

Vesta, her Virgins and the worship of her cult during the Roman Imperial Period

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
 Introduction	 1
Chapter 1: Vesta and the emperors of the principate: the new relationship between goddess, cult, and the <i>pontifex maximus</i>	12
Chapter 2: Vesta <i>Mater</i> and the imperial women of Rome	65
Chapter 3: The worship of Vesta outside the city of Rome	95
Chapter 4: The Palladium, Vesta, and the emperors of Rome: from Troy to Rome and back again?	151
Chapter 5: The Priests of Vesta	206
Chapter 6: The Vestal Virgins in the 3rd and 4th centuries: official policy and popular perception	232
Conclusion	268
Bibliography	277

ABSTRACT

My dissertation studies the position of Vesta and her cult during the often overlooked period from Augustus through the late fourth century CE through an examination—and most often a reconsideration—of the available sources, such as coins, inscriptions, monuments, and various written accounts. Counter to most scholarship that argues for a close affiliation between Augustus and his wife Livia to Vesta and her priestesses, I demonstrate that he and other emperors kept the *status quo* and nothing more. Additionally, modern scholars incorrectly compare imperial women to Vestal Virgins due to faulty readings of the primary sources and the lack of other categories of women who held exceptional privileges. I also explore the perception of this goddess by the Romans, arguing that they viewed her as a mother figure (*Vesta mater*), and that her role as a tutelary deity was directly connected to the objects she guarded, especially the Palladium, which continued to hold significance for the Byzantines even after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Vesta was also strongly connected to the hearth and altars, and in imagery was often represented by a flame and not anthropomorphized like other gods. For this reason I believe that her worship throughout the empire would have been focused around these objects. I further investigate changes within the cult of Vesta and its personnel. This includes an analysis of the origins and function of the role of “priest of Vesta”, a title which occurs for the first time in the fourth century CE, and an appraisal of changes that the Vestal Virgins experienced during this same century. Here I conclude that frequent absence of Roman emperors from the capitol city, as well as their increasing preference for Christianity, resulted in necessary modifications to cult practices, but not a loss of status or prestige.

In memory of family and friends departed.

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Introduction

The Roman goddess Vesta and her priestesses, the Vestal Virgins, are well-known subjects in the study of ancient history and religion. Recently the priestesses have become an especially popular topic not only in scholarship, but also in non-academic works such as historical novels and cinema. Indeed, the popularity for the subject of the Vestal Virgins has overshadowed that of Vesta herself who was one of the most important goddesses in Rome, and without whom the priestesses of Vesta would not have existed. Perhaps this should not be a surprise; while the Vestal Virgins were unique even in antiquity, they appear even more so in this day and age. Vesta, on the other hand, does not immediately stand out. To be fair, it is impossible to disassociate the goddess from her priestesses; there is no way to discuss the Vestals without mentioning the goddess they served and vice versa. However, Vesta was a very important part of Roman religious belief, and several aspects about her perception, worship, and cult practices deserve to be either considered for the first time or reexamined.

Vesta had similar characteristics as the Greek goddess Hestia, but she also acquired some unique attributes due to influences from the local peoples of Latium. Their version of Vesta, goddess of the hearth, was brought to Rome early in the history of the city. According to tradition this was done by Rome's second king, Numa Pompilius, around 713 BCE. The hearth of the goddess was given a home in a round building known as the *aedes Vestae* which was located on the eastern end of the *Forum Romanum*. The Romans also brought many of their other sacred objects to this temple where they would be protected by the goddess and her officials. Vesta was attended by a cult of originally four, but later six priestesses—the number maintained throughout the rest of Roman history. The fire within the hearth was believed to be Vesta herself—she was rarely anthropomorphized like other Roman gods. For this reason the flame was never allowed to be extinguished; if it went out then Vesta had left the city, leaving it

vulnerable. However, as long as she and her priestesses remained in Rome, the city and its people would continue and prosper.

The role and status of Vesta and her priestesses remained rather constant until the end of the Republic. Other than reports of accusations concerning broken vows of chastity (*incestum*), no other changes are recorded. However, in the first century BCE leading men of state began to affiliate themselves with Vesta and her priestesses. They started to entrust important legal documents, such as wills, to the care of the Vestals, which were hidden within the temple of the goddess. For example, Julius Caesar deposited his will with them while he was dictator and *pontifex maximus*, and the latter position also put him in charge of supervising the cult. Augustus had similar, minimal contact with Vesta and her priestesses early in his political career. This changed, however, when he became *pontifex maximus* himself in 12 BCE. From this time onward every emperor was also Rome's high priest, and in this capacity Vesta and her cult had a direct relationship with him. This fact marks an important difference between the Republican worship of Vesta and that of the principate and late antiquity. For this reason, and due to the general lack of scholarship about Vesta especially during this four hundred year period, the reign of Augustus is when my study begins.

One considerable problem with research about Vesta and her worship is the lack of primary sources and the types that are available. We have nothing written by a priestess, or even from a woman writing about them. The authors who mention Vesta in history, letters, or poetry often do so in passing or are our sources for the basic information about the goddess and her cult. Thus we know the mythological origins of the cult of Vesta, the process by which priestesses were chosen, examples of Vestals convicted of breaking their vows of chastity, etcetera. Some also write about the goddess for reasons that make clear her symbolic meaning for the Romans.

These take the form of both positive passages that emphasize her importance for the prosperity of the state, and also negative references that name offences against Vesta or her priestesses that might put Rome in danger. During the principate and into late antiquity, examples of both types were often tied to the emperors. However, very few ancient authors provide insight on topics relating to the popular response when something affecting the cult occurred, or how Vesta was worshipped outside Rome, the city to which she was most closely associated. This paucity of information is the most likely reason for the absence of scholarship on some of these issues and will be continue to remain an obstacle.

In addition to the written accounts, material remains also provide another pool of source evidence. Until recently, scholarship on Vesta and her cult has largely ignored the epigraphic evidence, which is crucial to gaining an understanding of the cult especially in the centuries CE that I examine in this work. Dozens of inscription refer to either Vesta, the Vestal Virgins (as a collective body), or to a specific priestess. In addition, others can be used to examine specific aspects of the cult such as its ties to the emperor and imperial family, and the worship of Vesta throughout the Roman Empire. They are also our main source of information for the priests of Vesta. The lengths of these sources range from one word to extremely long paragraphs and come from all over the Roman world, although the majority belong to the capital city where the worship of Vesta was greatest. Coins, monuments and statuary also contribute important information to the study of this goddess.

As is true for the histories of many times and places, little or no mention is made about women, and in the case of Vesta and her priestesses silence is often all we have about them in contemporary sources. However, this too can be used as source information. When something changed or happened that either positively or negatively affected the cult, it was usually

commented upon. Thus, a failure from the ancient authorities to discuss Vesta and her priestesses can be taken as a sign of continuity.

Despite the popularity of Vesta and the Vestal Virgins, scholarship devoted solely to this topic remained sparse until the late twentieth century—especially when the art and archeological works are omitted from the list. The earliest book length works on the Vestals are A. Preuner’s *Hestia-Vesta* (1864), Giulio Gianelli’s *Il sacerdozio delle Vestali romane* (1913), T. Cato Worsfold’s *The History of the Vestal Virgins of Rome* (1934), and A. Brelich’s *Vesta* (1949).¹ Preuner’s work on the cults of Hestia in Greece and Vesta in Rome was the first real attempt to write a balanced, source based account of each goddess and her cult worship in her respective society. Gianelli’s study takes a thematic approach, focusing on the connection between the Roman goddess Vesta and the Greek deity Hestia, the hearth and temple of the goddess, the composition and duties of the priesthood, and the punishment of the Vestals. Worsfold discusses these same issues, but also addresses in greater detail the festivals and ceremonies in which the priestesses participated, their dress, and also adds information about the cult during the empire and the end of the order. Brelich’s work pushed (although perhaps not successfully) the traditional thinking about the private versus public nature of Vesta and her cult and provoked considerable scholarly debate.

The amount and very nature of scholarship concerning the Vestals drastically changed starting in 1980, largely in response to feminist influences across the disciplines. In this year, Mary Beard wrote a watershed article entitled “The Sexual Status of the Vestal Virgins”.² In it, she first proposed an ambiguity in the sexuality of these priestesses and argued that their

¹ A. Preuner, *Hestia-Vesta: ein Cyclus religionsgeschichtlicher Forschungen*, (Tübingen: Lauppschen, 1864); Giulio Gianelli, *Il sacerdozio delle Vestali romane*, (Florence: Galletti e Cocci, 1913); T. Cato Worsfold, *The History of the Vestal Virgins of Rome*, (London: Rider & Co., 1932); A. Brelich, *Vesta*, (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1949).

² Mary Beard, “The Sexual Status of the Vestal Virgins”, *The Journal of Roman Studies*, vol. 70 (1980): 12-27.

imposed virginity caused them not to be viewed as sterile women, but rather that the Vestals represented stored up, procreative potential. The impact of her article was considerable. It provided through the use of new methodologies a different interpretation of a subject that had been long studied. Beard demonstrated that scholars really did not know everything about the Vestals and that there was room for further investigation on these priestesses.

No recent scholarship has focused specifically on Vesta, although four scholarly works have appeared which deal with the Vestal Virgins—a good indication of their continued popularity with modern scholars.³ José Carlos Saquete's *Las Vírgenes Vestales: un sacerdocio femenino en la religión pública romana* (2000) includes a historical overview of the Vestals, thematic approaches on topics such as their obligations and chastity, and also a prosopographical appendix of known priestesses primarily created from epigraphic sources.⁴ His goal is to explain the situation of the Vestals in the political, religious and social spheres of Roman society. The focus of the work, however, remains on topics that have been repeatedly discussed and within the boundaries of the city of Rome during the period of the Republic. Next, in *Die vestalischen Jungfrauen in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (2006) Nina Mekacher uses art history and archaeology to study aspects of the Vestal cult during the first three centuries CE.⁵ Individual chapters of the work focus on the Vestals as a priesthood, their ritual obligations, the *Atrium Vestae* (living quarters), the lives of the priestess taking into consideration their obligations and legal status, and their representation and self-representation. Her work—like Saquete's—attempts to set the Vestals into the social milieu of Roman society, but in a later chronological period. Maria Martini's book, *Le vestali* (2004), is an analysis of early Roman historiography and the role that

³ Other works worth mention include: Sarolta A. Takács, *Vestal Virgins, Sibyls, and Matrons*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2008).

⁴ José Carlos Saquete, *Las Vírgenes Vestales: un sacerdocio femenino en la religión pública romana*, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000).

⁵ Nina Mekacher, *Die vestalischen Jungfrauen in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2006).

the Vestals played in traditional accounts concerning the development of the city of Rome.⁶ Overall, she argues that charges of Vestal *incestum* (a broken vow of chastity) are linked in the historiographical tradition to crucial moments in the city's history. She devotes chapters to individual priestesses and the circumstances surrounding their verdict (whether guilty or innocent). However, this is the only aspect of the Vestals that Martini investigates in her work. Finally, Robin Lorsch Wildfang published *Rome's Vestal Virgins* (2006). This work follows a thematic approach with chapters devoted to the roles of the Vestals within and outside of their temple, their initiation, virginity, legal and financial positions, and place in Roman history.⁷ Wildfang's study provides some valuable new thoughts on these previously discussed topics, but once again remains focused on the Republic and the city of Rome.

This dissertation is unique from prior scholarship in several ways. First is the time period under discussion. The majority of these earlier works conclude their study sometime during the first century CE, and most often Augustus' principate (27 BCE – CE 14) is the terminus. Although I do consider relevant information about Vesta and her cult that dates from the Monarchy and Republican periods, the focus of this study is on its last four centuries. Second, I use all manner of sources available to assist my arguments and endeavor to solve each problem from as many angles as possible. For material evidence, this includes the use of coins, monuments, inscriptions and statuary. I also use all types of written evidence including historical accounts, letters, and poetry. These texts have been cited by scholars before, but some require a re-examination and additional analysis—as does the scholarship that uses them.

Each chapter in this dissertation deals with a theme that is unique: either it is a topic that has received little or no scholarly attention, or it is approached from an alternative perspective.

⁶ Maria Cristina Martini, *Le vestali: Un sacerdozio funzionale al "cosmo" romano*, (Brussels: Latomus, 2004).

⁷ Robin Lorsch Wildfang, *Rome's Vestal Virgins*, (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Within each chapter, I also address smaller issues relevant to the discussion where I have ideas that either augment or differ from present scholarship. These subject-based chapters are placed in an order that endeavors to flow from one topic to another with some connection between them, while also progressing in as much as a chronological order as possible.

During the principate of Augustus, the goddess Vesta experienced renewed significance in Rome and was provided with additional characteristics and provinces. The standard interpretation is that Augustus used his position as *pontifex maximus* to gain control over the symbolic influence of the goddess, the Vestals, and the sacred objects of Rome in their care. In particular, he is thought to have brought the cult of Vesta to his home on the Palatine, where her worshiped was combined with that of Apollo and the emperor. The connection between Vesta and the *princeps* was then reinforced in several modes of written and visual propaganda that connected the goddess and cult to him and the imperial family. It is my argument that while clearly a bond between Augustus and Vesta existed, the emperor did not begin to emphasize it until after he became *pontifex maximus* in 12 BCE. Furthermore, the primary sources do not support the level of connection between Augustus and the imperial family with Vesta and her Virgins that modern scholarship accepts fact. It then fell to the prerogative of each later emperor to choose if and how he might monopolize on this association. Many ignored the goddess and cult, while other emperors brought considerable—and often harmful—attention to the priestesses of Vesta. (Chapter 1)

In similar fashion, modern scholarship argues for a strong connection between Vesta and her priestesses with the women of the imperial family, especially the empresses Livia and Julia Domna. Reasons used to argue for an affinity between Livia and Vesta and her Virgins include: the “close” relationship between Augustus and Vesta, the privileges given to Livia that were

similar to those allowed to the Vestal Virgins, the modesty and chastity associated with the empress in imperial propaganda, and the fact that she became an official state priestess for the divine worship of Augustus' cult after his death in 14 CE. However, here too I argue that the primary source evidence does not support the claims of modern scholarship and that the similarities between Livia and Vesta and her priestesses have been overstressed. The same can also be said for the relationship between Julia Domna and Vesta. The primary source evidence about this empress and the part she may have played in the rebuilding of the *aedes Vestae* after it had been destroyed by fire are not enough to prove a close connection. In addition, this chapter addresses the issue of the epithet "mater" that was sometimes connected with Vesta (*Vesta mater*). This subject has received little scholarly attention, but is crucial to our understanding of the nature of this goddess in Roman society, especially when contrasted with the virginity of her priestesses. Although the topics of *Vesta mater* and the imperial women of Rome may appear disconnected, these empresses and Vesta all shared the honorific designation of "mother" in their public titles. (Chapter 2)

One of the most interesting problems surrounding the worship of Vesta is how it may have been performed in areas outside the city of Rome. The general belief is that there were no Vestal Virgins outside of the capital city. However, Vesta was a goddess of Latium, and a few nearby cities are known to have had cults with virgin priestesses that served Vesta. Very little is known about these women, but the general impression is that they followed the same rules as the priestesses in Rome. In addition to Latium, Vesta was an important deity that should have been honored throughout the empire. Her worship in the provinces would have required both personnel and a place to honor her, but there are no known priests, priestesses, or temples dedicated to Vesta outside of Italy. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the possibility that

Vesta was worshipped differently by people in the Western provinces than those of the east where Hestia also continued to be venerated. In order to come to any theories, I first provide an overview of the role, place and worship of Hestia in Greek society, as well any other practices that may have contributed to the development of Vesta. I also consider the uniquely local, Latin elements that the goddess and her cult acquired. With this information it is possible to theorize about how Vesta may have been worshiped throughout the Roman provinces. (Chapter 3)

Of all the sacred objects housed within the *aedes Vestae* and guarded by the Vestal Virgins, the Palladium arguably held the most significance for the Romans. They believed Aeneas saved this talisman during the fall of Troy and brought it to Italy. It eventually made its way to Rome where it was placed in the temple of Vesta among the other *sacra*, including the fire of Vesta which the Romans believed also came from Troy. During the Republican period stories of the Palladium state that it was removed only in exceptional circumstances, specifically when the temple was at risk of destruction by fire. However, some emperors beginning starting with Augustus and ending with Constantine are rumored to have moved the Palladium for their own individual purposes, but in each case it was due to the symbolic importance of the statue. This chapter provides an overview of the history of the Palladium and what it represented to the Roman people. It then analyzes the accounts claiming that certain emperors removed the talisman with a focus not on if they actually did so, but on why our sources claim that they had. (Chapter 4)

Inscriptions from the fourth century CE reveal examples of men described as a “Priest of Vesta” (*pontifex Vestae*). The fact that these men existed is reported as a fact in scholarship, and little attempt has been made to determine their origins or role in the cult of Vesta. Epigraphic examples documenting their presence belong solely to this century, and prosopographical

research confirms that membership was limited to men of the senatorial order who held this position along with other public or religious offices. Certainly these priests were connected with the cult of Vesta in some way as their title indicates. As such, the purpose of this chapter is to determine why this priesthood began, and the role its officials played in the worship of Vesta and Roman religious practices of the fourth century CE. (Chapter 5)

The Vestal Virgins maintained their public presence in the city of Rome during the third and fourth centuries. They continued to perform their duties on behalf of Vesta and the Roman state through their participation in many of Rome's traditional pagan ceremonies. They also maintained their role as *patronae*; they were slave owners, patrons to *liberti*, and also acted on behalf of clients belonging to all but the senatorial order. In fact, the Vestals had done so for centuries, so nothing noticeably changed. However, Christianity was on the rise and the religious dynamic in Rome was shifting. This resulted in occasional attacks against the pagan religions which were sometimes directed at Vesta and her priestesses. The traditional cults in Rome remained mostly intact until the rule of Gratian who withdrew many of the financial privileges of pagan priests. While his measures hurt all pagan cults, outrage against them focused on the damage that was specifically done to the cult of Vesta and her priestesses. Still, the pagan cults continued despite all of the restrictions placed on them until the reign of Theodosius when many of the pagan temples in Rome, including the *aedes Vestae*, were finally closed. This chapter examines the evidence in order to determine the ways in which the cult may have been affected by the changes around them, whether the prestige and symbolic nature of the Vestals waned in the eyes of many Romans during this period, and when and how the pivotal time of decline came before the last years of the Vestal order. (Chapter 6)

Rather than summarizing the individual chapters of this work, the conclusion aspires to bring together several overarching themes about Vesta and her cult that can only be obtained by the simultaneous consideration of multiple chapters. Analysis of the separate topics as a whole or “big picture” will allow me to posit some more accurate theories about key issues. These include: the relationship between the emperor and imperial family with Vesta, her cult and the sacred objects in her care, how this effected the symbolic nature of the goddess and her cult for the Roman people, how Vesta’s worship changed both over time and the distance of an empire, and how the everyday operations of the cult adapted to accommodate a *pontifex maximus* who was increasingly absent from the capitol and no longer a believer in traditional Roman religion.

Chapter 1: Vesta and the emperors of the principate:
the new relationship between goddess, cult, and the *pontifex maximus*

During the Principate of Augustus, the goddess Vesta became a much more visible religious figure who acquired new attributes and provinces than she had previously held. The roots of this development can be traced to the Civil Wars of the later Roman Republic, but without doubt Augustus was the person with the single greatest influence over the changes in the perception of this goddess and the practices of her priestesses. This relationship did not become manifest, however, until after Augustus gained the office of Pontifex Maximus in 12 BCE. Prior to this time he had focused on associating himself with other heroic figures and gods such as Aeneas and Apollo, expanding and adapting their religious domains to suit his needs. Once he had added the office of *pontifex maximus* to his already impressive list of powers, Augustus took the unprecedented act of declaring part of his own residence on the Palatine public property and making a dedication to Vesta there. The nature of this dedication and the effect it had on the cult of Vesta have received much scholarly attention and is an important component to understanding the relationship between goddess and *pontifex maximus*. What can be accepted without much discussion is that once Augustus formed connections between Vesta and himself, he used them to his advantage. With the bond between *pontifex maximus* and Vesta firmly in place, it was then the prerogative of each emperor to decide how—and if—they wished to exploit this connection. While some of their attentions to the cult were aimed at maintaining or improving the status of Vesta and her priestesses, much of it was merely done to benefit the current emperor and the imperial family. Indeed, such a focus on the Vestals was at times a detriment to the cult and caused more harm than good.

Augustus and religion before 12 BCE

Although Augustus⁸ would eventually connect himself to Vesta and her priestesses, for the first three decades he held authority in Rome his interactions with them appear minimal. For example, Plutarch relates that Augustus asked the Vestals to hand over the testament of Mark Antony. They refused, but allowed him to come in person and remove it.⁹ Augustus then used the document in his propaganda campaign against Antony in Rome; not a difficult task since the will—at least allegedly—left parts of the Roman Empire to the children of Cleopatra. This was Augustus' first documented tie to the Vestals, and not necessarily one that paints either party in a favorable light. Upon defeating these enemies Augustus returned to Rome where he was granted a triumph, and a procession including the Senate and the Vestal Virgins was sent to receive and escort him back to the city.¹⁰ However, the presence of these priestesses at such an event was by no means exceptional and does not indicate any special relationship between the *imperator* and Vesta at this time. The same is true for the fact that the Vestals were commissioned to carry out sacrifices on the anniversaries of his triumphant returns from Syria in 19 BCE and Spain and Gaul in 13 BCE.

For the first half of his career Augustus had other priorities that involved connecting himself to Rome's mythological foundations and certain divinities. As the adopted son of Julius Caesar and a member of the Julian family, he claimed ancestry to the goddess Venus through Aeneas and his son Ascanius (Iulus).¹¹ Caesar himself had maximized on this relationship in

⁸ Octavian received this title from the Senate in 27 BCE. For general ease I will refer to Octavian as Augustus throughout the chapter.

⁹ Plutarch, *Life of Antony*, 58.3: ἀπέκειντο δ' αὐτὰι παρὰ ταῖς Ἑστιάσι παρθένοις, καὶ Καίσαρος αἰτοῦντος οὐκ ἔδωκαν: εἰ δὲ βούλοιο λαμβάνειν, ἔλθειν αὐτὸν ἐκέλευον. ἔλαβεν οὖν ἐλθὼν. For Augustus to enter the *aedes Vestae* would have been strongly against Roman religious custom and is a point that the author fails to express.

¹⁰ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 51.19.

¹¹ One story of Iulus (perhaps invented in the days of Caesar) relates that he was deprived of his kingdom by his brother, Silvius, and instead received the office of *pontifex maximus*. Cf. Eusebius, *Chronicle*, 107, provides a summary of Diodorus VII, 5, 8: *Iulius autem imperio privatus pontifex maximus constitutes est et quasi secundus rex*

many ways, including the issue of a silver denarius in 47/6 that featured a profile of Venus on the obverse, and Aeneas carrying his father Anchises over his left shoulder and the Palladium in his left hand on the reverse.¹² In contrast, Augustus focused less on the traditional connection of the *Julii* to Venus and more on his family ties to Aeneas, a relationship he broadcasted in both literature and his visual program.

Virgil's *Aeneid* is the literary source that most emphasizes the family ties and similar acts of the hero Aeneas and his descendant Augustus. In this work especially, the focus is placed on Aeneas' Trojan ancestry and his role as one of the "founders" of Rome; his descendants would found the city, and it was due to him that the many Trojan objects which the Romans held sacred (Penates, fire from Troy, Palladium, etcetera) came to Italy. Thus by claiming descent from Aeneas, Augustus could even make the claim that these *sacra* (sacred objects) "belonged" to his own family.¹³ This also led to the idea that Rome was the "new Troy" and the Romans were the descendants of the Trojans.¹⁴ Moreover, throughout the *Aeneid* the "piety" (*pietas*) of Aeneas is repeatedly emphasized. This trait was especially useful for Augustus who—like his ancestor—promoted his great *pietas* in all matters, but especially his loyalty to his adoptive father whose

*erat; a quo ortam huiusce Iuliam familiam Romae perdurare aiunt; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1, 70, 4, sees Augustus holding the office of *pontifex maximus* as part of his direct inheritance from Ascanius: Ἰούλω δὲ ἀντὶ τῆς βασιλείας ἱερά τις ἐξουσία προσετέθη καὶ τιμὴ τῷ τε ἀκινδύνῳ προὔχουσα τῆς μοναρχίας καὶ τῆ ῥαστώνῃ τοῦ βίου, ἦν ἔτι καὶ εἰς ἐμὲ τὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ γένος ἔκαρποῦτο, Ἰούλιοι κληθέντες ἀπ' ἐκείνου. ἐγένετο δὲ μέγιστος ἅμα καὶ λαμπρότατος οἴκων οὗτος, ὃν ἡμεῖς ἴσμεν, ἄνδρας τε διαφορωτάτους ἡγεμόνων ἤνεγκεν, οἷς τὸ εὐγενὲς αἰ ἄρεται μὴ ἀπιστεῖσθαι παρέσχον: ὑπὲρ ὧν ἐν ἄλλῳ δηλωθήσεται λόγῳ τὰ προσήκοντα.*

¹² Crawford, *Coins of the Roman Republic*, 458/1. It is tempting to see this coin as coinciding with Caesar receiving the title *pater patriae* in 45 BCE, but the denarius appears to predate the bestowal of the title.

¹³ Augustus never openly made this claim, but the idea was implicit and will be discussed at greater length below.

¹⁴ The assimilation of Rome with Troy is constant in the Augustan poets of Rome. Examples include Vergil's *Aeneid*, Propertius' *Elegies* (4.1: *Troia, cades, et Troia Roma resurges*), Tibullus' *Elegies* (2.5) and Horace's *Odes* (3.3).

murder he avenged.¹⁵ Still, where attributes of Aeneas surely reflect on Augustus, Cairns advises caution as “the pair are to be seen as analogues rather than equated”.¹⁶

Augustus illustrated his association with Aeneas on many public buildings and through other media. A coin from 42 BCE featured on its reverse Aeneas carrying Anchises over his shoulder; however, Augustus’ strike differed in that Aeneas held the hand of his son rather than carrying the Palladium, and that the obverse bore an image of Augustus “C. Caesar” rather than Venus.¹⁷ Although similar in design, this stylistic change allowed Augustus once more to legitimize his position through Caesar (father and son), connect the *Julii* to Aeneas, and stress both their Trojan and divine origins. Aeneas was especially prominent as a part of Augustus’ larger building programs. The Forum of Augustus featured statues of important men from Rome’s history on the left side of the Forum, while the right side displayed prominent members of the *Julii* going all the way back to—and starting with—Aeneas. The latter is also featured on one of the friezes of the *Ara Pacis* (Altar of Peace) on which Aeneas is shown engaged in a sacrifice, possibly at the founding of Lavinium, the “mother city” of Rome.¹⁸ Naturally, Augustus also features prominently on the monument and scholars have analyzed the relationship between the figures at some length.¹⁹ Their affiliation is likely demonstrated again

¹⁵ Opt. cit. Jane DeRose Evans, *The Art of Persuasion: Political Propaganda from Aeneas to Brutus* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 41, and in general her chapter “Aeneas”, 35-57.

¹⁶ Francis Cairns, *Virgil’s Augustan Epic*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4. For a balanced account of the Augustus-Aeneas analogue, cf. G. Binder, “Aeneas und Augustus: Interpretationen zum 8 Buch der Aeneis,” (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1971); and from a historical viewpoint Strasburger, H. “Vergil und Augustus”, *Gymnas* 90 (1983): 41-76; and most recently E. Wistrand, “Aeneas and Augustus in the Aeneid,” *Eranos* 82 (1984): 195-8.

¹⁷ Crawford, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, 494/3a.

¹⁸ Considerable scholarly debate now exists over the identification of the figure making the sacrifice. The traditional interpretation is that it shows Aeneas, but the most recent theory proposed by Rehak is that the figure should be identified with Numa Pompilius. See: Paul Rehak, “[Aeneas or Numa?] Rethinking the Meaning of the *Ara Pacis Augustae*,” *The Art Bulletin* 83 (2001): 190-208.

¹⁹ Of course, this relationship is entirely dependent on the correct identification of the sacrificing figure. However, assuming that it is Aeneas, comments like that of Evans become useful: “The physical resonance of the two figures demonstrates the importance of Aeneas to Augustus. Not only are the origins of the Julian line and Rome itself shown to be inseparable...but the link between pious Aeneas and Augustus as the “priest of Aeneas’ line” is made

on the Altar of the Lares (also known as the Belvedere Altar), which commemorates Augustus' reorganization of the cult of the *Lares compitales*. Karl Galinsky points out several similarities between this altar and the *Ara Pacis*, including the association made between Augustus and Aeneas on both monuments where they are featured on opposite (parallel) sides from each other.²⁰

In addition to these connections with Aeneas, it is evident that Augustus chose Apollo as his preferred deity early on in his political career.²¹ During the later Republic many noble Romans adopted the custom of linking themselves and their families with one of the traditional Roman gods. These associations served to reinforce the right of the elite to rule due to their divine lineage while simultaneously invoking the protection of that divinity—especially important during a time of Civil War. Augustus followed suit and chose Apollo as his protector, emulating the god to the point of suggesting his own divinity. One story reported by Suetonius tells of a banquet for which the guests all dressed as one of the *Dii Consentes* and the host, Augustus, appeared as Apollo.²² Most scholars now agree that Antony used this event as part of his propaganda campaign against Augustus after the decline of the Second Triumvirate since the banquet occurred at a time of famine in Rome.²³ Moreover, at some point during his lifetime the

clear. Aeneas is shown in the act of founding Alba Longa; Augustus is refounding Rome after a long and terrible series of civil wars." Evans, 46.

²⁰ Karl Galinsky, *Augustan culture: an interpretive introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 319-321. See also John Pollini, *From Republic to Empire: Rhetoric, Religion, and Power in the Visual Culture of Ancient Rome*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 228.

²¹ Opt. cit. John F. Miller, *Apollo, Augustus, and the Poets*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²² Suetonius, *Augustus*, 70.

²³ Kenneth Scott, "Octavian's Propaganda and Antony's *De Sua Ebrietate*," *Classical Philology* (April, 1929): 133-141; M. P. Charlesworth, "Some fragments of the propaganda of Mark Antony," *CQ* 27 (1933), 172-7, at 175; J. Pollini, "Man or god: divine assimilation and imitation in the Late Republic and Early Principate," in K. A. Raaflaub and M. Toher (eds.), *Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and his Principate* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1990), 334-363, at 345.

rumor circulated that Apollo was in fact Augustus' father, the god having assumed the form of a snake and impregnated his mother, Atia.²⁴

On closer inspection Apollo may not seem to be an obvious choice as a titular god. Most scholars argue that Apollo was only a "minor" deity in Rome before Augustus.²⁵ Yet, this may have also been a large part of the god's appeal. By selecting a divinity of lesser importance Augustus gained the ability to mold the image of Apollo to meet his own goals and needs. When this is added to the facts that Apollo was one of the few gods not used in the propaganda of the Civil Wars before Augustus, and at the same time was a god of culture and harmony who could symbolically help create a new period of peaceful rule, Apollo's attractiveness becomes clearer. The Greek connection of this deity should also be taken into account; not only was he credited for helping Augustus in his eastern victories, but he was also the legendary builder of the walls of ancient Troy. Thus it is no coincidence that in the *Aeneid* Virgil gives Apollo a greater role than in the previous legends of Aeneas, wherein Apollo now becomes a protector and guide of the Trojans. Moreover, in book three Apollo predicts that Aeneas' house and descendants would dominate the world.²⁶ In these ways Apollo became a useful symbol for the prosperity of Rome, and of Augustus.

Augustus further demonstrated his preference for this god in visual representations. A coin issue from 37 BCE bears symbols of Apollo, the tripod and laurel wreath.²⁷ Scholarship often connects this coin with Augustus' new position as *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*, a

²⁴ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 94.4 (citing Asclepiades of Mendes); Dio 45.1.1. Note also the comparison to the legendary birth of Alexander the Great. Cf. Annie Vigourt, *Les présages impériaux d'Auguste à Domitien*, (Paris: De Boccard, 2001), 95, 116-7, and 201.

²⁵ Jean Gagé, *Apollon romain: essai sur le culte d'Apollon et le développement du ritus Graecus à Rome des origines à Auguste*, (Paris: Boccard, 1955), especially part three: 419-684.

²⁶ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 3.99-102.

²⁷ Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, nos. 537-538 and p. 744.

religious office that may have had ties to Apollo.²⁸ However, such an association is problematic for several reasons. First, other than the coin there is little evidence to support when exactly Augustus assumed this role. At least on scholar dates the event to between 43 and 40 BCE, and if correct it would not be logical for so many years to pass before the coin issue documenting it.²⁹ Secondly, an association between this priesthood and Apollo has been suggested in modern scholarship, but there is no real evidence to connect the two. Rather, it seems that later events have been used to justify an earlier connection. The most important duty of the *quindecimviri* was the protection of the Sibylline Books (oracles dating from the period of the Roman monarchy), which they would consult by request of the Senate, usually in times of crisis.³⁰ However, also in this decade (the 30s BCE) Augustus vowed and began construction on a new temple of Apollo on the Palatine, whence he moved the oracles. This act created a new association between the *quindecimviri* and Apollo, but one that has been unjustifiably applied to earlier times.

The traditional chain of events state that Augustus vowed to build the temple of Apollo Palatinus after winning victories in two battles, the Battle of Naulochus in 36 BCE and the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE.³¹ However, a recent re-examination of these events convincingly argues that the major reason for the construction of the temple was a lightning strike that occurred on

²⁸ Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 7, documents that he held this office. Martha W. Hoffman Lewis, *The Official Priests of Rome under the Julio-Claudians*, (American Academy in Rome, 1955), 8, “This college, which perhaps from its origin was connected with the cult of Apollo...”; Miller, 19.

²⁹ Hoffman Lewis, 88. She believes that Augustus would have received the office as part of his inheritance from Caesar, although it is possible that she is projecting the transferal of the office of *pontifex maximus* on to this situation.

³⁰ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 31.1. The original collection of prophecies was destroyed in the burning of the Capitol in 83 BCE, after which the senate commissioned a board of men to make a new collection from various places. It was this new version that Augustus moved to the temple of Palatine Apollo.

³¹ Apollo assists Augustus at Actium: Vergil, *Aeneid*, 8.704-5: *Actius haec cernens arcum tendebat Apollo / desuper*; Propertius, 4.6, says victory was due to Apollo’s help: *Astitit Augusti puppim super, et nova flamma/ Luxit in obliquam ter sinuate facem*.

property already acquired by Augustus on the Palatine.³² Cassius Dio relates that Augustus had purchased this land in order to build a new residence, but after the prodigy he made it public property with the intent that it would be dedicated to Apollo. In return, the people voted Augustus a *domus publica* late in 36 BCE.³³ Thus occurrences such as the victory at Actium came to be tied to the temple, but were not in fact the actual reason for its construction and were only of secondary importance.

Augustus had the temple of Apollo built next to his own home. Private corridors and a ramp connected his residence to the sanctuary essentially making them part of the same building complex.³⁴ And whereas Augustus' home was purposefully kept modest, the temple to Apollo was not: the entire set of buildings (sanctuary, porticos, and libraries) was adorned with white Luna marble and statuary, including cult statues of Apollo, his sister, Diana, and their mother, Latona, believed to have been made by famous Greek artists.³⁵ We are also told that Augustus

³² Olivier Hekster and John Rich, "Octavian and the thunderbolt: The Temple of Apollo Palatinus and Roman traditions of Temple building," *The Classical Quarterly* 56 (2006): 149-168, 162-3. The association between the Battle of Actium and the temple of Palatine Apollo was strengthened in large part due to the fact that the victory occurred near an ancient sanctuary of Apollo that Augustus rebuilt after his victory.

³³ Cassius Dio, 49.15.5. The date is not specifically given (November?). Cassius Dio also fails to specify where this public house was located in Rome, although presumably it was on the Palatine. However, a contradiction seems to occur at 54.27.3 when Dio states that once Augustus became *pontifex maximus* in 12 BCE it was necessary for him to live in a public residence so he made part of his own house public property (implying it was not before). Cf. Stefan Weinstock, *Divus Julius*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), 278, believes that Augustus' Palatine home was built next to the Apollo but was not made public property until 12 B.C.

³⁴ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 31.1. P. Gros, in *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae (LTUR)* I (1993), s.v. "Apollo Palatinus," 56f.

³⁵ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 72; Anthony A. Barrett, *Livia*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), 326-8, argues that Augustus' Palatine home may not have been as modest as Suetonius implies; Michael Lipka, *Roman Gods: a Conceptual Approach*, (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 76; Hans Gunther Martin, *Römische Tempelkultbilder. Eine Archäologische Untersuchung zur Späten Republik*, (Rome: L'Erma' di Bretschneider [Studi e Materiali del Museo della Civiltà Romana, 12], 1987), 254. For more on the symbolic nature of the location of the temple and its visual program see: Timothy Peter Wiseman, "The Public Image of Aristocratic and Imperial Houses," in *L'Urbs espace urbain et histoire (Ier siècle av. J.-C. - IIIe siècle ap. J.-C.) : actes du colloque international organisé par le Centre national de la recherche scientifique et l'École française de Rome* (Rome, 8-12 mai 1985), (Rome: École française de Rome, 1987): 393-413; Paul Zanker, "Der Apollontempel auf dem Palatin," in *Città e architettura nella Roma imperiale, Anal. Rom.*, Suppl. 10 (1983), 21-40, and Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, (Ann Arbor, 1988), 50-3, 85-9; Barbara Kellum, "Sculptural programs and propaganda in Augustan Rome: the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine," in R. Winkes (ed.), *The Age of Augustus*, (Louvain, 1985), 169-76 (repr. in E. D'Ambra [ed.], *Roman Art in Context. An Anthology* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1993], 75-84); Erika Simon, *Augustus. Kunst und Leben in Rom um die Zeitenwende*, (Munich, 1986), 19-25; Gianfilippo Carettoni, "Die Wandmalereien im oberen

erected a colossal bronze statue of Apollo fashioned with his own features and likely placed it in the library.³⁶ The temple was dedicated on October 9, 28 BCE from which time it became “...a focal point of Augustan propaganda, both culturally (with a library of Greek and Roman authors attached to it), politically (with its central role during the Secular Games in 17 B.C. and senatorial meetings convened in it), and religiously (due to its ties to Apollo and housing of the Sibylline books).”³⁷

How much forethought Augustus gave to an eventual relationship with Vesta and her cult is difficult to determine. This goddess would have been an appealing choice for many reasons. Vesta was not used in the propaganda of the Civil Wars and thus bore no negative political ties. Moreover, the antiquity of her cult and worship in Rome, and her characteristics of chastity would have been viewed as highly favorable. Also Vesta’s strong correlation to the prosperity of Rome and as the guardian of the city’s most sacred objects should have been attractive to the *princeps*: by tying himself to her, Augustus, by extension, tied himself even more closely to the success of the state. Yet if connecting himself to this goddess was a preconceived plan or just a fortuitous combination of events is hard to say.

Roots of the development and the expansion of the nature of Vesta can be found in literature predating 12 BCE, but close examination of the evidence provides insufficient support that this relationship was effectively implemented before this time. In a similar manner that

Cubiculum des Augustushauses,” in *Kaiser Augustus und die verlorene Republik*, (Mainz: von Zabern, 1988), 263-72; Eckard Lefèvre, *Das Bild-Programm des Apollo-Tempels auf dem Palatin*, (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag, 1989); Maria Josè Strazzulla, *Il principato di Apollo: mito e propaganda nelle lastre 'Campana' dal tempio di Apollo Palatino*, (Roma: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 1990); Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 213-24; Dietmar Kienast, *Augustus, Princeps und Monarch*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999), 231-8.

³⁶ Servius, *Commentary of the Eclogues of Vergil*, 4, 10: *cui <Augusto> simulacrum factum est cum Apollinis cunctis insignibus. Scholia Cruquii of Horace, Epistles*, I, 3, 17: *Caesar sibi in bibliotheca statuam posuerat ad habitum et staturam Apollinis.*

³⁷ Lipka, 20-1. Augustus moved the Sibylline books to the temple after he became *pontifex maximus*. See: Suetonius, *Augustus*, 31.1; Kienast, 230-36; Ulrike Egelhaaf-Gaiser, “Roman Cult Sites: a pragmatic approach”, in *A companion to Roman Religion*, Jörg Rupke ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007): 205-221, 214-218.

Apollo was developed in the *Aeneid*, many scholars also perceive in this work the first occurrence of Vesta's Trojan origins. Several passages indicate that a cult of Vesta existed in Troy.³⁸ Of these, the most explicit reference is: *Haec memorans cinerem et sopitos suscitatur ignes, Pergameumque Larem et canae penetralia Vestae farre pio et plena supplex veneratur acerra.*³⁹ To these examples, Herbert-Brown³⁹ adds a passage of Propertius that she sees as possibly anticipating Vesta's appropriation as one of the preferred deities of Augustus and his line.⁴⁰ The best information on the relationship between Vesta, Troy, and Augustus come from passages in Ovid; however the publication of this author's works post-date 12 BCE and consequently cannot help us determine how well developed they were—or if they were developed at all—before Augustus became *pontifex maximus*.

Outside of the literary realm we know that Augustus began purchasing (directly or through intermediaries) land on the Palatine, but especially in the direction of the *Forum Romanum* already in the thirties BCE.⁴¹ His objective is difficult to determine, but Wiseman believes that Augustus' intention may have been that "The whole *Forum Romanum* was to be his dynastic monument, and his 'triumphal' arch [dedicated in 20 BCE] would act as a formal

³⁸ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.295-296: *Sic ait, et manibus vittas Vestamque potentem aeternumque adytis effert penetralibus ignem*; 2.567-568: *Iamque adeo super unus eram, cum limina Vestae servantem*; 9.258-261: *per magnos, Nise, penatis Assaracique larem et canae penetralia Vestae obtestor; quaecumque mihi fortuna fidesque est, in vestris pono gremiis.*

³⁹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, 5.744-746: "Then on the altar of the gods of Troy he woke the smouldering embers, at the shrine of venerable Vesta, worshipping with hallowed bread and incense burning free," Theodore Williams, trans. Cf. Cyril Bailey, *Religion in Virgil*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969), 96 and 198-9: "...it looks almost as if Virgil already knew that he [Augustus] had this in mind [cult for Vesta on the Palatine]."

⁴⁰ Geraldine Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 71. Propertius, 3.4.11-21: *Mars pater, et sacrae fatalia lumina Vestae, ante meos obitus sit precor illa dies, qua videam spoliis oneratos Caesaris axes, ipsa tuam serva prolem, Venus: hoc sit in aevum, cernis ab Aenea quod superesse caput. praeda sit haec illis, quorum meruere labors.*

⁴¹ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 72.1, Augustus purchased the house of Hortensius. Earlier at 29.3 he also states that the Temple of Apollo was erected in the part of the Palace where the God had drawn attention by striking it with lightning. Velleius Paterculus, 2. 81.3: *Victor deinde Caesar reversus in urbem contractas emptionibus complures domos per procuratores, quo laxior fieret ipsius, publicis se usibus destinare professus est, templumque Apollinis et circa porticus facturum promisit, quod ab eo singulari exstructum munificentia est.* "Caesar, on his victorious return to the city, made the announcement that he meant to set apart for public use certain houses which he had secured by purchase through his agents in order that there might be a free area about his own residence. He further promised to build a temple of Apollo with a portico about it, a work which he constructed with rare munificence."

entrance to the *domus Augusta*.⁴² Such acquisitions would have extended his property virtually to the temple of Vesta, which was connected to the Palatine by a ramp, as well as to many other important religious buildings on that end of the Forum, such as the *regia* and the *domus publica*. Moreover, his arch formed a passage between these same two buildings.⁴³ Although none of these facts can serve as concrete proof that Augustus had a preconceived plan to tie himself to Vesta and her cult, they do suggest that the *princeps* wanted to keep this avenue open.

Augustus becomes *Pontifex Maximus*

The office of *pontifex maximus* numbered among the multiple positions that Julius Caesar held at the time of his assassination in 44 BCE. It had always been a lifetime appointment, and Caesar was elected to this position in 63 BCE. Uniquely, Caesar was honored by decree of the Senate that upon his death this high priesthood would pass to his heir. This did not happen. Antony as consul restored the right of the pontifical college to choose their own leader, and although Augustus was Caesar's heir and a *pontifex* (48 BCE), Aemilius Lepidus, former general of Caesar and member of the Second Triumvirate, was chosen.⁴⁴ Many years later as the Triumvirate dissolved, Augustus forced Lepidus into house arrest in Misenum in 36 BCE and stripped him of his triumviral powers, but allowed him to retain the office of *pontifex maximus*. It would seem that Augustus feared the possible repercussions that taking the position away from Lepidus and assuming the role for himself might bring. Lepidus died either late in 13 or early in 12 BCE, at which time Augustus was elected to the position.⁴⁵ He appropriated the title

⁴² Wiseman, 406.

⁴³ F. Coarelli, *Il foro romano: period repubblicano e augusteo*, (Rome: Quasar, 1985), esp. 54 (Arcus Augusti), 56-72 (Regia-Vesta complex), and 258-308.

⁴⁴ Dio 44.53.6-7. See also Richard D. Weigel, *Lepidus: the Tarnished Triumvir*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 46-48.

⁴⁵ This is the dating of Weigel, 98-99; Simon Price, *CAH* vo. 10, 825, favors 13 BCE. Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 10.

becoming high priest of Rome on 6 March, 12 BCE.⁴⁶ From Augustus forward the office fell under the purview of the emperor; every *princeps* also held the office of *pontifex maximus*.⁴⁷

The high priesthood was the culmination of Augustus's religious offices. Henceforth he was a member of every major college of priests (except the Vestal Virgins from which he was naturally excluded) and thus held considerable power in the domain of Roman state religion. As mentioned above, early on in his political career he obtained the position of *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*. As an augur he helped "take the auspices", or interpreted the will of the gods by studying the flight of birds.⁴⁸ However, these roles were dwarfed by the eminent prestige carried by the office of *pontifex maximus*, a position he used to continue and advance his reforms of Roman state religion. In this capacity he also carried out the traditional duties of the chief priest: supervising the pontifical college, maintaining the calendar, overseeing sacrifices, selecting new *flamines* and Vestal Virgins, and punishing these priestesses if necessary. And as Herbert-Brown has pointed out, the priests (and Vestal priestesses) of the pontifical college were largely attached to one specific god or goddess; however the role of the *pontifex* was more general and provided Augustus with direct affiliation with any officially recognized state god.⁴⁹

The position of *pontifex maximus* was obviously highly coveted by Augustus. He waited longer to hold this priesthood than any other office during his career, and likely longer than he himself expected since Lepidus lived for another 23 years. It was, however, only a matter of time. Augustus' election to the office of *pontifex maximus* ushered in a new practice of the most powerful man in Rome also being its high priest, but other than this he and subsequent emperors never made significant changes to the duties of the holder.

⁴⁶ Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.420.

⁴⁷ Cf. Herbert-Brown, 72-3 and 80.

⁴⁸ The word *augur* was also closely tied to the title of "Augustus" which also carried a religious connotation.

⁴⁹ Herbert-Brown, 68.

One custom that Augustus did not observe as *pontifex maximus* was to reside in the *domus publica*, a residence located near the *aedes Vestae* (temple of Vesta) and the *atrium Vestae* (the Vestals' residence adjacent) in the *Forum Romanum* (Rome's traditional religious center) reserved specifically for the holder of this position.⁵⁰ Indeed, upon his formal confirmation as *pontifex maximus* Augustus left the room before the senate could officially issue him this *domus publica*. He may have deliberately avoided the issue, preferring to remain in his Palatine home where he had lived for nearly two decades, and next to the temple he had built for one of his preferred deities.⁵¹ However, Augustus apparently recognized that in order to legitimize this decision he would need to make accommodations. As Cassius Dio reports, this included declaring at least part of his own house public domain, just as the *domus publica* was in the Forum.⁵² This reclassification of property appears to have been the only legal requirement involved. Weinstock believes that he did this “so that he did not commit an offence against the requirements of his new office.”⁵³ And, other than the fact that Augustus handed the traditional

⁵⁰ Samuel Ball Platner (completed and revised by Thomas Ashby), *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), s.v. “Regia”. The traditional belief was that the *pontifex maximus* lived in the *Regia*, located north-west of the temple of Vesta in the forum; however, it is now believed that this building served as a headquarters and that the high priest lived in the *domus publica*, next to the Atrium Vesta. Confirmed by Suetonius, *Caesar*, 46.1.

⁵¹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus*, 72.1, relates that Augustus first lived in the house of the orator C. Licinius Calvus which was near the Forum, and then in the house of Hortensius on the Palatine.

⁵² Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 54.27.2-3: [2] ἐπειδὴ τε τοῦ Λεπίδου μεταλλάξαντος ἀρχιέρεως ἀπεδείχθη καὶ διὰ τοῦθ' ἡ βουλὴ ψηφίσασθαι ... αὐτῷ 2 ἠθέλησεν, οὔτε τι αὐτῶν προσήσασθαι ἔφη, καὶ ἐγκειμένων οἱ ἐξανέστη τε [3] καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ συνεδρίου. καὶ οὔτε ἐκεῖνα ἔτ' ἐκυρώθη οὔτ' οἰκίαν τινὰ δημοσίαν ἔλαβεν, ἀλλὰ μέρος τι τῆς ἑαυτοῦ, ὅτι τὸν ἀρχιέρεων ἐν κοινῷ πάντως οἰκεῖν ἐχρῆν, ἐδημοσίωσεν. τὴν μὲντοι τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν ἱερῶν ταῖς ἀειπαρθένους ἔδωκεν, ἐπειδὴ ὁμότιχος ταῖς οἰκήσασιν αὐτῶν ἦν. “On the death of Lepidus he was appointed high priest and the senate accordingly wished to vote him other honours (?); but he declared that he would not accept any of them, and when the senators urged him, he rose and left the meeting. That measure, therefore, now failed of passage [these proposals, therefore, were not ratified], and he also received no official residence; but, inasmuch as it was absolutely necessary that the high priest should live in a public residence, he made a part of his own house public property. The house of the *rex sacrificulus*, however, he gave to the Vestal Virgins, because it was separated merely by a wall from their apartments.” Earnest Cary, trans. What the priestesses did with the building is unknown. Hoffman-Lewis, 74, points out that the *rex sacrorum* was nominated from the patricians by the *pontifices* and chosen by the *pontifex maximus*. She continues, 76-7, by mentioning a debate about if Augustus could have held this office but concludes that he did not. She argues that he probably avoided it due to its associations with kingship, and because once he held the high priesthood the “obsolete” office would not have been necessary.

⁵³ Weinstock, 278. He also points out that when Augustus's home was destroyed by fire in 3 CE, it was rebuilt and the whole area was made public property. Cf. Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 55.12.5.

home of the *pontifex maximus* over to the Vestals, the sources fail to mention the priestesses as the reason for his making part of his home public property.

Yet, many scholars connect Augustus' decision to stay in his home with the cult of Vesta since soon after becoming *pontifex maximus* he made a dedication to this goddess on the Palatine. By not living in the Forum near the *aedes Vestae* they argue for a kind of physical or spatial discontinuity between the *pontifex* and the cult which had never existed before, and must now be amended. Accordingly, instead of moving to the Forum, Augustus brought elements of Roman cult practices to him.⁵⁴ They also see the act of declaring part of his private home as public property to be a prerequisite for honoring Vesta on the Palatine. Unfortunately, due to the fragmentary survival of the primary sources it is not possible to definitively determine what it was that Augustus dedicated on this occasion (although scholars have tried). As a consequence, considerable scholarly debate exists over the worship of Vesta on the Palatine, and it is a major topic in the discussion of the relationship between Augustus and this goddess.

Augustus and Vesta: the Palatine debate

Determining the manner in which Vesta was honored on the Palatine has considerable impact on our understanding of the status and position of the cult of Vesta the second half of Augustus' reign, and also the relationship between this goddess and the *pontifex maximus*. However, before examining the relevant sources, it is prudent to put the events of 12 BCE and the years immediately before into a broader historical context. One very important incident happened less than two years before Augustus became *pontifex maximus* that potentially bears great significance for this discussion. A fire in 14 BCE spread to the temple of Vesta forcing the

⁵⁴ As Guarducci put it, "Se Augusto non vuole scender nel Foro, la dea salirà sul Palatino," Margherita Guarducci, "Vesta sul Palatino," *Röm. Mitt.* 71 (1964): 158-169, 167-8.

Vestals to take away the sacred objects before they were destroyed.⁵⁵ It is unknown whether a plan was in place in case of such a disaster. The most likely step was that the priestesses would go to the *pontifex maximus*, but given that Lepidus was in exile at the time that was not possible. Moreover, his residence, the *domus publica*, would not have been an option since it was located near the *aedes Vestae* and likewise would have been exposed to the same threat of fire. Accordingly, the Vestal Virgins went to the *flamen dialis* who, like Augustus, resided on the Palatine.⁵⁶ It is reasonably safe to assume, then, that the priestesses fled to, and possibly remained for some time, on the Palatine. Moreover, it is possible that this event when combined with Lepidus's death less than two years later that opened up the position of *pontifex maximus*, provided Augustus with the opportunity to make some changes to the manner and places of worship of Vesta in Rome.

The primary evidence clearly states that some kind of dedication was made to Vesta on the Palatine on 28 April, 12 BCE. The point of departure for the debate over what this dedication involves the examination of several calendars (*fasti*) known to us from inscriptions

⁵⁵ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 54.24.2-3: ἡ τε στοᾶ ἡ Παύλειος ἐκαύθη, καὶ τὸ πῦρ ἀπ' αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸ Ἑστιαῖον ἀφίκετο, ὥστε καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ ἐξ τε τοῦ Παλάτιου ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἀειπαρθένων ἢ γὰρ πρεσβεύουσα αὐτῶν ἐτετύφλωτό ἀνακομισθῆναι καὶ ἐς τὴν τοῦ ἱερέως τοῦ Διὸς οἰκίαν τεθῆναι. ἡ μὲν οὖν στοᾶ μετὰ τοῦτο ὀνόματι μὲν ὑπ' Αἰμιλίου, ἐς ὃν τὸ τοῦ ποιήσαντός ποτε αὐτὴν γένος ἐληλύθει, τῷ δὲ ἔργῳ ὑπὸ τε τοῦ Αὐγούστου καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν τοῦ Παύλου φίλων ἀνωκοδομήθη. “The Basilica of Paulus was burned [14 BCE] and the flames spread from it to the temple of Vesta, so that the sacred objects there were carried up to the Palatine by the Vestal Virgins, — except the eldest, who had become blind, — and were placed in the house of the priest of Jupiter. The basilica was afterwards rebuilt, nominally by Aemilius, who was the descendant of the family of the man who had formerly erected it, but really by Augustus and the friends of Paulus.” Earnest Cary, trans.

⁵⁶ There is some debate as to if this office was actually filled at this time, although this passage in Dio would indicate that it was. See also: Dio, *Roman History*, 54.36 and Tacitus, *Annales*, 3.58. The *flamen Dialis* was appointed by the *pontifex maximus*, and it is uncertain if and how the duties of this office were performed during the exile of Lepidus. One possibility is that no one was, but I doubt this. A second possibility is that one of the other *pontifices*, possibly a senior member or even Augustus, was performing the duties of the high priest in his absence. However, a third possibility is that Lepidus was performing his duties even during his period of exile. Weigel contends that Augustus periodically summoned Lepidus to Rome and allowed him to vote in the Senate as late as 18 BCE. As such, “it is also possible that Lepidus was permitted to attend such events as temple dedications, patrician weddings, public games, and inaugurations into consular office, where the chief priest would normally be involved, or even to participate in the cooptation of new pontiffs.” Weigel, 97-8. Cf. Cassius Dio, 54.15.5-6. In addition, if Lepidus was frequently in Rome it is possible that he may have stayed during these visits in the *domus publica*.

and literature. The first is the *Fasti Caeretani*, which has a brief entry for 28 April. Unfortunately, the exact meaning is unclear:

LOEDI FLOR(AE). FER(IAE) Q(UOD) E(O) D(IE) SIG(NUM) VEST(AE) IN DOMO
P(ALATINA) DEDIC(ATUM).⁵⁷

No scholarly debate currently exists over the reconstruction of this record.⁵⁸ Thus, the two most important questions here are what kind of *signum* was dedicated to Vesta, and the significance behind the phrase *in domo p(alatina)*. These problems reoccur in other sources and will be discussed in greater length below.

Another calendar, the *Fasti Praenestini*, also documents a dedication on this date. Unfortunately the original stone is damaged in exactly the places where researchers would most like to know the exact wording.

LVDI FLORAE. FERIAE EX S(ENATVS) C(ONSVLTO) QUOD EO DI[E
AEDICVL]A ET [ARA] / VESTAE IN DOMV IMP(ERATORIS) CAESARIS
AVGU[STI PO]NTIF(ICIS) MA[X(IMI)] / DEDICATAST QVIRINIO ET VALGIO
CO(N)S(VLIBVS).⁵⁹

This entry has caused scholars much grief, and considerable debate has raged over how it should be reconstructed. Of most significant concern are the lacunae substituted with the words *aedicula* and *ara*, and there is by no means a scholarly consensus on this matter. The first omission is the most problematic. Originally, as in the example above, Mommsen filled in the space with *aedicula*.⁶⁰ This reconstruction at first had a significant following and is most likely the impetus for the belief that a temple of Vesta existed on the Palatine.⁶¹ Degraasi next proposed that the final letter in this space (which is barely legible on the stone) should be identified as an “M” rather than as an “A”, and that the amount of space indicates a shorter word;

⁵⁷ *Fasti Caeretani: InscrIt XIII*² (1963) 66 = *CIL I*² 1 (1893²) p. 213.

⁵⁸ I will make some suggestions below: “My Thesis on the Palatine Debate,” 34.

⁵⁹ *Fasti Praenestini: InscrIt XIII*² 132-3 = *CIL I*² (1893) 236.

⁶⁰ Mommsen, *ibid*: [aedicule]a et [ara].

⁶¹ *Op. cit.* Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 2002), 245-6.

thus he suggested instead *signum*.⁶² At present, more scholars favor this reconstruction, which has the added advantage of corresponding to information supplied by the *Fasti Caeretani*. Regarding the second lacuna, it is now generally believed that it should be reconstructed with *ara* as shown above.⁶³ However, in a second theory Guarducci suggests instead *aedis*, which she takes to mean a temple.⁶⁴

It is certain that the *Fasti Caeretani* mentions a *signum*, and it is likely that this same word is also the correct reconstruction for the first lacuna in the calendar from Praeneste. This begs the question, what kind of *signum* was put on the Palatine? The word is vague at best. It most often refers to a statue, and thus the theory exists that a statue of the goddess Vesta was dedicated on the Palatine. Yet scholars have also argued that it denotes the fire in Vesta's temple, or the Palladium (a statue of Athena). All of these ideas are problematic. Statues of Vesta were uncommon, especially before the first century CE, and it is relatively certain that no cult statue of the goddess was ever placed within the *aedes Vestae* in the Forum.⁶⁵ Still, many scholars support the idea of the *signum* on the Palatine being a statue,⁶⁶ a theory that is more likely as long as it was not placed inside a temple for Vesta. Next, the hearth-fire in the temple of Vesta is usually referred to just in that way—it is an *ignis* (and increasingly called the “Trojan

⁶² Attilio Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae*, (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1963), 133: [*signu*]m et [*ara*].

⁶³ Mommsen, *ibid*; Degrassi, *ibid*; H. G. Kolbe, “Noch einmal Vesta auf dem Palatin” in *MDAI(R)* 73-74 (1966-1967): 94, who in examining the *Fasti Praenestini* also determined that *ara* fit better than *aedis*.

⁶⁴ Guarducci, “Vesta sul Palatino,” 158 and “Enea e Vesta,” *MDAI(R)* 78 (1971), 89: [*signu*]m et [*aedis*].

⁶⁵ Opt. cit. McDaniel, 83. Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.291-8. Cicero twice mentions a *simulacrum Vestae* (*De Oratore*, 3.3.10; *De Natura Deorum*, 3.80), but neither of these make clear where the statue was located. However, in both cases he describes the murder of a *pontifex maximus* (Caesar and Quintus Scaevola respectively), the one man who would have access to the Temple of Vesta—these must either be symbolic references or a less common use of the word *simulacrum* (such as “semblance”, perhaps meaning a fire) should be understood. Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.45, also mentions a *Vestae simulacra*, but this passage refers to the birth of Romulus and Remus at Alba Longa (not Rome). The Latin text reads: *Silvia fit mater. Vestae simulacra feruntur / virgineas oculis opposuisse manus; / ara deae certe tremuit pariente ministra, / et subiit cineres territa flamma suos*. Although a statue could be meant in this passage, I also find it plausible, especially given the reference to an altar and flames, that the *simulacrum* (plural) could indicate the altar flame(s) of Vesta.

⁶⁶ Augusto Frascchetti, “Augusto e Vesta sul Palatino,” *ARG* 1.2 (1999): 174-183, 179; Herbert-Brown, 79.

Fire” starting in the late Republic) located in a *focus*. Although this theory works on the level that Vesta was—we believe—represented by the flame within her own temple rather than being an anthropomorphized goddess who was present in the form of a cult statue, there is no precedent for referring to the fire as her *signum*. The Palladium, in contrast, is often referred to as a *signum* since it was, after all, a statue. However, it is usually referred to as the *signum imperii* (“pledge of empire”). Technically it should otherwise be called the “*signum Palladis*”, but never to my knowledge is it referred to as a “*signum Vestae*”.

Although the genre and purpose of Ovid’s *Fasti* differs from these calendars, it also provides an entry for 28 April. The poem is vague on particulars, but clearly indicates Vesta’s arrival on the Palatine.

Aufer Vesta diem! cognati Vesta recepta est
 limine: sic iusti constituere patres.
 Phoebus habet partem, Vestae pars altera cessit;
 quod superest illis, tertius ipse tenet,
 state Palatinae laurus, praetextaque quercu
 stet domus: aeternos tres habet una deos.⁶⁷

Although there is much of interest in this passage, it fails to mention any specific object or building being dedicated and in fact does not even mention a dedication. As such, what can immediately be taken from these lines to support the Palatine Vesta mystery is minimal; in some ambiguous manner Vesta or an aspect of her cult came to the Palatine on this day.

Based principally upon these sources, scholars fall into one of two camps when it comes to the issue of Vesta and the Palatine: either they believe a temple of Vesta was built by Augustus, or that a temple never existed and the various *fasti* refer to some other kind of dedication. The former school of thought argues that one of the two lacunae in the *Fasti*

⁶⁷ Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.949-4.954: “Grab the day, Vesta. Vesta was received on her kin’s doorstep; so the just Fathers decreed. Phoebus owns a part, another went to Vesta, *He* as a third possesses what is left. Endure, Palatine laurels. May the oak-wreathed house endure. One house holds three eternal gods.” Boyle and Woodward, trans.

Praenestini should be reconstructed with a word that would indicate a temple (*aedicula* or *aedis*). They also contend that Ovid's *Fasti* (4.949-954) indicates as much since Vesta was sharing the Palatine with Apollo and his temple, and Augustus with his house, thus Vesta must have had a comparable structure. The opposition, on the other hand, points out that nothing in the *Fasti Caeretani* or in Ovid points to the construction of a temple. They also supply different reconstructions for the *Fasti Praenestini* that allow for aspects of Vesta and her cult on the Palatine, but not for a temple.

Scholars on both sides of the debate look to other material remains and literary passages to support their respective theories. The two sources most commonly cited by both are the Sorrento Base and the Palermo Relief. The Sorrento Base (also called the Base of Augustus) has been damaged over time and it is therefore very difficult to identify the activities represented by the reliefs. It seems to depict a different religious scene taking place in Rome on each of its four sides. One of the longer faces is attributed to Vesta, although there is debate whether the figure is supposed to represent the goddess, is Vesta, or is a statue of her. This "side A" shows Vesta seated on a throne: she is flanked by two female figures, accompanied by five priestesses (presumably there would have been a sixth which is missing due to the damage of the base), and also by a figure usually identified as Augustus who is present in his role as *pontifex maximus*.⁶⁸ There are also two animals on pedestals, a ram and a bull, and in the background an Ionic portico and round temple.⁶⁹ Some scholars also argue for the appearance of the Palladium on the base

⁶⁸ The two "female figures" have been identified as goddesses by G. Rizzo, "La base di Augusto," *BullCom* 60 (1932): 7-109, 46-8; (cf. Guarducci, "Enea," 104-8), as the Roman counterparts of Demeter and Kore, Ceres and Libera. Guizzi reaches this conclusion by considering other female deities associated with Vesta (or Hestia) in myth and religious practice. However, most scholars are cautious about these figures and do not propose specific identifications.

⁶⁹ Rizzo, *ibid.*, sees these as representing the bronze cattle of Myron that Augustus acquired to decorate the temple of Apollo. Guarducci, "Enea," 108, sees the ram and bull as representing the signs of the zodiac during which time the work on the temple was carried out. Fishwick, "A Temple of Vesta on the Palatine?" In *Mélanges T. Kotula*.

(which may be an altar) inside the temple. Rizzo identifies the other sides as well: side B shows the Temple of Apollo Palatinus with the triad of Apollo, Leto and Diana; side C depicts Mars, the genius of Augustus, and the façade of his home; and side D portrays the temple of Magna Mater.⁷⁰ From these identifications he concludes that since sides B, C, and D take place on the Palatine, side A must represent the temple and statue of Vesta built there.⁷¹ Guarducci concurred, stressing marked differences between these sources and the coins, reliefs and Renaissance drawings linked with the temple in the Forum. The disparities, she suggested, prove the existence of two temples to Vesta in Rome.⁷² Thus, those who believe in the existence of a Palatine temple of Vesta use the Sorrento Base as part of their “proof”.

However, others refute this interpretation. They are led by Degrassi who sees instead on this relief the temple of Vesta in the Forum, and believes that the images on the base included monuments from both there and the Palatine.⁷³ This view also has a significant following.⁷⁴ A new theory by Moede borrows from both sides of the argument. She refutes the idea that a temple to Vesta was constructed on the Palatine, but does believe that all sides of the Sorrento Base belong to this hill. However, she contends that the side with Vesta represents an interior space, specifically a portico of the house of Augustus, where Augustus instituted a new cult with

(Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1992): 51-57, 51 and in particular 56-7, in which he says it is not necessary “to suppose that the animal figures corresponded to actual, physical monuments.”

⁷⁰ See Rizzo, “La base,” 1-99, provides a chapter on each of the four sides.

⁷¹ Rizzo, “La base,” 40 and 48-50.

⁷² Guarducci, “Vesta,” 163-5, and “Enea,” 108.

⁷³ Attilio Degrassi, “Esistette sul palatino un tempio di Vesta?” *RM* 62 (1955): 144-54, 154; cf. N. Degrassi, “La dimora di Augusto sul Palatino e la base di Sorrento,” *RPAA* 39 (1966-7): 77-116, 103-8.

⁷⁴ See Giovanna Cappelli, *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae*, Eva Margareta Steinby, ed. (Roma: Quasar, 1999) for the state of the question. Also T. Hölscher, “Historische Reliefs,” in *Kaiser Augustus und die verlorene Republik*, M. Hoffer, ed. (Mainz: von Zabern, 1988): 351-400, 375; Fraschetti, “Augusto,” 177-9; Nina Mekacher, *Die vestalischen Jungfrauen in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2006), 159; Sandro Stucchi, *I monumenti minori della parte meridionale del Foro Romano*, (Rome: Ateneo, 1959), 90-1, does not think this is a Palatine temple of Vesta and instead links the Ionic portico with the Temple of Divus Iulius, whose inauguration may have been celebrated with the sacrifice on side A. Fishwick, “A Temple,” 51 and 56-7 “there is nothing in the evidence that would seem to confirm the existence of a temple of Vesta, however small, in the Palatine”.

the receipt of a statue from the Vestal Virgins while in view and with the approval of the goddess herself.⁷⁵

The second piece of material evidence that often appears in the Palatine debate is a relief from the National Museum at Palermo that once belonged to Prince Raffadeli, of the province of Girgenti (Sicily). This “Palermo Relief” is believed to have come off an altar from the first century CE. One theory argues that the relief was likely designed and commissioned under Augustus, but the final product dates to the reign of Tiberius.⁷⁶ It shows a seated female figure holding a scepter, four women standing, a priest, and three altars (one with an ox, the second a ram, and a third bearing fruit), with a temple in the background. The dress of the female figures, especially the wearing of the *suffibulum* over their heads, strongly suggests that the relief shows Vesta and her priestesses. They are accompanied by a priest, presumably Augustus himself, but a positive identification cannot be made due to damage to the upper half of the figure.⁷⁷ Thus the Palermo Relief is similar in content to the panel of Vesta on the Sorrento Base. McDaniel believes that the entire work is a shorthand version of the images on the Sorrento Base except for the fact that there are only four Vestals and no other attendant figures.⁷⁸ However, this relief is also unique in that one of the women identified as a Vestal is almost touching Augustus. Although some of the image is missing, it has been interpreted as showing some sort of hand-off from the priestess to Augustus. This has resulted in speculation that this scene represents the transferal of the Palladium (which may have been featured within a temple on the Sorrento Base

⁷⁵ Katja Moede, “The dedication of cult statues at the altar. A Roman pictorial formula for the introduction of new cults,” in *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Joannis Mylonopoulos, ed., (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010): 273-287, especially 280-287. Her identification of the other sides generally agrees with that of Rizzo, except that she substitutes Romulus for Mars.

⁷⁶ See: Fishwick, “A Temple of Vesta.”; Inez Scott Ryberg, *Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art*, *Memoires of the American Academy in Rome* 22, (Rome: American Academy, 1955), 51-53.

⁷⁷ Rizzo, “La base,” 42-43. It is possible that Augustus was represented similarly on a lost fragment of the Sorrento Base. G. Cappelli, *LTUR*, 128.

⁷⁸ McDaniel, 61.

as well) from the care of the Vestals to the new temple of the goddess on the Palatine, and that Augustus may have built Vesta a temple there especially for this purpose.⁷⁹ Once again, however, there is no consensus on the matter, especially regarding the Palladium.⁸⁰

One additional piece of evidence sometimes mentioned in the debate is an undated coin commissioned by Tiberius in honor of Augustus. The reverse of the *dupondius* depicts a round temple with two animals, and has accordingly been compared to the Sorrento Base and Palermo Relief.⁸¹ Rizzo and other proponents of the existence of a temple of Vesta on the Palatine see the coin as an additional source confirming its existence and argue that the temple was built to imitate the traditional one in the Forum (but perhaps on a smaller scale). Unsurprisingly, opponents of this theory argue that the image is that of the *aedes Vestae* in the Forum.⁸² Thus, the coin mainly serves to bolster each side's theory of how the Sorrento Base and Palermo Relief should be read.

The arguments on both sides have led to additional debate over what other than a temple was—or could have been—dedicated to Vesta on the Palatine. From a practical standpoint, those who oppose the argument that Augustus built a temple to Vesta often note the lack of time between the day when Augustus became *pontifex maximus* (6 March) and the date of the

⁷⁹ McDaniel, 63, 87 and 89: “the message on the Palermo Relief is straightforward. The Vestals, gathered on the Palatine, willingly hand the Palladium over to Augustus as *pontifex maximus* while Vesta looks on in approbation.” According to Rosanna Cappelli, “Augusto e il culto di Vesta sul Palatino,” *Bollettino di Archeologia*, Ministero per I Beni Culturali e Ambientali, 2 (1990): 29-33, the Palermo Relief shows Augustus himself holding the Palladium; Ryberg, 51-53, proposes to see in the scene the delivery of the statue of Vesta by the Vestals and Augustus.

⁸⁰ Guarducci, “Vesta,” 161 and 169, uses an epitaph from Privernum, which lists among the titles of a benefactor, *praepositus palladii Palatini* as proof that Augustus stored a copy of the Forum temple's Palladium in this Shrine on the Palatine. As support she cites the discovery of an Archaic head of Athena on the Palatine and depictions of the Palladium inside a shrine of Vesta, but retracts this theory (“Enea,” 109-10) in agreement with, 103-4, who considers it inappropriate that the Palladium, as a symbol of Rome's power, should have been duplicated, an opinion followed by Cappelli, “Augusto”, Fraschetti, “Augusto,” 181-2, and Guarducci, “Enea,” 109.

⁸¹ Mattingly, *BMC*, Vol 1, no. 143 (p. 140): undated *dupondius* in the “Divus Augustus Pater” series depicts a radiate head of Augustus “Pater” on the obverse, and a round temple (with a domed roof with an opening at the top showing six columns, empty niche in the center, and a podium with three steps), with stone bases before it with a lamb and a calf on the reverse.

⁸² This identification was first made by H. Dressel, “Numismatische Analekten (I),” *Zeitschr. Für Numis.* 22 (1900), 20-31.

dedication (28 April). This certainly would not have been a long enough period to build a structure of any considerable size. Degrassi especially supports this theory, arguing that it would have made more sense that a statue (*signum*) was erected with an altar given the limited amount of time available.⁸³ However, Rizzo and Guarducci have countered his claim by arguing that the *fasti* and visual imagery could be symbolic, commemorating the vow of the building rather than the completion.⁸⁴

This is the state of the question at present and the main sources used in the debate. The dedication made to Vesta on the Palatine by Augustus either included a temple or took some other form, and scholars are divided on this issue despite using the same evidence to reach their differing conclusions.

My Thesis on the Palatine Debate

After reviewing the primary evidence and the arguments on both sides, I do not believe that a temple was ever dedicated to Vesta on the Palatine. First of all, no concrete archaeological evidence exists. Although various remains of foundations and monument bases have been interpreted to indicate the existence of one, all evidence of this kind is subjective. Likewise there is no literary evidence to confirm the presence of the temple. Several passages in Ovid are provocative, but none provide a statement that can be used to prove that a temple of Vesta on the Palatine existed. Thus I propose that the documented dedication made to Vesta on the Palatine consisted of an altar and some sort of *signum*, but that all other evidence points to the continued use and importance of the *aedes Vestae* in the *forum Romanum*. These ideas are not novel;

⁸³ A. Degrassi, in *I.It.* XIII, 2, 66 and 133, and “Esistette”, 144; N. Degrassi, “La dimora”, 77.

⁸⁴ Naja Regina Armstrong, “Round Temples in Roman Architecture of the Republic through the late Imperial Period,” D.Phil. in Classical Archaeology, (University of Oxford, 2001), “Round” 121, although she concludes that the Palatine shrine was never built. Cf. Guarducci, “Vesta”, 158, and “Enea”, 89.

indeed they correspond with those of many scholars already mentioned. However, I believe that I can provide a broader survey of the evidence and provide additional arguments in support of this theory than I have heretofore seen.

Returning to the dedication made on 28 April, 12 BCE, more can be done with both the *Fasti Caeretani* and the *Fasti Praenestini* to help solve this problem. Regarding the latter calendar, it is worth reconsidering the reconstruction of the first of the two lacunae. Admittedly, *signum* appears to fit well given the context, and is more likely than the usually cited alternative of *aedicula*. However, this identification is neither certain nor without its own difficulties given the multitude of possibilities proposed for what the *signum* could represent and the uncertainty over how many characters the missing word should be. There is at least one other possible reconstruction that has been proposed, but not widely circulated, *fanum*: *...feriae ex s(enatus) c(onsulto) quod eo di[e fanu]m et [ara] / Vestae in domu Imp(eratoris) Caesaris Augu[sti po]ntif(icis) max(imi) / dedicatast*.⁸⁵ I find this particular reconstruction plausible, logical and tempting. In its most general usage, *fanum* means “a place dedicated to some deity by forms of consecration”.⁸⁶ Although it can also refer to a “sanctuary” or “temple”, no specific structure appears necessary for the use of this word.⁸⁷ Moreover, we do not know the process by which Augustus made some of his land on the Palatine public property. If, however, some of his space was legally turned over to Vesta it would fall under the classification of *fanum*—with or without

⁸⁵ *Fasti Praenestini/InscrIt-13-02*, 00017 = EE-09, 00740 = Gordon 00036 = AE 1898, 00014 = AE 1922, 00096 = AE 1953, +00236 = AE 1993, +00144 = AE 2002, +00181 = AE 2007, 00312. I believe that this identification may have been made by René Cagnat; the above reconstruction is that used by the Epigraphik-Datenbank.

⁸⁶ Lewis & Short, s.v. “fanum”.

⁸⁷ For example, Livy 10.37.15: *sed fanum tantum, id est locus templo effatus, fuerat*. In this case only the *fanum*, or place set apart for the temple, had been consecrated; Tacitus, *Annales*, 15, 41, discussing buildings destroyed in the great fire of 64 CE, specifically here that of Hercules: *magna ara fanumque quae praesenti Herculi Arcas Evander sacrauerat*. Cf. M. Morani, “Sull’espressione linguistica dell’idea di santuario,” in M. Sordi (ed.), *Santuari e politica nel mondo antico*, (Milan 1983): 3-32, esp. 25-30. Morani concludes that *fanum* is best translated as “seat of a cult” and that it is a generic word, especially when compared to *aedes* and *templum*. He also notes that its usage declined after the time of Cicero. Morani further allows for the possibility that this term was more often used for oriental/eastern divinities, such as the example of Hercules. However, Hercules and Vesta shared another thing in common, their temples in Rome were round (see discussion below).

a temple. Other words could also be used if anything was built or placed there, such as a shrine or statue. Presumably, the transfer of land to public property, or even more so religious property, would have required an act of the Senate.⁸⁸ Conveniently we see in the *Fasti Praenestini* the phrase *ex s(enatus) c(onsulto)*. This calendar also suggests that 28 April gained a new religious significance. Although already connected to the *Floralia*, the latter was a movable feast and had not been included on calendars before.⁸⁹ Now these calendars marked the celebration of Flora and the events on the Palatine that occurred in 12 BCE. Thus I find *fanum* an interesting alternative.

Both of the *fasti* also document that the dedication was made *in domo*, which I would argue could be interpreted in more than one way. This phrase is generally taken to mean “on the property of”, thus a dedication to Vesta was made on the property of Augustus. However, this is not the only conceivable translation. It is possible that the authors of these *fasti* meant “in the house of”. By 12 BCE the concept of the *domus Augusta* had been used in literature to indicate the dwelling rather than the members of the imperial family.⁹⁰ Thus the argument can be made that the dedication of 28 April literally occurred in (or within) the house of Augustus. As such, the reconstruction of *ara* in the *Fasti Praenestini* fits into this context well since altars were erected in many places—not just temples. Indeed, they were also placed in the courts of houses for the worship of the family gods (*penates*).⁹¹ When this fact is compared to several passages in Ovid and the interpretation that Vesta has essentially been made one of the Penates of Augustus

⁸⁸ William Smith, *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (1875), s.v. “Agrariae Leges”. The implication is that the property would have needed to be turned over first to the state and from there it could become *divini juris*; specifically, it could be made *sacer* through a *lex* or *senatus consultum*.

⁸⁹ Elaine Fantham, ed., *Fasti. Book IV*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 273.

⁹⁰ D. Wardle, trans. and comm., *Valerius Maximus. Memorable Deed and Saying, Book I*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 481, makes this point about the work of Valerius Maximus whom he identifies as the first to do so. Fantham, 276, proposes for *Fasti* 953-4 that “the physical and the dynastic house are fused in this parting loyal vow.”

⁹¹ Lewis & Short, s.v. “ara”.

(discussed at greater length below),⁹² it would only make sense that he would honor her with an altar in his home. I also propose that in the *Fasti Caeretini* there is more than one way to take the last word of the phrase *in domo P(alatina)*. This formula is not attested in inscriptions (although there are examples of *domus Palatinarum*), and is rare in literature.⁹³ Moreover, the *Fasti Praenestini* uses the phrase *in domu imp(eratoris)*. In this case the physical location of the Palatine is implied, but not specifically stated. However it is at least possible that the “P” in the *Fasti Caeretani* could also be read as either “Pontifex”, “Pont. Max.”, or “Princeps”, but since these alternatives would not fundamentally change our reading of this calendar entry they do not bear further examination.

Regarding the visual imagery involved in the debate, especially the Sorrento Base and the Palermo Relief, I believe that these reliefs—and even the coin issued by Tiberius—all depict the *aedes Vestae* of the Forum and not a second temple to Vesta on the Palatine. All aspects of each source can be plausibly associated with the former.⁹⁴ Round temples are somewhat uncommon, and of the known examples the traditional *aedes Vestae* of the Forum appears most often. The depiction of Vestal priestesses would also suggest the temple in the Forum since this is the building they were most associated with.⁹⁵ Although I am not prepared to endorse Moede’s theory that the scene with Vesta on the Sorrento Base depicts the interior of the house of Augustus, it has the dual advantage of arguing for a Palatine location for the primary scene, while allowing for the temple in the background to still represent the *aedes Vestae* in the

⁹² Miller, 368; Herbert-Brown, 67, who references G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, (Munich: Beck, 1912), 76; J. H. W. G. Liebschuetz, *Continuity and change in Roman religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 70. See below note 108.

⁹³ *CIL*, 6, 8567 and 8660; Suetonius, *Domitian*, 15; *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, “Commodus Antoninus”, 12.7.

⁹⁴ Concerning the Palermo relief, Fraschetti, 182: “mi chiedo da parte mia se non debba trattarsi in modo molto piu semplice e molto piu generico della raffigurazione del culto reso a Vesta nel suo tempio del Foro da parte dello stesso Augusto o da parte di uno dei suoi successori.”

⁹⁵ In the case of the Tiberian coin the six pillars appear to stand in place of the six Vestal priestesses.

Forum.⁹⁶ The altar also makes sense in that the Vestals are known to have performed several sacrifices throughout the year. Moreover, multiple altars have been found near the temple: Van Deman records one in the courtyard next to the *aedes Vestae*, and there was another directly to the northwest of Vesta's temple outside of the *regia*.⁹⁷ Indeed, animal sacrifices are known to have taken place at the latter, including the slaughter of the same animals featured on these visual images.⁹⁸ Thus if the east end of the forum is taken as a religious center comprising these two buildings, all elements of the Sorrento Base, Palermo Relief and the coin issued by Tiberius can be explained.

The appearance of Vesta on some imagery might also be taken as symbolic; Vesta is seated before her temple or is otherwise shown to indicate her presence. However, there still remains the possibility that the figure does refer to a statue of the goddess. Ovid was likely correct that there was no statue of Vesta within her temple; there was no need due to the presence of the flame.⁹⁹ Yet evidence does suggest that a statue of the goddess was present near to, and perhaps even along the exterior of, the *aedes Vestae*. This fact that has been largely overlooked due to Ovid's claim that *effigiem nullam Vesta nec ignis habet*, but literary and archeological evidence exists (and has for some time) to support the idea. There are several accounts of the murder of the *pontifex maximus* Q. Mucius Scaevola in 82 BCE. Livy's version states that the

⁹⁶ Cf. Moede, 282-3.

⁹⁷ Esther Van Deman, *The Atrium Vestae*, (Washington, DC: The Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1909), 9.

⁹⁸ Platner-Ashby s.v. "regia". Cf. Varro, 6.12; Festus, 329; Macrobius, I.15.19, 16.30. A sheep was offered to Janus on 9 January by the *rex sacrorum* (*CIL* I², p. 306), and the blood of the October horse was sprinkled on its hearth and the head fastened on its wall (Festus, 178; Plutarch, *Questiones Romanae*, 97). That is not to completely discount the theory of Guarducci, "Enea," 108, that the animals correspond to signs of the Zodiac, but I believe something more tangible is a more likely answer. In addition the known sacrifices on the altar of the *regia*, the bull and sheep are two of the three animals sacrificed of the *suovetaurilia* which was performed during the *lustratio* (purification) of a city, people, or piece of land. Cf. Platner-Ashby, s.v. "sacrificium" and "lustratio". Moede, 282-3, believes they are the *dona ex maniis* mentioned in the *Res Gestae* (21) that Augustus had placed in the Capitol, Temple of Divine Julius, Temple of Apollo, Temple of Vesta, and Temple of Mars Ultor.

⁹⁹ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.295-8: *esse diu stultus Vestae simulacra putavi, mox didici curvo nulla subesse tholo: ignis inextinctus templo celatur in illo, effigiem nullam Vesta nec ignis habet.*

crime occurred *in vestibulo aedis Vestae*, or just outside of the temple.¹⁰⁰ In addition, Van Deman in her study of the *atrium Vestae* (the residence of the Vestal Virgins next to the temple of Vesta in the Forum) identified at least one niche that could have held a statue. She suggested that there was a shrine on the north-west corner of the podium of the *aedes Vestae* near the main entrance of the building that was large enough for a statue, although she dates the latter to the second imperial period (post Neronian).¹⁰¹

The only other known monument to connect Augustus with Vesta and her priestesses is the Ara Pacis.¹⁰² As the monument stands today, the goddess does not appear at all; however Pollini hypothesizes that the *prothesis* of the inner altar originally included a frieze of the Twelve Gods, and if so Vesta should have been featured here.¹⁰³ The Vestal Virgins are believed to be depicted on a small frieze on the North inner wing of the altar. Although it is likely that the figures are the Vestals (the heads of all the bodies have been damaged), they by no means play a prominent role when compared to Rome's other priests located more prominently on the outer altar. Indeed, it could almost be taken as a slight to the priestesses when every other major priesthood (*pontifices*, *augures*, etcetera), appears prominently on the North Frieze. The sequence of events here may provide a clue. The *Ara Pacis* was commissioned by the Senate in

¹⁰⁰ Livy, *Fragment*, LXXXVI: *ex cuius numero Q. Mucius Scaevola pontifex maximus fugiens in vestibulo aedis Vestae occisus est*.

¹⁰¹ Van Deman, 19 and 23. Cf. L. Frothingham Jr. and Allan Marguqnd, "Archaeological News," *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 11 (1896): 205-316, reprinting a submission by M. Abbeé Thédenat to the *SAF* (June 26, 1895): 289-90, who a few years earlier also argued for a small state of the goddess in the vestibule of the *aedes Vestae*.

¹⁰² The few other images we have of Vesta or the Vestals have not been overlooked, but they do not add to the present conversation. The Belvedere altar in the Vatican appears to show the apotheosis of Caesar and includes three other figures, one of which is thought by some scholars to be the Vestal Virgin Maxima. See: Cappelli "L'altare del Belvedere. Un saggio di nuova interpretazione" in *AFLPer*. 22, n.s. VIII (1984-5):91-101, 91; Zanker, "Der Larenaltar im Belvedere des Vatikans" in *MDAI(R)* 76 (1969) 205. However, there is disagreement over this identification. Fraschetti believes that the figures do not wear the *siffibulum*, but rather are *capite velato* and as such are more likely to be Augustus accompanied by two togate figures, probably Gaius and Lucius (Fraschetti "Augusto", 180. See also Fraschetti, *Roma e il principe*, 299). The dedicatory inscription is missing. There is a relief showing the Vestals at banquet, which although in the Museo dell'Ara Pacis probably belongs with the Valle-Medici reliefs instead and also contributes nothing to the present discussion. See: Pollini, 347.

¹⁰³ Pollini, 237.

13 BCE and dedicated on 30 January 9 BCE. Given that Augustus was not yet *pontifex maximus*, Pollini believes that this display of religious officials represents the four major priesthoods in which Augustus held membership at the time the *Ara Pacis* was voted.¹⁰⁴ The dating and lack of interest in Vesta and her priestesses might also suggest that Augustus had not yet fully developed his plan to tie himself to this goddess and her cult.

There is also no archaeological evidence (foundations, pediments, podiums) that support the theory of a temple of Vesta on the Palatine. Suggestions have been made that this or that spot on the Palatine could be its location, but all have been dismissed. In their search for a second temple of Vesta scholars have also limited themselves by looking only for round structures since this was the shape of the *aedes Vestae* in the Forum. Although it does seem more likely that a second temple of Vesta would be made in the same manner, or even as a replica of the original, this does not preclude the possibility that a new temple could take another form. Still, no convincing location has been proposed. Thus anything dedicated in honor of the goddess on the Palatine must have been of modest size, certainly smaller than a temple.

The works of Ovid, especially the *Fasti*, appear repeatedly in the discussions of a possible temple of Vesta on the Palatine. There is no doubt that several passages purposely make clear the connection between Vesta and Augustus. One of the most commonly cited entries is the one for 6 March, the date when Augustus became *pontifex maximus*.

Sextus ubi oceano clivosum scandit Olympum
 Phoebus et alatis aethera carpit equis,
 quisquis aedes castaeque colis penetralia Vestae,
 gratare, Iliacis turaque pone focis.
 Caesaris innumeris (quem maluit ille mereri?)
 accessit titulis pontificalis honor.
 ignibus aeternis aeterni numina praesunt
 Caesaris: imperii pignora iuncta vides,

¹⁰⁴ Pollini, 2012, 220. It is possible that any plans for the altar that predated Augustus becoming *pontifex maximus* could have been modified, but it is unknown if this occurred.

di veteris Troiae, dignissima praeda ferenti,
 qua gravis Aeneas tutus ab hoste fuit,
 ortus ab Aenea tangit cognata sacerdos
 numina: cognatum, Vesta, tuere caput!
 quos sancta fovet ille manu, bene vivitis ignes:
 vivite inextincti, flammaque duxque, precor.¹⁰⁵

This passage in actual fact does little to help us to better understand the Palatine debate. It does mention the *aedes Vestae* (line 417), which is presumably a reference to the temple in the Forum. However, even this is not conclusive since we do not know for certain the proper designation for any structure—if one existed—on the Palatine (only Guarducci substitutes *aedis* for the second lacuna in the *Fasti Praenestini*). The *Iliacis focis* (line 418) would also seem to indicate the temple in the Forum since that was its traditional home in the city of Rome, although it has been argued that the fire was one of the objects brought to—or even the reason for—the Palatine temple.¹⁰⁶ Some scholars see an argument for the use in this passage of the metonyms *ignes aeterni* and *pignus imperii* as “proof” that the flame of Vesta and the Palladium were relocated to the Palatine on this date.¹⁰⁷ However, the flame by necessity needed to be eternal so that Rome would prosper (*ignibus aeternis*, line 421), and *pignora* (line 422) as a plural (rather than *pignus*) would seem to indicate the many *sacra* of the Romans, not solely the Palladium.¹⁰⁸ Thus the

¹⁰⁵ Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.415-428: “On the sixth day that Phoebus climbs steep Olympus from Ocean and plucks the sky on winged horses, all who have come to worship at chaste Vesta’s shrine, rejoice and place incense on Ilian hearths. Caesar’s countless titles, which he preferred to earn, were increased by pontifical office. Eternal Caesar’s godhead oversees eternal fires: you see empire’s tokens joined. Gods of old Troy, your bearer’s most deserving prize, whose burden saved Aeneas from the foe, a priest sprung from Aeneas handle kindred gods: guard, Vesta, the head of your kinsman. Your fires quicken with the care of his hallowed hand: Live on deathless, I pray, leader and flame.” Boyle and Woodward, trans.

¹⁰⁶ I have not seen any argument about the possible “duplication” of the fire in the same way that a possible duplicate of the Palladium has been proposed. I find this surprising since the “Trojan” fire in the *aedes Vestae* could have been used to ignite a new fire on the Palatine without provoking (to mind) the same kind of criticism that the possible creation of a second Palladium has received.

¹⁰⁷ Herbert-Brown, 77. However, she later concedes that “Despite Ovid’s conceptual unification of Augustus, Pontifex Maximus with the fire of Vesta and her pledge of empire, it must be conceded that the unification was not represented physically in his home on the Palatine,” 79.

¹⁰⁸ I favor this argument. However it should be noted that *focis*, like *pignora*, are both plurals.

point here is to expound on the eternal nature of these objects (and by extension the city of Rome) and their connection to Augustus, but not his acquisition of them.¹⁰⁹

These same lines (421-2) also indicate that Augustus now protects the *pignora* and the Trojan fire. Not surprisingly, this passage is frequently cited by those who believe that the Palladium, the fire, or both were moved to the Palatine, and they usually contend it was placed in the elusive Temple of Vesta there. There is no reason, however, to presume that this passage in Ovid was meant to be literal or locative, rather than symbolic. Augustus, especially in his role as *pontifex maximus*, could protect these *sacra* even though they remained in the *aedes Vestae*. Pre-Augustan accounts all indicate that the Temple of Vesta is where they were kept, and later reports from the second and third century indicate that this is where they were still located. Furthermore, Ovid's own *Tristia* (3.1.29-30), written after the *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*, indicates that the Palladium and fire remained in the *aedes Vestae* of the *Forum Romanum*: *hic locus est Vestae, qui Pallada servat et ignem, / haec fuit antique regia parva Numae*.¹¹⁰ As such there is not enough evidence to support the idea that they were ever removed, and certainly no report exists of their return to the temple in the Forum.

Augustus' connection as a *pontifex* and *sacerdos* brought him into connection with the gods, but it is important to note that nowhere is he called a priest of Vesta. Rather, Ovid identifies Augustus as a *cognatus* of Vesta (426), arguably an even closer relationship made

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.455-6 (9 June, date of the *Vestalia*): *nunc bene lucetis sacrae sub Caesare flammae: ignis in Iliacis nunc erit usque focis* ("Now sacred flames you shine brightly under Caesar's rule: The fire on the Ilian hearths is there, and will remain," A. S. Kline, trans.). Commentary on this passage by H. Wagenwoort, "Auguste et Vesta," in *Mélanges d'archéologie, d'épigraphie, et d'histoire offerts à Jérôme Carcopino*, M. M. J. Heurgon, G. Picard and W. Seston, eds, (Paris: Hachette, 1966): 965-978, "Deux motifs sont fortement soulignés ici: la divinité éternelle d'Auguste en rapport avec le feu éternel comme gage de la persistance de Rome, et l'origine troyenne de Vesta qui fait du *princeps*, descendant d'Énée, son parent."

¹¹⁰ Ovid, *Tristia*, 3.1.29-30: "Here is the place of Vesta, who guards the Palladium and fire, in which place was the little regia of ancient Numa." Cf. Herbert-Brown, 78.

possible due to the “Trojan” origins of both.¹¹¹ Still, it is important to bear in mind that the hearth of Vesta is Trojan due to the origin of the fire inside and the fact she protects Trojan gods; as such she is “Trojan” only by association. Herbert-Brown may be correct in stressing the innovation and importance of the “cognatio” theme for the importance of the emperor also serving as *pontifex maximus*, and its dynastic implications: “Augustus had taken over the *penates publici* brought by Aeneas to Rome and the hearth of Rome itself as his personal, dynastic, divine right. Only Vesta’s *cognatus* could tend her hearth, could be her priest. Only a Caesar, in other words, could be Pontifex Maximus.”¹¹² Even so, this connection would not necessarily require the removal of *sacra* from the *aedes Vestae* to the Palatine. Coinciding with this idea is the statement that Augustus himself cares for the flame (427). Once again, the notion that he would tend the sacred fire is surely more symbolic than literal. Firstly, it would have potentially been a huge insult to the Vestals to take this responsibility away from them, even to the extent of making their priesthood unnecessary. It also would have been an affront to the goddess who had been the protector of the flame since its legendary arrival in Rome. Moreover, it would have been beyond Augustus’ ability to single-handedly perform the duties that had been left to the care of six women plus their servants, and all this in addition to his many other responsibilities.

The next passage from Ovid’s *Fasti* that deserves further consideration is one already discussed above that commemorates the date of the Palatine dedication, 28 April.

Aufer Vesta diem! cognati Vesta recepta est
 limine: sic iusti constituere patres.
 Phoebus habet partem, Vestae pars altera cessit;
 quod superest illis, tertius ipse tenet,
 state Palatinae laurus, praetextaque quercu

¹¹¹ There also exists the argument that Vesta was part of Augustus’ extended family through his connection to Venus: Venus was the daughter of Jupiter, who was the brother of Vesta.

¹¹² Herbert-Brown, 72. See also G.W. Bowersock, “The Pontificate of Augustus,” in *Between Republic and Empire: interpretations of Augustus and his principate*, Raaflaub and Toher eds, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990): 380-394, 383.

stet domus: aeternos tres habet una deos.¹¹³

There are several additional points worth noting about this entry. Vesta is very much the focus. Augustus is never specifically mentioned, although his presence is clearly implied. Again the connection between Vesta and Augustus as *cognati* is made (949), and Vesta was received on his *limine* (950). The latter is an interesting word in this context. Although usually translated as “threshold” or “doorway”, it can also be used more generally as “house” or “dwelling”.¹¹⁴ We are also told that this move was decreed by the *patres*, which could be a reference to the *senatus consultum* mentioned in the *Fasti Praenestini*.¹¹⁵ Next is the division of this *limine* (or more specifically the property of Augustus) into parts. We know from this passage and elsewhere that Augustus had his house, and Apollo his temple, but this does not necessarily mean that Vesta likewise received her own temple.¹¹⁶ There is also no reason to believe that these parts were equal ones. Ovid also mentions the oak wreathed *domus* (954), specifically using this word to indicate the house and not the household of Augustus, just as in the phrase *in domu* found in both of the calendars. To finish, the three eternal gods, Apollo, Vesta and Augustus (but again, he is not named explicitly) are all invoked and the relationship between them is established. However, it is interesting to note that in this passage no connection is made between any of these figures and Troy, and no structures are mentioned other than the *domus* of Augustus.

¹¹³ Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.949-4.954: “Grab the day, Vesta. Vesta was received on her kin’s doorstep; so the just Fathers decreed. Phoebus owns a part, another went to Vesta, *He* as a third possesses what is left. Endure, Palatine laurels. May the oak-wreathed house endure. One house holds three eternal gods.” Boyle and Woodward, trans.

¹¹⁴ Lewis & Short, s.v. “limen”. I also believe a translation of “entrance” should be considered, especially in the context of an “entrance to his property.”

¹¹⁵ Admittedly, it is more likely that the *ex senatus consultum* refers to the fact that the day was made a *feriae*, however the fact remains that a reason was necessary to make a day into a new *feriae*. Cf. Jörg Rüpke, *The Roman calendar from Numa to Constantine*, David M. B. Richardson, trans., (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 126-7.

¹¹⁶ Fraschetti “Augusto,” 176. See also I. Iacopi in *LTUR* II (1995) 46-48; G. Carettoni “I problem della zona augustea del Palatino alla luce dei recenti scavi” in *RPAA* 39 (1966-67) 56; G. Carettoni, “La X regione: Palatium” in *l’Urbs. Espace urbain et histoire*, 776-7; G. Carettoni, *Das Haus des Augustus auf dem Palatin*, (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 1983).

The relationship between Vesta and Augustus (and Apollo) is also underscored in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* wherein the three are invoked together, but not without company.

Di, precor, Aeneae comites, quibus ensis et ignis
 cesserunt, dique Indigetes genitorque Quirine
 urbis et invicti genitor Gradive Quirini,
Vestaque Caesareos inter sacrata penates,
et cum Caesarea tu, Phoebae domestice, Vesta,
 quique tenes altus Tarpeias Iuppiter arces,
 quosque alios vati fas appellare piumque est¹¹⁷

There is an allusion in the first line (861) to both the Penates and the Trojan fire, which again underscores the importance of both in Augustan culture. However, the two lines of particular interest for the purpose of this discussion fall in the middle of the passage (864-5). I find it significant that Vesta is invoked twice, once in conjunction with the *penates* of Caesar, and once seemingly without modifier. Indeed, all of line 864 describes her: *Vestaque Caesareos inter sacrata penates*. The word choice and positioning of *sacrata* is also of particular interest for two reasons: it is symbolically positioned to fall among the Penates (*inter...penates*), and *sacro* can be translated as “to declare sacred” or as “to dedicate” as in the dedication on the Palatine.¹¹⁸ Indeed the first reference, as has been remarked upon by others, closely ties Vesta to the Penates of Caesar, and can even be read to include her among their number.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the *Vesta* at the beginning of this line (864) and the *Vesta* that completes the following one (865) serve to frame these two sentences. In between these exhortations Caesar is referenced twice and Phoebus (Apollo) once, the same three figures we are told now share the Palatine. To me it seems that in these two sentences Ovid suggests that the goddess is playing two roles, the

¹¹⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.861-867. “I pray you, gods who accompanied Aeneas, to whom fire and sword gave way, gods of our own land, and you, Romulus, founder of our city, Mars, the father of unconquered Romulus, and Vesta too, worshipped among Caesar’s household gods, and with her you, O Phoebus, who have your home with us, and Jupiter on high, who dwell on the Tarpeian citadel, and all the rest whom it is right and proper for a poet to invoke...” Mary M. Innes, trans.

¹¹⁸ Lewis & Short, s.v. “sacro”.

¹¹⁹ Miller, 368; Herbert-Brown, 67, who references Wissowa, *Religion*, 76, and Liebeschuetz, 70.

modified Vesta of Augustus and the traditional *Vesta* of Rome, and in two locations, the Palatine and the Forum.

I also propose a rather different reading for line 865 by removing the supplied punctuation: *et cum Caesarea tu Phoebae domestice Vesta*. Following Herbert-Brown, I take *Caesarea* as a reference to Vesta, which is made possible because of the association established in the previous line.¹²⁰ This allows for the first part of the line 865 (*et cum Caesarea tu, Phoebae*) to be translated as “and with Caesarean [Vesta], you, Phoebus”. Next, by once again removing the supplied punctuation the end of this line simply reads *Phoebae domestice Vesta*, wherein which god should receive the modifier “domestic” is put into question. Although it is always (to my knowledge) attributed in scholarship to Phoebus, it could just as easily be attached to Vesta, or, due to its position between their names, to both.¹²¹ Indeed, this is the only reference of which I am aware to a *Phoebus domesticus* and as such there is no way to make the identification by outside comparison. Moreover, considering the several passages that make clear the fact that Vesta is a *cognatus* of Augustus and all of the references to a dedication for her in his *domus*, it seems in fact more plausible to take the *domestice* with Vesta rather than with Apollo.

In total, the passages in Ovid are full of potential symbolic meanings, but lack any specific relevance concerning the Palatine dedication for Vesta by Augustus. Some entries, such as the *Fasti* 4.949-4.954, strongly make the connection between Vesta, Augustus, and Apollo; essentially the three gods (*deos*) now share the Palatine, forming a Triad fashioned by Augustus

¹²⁰ Herbert-Brown, 67, translates these lines as “And Vesta, consecrated amongst the Caesarian household gods, and, with Caesarian Vesta, you, Phoebus, at home with Caesar.”

¹²¹ Miller, 369-70, on this passage, “This is the virtuoso of the elegiac couplet creating a self-contained pair of verses to link Augustus’ two divine “housemates” inextricably with one another. The effects of enclosure suits well the theme of domestic ensconcing. The epithets could apply to both divinities. The Actian god is surely “Caesarean”; Vesta is intimately associated with the *domus* (which is brought out here by the sonorous juxtaposition *domestice, Vesta*).”

himself.¹²² The new, special relationship between this goddess and Augustus as *pontifex maximus* is made even clearer: “The two passages [March 6 and April 28] together celebrate the intimate relationship between Pontifex Maximus and the goddess of the hearth of Rome, both conceptually and topographically.”¹²³ In addition, Vesta was re-conceptualized under Augustus to maximize on her Trojan connections. A similar discontinuity appears throughout Book 6 of the *Fasti* where the goddess appears in three very different guises: a symbol of earth and fire, as a goddess of the people (especially bakers), and the protector and kinswoman of the imperial family.¹²⁴ Thus while Ovid conforms to Augustan religious messages, he is vague—likely purposefully so—and his words and passages can often be interpreted in multiple ways.

The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* is one additional piece of literary evidence that is significant not for any details it provides about the Palatine dedication for Vesta, but rather for its lack of any. Several scholars have mentioned the *Res Gestae* for this reason already. Simply put, if Augustus had a new temple (or any structure of reasonable size) built and dedicated to Vesta, surely he would have mentioned it in this work.¹²⁵ In fact Vesta, and specifically her temple, is only referred to once in any context:

In privato solo Martis Ultoris templum forumque Augustum ex manibiis feci. Theatrum ad aedem Apollinis in solo magna ex parte a privatis empto feci, quod sub nomine M. Marcelli generi mei esset. **Dona ex manibiis** in Capitolio et in aede divi Iuli et in aede

¹²² Herbert-Brown, 1994, 77, argues for a triad of Augustus-Vesta and Palladium; Alessandro Barchiesi, *Il Poeta e il Principe Ovidio e il discorso Augusteo*, (Latertza, 1994), 128, also refers to a “triade palatine” of Apollo-Augustus-Vesta. Molly Pasco-Pranger, *Founding the Year: Ovid’s Fasti and the Poetics of the Roman Calendar*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 207.

¹²³ Herbert Brown, 68.

¹²⁴ Carole Newlands, *Playing with Time: Ovid and the Fasti*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 133 “[in Book 6] Ovid offers us three basically incompatible views of Vesta: the rational view that sees her simply as a symbol of fire or earth (367-82, 289-94; 460); the popular, Republican view that sees her as a goddess of the people and, in particular, the lowest social classes such as bakers (311-18); and, at the other end of the social scale, the Augustan view that sees her as protectress of the imperial family and their empire (455-68). Ovid makes no attempt to reconcile these different perspectives.”

¹²⁵ Opt. cit. Fraschetti, “Augusto,” 176. Degrassi, “Esistette,” 149-51 notes the unlikelihood of Augustus or the Senate having built the Shrine without recording its construction.

Apollinis et **in aede Vestae** et in templo Martis Ultoris consecravi, quae mihi constiterunt HS circiter milliens.¹²⁶

This passage and the otherwise total lack of mention of the Temple of Vesta strongly suggests that Augustus did not build a second temple for Vesta on the Palatine since he clearly is not shy about mentioning his other building projects and benefactions. I also find it noteworthy that the one reference concerning the goddess is about war spoils that Augustus had set up in the *aedes Vestae*. It strikes me as somewhat odd that Vesta's temple would have been considered a suitable location to put such objects on display given the nature of this goddess and the fact that her temple was not open to the public. However, the four temples that received the spoils happen to be those of the same four gods that Augustus strived most to connect himself with: "divine" Julius, Apollo, Vesta and Mars ("Ultor"). Secondly, we know that the temple of Vesta in the Forum was rebuilt after the fire of 14 BCE, but there is no mention of this fact in the *Res Gestae*. Presumably this is because Augustus was not solely responsible for its reconstruction. Given the antiquity of the temple and the importance of the cult for traditional state religion, presumably either the Senate or the pontifical college stepped in and oversaw the restoration of the *aedes Vestae*.¹²⁷ As a member of both groups, Augustus likely had some role in the rebuilding of the temple, but it is not known to what extent.

¹²⁶ *Res Gestae* 21: "I built the temple of Mars Ultor on private ground and the forum of Augustus from war-spoils. I built the theater at the temple of Apollo on ground largely bought from private owners, under the name of Marcus Marcellus my son-in-law. I consecrated gifts from war-spoils in the Capitol and in the temple of divine Julius, in the temple of Apollo, in the temple of Vesta, and in the temple of Mars Ultor, which cost me about HS 100,000,000," Thomas Bushnell, trans.

¹²⁷ Philip V. Hill, *The Monuments of Ancient Rome as Coin Types*, (London: Seaby, 1989), 23-4. Hill identifies seven temples of Vesta built throughout Roman history. The earliest temple (wattle with a thatched roof); a second before 390 BC which was destroyed during the Gallic invasion; a third of stone and wood that burned down in 241 BCE; the fourth built after this which stood until the time of Augustus; the fifth was the one Augustus had rebuilt in marble, which was destroyed in the Great Fire of 64; the sixth was that rebuilt by Nero which in turn was destroyed during the fire of 191; the seventh and final temple. R. Scott attributes some work done to the temple in the first century BCE to Julius Caesar while *pontifex maximus*, Russell Scott, "Lavori e ricerche nell'area sacra di Vesta 1990-1," In *Eius Virtutis Studiosi*, Russell T. Scott and Ann Reynolds Scott, eds. (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1993) 17. Van Deman, "Methods of determining the date of Roman concrete monuments," *AJA* 16 (1912): 387-432, 393, links this rebuilding to Augustus

Although I disagree with arguments made in support of a temple of Vesta on the Palatine, I can see why the theory that Augustus built the goddess a temple there has gained its supporters. Despite the evidence, which obviously can and has been interpreted in more than one way, the symbolism for such an act would have been considerable. If a second temple had been constructed, it likely would have been seen as a major transition for the practice of traditional Roman religion as a whole—and the cult of Vesta in particular. This point has definitely not been overlooked, but perhaps overstressed, by modern scholars. Regarding both the Palladium and the Trojan fire housed in the *aedes Vestae*, with all of their symbolic importance for the Roman state it is clear why scholars would want to see Augustus as taking possession over them. Their relocation to the Palatine would have added the appearance of divine sanction of his rule and reinforced the propaganda of Augustus' Trojan ancestry.¹²⁸ The theory that a temple of Vesta on the Palatine existed also provoked the idea that from Augustus forward there were two cults of Vesta in Rome, the traditional one in the Forum and one on the Palatine.¹²⁹ Yet, even if a temple of Vesta had been built (and I maintain my contention that it was not), there is no other real evidence of worship to Vesta on the Palatine, and surely not enough to establish her worship there as a new cult: no new officials were added (other than Augustus), no yearly festival was created, and no votive deposits or other conclusive archaeological evidence has been found.¹³⁰ Moreover, if a new cult were in fact made separate from the one in the Forum, all of the symbolic connection to the traditional cult would have been lost. As such, other than the fact

¹²⁸ Opt. cit. McDaniel, 75.

¹²⁹ Herbert-Brown, 78: "...it is evident that the new cult of Vesta did not replace the old one in the Forum. The Vestals were not transferred to the Palatine, but remained in the Atrium Vestae," and 80: "Augustus obviously felt that to transfer an ancient cult, its 'sacra' and its festivals from its hallowed location in the Forum for the purpose of providing a new meaning to the title Pontifex Maximus was risking too radical a break with tradition. To create a new cult was his only solution."

¹³⁰ I believe that both *CIL* X 6441, an inscription that mentions a *praeposito Palladii Palatini*, and the head of a statue of Minerva found there can both be more reasonably explained as having purposes other than providing "proof" for cult worship of Vesta on the Palatine.

that a dedication was made to the goddess there, the evidence does not support the idea that a new cult of Vesta developed on the Palatine. At most, it can be argued that the worship of this goddess was an extension of that taking place in the Forum.

In sum, I believe that 28 April marks the day when Augustus officially changed the status of some of his property on the Palatine from private to public, and that this was done in accordance with the Senate so that he could make a reasonable argument to remain in his Palatine home and not move to the *domus publica* in the Forum. On this same day Augustus made a dedication of an *ara* and *signum* to Vesta somewhere on this property which likely eased this change of custom and also symbolically tied himself to the goddess. I think it most likely that the *ara* mentioned in the *Fasti Praenestini* was set up within the walls of his own home. This would also allow him to worship Vesta as essentially one of his household gods. In this vein, while acknowledging the many possibilities for what exactly the *signum* could have been, I believe a statue of some sort is the most likely explanation, perhaps a small one that could be used in conjunction with the worship of his *penates*.¹³¹

It is also certain that the *aedes Vestae* was rebuilt after the fire of 14, an act that Augustus never takes credit for and consequently should be attributed to the Senate or pontifical college. Archeological evidence (as well as common sense due the importance of the cult) suggests that reconstruction of the destroyed *aedes Vestae* began almost immediately, and the remains of the new foundation and podium suggest a date between 14 and 12 BCE.¹³² Moreover, it is logical to presume that the completion of the new building would be both celebrated and consequently documented in some way. Accordingly, I argue that the imagery sometimes interpreted as

¹³¹ If not this, then a fire lit from the temple of Vesta seems the next most logical possibility as the Lares were often given offerings on a small hearth.

¹³² Ernest Nash, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, 2 vols. (New York: Praeger, 1968), 505; Marion E. Blake, *Ancient Roman construction in Italy from the prehistoric period to Augustus. A chronological study based in part upon the material accumulated by Esther Boise Van Deman*, (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1947), 176-7.

supporting a temple of Vesta on the Palatine (such as the Sorrento Base, Palermo Relief, coins, etcetera) all in fact show the completion and commemoration of the new temple in the Forum. It is coincidence that its reconstruction occurred in the same general timeframe as when Augustus became *pontifex maximus* and made the dedication to Vesta on the Palatine.¹³³ Thus, two completely separate events have been (not illogically) confused in our sources due to their close chronological dating.

Augustus and the Vestals after 12 BCE

From 12 BCE onwards the connection between Augustus and Vesta and her priestesses is clearer. As *pontifex maximus* he was responsible for the general supervision of the Vestal cult, and he chose new Vestals as vacancies occurred. Beyond this, however, there is little proof that Augustus favored the priestesses in any tangible way despite the fact that scholarship typically reports that he awarded them special privileges and benefits. For example, a passage in Suetonius is interpreted as indicating Augustus gave the Vestal Virgins the right to sit in reserved seating at public games (*solis virginibus Vestalibus locum in theatro separatim et contra praetoris tribunal dedit*) when all other women were relegated to the highest seats.¹³⁴ However, a passage from Cicero's *pro Murena* indicates that this was a privilege the priestesses already possessed: *si virgo Vestalis, huius propinqua et necessaria, locum suum gladiatorium concessit huic, not et illa pie fecit et hic a culpa est remotus.*¹³⁵ The fact that Augustus deposited with the Vestals his will, directions for his funeral, a copy of the *Res Gestae* and a financial statement for the Roman Empire, also cannot be used since it had become standard practice for state leaders to

¹³³ It is a stretch, but I wonder how plausible it is (if at all) that the dedication to Vesta on the Palatine perhaps marked the location of where the *pignora* were housed until the temple was complete enough for their return and that 28 April marked the day on which this occurred.

¹³⁴ Suetonius, *Augustus* 44.3.

¹³⁵ Cicero, *pro Murena*, 73: "nor, if a vestal virgin, my client's near relation, gave up her place to see the spectacle in his favour, was that any other than a pious action nor is he liable to any charge on that ground," C. D. Yonge, trans.

entrust important documents to their care.¹³⁶ Indeed, many of the benefices that scholarship claims Augustus gave on their behalf were more likely done to keep all of the positions in the college filled rather than as a result of any special relationship with Vesta or to “increase the order’s prestige and importance”.¹³⁷ A well-known anecdote relates that at one point during Augustus’ tenure a vacancy occurred in the priesthood, but not one elite family offered a daughter to fill the position. To this situation Augustus (in an attempt to shame them into doing so, it seems) declared that if he had a grand-daughter of eligible age he would have put her forward.¹³⁸ Accordingly he passed a law in 5 CE allowing the daughters of freedmen to become priestesses. Gardner also sees the lack of candidates as the reason for why Augustus gave the Vestal Virgins the *ius trium liberorum*: “...The benefit derived...was not exemption from *tutela*, which they already had, but freedom from the restrictions on inheritance which Augustus’ legislation had imposed on the unmarried and childless.”¹³⁹ Indeed, by granting Roman women more privileges such as the *ius trium liberorum* Augustus may have inadvertently decreased the number of potential candidates for the cult since one of the major advantages to be gained by membership was now extended to more Roman women. Thus the actions taken by Augustus were practical ones meant to maintain the cult in its traditional way.

Despite the complaint of Augustus and the new law, it does not appear that there was any great difficulty in finding a suitable nominee whenever a vacancy in the Vestal college occurred (although there were never again enough candidates to follow the traditional Republican practice of selecting 20 suitable candidates and then choosing one by lot). It is little wonder that the

¹³⁶ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 101; Tacitus, *Annales*, 1.8; Cassius Dio, 56.32.

¹³⁷ Robin Lorsch Wildfang, *Rome’s Vestal Virgins*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 101.

¹³⁸ Suetonius, *Augustus*, 31.3; Cassius Dio, 55.22.5: “Since the most highly born families showed themselves reluctant to let their daughters enter the order, a large number presented themselves for this honour, and so lots were drawn in the Senate in the presence of the girls’ fathers, if these were knights. But in the event no priestess was appointed from this class,” Earnest Cary trans.

¹³⁹ Jane Gardner, *Women in Roman Law & Society*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indian University Press, 1991), 24.

upper classes refrained from offering their daughters, since young women were often used to gain power, prestige, wealth, and through marriage in this period. Although these could arguably have been gained in becoming a Vestal priestess, the continuation of the family tree could not. Nonetheless, in her study of known Vestal priestesses Raepsaet-Charlier found that the majority continued to come from senatorial, patrician families, and ones that were known for their male members holding important priesthoods.¹⁴⁰

Another modification that Augustus made to the cult was the expansion of the duties of the Vestal priestesses. They were traditionally involved in many religious ceremonies, but under Augustus they became part of new rites, particularly recently instituted ones for the Julian family. One of these was the yearly sacrifice at the *Ara Pacis*.¹⁴¹ However, this extra requirement should not be taken as a sign of favor as modern scholarship tends to argue. The Vestals took part in most Roman religious ceremonies and as such their exclusion from these rites would be more surprising than their presence in them.

It is clear that from 12 BCE forward Augustus had firm ties to Vesta and her cult. He was now *pontifex maximus*, and he and *Julii* had newly created kinship ties to ‘Trojan’ Vesta. The connection made sense for many reasons, the most obvious being the symbolic importance that the goddess and her priestesses had for the state. And since the best way to show favoritism to—and divine favor from—a god was to make very public dedications in their name, Augustus honored Vesta. However, the evidence fails to support any exceptional honors or preference given to the Vestal Virgins. Indeed, there was no need to show them favoritism or provide them with compensation for his appropriation of their sacred objects, as has been argued, since this

¹⁴⁰Marie-Thérèse Raepsaet-Charlier, “Les sacerdoces des femmes sénatoriales sous le Haut-Empire,” in *Prosopographie et Histoire Religieuse*, Marie-Francoise Baslez and Françoise Prévot eds., (Paris : De Boccard, 2005): 283-304, esp 284-89. See also Raepsaet-Charlier, “L’origine sociale des Vestales sous le haut-empire,” in *Mneme Georges A. Petropoulos II* (Athens: Ekdoseis Ant. Sakkoula, 1984): 255-270.

¹⁴¹ Vellius Paterculus, *Res Gestae*, 2.12.

never occurred.¹⁴² It has even been suggested that through the acts of Augustus “They [the Vestals] came perilously close to becoming so many members of the emperor’s household, or, to put it in the heroic/regal perspective favored by Augustus, the priest-king’s daughters.”¹⁴³ The latter statement, I believe, is a retrogression to the theory that the original Vestals during the Roman Monarchy were daughters of the kings, and is not an accurate description of the situation under Augustus. Most of his “gifts” or “privileges” to the Vestals served merely to maintain the position that the priestesses and cult had always held in Roman society, but they have been incorrectly used as proof of Augustus’ close relationship to Vesta.

The Vestals and Later Emperors

Once Augustus had set the stage for the connection between the *Julii* clan—and in particular the emperor who was also the *pontifex maximus*—to Vesta and her cult, it seems that his successors more or less followed his pattern: they used the relationship when it was advantageous and otherwise primarily focused on keeping the *status quo*. In all, the connection between the other Julio-Claudian emperors and the cult of Vesta was rather quiet. A few anecdotes tie Tiberius (14-37 CE) to Vesta and her priestesses. One account states that he went to Rhodes in order to convince the Parians to hand over their cult statue of Hestia so that he could place it in the Temple of Concord, which he had restored between 7 and 10 CE (before he became *princeps* and *pontifex maximus*).¹⁴⁴ Although his reason for this choice is uncertain, it does not seem to have been to honor Vesta or her cult in any particular way.¹⁴⁵ During his time

¹⁴² McDaniel, 67.

¹⁴³ Russell T. Scott, “Vestae Aedem Petitam?” in Sheila K. Dickison and Judith P. Hallett, eds. *Rome and her Monuments*, (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2000): 173-191, 182.

¹⁴⁴ Cassius Dio, 55.9.6.

¹⁴⁵ His precise reasons for doing so are unclear. It has been suggested that the trip was a pretense to leave Rome for a time (due to his anger over succession or desire to be away from his wife, Julia). Peter Sattler, “Julia and Tiberius” in his *Studien aus dem Gebiet der alten Geschichte*, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1962), 22-3,

as emperor at least one known vacancy in the college of Vestals occurred. When two acceptable candidates were put forward, Tiberius chose the girl whose mother and father were still married, but gave a dowry of one million sesterces to the one who was not selected because her parents were divorced.¹⁴⁶ In 22 CE another Vestal from this period, Junia Torquata, petitioned Tiberius to commute the sentence of her brother, Gaius Junius Silanus, who had been accused of misconduct. Her request was granted and the punishment was changed from exile on an uninhabited island (Gyaros) to a more comfortable one (Cynthos).¹⁴⁷ A third anecdote from Tacitus relates that Tiberius also gave the Vestal Cornelia a gift of two million sesterces when she became the *virgo Vestalis Maxima* (chief Vestal Virgin) in order to increase the dignity of the priesthood and to encourage candidates to join them.¹⁴⁸ I would argue once again that the practical necessity of keeping the college full outweighed any desire to promote the standing of the Vestals in society.

After Tiberius the number of literary references involving emperors and Vesta and her priestess decline, and of these most serve to relate general information. Little else occurred to directly connect the Julio-Claudians to Vesta except when privileges were bestowed upon women of the imperial family that were shared only by the Vestal priestesses, a subject which will be discussed in the next chapter. The other major topic mentioned is that of construction work on either the *aedes Vestae* or the *atrium Vestae*, which happened during the reigns of Nero,

suggests that acquisition of this statue was an appeal to Livia as the embodiment of Vesta and that he “convinced” the Parians to give it to him by force of his *tribunicia potestas*, but I believe the part about Livia overstretches the evidence. Cf. Barbara Levick, “Tiberius’ Retirement to Rhodes in 6 B.C.,” *Latomus* 31 (1972): 779-813, 805.

¹⁴⁶ Tacitus, *Annales*, 2.86: “The emperor then moved for the appointment of a virgin to replace Occia, who for fifty-seven years had presided over the rites of Vesta with unblemished purity: Fonteius Agrippa and Domitius Pollio he thanked for the public-spirited rivalry which had led them to proffer their own daughters. Pollio’s child was preferred, for no reason save that her mother was still living with the same husband, while Agrippa’s divorce had impaired the credit of his household. As a *solatium* to the rejected candidate, the Caesar presented her with a dowry of a million sesterces,” J. Jackson, trans.

¹⁴⁷ Tacitus, *Annales*, 3.70.

¹⁴⁸ Tacitus, *Annales*, 4.16: *utque glisceret dignatio sacerdotum atque ipsis promptior animus foret ad capessendas caerimonias decretum Corneliae virgini, quae in locum Scantiae capiebatur, sestertium viciens.*

Domitian (likely finished by Hadrian), and Septimius Severus.¹⁴⁹ Vesta, her temple, and the Palladium (either singly or together) sometimes make an appearance on coinage, usually either to document the reconstruction of the temple, or during or just after a time of crisis such as the Civil Wars of 68-69 CE.¹⁵⁰

There are, naturally, a few exceptions to this rule. Connections between Nero and the Vestals occur a few times. Suetonius relates that this *princeps* allowed the Vestals to attend athletic contests (women had been banned from doing so by Augustus) on account that the priestesses of Ceres were permitted to watch at Olympia.¹⁵¹ Suetonius next states that Nero raped the Vestal Virgin Rubria; however this author is the only source for the act, and he mentions it without any detail. Moreover, he includes this scandal in a passage that is clearly intended to create prejudice in his readers by criticizing the sexual appetites and character of this emperor.¹⁵² In 64 CE Nero went to the Capitol to consult about a proposed journey, then proceeded through many of the city's temples. However, at the temple of Vesta, "...all his limbs suddenly began to tremble. The goddess frightened him. Or perhaps he was always frightened, remembering his crimes. At all events, he abandoned this journey too."¹⁵³ This too is an unusual story, and no real attempt at explanation is made. It could plausibly be read as a foreshadowing of the Great Fire of 64 CE in which much of Rome was destroyed. There is no doubt that the

¹⁴⁹ Hill, 23-4, the fifth temple of Vesta was rebuilt by Augustus and destroyed in the Great Fire of 64 CE. This was replaced during the reign of Nero by the sixth temple, which was in turn destroyed by fire in 191 CE. The seventh and final temple dates to the reign of Septimius Severus

¹⁵⁰ During the Civil War of 68-9 Vesta appears on the obverse or reverse of several coins with a lighted torch, usually in conjunction with Jupiter on the other side. See *BMCRE* I, 306-8 nos. 64 and 70-3. Galba appeared on a coin with the goddess and the Palladium, most likely using the symbolism that each carried to promote his rule. See *BMCRE* I, 335 nos. 157-60. Grant argues that the Temple of Vesta appears on coinage on the principal anniversaries of the death of Augustus. See: Michael Grant, *Aspects of the Principate of Tiberius*, (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1950), 122; Cf. Grant, *Roman Anniversary Issues: An exploratory Study of the Numismatic and Medallion Commemoration of Anniversary Years 49 B.C. – A. D. 375*, (University Press, 1950).

¹⁵¹ Suetonius, *Nero*, 12.4. Wildfang, 102-3, argues that "...it seems likely that he granted this privilege to the Vestals not because he wished to increase their status or the close connections between his family and their order, but because he was intent on heightening the importance of the Greek goddess Ceres (Demeter) and her priestesses."

¹⁵² Suetonius, *Nero*, 28.

¹⁵³ Tacitus, *Annales*, 15.36.3, Michael Grant, trans. Cf. Suetonius, *Nero*, 19.

aedes Vestae was damaged in the blaze, but the extent of the damage is uncertain and it has been posited that the statement of Tacitus that the temple was destroyed may be exaggerated.¹⁵⁴ In support of this theory, none of our sources indicate that the Vestals were forced to flee or the *sacra* removed, so perhaps the damage was minimal.¹⁵⁵ Coins (*aurei* and *denarii*) issued after 64 likely commemorate the restoration of the temple, the reverses of which represent the *aedes* with a seated figure of Vesta within holding scepter and *patera*.¹⁵⁶

The Flavians too recognized the symbolic importance of Vesta and the objects she guarded, and accordingly applied this on imagery, especially on their coinage. While emperor, Vespasian's image appeared on the obverse of a *sestertius*, and on the reverse he is seen with hand extended receiving the Palladium from Victory.¹⁵⁷ Another series of *sestertii* in honor of *Divus Vespasianus* struck under Titus show Vesta holding the Palladium and a scepter.¹⁵⁸ Coins of Titus' daughter, Julia, also appear; the reverse of one has Vesta, seated, holding a scepter in one hand and extending the Palladium in the other.¹⁵⁹ Another coin series (*aurei* and *denarii*) dating to 79 CE include Vesta seated on a throne, holding a scepter in one hand and the palladium in the other, and bears the inscription PRINCEPS IVVENTUTIS (referring to

¹⁵⁴ Tacitus, *Annales*, 15.41, and *History*, 143. Platner/Ashby s.v. "regia" proposes that the damage to the *regia* has been exaggerated, which may suggest the same for the *aedes Vestae* due to the close proximity of the structures to one another.

¹⁵⁵ It is more evident that the *atrium Vestae* was damaged and rebuilt; significant archaeological evidence has found many changes made between the pre-Neronian and Post-Neronian structures including to its orientation. Platner and Ashby, s.v. "atrium Vestae". See also Ernest Nash, *Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, s.v. "atrium Vestae"; R. Scott, "Lavori," believes that *delubrum* mentioned in Tacitus refers to the Area Sacra of Vesta, not only to the Temple, while Nero's rebuilding work also included additions to the *atrium Vestae*.

¹⁵⁶ She appears for identification purposes only according to G. Fuchs, *Architekturdarstellungen auf römischen Münzen der Republik und der frühen Kaiserzeit*, (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1969), 51-7; Hill, 24. These coins closely resemble Caesarean/Augustan coins that commemorated the earlier reconstruction of the temple and demonstrate that the design of the new temple was not significantly altered. Cf. Armstrong, 130, who seems to follow Scott in dating the earlier coins to Caesar rather than Augustus.

¹⁵⁷ Mattingly, *BMC*, Vol 2, 586; Henry Cohen, *Description historique des monnaies frappées sous l'Empire Romain*, (Paris: Rollin & Feuarent, 1888), 620.

¹⁵⁸ Kenneth Scott, *The Imperial Cult under the Flavians*, (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936), 43. See: Mattingly, *BMC*, 253, 261 and 264.

¹⁵⁹ K. Scott, *Imperial*, 49-50. Mattingly, *BMC*, (*denarius*) 247, no. 144 and (*dupondii*), 279, nos. 256-258.

Domitian).¹⁶⁰ Additional types dating to 80-81 show either Vesta again holding the Palladium in her extended hand or the goddess Roma with a foot on a globe; both present the Palladium to Titus, sitting on horseback, who reaches out to receive it.

The frequent appearance of Vesta on Flavian coinage has led to commentary and theories as to why aspects of this goddess occur so often. One idea is that the Flavians—perhaps not unlike Augustus before them—were using Vesta as a “special protectress” of their family.¹⁶¹ Another theory concerns the *aedes Vestae*, which appears on *aurei* of Vespasian and Domitian. While there is no documented reason why the temple would have needed to be rebuilt under the Flavians, it has been proposed that they may have undertaken its restoration since evidence suggests that the *atrium Vestae* was damaged by fire and repaired under Domitian.¹⁶² Scholars disagree as to whether it was Domitian or Trajan who was responsible for its repair, although I think it possible that Domitian started the project and that Trajan later finished it. A third theory concerns the status of Julia. Here ideas range from her image joined with that of Vesta and the Palladium as “an attempt to flatter the princess by associating her with the goddess”¹⁶³ to “The Vesta is perhaps a reference to a possible bestowal of the honors of the Vestal Virgins upon Julia, since these honors were granted to many other princesses,”¹⁶⁴ and that it “...may indicate that Julia, as the sole child of Titus, is one of the family which wishes to associate the eternity of Rome with the eternity of the Gens Flavia.”¹⁶⁵ Along these same lines, the last type with Roma and Titus may be “...symbolic of the fact that he was entrusted with the security and protection

¹⁶⁰ Mattingly, *BMC*, 46, no. 260.

¹⁶¹ K. Scott, *Imperial*, 51-2.

¹⁶² Platner-Ashby, s.v. “Atrium Vestae”. Cf. Armstrong, 164-5, “Like the Neronian issues, which commemorated its rebuilding after the fire of 64 AD, they show a round temple on a stepped podium with Ionic columns and a domed roof. Vesta appears twice, on the apex of the roof as well as inside the temple, to aid in its identification.”

¹⁶³ K. Scott, *Imperial*, 76. See also? Mattingly, p. 313, no. 69.

¹⁶⁴ Mattingly, p. lxxv

¹⁶⁵ K. Scott, *Imperial*, 50-1.

of the city and of the empire.”¹⁶⁶ Thus, although Domitian is best known for his connections with Minerva as his patron deity, the latter could easily be connected to Vesta through the Palladium (the statue of Minerva housed in the *aedes Vestae*) which appears more often in Flavian imagery than the goddess Vesta. In fact, of the divinities featured on Flavian coinage, Roma and Vesta appear most often and both with the Palladium.¹⁶⁷

Domitian in fact had considerable interaction with the cult of Vesta, not for employing the goddess on coinage or for remodeling her temple or the residence of her priestesses, but rather for several accusations against Vestal priestess of *incestum* (broken vow of chastity). No Vestal Virgin had been charged of this crime in 150 years, and none had been found guilty for nearly two centuries.¹⁶⁸ Under Domitian at least four priestesses were charged in the first round of accusations (probably between 81-83 CE), and of these three were convicted: the Oculatae sisters and Varronilla.¹⁶⁹ Interestingly, Domitian did not impose the ancient custom of inhumation upon them, but instead let them choose the manner of their death (their lovers also received the lesser penalty of banishment instead of stoning).¹⁷⁰ The fourth Vestal, Cornelia, escaped her first trial, only to be accused by the emperor a second time at a later date (most

¹⁶⁶ K. Scott, *Imperial*, 184-5.

¹⁶⁷ Pat Southern, *Domitian: tragic tyrant*, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1997), 115-6. However, R. Scott, “Vestae,” 185-6, maintains that “numismatists have pointed out that Vesta does not appear in the coinage of Domitian.” On the dating, Eusebius (ed. Schoene ii, pp. 160-1) in the Armenian version dates the punishment of the three Vestals in the year 2098 a. Abr. (1 Oct., 81 – 30 Sept., 82), while Hieronymus places the event in the following year; cf. Stéphane Gsell, *Essai sur le règne de l'empereur Domitien*, (Paris : Thorin & fils, 1894), 80, n.4 ; Southern, 79.

¹⁶⁸ Over several months in 114-3 BCE three priestesses (Marcia, Aemilia and Licinia) were accused, convicted (two after first being acquitted and retried by a *questio*), and sentenced to death. Charges were made against two Vestals (Fabia and Licinia) in 73 BCE, but both were acquitted. For an overview of the primary and secondary scholarship concerning both events see Wildfang, 93-6 and 106 fns. 10 and 17. On the technicalities of the retrial and punishment of the Vestals in 113 BCE see Bauman, 93, and Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 52-8 and 61-3.

¹⁶⁹ Opt. cit. Marie-Thérèse Raepsaet-Charlier, *Prosopographie des femmes de l'ordre senatorial (I^{er}-II^e siècles)*, (Louvain, 1987 [FOS]), 16/17, Vestales, no 1-2, and 275, Vestale, no. 15; Raepsaet-Charlier, “Les sacerdoces,” 284-89.

¹⁷⁰ Suetonius, *Domitian*, 8, and Cassius Dio 67.3.3-4.

likely around 89-90 CE).¹⁷¹ This time found guilty, Domitian reverted to the traditional punishment and Cornelia was buried alive in the *Campus Sceleratus* (near the Colline Gate, but within the walls of Rome).¹⁷²

Domitian's reasons for persecuting the Vestals are uncertain. There is, of course, the possibility that they were guilty. Religious zeal, as indicated by Suetonius, may have also been a contributing factor. Indeed, Domitian's various measures concerning moral reform (again reminiscent of Augustus) likely played a part in his attacks against the priestesses.¹⁷³ This motivation is seemingly confirmed by Pliny the Younger who writes that Domitian was intent on

¹⁷¹ See A. Frascchetti, "La sepoltura delle Vestali e la Città," *Du châtement dans la cité, ColloEFR* 79 (1984): 97-129 [89CE]; R. A. Bauman, *Crime and Punishment in Ancient Rome*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 186, fn. 9 [believes 89 is most likely, revising an earlier argument for 93 CE]; Eva Cantarella, *I supplizi capitali in Grecia e a Roma*, (Milan: Rizzoli, 1991), 137 [91 CE].

¹⁷² Suetonius, *Domitian*, 8.3-4: *incesta Vestalium uirginum, a patre quoque suo et fratre neglecta, uarie ac seuere coercuit, priora capitali supplicio, posteriora more ueteri. nam cum Oculatis sororibus, item Varronillae liberum mortis permisisset arbitrium corruptoresque earum relegasset, mox Corneliam maximam uirginem absolutam olim, dein longo interuallo repetitam atque conuictam defodi imperauit stupratoresque uirgis in comitio ad necem caedi, excepto praetorio uiro, cui, dubia etiam tum causa et incertis quaestionibus atque tormentis de semet professo, exilium indulsit.* "The desecration of Vestal Virgins, which had been overlooked by his father and brother, he punished through the application of different but severe penalties, at first through capital punishment, later on in the traditional way. For while he allowed the Oculata sisters and Varronilla to choose their own form of death and relegated their seducers, soon afterwards, when the senior Vestal Cornelia, who had been acquitted some time previously, was again, much later, accused and convicted, he ordered that she be buried alive and that her defilers should be beaten to death with rods in the Comitium, with the exception of a man of praetorian rank. This man, because he had confessed when the case against him was still doubtful and the examination and torture of witnesses were inconclusive, Domitian let off with exile," Catherine Edwards, trans. For information on Cornelia see Jakub Pigoń, "The Identity of the Chief Vestal Cornelia (PIR 2 C 1481): Some Suggestions," *Mnemosyne* 52.2 (1999): 206-213. For the trial see Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny: a historical and social commentary*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966); Bauman, *Crime*, 96-7 and 99, who differentiates the trials and penalties arguing that the first was a secular trial that resulted in conviction and a generalized sentence of death whereas the trial of just Cornelia was performed according to traditional, Republican practices with Domitian overseeing the process as Pontifex Maximus; Barbara Scardigli, "L'Imperatore-Pontefice Massimo e le Vestali," in *Forme di aggregazione nel mondo romano*, (Bari: Conv. Ischia 2006): 315-327, esp. 322-324. On the punishment see Frascchetti, "La sepoltura," 97-129. Juvenal's *Satire* 4 has been taken as a critique of the Domitian and his actions toward Cornelia. For a detailed analysis of this work and an overview of the secondary scholarship see Roberta Stewart, "Domitian and Roman Religion: Juvenal, *Satires* Two and Four," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 124 (1994): 309-332, 322-3.

¹⁷³ Opt. cit. Bauman, *Crime*, 92-5. Domitian's many moral and social reforms included the renewal of Augustus' *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* (17 BCE): Francesco Grelle, "La 'correctio morum' nella legislazione flavia," *ANRW* II, 13 (1980): 340-65, esp. 340-52; B. W. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 76 and 106-7. For other examples of comparison between Domitian and Augustus such as the Cancellera Reliefs and in matters of religion see Thompson, 120-136.

burying Cornelia alive believing that it would “lend luster to his reign”.¹⁷⁴ Scholars have also proposed several additional theories. One is that it was the very connection between Domitian and the Palladium, and by extension Vesta and her cult, that drew extra attention to the behavior and conduct of the priestesses.¹⁷⁵ A second contends that Domitian’s many prosecutions and confiscations were a roundabout means of raising money to pay for his building projects.¹⁷⁶ Another idea suggests that Cornelia was being used as a scapegoat for some kind of calamity. Traditionally, Vestals were charged with unchastity when Rome encountered some kind of disaster, especially in cases of military defeat. As such we would expect that Domitian was using broken vows of Vestal chastity as the reason for some negative event, but we unfortunately do not hear anything in the contemporary sources to which the trials can be directly linked.¹⁷⁷

Vesta continued to hold a fairly prominent position in Rome after the Flavian Dynasty. She and her attributes (i.e. the Palladium) continued to feature prominently on the coinage of Trajan and Hadrian.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, Trajan is believed to have worked on the Vestal precinct: the *atrium Vestae* was remodeled under him (possibly a continuation of work started by Domitian), and evidence also suggests some rebuilding of the temple.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Pliny the Younger, *Epistles*, 4.11.6: *Nam cum Corneliam Vestalium maximam defodere vivam concupisset, ut qui illustrari saeculum suum eiusmodi exemplis arbitraretur.*

¹⁷⁵ K. Scott, *Imperial*, 187-8.

¹⁷⁶ R. Scott, 185-6.

¹⁷⁷ Pliny, *Epistles*, 4.11.7, records that Cornelia used this fact as part of her (unsuccessful) defense: “Me Caesarem, incestam putat, qua sacra faciente vicit, triumphavit?” Cf. Inge Kroppenber, “Law, Religion, and Constitution of the Vestal Virgins,” *Law and Literature* vol. 22, no. 3 (2010): 418-439, 430-1; Tim Cornell, “Some observations on the ‘Crimen Incesti,’” in *Le délit religieux dans la cité antique*, M. Torelli ed., (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1981): 27-37, 27. Bauman, *Crime*, 96-7, suggests that the revolt of Antonius Saturninus may have been the cause. Jo-Ann Shelton, *The Women of Pliny’s Letters*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 316-7, as believes that there was no obvious crisis to tie the trials to, nor any portents or bad omens. Cf. Cassius Dio, 57.11.

¹⁷⁸ Opt. cit. R. Scott, “Vestae,” 187. Cf. P. Strack, *Untersuchungen zur Römischen Reichsprägung des zweiten Jahrhunderts*, Vol. III, *Die Reichsprägung zur Zeit des Antoninus Pius*, (Stuttgart, 1937), 185-90; H. Mattingly, *RIC*² (1926), 308.

¹⁷⁹ Armstrong, 165. Cf. H. Bloch, “I bolli laterizi e la storia edilizia romana,” *BullComm* 64 (1936): 141-225, 217-25; Rodolfo Lanciani, *The ruins and excavations of ancient Rome*, (New York: Blom, 1967), 228-34; R. Scott, “Lavori,” 174-5. An inscription (*CIL*, VI, 31578) from either the reign of Trajan or Hadrian records a restoration.

The Severan Dynasty, specifically Septimius Severus and his wife Julia Domna, are also known for their care of Vesta and her temple. Both the *atrium Vestae* and the *aedes Vestae* were again damaged by fire during the reign of Commodus, but the house of the Vestals was restored and their area expanded by the Severans.¹⁸⁰ Julia Domna is generally credited for the reconstruction of the buildings, although how active a role she in fact played is uncertain. Coins commemorating the rebuilding of the temple, likely minted during the reign of Caracalla, appear to highlight his mother's role (Julia Domna). They also indicate at least one architectural change in the building, the use of Corinthian rather than Ionic columns.¹⁸¹

Ironically, it was Caracalla who once again brought negative attention to the cult of Vesta. Cassius Dio reports that he not only charged four Vestal priestesses with *incestum* and condemned them all to the traditional punishment of inhumation (three suffered this fate, one committed suicide), but was also the seducer of one.¹⁸² It has been suggested that this trial is connected to a “revival” of the cult of Vesta by the Severans, but there is no evidence to suggest that a revival was attempted—or even necessary.¹⁸³

Conclusions

Augustus was never shy about connecting himself to gods and heroes whenever such ties worked to his advantage. His “ancestor” Aeneas, and Apollo were among those to whom he showed early favor. However, for the first thirty years he held power in Rome connections

¹⁸⁰ For more details about the reconstruction see: R. Scott, “Vestae,” 190-1.

¹⁸¹ Armstrong, 216-9. On the coins, an image of Vesta is shown inside the Temple and Vestals appear sacrificing on a round altar in front. Mattingly, *RIC* (1950), 168-9; cf. C. Cecamore, “Apollo e Vesta sul Palatino fra Augusto e Vespasiano,” *BCAR* 96 (1994-1995): 9-32, 26 figs. 19 and 20.

¹⁸² Cassius Dio, 78.16.1: ὅτι λέγων εὐσεβέστατος πάντων ἀνθρώπων εἶναι περιττότητι μαιφονιῶν 1 κατεχρήσατο, τῶν ἀεπαρθένων τέσσαρας ἀποκτείνας, “While claiming to be the most pious of all mankind, he indulged to an extravagant degree in bloodshed, putting to death four of the Vestal Virgins, one of whom he had himself outraged,” Earnest Cary, trans. For the suicide of the fourth priestess, see Cassius Dio, 78.16.2.

¹⁸³ C. R. Whittaker, *Herodian*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 405 n. 7 at Herod. 4.6.4, Whittaker suggests that Dio deliberately created Caracalla as a second Domitian.

between Augustus and Vesta and her cult were minimal and do not provide enough evidence to suggest that Augustus had any detailed, premeditated plans to form a close relationship to this goddess. Their connection became manifest only around the time he became *pontifex maximus* in 12 BCE and after. The one small hiccup to accepting this role was the fact that Augustus was expected to live in the *domus publica* in the Forum, something that he had no intention of doing. He accordingly made some of his property public domain, which seems to have solved the only legal issue involved. How the Romans would have viewed this change is another matter.

I do not believe that Augustus ever intended to supplant or transfer the religious center of the city from the ancient end of the Forum, nor to fundamentally change the traditional worship of Vesta in Rome. However the dedication he made to her on the Palatine may have been motivated—at least in part—by this change in custom. Several additional reasons, such as the importance of Vesta to Rome and her potential usefulness to the *princeps*, are also logical factors. Thus Augustus honored Vesta on the Palatine, but not with a temple or by relocation of the sacred objects in her care. Vesta, her priestesses, and the *sacra* stayed in the *aedes Vestae* in the Forum. The dedication on the Palatine came in the form of an *ara* (altar) and some sort of *signum* (most likely a statue), both of which may have been placed inside the house of Augustus where Vesta could have been treated as one of his household gods (*penates*). All of the evidence cited by scholars who support or reject this theory can be interpreted to support both sides of the argument and must be used with caution. However, the visual evidence especially can—and I argue should—be taken as commemorating the restoration of *aedes Vestae* in the Forum which occurred shortly after Augustus became *pontifex maximus*. As such the two events are coincidental, not codependent.

Augustus did, however, use his position as *pontifex maximus* to take advantage of the symbolism surrounding Vesta through the encouragement of literary and visual references between connecting the goddess to himself and the imperial family. Augustus also maintained the status of Vesta's cult by providing the priestesses with gifts and rights, and by incorporating them into new religious practices. These patterns were by and large continued by subsequent generations of *principes* who likewise preserved the standing of the cult and used the symbolic value of Vesta and her attributes when they wished. Yet Vesta and her priestesses never had a say in these association, and at times imperial notice caused them considerably more harm than it ever did good.

Chapter 2: Vesta Mater and the imperial women of Rome

Vesta's mythology in Rome was not well developed; her relationship to the other gods is rarely defined and the stories about her are few. She is often viewed in modern scholarship as a virgin goddess due to her chastity, the fact that she had no known consort or children, and as a result of the sexual status of her priestesses as virgins. However, the sources suggest that the Romans did not perceive her this way. For them, she was *Vesta mater* ("mother Vesta"). Although this situation may seem paradoxical to modern historians, it seems that this condition was perfectly understandable to the Romans. The first section of this chapter provides an overview of the ancient references to *Vesta mater*, and attempts to clarify the ancient perception of the goddess and her priestess.

During the late Republic important elite Romans began to identify themselves or their families with one or more of the gods. For example, the *Julii* family was connected to Venus through their ancestor Aeneas, and Augustus connected himself to Apollo. This practice also extended to the women of the imperial family. Livia was associated with a considerable amount and variety of goddess and feminine personifications of attributes in literature and in visual imagery (coins, statuary, etcetera). Some of these divine associations also connected her with Vesta. Although many reasons for their affiliation are suggested in the sources and in scholarship, the single most unifying element to their relationship was a shared chastity (*castitas* or *pudicitia*). Livia and other women of the imperial family are also frequently compared to Vestal Virgins. Some ancient sources provide a link between the two groups of women, but it is especially prevalent in modern scholarship. In particular, grants of privileges to female members of the imperial family are usually justified by referring to similar grants held by the Vestal Virgins. However, while the fact that the Vestals established a precedent for giving exception

rights to imperial women, it does not mean that the two groups of women were intended to be otherwise compared or likened to one another.

The final topic of this chapter considers the honors bestowed on the women of the imperial family on a larger scale, but with a focus of on the titles they received due to their motherhood. The roots of this practice can be found with Livia, but developed over the course of the *principate* and reached their culmination with Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus. Imperial women are most often honored not for being the spouse of a current emperor, but for their procreative role in providing the current (or sometimes) future leader of Rome. Thus they gained the greatest possible praise for being mothers and could be given honorific titles accordingly. This is then the one way in which the imperial women and Vesta were similar—they were both held in high regard in Roman society and were bestowed with the honorific title of *mater*.

Vesta Mater: the perception of the goddess and her priestesses

The origins for the use of the term *mater* for Vesta are not clear. It may have been a Roman custom for some time before the sources document the practice. The earliest literary example comes from Cicero's *pro Fonteio*, a speech he likely delivered c. 69 BCE in which he refers to the goddess as *Vestae matris*.¹⁸⁴ The expression *Vesta mater* also reappears on his *de Domo sua* (144). In the *Georgics* (1.498-9) Vergil describes the goddess as: *Vestaque mater quae Tuscum Tiberim et Romana Palatia servas*.¹⁸⁵ The title *Vesta mater* also appears in Ovid's *Fasti* (4.828). Likewise Seneca the Elder invokes "Vesta mater" in one of his *Controversiae* concerning the *pontifex maximus* Metellus. The latter, according to some traditions, was blinded

¹⁸⁴ Cicero, *pro Fonteius*, 21: *nolite pati, iudices, aras deorum immortalium Vestaeque matris cotidianis virginis lamentationibus de vestro iudicio commoneri*.

¹⁸⁵ Virgil, *Georgics*, 1.498-9: "...and mother Vesta who preserves the Tuscan Tiber and the Roman Palatine."

while trying to save the *sacra* from Vesta's temple during a fire a result that Seneca argues was unfair.¹⁸⁶ These examples confirm the common usage of the epithet "mater" for Vesta by the late Republic.

We also know the use of the title *Vesta mater* from inscriptions. The most notable examples of this kind come from the *Acta Fratrum Arvalium quae supersunt* of the Arval Brethren (*Arvales fratres*), which date from the mid first and second centuries CE. Roman tradition contends that this group of priests originated at approximately the same time as the city of Rome. However, by the time of Augustus the priesthood no longer functioned, and Augustus revived their practices.¹⁸⁷ The inscriptions connected to them likely reflect the way that Vesta was honored and perceived in the first century (if not earlier). One text, *CIL VI 2074*, records a vow made by the Arvals for the safe return of Emperor Trajan in which they invoke the assistance of several deities including *Vesta mater*. A second, slightly later inscription dating to 183 CE records a sacrifice in which many gods are honored and, puzzlingly, Vesta is called upon not once, but twice.

L. Tutilio Pontiano Gentiano cos. VI id. Februar., | in luco deae Diae Q. Licinius Nepos mag. operis inchoandi causa, quod | in fastigio aedis deae Diae ficus innata esset, eruendam et aedem reficiendam, immolavit suovetaurilibus maioribus; item ad aedem deae | Diae boves feminas II, Iano patri arietes II, Iovi berbeces II altilaneos, || Marti arietes altilaneos II, Iunoni deae Diae oves II, sive deo sive deae oves II, | Virginibus divis oves II, Famulis divis verbeces duos, Laribus verbeces duos, | Matri Larum oves duas, sive deo sive deae in cuius tutela hic lucus locusve | est oves II, Fonti verbeces II, Florae oves II, **Vestae** oves II, **Vestae matri** oves II; iten (sic) | Adolendae Conmolandae Deferundae oves II; item ante Caesareum divis n. XVI verbec. | immolavit n. XVI.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Seneca the Elder, *Controversiae*, 4.2. Several other examples exist. One alternative account by Ennius represents Vesta as the mother of Saturn and Titan. See: Lactantius, *Divin. Inst.* 1.14. Ennius, *Var*, 65.

¹⁸⁷ Some scholars believe, however, that Augustus invented this priesthood. The origins of the cult are recorded by Aulus Gellius, *NA*, 323, but this was not until the second century CE.

¹⁸⁸ Dessau, ed., *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, Vol. II, Pars., (Berlin: Weidmann, 1902), p. 279, #5047 = *CIL VI 2074*. "Under the consulship of Lucius Tullius Pontianus Gentianus, on the sixth day before the Ides of February (the 8th), the magister Quintus Licinius Nepos sacrificed adult suovetaurilia, in order to begin the work of digging out a fig tree that had grown on the roof of the temple of dea Dia, and in order to repair the temple; he also

Vesta is invoked the first time without modifier, but appears again immediately and this time is called *mater*. Along the same line, in what Scheid called a “parallel document” to this inscription dating to 224 CE Vesta is first called *mater*, then *Vesta deorum dearumque* (“of gods and goddesses”).¹⁸⁹

The function of *Vesta mater* and *Vesta deorum dearumque* has received very little scholarly attention. They seem to indicate (once again) a dual nature of this goddess, but in a way that is not explained at all. Wissowa accounted for the combined use of *Vesta* and *Vesta mater* by taking the former to be *Vesta deorum dearumque* as in the third example above; thus the first *Vesta* was the one who guarded the hearth of the gods, while *Vesta mater* cared for the public hearth of the Romans.¹⁹⁰ Scheid reached a similar conclusion arguing that “on the one hand we are dealing with the patron goddess of the public hearth, on the other with the *Vesta* who is the patron of the sacrificial fire of every deity, of every altar in the sacred grove.”¹⁹¹

A further source of evidence is the *Feriale Duranum*, a calendar found on papyrus that was created during the reign of Severus Alexander (224-235). It was made for a Roman military garrison at Dura-Europos and includes instructions for the celebration of the *Vestalia* in honor of

sacrificed, close to the sanctuary, two female cattle to dea Dia, two rams to father Janus, two sheep with abundant wool to Jupiter, (Column II) two rams with abundant wool to Mars, two ewes to the Juno of dea Dia; two ewes to the God-or-Goddess, two ewes to the divine Virgins, two sheep to the divine Servants, two sheep to the Lares, two ewes to the God-or-Goddess who protects this sacred grove and place, two sheep to Fons, two ewes to Flora, two ewes to Vesta, two ewes to mother Vesta; he also sacrificed two ewes to Adolenda Conmolanda <sic> Deferunda. Also, (he sacrificed) before the Caesareum sixteen sheep to the sixteen divi,” John Scheid, trans. in “Hierarchy and Structure in Roman Polytheism: Roman Methods of Conceiving Action,” in Clifford Ando, ed., *Roman Religion*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 164-189. Note that in this same inscription Mars and Neptune are both called *pater*. However, Mars is invoked twice, once as *Mars pater* and once as *Mars victor* (thus a dual nature or honoring different aspects of the god). The other Arval inscriptions are: *ILS* 2942, 4930, 4937, 5035, and 5048. A priest of Vesta from the fourth century CE, Gaius Iulius Rufinianus Ablabius Tatianus, is called a *pontifici Vestae matris*. Cf. *CIL* 10, 1125 and chapter 5.

¹⁸⁹ Scheid, “Hierarchy,” 170-1.

¹⁹⁰ G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, (Munich: Beck, 1971 [1912]) 142f. Cf. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1884), s.v. “Vesta” col. 259; cf. Fink, Hoey and Snyder, “The feriale Duranum,” *Yale Cassical Studies* 7 (1940): 1-222, at 140.

¹⁹¹ Scheid, “Hierarchy,” 170-1.

“mother Vesta”: [*v*] *id Jus i]unias ob vestalia veste matri supplicat[io] (vacat .*¹⁹² Thus Vesta was considered important enough that men, and soldiers no less, far away from the *aedes Vestae* in Rome were expected to honor the goddess on this day.

Although scholarship has gone back and forth over the perception of Vesta, recent scholars have started to identify and comment about the motherly, as opposed to the virginal, aspect of Vesta.¹⁹³ The first problem with this theory is that Vesta would then be a mother without children. This can be explained by accepting *mater* as a title of respect, something along the lines of “venerable”. In her study of *Latin forms of address*, Dickey includes as part of her definition for the term “mater”: “Alone in extended usage as a respectful and affectionate address to goddesses and older women.”¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, in his study of the “Mother of the gods” Borgeaud states

The name “Mother” can refer to two ideas. The first is maternity in the sense of the direct filiation: this Mother is a “mother” because she has a given number of children, whom we can name. Second, there is the respect linked to “maternal” status in general. All female divinities, in this sense, were theoretically likely to see themselves called “Mother.”¹⁹⁵

Wissowa explained the use of *mater* with Vesta (and likewise for any other goddesses to whom it was applied) as a sign of Vesta’s preeminent rank in official religion.¹⁹⁶ Other examples of goddesses identified with the epithet *mater* include Tellus (*Tellus Mater* or “Mother Earth”) and Juno (*Juno Sospes Mater Regina*).¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² *Feriale Duranum*, Column II, line 15. Fink et al., 138, also state that “The spelling *veste* instead of *vestae* is merely an example of the substitution of E for AE which was rather common at this time.”

¹⁹³ Richard Wright, “Vesta: A Study on the Origin of a Goddess and her Cultus,” (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 1995), 1995; Robin Lorsch Wildfang, *Rome’s Vestal Virgins*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7.

¹⁹⁴ Eleanor Dickey, *Latin Forms of Address: from Plautus to Apuleius*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 340 s.v. “mater”.

¹⁹⁵ Borgeaud, *Mother of the Gods: from Cybele to the Virgin Mary*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 28. He also states, “The Mother of the gods is also the Mother of humankind and the protector of cities,” 30.

¹⁹⁶ Wissowa, 142f.

¹⁹⁷ For Juno see K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, (Munich, 1960), 166-8. Cf. Saratola A. Takács, *Vestal virgins, sibyls, and matrons: women in Roman religion*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2008), 33.

Clearly the Romans thought of Vesta as a mother figure and not a young virgin. In addition to her provenance over the hearth, enough evidence exists to also suggest that she possessed elements of an earth goddess or sort of “mother Earth”. This is demonstrated through her connections to and similarities with other earth and fertility goddesses and in the role her priestesses played in several state fertility festivals.

Vesta (and also her Greek counterpart Hestia) is often associated with goddesses connected to the earth and fertility (especially agricultural) and were likewise considered “mothers”. Her priestesses took part in an annual ritual to Tellus Mater, and Ovid clearly identifies a connection between this goddess and Vesta: *Tellus Vestaque numen idem* (“Tellus and Vesta are the same deity”).¹⁹⁸ Similarly in the Greek East Hestia was connected to Gaea (Gē Mâtēr or “mother Earth”).¹⁹⁹ The Vestals also supervised the festival of the Bona Dea. Although the sphere of influence of this goddess is not fully explained in our sources, one of her epithets (*Agrestis*) may indicate agricultural fertility.²⁰⁰ Moreover, any agricultural components to Vesta and her priestesses would naturally overlap with the purview of the Roman agricultural fertility goddess par excellence, Ceres. Although a decisive family tree does not exist for the Roman pantheon, there is some indication that the Romans considered the latter goddess, as well as Juno, to be Vesta’s sister.²⁰¹ Thus Vesta was related to both Rome’s chief goddesses of

¹⁹⁸ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.460.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.23.8: “*Quod autem addit: μένει δὲ Ἑστία ἐν θεῶν οἴκῳ μόνη, significat quia haec sola, quam terram esse accipimus, manet immobilis intra domum deorum, id est intra mundum, ut ait Euripides: Καὶ Γαῖα μήτηρ, Ἑστίαν δὲ σ’ οἱ σοφοὶ Βροτῶν καλοῦσιν ἡμένην ἐν αἰθέρι.*” Translation: “As Euripides says: and mother Earth: the wise among mortals call you Hestia, sitting still in the ether,” Robert A. Kaster, trans.; cf. Porphyry, as cited by Eusebius (*Praep. Ev.*, 3.11.7) identifies two images of Hestia, the model virgin and the fertile matron.

²⁰⁰ H. H. J. Brouwer, *Bona Dea. The sources and a description of the cult*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 249.

²⁰¹ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6, 285-8: *ex Ope Iunonem memorant Cereremque creatas / semine Saturni, tertia Vesta fuit; utraque nupserunt, ambae peperisse feruntur, / de tribus impatiens restitit una viri.*

agriculture and biological fertility. Consequently, the possibility that Vesta was likewise connected with fertility becomes greater.²⁰²

Another factor to consider is that many of the rites that the Vestal priestesses participated in were intrinsically fertility rituals, primarily for crops and animals. Indeed, Vesta and her virgins were connected to grain in several ways: the Vestals prepared *mola salsa* (salted flour) that was frequently used in many Roman sacrifices, and Vesta was the patron deity of bakers and their donkeys (used to mill grain). Thus her precise domain seems to be the preparation of food (grain), especially the kind of food that was made in a hearth fire. They also were involved in rites that involved the reproduction of animals. During the ritual of the *Fordicidia* (April 15) the Romans sacrificed pregnant cows to Tellus or Tellus Mater ('mother' Earth), and part of the rite involved tearing unborn calves from their mother's wombs. The chief Vestal burned these calves and stored their ashes to use at the *Parilia*. The latter was held on April 21, and it was a fertility ritual for shepherds. During the ceremony the Vestals combined the ashes with the blood of a horse that had been sacrificed the previous October, then gave the mixture to the shepherds to use as "...a fertility charm...to quicken both the seed in the ground and the wombs of the cows and the ewes."²⁰³ Thus, the Vestals took part in many fertility festivals throughout the year, and most of these had a focus on agricultural fertility. Once proper preparations had been made for the growth of this grain, Vesta was the patron over its use as bread and also in religious ceremonies that involved the special grain cakes made by her priestesses.

The perception of her priestesses, the Vestal Virgins, as either virgins or mothers is a related but separate issue. It is clear that the priestesses were required to maintain their virginal

²⁰² This argument could potentially be taken one step further. While Juno was a wife and a mother, and Ceres a mother but not a wife, Vesta was neither. Thus as a triad they covered the entire spectrum of possibilities for women's lives (only missing the childless wife, although you could argue that Ceres's loss of Persephone might substitute).

²⁰³ J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 229.

status during their thirty years of service to the goddess. Indeed, The very name of the priestesses, the “virgins of Vesta” (*virgines Vestalis*), provides a significant stumbling block since it evokes a fixed image of the priestesses. However, certain aspects about them, such as their appearance, suggest aspects of adult women. Scholars have endeavored repeatedly to reconcile these issues. Frazer was the first to argue that Vesta always bore the official title of “mother” and never that of Virgin.²⁰⁴ He also believed that Vestals of any age were addressed as *mater*, and that this suggests that they evolved from the wives of the early kings, although a counter argument exists that maintains the first priestesses were in fact his daughters.²⁰⁵ Among the evidence which he adduces in support of this claim he refers to the initiation ceremony for Vestal priestesses in which they are addressed by the name “Amata” (Beloved), which was the name of the wife of King Latinus, the legendary king of the Latins.²⁰⁶ Although the way Frazer expressed this leads us to think of Amata as a wife first, she was also a mother. Still, this argument alone is not convincing. More compelling, however, are linguistic studies which argue that “Amata” is a derivation of *amma*, *ama*, a familiar expression of *mater*.²⁰⁷ Indeed, one theory goes further to claim that *ama-ta* would mean “the one made to be a mother”, and also that *Vesta-lis* should also be interpreted as “the Vesta.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ James Frazer, *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, vol. 2 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), 198 and 229.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 229-30. For other scholarship that argues that the Vestals began as the wives of kings see: K. Mustakallio, “The ‘crimen incesti’ of the Vestal Virgins and the Prodigious Pestilence,” in T. Viljamaa, A. Timonen and C. Kritzel eds., *Crudelitas: The Politics of Cruelty in the Ancient and Medieval World*, (Turku, Finland: Medium Aevum Quotidianum, 1992): 56-62; Maria Cristina Martini, “Carattere e struttura del sacerdozio delle Vestali: un approccio storico-religioso. Primo parte,” *Latomus* 56.2 (1997): 245-263. For arguments in favor of Vestals as the daughters of kings, see: H. J. Rose, “De Virginibus Vestalibus,” *Mnemosyne* 54 (1926): 440-448; Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. 8A.2 (1958), 1774.

²⁰⁶ Frazer, 197. The ancient passage comes from Aulus Gellius 1.12.14: *Sacerdotem Vestalem, quae sacra faciat, quae ius siet sacerdotem Vestalem facere pro populo Romano Quiritibus, uti quae optima lege fuit, ita ate, Amata, capio*. However, several other theories have been advanced. For an overview see Wildfang, 40-1.

²⁰⁷ Francesco Guizzi, *Aspetti giuridici del sacerdozio romano. Il sacerdozio di Vesta*, (Naples: E. Jovene, 1968), 55.

²⁰⁸ Wright, 133.

It is also necessary to consider the multiple meanings that the Latin word *virgo* might express. It most simply meant a girl or maiden, but had the additional connotation of “unwedded” or “pure” since all young women were expected to be chaste until their wedding night.²⁰⁹ Modern western culture tends to use the equivalent word virgin foremost as an identifier of sexual status (a person who has not yet had intercourse), but accepts that the term is generally applied only to young women.²¹⁰ Thus the meaning of the word has changed a little over time, and both cultures as a general rule identify a virgin as a young woman who has not had intercourse. Watson’s analysis of the Roman use of the word *virgo* is also helpful for the present discussion. She used examples from Comedy (especially Plautus and Terrence) to make the following conclusions (among others). First, she argues that *virgo* can be used to mean both “young” and “unmarried” synonymously.²¹¹ Second, that through the end of the first century BCE the word *virgo* referred more to a woman’s respectability than her physical virginity; thus a *virgo* was “an unmarried girl of respectable morals” and that “in most cases she is also sexually inexperienced: this notion, however, is not part of the primary sense of *virgo* but a secondary resonance which the word acquired through social custom: since unmarried girls were expected to be chaste this meaning is usually—but not necessarily—present.”²¹² Third, “As the junior version of the *matrona*, *virgines* are often coupled with *matronae/matres* and/or *pueri* to denote the different groups of people within the civilian population.”²¹³

This analysis suggests that a woman in Rome was either a *virgo* or a *mater*. No intermediate state existed. As such, there was no additional term available that could be used to define a woman who remained a virgin into adulthood because it was not common practice to do

²⁰⁹ Lewis and Short, s.v. “virgo”.

²¹⁰ Merriam-Webster, s.v. “virgo”.

²¹¹ P. Watson, “Puella and Virgo,” *Glotta* 61 (1992): 119-143, at 120 fn. 7.

²¹² Watson, 122 and 125.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 125.

so—except among the small group of Vestal priestesses. In addition, she further argues that “...the word *mater* would have meant not only ‘mother’ but also ‘matron’ or more technically ‘a woman belonging to the class of married Roman citizen women.’”²¹⁴ Thus if the Vestals were unmarried and childless, they fit better into the category of *virgines*.

Watson’s theory about the use of *virgo* with these specific meanings can be advanced to further support the present discussion. Although several examples exist, I will focus on the written accounts of three young women from Rome’s early myth-history. At the very beginning of the Republic Cloelia and many of Rome’s other youth were taken as hostages during a time of war. She escaped, but returned to her captors since they promised to free the other hostages in exchange for her. Livy’s account refers to her as “Cloelia virgo”. He uses the word *virgo* to describe her and the other young women held captive and mentions her “femina virtutem”.²¹⁵ Valerius Maximus mentions her simply by her name, but he does refer to the “virgines” and the word “puella” also appears.²¹⁶ In his account of Tarpeia, who according to some accounts was a Vestal Virgin, Livy does not once mention her by name. Rather she receives one mention by the title “virginem” at the beginning of the passage and nothing again (perhaps an indication that the

²¹⁴ Wildfang, 7; Cf. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* 8, s.v. “mater”.

²¹⁵ Livy, 2.13.6-11: *ergo ita honorata virtute feminae quoque ad publica decora excitatae, et Cloelia virgo, una ex obsidibus, cum castra Etruscorum forte haud procul ripa Tiberis locata essent, frustrata custodes, dux agminis virginum inter tela hostium Tiberim tranavit sospitesque omnes Romam ad propinquos restituit. quod ubi regi nuntiatum est, primo incensus ira oratores Romam misit ad Cloeliam obsidem deposcendam: alias haud magni facere; deinde in admirationem versus supra Coclites Muciosque dicere id facinus esse et prae se ferre, quem ad modum, si non dedatur obses, pro rupto foedus se habiturum, sic deditam intactam inviolatamque ad suos remissurum. ipsa, quos vellet, legeret. productis omnibus elegisse inpubes dicitur, quod et virginitati decorum et consensu obsidum ipsorum probabile erat, eam aetatem potissimum liberari ab hoste, quae maxime opportuna iniuriae esset. pace redintegrata Romani novam in femina virtutem novo genere honoris, statua equestri, donavere: in summa sacra via posita virgo insidens equo.*

²¹⁶ Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, 3.2.2: *Immemorem me propositi mei Cloelia facit, paene eadem enim tempestate, certe aduersus eundem hostem et in eodem Tiberi inclytum ausa facinus: inter ceteras enim uirgines obses Porsennae data hostium nocturno tempore custodiam egressa equum conscendit celerique traiectu fluminis non solum obsidio se, sed etiam metu patriam soluit, uiris puella lumen uirtutis praeferendo.*

severity of her crime indicates that she no longer deserves to be mentioned).²¹⁷ In contrast, Propertius, mentions Tarpeia by name several times in his section on her, and also uses the words “puella” and “virgo” once each.²¹⁸ Livy’s habit of not mentioning young girls by name also appears in his account of Verginia, who was accused of being a slave so that she could be ravished by an important man whom desired her. Throughout his (rather lengthy) story, Livy

²¹⁷ Livy, 1.11.6-9: *consilio etiam additus dolus. Sp. Tarpeius Romanae praeerat arci. huius filiam virginem auro corrumpit Tatius, ut armatos in arcem accipiat; aquam forte ea tum sacris extra moenia petitem ierat. accepti obrutam armis necavere, seu ut vi capta potius arx videretur, seu prodendi exempli causa, ne quid usquam fidum proditori esset. additur fabula, quod vulgo Sabini aureas armillas magni ponderis brachio laevo gemmatosque magna specie anulos habuerint, pepigisse eam, quod in sinistris manibus haberent; eo scuta illi pro aureis donis congesta. sunt, qui eam ex pacto tradendi, quod in sinistris manibus esset, derecto arma petisse dicant et fraude visam agere sua ipsam peremptam mercede.*

²¹⁸ Propertius, *Elegies*, 4.4: *Tarpeium nemus et Tarpeiae turpe sepulcrum fabor et antiqui limina capta Iouis. lucus erat felix hederoso conditus antro, multaque natiuis obstrepit arbor aquis, Siluani ramosa domus, quo dulcis ab aestu fistula poturas ire iubebat ouis. hunc Tatius fontem uallo praecingit acerno, fidaque suggesta castra coronat humo. quid tum Roma fuit, tubicen uicina Curetis cum quateret lento murmure saxa Iouis? atque ubi nunc terris dicuntur iura subactis, stabant Romano pila Sabina Foro. murus erant montes: ubi nunc est curia saepta, bellicus ex illo fonte bibebat equus. hinc Tarpeia deae fontem libauit: at illi urgebat medium fictilis urna caput. et satis una malae potuit mors esse puellae, quae uoluit flammis fallere, Vesta, tuas? uidit harenosis Tatum proludere campis pictaque per flauas arma leuare iubas: obstipuit regis facie et regalibus armis, interque oblitus excidit urna manus. saepe illa immeritae causata est omina lunae, et sibi tingendas dixit in amne comas: saepe tulit blandis argentea lilia Nymphis, Romula ne faciem laederet hasta Tati. dumque subit primo Capitolia nubila fumo, rettulit hirsutis brachia secta rubis, et sua Tarpeia residens ita fleuit ab arce uulnera, uicino non patienda Ioui: "ignes castrorum et Tatiae praetoria turmae et formosa oculis arma Sabina meis, o utinam ad uestros sedeam captiua Penatis, dum captiua mei conspicer ora Tati! Romani montes, et montibus addita Roma, et ualeat probro Vesta pudenda meo: ille equus, ille meos in castra eponet amores, cui Tatius dextras collocat ipse iubas! quid mirum in patrios Scyllam saeuisse capillos, candidaque in saeuos inguina uersa canis? prodita quid mirum fraterni cornua monstri, cum patuit lecto stamine torta uia? quantum ego sum Ausoniis crimen factura puellis, improba uirgineo lecta ministra foco! Pallados extinctos si quis mirabitur ignis, ignoscat: lacrimis spargitur ara meis. cras, ut rumor ait, tota potabitur urbe: tu cape spinosi rorida terga iugi. lubrica tota uia est et perfida: quippe tacentis fallaci celat limite semper aquas. o utinam magicae nossem cantamina Musae! haec quoque formoso lingua tulisset opem. te toga picta decet, non quem sine matris honore nutrit inhumanae dura papilla lupae. hic, hospes, patria metuar regina sub aula? dos tibi non humilis prodita Roma uenit. si minus, at raptae ne sint impune Sabinae: me rape et alterna lege repende uices! commissas acies ego possum soluere: nuptae uos medium palla foedus inite mea. adde Hymenaeae modos, tubicen fera murmura conde: credite, uestra meus molliet arma torus. et iam quarta canit uenturam bucina lucem, ipsaque in Oceanum sidera lapsa cadunt. experiar somnum, de te mihi somnia quaeram: fac uenias oculis umbra benigna meis." dixit, et incerto permisit brachia somno, nescia se furiis accubuisse nouis. nam Vesta, Iliacae felix tutela fauillae, culpam alit et plures condit in ossa faces. illa ruit, qualis celerem prope Thermodonta Strymonis abscisso fertur aperta sinu. urbi festus erat (dixere Parilia patres), hic primus coepit moenibus esse dies, annua pastorum conuiuia, lusus in urbe, cum pagana madent fercula diuitiis, cumque super raros faeni flammantis aceros traicit immundus ebria turba pedes. Romulus excubias decreuit in otia solui atque intermissa castra silere tuba. hoc Tarpeia suum tempus rata conuenit hostem: pacta ligat, pactis ipsa futura comes. mons erat ascensu dubius festoque remissus nec mora, ocalis occupat ense canis. omnia praebebant somnos: sed Iuppiter unus decreuit poenis inuigilare suis. Prodiderat portaeque fidem patriamque iacentem, nubendique petit, quem uelit, ipsa diem. at Tatius (neque enim sceleri dedit hostis honorem) "nube" ait "et regni scande cubile mei!" dixit, et ingestis comitum super obruit armis. haec, uirgo, officii dos erat apta tuis. a duce Tarpeia mons est cognomen adeptus: o uigil, iniustae praemia sortis habes.*

never mentions Verginia by name, only as either “puella” or “virgo”.²¹⁹ Each female figure in these stories was a young, unmarried female. They were also from families belonging to upper-class Roman society. Thus all of Watson’s conditions for the term “virgo” are present.

To apply these conditions to the Vestals is more difficult, but it can be done. At least at the time when a Vestal priestess was brought into the cult she was young, unmarried, and from a good (citizen) family. The only thing that changed over time was her age—the other conditions remained. However, the Romans had no term an unmarried adult woman.²²⁰ It possibly made more sense for them to retain the title of “virgo” for the Vestals (rather than “mater” if these were the only two options) since there was no reason to believe that their status as unmarried women would change since they were committed to thirty years of service. Moreover, no standardized title for priestesses ever came into being. Until the first century BCE the most common title used for the Vestal Virgins was either “sacerdos Vestalis” or “sacerdos Vestae”, after which the phrasing “virgo Vestalis” or “virgo Vestae” became more common.²²¹ This fact

²¹⁹ Livy, 344f. : *Ap. Claudium virginis plebeiae stuprandae libido cepit. pater virginis, L. Verginius, honestum ordinem in Algido ducebat, vir exempli recti domi militiaeque. perinde uxor instituta fuerat liberique instituebantur. desponderat filiam L. Icilio tribunicio, viro acri et pro causa plebis expertae virtutis. hanc virgines adultam, forma excellentem Appius amore amens pretio ac spe perlicere adortus, postquam omnia pudore saepta animadvertit, ad crudelem superbamque vim animum convertit. M. Claudio clienti negotium dedit, ut virginem in servitutem adsereret neque cederet secundum libertatem postulantibus vindicias, quod pater puellae abesset, locum iniuriae esse ratus. virgini venienti in forum—ibi namque in tabernaculis litterarum ludi erant—minister decemviri libidinis manum iniecit serva sua natam servamque appellans sequique se iubebat: cunctantem vi abstracturum. pavida puella stupente ad clamorem nutricis fidem Quiritium inplorantis fit concursus. Vergini patris sponsique Icili populare nomen celebratur. notos gratia eorum, turbam indignitas rei virgini conciliat. iam a vi tuta erat, cum adsertor nihil opus esse multitudine concitata ait; se iure grassari, non vi. vocat puellam in ius. auctoribus qui aderant, ut sequeretur, ad tribunal Appi perventum est. notam iudici fabulam petitor, quippe apud ipsum auctorem arguerenti, peragit; puellam domi suae natam furtoque inde in domum Vergini translatae suppositam ei esse.*

²²⁰ I have found only a couple of uses of the word *caelibes* “unmarried” (from *caelebs*) but it does not appear to have been common.

²²¹ Nina Mekacher, *Die vestalischen Jungfrauen in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2006), 20-21. She provides a comprehensive list of primary source examples in Latin, but also in Greek sources. Cf. Aulus Gellius 10.15.31; *CIL* 6, 2128.

can be easily seen in the above mentioned speech of Cicero on behalf of Fonteius wherein he refers to this man's sister, a priestess of Vesta, as *virgo*, *virgo Vestalis*, and once as *sacerdotis*.²²²

A further conclusion that Watson made also helps to explain the continued perception of both the Vestal Virgins and the goddess herself as *virgines*. She found that that "Ovid is the first writer to make extensive use of *virgo* in the technical [biological] sense 'virgin'."²²³ This is significant for several reasons. First, his work falls into the transitional period when the term most often used for the priestesses was evolving from *sacerdos* to *virgo*. Second, he is a major contemporary source of information about the goddess Vesta, and while he calls her *Vesta mater* in an example cited above, he also refers to her as a *virgo* in the passage which declares Juno and Ceres to be her sisters.

ex Ope Iunonem memorant Cereremque creatas
 semine Saturni, tertia Vesta fuit;
 utraque nupserunt, ambae peperisse feruntur,
 de tribus impatiens restitit una viri.
 quid mirum, virgo si virgine laeta ministra
 admittit castas ad sua sacra manus?
 nec tu aliud Vestam quam vivam intellege flammam,
 nataque de flamma corpora nulla vides.
 iure igitur virgo est, quae semina nulla remittit
 nec capit et comites virginitatis amat.²²⁴

²²² Cicero, *pro Fonteius*, 21: *quod si tantas auxiliorum nostrorum copias Indutiomarus ipse despexerit, dux Allobrogum ceterorumque Galloru1, num etiam de matris hunc complexu, lectissimae miserrimaeque feminae, vobis inspectantibus avellet atque abstrahet? praesertim cum virgo Vestalis ex altera parte germanum fratrem complexa teneat vestramque, iudices, ac populi Romani fidem imploret; quae pro vobis liberisque vestris tot annos in dis immortalibus placandis occupata est ut ea nunc pro salute sua fratrisque sui animos vestros placare possit. cui miserae quod praesidium, quod solacium reliquum est hoc amisso? nam ceterae feminae gignere ipsae sibi praesidia et habere domi fortunarum omnium socium participemque possunt; huic vero virgini quid est praeter fratrem quod aut iucundum aut carum esse possit? nolite pati, iudices, aras deorum immortalium Vestaeque matris cotidianis virginis lamentationibus de vestro iudicio commoneri; prospicite ne ille ignis aeternus nocturnis Fonteiae laboribus vigiliisque servatus sacerdotis vestrae lacrimis exstinctus esse dicatur. tendit ad vos virgo Vestalis manus supplices easdem quas pro vobis dis immortalibus tendere consuevit. Cavete ne periculosum superbumque sit eius vos obsecrationem repudiare cuius preces si di aspernentur, haec salva esse non possent.*

²²³ Watson, 129.

²²⁴ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.282-294: "Why, you ask, do virgin attendants serve the goddess? I shall find the correct causes here, too. Juno and Ceres, they recount, were born from Ops by Saturnus' seed. Vesta was the third. The first two married, both gave birth, it's reported; one of the three stayed ignorant of men. What is strange, if a virgin likes virgin attendants and allows only chaste hands at her rites? Understand Vesta as nothing but living flame; you see no substances born from flame. She is a virgin *de iure*, giving and taking no seed, and loves virginity's escorts," A. J. Boyle and R. D. Woodard, trans.

Indeed, some form of this word appears repeatedly throughout this section. It also seems to indicate that Ovid himself was somewhat confused over the nature of Vesta, although I find this unlikely. First of all, this passage assimilates the goddess with her priestesses. Since they were *virgines*, she was a *virgo*. Second, these terms must be taken for the entire range of meanings and not just their biological definition. I argue that the focus needs to be placed on their implications for purity and chastity. The above passage of Ovid supports this with his focus on their “chaste hands” (*castas manus*). It is also possible that there is some connection here to the *Campus Sceleratus* or “polluted field” where Vestals convicted of *incestum* (broken vow of chastity) were buried alive since they were no longer “pure” or a *virgo*.²²⁵ Moreover, the virginity of Vesta and her priestesses was a byproduct of their chastity. Vesta was a chaste goddess without a husband and priestesses were chaste women who could not marry. As such their chastity should be the focus, and the virginity or continued status of the priestesses as *virgines* was the byproduct.

The appearance and dress of the Vestal Virgins also deserves a brief mention since it is typically mentioned in the question of whether the priestesses were considered *virgines* or *matres* and because I believe that it is a topic that deserves additional consideration. Their official statuary presents a somewhat standard dress and hairstyle, sometimes called the “Vestal type” which (in most cases) clearly delineates these examples from those of goddesses or imperial women. They also demonstrate that the Vestals simultaneously wore elements of dress that are associated with both brides and adult women. Once again, the meaning for this has caused considerable scholarly debate.

²²⁵ The etymology of this name is interesting. Was it called this because the Vestals were buried there, or did it have the name before?

The Vestal “costume” distinguishes the priestesses in visual imagery. Statue heads are especially useful since they show the unique hairstyle and headdress of the Vestal Virgins. Indeed, without the heads it is hard to identify a statue as a priestess unless there is some additional identification. According to Festus their hairstyle was called the *sex crines* and this coiffure was only used by the priestesses and by Roman brides.²²⁶ Portrait heads all show a characteristic style in which the hair is parted on the forehead and put in a round roll that frames the front, to the rear. About the vertices it is tightly combed back and braided in the neck in braids (usually four or five) that are shown around the head. Over this coiffure were placed bands of wool, although they do not always look exactly the same and different interpretations exist over how it would have been done in actual practice.²²⁷ No other literary sources describe the *sex crines*, and pictorial representations are not detailed enough to demonstrate what was going on underneath.²²⁸ The two terms, *infula* and *vitta*, are often used interchangeably and their exact relationship to each other is not clear from the literature. According the ancient descriptions, an *infula* was white or may have had some red on it also.²²⁹ In the case of the Vestals, the bottom strips often hung down around their shoulders. In addition, a *suffibulum*

²²⁶ Festus, p. 454K: *senis crinibus nubentes ornatur quod [h]is ornatus vestutissimus fuit. Quidam quod eo Vestales virgines ornentur.* Cf. Laetitia LaFollette and R Wallace, “Latin *seni crines* and the hair style of Roman brides,” *SyllClass*, 4 (1993): 43-48; Wildfang, 11-13: “It seems probable then that Vestals and brides employed the same hairstyle because they were both pure and occupied a liminal position in relation to the traditional Roman family structure,” 13. However, other scholars argue that the Vestals wore their hair short and that either a wig or some additional wool bands were used to give the appearance of longer hair. Cf. Mekacher, 46. Laetitia La Follette, “The Costume of the Roman Bride,” in *The World of Roman Costume*, Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante, eds. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001):54-64. Following the theory of Wildfang, I suggest an additional, practical idea. If the goal was to single out the Vestal Virgin in imagery, one easy way to do so would be to give them a unique hairdo—such as one that woman wore only one (or a very few) day in her entire life.

²²⁷ Mekacher, 45.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

(short veil) fell to approximately their chest (some variation exists), and over this is often a *fibula* (brooch).²³⁰

The body of a Vestal in statuary is covered by the *stola* which was a sign of chastity for married women (and should be taken in this way for the Vestal Virgins also).²³¹ Other than these artistic representations, their dress is scarcely mentioned in literature. Pliny reports that when the Vestal Cornelia had been convicted of *incestum* and was descending into a pit to die that her shawl caught on something. This was likely a veil that may have been used as a cloak that was separate from the *suffibulum*. Giulio Gianelli coined a term for this article of clothing, the *stola carbasina*, which according to him was a *tunica matoronale*.²³² This appears to agree with statuary that seems to show fine undergarments with heavy material draped over it. Sometimes the clothing is cinched with either a belt or a Hercules knot.²³³ The sources indicate that the majority of their clothing was white, although the *suffibulum* may have had a purple hem and the *infula* may have had some red on it.²³⁴ No ink residue exists on any of the statues to confirm any conclusions about color.²³⁵

The effect of Vestal artistic representation has puzzled scholars. The statues suggests a dual nature to Vesta and her priestesses as brides as well as married women, and perhaps even a permanent, transitional aspect between girlhood and womanhood (no longer young in age but abstaining from sexual intercourse due to their religious obligations). Although their clothing seems to us to conflict, they certainly meant something to the Romans that they clearly

²³⁰ Festus L. p. 474: *Suffibulum est vestimentum al<bum, praetextum, qua>drangulum, oblongum quod in ca<pite virgines Ve>stales, cum sacrificant, semper<habere solent, i>dque fibula comprehenditur.*

²³¹ LaFollette, 54-64; Mekacher, 44-49; Wildfang, 13-16; Mary Beard, "The sexual status of Vestal Virgins," *Journal of Roman Studies* 70 (1980): 12-27, 16, was the first to argue for a connection between the Vestals and the *matronae* in this regard.

²³² Giulio Gianelli, *Il sacerdozio delle Vestali romane*, (Florence: Galletti e Cocci, 1913).

²³³ Mekacher, 47-8.

²³⁴ The *Suda* also mentions that they wore white and Festus' entry for the the *suffibulum* suggests the same.

²³⁵ Mekacher, 48

understood. I would suggest that at least part of the solution is that their “costume” reflects a very early form or dress for Roman women that did not evolve to match or incorporate new styles of clothing. Moreover, while the Vestal Virgins wore the hairstyle of a bride or the *stola* of a married woman, they stood apart from other women in the color of their garments which was primarily white (with possible elements of purple and red). Indeed, while their *siffibulum* is sometimes compared to a bridal veil, the latter wore a flame colored (yellow-orange) head covering—not white.²³⁶ Thus, the specific composition and characteristic of the dress of the Vestals are unique to these priestesses and is most notable for their color (white) and the elaborateness of their hair and headdress.²³⁷

I further suggest that despite the above, popular, representation of the Vestals in art, their everyday dress may have been quite different. On this matter Shelton comments: “Although there are quite a few artistic depictions of Vestal Virgins, including statues found in the residence or dormitory where they lived in the Forum, we have no certain description of how they may have been required to dress.”²³⁸ The above may have been the standard, sacred portrayal of a Vestal priestess and may have represented their appearance when undertaking sacred duties in and on behalf of the public. However, there is reason to believe that this was not their everyday uniform. Livy recounts two stories wherein a Vestal priestess was criticized for her appearance. In the first the Vestal Postumia (420 BCE) was charged with *incestus* for being too showy in her

²³⁶ Festus L. p. 474.

²³⁷ Although no firm connection can be made, I find a passage from Diodorus Siculus, 16.26.6, about the Pythia to be an interesting point of comparison: “It is said that in ancient times virgins delivered the oracles because virgins have their natural innocence intact and are in the same case as Artemis; for indeed virgins were alleged to be well suited to guard the secrecy of disclosures made by oracles. In more recent times, however, people say that Echebrates the Thessalian, having arrived at the shrine and beheld the virgin who uttered the oracle, became enamoured of her because of her beauty, carried her away with him and violated her; and that the Delphians because of this deplorable occurrence passed a law that in future a virgin should no longer prophesy but that an elderly woman of fifty should declare the oracles and that she should be dressed in the costume of a virgin, as a sort of reminder of the prophetess of olden times.” C. L. Sherman, trans.

²³⁸ Jo-Ann Shelton, *The Women of Pliny’s Letters*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 313.

dress and too free in her speech, more so than a *virginem* should. These facts led to suspicion about her purity. She was found innocent but received a warning from the *pontifex maximus* to dress and act properly.²³⁹ The other example occurred in 337 BCE when the Vestal Minucia was also suspected of breaking her vow of chastity because of the manner of her dress which was “more elegant than suitable”. In her case, Minucia was found guilty and suffered the punishment of inhumation.²⁴⁰ These accounts are not specific about what elements of the priestesses’ wardrobe was improper, but they do demonstrate that all six priestesses did not dress in exactly the same way at all times, and that they had some freedom to choose what they wore. Whether this included the *stola* and *vitta* is not known. At a minimum, it seems logical to presume that they were allowed some variety in color and choice of fabric, if not also in their style of dress. Moreover, if the Vestal Virgins did not conform to the artistic representations of their appearance at all times, it is likewise possible that they did not always wear the *sex crines* in their hair.

The confusion concerning the status of Vesta as either virgin or mother (or even both) is understandable. Vesta has no romantic ties or marital affiliations. Moreover, the Romans saw her as a mother, but Vesta has no children. The most sacred object in her care, the Palladium, also had ties to the virgin goddess Athena. Then there is the issue of her virgin priestesses, which are most likely the prime source of the confusion. Traditional thinking has been that virgin attendants serve a virgin goddess (or so says Ovid), but was this necessary? Moreover, some scholarship has argued that the Vestals were a visual representation or embodiment of the

²³⁹ Livy, 4.44.11-2: *eodem anno Postumia virgo Vestalis de incestu causam dixit crimine innoxia, ab suspitione propter cultum amoeniorem ingeniumque liberius, quam virginem decet, parum abhorrens. eam ampliata, deinde absolutam pro collegii sententia pontifex maximus abstinere iocis colique sancte potius quam scite iussit.*

²⁴⁰ Livy, 8.15.7-8: *eo anno Minucia Vestalis suspecta primo propter mundiorem iusto cultum, insimulata deinde apud pontifices ab indice servo, cum decreto eorum iussa esset sacris abstinere familiamque in potestate habere, facto iudicio viva sub terram ad portam Collinam extra viam stratam defossa Scelerato campo; credo ab incesto id ei loco nomen factum.*

goddess. This would not have been possible since Vesta was generally represented as a flame (at least through the late Republic). The key to understanding this situation is to focus on the chastity of Vesta and her priestesses rather than virginity. Vesta was a chaste goddess. Her priestesses were also chaste; however due to the early age that the priestesses were brought into the cult, their chastity and their virginity was the same. Regardless of whether they were considered *virgo* or *mater*, but were meant as titles of respect, something that *Vesta mater* shared in common with some of the imperial women of Rome.

Imperial Women and their ties to Vesta and the Vestal Virgins

Livia (58 BCE – 29 CE) in her position as *de facto* first lady of Rome was linked to several goddesses including Juno, Ceres, Magna Mater, and of course Vesta. Indeed, Vesta is affiliated with Livia more often than with any other empress, and although the number of sources that connect them are not many, they are clearly expressed.

Our main sources fall into two general categories: material evidence and literary references. In his study of imperial women and their assimilations to goddesses as seen in objects, Mikocki finds that Livia was assimilated with 17 divinities in total, and that only six artifacts (out of 132 examples) connected Livia and Vesta.²⁴¹ This selectivity indicates that when the two are connected, it was a deliberate, purposeful choice.

The similarities between Livia and Vesta is most clearly expressed in Ovid's *Epistulae ex Ponto* in which he calls Livia the "Vesta of chaste mothers" (*puđicarum Vesta matrum*).²⁴² He also connects them in the *Tristia*:

²⁴¹ Tomasz Mikocki, *Sub specie deae: les impératrices et princesses romaines assimilées à des déesses: étude iconologique*, (Roma: G. Bretschneider, 1995), 125.

²⁴² Ovid, *Pontus*, 4.13.29.

pro sospite Livia nato
 munera det meritis, saepe data, deis,
 et pariter matres et quae sine crimine castos
 perpetua servant virginitate focos²⁴³

Ovid wrote the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* during his time of exile, thus after 8 CE. It is unlikely that they appeared in Rome before the death of Augustus in 14 CE, and as such Livia must have been his intended audience rather than the emperor. Surely Ovid intended to flatter Livia, and it is interesting that he chose comparison to Vesta as one way to accomplish this. Indeed, these two passages demonstrate not only an affiliation between Livia and Vesta (which is implied in the second text), but also to the concept of chastity, either *pudicitia* or *castitas*. Thus Ovid chose Vesta as the goddess who best represented the conduct of Livia in her widowhood.

A small amount of material evidence can also be used to support a connection between Livia and Vesta. Some of the empresses' statuary presents her in the guise of priestesses, perhaps as a Vestal Virgin.²⁴⁴ However, while it is possible that her image was meant to evoke the Vestals, the statues do not fully conform to the "Vestal type" discussed above. Evidence also suggests an association with Livia and Hestia (the Greek counterpart to Vesta) in the East. An inscription from Athens indicates a combined worship there of Hestia, Livia, and Augustus' daughter, Julia.²⁴⁵ Moreover, a second inscription from Lampsakos honors a Iulia Augusta under several names including *Hestia*, *Ioulia Sebaste*, and *nean Demetera*.²⁴⁶

Scholars attempt to form an argument for a strong relationship between Livia and Vesta based several other pieces of "evidence", but these are conjectural at best and can often be

²⁴³ Ovid, *Tristia*, 4.2.11-14: "Livia as ever is offering gifts to the gods for her son's safety, and the *matres* also and the ones without reproach who serve the chaste fire in eternal virginity."

²⁴⁴ Elizabeth Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 94-5.

²⁴⁵ Athens: *IG III* 316; Gertrude Grether, "Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult," *American Journal of Philology* 67 (1946), 230 n. 43; Mika Kajava, "Vesta and Athens," in *The Greek East in the Roman Context*, O. Salomies, ed. (Helsinki, 2001): 71-94.

²⁴⁶ Anthony A. Barrett, *Livia*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), 144-5. For the inscription from Lampsacus: *IGR*, 4.180.

explained away. Barrett argues in his biography of Livia that her restoration of the shrine of Bona Dea and the allusion in the above passage of Ovid regarding her sacrifices in the presence of the Vestals both demonstrate a connection to Vesta's priestesses.²⁴⁷ Yet, problems exist even with these points. Ovid (*Fasti*, 5.157-8) confirms Livia's restoration of the Temple of Bona Dea, but this shows demonstrates a relationship with Bona Dea—not Vesta.²⁴⁸ Moreover, our understanding of the celebration for Bona Dea is by no means clear. Livia as an elite Roman matron should have been in attendance and in fact may have served as host for one or more of the annual rituals for the goddess held in December. The Vestals participated in—and probably led the ritual—with the *virgo Vestalis maxima* presiding over a sacrifice.²⁴⁹ However, this is one of the functions the priestesses performed on behalf of the state, and not for the goddess they specifically served. Other attempts have been made to connect Livia, Vesta and the Vestals to Augustus' moral reforms. However, to make this argument scholars use passages from Ovid and Valerius Maximus that were written after Augustus' death and decades after his moral reforms were passed.²⁵⁰

These examples and others have led modern scholars to make exceptional claims for a connection between Livia and Vesta and her cult that are not supported by the evidence. These range from “Livia modeled herself upon Vesta in official cult as a mother figure of exemplary chastity,”²⁵¹ and, “Livia thus established herself as the fertile counterpart to the Vestal Virgins,

²⁴⁷ Barrett, 143.

²⁴⁸ I disagree with Severy on this point who believes, “When Livia rebuilt the Temple of the Bona Dea, she emphasized her relationship to the Vestals, and even put herself in a position of benefaction and leadership over them.” Beth Severy, “Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire,” in *Augustus and the family at the birth of the Roman Empire*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 135.

²⁴⁹ Concerning the sacrifice see: Brouwer, 349-350.

²⁵⁰ Hans-Friedrich Mueller, *Roman Religion in Valerius Maximus*, (London : Routledge, 2002), 59. Among his “proof” is a passage from *Valerius Maximus* (6.1) that refers to the “holy marriage bed of Julia [Livia]”. The reference to Julia indicates that it was written after 14 CE. He also cites Ovid's, *Tristia*, 4.2.11-14, (see above) which clearly mentions that Livia is making offerings for her son.

²⁵¹ Carole Newlands, *Playing with Time: Ovid and the Fasti*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 131.

and thereby shaped a public role for herself as a matron with responsibility for the well-being of the community,”²⁵² and “The allusions to Vesta, however, are the most potent in Livia’s iconographic arsenal.”²⁵³ From scholars who believe in a Palatine cult of Vesta led by Livia we also see comments such as “With their shared responsibilities as guardians of the hearth – the Vestals in the public sphere of the state and Livia in the private sphere of the family – the identities of the two would have merged in the public mind.”²⁵⁴ I contend that too much has been made of potential connections between Livia and Vesta, and those that truly did exist can all be explained as having additional motivating factors. Certainly enough evidence exists to argue for a connection, just not the one that typically appears in modern scholarship.

Other than Livia, women of the imperial family usually appear in connection to Vesta almost exclusively on coinage. Mikocki identified only two other imperial women associated with Vesta, Agrippina the Elder (14 BCE – 33 CE) and Marciana (48-112/114), and there is only one example for each.²⁵⁵ However, his study fails to incorporate all potential numismatic connections, and coins can be challenging sources. In the majority of cases the imperial woman appears on one side (usually the obverse), and the goddess or her attributes on the other (reverse), but on many coins the connection is uncertain. It has also been postulated that when some imperial woman appear on coins they are intended to represent a goddess (the figure of the goddess bears the physical features of an imperial woman).²⁵⁶ It is also possible that in many cases a coin may have been kept intentionally vague so as to let the viewer draw their own, potentially multiple, conclusions. By the Flavian Dynasty the so-called “Vesta type” displaying

²⁵² Severy, 135.

²⁵³ Bartman, 94.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 94.

²⁵⁵ Mikocki, 125.

²⁵⁶ Mary Joann McDaniel, “Augustus, the Vestals and the Signum Imperii,” (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1995), 94.

an imperial woman on the obverse and Vesta on the reverse (usually holding a *patera* and scepter but with some variations) was well established.²⁵⁷

Julia Domna is the only other imperial woman who had more than a numismatic connection to Vesta, although scholars also overemphasize the strength of their affiliation. They first point the rebuilding of the temple of Vesta in the Forum. The temple had been damaged by fire during the reign of Commodus and had yet to be repaired when the Severans came to power.²⁵⁸ Julia Domna is often accepted as the benefactor of the rebuilding project for two reasons: a coin issue and an inscription.²⁵⁹ The coin from 214-5 shows her son Caracalla making a sacrifice in front of the temple.²⁶⁰ Moreover, the inscription (*CIL* VI, 786) found in the *Forum Romanum* may commemorate the rebuilding of the temple and the part that Julia Domna played in the reconstruction.

VESTAE DONVM-
 PRO SALVTE IVLIAE AVG –
 MATRIS M ANTONINI AVG N-P-M-
 EVTYCHVS FICTOR CVM FILIS VOTO SVSCEPTO

Williams, however, believes that this stone pedestal was probably dedicated in the temple of Vesta as an offering on Julia Domna's behalf because she is the mother of the *pontifex maximus*

²⁵⁷ Vibia Sabina (83-136/7 CE), wife of Hadrian, appears on coinage of this type, as does Plotina (d 121/2 CE), wife of Trajan, and his sister, Ulpia Marciana (48-112/114 CE). For Julia, cf. *RIC* 1, 136 no. 160, (dupondius), and 183 no. 231 (denarius); for Plotina, cf. *RIC* 1, 297-298 nos. 728-731; for Sabina, cf. *RIC* 1, 387-89 nos. 397 (a), 408, 410, and 413. For the money of Marciana, *BMC* III, CVII, p.126, no. 655, pl. 21, 9 and p. 230, no 1086-7, pl. 44, 8: shows an obverse bust of Marciana with diadem and legend DIVA AVGVSTA MARCIANA; reverse of empress in the guise of Ceres or Vesta seated on a chair flanked by two elephants holding a ear of corn (or a *patera* in a variant type) in right hand and a long scepter in left with the legend SENATVS CONSVLTO. Cf. McDaniel, 94; Mikocki, 115 and 192, no. 287.

²⁵⁸ It is from this restoration that most of the architectural fragments come. Christian Hülsen, *The Roman forum: its history and its monuments*, trans. Jesse Benedict Carter, (New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1906), 185-6.

²⁵⁹ Cohen, IV, n. 140, 234-44. Julie Langford, *Maternal Megalomania: Julia Domna and the Imperial Politics of Motherhood*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 164 note 90. Cf. Gorrie, “Julia Domna’s Building Patronage, Imperial Family Roles and the Severan Revival of Moral Legislation,” *Historia* 53 (2004): 61-72, 65-8. Yet there is little firm evidence for this contention.

²⁶⁰ Koch (1958) *RE* 8A: 1759; 1768f. On the rebuilding of the temple see: Mary Gilmore Williams, “Studies in the Lives of Roman Empresses,” *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1902): 259-305, 275; R. T. Scott in E. M Steinby ed. *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, vol. 5, 125-8. Cf. *RIC* 4.1, 171 nos. 584-7A, and *RIC* 4.1.247, nos. 249f.; 251f, nos. 271f.

and therefore stands in close relation to the Vestals.²⁶¹ Although I agree that this dedication was likely part of the rebuilding of the *aedes Vestae* and connects the empress to Vesta, I am not convinced that it is “proof” the Julia Domna was responsible for the reconstruction of her temple. No other evidence exists that demonstrably ties the empress to this project.

Further connections between Julia Domna and Vesta and her cult are scant except for the numismatic examples. In the Commentary of the *Ludi Saeculares* of 204 CE Julia Domna’s name appears with that of two of the Vestal Virgins (Nimisia Maximilla and Terentia Flavola). In it these women and 110 Roman matrons are asked to offer a public prayer to Juno Regina for a blessing on the people and to preside over the ceremonies which followed the sacrifices to the queen of the gods.”²⁶² It has also been argued that an inscription (mentioned above) that was erected by the council of Lampsacus and dedicated to "Julia Augusta, Hestia, the new Demeter" may in fact have been intended to honor Julia Domna and not Livia.²⁶³

Julia Domna received considerable honors in inscriptions and coinage. According to Cohen, she is mentioned in 180 inscriptions, and over 350 varieties of coins bear her name—more in quantity and variety than any other imperial woman.²⁶⁴ Several coins with the legend PVDICITIA represent her chastity while standing veiled or seated holding a *patera* (as Vesta typically does).²⁶⁵ She also appears on multiple coins that include the name and image of Vesta.²⁶⁶ Such examples were struck in several areas of the Roman Empire. For example, coin

²⁶¹ Williams, 294-5.

²⁶² T. Mommsen, *Commentarii dei Ludi secolari*, (Roma: R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1891), Tab. E. fr. VI, 1. 18 ; fr. VII, 11. 8, 10. Tab. F, 11. 6-10. Cf. *Eph. Ep.* 1898, p. 284, pt. IV, 11. 8-10. (= *CIL* VI 32328). I find it puzzling that two Vestals are included by name. I would have thought it more likely that they would have all been included by a general title, that only the *maxima* would be specifically mentioned, or that they all would have been included. Perhaps for some reason, however, only two were present at the ceremony. Cf. Silvia Orlandi, “Osservazioni prosopografiche sulle Vestali,” in *Rend. Pont. Acc. Rom. Arch.*, 68 (1995-6): 359-37, at 361.

²⁶³ *IGR*, IV 180.

²⁶⁴ Williams, 304.

²⁶⁵ Cohen, IV. n. 164. Opt. cit. Williams, 302, and Mattingly, *RIC* IV (1968).

²⁶⁶ Cohen, IV, n. 220-232.

hoards found in Britain show that Julia Domna's most common reverse types minted between 196 and 211 CE were: VENVS FELIX, PIETAS PVBLICA, and VESTA SANCTA.²⁶⁷ Of even greater importance for the present discussion are coins with her image that are tied to motherhood. Some show her role as mother of the heir to the throne.²⁶⁸ Others, however, demonstrate a more allegorical form of motherhood through association with goddesses like Ceres, Isis, Magna Mater, and Vesta.²⁶⁹ Indeed, she even appears along with VESTA SACRA and VESTA MATER. Thus for Julia Domna a clear relationship is made between the empress and Vesta—specifically *Vesta mater*.²⁷⁰

After Julia Domna the connections between empresses and Vesta decline. Cornelia Salonina (d. 268), wife of Emperor Gallienus and mother of Valentinian II, appeared on the obverse of several coins, usually wearing a diadem, clothed in a draped bust, and accompanied by the title “AUG”. The reverse of these coins have the legend VESTA (in one case “VESTA AETERNA” and in another VESTA FELIX”) and an image of the goddess (sitting or standing), usually with a *patera* and scepter (but in one case a “Victory”).²⁷¹

In addition to these connections between imperial women and Vesta, scholars also argue for associations between them and the Vestals. The female relatives of Roman rulers began to receive exceptional legal rights and privileges starting with Livia and Octavia, sister of Augustus and some of these were the same as those held by the Vestal Virgins. For this reason the

²⁶⁷ Langford, 46. See also Appendix B, 130-33.

²⁶⁸ Langford's observation based on the coin types from *RIC*. Langford, 164 note 93.

²⁶⁹ Ghedini, *Giulia Domna tra oriente e occidente: le fonti archeologiche*, (L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1984), 123-60, explores the range of divine associations attributed to Julia Domna.

²⁷⁰ Langford, 72-3, argues that the last title in particular allowed Severus to link the cult of Vesta to his wife through maternal imagery that also suggested divine parentage while extending the maternal influence of the empress to a universal level. His motivations for doing so would have been dynastic, helping to legitimize his position and that of his sons. The author calls this “Maternal megalomania” on the part of Septimius Severus.

²⁷¹ I wonder if the “Victory” could in fact be the Palladium. Cf. *RIC* V, 32, 39, 68, 69, and 71.

imperial women are often compared to the Vestal Virgins. However, caution must be used in doing so since their function and role in society were considerably different.

Cassius Dio is our main source for the unusual privileges given to Livia and Octavia. In his account of 35 BCE he explains the reason why they received some of their earliest grants:

καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐκεῖ μὲν Φούφιον Γέμινον σὺν δυνάμει τινὶ κατέλιπεν, αὐτὸς δὲ ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην ἀνεκομίσθη, καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐπινίκια ψηφισθέντα οἱ ἀνεβάλετο, ἡ δὲ Ὀκταουία τῇ τε Λιουία καὶ εἰκόνας καὶ τὸ τὰ σφέτερα ἄνευ κυρίου τινὸς διοικεῖν, τὸ τε ἀδελῆς καὶ τὸ ἀνύβριστον ἐκ τοῦ ὁμοίου τοῖς δημάρχοις ἔχειν ἔδωκεν.

“After this he [Augustus] left Fufius Geminus there with a small force and himself returned to Rome. The triumph which had been voted to him he deferred, but granted to Octavia and Livia statues, the right of administering their own affairs without a guardian, and the same security and inviolability as the tribunes enjoyed.”²⁷²

Thus, in 35 BCE Livia and Octavia both received, probably by *senatus consultum* (or perhaps by *triumviral* edict), freedom from tutelage, sacrosanctity and the right to be honored with statues. Indeed, it is the grant of *sacrosanctitas* that receives the bulk of scholarly attention for a comparison between Livia and the Vestals.²⁷³ These rights are connected historically to the Augustus’ proposed triumph, but the latter was not the reason for them. The safety of these women was considered to be an issue of enough importance that they required the same level of protection as the tribunes. There is also no doubt that the significance of this act was considerable for the prestige of Livia and Octavia in Rome. However, neither the reason for these grants nor the precedent upon which they were based can be tied to the privileges of the Vestals (although some scholars attempt to). The priestesses were merely the only women to hold these rights before 35 BCE.²⁷⁴ In addition, Livia received the *ius trium liberorum* after 9

²⁷² Cassius Dio, 49.38. Earnest Cary, trans.

²⁷³ Opt. cit. P. Schrömbges, *Tiberius und die res publica romana*, (Bonn: 1986), 191 and 200-201. Willrich was the first to suggest the *sacrosanctitas* for Octavia and Livia was analogous to the privileges of the Vestal Virgins. See: H. Willrich, *Livia*, (Leipzig and Berlin, 1911), 54.

²⁷⁴ Regula Frei-Stolba, “Position Juridique et Sociale de Livie,” *Femmes et vie publique dans l’antiquité gréco-romaine*, (1998): 65-89, 73-4, drawing on arguments from R. A. Bauman, “Tribunician Sacrosanctity in 44, 36 and

CE. According to Dio Cassius, this was to console her after the death of her son Drusus.²⁷⁵

Thus, the grant was connected to her role as a mother.

Livia continued to receive privileges after the death of Augustus that belonged to no other women except the Vestal Virgins. She was granted the use of a *lictor* (probably in 14 BCE) due to her position as priestess of the cult of the deified Augustus.²⁷⁶ She received two other grants in either 22 or 23 CE. The first was the use of a *carpentum* (covered carriage), which was a privilege belonging primarily to the Vestal Virgins (but not exclusively).²⁷⁷ At or about the same time she was permitted by decree of the senate to sit with the Vestal Virgins at the theater and at games.²⁷⁸ As an official state priestess, it could also be argued that she was allowed to legitimately sit with and among women of similar status at public events. Yet, the lapse of years between when she became a priestess and when she received this privilege would indicate that this was not the primary motive. Wildfang believes that “...Tiberius’ placement of Augusta [Livia] in the Vestal box implies that, like Augustus, he too was interested in binding the Vestal cult and the imperial family more closely together.”²⁷⁹ However, his argument is not convincing. Tiberius never made any overt attempts to connect himself to Vesta—he merely kept the established practices started by his step-father. After Livia’s death and deification by Claudius the Vestals were given the duty of making the proper sacrifices in her honor.²⁸⁰

However, the fact that these priestesses were asked to do so is not surprising since Augustus had

35 B.C.,” *RhMus*, 124 (1981): 166-83. See also : B. Scardigli, “La sacrosanctitas tribunicia di Ottavia e Livia,” *Ann.Fac.Lett.Siena*, 3 (1982), 61-4. See also *CIL*, VI 2132-2145 and 32420-32428.

²⁷⁵ Cassius Dio, 55.2.4-5: κἀν τούτῳ καὶ ἡ Λιουία μετὰ τῆς Ἰουλίας τὰς γυναῖκας εἰστίασε. τὰ δ’ αὐτὰ ταῦτα καὶ τῷ Δρούσῳ ἠτομάζετο.

²⁷⁶ Tacitus, *Annales*, 1.14; Cassius Dio, 56.46.1.

²⁷⁷ Cassius Dio, 60.22.2.

²⁷⁸ Tacitus, *Annales*, 4.16 : *Ut glisceret dignatio sacerdotum atque ipsis promptior animus foret ad capenssendas caeremonias.* See also Rawson, “Discrimina ordinarum : the Lex Iulia theatralis,” *PBSR* 55 (1987): 83-114. On the use of the *carpentum*, Cassius Dio 60.22.2.

²⁷⁹ Wildfang, 102.

²⁸⁰ Cassius Dio, 60.5.2: ἐς ἑτέρας ἡμέρας, ὅπως μὴ ἅμα ποιῶνται. τὴν τε τήθην τὴν Λιουίαν οὐ μόνον ἵππων ἀγῶσιν ἐτίμησεν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπηθανάτισεν, ἄγαλμά τέ τι αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ Αὐγουστειῷ ἰδρύσας καὶ τὰς θυσίας ταῖς ἀειπαρθένοις ἱεροποιεῖν προστάξας, ταῖς τε γυναῖξιν ὄρκον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῆς ποιεῖσθαι κελεύσας.

set the precedent of using the Vestal Virgins to make sacrifices on behalf of the imperial family decades earlier. It should not be presumed that they were asked because of a close connection between Livia and Vesta, nor as a result of the privileges shared by the empress and the Vestal Virgins.

Conclusion

The ancient sources clearly indicate that the Roman conception of Vesta included the idea of the goddess as a mother figure. This was not necessarily a biological maternity, but rather an honorific one since the word *mater* offered flexibility and could also be used as a title of respect. Her priestesses, however, were *virgines*. This term could have multiple meanings, but in the case of the Vestals the stress should be placed on the idea of purity. Consequently, when instances of affiliation between imperial women and Vesta occur they can be considered deliberate, well planned decisions made by a wish to highlight the ideas of *pudicitia* or *castitas*.

The privileges granted to imperial women such as Livia coincide with events that featured male relatives and thus have no religious ties. Some of these rights, as well as many of the honorific titles they received, can be directly connected to their roles as mothers. Livia is the starting point for this development, although she received no official title in honor of her motherhood. The Senate proposed voting her the title of *mater patriae* (mother of the nation) or *parens patriae* (parent of the nation) in 14 CE, but Tiberius declined the grant of either title for his mother.²⁸¹ However, the idea also gained at least some popular support; Livia appears on a coin from Leptis Magna with the dedication *mater patriae*, and an issue from Romula calls her

²⁸¹ Tacitus, *Annales*, 1.14.1; Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 50.3; Cassius Dio, 57.12.1, and 58.2.3. See also Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 250. Opt. cit. Barrett, 156-7 who also points out that the first title was novel, and the second had previously been associated only with men.

genetrix orbis.²⁸² Thus Livia did receive some exceptional titles connected to her motherhood. She also received a new name, Augusta, which "...was a distinction for an elderly woman, widow of the old Princeps and, significantly, mother of the new one, Tiberius."²⁸³ Soon after, this name became a title sometimes given to women of the imperial family. Starting with the Julio-Claudians but extending into later dynasties the title Augusta became intended only for mothers of emperors who had succeeded to rule.²⁸⁴ Being wife of the current emperor was not enough to earn the title.²⁸⁵

The use of the honorific title *mater* for imperial women officially began in the second century CE. Faustina the Younger (120-175), wife of Marcus Aurelius, appears on coins in the 170s on which she was praised for her fecundity, and also as *mater castrorum* ("mother of the camps") both during her lifetime and posthumously.²⁸⁶ Thus she gained her greatest praise through her role as a mother. This title (*mater castrorum*) gained the greatest popularity under Julia Domna and the subsequent women of the Severan dynasty.²⁸⁷ Indeed, Julia Domna was honored with multiple titles including *Augusta*, *mater castrorum*, *mater Augustorum*, *mater Senatus et Patriae*" and even known to have been addressed with the title *Mater populi Romani*.²⁸⁸ The dating for the titles of *Mater Senatus* and *Mater Patria* are not certain, but they

²⁸² Burnett, *Roman Provincial Coinage*, 73 (Romula), 849-50 (Leptis). Cf. Cohen, I, p. 165, n. 807; p. 207, n. 203.

²⁸³ Barbara Levick, *Julia Domna: Syrian Empress*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 65. For Livia and early history of "Augusta" see: Barrett, 322-5; M. B. Florey, "The Meaning of *Augusta* in the Julio-Claudian Period," *AJAH* 13 (1988 [1997]): 113-38, 113. Cf. Ghedini, 8: "L'esaltazione della maternità si riallaccia a una lunga tradizione, che risale ancora alla prima epoca imperial e non si può certo ascrivere al caso il fatto che i massimi onori siano stati sempre attribuiti alle progenitrici di eredi."

²⁸⁴ H. Temporini, *Die Frauen am Hofe Trajans. Ein Beitrag zur Stellung der Augustae im Principat*, (Berlin and New York: 1978), 23-36, 44.

²⁸⁵ M. B. Florey, "Dynastic Ideology, the Domus Augusta, and Imperial Women: A Lost Statuary Group in the Circus Flaminius," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* Vol. 126 (1996): 287-306, at 298. The one exception was Claudius who gave it to Agrippina, whose son Nero was heir.

²⁸⁶ Mary T. Boatwright, "Faustina the Younger, *Mater Castrorum*," in *Les femmes antiques entre sphère privée et sphère publique*, Frei-Stolba, Bielman and Bianchi, eds., (Bern and New York: P. Lang, 2003): 249-268, 250.

²⁸⁷ Opt. cit. Boatwright, 250.

²⁸⁸ See Cassius Dio 79.3.3 for her titles. "Dio clearly thought Julia Domna a woman of good character and he spares kind words for her, largely by way of reflecting on her inability to restrain her monstrous son," C. Ando, *Imperial*

probably postdate the death of Severus in 211 CE.²⁸⁹ She also received titles that focused on her role as a biological mother to imperial heirs including *Mater Augusti*,²⁹⁰ *Mater Caesaris*,²⁹¹ *Mater Augusti et Caesaris*,²⁹² and *Mater Augustorum duorum*.²⁹³ For these reasons it can be argued that “Domna was being assigned a public role thought to be appropriate to her sex, her title as ‘*mater*’ stressing it.”²⁹⁴ In short, Vesta, one of the most important goddesses for the Romans, and also the most highly decorated imperial women were honored as *matres*.

Rome Ad 193 to 284. The Critical Century, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 48-9. See also: G. Herzog in *RE* 10, 1 (1918): 926-929; J. Hasebroek, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Septimius Severus* (Heidelberg, 1921), 92; H. V. Instinsky, "Studien zur Geschichte des Septimius Severus," *Klio* 17 (1942): 200-219. *CIL* 6, 419; *IGR* 1, 577. Cf. Ghedini, 23 n. 122.

²⁸⁹ Levick, 93-4. Instinsky, 205, dates the titles *PIA FELIX*, *MATER AUGUSTORUM* *MATER SENATUS* *MATER PATRIAE* to between Severus's death in February 211 and the death of Geta in December 211.

²⁹⁰ *CIL* 9, 2165.

²⁹¹ E. Kettenhofen, *Die syrischen Augustae in der historischen Überlieferung*, (Bonn, 1979), 83f.

²⁹² *CIL* 2, 810; *CIL* 8, 17872 (cf. 18253).

²⁹³ Williams, 285.

²⁹⁴ Levick, 63.

Chapter 3: The worship of Vesta outside the city of Rome

"A deity might be known by the same name across the empire, but there can be no reason to suppose that its associations, political context, forms of worship, and meaning would be consistent from one part of the Roman world to another."²⁹⁵

It is generally accepted that Vesta was the Latin counterpart to the Greek goddess Hestia. The two shared many similarities, especially their main provenance, the hearth fire. Both Hestia and Vesta also had a private, domestic quality as well as a public, civic function. Yet our understanding of the perception and role of Hestia in the Greek world is, on the whole, more detailed than that of Vesta. For example, Hestia has a complete background story, whereas Vesta's history was less developed, at least before Augustus. Hestia's role and place in domestic worship is also better documented. It is in their public functions, however, that the two goddesses become increasingly dissimilar. Hestia's public role was tied to the magistrates and the functioning of the city whereas the public worship of Vesta was considered part of Roman religious practices (albeit ones that were considered necessary to the prosperity of the state). Vesta also had particular ties to one city, Rome, as a tutelary deity; in contrast Hestia was important in every Greek city but was not attached to any particular *polis* more than the others. Thus, although the two goddesses possessed fundamental similarities, Vesta was not a carbon copy of Hestia. The first part of this chapter will highlight both similarities and differences between Hestia and Vesta. In the case of practices that were not performed to honor both Hestia and Vesta, it also considers other Greek religious beliefs and traditions that may have influenced the ways of Roman worship. By doing so it is possible to hypothesize about the origin of certain practices of the cult of Vesta that remain unexplained. This in turn aids in our understanding of

²⁹⁵ Mary Beard, "The Cult of the 'Great Mother' in Imperial Rome," in *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice*, J. Rasmus Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng, eds, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 323-362.

the place of the goddess in Rome and, by extension (and conquest), the worship of Vesta throughout the Roman Empire.

Of all the traditional deities, Vesta is arguably the one most closely identified with the city of Rome. However, Vesta likely began her existence as a variation of a local, indigenous deity of Latium that evolved in the earliest stages of the history of the area to more closely resemble the Greek goddess Hestia. Several foundation stories, such as that of Rhea Silvia, establish her early worship in Italy among many neighboring communities. Vesta's worship in Latium also included cult personnel—priestesses of Vesta. The evidence suggests that from prehistoric times and continuing until the late fourth century CE some Latin communities had at least one priestess of Vesta who may have been bound to the same duties and restrictions as their Roman counterparts. Accordingly this section demonstrates that Vesta began as a goddess worshipped by the Latins, that their local practices influenced her cult in the city of Rome, and that the worship of Vesta in Latium continued through the fourth century CE. Meanwhile, the Latin characteristics of Vesta subsequently accompanied the spread of her worship throughout the Roman Empire.

Beyond the worship of Vesta by Rome and other Latin communities, it is difficult to determine the extent that Vesta was honored throughout the Roman Empire. In theory Vesta should have been venerated anywhere and everywhere where traditional Roman religion was being practiced, and as the Empire expanded Roman religious beliefs were carried to the provinces and gradually gained acceptance in urban settings. However, information regarding the worship of Vesta outside of central Italy is limited. In the West (other than Latium) Vesta has no known temples or priestesses. Our main evidence for her worship is confined to a limited number of inscriptions. This part examines the evidence (and lack thereof) for the extent and

forms of worship of Vesta in the western Roman Empire, which by necessity would have been modified from that which occurred in the capital city of Rome.

As Roman religious beliefs and practices also spread to the East some awareness of Vesta should have been part of the cultural exchange. In theory, it should have been easier for areas of the eastern empire where Greek religious practices predominated to accept Vesta because of her similarities to Hestia. If these people acknowledged Vesta and Hestia to be in essence the same deity—and there is evidence that they did—only a slight adjustment should have been necessary in thinking and belief since the hearth goddess was already worshiped in Greek homes and communities. Yet how much of a distinction they made between their Hestia and the Roman Vesta is difficult to determine. Evidence suggests that at least in Athens some differentiation was made, and that the Athenians connected Vesta with the imperial family, if not also the imperial cult. Still this does not mean that Athens should be taken as representative of the Roman provinces in the East since less evidence exists for these areas. Thus this section brings the argument back full circle to Greece and examines the extent and forms of worship of the Roman Vesta—either independently of Hestia or as an assimilation of her—in the eastern Roman Empire.

Greek religious influences on the Roman worship of Vesta

Like Vesta, Hestia was the Greek goddess of the hearth. Evidence suggests that Hestia was an import to Greek civilization, her origins lying further east. Herodotus states that the Scythians worshiped Hestia “whom they reverence beyond all the rest.”²⁹⁶ The Dacian

²⁹⁶ Herodotus, 4.59: τὰ μὲν δὴ μέγιστα οὕτω σφι εὐπορα ἐστὶ, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ νόμαια κατὰ τάδε σφι διακέεται. θεοὺς μὲν μούρους τούσδε ἰλάσκονται, Ἰστίην μὲν μάλιστα, ἐπὶ δὲ Δία καὶ Γῆν, νομίζοντες τὴν Γῆν τοῦ Διὸς εἶναι γυναῖκα, μετὰ δὲ τούτους, Ἀπόλλωνά τε καὶ οὐρανίην Ἀφροδίτην καὶ Ἥρακλέα καὶ Ἄρεα. τούτους μὲν πάντες Σκύθαι νενομίκασι, οἱ δὲ καλεόμενοι βασιλῆιοι Σκύθαι καὶ τῷ Ποσειδέωνι θύουσι.

Goddess Esta/Eshta may come from the Hattic Sun Goddesses Estan/Eshtan (meaning “Sun” or “day”).²⁹⁷ Diodorus Siculus relates that Hestia was an important goddess for the Getae (Dacians), stating that “their common goddess Hestia” gave them their laws.²⁹⁸ These accounts clearly demonstrate similarities between the Greek Hestia and these other deities without ever saying that they were all the same goddess.

In Greek myth Hestia was the first-born of the Olympian children of Cronos and Rhea. She was accordingly the first to be swallowed by her father, and the last to be re-born.²⁹⁹ One of the lengthiest and most descriptive accounts of her history comes from the Homeric hymn to Aphrodite:

οὐδὲ μὲν αἰδοίη κόυρη ἄδε ἔργ’ Ἀφροδίτης,
 Ἴστίη, ἦν πρώτην τέκετο Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης,
 αὐτίς δ’ ὀπλοτάτην, βουλῇ Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο.
 πότνιαν, ἦν ἐμῶντο Ποσειδάων καὶ Απόλλων:
 ἦ δὲ μαλ’ οὐκ ἔθελεν, ἀλλὰ στερεῶς ἀπέειπεν:
 ὦμοσε δὲ μέγαν ὄρκον, ὃ δὴ τετελεσμένος ἐστίν,
 ἀψαμένη κεφαλῆς πατρὸς Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
 παρθένος ἔσσεσθαι πάντ’ ἤματα, δῖα θεάων.
 τῇ δὲ πατὴρ Ζεὺς δῶκε καλὸν γέρας ἀντὶ γάμοιο
 καὶ τε μέσῳ οἴκῳ κατ’ ἄρ’ ἔζετο πῖαρ ἑλοῦσα.
 πᾶσιν δ’ ἐν νηοῖσι θεῶν τιμᾶοχος ἐστὶ
 καὶ παρὰ πᾶσι βροτοῖσι θεῶν πρέσβειρα τέτυκται.
 τᾶων οὐ δύναται πεπιθεῖν φρένας οὐδ’ ἀπατήσαι³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ David Leeming, *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 187.

²⁹⁸ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 1.94.2: καὶ παρ’ ἑτέροις δὲ πλείοσιν ἔθνεσι παραδέδοται τοῦτο τὸ γένος τῆς ἐπινοίας ὑπάρξει καὶ πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν αἴτιον γενέσθαι τοῖς πεισθεῖσι: παρὰ μὲν γὰρ τοῖς Ἀριανοῖς Ζαθραύστην ἱστοροῦσι τὸν ἀγαθὸν δαίμονα προσποιήσασθαι τοὺς νόμους αὐτῶ διδόναι, παρὰ δὲ τοῖς ὀνομαζομένοις Γέταις τοῖς ἀπαθανατίζουσι Ζάλμοξιν ὡσαύτως τὴν κοινήν Ἑστίαν, παρὰ δὲ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις Μωυσῆν τὸν Ἰαὼ ἐπικαλούμενον θεόν, εἴτε θαυμαστὴν καὶ θεῖαν ὄλως ἔννοιαν εἶναι κρίναντας τὴν μέλλουσαν ὠφελήσειν ἀνθρώπων πλήθος, εἴτε καὶ πρὸς τὴν ὑπεροχὴν καὶ δύναμιν τῶν εὐρεῖν λεγομένων τοὺς νόμους ἀποβλέψαντα τὸν ὄχλον μᾶλλον ὑπακούσεσθαι διαλαβόντας. R. F. Hoddinott, *The Thracians*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1981), 150-154, identifies the remains of two circular buildings as temples, at least one with a central hearth, and notices the frequency of the number six in these and other Thracian sanctuaries. This naturally brings to mind the aedes Vestae in Rome and the number of priestesses of Vesta there. However, these examples date to no earlier than the first century BCE, so it is difficult to determine if early Thrace could have influenced the Greeks and Romans, or if the opposite may have occurred.

²⁹⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 495-497, tells of how Cronos swallowed his children: ὃν γόνον ἄψ ἀνέηκε μέγας Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης νικηθεὶς τέχνῃσι βίηφι τε παιδὸς ἐοῖο. πρῶτον δ’ ἐξέμεσεν λίθον, ὃν πύματον κατέπιπεν.

³⁰⁰ *Homeric Hymn 5 (to Aphrodite)*, 21-33: “Nor yet does the pure maiden Hestia [Hestia] love Aphrodite's works. She was the first-born child of wily Kronos and youngest too, by will of Zeus who holds the aegis, --a queenly maid whom both Poseidon and Apollon sought to wed. But she was wholly unwilling, nay, stubbornly refused; and

Although pursued by Poseidon and Apollo, Hestia preferred to remain unwed, and swore to her brother Zeus to remain such. He in turn honored her and thereafter “she is seated in the middle of th house, taking the fat (richest portion).” In all the temples of the gods she has a share of honor, and among all mortal men she is chief of the goddesses.” This idea continues in *Homeric*

Hymn 29 (to Hestia):

ἔστίη, ἧ πάντων ἐν δώμασιν ὑψηλοῖσιν
 ἀθανάτων τε θεῶν χαμαὶ ἐρχομένων τ’ ἀνθρώπων
 ἔδρην αἰδίων ἔλαχες, πρεσβηίδα τιμήν,
 καλὸν ἔχουσα γέρας καὶ τίμιον· οὐ γὰρ ἄτερ σοῦ
 Σειλαπῖναι θνητοῖσιν, ἴν’ οὐ πρότη πυμάτη τε
 Ἔστίη ἀρχόμενος σπένδει μελιθεῖα οἶνον³⁰¹

Consequently, Hestia was to be honored for keeping her place, which was undoubtedly the hearth of every “home”, whether that was in the form of the hearth of all the gods, their individual temples, or in the houses of men.³⁰²

More than just a goddess of the hearth, or more specifically representing the fire within the hearth, Hestia was a domestic goddess of the home, both of its physical structure and of the family.³⁰³ The Greeks thought that this goddess had discovered the art of building houses. More than that, they also believed that Hestia dwelled in the inner part of their homes, where the hearth-fire was located and where the family made offerings to the domestic gods, including

touching the head of father Zeus who holds the aegis, she, that fair goddess, sware a great oath which has in truth been fulfilled, that she would be a maiden all her days. So Zeus the Father gave her a high honour instead of marriage, and she has her place in the midst of the house and has the richest portion. In all the temples of the gods she has a share of honour, and among all mortal men she is chief of the goddesses. Of these three Aphrodite cannot bend or ensnare the hearts," Evelyn-White, trans.

³⁰¹ *Homeric Hymn 29 (to Hestia):* "Hestia, in the high dwellings of all, both deathless gods and men who walk on earth, you have gained an everlasting abode and highest honour: glorious is your portion and your right. For without you mortals hold no banquet,--where one does not duly pour sweet wine in offering to Hestia both first and last," Evelyn-White, trans.

³⁰² Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246: μένει γὰρ Ἐστία ἐν θεῶν οἴκῳ μόνη. "For Hestia alone stays in the house of the gods," my translation.

³⁰³ Opt. cit. Marcel Detienne, *The writing of Orpheus: Greek myth in cultural contact*, Janet Lloyd, trans., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 62.

Hestia.³⁰⁴ In the Greek domestic sphere, the roofed-over domestic space has a feminine connotation and the exterior a masculine one: the woman's domain and place is the house, but in contrast the man is meant to leave and have contact with the outside. This is true in every instance except marriage when it is reversed; the woman leaves the house (of her father) and the groom remains at home.³⁰⁵ When a marriage took place, embers from the maternal fire were brought with the bride to light the way to, and as far as, her new domicile.³⁰⁶ The addition of any new members to the household (births, marriages, slaves) required an initiation ceremony in which they were "presented" to Hestia.³⁰⁷ Thus "As she bestows on the house the center that

³⁰⁴ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 5.68: τούτων δὲ λέγεται τὴν μὲν Ἑστίαν τὴν τῶν οἰκιῶν κατασκευὴν εὐρεῖν, καὶ διὰ τὴν εὐεργεσίαν αὐτὴν παρὰ πᾶσι σχεδὸν ἀνθρώποις ἐν πάσαις οἰκίαις καθιδρυθῆναι, τιμῶν καὶ θυσιῶν τυγχάνουσαν." Of these [the children of Kronos and Rhea], they say, Hestia discovered how to build houses, and because of this benefaction of hers practically all men have established her shrine in every home, according to her honours and sacrifices," Oldfather, trans. I have seen Greek "domestic gods" defined as *hestiouchoi* or *ephestioi*, but question this assessment. For the former, the linguistic connection to "Hestia" is clear. Recent scholarship has translated this word as "Hearth-Guards" (Geoffrey C.R. Schmalz, *Augustan and Julio-Claudian Athens*, [Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009], 41) or "supervisors of the sacred hearth" (Guy Maclean Rogers, *The Mysteries of Artemis of Ephesos*, [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012], 234). The primary source evidence indicates that these hearth-guards were associated with the *prytaneis* and the *boule*. See below for a fuller discussion. I think the second term, *ephestioi*, with its usually cited connections to the home and fireside, is more likely to be used to reference domestic gods, but am still not convinced by the passages cited to support this. Is it possible that this term references Ephesus and the temple of Artemis, in which case it could refer to some sort of cult personnel (like the example of *hestiouchoi*)? Cf. Liddell and Scott, s.v. "*ephestioi*"; *IE* IV 1071.5-9 and 1072.10-14.

³⁰⁵ Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Hestia-Hermes: The Religious Expression of Space and Movement in Ancient Greece," in Vernant *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks*, (New York: Zone Books; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006): 157-196, 163-4.

³⁰⁶ John H. Oakley and Rebecca H. Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 34, and Ginette Paris, *Pagan Meditations: The Worlds of Aphrodite, Artemis, and Hestia*, Gwendolyn Moore, trans. (Spring Publications, Inc.: Dallas, Texas, 1986), 182. The role of Hestia in Greek marriages can be further documented. For example, one Athenian vase depicts Hestia carrying a lighted torch in each hand escorting a newly married couple to their home, cf. Matthew Dillon, *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 218-9. Hestia's role in marriage extended from the ceremony itself to being involved in the search for a suitable partner; in Euripedes' play *Alceste* the eponymous character prays on her deathbed to Hestia, beseeching the goddess to look after her children and specifically to find both her son and daughter a spouse (162-6): καὶ σῆσά προσθεν Ἑστίας κατηύξατο: Δέσποινα, ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔρχομαι κατὰ χθονός, πανύστατον σε προσπίτνουσ' αἰτήσομαι, τέκν' ὀρφανεῦσαι τὰμά: καὶ τῷ μὲν φίλην σύζευξον ἄλοχον, τῇ δὲ γενναῖον πόσιν. "And standing in front of the hearth-goddess' altar she made her prayer: 'Lady, since I am going now beneath the earth, as my last entreaty I ask you to care for my orphaned children: marry my son to a loving wife and give my daughter a noble husband,'" David Kovacs, trans.

³⁰⁷ Deborah Boedeker, "Family Matters: Domestic Religion in Classical Greece," in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan, eds., (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008): 229-247, 234. Cf. Janett E. Morgan, "Families and Religion in Classical Greece," in *A companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Beryl Rawson, ed., (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011): 447-464, 453: "The *hestia* or domestic hearth was the focus of rituals by which new members were joined to the family, whether bride and groom, slave or baby, through the rituals of *katachysmata* (wedding ceremony) and *Amphidromia* (birth ceremony)." Cf. Aristotle,

anchors it in space, so Hestia ensures the domestic group's continued existence in time. It is through Hestia that the family line is perpetuated and remains constant, as though in each new generation the legitimate offspring of the household were born directly 'of the hearth'.³⁰⁸

Hestia is also known to bear the title of *tamia*, which Vernant sees as an indication that the concentration of wealth and the delimitation of family patrimonies was part of her purview, although I believe this interpretation would benefit from further analysis.³⁰⁹ Still, given her role as protectrice of the house in every way it is feasible to argue that "[Hestia's] ...domestic cult was probably the most widespread in the Greek world."³¹⁰

Hestia is often paired with Hermes in the Greek world from an early period. For example, they appear together in *Homeric Hymn 29 (to Hestia)*:

καὶ σὺ μοι, Ἄργειφόντα, Διὸς καὶ Μαιάδος νιέ,
 ἄγγελε τῶν μακάρων, χρυσόρραπι, δῶτορ ἑάων,
 ἵλαος ὦν ἐπάρηγε σὺν αἰδοίῃ τε φίλῃ τε.
 ναίετε δῶματα καλά, φίλα φρεσὶν ἀλλήλοισιν
 εἰδότες: ἀμφοτέροι γὰρ ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
 εἰδότες ἔργματα καλά νόφ θ' ἔσπεσθε καὶ ἦβη.³¹¹

In this Hymn, Hestia and Hermes are invoked as the two deities sharing the space inhabited by humans and aiding them.³¹² Both carry out activities that complement the other while simultaneously being opposites; Hestia refuses to leave the center of the house, the hearth, which

Oeconomicus, 1344a, compares a wife to "someone led from the hearth," ὥσπερ ἰκέτιν καὶ ἀφ' ἐστίας ἡγμένην ὡς ἦκιστα δεῖν δοκεῖν ἀδικεῖν; Theopompus fr. 15, also mentions the *katachysmata* ceremony wherein coins, dried fruits and nuts were poured over the bride and groom.

³⁰⁸ Vernant, 164-5.

³⁰⁹ Vernant, 183. The usual translation (in the feminine) is "housekeeper" or "housewife". Cf. Liddell and Scott, s.v. "tamia"; *SIG* 1025.29 (Cos, iv/iii BCE) παρὰ τὰν Ἰστίαν τὰν Ταμίαν.

³¹⁰ Boedeker, "234.

³¹¹ *Homeric Hymn 29 (to Hestia)*: "And you, Slayer of Argus, Son of Zeus and Maia, messenger of the blessed gods, bearer of the golden rod, giver of good, be favorable and help us, you and Hestia, the worshipful and dear. Come and dwell in this glorious house in friendship together; for you two, well knowing the noble actions of men, aid on their wisdom and their strength," Evelyn-White, trans. *SEG* XXXVII 1228 is a list of gods on which Vesta appears first and Hermes second.

³¹² Opt. cit. Paris, 181.

ties the home and family to the earth, while Hermes was a messenger and god of travel.³¹³ Thus Hestia “is the symbol and pledge of fixity, immutability, and permanence” while Hermes “represents movement, transition.”³¹⁴ Essentially, the territory of Hermes ends where that of Hestia begins—the threshold. And whereas Hestia is the hearth, Hermes’ place “is at the door, protecting the threshold, repelling thieves because he is himself the thief.”³¹⁵

There is very little iconographical evidence for Hestia, and perhaps the best explanation for this is that she was present in the form of the fire in flame altars and hearths. Because of her elemental form, there may have been less need to anthropomorphize this goddess compared to other Greek deities and consequently she never developed a standardized image.³¹⁶ Portrayals identified as “Hestia” can only be confirmed when her name is included, or when she is accompanied by attributes which can only be linked to her. When she is shown in imagery it is usually among the twelve gods or with one companion deity, typically Hermes. The best example of this comes from the base of the great statue of Zeus at Olympia on which Pheidias carved the twelve gods in pairs and Hestia appears with Hermes.³¹⁷

Several points already stand out when comparing the Greek Hestia to the Roman Vesta. First, Vesta is never “romantically” involved with either Poseidon or Apollo; however if the

³¹³ For Hestia as the earth see discussion below. Cf. Euripides, *Fragments*, 944N; Sophocles, *Fragments*, 558N.

³¹⁴ Vernant, 158-9. Borrowing heavily from Jean-Joseph Goux, “Vesta, or the Place of Being,” in *Representations*, no. 1 (Feb. 1983): 91-107, 92: “The hearth is a symbol of permanence, of fixity, of immutability, of centrality, all equally characteristic of Hestia.”

³¹⁵ Vernant, 159.

³¹⁶ Opt. cit. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, John Raffan, trans., (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 170. Cf. *LIMC (Lexicon Iconographicum mythologicae graecae)* V, s.v. “Hestia”.

³¹⁷ Giulia Sissa and Marcel Detienne, *The Daily Life of the Greek Gods*, Janel Lloyd trans., (Stanford, CA : Stanford University Press, 2000), 157-8 also mention that Pausanias went to a small city in Achaia and found in the agora a rectangular, bearded Hermes accompanied by a small Hestia, and a temple at Amphiaros that was divided into five parts, one of which was a section for Hestia and Hermes in which they resemble a couple. Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1. 34. 3: “[The temple of Amphiaraus in Oropos, Attika] The altar shows parts. One part is to Herakles, Zeus, and Apollon Paion (Healer) . . . the third is to Hestia and Hermes and [the hero] Amphiaraus and the children of Amphilokhos.”

Romans considered this as part of her history due to her connections with Hestia is uncertain.³¹⁸ The elephant in the room that I have not yet stressed is the nature of Hestia and Vesta as both virgin goddesses. Hestia's sexuality was directly connected to her religious importance for the Greeks: "Hestia is not one among many manifestations of the sacred, she is the root of sacredness itself: the inviolable. What is sacred is that which cannot be touched, approached, violated...The absolute virgin, innocent of any sexual relation, is the highest manifestation of the sacred, the essence of what is sacred."³¹⁹ This same statement could easily be applied for the Romans and their regard for Vesta, as well as for her cult officials, the Vestal Virgins.

The second point worth noting is the connection between Hestia and Vesta with the domestic gods. Due to the private nature of family religion considerably less is known about domestic than public forms of worship in the ancient world. Moreover, comparatively less is known about the domestic worship of Vesta than that of Hestia. It appears that Hestia was connected to the Greek domestic gods in approximately the same way that Vesta was connected to the *lares* and *penates* in Rome. For example, Cicero (*de Natura Deorum*, 2.67) says of Vesta: *Nec longe absunt ab hac vi di Penates* ("the household gods are not far away from this force [Vesta]"). Beyond this, any evidence concerning the private worship of Vesta by the Roman people is minimal.³²⁰ However, if the domestic cult of Hestia was as dominant and widespread

³¹⁸ The only Roman source dealing with Vesta's sexuality—and possible violation of it—involves the god Priapus. Cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 319-348.

³¹⁹ Goux, 95.

³²⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 2.65.1: διαιρούμενοί τε διχῆ τὰ ἱερά καὶ τὰ μὲν αὐτῶν κοινὰ ποιοῦντες καὶ πολιτικά. "And recognizing two classes of religious ceremonies — the one public and common to all the citizens, and the other private and confined to particular families," Earnest Cary trans. Sceptics point out that no household shrines to Vesta are documented in the archaeological record, that there is no mention of her domestic cult in literature, and dedications to her are rare. At a minimum, they claim that there is no evidence to support the idea that the cult of Vesta began in the home. Opt. cit. Mary Joann McDaniel, "Augustus, the Vestals and the Signum Imperii," (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1995), 22-3. Cf A. Brelich, *Vesta*, (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1949).

as often argued, it is possible that Vesta may have held a more important place in the home than what the evidence suggests.

Other issues include the coupling of deities and sacrifices. From the description above it is easy to see a resemblance not only between Hermes and the Roman Mercury (the association most often made), but also between Hermes and the Roman god Janus, the two-headed god who protected thresholds and is often connected to Vesta in Roman myth.³²¹ Ties between Vesta and Mercury/Hermes also existed in Rome, but the ties were not as strong as with their Greek counterparts.³²² Janus could see both the past and the future and his provenance included beginnings and transitions. His similarities to Hermes extend beyond their association with the hearth goddess to include similar provenances over boundaries, travelers, and both often appear with a staff in imagery.³²³ Scheid has pointed out that generally when a group of deities appears Janus and Vesta are featured as a couple, Janus comes first and Vesta last, framing the other gods (also appearing as couples) between them.³²⁴ This practice extended to sacrificial offerings to the gods wherein Janus was invoked first and Vesta last (unlike in Greece where Hestia was honored first and last).³²⁵ Cicero seems to confirm this in the *De Natura Deorum*:

Cumque in omnibus rebus vim haberent maxumam prima et extrema, principem in sacrificando Ianum esse voluerunt, quod ab eundo nomen est ductum, ex quo transitiones perviae iani foresque in liminibus profanarum aedium ianuae nominantur. Nam Vestae nomen a Graecis (ea est enim quae ab illis Ἑστία dicitur); vis autem eius ad aras et focos

³²¹ See: Georges Dumézil, "De Janus à Vesta," in *Tarpeia: essais de philologie comparative indo-européene*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1947): 33-113; Brelich, *Vesta*, esp. "Vesta und Ianus," 28-40; Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.89-294.

³²² For example, it is believed that the Shrine of Mercury may have been next to the *Atrium Vestae* in Rome. Cf. Worsford, 123.

³²³ Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.9.7: "But among us the name of Janus shows that he was the patron of all doorways, which is similar to Θυραῖω. Indeed he is represented also with a key and a stick, as if he were the protector of all doorways and the ruler of all roadways."

³²⁴ John Scheid, "Hierarchy and Structure in Roman Polytheism: Roman Methods of Conceiving Action," translated by Philip Purchase, in *Roman Religion*, Clifford Ando, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003): 164-189, 174-5.

³²⁵ For Roman invocation at ceremonies, cf. *Acta Fratrum Arvalium*, G. Henzen, ed. (Netherlands: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1967), CCXIV and 144 ff.

*pertinet, itaque in ea dea, quod est rerum custos intumarum, omnis et precatio et sacrificatio extrema est.*³²⁶

However, Ovid (*Fasti*, 6.304) contradicts this: *prae famur Vestam, quae loca prima tenet* (“Before praying we address Vesta, who holds first place”). Either way, as the last or first and last deity invoked, Vesta held a place of distinction.

As important as Hestia’s domestic role was, her public presence was also considerable. In the civic realm Hestia often appears with Zeus, as well as with any other patron gods of a city. From at least the fourth century BCE in the city of Cos Hestia was paired with Zeus Polieus (Zeus of the city). These two deities were the major players in the festival for Zeus in which the animal chosen for sacrifice was purchased by the city’s entire citizenry together but was paid for by Hestia.³²⁷ Detienne argues that the latter symbolically placed Hestia (in the role of treasurer of the city) above Zeus in status.³²⁸ Another example of Hestia being grouped with Zeus and patron deities of cities comes from Plato’s *Laws*. In this work the author writes about the founding of his ideal city which includes a division of space into twelve portions of land (presumably a reflection of the twelve gods), plus a sacred area reserved for Hestia, Zeus and Athena which will be named “acropolis”. Here Zeus is honored as king of the gods, Athena as city-protector, and Hestia as goddess of the civic hearth.³²⁹ One comment on this passage

³²⁶ Cicero, *de Natura Deorum*, 2.67. “In all matters, beginnings and ends are the vital features. This is why they cite Janus first in sacrifices, for his name is derived from the verb *ire*, to go; hence the word *iani* for archways, and *ianuae* for the gates of secular buildings. As for Vesta, her name is adopted from the Greeks, being identical with their Hestia. Her province is altars and hearths, and this is why the goddess is invoked at the end of all prayers and sacrifices, because she guards the things deep within,” P. G. Walsh, trans.

³²⁷ Detienne, 66 and 172 notes 35-6. The original interpretation of the inscription included the epithet “Hetaireia” which has been emended to “Tamia.” See: F. Sokolowski, *Les Lois sacrées des cites grecques*, (Paris, 1969), n.151A.252-257.

³²⁸ Detienne, 67.

³²⁹ Plato, *Laws*, 745B-C: τὸ δὲ μετὰ τοῦτο πρῶτον μὲν τὴν πόλιν ἰδρῦσθαι δεῖ τῆς χώρας ὅτι μάλιστα ἐν μέσῳ, καὶ τᾶλλα ὅσα πρόσφορα πόλει τῶν ὑπαρχόντων ἔχοντα τόπον ἐκλεξάμενον, ἃ νοῆσαί τε καὶ εἰπεῖν οὐδὲν χαλεπὸν: μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα μέρη δώδεκα διελέσθαι, θέμενον Ἑστίας πρῶτον καὶ Διὸς καὶ Ἀθηνᾶς ἱερόν, ἀκρόπολιν ὀνομάζοντα, κύκλον περιβάλλοντα, ἀφ’ οὗ τὰ δώδεκα μέρη τέμνειν τὴν τε πόλιν αὐτὴν καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν χώραν.

follows, “To have Hestia, Zeus, and Athena on the acropolis means having the hearth as the centre of the community, and the highest god and the representative of the city in proximity.”³³⁰

The Greeks considered the community hearth, usually located in the Prytaneion, as belonging to Hestia. This building, a sort of town hall of a Greek city-state, often housed the chief magistrate and could serve as a meeting place for the *prytaneis*. In Athens, the Prytaneion was called the *Tholos* (round building) and inside a perpetual fire burned. Some Prytaneions housed the law codes of their city, and some known examples invoke Hestia in dedications from as early as the sixth century BCE.³³¹ She was known to bear the epithets *Prytaneia* and *Boulaia* which underscores her association with city government and differentiates her from the domestic Hestia.³³² Ambassadors, distinguished foreigners, and citizens who had done signal service were

³³⁰ Burkert, 334-5.

³³¹ Pindar, *Nemian Ode*, 11.1-7: παῖ Ῥέας, ἃ τε πρυτανεῖα λέλογγας, Ἑστία, / Ζητὸς ὑψίστου κασιγνήτα καὶ ὁμοθρόνου Ἥρας, / εὖ μὲν Ἀρισταγόραν δέξαι τεδὸν ἐς θάλαμον, / εὖ δ' ἑταίρους ἀγλαῶ σκάπτω πέλας, / οἷ σε γεραίροντες ὀρθὰν φυλάσσοισιν Τένεδον, / πολλὰ μὲν λουβαῖσιν ἀγαζόμενοι πρόταν θεῶν, / πολλὰ δὲ κνίσσα. “Daughter of Rhea, you who have received the town hall under your protection, Hestia, sister of Zeus the highest and of Hera who shares his throne, welcome Aristagoras to your dwelling, and welcome to a place near your splendid scepter his companions, who, in honoring you, guard Tenedos and keep her on a straight course; often they worship you, first of the gods, with libations, and often with the savor of burnt sacrifice,” Diane Arnson Svarlien, trans. Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1. 18. 3: πλησίον δὲ πρυτανεῖόν ἐστιν, ἐν ᾧ νόμοι τε οἱ Σόλωνός εἰσι γεγραμμένοι καὶ θεῶν Εἰρήνης ἀγάλματα κεῖται καὶ Ἑστίας. “Hard by is the Prytaneon [town-hall at Athens] in which the laws of Solon are inscribed, and figures are placed of the goddesses Eirene (Peace) and Hestia,” W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod trans. *SEG XLII* 543 ter. (Ambrakia, ca. 200 BCE) records a dedication to Hestia by the *prytaneis*. Detienne, 68, mentions the city of Naucratis, ceded to Greeks by Pharaoh Amasis between 615-610 BCE, where “Hestia reigned, probably on the agora, in a Prytaneion over which she herself presided.” Cf. Hermeias, *The Apollo of Gryneion*, in Athenaeus, VI.149d (= F. 112 Tresp.). See also: J. Labarbe, “Les Premières démocraties de la Grèce antique,” *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Belgique, Littérature, and Moral and Political Sciences* (1972): 223-254.

³³² The epithets are discussed again below and should be used with some caution since some date to the centuries CE. Epithets: “Prytaneia”, *IG*, XII, 5, 667 = *Syll*3, 890, 8 (251 CE): Ἑστία Πρυταν[ε]ία. “Boulaia”, interpretation of Ove Hansen, “Hestia Boulaia at Erythrai,” in: *L'antiquité classique*, vol. 54 (1985): 274-276. Cf. R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), n. 8 (A.I.1-2), 14-17 (early 6th century BCE); *SEG IV*, 187 (Halicarnassus, 3rd century BCE), Ἑστίας Βουλ[αίας; *Hesperia* 40 (1971) 96ff (2nd century BCE), Διὶ Βουλαίῳ καὶ Ἀθηνᾶ Βουλαίᾳ κ[αὶ] Ἑστ-[ί]α; *Hesperia* 12 (1943) 63 f. no. 16 (55/54 BC) = *Hesperia* 52 (1983) 161 f. no. 3 (=SEG 33 [1983] 198), Διὶ Βουλαίῳ καὶ Ἑ[στία] Βουλαίᾳ] ἢ Διὶ Βουλαίῳ καὶ Ἑ[στία] Βουλαίᾳ; *Agora XV* no. 269 (53/2 BC) Ἑστία Βου[λ]αία; *SEG XVI* 720 (Ephesus, 1st century CE), Ἑστία Βουλαίᾳ; possible reconstructed dedication *SEG XL* 1359 (Marion [Cyprus] 1st century CE); *SEG XVIII* 18, 578 (Cyprus, 1st century CE), Βουλαίαν Ἑστίαν; *SEG XXXVII* 1349 (1st-2nd century CE), Βουλαίας Ἑστίας Σεβαστῆς διὰ Βίου; *SEG XXXIX* 1209 = *SEG XXXIV* 1126 (237/8 CE), Ἑστία Βουλαία.

For a literary reference see: Aeschines, *On the Embassy*, 2, 45: ὡς γὰρ δεῦρ' ἦλθομεν καὶ πρὸς τὴν βουλὴν ἐπὶ κεφαλαίων τὴν πρεσβείαν ἀπηγγελάμεν, καὶ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἀπέδομεν τὴν παρὰ Φιλίππου, ἐπαινέτης ἦν ἡμῶν Δημοσθένης πρὸς τοὺς συμβουλευτάς, καὶ τὴν Ἑστίαν ἐπόμωσε τὴν βουλαίαν συγκαίρειν τῇ πόλει, ὅτι τοιούτους

entertained in the Prytaneion, and it also served as a place of sanctuary or asylum.³³³ In this building city officials oversaw public festivals not assigned to the priests due to the authority that came from connection to the common hearth.³³⁴ By the late fourth century CE it was also customary to swear oaths by Hestia.³³⁵

Hestia's purview extended over the city officials who in turn cared for her. Magistrates may have offered Hestia sacrifices in the Prytaneion when entering and leaving office (the same mentality of Hestia being invoked first and last in sacrifices), and possibly in conjunction with Hermes and Aphrodite who were both honored by outgoing magistrates and "...who appear to have helped Hestia in that they combined the complementary values of space that was open and space that was closed."³³⁶ Svenbro first advanced the theory that (at least at Cos) the chief

ἄνδρας ἐπὶ τὴν πρεσβείαν ἐξέπεμψεν, οἱ καὶ τῇ πίστει καὶ λέγοντες ἦσαν ἄξιοι τῆς πόλεως. "On our return, then, after we had rendered to the senate a brief report of our mission and had delivered the letter from Philip, Demosthenes praised us to his colleagues in the senate, and he *swore by Hestia, goddess of the senate*, that he congratulated the city on having sent such men on the embassy, men who in honesty and eloquence were worthy of the state," Charles Darwin Adams, trans. (my italics).

³³³ Parthenius, *Love Romances*, 18: "Neaira, in fear of Hypsikreon, journeyed to Naxos; and, when her husband came to fetch her, took up suppliant's position at the altar-hearth (*hestia*) of the Prytaneion (Town Hall). When Hypsikreon asked the Naxians to give her up, they refused," Gaselee, trans. Diomedes claimed sanctuary at the altars of Athena and Hera, cf. *Tzetzes on Lycophron* 602 and 609, and Odysseus considered taking refuge at the altar of Zeus, Homer, *Odyssey*, 22.334-7.

³³⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, 6.1322b.26-30: ἐχομένη δὲ ταύτης ἢ πρὸς τὰς θυσίας ἀφορισμένη τὰς κοινὰς πάσας, ὅσας μὴ τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν ἀποδίδωσιν ὁ νόμος, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς κοινῆς ἐστίας ἔχουσι τὴν τιμὴν: καλοῦσι δ' οἱ μὲν ἄρχοντας τούτους οἱ δὲ βασιλεῖς οἱ δὲ πρυτάνεις. "And connected with this is the office devoted to the management of all the public festivals which the law does not assign to the priests but the officials in charge of which derive their honor from the common sacrificial hearth, and these officials are called in some places Archons, in others Kings and in others Presidents," H. Rackham, trans. Opt. cit. Detienne, 64.

³³⁵ Aristophanes, *Wealth*, 395: Βλεψίδημος: λέγεις ἀληθῆ / Χρεμύλος: φημί. / Βλεψίδημος: πρὸς τῆς Ἑστίας. "Blepsidemus: Are you telling the truth? / Chremylus: I am. / Blepsidemus: Swear it by Hestia," Eugene O'Neill, Jr., trans. This idea is continued in Plato's *Laws* 9.856a, in which he describes an ideal city: δοκῆ, γράμμασιν σημεῖα ἐπιβάλλοντας πάντων τῶν δικαστῶν, θεῖναι ἐπὶ τὴν ἐστίαν, καὶ πάλιν αὐριον εἰς ταῦτον συνελθόντας, ὡσαύτως τε ἀνακρίνοντας διεξελεθεῖν τὴν δίκην καὶ σημεῖα ἐπιβάλλοντας αὐτὸς τοῖς λεχθεῖσιν: καὶ τρίς δράσαντας τοῦτο, τεκμήριά τε καὶ μάρτυρας ἰκανῶς παραλαβόντας, ψῆφον ἱερὰν ἕκαστον φέροντα καὶ ὑποσχόμενον πρὸς τῆς ἐστίας εἰς δύναμιν τὰ δίκαια καὶ ἀληθῆ κρίνειν, οὕτω τέλος ἐπιθεῖναι τῇ τοιαύτῃ δίκῃ. "Of all the judges, they shall lay them up at the altar of Hestia. And after doing this thrice, during which proceedings they shall pay full attention to evidence and witnesses, each of the judges shall cast a sacred vote, promising by Hestia to give just and true judgment to the best of his power; and thus they shall bring to its end this form of trial," R.G. Bury, trans.

³³⁶ Detienne, 63-4. Pindar, *Nemean Ode*, 11: "Daughter of Rhea, guardian of parliaments, Hestia, sister of all-highest Zeus, and of Hera who shares his throne, welcome with goodwill to your sacred hall Aristagoras, and his fellows with goodwill, beneath your glorious sceptre. For they in honouring you keep watch and ward on Tenedos island and secure her weal. First of all other gods they worship you with many a gift of wine and many a victim, and the lure sounds for you, and song. And at their well-spread tables, never bare, the rites of Zeus, the hospitable father,

magistrate responsible for sacrifices, an *archon* and not a priest, tended the altar or hearth of Hestia.³³⁷ If correct, this indicates that public (elected) officials—all male of course—were in charge of her worship, at least in some cities. Indeed, in some cases women may have been excluded entirely from her public care. In the city of Naucratis the only female allowed in the Prytaneion was the flute player.³³⁸ Plutarch remarks that older women tended the fire: ἐπεὶ τοῖς τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὅπου πῦρ ἄσβεστόν ἐστίν, ὡς Πυθοῖ καὶ Ἀθήνησιν, οὐ παρθένοι, γυναῖκες δὲ πεπαυμένα γάμων ἔχουσι τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἐὰν δὲ ὑπὸ τύχης τινὸς ἐκλίπη, (“Since wherever in Greece a perpetual fire is kept, as at Delphi and Athens, it is committed to the charge, not of virgins, but of widows past the age of marriage.”).³³⁹ Detienne believes that, “This exclusion of women, ordered by a deity who did not conceal her preference for a masculine personnel of high-ranking magistrates, accentuated the distance that separated the Public Fire, personified by the flames on the altar, from the deity with a woman’s body who, for her part, dwelt at the heart of private homes, in the twofold guise of a virgin and an old woman.”³⁴⁰ Only a few sources suggest a formal priesthood of Hestia. In Sparta the title “Hestia of the City” appears although the meaning is not perfectly understood.³⁴¹ Van Bremen believes that women with this position were connected by some sort of service to the city’s prytaneion, but nothing else about their

receive their due,” Conway, trans. Cf. Jean-Pierre Vernant. Cf. *IG XII 8*, 425, which reconstructs the last line read “Hestia and Hermes and Aphrodite,” and *IG XII 8*, 422, which is also identified as a dedication by magistrates restored as “to Hestia, Aphrodite and Hermes.” Cf. *IE III 859(a)*, which mentions C. Iulius Nikephoros, an imperial freedman, gave money at the altar of Hestia for sacrifices to Roma and Artemis, at approximately the same time a new Prytaneion was built in Uphesos. He later became prytanis for life. See: Rogers, 99.

³³⁷ Jesper Svenbro, *La Parola e il marmo. Alle origini della poetica greca* (Torino: Boringhieri, 1984).

³³⁸ Hermeias, *The Apollo of Gryneion*, in Athenaeus, IV. 149d-150b. Cf. Detienne, 68.

³³⁹ Plutarch, *Numa*, 9.5, Perrin, trans. Cf. Helen F. North, “Hestia and Vesta: non-identical twins” in *New light from ancient Cosa: classical Mediterranean studies in honor of Cleo Rickman Fitch*, Norma Wynick Goldman, ed. (New York: P. Lang, 2001): 179-188, 180.

³⁴⁰ Detienne, 69.

³⁴¹ For the use of the phrase “Hestia of the city” (ἑστίαν πόλεως) in possible conjunction with Spartan priestesses see: *IG V[1]* 583, 584, 586 (all dated to the Roman period).

duties, length, or requirements of office are known.³⁴² A few inscriptions provide examples of priests and priestesses of Hestia, but not to significant extent to determine the organization of the cult or the delegation of duties.³⁴³ Kajava argues that any such formal organization would be rare in part “because the cult of Hestia was never fully institutionalized.”³⁴⁴

The common hearth of Hestia held great symbolic importance. A passage from Aristophanes indicates that the Greeks typically used burning glasses to reignite their fires, a method presumably used on the common hearth.³⁴⁵ When a domestic hearth fire went out or was purposefully extinguished due to a death in the family a member of the household went to the public hearth for a flame to restart it. Moreover, when the Persians laid siege to Athens and extinguished the sacred fire the Athenians went to the hearth of Vesta at the great temple at Delphi for a source to rekindle it.³⁴⁶ Theoretically the common hearth fires of Hestia burned even far from Greece. According to our sources when colonizers established a new colony they brought with them a brand from the prytaneion of their mother city which they used to kindle their new community hearth fire.³⁴⁷ Thus, “For ordinary individuals... Hestia represented the

³⁴² Riet Van Bremen, *The Limits of Participation: Women and Civic Life in the Greek East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, (Amsterdam : J.C. Gieben, 1996), 196. She also points out those women with the title “Hestia of the City” often were referred to as either a “daughter” or “mother” of the city as well.

³⁴³ At Ephesus several dedications of female *prytaneis* were found that also mention Hestia Boulaia. See: D. Knibbe, “Der Staatsmarkt. Die Inschriften des Prytaneions,” in *Forschungen in Ephesos*, IX, I, I, (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), F. I (62-63) and F. 4 (64); Rogers, 304, singles out *IE* Iv 1058.6-7, 1060.2-3, 1070A.4-6, 1071.5-9 and 1072.10-14. It is interesting to note that all but one of these inscriptions first mention Hestia Boulaia and also the Eternal Fire. For a further discussion cf. Merkelback, “Der Kult der Hestia im Prytaneion der griechischen Städte,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 37 (1980): 77-92, 84-87.

³⁴⁴ Mika Kajava, “Vesta and Athens,” in *The Greek East in the Roman Context*, O. Salomies ed., (Helsinki, 2001): 71-94, 75-6. He also attributes the rarity due to the ambiguity of the term *hestia*...which is sometimes translated as “altar”. For the *hestia* of the Athenian Bouleuterion in this context see: R.E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora*, vol. III (Princeton: New Jersey, 1957) 128. Cf. Burkert, 61: “The altar is the pre-eminent fire place, the hearth of the gods”.

³⁴⁵ Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 765-770.

³⁴⁶ Paris, 174.

³⁴⁷ Cf. Lewis R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States*, vol. 5 (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Caratzas Brothers, Publishers, 1977), 351-4.

fact of living, life itself...The symbolism extended from the individual life of each separate household's hearth to the collective and public power personified by."³⁴⁸

This public role of Hestia as incarnate within the common hearth in the political center of Greek cities again brings to mind both similarities and differences with Rome's Vesta. The first is the high prestige that Hestia held in the Greek city, appearing with—and at times perhaps superior to—Zeus and other patron god(s).³⁴⁹ Indeed, in Plato's ideal city (largely modelled on Athens) Hestia belongs among the three preeminent deities along with Zeus and Athena who are all present “on the acropolis”. This grouping likewise brings to mind the Capitoline Triad of Jupiter, Minerva and Juno in Rome. Their temple was located on the highest summit in Rome, the Capitoline Hill (thus the Roman equivalent of an ‘acropolis’), the obvious difference being the substitution of Juno for Hestia. Thus, when comparing the political importance of the traditional gods of Greece and Rome (at least in their early, pre-Augustan forms) the role of Hestia would appear to be greater than that of Vesta.

Comparisons also need to be made between the common hearth of Greek cities and that of the city of Rome regarding location and function. In Greece this *hestia* was most often located in the Prytaneion, which in turn was located in the city's agora, whereas in Rome it was housed in the *aedes Vestae* in the *Forum Romanum*. In the case of the city of Athens this was a round building (*Tholos*), just as the Temple of Vesta was round.³⁵⁰ However, the purposes of each space were considerably different. The Greek Prytaneion was a building used for government business by elected officials that was generally an open, accessible area (as part of the agora). In contrast the *aedes Vestae* was normally closed to the public—and to all men in

³⁴⁸ Detienne, 63.

³⁴⁹ See above page 11 and notes 33-4.

³⁵⁰ Vernant, 180: “During the period of the city and the establishment of the communal hearth in the *prytaneum*, Hestia was associated with a rotunda, the *tholos*, the sole example of the circular form in Greek religious architecture, recalling the *aedes vestae* and the *mundus* of the Romans.”

general except the *pontifex maximus*. Yet, both buildings were located in the political center of their respective cities (*agora* and *forum*) resulting in a spatial closeness of the common hearth to high-ranking magistrates. In Greece these men would spend considerable time working (and perhaps living) in the same building as the common *hestia*. However, in Rome the common hearth was located at the more religiously oriented end of the forum, near other important buildings belonging to Rome's early history such as the *regia*. The latter was originally the residence of the king of Rome (chief magistrate), before it became the home of the *pontifex maximus*. Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that this point should be considered in the discussion of Augustus and the bringing of Vesta to the Palatine since by his order the Palatine came to have a common hearth, a Temple of Apollo and a seat of power, the house of Augustus. This combination is especially poignant since the agora of Athens likewise contained the common hearth, a temple of Apollo, and an important seat of power, the Bouleuterion, all located in close proximity.

The next point to consider is the issue of cult personnel and their duties. This is one area in which we know less about the worship of Hestia in Greece than that of Vesta in Rome. It appears that most often the common hearth in Greek cities was tended by the city magistrates, although in some places widows tended to the fire. If these women did so in addition to or instead of the magistrates is uncertain. It is also unknown if any of these individuals had the right to call themselves "priest" or "priestess" of Hestia. Kajava has identified priests of Hestia at Camirus (Rhodes), Delos and Stratoniceia (Caria), and one priestess of Hestia at the Euboean Chalcis.³⁵¹ *Orphic Hymn 83 (to Hestia)* also suggests the presence of cult personnel for Hestia:

³⁵¹ Kajava, "Vesta," 75. *IG II² 1214* (early third century BCE), and 1229 (late fourth century BCE). An inscription from Rhodes mentions *Hestiastai*: *IG XII, 1 162*: ἱμαθνοῦς ὑπὸ Ἀλιαστῶν Ἀθαναϊστῶν Ἑρμαϊστῶν Λιστειδείων / κοινοῦ χρυσέωι στεφάνωι· καὶ ὑπὸ Διὸς Σωτηριαστῶν / Σαραπιαστῶν κοινοῦ θαλλίνωι στεφάνωι / καὶ ὑπὸ

"To Hestia, Fumigation from Aromatics. Daughter of Kronos, venerable dame, *who dwellest amidst great fire's eternal flame*; in sacred rites *these ministers are thine*, mystics much blessed, holy and divine. *In thee the Gods have fixed their dwelling place*, strong, stable basis of the mortal race. Eternal, much formed, ever florid queen, laughing and *blessed*, and of lovely mien; accept these rites, accord each just desire, and gentle health and needful good inspire."³⁵²

There is also the issue of the exact nature of the *hestiouchoi*, which I believe could well be connected to the maintenance of the common hearth. Still, given the paucity of known examples it is necessary to tread carefully since nothing is known about how these individuals were chosen, their length of service, or specific duties. Indeed, there appears to be no direct comparison here with the Vestal Virgins.

The chief duty of this personnel in both Greece and Rome was to tend the hearthfire of Hestia/Vesta. Like the eternal flames in Greece, if the fire in the *aedes Vestae* were extinguished it could not simply be rekindled from just any fire; it required special reignition from the rays of the sun.³⁵³ Moreover, in Rome the priestess of Vesta responsible for allowing this to happen was punished; if this too happened in Greece it is impossible to say, although it seems unlikely that male magistrates in Greek cities would receive corporal punishment, the penalty incurred by a

Σαραπιαστῶν χρυσέωι στεφάνωι καὶ ὑπὸ Μηνιαστῶν / Ἀφροδισιαστῶν κοινοῦ χρυσέωι στεφάνωι καὶ ὑπὸ Σωτηριαστῶν / Ἀσκληπιαστῶν Ποσειδανιαστῶν Ἡρακλείστῶν Ἀθαναϊστῶν Ἀφροδισιαστῶν / Ἑρμαϊστῶν Ματρὸς / Θεῶν κοινοῦ χρυσέωι στεφάνωι ἢ ὑπὸ Ἑστιαστῶν κοινοῦ θαλλίνωι στεφάνωι. Cf. *SEG* XL 1009 (50-27 BCE): τῆι θεῶι θυσίαν ἐπὶ τῆς ἐστ[ίας τῆς πόλεως τοῖς]; statue base of Memmia Xenodratia *SEG* XI 812a = *SEG* XXXV 317 (Kalyvia Sochas, reign of Marcus Aurelius or Commodus) cf. A. J. S. Spawforth, "Families at Roman Sparta and Epidaurus: Some Prosopographical Notes," *The Annual of the British School at Athens (ABSA)*, vol. 80 (1985): 191-258, 206-8; *SEG* XXXIII 184 (Eleusis, first century CE) fragments of a fragment base with the possible reconstruction: ἀφ' ἐστ[ίας] / ἐπὶ ἱερ[είας]. *SEG* XIX 467 (Moesia, second century BCE): [Ἐπ'] ἱέρεω Ἑστιαίου.

³⁵² Taylor, trans. (my Italics).

³⁵³ Plutarch, *Numa*, 9.6-7: "[6] And if by any chance it goes out, as at Athens during the tyranny of Aristion the sacred lamp is said to have been extinguished, and at Delphi when the temple was burned by the Medes, and as during the Mithridatic and the Roman civil wars the altar was demolished and the fire extinguished, then they say it must not be kindled again from other fire, but made fresh and new, by lighting a pure and unpolluted flame from the rays of the sun. [7] And this they usually effect by means of metallic mirrors, the concavity of which is made to follow the sides of an isosceles rectangular triangle, and which converge from their circumference to a single point in the centre. When, therefore, these are placed opposite the sun, so that its rays, as they fall upon them from all sides, are collected and concentrated at the centre, the air itself is rarefied there, and very light and dry substances placed there quickly blaze up from its resistance, the sun's rays now acquiring the substance and force of fire," Bernadotte Perrin trans. Festus, s.v. "ignis": *Ignis Vestae si quando interstinctus esset, virgines verberibus afficiebantur a pontificibus, quibus mos erat tabulam felicitis materiae tamdiu terebrare, quousque exceptum ignem cribro aeneo virgo in aedem ferret.*

negligent Vestal priestess. As mentioned, when the common hearth of Athens was extinguished by the Persians, they went to Delphi, the symbolic center and “mother” of Greece. The Romans, as far as we know, always relit the fire by the prescribed means (they did not have the option of obtaining a flame from their “mother-city” since it no longer existed). The issue of the hearth fire of Vesta will be discussed again in the next section for its similarities to the hearth fire at Delphi and the perpetual fire of Athena on the Acropolis.

The domestic and civic roles of Hestia overlap with a third aspect of her worship in the Greek world, her place in the religious practices that took place outside the home or Prytaneion. Several sources suggest that Hestia had a place in the houses (temples) of all the gods.³⁵⁴ What is not made clear in these passages is in what form or manner her presence was established, although presumably it was in the form of a flame either in a hearth or on an altar. Although *hestia* is generally accepted as meaning “fire”, especially the hearth-fire, it could also indicate an altar flame, “which was connected both with eating and with sacrifice: with sacrifice because it marked out the fixed center of a cult, rooted in the earth yet at the same time a human construction, the work of an architect.”³⁵⁵ Further, an altar “...stands as a rule in the open air opposite the temple entrance; by virtue of its function, the altar is the pre-eminent fire place, the hearth of the gods.”³⁵⁶ No matter whether embodied by the flame in the hearth or on the altar

³⁵⁴ *Homeric Hymn 5 (to Aphrodite)*, see note 5 above; Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246, see note 8 above; *Homeric Hymn 24 (to Hestia)*: “Hestia, in the high dwellings of all, both deathless gods and men who walk on earth, you have gained an everlasting abode and highest honour: glorious is your portion and your right. For without you mortals hold no banquet,--where one does not duly pour sweet wine in offering to Hestia both first and last. And you, Argeiphontes [Hermes], son of Zeus and Maia . . . be favourable and help us, you and Hestia, the worshipful and dear. Come and dwell in this glorious house in friendship together; for you two, well knowing the noble actions of men, aid on their wisdom and their strength. Hail, Daughter of Kronos, and you also, Hermes,” Evelyn-White, trans.; Pindar, *Nemean Ode*, 11, see note 42 above; *Orphic Hymn 83 (to Hestia)*, see 17-8 and note 58 above, noting that Hestia lives within the fire, and that it is in Hestia that the gods live.

³⁵⁵ Detienne, 62.

³⁵⁶ Burkert, 61.

Hestia was present since she was the “essence of all things.”³⁵⁷ It is likely that the circumstances of altars belonging to Hestia and her mention first of all the gods in sacrifices account, at least in part, for the fact that there are few known temples or festivals dedicated specifically to her in the Greek world. It also stands to reason that since the ideological public center of every city was also dedicated to Hestia that the Greeks saw less need to pay her additional honors. Very few temples dedicated to Hestia have been identified, however some epigraphic evidence supports their existence as does reports by Pausanias of sanctuaries at Hermione and Sparta.³⁵⁸ Indeed, Sparta is also where document examples of the name Hestia used as a title for women appear.³⁵⁹

In some of the larger religious centers such as Olympia and Delphi, Hestia was connected to Poseidon and Apollo.³⁶⁰ She was one of the many deities honored at Olympia; interestingly, however, her worship there was joined to Poseidon and Amphitrite.³⁶¹ Still, the amount of

³⁵⁷ Plato, *Cratylus*, 400d-401b: "Sokrates : Let us inquire what thought men had in giving them [the gods] their names . . . The first men who gave names [to the gods] were no ordinary persons, but high thinkers and great talkers . . . Shall we, then, begin with Hestia, according to custom? . . . Then what would you say the man had in mind who gave Hestia her name? . . . Take that which we call *ousia* (reality, essence); some people call it *essia*, and still others *ôsia*. First, then, in connection with the second of these forms, it is reasonable that the essence of things be called Hestia; and moreover, because we ourselves say of that which partakes of reality 'it is' (*estin*), the name Hestia would be correct in this connection also; for apparently we also called *ousia* (reality) *essia* in ancient times. And besides, if you consider it in connection with sacrifices, you would come to the conclusion that those who established them understood the name in that way; for those who called the essence of things *essia* would naturally sacrifice to Hestia first of all the gods. Those on the other hand, who say *ôsia* would agree, well enough with Herakleitos that all things move and nothing remains still. So they would say the cause and ruler of things was the pushing power (*ôthoun*), wherefore it had been rightly named *ôsia*," Fowler, trans.

³⁵⁸ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 2.35.1-2: "Passing into the sanctuary of Hestia [at Hermione], we see no image, but only an altar, and they sacrifice to Hestia upon it."; and 3.11.11: "The Lakedaimonians also have a sanctuary of Hestia [at Sparta]." Epigraphic support comes from: Eleusis = *IG II² 1229* (350-300 BCE); Piraeus = *IG II² 1214* (300-250 BCE), cf. Kajava, "Vesta," 75; Paros = G.I. Despinis, *AD* (1961) 118-132, and *Chiron* 13 (1983) 306-8 and 344-5; *SEG XVI 470* (Thera, 1st/2nd century CE) mentions a Ἑστίαϊον; Sicily: *Da un'Antica Città di Sicilia: I Decreti Di Entella E Nakone* (Pisa, 2001); cf. *SEG 44XX 1117, 1118*, cf. M. Giangiulio, "Edifici pubblici e culti nelle nuove iscrizioni da Entella," *Annali Scuola Normale di Pisa* 12.3: 944-92, who concludes that the hieron of Hestia in Entella must have been a public building closely connected with civic life.

³⁵⁹ Mika Kajava, "Hestia Hearth, Goddess, and Cult," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, vol. 102, (2004): 1-20, 1. Cf. Van Bremen, 169.

³⁶⁰ Is it a coincidence that these were her former suitors? Is it possible the myth was used to explain Hestia's connection to Poseidon and Apollo at these places?

³⁶¹ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 5. 14. 4: "The order in which the Eleans are wont to sacrifice on the altars [at Olympia]. They sacrifice to Hestia first, secondly to Zeus Olympios, going to the altar within the temple, thirdly to Zeus Laoitas and to Poseidon Laoitas . . . Fourthly and fifthly they sacrifice to Artemis and to Athena."; 5. 11. 8: "[Images on the throne in the temple of Zeus at Olympia :] "Close to her [Grace] comes Hermes, and close to

evidence connecting Hestia to Apollo and Delphi is especially abundant. *Homeric Hymn 24 (to Vesta)* makes their connection clear:

ἔστίη, ἦτε ἄνακτος Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκάτοιο
 Πυθοῖ ἐν ἡγαθέη ἱερὸν δόμον ἀμφιπολεύεις,
 αἰεὶ σῶν πλοκάμων ἀπολείβεται ὕγρον ἔλαιον:
 ἔρχεο τόνδ' ἀνὰ οἶκον, ἔν' ἔρχεο θυμὸν ἔχουσα
 σὺν Διὶ μητιόεντι: χάριν δ' ἄμ' ὄπασσον ἀοιδῆ.³⁶²

The sanctuary at Delphi was, like the *Tholos* in Athens, a round structure that contained an ever-burning fire that was not allowed to die out.³⁶³ As indicated above, the Greeks believed Delphi to be the *omphalos* (navel) or center of the earth, and the common hearth of all (Greek) people.³⁶⁴ Hence, the hearth at Delphi belonging to Hestia connected the earth and its core (which the Greeks believed contained fire), while simultaneously being the center of the universe around which the planets orbited.³⁶⁵ Yet Delphi is perhaps most famous for the oracles delivered there by the Pythia. Diodorus Siculus states:

θεσπιφδεῖν δὲ τὸ ἀρχαῖον λέγεται παρθένους διὰ τε τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἀδιάφθορον καὶ τὸ τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ὁμογενές: ταύτας γὰρ εὐθετεῖν πρὸς τὸ τηρεῖν τὰ ἀπόρρητα τῶν χρησμοδουμένων. ἐν δὲ τοῖς νεωτέροις χρόνοις φασὶν Ἐχεκράτη τὸν Θετταλὸν παραγενόμενον εἰς τὸ χρηστήριον καὶ θεασάμενον τὴν χρησμολογοῦσαν παρθένον ἐρασθῆναι διὰ τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆς καὶ συναρπάσαντα βιάσασθαι: τοὺς δὲ Δελφοὺς διὰ τὸ γεγεννημένον πάθος εἰς τὸ λοιπὸν νομοθετήσαι μηκέτι παρθένον χρηστηριάζειν, ἀλλὰ γυναῖκα πρεσβυτέραν πεντήκοντα ἐτῶν χρησμολογεῖν: κοσμεῖσθαι δ' αὐτὴν παρθενικῆ σκευῆ, καθάπερ ὑπομνήματι τῆς παλαιᾶς προφητίδος. τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ τῆς εὐρέσεως τοῦ μαντείου μυθολογούμενα τοιαῦτ' ἐστίν: ἡμεῖς δ' ἐπανήξομεν ἐπὶ τὰς Φιλομήλου πράξεις.³⁶⁶

Hermes Hestia.”; 5. 26. 2 - 3: "The offerings of Mikythos I found [at Olympia] were numerous and not together . . . [statues of] Amphitrite, Poseidon and Hestia," W.H.S. Jones and H.A. Ormerod, trans.

³⁶² *Homeric Hymn 24 (to Hestia)*: "Hestia, you who tend the holy house of the lord Apollon, the Far-shooter at goodly Pytho, with soft oil dripping ever from your locks, come now into this house, come, having one mind with Zeus the all-wise--draw near, and withal bestow grace upon my song," Evelyn-White, trans.

³⁶³ The sanctuary at Delphi pre-dates the *Tholos* of the Athenian *agora*. The temple of Apollo Lykeios at Argos and the temple of Apollo Karneios in Cyrene likewise had perpetual fires. Cf. L. M. R. Simons, *Flamma aeterna*, (Proefschrift--Utrecht, 1949).

³⁶⁴ Opt. cit. Burkert, 170. On the Omphalos as the seat of Hestia see P. Roussel, "Hestia à l'omphalos," *Revue Archéologique*, 2 (1911): 86-91. Vernant, 179, points out that in some cases the common hearth (Hestia Koine) was called this, and that at times the omphalos is called "Gē" due to its association with the earth.

³⁶⁵ Paris, 174.

³⁶⁶ Diodorus Siculus, 16.6: "It is said that in ancient times virgins delivered the oracles because virgins have their natural innocence intact and are in the same case as Artemis; for indeed virgins were alleged to be well suited to

Thus the priestesses here were originally virgins, but later were replaced by older women to prevent their sexual violation.

Hestia was assimilated with several other goddesses worshipped by the Greeks such as Cybele, Gaea, Demeter, Persephone, Artemis, but most importantly with Earth (Ge or Gaia). The latter has obvious ties to their affiliation at Delphi. It also had one of form; Hestia was often associated with things that were round—the same shape as the earth. Precursors to this idea (perhaps not yet fully developed) can be found in the early hymns where Hestia alone stays at home (fixed, centered) while the other gods roam about. Euripides associated Gaia with Hestia already in the fifth century BCE.³⁶⁷ Later in the first century CE, Cornutus writes that Ge, Demeter and Hestia were the same.³⁶⁸ Beyond these examples, Hestia may shared some attributes and similarities with other Greek female deities, but their provenances do not overlap significantly.

Of the above mentioned Greek religious practices, some have similarities to the worship of Vesta in Rome while others do not. A third category also exists of rituals that may have occurred in Rome, but which cannot be confirmed. A good example of the latter concerns the worship of Hestia in every temple. No source states that Vesta was worshipped in the temple of every Roman god, yet we also have no evidence—other than the silence on the matter—to prove

guard the secrecy of disclosures made by oracles. In more recent times, however, people say that Echeocrates the Thessalian, having arrived at the shrine and beheld the virgin who uttered the oracle, became enamoured of her because of her beauty, carried her away with him and violated her; and that the Delphians because of this deplorable occurrence passed a law that in future a virgin should no longer prophesy but that an elderly woman of fifty should declare the oracles and that she should be dressed in the costume of a virgin, as a sort of reminder of the prophetess of olden times,” C. H. Oldfather, trans. Cf. Giulia Sissa, *Greek Virginity*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 34-36.

³⁶⁷ Euripides quoted by Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 1.23.8: Quod autem addit: μένει δὲ Ἑστία ἐν θεῶν οἴκῳ μόνη, *significat quia haec sola, quam terram esse accipimus, manet immobilis intra domum deorum, id est intra mundum, ut ait Euripides: Καὶ Γαῖα μήτηρ, Ἑστίαν δέ σ' οἱ σοφοὶ Βροτῶν καλοῦσιν ἡμένην ἐν αἰθέρι.* See also: North, Hestia and Vesta, 184.

³⁶⁸ Cornutus, *Epidrome*, 28: “Each of them [Demeter and Hestia] seems to be none other than the earth,” Robert Steven Hays, trans.

that she was not. Indeed, it is tempting to push the statement of Cicero (*De Natura Deorum* 2. 27), *vis autem eius ad aras et focos pertinet* (“Her [Vesta’s] power extends over altars and hearths”), to mean that the altar in every Roman temple was recognized as belonging to Vesta.³⁶⁹ Is it possible that the Romans failed to record this fact since it was so well known (and based on Greek precedent)? The safe answer is to say that Vesta was not honored in the same way as Hestia, but if the opposite happened to be true it would increase the modern understanding of the importance of Vesta (especially through the late Republic) in Roman society.

Some elements about the Roman worship of Vesta were clearly different from the Greek ways of honoring Hestia. First, the Romans had one temple dedicated to the worship of Vesta. At least a handful of Greek cities (and perhaps more) likely had temples for Hestia, in addition the common hearth of their community. Still, temples to the hearth goddess in both societies are few in number compared to the other major gods. Another difference concerns celebrations in honor of these goddesses; in Greece, Hestia was seldom honored with her own festival (except for the one example cited), whereas the Romans had the annual festival of Vesta, the *Vestalia*.³⁷⁰

Regarding Apollo and his cult at Delphi, several connections can be made. Apollo and Vesta were not closely connected in early Roman society. However, this fact changed radically with Augustus who linked the dieties both in propaganda and also spatially on the Palatine. Indeed the close connection between Apollo and Hestia in the Greek world may have been a factor (or even a model?) for their new pairing in Rome. It is also possible that to some extent aspects of the priestesses of Vesta in Rome were inspired by the female priestesses of Delphi. Hestia was honored there in a round temple, and the priestesses (at least in early history) were virgins—clear similarities to the *aedes Vestae* and the Vestal Virgins. This argument can

³⁶⁹ Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 2. 27.

³⁷⁰ I am aware of one festival in honor of Hestia practiced by Greeks in an Egyptian city. See the discussion below.

perhaps be pushed one step further in an effort to explain the seemingly dual nature of the Vestal Virgins who had attributes of both virgins and matrons.³⁷¹

The next point of comparison concerns the association with Hestia and Vesta with the Earth. Examples of the connection between Hestia and Earth (Ge or Gaia) have already been discussed, and those of Vesta and Earth are quite similar. Dionysius of Halicarnassus writes “...they regard the fire as consecrated to Vesta because that goddess, being the earth and occupying the central place in the universe, kindles the celestial fires from herself.”³⁷² Varro writes that because Earth received so many other names she came to be thought of as many different goddesses: Earth (Tellus), Ops, Mother, Great, Proserpine and Vesta.³⁷³ Ovid too shared this opinion, “Vesta is the same as the earth...under both of them is a perpetual fire; the earth and the hearth are symbols of the home,” and continues on to say that Vesta’s temple in Rome was round because of her association with the earth.³⁷⁴ Plutarch indicates a similar belief

³⁷¹ Cf. Diodorus Siculus 16.6 (note 72 above). There is also the nature of the goddesses to consider. The duality of Vesta was discussed in Chapter 2. Vernant, 174-5, argues that Hestia is both “virgin / daughter and as procreator, as the reservoir of life.” Detienne, 174 no. 64: “The Virgin-Hestia, positioned close to the hearth (Porphyry, in Eusebius, *Prepar. Evangel.*, III.II), and the old woman of Artemidorus, II.44, ed. R. A. Pack, 179, 3-4. But there is also room for a matronly figure of Hestia in the Prytaneion: the one sculpted by Scopas for the city of Paros (Pliny, *Natural History*, 36.25) and, now, the relief by Pharsalus, studied by S. G. Miller, “Hestia and Symmachos,” *Opuscula romana* 9 (1973): 167-172.”

³⁷² Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 2.66. 3: Ἐστία δ’ ἀνακεῖσθαι τὸ πῦρ νομίζουσιν, ὅτι γῆ τε οὖσα ἡ θεὸς καὶ τὸν μέσον κατέχουσα τοῦ κόσμου τόπον τὰς ἀνάψεις τοῦ μεταρσίου ποιεῖται πυρὸς ἀφ’ ἑαυτῆς. Earnest Cary, trans.

³⁷³ Varro cited by Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 7.24: *Deinde adiungit et dicit, Tellurem matrem et nominibus pluribus et cognominibus quod nominarunt, deos existimatos esse complures. "Tellurem, inquit, putant esse Opem, quod opere fiat melior; Matrem, quo d plurima pariat; Magnam, quod cibum pariat; Proserpinam, quod ex ea proserpant fruges; Vestam, quod uestiatur herbis. Sic alias deas, inquit, non absurde ad hanc reuocant." Si ergo una dea est, quae quidem consulta ueritate nec ipsa est, interim quid itur in multas? Vnius sint ista multa numina, non tam deae multae quam nomina. Sed errantium maiorum auctoritas deprimit et eundem Varronem post hanc sententiam trepidare compellit. Adiungit enim et dicit: "Cum quibus opinio maiorum de his deabus, quod plures eas putarunt esse, non pugnat." Quo modo non pugnat, cum ualde aliud sit unam deam nomina habere multa, aliud esse deas multas? "Sed potest, inquit, fieri ut eadem res et una sit, et in ea quaedam res sint plures." Concedo in uno homine esse res plures, numquid ideo et homines plures? Sic in una dea esse res plures, numquid ideo et deas plures? Verum sicut uolunt, diuidant conflent, multiplicent replicent implicant.*

³⁷⁴ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.265-282: *forma tamen templi, quae nunc manet, ante fuisse / dicitur, et formae causa probanda subest. / Vesta eadem est et terra: subest vigil ignis utrique: / significant sedem terra focusque suam. / terra pilae similis nullo fulcimine nixa, / aere subiecto tam grave pendet onus. / ipsa volubilitas libratum sustinet orbem, / quique premat partes, angulus omnis abest, / cumque sit in media rerum regione locata / et tangat nullum plusve minusve latus, / ni convexa foret, parti vicinior esset, / nee medium terram mundus haberet onus. / arte Syracosia*

that Vesta was the same as the earth, but claims the round shape of the *aedes Vestae* was due to that of the universe at the center of which was fire or Vesta.³⁷⁵

It is clear that Vesta's essential nature mimics that of Hestia while also maintaining strong ties to Earth; however Vesta also has elements in common with several other Greek goddesses in both purview and manner of worship. For example, interesting similarities appear when comparing the cult and temple of Vesta with the Greek celebration of the Thesmophoria in Eleusis which was held in honor of Demeter and Kore. In his study of Eleusis, Kerényi identifies a room (termed "the Megaron") used by the priestesses of the cult which was likely off limits to all men except the Hierophant. He also mention that the priestesses were in charge of secret, sacred objects that were possibly stored in the same place where the priestesses lived, another space where male presence was limited to the Hierophant.³⁷⁶ These details bring to mind several aspects comparable with cult practices of Vesta in Rome: there the *pontifex maximus* was the only male who was allowed to enter the *aedes Vestae*, a place used, among other things, to guard sacred objects, which was a task performed by female personnel who lived one building away. Also the nature of the Thesmaphoria as a nocturnal festival for the wives of citizens recalls the rites of Bona Dea in Rome. The latter also involved a private, nocturnal celebration attended by primarily upper-class women and supervised by the Vestal Virgins. In addition, at the Thesmophoria the Danaids played an important role, carrying water by means of

suspensus in aere clause / stat globus, immensi parva figura poli, / et quantum a summis, tantum secessit ab imis / terra; quod ut fiat, forma rotunda facit, / par facies templi: nullus procurrit in illo angulus; a pluvio vindicat imbre tholus. J. G. Frazer, trans.

³⁷⁵ Plutarch, *Numa*, 11.1: Νομᾶς δὲ λέγεται καὶ τὸ τῆς Ἑστίας ἱερὸν ἐγκύκλιον περιβαλέσθαι τῷ ἀσβέστῳ πυρὶ φρουρᾶν, ἀπομιμούμενος οὐ τὸ σχῆμα τῆς γῆς ὡς Ἑστίας οὕσης, ἀλλὰ τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου, οὗ μέσον οἱ Πυθαγορικοὶ τὸ πῦρ ἰδρῦσθαι νομίζουσι, καὶ τοῦτο Ἑστίαν καλοῦσι καὶ μονάδα. "Furthermore, it is said that Numa built the temple of Vesta, where the perpetual fire was kept, of a circular form, not in imitation of the shape of the earth, believing Vesta to be the earth, but of the entire universe, at the centre of which the Pythagoreans place the element of fire, and call it Vesta and Unit," Bernadotte Perrin, trans.

³⁷⁶ Carl Kerényi, *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter*, trans. Ralph Manheim, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 110.

a perforated jar or sieve.³⁷⁷ Herein lays another similarity with the cult of Vesta since in early stories Vestal Virgins proved their purity by carrying water in a sieve.³⁷⁸

Interesting points of similarity also exist between Vesta and Athena. Each goddess stood as a protector and metonym for their city: the Romans viewed Vesta and the fire in her temple as synonymous with their prosperity and safety, and Athena was the patron of her eponymous city.³⁷⁹ The most obvious parallel is that they were both virgin goddesses. Athena often carries the epithet *parthenos* which is usually translated as “virgin” or “maiden”. However, alternate theories suggest that this word also meant “she who tends the fire”³⁸⁰ or “specifically denoted a priestess who was dedicated to retaining her vital energies in order to use them to attempt divine birth.”³⁸¹ According to Greek myth the virgin goddess Athena was mother to Erichthonius, one of the early kings of Athens.³⁸² Once again here is another example of a goddess with the dual nature of virgin and mother. Athena’s story is also reminiscent of the Vestal Virgin, Rhea Silvia, who gave birth to Romulus and Remus, the early kings of Rome. Frazer also made the

³⁷⁷ Sissa, 5 and 141.

³⁷⁸ Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, 8.1.5: *Eodem auxilii genere Tucciae uirginis Vestalis incesti criminis reae castitas infamiae nube obscurata emersit. quae conscientia certa sinceritatis suae spem salutis ancipiti argumento ausa petere est: arrepto enim cribro 'Vesta' inquit, 'si sacris tuis castas semper admoui manus, effice ut hoc hauriam e Tiberi aquam et in aedem tuam perferam'. audaciter et temere iactis uotis sacerdotis rerum ipsa natura cessit.*

³⁷⁹ H. N. Parker, “Why were the Vestals Virgins? Or the chastity of women and the safety of the Roman state,” *AJP* 125 (2004): 563-601, 567 “For the poets, Vesta was the metonym for Rome.” In the case of Athena consider also her epithet *Polias* = “Athena of the City”. The symbolic nature of Vesta for the Romans is discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

³⁸⁰ Louis DeRoy, “Le culte du foyer dans la Grèce mycénienne,” *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, vol. 137.1 (1950): 26-43, 29.

³⁸¹ Marguerite Rigoglioso, *The Cult of Divine Birth in Ancient Greece*, (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 40, “Dexter ...conjectures that remaining in a state of celibacy was thought to allow a woman to store up her vital energies so that she could transmit them in holy ways to others without a loss of vitality. She posits that, in myth, females avoided sexual intercourse with human males because the act was thought to dissipate this energy, while “chohabitation with a divine sprit” was thought not to result in such a diminishment.” Cf. Miriam Dexter, *Whence the Goddess*, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1990), 164-9.

³⁸² PseudoApollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 3.14.21: “Some say that this Erichthonius was a son of Hephaestus and Atthis, daughter of Cranaus, and some that he was a son of Hephaestus and Athena, as follows: Athena came to Hephaestus, desirous of fashioning arms. But he, being forsaken by Aphrodite, fell in love with Athena, and began to pursue her; but she fled. When he got near her with much ado (for he was lame, he attempted to embrace her; but she, being a chaste virgin, would not submit to him, and he dropped his seed on the leg of the goddess. In disgust, she wiped off the seed with wool and threw it on the ground; and as she fled and the seed fell on the ground, Erichthonius was produced,” Frazer, trans.

connection of the perpetual lamp of Athena that burned in the *Erechtheum* (house of Erechtheus) as similar to the *ignis Vestae* in Rome.³⁸³ Indeed, in both the Greek world and in Rome, “A fire of this kind is the embodiment of the continuity of the sanctuary and of the body politic.”³⁸⁴ In addition, Frazer remarks, “...it is possible that the maidens called Arrephoroi or Errephoroi, who dwelt close to the Erectheum, may at one time have personated Athena and passed, like Vestals, for wives of the fire-god.”³⁸⁵ Not much about this priesthood is known: it was comprised of two or four girls between the ages of seven and eleven who were chosen by the *basileus* to serve Athena Polias.³⁸⁶ Still, even this amount of information has parallels with the Vestal Virgins who early in Rome’s history had only four (not six) priestesses at any one time, and who were chosen by the *pontifex maximus* between the ages of six and ten. Vernant believes that a reasonable comparison can be found by going back to the tenders of the royal Mycenaean hearth, a role that “was at first a sacred office performed by women and that this duty fell to the daughter of the house prior to her marriage.”³⁸⁷

³⁸³ James Frazer, *The Magic Art & the Evolution of Kings*, vol 2 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), 198-9.

³⁸⁴ Burkert, 61.

³⁸⁵ Frazer, 198-9.

³⁸⁶ Cf. possible reference in Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 642: Harpocraton, *Lexicon*, s.v. “arrephorein”; *Suda*, “arrhephoria”; *Etymologicum Magnum* 149, 14-23; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.27.3: ἃ δὲ μοι θαυμάσαι μάλιστα παρέσχεν, ἔστι μὲν οὐκ ἐς ἅπαντας γνώριμα, γράψω δὲ οἷα συμβαίνει. παρθένοι δύο τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Πολιάδος οἰκοῦσιν οὐ πόρρω, καλοῦσι δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι σφᾶς ἀρρηφόρους· αὐταὶ χρόνον μὲν τινα δίαιταν ἔχουσι παρὰ τῆ θεᾶ, παραγενομένης δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς δρῶσιν ἐν νυκτὶ τοιάδε. ἀναθεῖσαι σφισιν ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς ἃ ἢ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἰέρεια δίδωσι φέρειν, οὔτε ἢ διδοῦσα ὁποῖόν τι δίδωσιν εἰδυῖα οὔτε ταῖς φερούσαις ἐπισταμέναις—ἔστι δὲ περίβολος ἐν τῇ πόλει τῆς καλουμένης ἐν Κήποις Ἀφροδίτης οὐ πόρρω καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ κάθοδος ὑπόγειος αὐτομάτη—, ταῦτη κατίασιν αἱ παρθένοι. κάτω μὲν δὴ τὰ φερόμενα λείπουσιν, λαβοῦσαι δὲ ἄλλο τι κομίζουσιν ἐγκεκαλυμμένον· καὶ τὰς μὲν ἀφῖασις ἤδη τὸ ἐντεῦθεν, ἑτέρας δὲ ἐς τὴν ἀκρόπολιν παρθένους ἄγουσιν ἀντ’ αὐτῶν. “I was much amazed at something which is not generally known, and so I will describe the circumstances. Two maidens dwell not far from the temple of Athena Polias, called by the Athenians Bearers of the Sacred Offerings. For a time they live with the goddess, but when the festival comes round they perform at night the following rites. Having placed on their heads what the priestess of Athena gives them to carry—neither she who gives nor they who carry have any knowledge what it is—the maidens descend by the natural underground passage that goes across the adjacent precincts, within the city, of Aphrodite in the Gardens. They leave down below what they carry and receive something else which they bring back covered up. These maidens they henceforth let go free, and take up to the Acropolis others in their place,” W.H.S. Jones, Litt.D., and H.A. Ormerod trans. Kajava, “Vesta,” 77, suggests that the the role of priestess of Vesta may have been given to one of the priestesses of Athena Parthenos (see below).

³⁸⁷ Vernant, 162. Cf. DeRoy, 32 note.1.

Still, no direct parallel exists between the Vestal Virgins and one group of religious personnel in Greece. The majority of Greek priesthoods were open to all citizens except those disqualified by physical blemish or disability, and the priestesses of Vesta were also bound by this guideline. Officials in Greece were usually chosen by lot annually (e.g. the priestesses of Athene Soteria and Athene Nike), but others were for life (Athene Polias). In general holders of these roles were allowed to marry and were not required to live within a sanctuary. Chastity was normally a temporary state that arose periodically (e.g. before specific festivals) or was limited to their one year of service (or in the case of young girls until marriage), although it was more common in priesthoods of virgin goddesses. In comparison, early Vestal priestesses were also chosen by lot, but over time this rule was disposed of since it became difficult to find enough potential candidates. Moreover, the term of office of a Vestal Virgin was not limited to one year, or merely their pre-pubescence; rather it lasted for thirty years or for life, if they wished. During this time they served in the Temple of Vesta and lived one building away in the *Atrium Vestae*. Greek priestesses sometimes had special cultic privileges, such as permission to enter forbidden places or see special things, they often received payment (money or food), and some owned property.³⁸⁸ This is again similar to Vestal Virgins who protected Rome's most sacred objects hidden within the *penus* of the temple, and who as a privilege for their service were given a state stipend and allowed to own and manage their property without the need of a *tutor*. In sum, there is no priesthood in the Greek world which provides a perfect model for the Vestal Virgins, but taken as a whole there are significant precedents that explain many of the characteristics of the priestesses in Rome.

³⁸⁸ Rigoglioso, 40-5. Cf. Joan Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2007); Barbara Goff, *Citizen bacchae: Women's ritual practice in ancient Greece*, (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2004); Elizabeth Holderman, *A study of the Greek priestess*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1913); Zaidman and Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, Paul Cartledge, trans., (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1992); Dillon, 75, for the sexual status required of women in several Greek priesthoods; Judy Ann Turner, *Hiereiai: Acquisition of feminine priesthoods in ancient Greece*, (PhD diss.: California, Santa Barbara, 1983).

The worship of Vesta in Latium

There is no doubt that the the Roman goddess Vesta was influenced by the Hestia of the Greek East. However, Vesta was also an early (if not indigenous) deity of Latium that was worshipped in the immediate area around Rome. Material evidence supports this and, according to the literary accounts, the Romans themselves believed they had brought the worship of Vesta from one or more neighboring communities. Indeed, a survey of select Latin cities reveals important information about the early worship of Vesta in local religious practices which influenced Roman worship of her. These facts can be used to better explain some of the unique aspects of Vesta and her cult when compared to Hestia.

Vesta had an ancient sanctuary at Lavinium, and this city was most likely the primary conduit from which Latin religious practices entered Rome. Kajava and others believe that the Roman Vesta probably developed out of an indigenous fire deity; however, the possibility remains that "...a well-established form of the cult of Hestia (with some aspects in common or later associated with Vesta) really did arrive in Rome through Lavinium (and Cumae) together with other cults of eastern origin."³⁸⁹ If true, this would be far from the only detail of early Roman religion that was modelled on Greek practices. For example, Ampolo has also argued convincingly that the Regia built in the Roman Forum circa 500 BCE was modelled upon the Prytaneion complex of the agora in Athens.³⁹⁰ Moreover, Frazer commented on the fact that the *aedes Vestae* was located near other Greek "imports" like the temple of Castor and Pollux.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Kajava, "Vesta," 71. For Vesta and Lavinium see: A. Dubourdieu, *Les origines et le développement du culte des Pénates à Rome*, (Rome: École française de Rome, 1989), 292.

³⁹⁰ Carmine Ampolo, "Analogie e rapporto fra Atene e Roma arcaica. Osservazioni sulla Regia, sul rex sacrorum e sul culto di Vesta," in *La Parola del Passato* XXVI, 141 (1971): 443-460, 453. Cf. J.G. Frazer, "The Prytaneum, the Temple of Vesta, the Vestals, Perpetual Fires," in *Journal of Philology* 14 (1885): 145-72, pointed out the similarities between the Greek prytaneum and the *aedes Vestae* in Rome. However, detractors argue that the shape of Vesta's temple comes from the shape of the early huts on the Palatine. Cf. David G. Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion," *ANRW* II 16.2 (Berlin-New York : W. de Gruyter, 1978). See also F. Coarelli, *Il Foro Romano*, (Roma:

Another theory connects the worship of Vesta to the goddess Pallas (an aspect of Athena). The latter had a temple in Lavinium and—according to some—Pallas was identical to Vesta.³⁹² One of Pallas' early priestesses may have been Amata who, according to myth, was the wife of King Latinus of the Latins. Carcopino believes that Amata was a member in a cult of priestesses who looked after the temple of Pallas in Lavinium, and that from this origin the cult of Vesta developed.³⁹³ This explanation is also used to clarify a confusing aspect of the initiation ceremony of Vestal Virgins in which the pontifex maximus says *amata, te capio*.³⁹⁴ Thus, “Amata” in this rite is taken as the name of an early priestess of Vesta. The obvious problem with this theory is that Queen Amata was a married woman, not a virgin. As such, either this theory is incorrect, or the requirements for becoming a priestess were different in early cult practice. Lavinium remained an important source of religious practices for the Romans even after they established Vesta in her own temple in Rome. Officials with *imperium* were required to travel to Lavinium and make a sacrifice to the Penates and Vesta on their way to and from the provinces.³⁹⁵ Hence the priesthood of Vesta continued in Lavinium for centuries, although its original form with ties to the goddess Pallas differed from that practiced by the people of Rome.³⁹⁶

Quasar, 1985), 56; and T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome : Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000-264 BC)*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 102.

³⁹¹ McDaniel, 16. Cf. Marion E. Blake, *Ancient Roman Construction in Italy from the Prehistoric Period to Augustus*, (Washington: Carnegie Institute, 1947), 120, dates the earliest temple to the beginning of the fifth century, contemporary with the temple of Saturn.

³⁹² Audin, “Le Palladium de Rome”, in *Rev. Arch.* (1929): 46-57, 54-55. Carcopino, *Virgile et les origines d’Ostie*, (Paris : E. de Boccard, 1919): 320-340, 324, likewise argues that Pallas and Vesta (and also Libera) were essentially the same deity early on in Rome’s history.

³⁹³ Carcopino, 324. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 1.12.19: *Amata inter capendum a pontifice maximo appellatur, quoniam ei, quae prima capta est, hoc fuisse nomen traditum est.*

³⁹⁴ The formula comes from Aulus Gellus, *Noctes Atticae*, 1.12.14, but is preserved in Fabius Pictor.

³⁹⁵ Cf. Pauley Wissowa and Kroll, *Real-Encyclopädie d. klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, s.v. “Lavinium” 1010.35, where a number of sources are cited; Dubourdieu, 355-361; A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins*, (Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 1965), 257-265.

³⁹⁶ *CIL*, XIV, 2077, mentions one of the priestesses: *Caeciliae Q.f. / Philete. virgini / maiori regiae Laurentium La / vinatium. Q. / Caecilius Papi—/ on pater filiae.* M. G. Granino Cecere, “Vestali non di Roma,” in *Studi di*

Several authors state that the cult of Vesta originated in the city of Alba, which according to Roman myth was founded by Aeneas' son, Ascanius. It held an ancient temple of the Vesta, and according to some accounts it was from Alba that this goddess was brought to Rome. Dionysius of Halicarnassus provides the most detailed and best information concerning this importation. He states that a temple of Vesta had existed from ancient times in Alba where Rhea Silvia had served as her priestess, but that the people who believed that Romulus had constructed the temple of Vesta—which would seem proper since his mother was her priestess and it was his ancestors who had brought the sacred rites of this goddess from Ilium (Troy)—were mistaken.³⁹⁷

Rather, Romulus established **many** hearths and appointed **priests** to oversee them:

διὰ ταῦτα μὲν δὴ κοινὸν ἱερὸν οὐ κατεσκευάσατο τῆς Ἑστίας οὐδὲ ἱερείας ἔταξεν αὐτῇ παρθένους, ἐν ἐκάστη δὲ τῶν τριάκοντα φρατριῶν ἰδρυσάμενος ἑστίαν, ἐφ' ἧς ἔθνον οἱ φρατριεῖς, θυηπόλους αὐτῶν ἐποίησε τοὺς τῶν κουριῶν ἡγεμόνας τὰ παρ' Ἑλλησιν ἔθη μιμησάμενος, ἃ παρὰ ταῖς ἀρχαιοτάταις τῶν πόλεων ἔτι γίγνεται. τὰ γέ τοι καλούμενα

Epigrafia Latina, 20 (2003) : 67-80, 72, interprets the use of the title *maior* to indicate that Lavinium maintained two virgin priestesses at any given time, although I believe his argument leaves room for further analysis.

³⁹⁷ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 2.65.1-2: τὴν γοῦν ἰδρυσιν τοῦ ἱεροῦ Ῥωμύλω τινὲς ἀνατιθέασιν τῶν ἀμηγάνων νομίζοντες εἶναι πόλεως οἰκισσομένης ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς ἐμπείρου μαντικῆς μὴ κατασκευασθῆναι πρῶτον ἑστίαν κοινήν τῆς πόλεως, καὶ ταῦτα ἐν Ἄλβᾳ τοῦ κτίστου τραφέντος, ἐν ἧ παλαιὸν ἐξ οὗ τὸ τῆς θεᾶς ταύτης ἱερὸν ἰδρυμένον ἦν, καὶ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ θυηπόλου γενομένης τῇ θεῷ: διαιρούμενοί τε διχῆ τὰ ἱερά καὶ τὰ μὲν αὐτῶν κοινὰ ποιοῦντες καὶ πολιτικά, τὰ δὲ ἴδια καὶ συγγενικά, δι' ἄμφω ταῦτά φασιν πολλὴν ἀνάγκην εἶναι τῷ Ῥωμύλῳ ταύτην σέβειν τὴν θεὸν. [2] οὔτε γὰρ ἀναγκαιότερον ἀνθρώποις οὐδὲν εἶναι τῆς κοινῆς ἑστίας οὔτε τῷ Ῥωμύλῳ κατὰ διαδοχὴν γένους οὐδὲν οικειότερον προγόνων μὲν ὑπάρχοντι τῶν ἐξ Ἰλίου τὰ τῆς θεᾶς ἱερά μετενεγκαμένων, μητρὸς δὲ ἱερείας. εὐόκασιν δ' οἱ διὰ ταῦτα τὴν ἰδρυσιν τοῦ ἱεροῦ Ῥωμύλῳ μᾶλλον ἀνατιθέντες ἢ Νόμα, τὸ μὲν κοινὸν ὀρθῶς λέγειν, ὅτι πόλεως οἰκισσομένης ἑστία πρῶτον εἶδει ἰδρυθῆναι καὶ ταῦτα ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς οὐκ ἀπείρου τῆς περὶ τὰ θεῖα σοφίας, τὰ δὲ κατὰ μέρος ὑπὲρ τε τῆς κατασκευῆς τοῦ νῦν ὄντος ἱεροῦ καὶ τῶν θεραπευσῶν τὴν θεὸν παρθένων ἡγνοηκέναι. “At any rate, as regards the building of the temple of Vesta, some ascribe it to Romulus, looking upon it as an inconceivable thing that, when a city was being founded by a man skilled in divination, a public hearth should not have been erected first of all, particularly since the founder had been brought up at Alba, where the temple of this goddess had been established from ancient times, and since his mother had been her priestess. And recognizing two classes of religious ceremonies — the one public and common to all the citizens, and the other private and confined to particular families — they declare that on both these grounds Romulus was under every obligation to worship this goddess. [2] “For they say that nothing is more necessary for men than a public hearth, and that nothing more nearly concerned Romulus, in view of his descent, since his ancestors had brought the sacred rites of this goddess from Ilium and his mother had been her priestess. Those, then, who for these reasons ascribe the building of the temple to Romulus rather than to Numa seem to be right, in so far as the general principle is concerned, that when a city was being founded, it was necessary for a hearth to be established first of all, particularly by a man who was not unskilled in matters of religion; but of the details relating to the building of the present temple and to the virgins who are in the service of the goddess they seem to have been ignorant,” Earnest Cary, trans.

πρυτανεῖα παρ' αὐτοῖς Ἑστίας ἐστὶν ἱερά, καὶ θεραπεύεται πρὸς τῶν ἐχόντων τὸ μέγιστον ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι κράτος.³⁹⁸

It was Numa, not Romulus, who created the common hearth of the Romans, the temple of Vesta, and appointed virgins to guard the holy things within, “in accordance with the ancestral custom of the Latins”.³⁹⁹ When a passage from Livy is also considered, *virginesque Vestae legit, Alba oriundum sacerdotium et genti conditoris haud alienum. iis, ut adsiduae templi antistites essent, stipendium de publico statuit, virginitate aliisque caerimoniis venerabiles ac sanctas fecit*, it becomes apparent that the priestesses in these other Latin cities may have been “Vestal virgins” with the same duties and requirements as the Vestal Virgins of Rome.⁴⁰⁰ In the late first or early second century CE, Juvenal remarks that Alba still looked after the Trojan fire and lesser Vesta, which refers to the pre-Roman temple of Vesta at Alba.⁴⁰¹ However, it is also a reference to the Roman destruction of this city by King Tullus Hostilius, after which we are told the entire

³⁹⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 2.65.4: “For this reason, therefore, he did not build a common temple of Vesta nor did he appoint virgins to be her priestesses; but having erected a hearth in each of the thirty curiae on which the members sacrificed, he appointed the chiefs of the curiae to be the priests of those hearths, therein imitating the customs of the Greeks that are still observed in the most ancient cities. At any rate, what are called prytaneia among them are temples of Hestia, and are served by the chief magistrates of the cities,” Earnest Cary, trans.

³⁹⁹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 2.66.1: νόμας δὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν παραλαβὼν τὰς μὲν ἰδίας οὐκ ἐκίνησε τῶν φρατριῶν ἐστίας, κοινὴν δὲ κατεστήσατο πάντων μίαν ἐν τῷ μεταξύ τοῦ τε Καπιτωλίου καὶ τοῦ Παλατίου χωρίῳ, συμπεπολισμένων ἤδη τῶν λόφων ἐνὶ περιβόλῳ καὶ μέσης ἀμφοῖν οὔσης τῆς ἀγορᾶς, ἐν ἧ κατεσκευάσται τὸ ἱερόν, τὴν τε φυλακὴν τῶν ἱερῶν κατὰ τὸν πάτριον τῶν Λατίνων νόμον διὰ παρθένων ἐνομοθέτησε γίνεσθαι. “Numa, upon taking over the rule, did not disturb the individual hearths of the curiae, but erected one common to them all in the space between the Capitoline hill and the Palatine (for these hills had already been united by a single wall into one city, and the Forum, in which the temple is built, lies between them), and he enacted, in accordance with the ancestral custom of the Latins, that the guarding of the holy things should be committed to virgins,” Earnest Cary, trans. I suppose it possible that these examples of priestesses from nearby cities in Latium were developed after that of Rome rather than providing the model for the Vestal Virgins, but the Romans did not think so.

⁴⁰⁰ Livy, *ab Urbe condita*, 1.20.3: “He [Numa] further appointed virgin priestesses for the service of Vesta, a cult which originated in Alba and was therefore not foreign to Numa who brought it to Rome. The priestesses were paid out of public funds to enable them to devote their whole time to the temple service, and were invested with special sanctity by the imposition of various observances of which the chief was virginity,” Aubrey de Séincourt, trans.

⁴⁰¹ Juvenal, *Satires*, 4.60-62: *Utque lacus suberant, ubi quamquam diruta servat / Ignem Troianum et Vestam colit Alba minorem, / Obstitit intranti miratrix turba parumper*. “And when the lakes lay below him, where Alba in ruins still tends the Trojan flame and the lesser Vesta, a gaping crowd blocked his path for a time,” Susanna Morton Braund, ed. and trans. Alba Longa, near the Alban Lake, was founded by Aeneas’ son Ascanius and housed the flame of Vesta, which the Trojans had brought from Troy.

population was moved to Rome.⁴⁰² Still, the worship of Vesta was continued in Alba by the people of Bovillae. This city housed the *Albae Longanae Bovillenses*, supposedly a continuation of the Alban Vestals. Epigraphic and literary sources confirm the presence of Vestal priestesses in this city through the late fourth century CE.⁴⁰³

Elsewhere in Latium, Vesta also had ties to Nemi and Tibur. Frazer is the strongest proponent of the connection between Vesta and the former, arguing that the goddess and her priestess had ties to Diana Nemorensis:

“Further, the title of Vesta borne by Diana at Nemi points clearly to the maintenance of a perpetual holy fire in her sanctuary. A large circular basement at the north-east corner of the temple, raised on three steps and bearing traces of a mosaic pavement, probably supported a round temple of Diana in her character of Vesta, like the round temple of Vesta in the Roman Forum. Here the sacred fire would seem to have been tended by Vestal Virgins, for the head of a Vestal in terra-cotta was found on the spot, and the worship of a perpetual fire, cared for by holy maidens, appears to have been common in Latium from the earliest to the latest times.”⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.29.1-2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 3.27.

⁴⁰³ Asconius, *pro Milone*, 40, wrote that: *Virgines quoque Albae dixerunt mulierem ignotam venisse ad se, quae, Milonis mandato, votum solveret, quod Clodius occisus esset*; *CIL*, XIV, 2140 = *ILS* 6190 mentions Manlia Severa, *virgo Albana maxima*; *CIL*, VI, 2172 = *ILS* 5011, mentions a *virgini Vestali maxime arcis* and *Albae* whose name is usually reconstructed as Flavia (or Valeria) Vera, but the inscription was found in Rome leading to questions over its origin. In two of his letters Symmachus (*Epistles*, 9.147-8) mentions Primigenia, an Alban vestal of Bovillae, who was accused of incest in 382 CE. cf. M. Granino Cecere, “*Sacerdotes Cabenses e sacerdotibus Albani: la documentazione epigrafica*,” in A. Pasqualini (ed.), *Alba Longa. Mito, storia, archeologia. Atti dell’Incontro di studio Roma -Albano Laziale 27-29 gennaio 1994*, (Roma, 1996) : 307-316 ; Cecere, “Vestali,” 69-70: “De passo non solo viene a confermare che la sede delle vergini Albane era a Bovillae, ma anche che alle Vestali Albane era concesso il privilegio di testimoniare nei processi, proprio come alle Vestali di Roma. Anche le Albane, dunque, dovevano godere, a somiglianza delle Romane, di una posizione di indiscusso privilegio nella comunità locale e come quelle dovevano essere scelte tra le famiglie di maggior prestigio. Una conferma in tal senso giunge dall’epigrafia: due sono infatti le Vestali Albane note attraverso le iscrizioni.”; Cecere, “Nuovi documenti epigrafici da Bovillae,” *Miscellanea graeca romana* 16 (Roma, 1991): 239-259. Cecere dates *CIL*, XIV, 2140, to 158 CE. He also analyses *CIL*, VI, 2172, in greater detail in “Vestali,” 72: “Non deve stupire una dedica ad una vestale Albana nell’Urbe. E* possibile che la sacerdotessa appartenesse ad una famiglia di origine bovillense residente in Roma o che il sacerdozio, considerato pur sempre un titolo d’onore, fosse ambito anche da gentes di prestigio della Città.” Cf. R. A. Bauman, *Crime and Punishment in Ancient Rome*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 97.

⁴⁰⁴ James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abridged ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 3. See: A. Alföldi, “Diana Nemorensis,” in *AJA* 64 (1960) : 137-44 and plates 31-34 ; G. H. Wallis, *Illustrated Catalogue of Classical Antiquities from the Site of the Temple of Diana, Nemi, Italy*, (Nottingham, 1893).

In brief, the possible associations between Vesta and Nemi include an inscription, a terracotta bust identified as a Vestal virgin, and the fact that the temple here was either partly or completely round in shape.⁴⁰⁵



Although these points have merit, I believe the subject would benefit from additional analysis.⁴⁰⁶

At Tibur, inscriptions not only demonstrate the continuation of Vestal Virgins in this city (*virgini Vestali Tiburtium*), but also that they were active as patrons during the imperial period.⁴⁰⁷

In addition to the many and obvious Greek influences on the Roman worship of Vesta, at least some elements of this goddess and her cult do have indigenous, Latin origins. The connection of Vesta to Pallas appears to be unique to the area near Lavinium. The issue of the use and origin of “Amata” is trickier: as the ancient authorities indicate, it is possible that the

⁴⁰⁵ *ILS* 3243; *CIL*, 14, 2213.

⁴⁰⁶ For example, as discussed in an earlier chapter, just because a Roman building was round it does not mean it was a temple dedicated to Vesta. Cf. C. Bennett Pascal argues that Vesta was not synthesized with Diana Nemorensis in “Rex Nemorensis”, *Numen* 23.1 (April 1976):23-39.

⁴⁰⁷ One inscription is from the tomb of the Vestal Virgin Cossinia : *Inscr. It.*, 04-01, 213 ; cf. Cecere, “Vestali,” 74-5, who argues for the presence of two tombs in this spot, one located above the other. Two other honorific inscriptions exist : *CIL*, XIV 3677 = *ILS* 6244 = *Inscr. It.* IV, 1 nr. 218, and *CIL*, XIV 3679 = *Inscr. It.* IV, 1 nr. 188; cf. Cecere, “Vestali,” 73.

Romans believed an early priestess of Vesta was so named, and from there “Amata” became part of the initiation ceremony of Vestal priestesses. On the other hand it also seems possible that the Romans had no idea where this name came from or why they used it, and accordingly invented a story to explain it. Either way, it places Vesta in a Latin context. Also, the tradition of having a female priesthood of Vesta appears to have developed much more clearly in Latium even though some priestesses of Hestia are known in Greece. It is also perhaps more likely that the concept of a priesthood that required an extended period of celibacy of its officials was a Latin innovation, given that celibacy among priests and priestesses of Greece was not all that common, and perpetual celibacy even less so. These are the Latin influences on the cult and worship of Vesta.

The worship of Vesta in the Western Roman Empire

As Rome expanded its empire the religious practices of the Roman people also spread. Their customs, largely based on and similar to Greek religious beliefs, would have been especially novel to parts of the Western Roman Empire that had limited prior contacts with the East. As Roman officials travelled to the provinces, soldiers were sent from one end of the empire to the other, local elites endeavored to be more “Roman”, and Roman style cities were built, the local peoples (especially those in urban areas) came into increasing contact with Roman gods and religious ceremonies. The worship of Vesta was part of this cultural transfer, although perhaps not to the extent one would expect considering her symbolic importance for the Romans. There are no known temples of Vesta in the Western Roman provinces, nor any known cult officials for her. Many “Roman” gods underwent syncretism with local deities, but some—like Vesta—do not seem to have received this treatment. As such, the majority of our knowledge

concerning the worship of Vesta in these areas comes from a rather small number of inscriptions that are concentrated in the provinces of Baetica, Lugudunensis, Africa Proconsularis and Germania Inferior. What these suggest, however, is that Vesta was often honored in such a way that indicates potential ties to the imperial family.⁴⁰⁸ The question then becomes if and to what extent Vesta was a part of the worship of the imperial cult in western provinces.

In Rome Vesta received one annual festival, the *Vestalia*, but her priestesses were involved in the religious ceremonies of many gods. How these festivals were celebrated in the provinces is largely a matter of conjecture. Scholars typically draw on calendars as the main source for religious festivals at the provincial level, but these sources have obvious weaknesses. First, none exist from any province at an administrative level; rather, the only known examples were imperial issues to the military. However, given what we know it seems "...that at least from the Flavian period provincial priests will have had in their hands a prescribed order of festival days to be observed throughout the liturgical year. Presumably a similar roster will have followed earlier, if on a less uniform basis."⁴⁰⁹ Moreover, Fishwick believes that if the Dura calendar (from the eastern province of Mesopotamia) were to be applied to the west it "...suggests that certain *feriae publicae* for the Roman State, notably the Kalends of January or the *Vestalia*, *Neptunalia* and Birthday of Rome, will have been observed."⁴¹⁰ However, there is no obvious way in which the festival could have been performed in the western provinces; no cult personnel is known, nor are there any temples dedicated to Vesta, a necessary element considering the primary objective of the holiday in Rome was the ceremonial cleaning out of the

⁴⁰⁸ The examples from Germany have no clear ties to the imperial cult and must be excluded from this list. However, one inscription may suggest a place of worship. See: *CIL* 13.8729: *Vestae / sacrum / Iul(ius) Victo(r) / mag(ister) fig(ulorum) / pro se*. Two others from Xanten, Germany, may in fact refer to the same inscription, but I have not been able to confirm this. See: *AE* 1902.250: *Dea Vest(a)e*, and *CIL* 13, 8642: *Deae Vest(a)e*. The latter text was found on the base of a statue of a female figure, but its head has been lost.

⁴⁰⁹ Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, vol 1 (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 1987), 253.

⁴¹⁰ Fishwick, 255. Cf. *InscrIT* 13, 2, no. 44; Fishwick Vol. II, 1, 517.

goddess' temple. Thus if celebrations such as the *Vestalia* took place, they could not have been carried out in the provinces in the same manner as they occurred in Rome.

It is possible that the worship of Vesta in the West was tied to the imperial cult, but the evidence for this is slight and inconclusive. Mekacher has argued that there is no direct evidence that extends beyond Livia for the involvement of the Vestal Virgins in the worship of the imperial cult as a whole.⁴¹¹ There are other means through which Vesta could have been incorporated with the imperial cult, but they are largely conjectural. The first way concerns the possible manifestation of Vesta in religious buildings not dedicated to her. Drawing on discussions above concerning altars as the domain of Hestia and to a lesser extent Vesta, it is theoretically possible that any Roman temple with an altar (like that for the imperial cult), especially one with a fire or flame, was intended to invoke the presence of Vesta. Proving this, however, would be exceptionally difficult. A second theory previously advanced by Mellor argues for a close correlation between the goddess Roma and Vesta. His theory maintains that the worship of Roma and Augustus in the western provinces could essentially be considered the worship of Vesta and Augustus (or whoever *was princeps* at that time). A third potential connection between Vesta and the imperial cult derives from inscriptions in honor of "Vesta Augusta". I shall provide an overview and analysis of each of these last two possibilities.

During the reign of Augustus temples for the imperial cult began to spring up throughout the Roman Empire. Yet there were differences in the ease of acceptance and details of cult practice, especially between the eastern and western provinces. It is generally believed that areas with strong Greek influences accepted the imperial cult more easily due to their history of ruler worship. However, this concept was largely foreign to people in the western parts of the empire.

⁴¹¹ Nina Mekacher, "Weg vom Herd? Zur Integration der Vestalinnen in die Kaiserfeste des frühen Prinzipates," in R. Frei-Stolba, A. Beilmar and B. Bianchi, eds. *Les femmes antiques entre sphere privée et sphere publique*, (Bern-Frankfurt, 2003): 153-71, 166.

Mellor has studied the goddess Roma extensively and believes that those in the east would have accepted the more standardized idea of Roma that was also used in the capital city, but that to facilitate acceptance in the west “Roma was identified with a familiar divinity...Vesta.”⁴¹² His argument largely depends on the issues of citizenship and symbolism. For Mellor, since many people in the Greek provinces were already Roman citizens the goddess Roma would have carried a stronger symbolic meaning for them. However, for people in the western provinces who were less familiar with greco-roman religious practices and customs, “Neither the eastern or republican conceptions of Roma seem appropriate or simple enough for use in these outposts.”⁴¹³ This theory, however, is dependant upon the contention that Roman citizenship was held by greater numbers of people in the East than in the West, a fact which he fails to prove.

Mellor views Augustus as the primary force behind the introduction of the combined worship of Roma and himself to the western provinces, and believes the *princeps* came up with a plan to make the imperial cult there accessible and understandable. The answer was assimilation with Vesta: “The new goddess Roma was put forward as a traditional deity. Sometimes portrayed as a warrior, sometimes as a mother, she always had to draw on the attributes of other divinities—since she herself had no history, no myth...the relationship between Roma and Vesta, the most traditional cult of Rome...goes far to explain the significance of various cults of Roma in the West.”⁴¹⁴ He also argues that while Jupiter and Vesta were considered the *pignora imperi Romani* during the Republic, their place was assumed by Augustus and Roma.⁴¹⁵ This new coupling carried additional benefits: “Roma could be used in both the East and the West – a

⁴¹² Ronald Mellor, [*Thea Rhōmē*] = *The worship of the goddess Roma in the Greek world*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 200-1.

⁴¹³ *Ibid*, 110-1.

⁴¹⁴ Mellor, *Dea Roma*, 21-2. Rostovtzeff, “Augustus”, *Classical Studies*, s. II, *University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature* 15 (1922): 132-147, also claims “Roma is Vesta”!

⁴¹⁵ Mellor, [*Thea Rhōmē*], 200-1: “It was Roma and the emperors whose *aeternitas* was so often heralded in poems and on coins. And as the emperor is frequently syncretized with Jupiter-Zeus in depiction and cult, so Roma takes on the trappings of Vesta.”

unifying symbol had been found. And Augustus could eschew outright deification in the West, while promoting himself as companion of Roma, the temporal embodiment of the *imperium populi Romani*.⁴¹⁶

The worship of Roma and Augustus at altars and temples occurred in the major cities and often along the frontiers of the western provinces. These places of imperial worship could serve multiple purposes: one was to connect the locals to the capital (“mother city”), while another was likely to impress and intimidate those resisting Roman rule.⁴¹⁷ Symbolically, these altars could do even more by evoking “the hearth of Rome, the promises of eternity, and the power of the emperor.”⁴¹⁸ Mellor believes that the symbolism was kept to a minimum so that the meanings and significance of these altars and temples would have been obvious to any viewer.⁴¹⁹ In addition, he argues that “Such meaning can be found in a combination of Roma and Vesta: a new *dea Roma* carries the awful name of Roma and the power of the hearth fire. And this connection gives a picture of the cults of Roma and Augustus as extensions of the hearth of the Capital, flung out along the imperial frontiers to provide protection and encouragement.”⁴²⁰ Thus according to this theory Vesta, the sacred goddess of Rome who protected her people and guarded their most sacred objects, was brought to the provinces in the guise of Roma and in the form of altar fires.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁶ Mellor, *Dea Roma*, 111.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 105 (above) and 110: “It was precisely during this period that the representatives of Augustus dedicated altars to Roma and Augustus on the Rhine, Rhone, Elbe, in Dalmatia and in northwest Spain. These altars, intended to inspire confidence in, and fear of, Rome, were situated in the more unstable areas of the West.”

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *Dea Roma*, 110-1.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, *Dea Roma*, 1.

⁴²¹ The syncretism between Vesta and Roma also occurred in Rome starting in the first century. The best evidence of this comes from coins and gems on which Roma begins to appear with the Palladium and other attributes of Vesta. Cf. *BMCRE* (British Museum Catalogue of Coins of the Roman Empire) II, 260 no.188, and 279 nos. 256-8; H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems and Cameos, Greek, Etruscan and Roman in the British Museum*, (London: Printed by order of the Trustees, 1926), no. 1810 (intaglio showing Roma and the Palladium). Mellor, *Dea Roma*, 115-6, states that Roma, Vesta and Mars were the three most often used divinities on Flavian coinage; Jean Beaujeu, *La Religion Romaine a l’apogee de l’Empire I: La politique religieuse des Antonins (96-192)*, (Paris:

Although Mellor's theories have merit and I fully agree there was room for assimilation between Roma and Vesta, I am not convinced that this was intended or accomplished to the extent Mellor argues for. I also take issue with the idea that the association of the two occurred because of Vesta's "familiarity" since there is little indication that peoples of the Western provinces were all that "familiar" with her before the Augustan age.

A small number of inscriptions from the western provinces invoke or honor Vesta. In some of these she is mentioned in conjunction with an emperor, empress, or their title of either "Augustus" or "Augusta". The most notable example comes from Lugudunensis (*CIL*, 13, 1676) and for certain mentions "AUGUSTAE DEAE VESTAE AUG".⁴²² Van Andringa reads this as invoking "deus Augustus", which would be a very early example of any such appellation from a western province.⁴²³ I, however, read the inscription along the same lines as Fishwick who views this and other similar inscriptions as invoking "the Augustan god Mars, the Augustan goddess Vesta, and the Augustan god Vulcan."⁴²⁴ Still, what is meant by titles such as "the Augustan goddess Vesta" is not immediately clear. He believes that "...the original intention of the epithet *August[us]/a* will have been to personalize the deity, to appropriate its powers for the emperor and his family."⁴²⁵ The combination of Mars, Vesta and Vulcan is also an interesting choice for which no obvious reason exists. One possible explanation is that it references the three great archaic gods of Rome.⁴²⁶

Société d'édition Les Belles lettres, 1955), 135, claims that Trajan worshipped Roma under the mask of Vesta and points out that Hadrian dedicated a temple to Venus Felix and Roma Aeterna in the *Forum Romanum* that contained a statue of a seated Roma holding a Palladium.

⁴²² *CIL*, 13, 1676: Sex(to) Iulio / Thermiano / Senonio // A[quil]ae Flacc[us] / il[lae] civi Ae[li] / d[omi]nae uxori // Sex(to) Iulio / Sextiliano / filio // [Augusto] / [deo] / [Marti] // Augustae / Deae / Vestae // Augusto / deo / Volcano // Iuliae Regi[nae] / Magil[i] Hon[or]ati filia[e] nep[oti] // Iuliae / Thermiolae / filiae // M(arco) Tullio / Thermiano / nepoti.

⁴²³ William Van Andringa, *La Religion en Gaule Romaine*, (Paris: Editions Errance, 2002), 162.

⁴²⁴ Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, vol 2, part 1, (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 1991), 446-454.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*, 448.

⁴²⁶ Van Andringa, 38: "...la triade Mars, Vesta, Vulcain dans laquelle on peut reconnaître les trois grands dieux archaïques de Rome." This is one of a series of three inscriptions dedicated to Sextus Iulius Thermianus. Another, *CIL* 13, 2940, begins, "In ho[n]or(em) dom(us) A[ug]ustae Mart(i) Volk(ano) et deae sanctiss(imae) Vestae...". It

This point leads to a discussion of inscriptions that are dedicated to Roman gods bearing the cognomen or epithet “Augustus” or “Augusta”. Van Andringa has identified 69 inscriptions in which gallo-Roman gods have the cognomen *Augustus* and similar examples can be found throughout the western provinces.⁴²⁷ In addition to this, the examples of *Augusta* also need to be considered. In particular for this discussion, eight inscriptions are dedicated to “Vestae Aug(stae)” (or “Vestae August[ae]”) in the western provinces (this does not include dedications to Vesta without modifier).⁴²⁸ Thus we return to the issue of what the authors of these inscriptions meant to express by invoking “Vestae Augusta”. There is no reason to doubt Fishwick’s assessment that a primary motivation was to make a connection between the god and the imperial family. Still, the use of *Augustus/a* attached to the name of a god also may have been intended to convey multiple levels of meaning. Indeed, this was one of the main reasons why the title was originally chosen for Augustus since the Latin word *augustus* held religious connotations. *Vesta Augusta* would hence be connected to the imperial family and it stands to reason that this invocation intended to work two ways: this Vesta was of a particular aspect of the goddess defined by this relationship, while simultaneously they could draw on the significant attributes of this goddess, such as her connection the security and prosperity of the Roman empire. It seems reasonable to presume that the authors of early examples of such inscriptions realized the opportunity to draw on these various interpretations and intentionally monopolized

is important to note the use of the same three deities which were obviously chosen with care despite the fact that the choice of Vesta for provincial dedications is rather rare. Cf. F. Richard, “Une nouvelle inscription lyonnaise d’un *Sacerdos* Senon des Trois Gaules: *Sextus Iulius Thermianus*,” *CRAI* vol. 136.3 (1992); 489-509, especially 494-8.

⁴²⁷ Van Andringa, 160.

⁴²⁸ *CIL*, 13, 1676 (note 127 above); *CIL* 02, 01166 (p 841) = *CILA*-02-01, 00004 = *D* 03318 (Baetica); *CIL* 02-05, 00003 = *CIL* 02, 03378 = *CILA*-03-01, 00278 = *HEp*-05, 00447 (Baetica); *CIL* 05, 08655 = *IRConcor* 00012 = *ILLConcordia*-01, 00003 (Venetia et Histria); *IL Afr* 00258 = *AE* 1912, 00145 (Africa proconsularis); *IL Alg*-02-01, 03583 = Tiddis p 083 = *AE* 1952, 00208 (Numidia); *IMustis* 00010 = *LBIRNA* 00135 = *AE* 1968, 00597 (Africa proconsularis); Thignica p 68 = *AE* 2006, 01759 (Africa proconsularis).

on the multiple levels of significance. Once a pattern had been set, others followed the example.⁴²⁹

The extent and means by which Vesta was worshipped in the western provinces is clearly a difficult matter to assess. It appears her annual festival, the *Vestalia*, was practiced in at least some areas, but by whom and in what manner is entirely unknown. No other celebrations, temples, or cult personnel dedicated specifically to her are known, and the issue of altars will likely remain uncertain. The idea that the altars of temples dedicated to Roman gods or the imperial cult were dedicated to Vesta is a alluring one, but it might be a difficult thing to explain to provincials that the flame within was the goddess herself. Moreover, none of the inscriptions that I am aware from this area that mention Vesta tie her specifically to an altar, and I see no other way to demonstrate a connection between them. Mellor's argument about the assimilation of Vesta with Roma in the western provinces is interesting and has support among scholars. However, I believe that one fault in his theory comes from his belief in a total acceptance by the people of Roma as Vesta (or vice a versa). Certainly not all areas would have accepted and assimilated the two goddesses in precisely the same ways, or at the exact same time. Accordingly, I would expect to see examples (epigraphic or other) of the two worshipped together in the West where both are named ("to Vesta Roma" or "to Roma Vesta"), and perhaps a chronological progression towards assimilation. This does not occur. The inscriptions to "Vestae Aug(ustae)" are an interesting topic that may warrant further examination. These examples clearly demonstate a deliberate attempt to associate Roman gods with the imperial

⁴²⁹ G. Grether, "Livia and the Roman imperial cult," *American Journal of Philology*, (1946): 222-252, 238-9, identifies cult personnel from the western provinces dedicated to the *Genius* of Augustus and the *Juno* (the feminine equivalent) of Livia but does believe a couple of exceptions where her priestesses honored her under the name of *Ceres* or *Ceres Augusta*. Cf. *CIL* 10, 7501 and *CIL*, 11, 3196.

family. The question could even be raised as to who was the primary person being honored, the named god or Augustus/Augusta?

The worship of Vesta in the Eastern Roman Empire

Analysis of the extent and kind of worship Vesta received in the eastern Roman provinces involves its own set of difficulties. Foremost among these is the level of assimilation that occurred between the Roman Vesta and the Greek Hestia. As argued, Vesta took on many of the characteristics of Hestia, but influences also came from other Greek religious practices as well as from indigenous Latin customs. Accordingly, by the time Roman religious practices were spreading to the East, Vesta and her cult would have had attributes that differentiated her from Hestia. However, how much of a difference the Greeks saw between the two goddesses is difficult to determine. Most likely their everyday worship of Hestia in the home and in the Prytaneion continued in the same way it always had. As such, the question is in what additional ways—if any—did the peoples in the Eastern Roman Empire also pay tribute to Vesta?

Examples of Roman religious practices and ideas in the Greek East predate Augustus and the spread of the imperial cult. The earliest possible references to indicate the worship of Vesta in the east come from the island of Delos in the second century BCE. According to inscriptions, the Delians had a priesthood of Roma, Hestia and Demos.⁴³⁰ “There [Delos] Roma and the Demos of the Athenians were incorporated with Hestia into a joint priesthood. The chapels for Roma and Demos added to the prytaneum of Delos may have been a symbolic incorporation of

⁴³⁰ P. Roussel, *Délos, colonie athénienne*, (Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, #111), (Paris: Fontemoing Icie, 1916), 22. Mellor, *Dea Roma*, 111: “The cult dates from a period of Athenian occupation, so Roma and Demos symbolize the double sovereignty over the Delians.” Cf. *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, 10 (1886) 34 (ID 1877) [158 BCE]; 32 (1908) 438 n. 64 1.9 [129 BCE]. Both inscriptions are fragmentary but together have been combined to read *iereus Estias Demou Romes*.

the twin masters of Delos.”⁴³¹ Although both Roma and Hestia were honored here, it would be taking it too far to see in this example anything more than a faint implication of Vesta due to her similarities with Vesta and the mention of Roma.⁴³²

In later centuries epigraphic, literary, and archaeological evidence indicate the existence of more than a dozen temples dedicated to Roma with Caesar or Augustus, and a few to Roma herself. Many of these have not been located today. Again, the question is raised whether Vesta was worshipped in any or all of these places. My arguments for the possibility of this practice in the western provinces have already been listed and may also be generally applied to the east. To these I will add one more relevant point: the Greeks already believed that Hestia lived in the flame of their altars and they also recognized Hestia and Vesta to be nearly analogous with the other. As such, would they not believe that Vesta was present as the flame at the altars of temples belonging to Roman gods or the imperial cult even if these were located in Greece?

The best evidence for an eastern connection with Vesta comes from Athens where inscriptions referring to Hestia/Vesta and even the Vestal Virgins have been found. Three inscriptions were found on seats at the Theatre of Dionysus indicate that they were reserved for the “priestess of Hestia”. The one most discussed in scholarship belonged to, “the priestess of Hestia on the Acropolis, Livia and Julia.”⁴³³ This raises questions whether the “Hestia” on the Acropolis is the Greek Hestia who may have been worshiped there for centuries, or if in fact this is a reference to Vesta especially since her title connects her with imperial Roman women. Moreover, the other two inscriptions are both dedicated to “the priestesses of Hestia of the

⁴³¹ Mellor, [*Thea Rhōmē*], 129. Ibid. 135-6: “But archaeologists disagree on how Hestia and her new partners were accommodated, whether in three chapels or with Hestia in a larger room flanked by two small chapels. Roma and Demos must have been added to the cult of Hestia soon after the Athenians’ arrival in 167, and physical changes to include the new cult may have followed soon after.”

⁴³² I do find the order of the words interesting; it is almost if Hestia was used to separate Roma and Demos.

⁴³³ *IG II² 5096*: ἱερίης Ἑστίας ἐπ’ ἀκροπόλει καὶ Λειβίας καὶ Ἰουλίᾱ[ς].

Romans”.⁴³⁴ Presumably this is a reference to Vesta, or at the very least the Romanized version of Hestia.⁴³⁵

The majority view among scholars is that the “Hestia on the Acropolis” indicates a connection between the holder of this title and the Temple of Roma and Augustus erected there in the late 1st century BCE. The major questions then become the manner in which Hestia/Vesta was represented, the time period in which this occurred, and if this “Hestia” was more Greek or Roman in nature. Graindor argues that Hestia, Livia and Julia shared an altar in the temple of Roma and Augustus, dating the latter to between 27 and 18 BCE.⁴³⁶ Kajava’s ideas on this issue develop from those of Graindor, and he believes that the cult of “Hestia on the Acropolis” was likely connected to the Roman world, a conclusion which he reaches in part due to Livia’s association with Vesta of Hestia in inscriptions and literature.⁴³⁷ He also postulates that the temple was probably dedicated in 19 BC during Augustus’ last visit to Athens, and dates the inscription of Hestia, Livia, and Julia to before 2 BCE, the year of the latter’s banishment.⁴³⁸ Kajava’s argument weakens, however, when he suggests that the worship of Roman Vesta was brought to Athens at the same time as the cult of Livia and Julia, which he more precisely dates to the years from 12 BCE or just after.⁴³⁹ This dating hinges on two specific events that allegedly happened in that year: Augustus became *pontifex maximus*, and the cult of Vesta was symbolically extended to the Palatine. Regardless of when this cult was brought to Athens, Kajava believes it was incorporated into the pre-existing temple of Roma and Augustus on the

⁴³⁴ *IG II²* 5102 and 5145: ἱερείας Ἐσ[τίας] Ῥω[μαίων] and ἱερείας Ἐσ[τίας] Ῥ[ω]μαίων.

⁴³⁵ See Kajava, “Vesta,” 74, for alternate interpretations. He dates these inscriptions to early imperial period.

⁴³⁶ P. Graindor, 153-5. Mellor, [*Thea Rhōmē*], 139, also follows Graindor.

⁴³⁷ Kajava, “Vesta,” 76. This inscription has already been discussed in chapter 2 wherein I argue that the connection between Livia and Vesta may not have been as strong as generally accepted, and point out the historical debate over the dating of this inscription which, it has been argued, belongs to later in the first century CE (after the death of Livia).

⁴³⁸ *Ibid*, 80-1.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, 83-5.

Acropolis. A different theory by Grether argues that Livia and Julia shared a priestess and probably a temple with Hestia, a situation that would have been pleasing to Augustus given “who had built a new temple to Vesta near his own dwelling on the Palatine”.⁴⁴⁰

Several points warrant comment. The first and most obvious is that the inscription clearly states Hestia—not Vesta. Given the amount of overlap between the two goddess, this fact can largely be explained away. However, it is still important to note that the choice was specifically to use the Greek Hestia and not the Roman Vesta (or to otherwise say the “Hestia of the Romans” as was done with the other two seating inscriptions). Thus the goddess invoked would have maintained her Greek character. The second issue concerns the choice of date for the arrival of the cult. Although 12 BCE would fit nicely into the argument, there is no other reason to presume that the inscription or priesthood belonged to this specific year or was otherwise a direct result of the events occurring in Rome at that time. Another problem involves all of the connections accepted by both Kajava and Grether concerning the affiliations between Augustus and Vesta (such as the alleged Palatine temple), which I have already argued were not as strong as commonly accepted. The fourth point of concern is the location on the Acropolis and the problem of Hestia’s potential, prior worship there. The inscription implies that the worship of Livia and Iulia was added to and joined that of Hestia on the Acropolis (and no mention is made of Roma or Augustus), but still there is no evidence to confirm where, if at all, Hestia was honored at this location.

As indicated, the most common argument is that this cult was in some way connected to the Temple of Roma and Augustus on the Acropolis.⁴⁴¹ The temple was located sixty feet (23

⁴⁴⁰ Grether, 230-1, especially note #43 which provides an overview of the scholarly debate about this inscription. Cf. *C. I. A. (Corpus inscriptionum Atticarum)* III, 316 = *IG* III 316; P. Graindor, 153.

⁴⁴¹ *IG* II² 3173 (= *ID* 2605): [ὁ] δῆμος θεᾶι Ῥώμηι καὶ Σ[εβασ]τῶι [[Καίσαρι] στρα[τηγ]οῦντος ἐπὶ τ[οῦς] / ὀπίστας Παμμένους τοῦ Ζήνωνος Μαραθωνίου ἱερέως θεᾶς / Ῥώμης καὶ Σεβαστοῦ Σωτῆρος ἐπ’ ἀκροπόλει, ἐπὶ

meters) east of the Parthenon, aligned along its east-west axis. It was a monopteros with nine Ionic columns with decoration and details influenced by the Erechtheum.⁴⁴² The circular shape was rather unique in the Greek world; this is the only known example of a temple dedicated to Roma and Augustus in this form. Moreover, the order and shape are the same as the *aedes Vestae* in Rome. This was surely not pure coincidence: “What seems probable is that the two came to be easily associated with each other not only in ideological terms but also because of their appearance. For a Roman visiting the Acropolis the mere shape of the temple of Roma and Augustus may have recalled Vesta’s temple in the Roman Forum.”⁴⁴³ However, more points can be added to help explain the choice of shape and style. Like Vesta’s temple in Rome, Hestia was typically honored in the Greek world with a circular hearth and/or building. Accordingly, if this temple was made in any way to honor her—or her Roman counterpart—it would logically need to be round.⁴⁴⁴ Moreover, I find it at least possible that the Temple of Roma and Augustus may have had a connection with this goddess from its inception (perhaps in the form of an altar/flame, or even more theoretically the site had in some way belonged to Hestia before the Temple of Roma and Augustus was constructed there).

It is interesting that influences for the Temple of Roma and Augustus came from the Erechtheum in particular. Built in the late 5th century BCE, it was dedicated to Athena and Poseidon, although obviously named for the legendary king of Athens and son of Athena, Erechtheus, whom legend states may have been buried at the spot where the temple was built. It too had several commonalities with the *aedes Vestae* in Rome. First, it was a building of Ionic

ἱερείας Ἀθηνᾶς / Πολιάδος Μεγίστης τῆς Ἀσκληπίδου Ἀλαιέως θυγατρὸς. / ἐπὶ ἄρχοντος Ἀρήου τ[οῦ] Δωρίωνος Παιανιέως.

⁴⁴² Mellor, [*Thea Rhōmē*], 139. See also Graindor, 153-5; and Kajava, “Vesta,” 78.

⁴⁴³ Kajava, “Vesta,” 78-9.

⁴⁴⁴ Mellor, [*Thea Rhōmē*], 112, comments that “The circular plan of this temple is as exceptional for Athens as for Rome.” Although he is correct for the former, he overstates his case for the latter given that there were several circular temples in Rome that did not belong to Vesta (discussed in an earlier chapter).

order. Second, one of the Erechtheum's most notable features is the Porch of the Caryatids ("maidens"), the roof of which is supported by six female figures—the same number as that of the Vestal priestesses. Third, the building was rumored to hold sacred objects—including a wooden statue of Athena, otherwise known as a *palladion*—just as the Temple of Vesta in Rome did.⁴⁴⁵ The similarities are intriguing.

The details of any cult of Hestia or Vesta as indicated by these three seating inscription is largely speculative. There were three dedications, so presumably there were at least three priestesses serving at a time while the cult was maintained, one for "Hestia on the Acropolis, Livia and Julia", and two for the "Hestia of the Romans". If the three positions were created simultaneously, or if the priesthood grew is unknown. It seems that all of this cult personnel was female, which would suggest affiliation with Vesta rather than Hestia since Vesta was more likely to have female attendants and men seem to have more often performed the rites of Hestia.⁴⁴⁶ Kajava further suggests that the role of priestess of Vesta was given to one or more priestesses of Athena *Parthenos* (since those of Athena *Poliās* were married women), although no clear examples prove the existence of this type of priestess.⁴⁴⁷ This point takes for granted the fact that virginity was a requirement for holding the office, but there is no way to know if these priestesses were required to conform to the same guidelines and perform the same duties as the Vestal Virgins in Rome. For my part, I doubt very much that the cult in Athens was a copy

⁴⁴⁵ Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 444.

⁴⁴⁶ Opt. cit. Kajava, "Vesta," 74 and 77.

⁴⁴⁷ Kajava, "Vesta," 77. A priesthood of Athena Parhenos is conceivable (a number of dedications are preserved); cf. B. Jordan, *Servants of the Gods. A Study in the Religion, History and Literature of Fifth-century Athens* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979), 34f. Recently, however, J.M. Hurwit, *The Athenian Acropolis: History, Mythology and Archaeology from the Neolithic Era to the Present*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), has argued that the Parthenon may not have been a temple but rather a treasury. Kajava, 85, concludes that if the inscription mentioning "Hestia on the Acropolis" was meant as Vesta and associated with the temple of Roma and Augustus, the cult here would have required one priest (Roma and Augustus) and two priestesses (one for Vesta and one for Vesta, Livia and Julia. He adds that the temple would have contained at least two altars, status of Roma, Augustus, Livia and Julia, and a flame as symbol of Vesta. I do not follow his reasoning here.

of the one of Vesta in Rome. Moreover, while it is clear that this priesthood came into being during the Augustan period, but how long it endured beyond this is uncertain. The lack of any additional references suggests that it may have been short-lived.

In addition to these inscriptions that mention priestesses of Hestia/Vesta in Athens, three inscriptions belonging to the Acropolis are dedicated to actual Vestal priestesses serving in Rome. Kajava dates one in honor of Vibidia to the Augustan period, and two others for Aurelia and Valeria to the second quarter of the first century AD.⁴⁴⁸ He believes that *ἱερὰ παρθένος* was the official Greek expression for *virgo Vestalis*, although variations on this title do appear.⁴⁴⁹ The question is why statues honoring Roman Vestal priestesses appear in Athens at all, especially considering they were prohibited from leaving Rome (ie. it was not because they had travelled to Athens and were being honored). Kajava also argues that “This probably means that when a Vestal was honoured in Athens, it was her father who was in the Greek East because of either administrative duties or military service or for some other reason. In such cases a statue may have been erected on the initiative of the father.”⁴⁵⁰ Indeed the above mentioned Vestal Aurelia was the daughter of M. Aurelius Cotta Maximus Messalinus, patrician, *consul ordinarius* in 20, and a *sacerdos*.⁴⁵¹ However, other possible reasons remain.

Still, this fails to answer the question of why placing honorific statues of Vestal Virgins was permitted on the Acropolis. Statues of these priestesses have not been found anywhere else

⁴⁴⁸ Kajava, “Vesta,” 72. [Vibidia] *IG II² 3532*: [ὁ] δῆμος / [Οὐιβιδίαν, ἱερὰν παρθένον, / [Σέξτου Οὐιβιδίου] Οὐίρρωνος / [Θυγατέρα, εὐ]σεβείας ἔνεκα; [Aurelia] Marie-Thérèse Raepsaet-Charlier, *Prosopographie des femmes de l'ordre senatorial (I^{er}-II^e siècles)*, (Louvain, 1987), 805; [Valeria] Raepsaet-Charlier, *PFOS*, 131.

⁴⁴⁹ Kajava, “Vesta,” 72.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 73. Compare the monuments of Hellenistic date on the Acropolis, which were set up by parents in commemoration of their daughter’s service as *arrephoros* of Athena: R. Parker, *Athenian Religion. A History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 271.

⁴⁵¹ Silvia Orlandi, “Osservazioni prosopografiche sulle Vestali,” in *Rend. Pont. Acc. Rom. Arch.*, 68 (1995-6): 359-37, 366; Marie-Thérèse Raepsaet-Charlier, “Les sacerdoces des femmes sénatoriales sous le Haut-Empire”, in *Prosopographie et Histoire Religieuse*, Marie-Francoise Baslez and Francoise Prévot eds, (Paris: De Boccard, 2005) : 283-304 (esp 284-89), 286; Raepsaet-Charlier, *PFOS*, 131 : *Prosopographia imperii romani* 2 A 1488.

in the Roman Empire except for the city of Rome and in Latium. Why was Athens an exception? As Mekacher points out, the inscriptions indicate that it was due to their piety, and she believes the presence of the statues is indicative of the significance of the Vestals since their function and importance was acknowledged even in Athens.⁴⁵² However, other factors were likely involved. Kajava suggest that these priestesses may have been honored on the Acropolis because Vesta was also there.⁴⁵³ Indeed, it is tempting to connect these statues to the presence of the cult of Hestia/Vesta on the Acropolis, especially given the brief time period in which all of these things occurred (no more than 75 years, and likely even less, from the time of the dedication of the Temple of Roma and Augustus to the date of the last statue base for a Vestal Virgin). If, however, the statues were not tied directly to the presence of Vesta on the Acropolis, connections to Athena and the symbolic importance of the location remain. The Vestal priestesses were virgin attendants of a virgin goddess who lived and performed their religious duties in the religious center in the capital of the Roman Empire. If Vestal Virgins were going to be honored anywhere in Athens it is logical that it would be in the precinct of another virgin goddess, who also happened to be a tutelary deity of the city and honored at its religious center as Vesta was in Rome. Still, whatever the motivations for the statues may have been, the practice was soon discontinued as is clear from the lack of any additional examples.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² Nina Mekacher, *Die vestalischen Jungfrauen in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2006), 152-3: "Man hat die Tendenz, die drei Statuenweihungen auf der Akropolis als Einheit zu betrachten. Ich habe die Basis für Aurelia nicht selbst begutachten können, da sie auf der Athener Akropolis nicht auffindbar war. Die Basis der Vibidia unterscheidet sich von derjenigen Valerias sowohl in den Massen, dem verwendeten Marmor also auch in der Schriftgröße, während der Schriftstil im wesentlichen übereinzustimmen scheint und das Formular mit Ausnahme des fehlenden Patronyms bei Valeria einheitlich ist. Aufgrund des Eintrags in den *Inscriptiones Graecae* zur Basis der Aurelia scheint diese in Höhe, Marmor und Schriftgröße mit derjenigen für Valeria übereinzustimmen. Der Wortlaut ist erneut inklusive Patronym identisch, allerdings auf drei Zeilen beschränkt. Die drei Basen sind ungefähr gleichzeitig. Eine gemeinsame Planung und Aufstellung scheint aber, zumindest für die beiden verifizierbaren Monumente, eher unwahrscheinlich."

⁴⁵³ Kajava, "Vesta," 73.

⁴⁵⁴ Mekacher, *Die vestalischen*, 153: "Gerade angesichts der Verbindung mit dem Kult der römischen Vesta in Athen könnte man sich fragen, ob es einen -- offenbar recht schnell aufgegebenen -- Versuch gab, Vesta von der Stadtgöttin zur Reichsgöttin zu machen und die Vestalinnen in diese Religionspolitik einzugliedern."

These examples suggest some connection between Vesta, Augustus, Livia and the imperial cult in Athens. In the east both Augustus and Livia (Julia Augusta) often appear in the company of gods or are even honored as such. Another inscription from Athens (mid first century CE, possibly from the reign of Claudius) honors Ἑστία καὶ Απόλλωνι καὶ θεοῖς Σεβαστοῖς (Hestia, Apollo and the *theois Sebastois*).⁴⁵⁵ The choice of deities here seems unlikely to be a coincidence and may in fact reference Augustan propaganda connecting himself and his family to Apollo and Vesta (if not directly indicating their ties to the Palatine).

Beyond Athens, other indications of the worship of Vesta in the eastern empire exist. An inscription from Lampsacus honors Ἰουλία Σεβαστὴ Ἑστία νέα Δημήτηρ, but this clearly invokes Hestia and not Vesta.⁴⁵⁶ There is also an inscription from the first century CE that honors Claudia Trophime, a priestess of Hera who also served as chief priestess of Hestia.⁴⁵⁷ Once again, however, the honoree is the Greek goddess of the hearth and not the Roman one. Overall, inscriptions in honor of Hestia in the east during the Roman period are rare; ones in honor of the goddess Vesta specifically (and not her cult or priestesses) are unknown.

Other sources worth mentioning are a religious calendar from Egypt and a military calendar from Mesopotamia. The first is from the city of Tebtunis and it preserves a list of festivals and ceremonies celebrated during the reign of Marcus Aurelius.⁴⁵⁸ This calendar does not seem to have been issued by Rome, but rather was a record of local custom. Although it is

⁴⁵⁵ *IG II²*, 3185.

⁴⁵⁶ Grether, 241. *I.G.R.*, IV, 180. This inscription was set up by the *Gerousia*, but the celebration given in honor of Livia is financed by a priest of the *Sebastoi* who is also *Stephanephoros* of the whole house and *tamias* of the people.

⁴⁵⁷ *SEG* 37 891. Cf. H. Engelmann, “Zum Gedicht der Prytanin Claudia Trophime,” in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 36 (1979): 90. Claudia Trophime wrote two epigrams honoring Hestia. *Inscrit. Eph.* “(In prose) Claudia Trophime the *prytanis* wrote this song of praise to Hestia: (*in verse*) she [the goddess] both gave satisfaction to the gods in their feasts, and tends the blooming fire of our country. Sweetest divinity, flower of the universe, you tend the eternal flame of fire from heaven on your altars. (*In prose*) The same priestess wrote this: (*in verse*) The [mountain] Pion secretly drinks within himself the moisture from the mist and draws it into his sides towards the vast sea. How then can one describe you goddess’, who keep and hold within yourself the god-sent fire, a remnant of the harmony [of the universe]?” Lefkowitz and Fant, trans.

⁴⁵⁸ S. Eitrem and L. Amundsen eds., *Papyri Osloenses*, 45-55.

not complete (only parts of December and January remain), enough remains to sustain the argument that it included no Egyptian or old Roman civic festivals; rather it includes primarily *natales*, memorial days of the living ruler and deified personages.⁴⁵⁹ However, “Interestingly, the birthday is commemorated (I. 21) of L. Aelius Caesar, who was not celebrated as *divus* on the Roman calendar, as also is that of Vesta (I. 13f).”⁴⁶⁰ This raises two questions: why was Vesta so honored when other significant Roman gods were neglected, and why did they honor her “birthday” at this time given that her festival in Rome was celebrated in June? To my knowledge, the above mentioned city of Naucratis is the only other city known to have a celebration of Hestia on her “birthday”.⁴⁶¹ Presumably, then, this is a phenomenon that occurred

⁴⁵⁹ Duncan Fishwick, vol 2, part 1, 492-3.

⁴⁶⁰ Fishwick, 492-3. A similar calendar in force in the late-second or early-third century C. E. appears to originate from Oxyrhynchus. See: J. W. B. Barns, P. Parsons, J. Rea, E. G. Turner (eds.), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Part XXXI, (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1966), 72 no. 2553.

⁴⁶¹ Hermeias, *The Apollo of Grneion*, in Athenaeus, IV, 149d-150b: ‘παρὰ δὲ Ναυκρατίταις,’ ὡς φησιν Ἑρμείας ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ τῶν περὶ τοῦ Γρυνείου Ἀπόλλωνος, ‘ἐν τῷ πρυτανείῳ δειπνοῦσι γενεθλίοις Ἑστίας Πρυτανίτιδος καὶ Διονυσίοις, ἔτι δὲ τῆ τοῦ Κομαίου Ἀπόλλωνος πανηγύρει, εἰσιόντες πάντες ἐν στολαῖς λευκαῖς, ἄς μέχρι καὶ νῦν καλοῦσι πρυτανικὰς ἐσθῆτας. καὶ κατακλιθέντες ἐπανάστανται εἰς γόνατα τοῦ ἱεροκῆρυκος τὰς πατρίους εὐχὰς καταλέγοντος συσπένδοντες. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα κατακλιθέντες λαμβάνουσιν ἕκαστος οἴνου κοτύλας δύο πλὴν τῶν ἱερέων τοῦ τε Πυθίου Ἀπόλλωνος καὶ τοῦ Διονύσου: τούτων γὰρ ἑκατέρῳ διπλοῦς ὁ οἶνος μετὰ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων μερίδων δίδονται. ἔπειτα ἑκάστῳ παρατίθεται ἄρτος καθαρὸς εἰς πλάτος πεποιημένος, ἐφ’ ᾧ ἐπίκειται ἄρτος ἕτερος, ὃν κριβανίτην καλοῦσι, καὶ κρέας ὕειον καὶ λεκάριον πτισάνης ἢ λαχάνου τοῦ κατὰ καιρὸν γινομένου φά τε δύο καὶ τυροῦ τροφαλὶς σῦκά τε ξηρὰ καὶ πλακοῦς καὶ στέφανος, καὶ ὃς ἂν ἕξῃ τι τούτων ἱεροποιὸς παρασκευάσῃ ὑπὸ τῶν τιμούχων ζημιούται, ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ τοῖς σιτουμένοις ἐν πρυτανείῳ ἔξωθεν προσεισφέρειν τι βρώσιμον ἔξεστι, μόνον δὲ ταῦτα καταναλίσκουσι, τὰ ὑπολειπόμενα τοῖς οἰκέταις μεταδιδόντες, ταῖς δ’ ἄλλαις ἡμέραις πάσαις τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἔξεστι τῶν σιτουμένων τῷ βουλομένῳ ἀνελθόντι εἰς τὸ πρυτανεῖον δειπνεῖν, οἴκοθεν παρασκευάσαντα αὐτῷ λάχανόν τι ἢ τῶν ὀσπρίων καὶ τάριχος ἢ ἰχθύν, κρέως δὲ χοιρείου βραχύτατον, καὶ τούτων μεταλαμβάνων., κοτύλην οἴνου. γυναικὶ δὲ οὐκ ἔξεστιν εἰσιέναι εἰς τὸ πρυτανεῖον ἢ μόνῃ τῇ ἀύλητρίδι. οὐκ εἰσφέρεται δὲ οὐδὲ ἀμὶς εἰς τὸ πρυτανεῖον. ἐὰν δὲ τις Ναυκρατιτῶν γάμους ἐστιά, ὡς ἐν τῷ γαμικῷ νόμῳ γέγραπται, ἀπείρηται φά καὶ μελίπηκτα δίδοσθαι.’ τίς δὲ ἡ τούτων αἰτία Οὐλπιανὸς ἡμᾶς διδάσκειν δίκαιος. "In Naucratis," as Hermias says in the second book On the Gryneian Apollo,⁹ "the people dine in the town hall (prytaneion)¹⁰ on the natal day of Hestia Prytanitis and at the festival of Dionysus, and again at the great gathering in honour of the Comaeian Apollo, all appearing in white robes which even to this day they call their 'prytanic' clothes. After reclining they rise again, and kneeling, join in pouring a libation, while the herald, acting as priest, recites the traditional prayers. After this they recline, and all receive a pint of wine excepting the priests of Pythian Apollo and of Dionysus; for to each of these latter the wine is given in double quantity, as well as the portions of everything else. Thereupon each diner is served with a loaf of pure wheat moulded flat, upon which lies another loaf which they call oven-bread;¹¹ also a piece of swine's flesh, a small bowl of barley gruel or of some vegetable in its season, two eggs, a bit of fresh cheese, some dried figs, a flat-cake, and a wreath. Any manager of the festival who provides more than these viands is fined by the censors, and what is more, neither are those who dine in the town hall permitted to bring in anything to eat, but they eat these foods alone, giving a share of what remains to the slaves. 150 But on all other days of the year any diner who wishes may go up to the town-hall and eat, after preparing at home for his own use a green or leguminous vegetable, some salt-fish or fresh fish and a very small piece of pork; sharing these . . . (he receives) a

only in Egypt, although the reason why they did so is unknown. The other calendar, the *Feriale Duranum*, was sent to the military garrison at Dura Europus (Roman Syria along the Euphrates River) in the mid third century CE. It records among other important dates the three ‘ordinary’ Roman festivals: the *Quinquatria*, the *Vestalia*, and the *Neptunalia*.⁴⁶² Iddeng has interpreted this information as indicating: “...that a Roman setting was far from necessary. We may, however, question whether a proper festival was indeed celebrated throughout the Roman empire, even if a holiday was marked on the calendar.”⁴⁶³ In the analysis of this text the editors argue that the way Vesta would be honored by the military could have nothing to do with the domestic cult of Vesta or with her role as patron of millers and bakers.⁴⁶⁴ Yet, “Her official public cult, however, had always been looked upon as one of the essential supports of the very existence of the state, necessary to insure *salus publica* and the *aeternitas imperii*, and consequently could not have been neglected by so important a branch of the state as the army.”⁴⁶⁵ In what precise way male soldiers without the presence of cult personnel honored Vesta remains mere speculation.

One further item is worth mentioning for its similarities to some of the sources discussed despite the fact that it chronologically falls beyond the Roman period. A tapestry of “Hestia Polyolbos” (Hestia of many blessings) woven in Panopolis-Achmim in the sixth century CE is now part of the Dumbarton Oaks collection. It has been examined most extensively by

half-pint of wine. No woman may enter the town-hall except the flute-girl. Nor is it allowed to bring a chamber-pot into the town-hall either. If a Naucratisite gives a wedding-banquet, it is forbidden, following the prescription of the marriage law, to serve eggs and honey-cakes.” As for the origin of these practices, Ulpian is the right man to inform us!” Charles Burton Gulick, trans.

⁴⁶² Fink, Hoey and Snyder, “The *feriale Duranum*,” *Yale Classical Studies* 7 (1940): 1-222; Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), ii 71-4 (no. 3.5).

⁴⁶³ Jon W. Iddeng, “What is a Graeco-Roman Festival? A Polythetic Approach,” in *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning and Practice*, J. Rasmus Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 11-38, 19.

⁴⁶⁴ Fink et al, 139. I am not convinced that there was no way to honor Vesta in a local capacity either through some level of “domestic” worship or her role as patron of bread-making.

⁴⁶⁵ Fink et al, 139.

Friedländer who believes it was intended for Alexandria and that “It is a devotional object, a sacred icon of a religious cult.”⁴⁶⁶ He argues that that epithet “Polyolbos” [πολύολβος] was deliberately chosen for the myriad of references it could be tied to. Centuries before Sappho used it to describe Aphrodite, and by the imperial age it had become a common word in religious worship “as a reminiscence from a liturgical hymn or prayer.”⁴⁶⁷ Moreover, the Greek and Roman assimilations between the goddess Earth (Ge, Tellus, etcetera) and Hestia/Vesta have already been discussed, and this tapestry appears to provide a further, late example wherein “The very “weal” (ὄλβος) and “wealth” (πλούτος) which a Homeric hymn (XXX, 12) attributes to Mother Earth are exhibited on our tapestry as gifts of Hestia.”⁴⁶⁸ Friedländer also points out an Orphic hymn to Hestia that asks her to render initiates “full of bliss” (πολύόλβουσ) and “full of cheer” (εὐφρονας), and to give those bringing offerings “blessing” (ὄλβον) and “health” (ὑγίειαν).⁴⁶⁹

Of her appearance Friedländer remarks that Hestia’s green crown (wreath of fruit) distinguishes her from an empress and denotes her as a divinity related to vegetation and fruit.⁴⁷⁰ If “vegetation” were extended to include the production of grains then a comparison to Vesta can be made, although one to Hestia is more difficult to explain beyond her ties to Earth. Also on the tapestry Hestia is attended by six naked boys, each accompanied by a word (wealth, mirth,

⁴⁶⁶ Paul Friedländer, “The Hestia Tapestry,” in *Documents of Dying Paganism: Textiles of Late Antiquity In Washington, New York, and Leningrad*, (University of California Press, 1945): 1-26, 14.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid, 6-7, where his analysis goes further: “Varro identifies Earth (Tellus) with Ops, the Great Mother, Proserpine, and Vesta, “quod vestiatur herbis” (Augustine, *Civ. Dei* VII, 24) – words which could well be used to describe the head of our Hestia. In like manner the Orphic *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* (XXVII) identifies that great Phrygian goddess, Oriental though Hellenized, with Hestia...and in the same verse calls her “giver of blessings” (ὄλβοδότις).” The same hymn gives her a place in the center of the world; she is the “house of the gods” and the “firm support of our mortals; “That she is identical with the Earth is apparent,” due to epithets “of verdant guise” and “fruitful in verdure (Homeric Hymn to Demeter); “The green cap or crown, fruit-garlanded, which Hestia is seen wearing in this tapestry, is a visualization of these epithets.” Cf. Bacchylides, *Fragment* 148 : “Gold-throned Hestia, you who increase the great prosperity of the glorious Agathokleadai, those men of wealth, as you sit in mid-city by the fragrant Peneios in the glens of sheep-rearing Thessalia,” Campbell, trans.

⁴⁶⁹ Friedländer, 16.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid, 3-4.

praise, festivity, excellence, and progress), which he interprets as “the gifts of Hestia.”⁴⁷¹ These particular qualities are puzzling since they are not typically associated with Hestia or Vesta, although they could be the result of any divine favor. However the choice of six attendants is an interesting touch; whether it was intended to be an indirect signal to the six Vestal Virgins formerly in Rome is unknown. Still Friedländer correctly concludes that the goddess appears to have evolved over time: “The Hestia on our textile is no longer the old numen of the hearth which she had been a thousand years before. We have seen how she became endowed with an almost universal power, and how this universality is expressed on the tapestry.”⁴⁷²

Conclusion

Hestia was not singularly honored with temples and festivals in the Greek world; rather she was worshipped in the temples (homes) of all of the gods and invoked first at all major ceremonies. Although her worship was not showy, she was omnipresent: in the home, in the public hearth, in the temples of all the gods. It also clearly influenced the Roman worship of Vesta. Nonetheless, Vesta and her cult is not a carbon copy of Hestia and her worship in Greece. Additional influences can be found in other Greek religious practices; most notable are commonalities with the cult personnel at Delphi, the celebration of the Thesmophoria, and with Athena. Moreover some of the aspects of the worship and cult of Vesta that do not have ties to the east can be explained by local, Latin customs. In particular is the issue of cult membership. The idea of using lifelong virgins to serve Hestia/Vesta not customary in Greece, and the public worship of Hestia more often included the use of male rather than female personnel.

⁴⁷¹ Friedländer, 7.

⁴⁷² Ibid, 21.

The issue of the worship of Vesta in the Roman provinces is a difficult one. Her strong connections to the city of Rome present by the late Republic plus the fact that she was aniconic and typically invoked by the presence of a flame likely did not facilitate the spread of her worship to areas outside of Rome. The issue of altars and hearths is especially difficult, but evocative. The Greek sources are clear in connecting the goddess Hestia to the *hestie* (altar or hearth fire). The Roman sources imply this also to be correct, but are less clear. If true, however, Vesta may have had a much stronger presence in the Roman world than she is generally given, both within the capital city and in the provinces. The epigraphic sources fail to demonstrate any significant worship of Vesta outside of Rome and for a brief period in Athens, but if Vesta shared in the honors of all Roman places of worship in the provinces in the guise of an altar flame a much stronger argument could be made for the level of acceptance of this goddess throughout the empire—as long as the locals also understood that *effigiem nullam Vesta nec ignis habet* (Ovid, *Fasti*, 298).

**Chapter 4: The Palladium, Vesta, and the emperors of Rome:
from Troy to Rome and back again?**

Pallada Roma tenet (Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.424)

Of the seven *pignora* and other sacred objects (*sacra*) that the Vestal Virgins were believed to have guarded in the *aedes Vestae*, the Palladium was the one most discussed by ancient authors. The Palladium was a legendary talisman; the city that held it would prosper and could not be conquered. Tradition stated that Troy (Ilium) first possessed the Palladium, but after the city fell at the end of the Trojan War (due to its removal), Aeneas brought the sacred object to Italy and it eventually arrived in Rome. There the Palladium became the prized talisman of the Romans. The people believed that as long as they possessed it, Rome would continue to prosper and could not fall to any enemy. The Palladium was given over to the care of the Vestal Virgins and placed under the divine protection of the goddess Vesta. It was hidden within the innermost part of her temple, the *penus Vestae*, where many of Rome's *sacra* were housed. The Palladium remained undisturbed within the *aedes Vestae* except when the temple was at risk of destruction or, after the start of the principate, when various emperors are reported to have removed the statue.

Three emperors allegedly moved the Palladium during the imperial period. Based on inferences from contemporary accounts, some modern scholars argue that after a fire forced its removal from her temple of Vesta in the *Forum Romanum*, Augustus permanently relocated the statue to his own residence on the Palatine Hill where he had built an altar or shrine for this goddess.⁴⁷³ If this occurred, the most important points are that the Palladium remained in the city of Rome, and in the care of the high priest himself. Next, Elagabalus allegedly carried out

⁴⁷³ See chapter 1.

many acts that negatively affected traditional Roman religion. His list of transgressions include taking the Palladium from the Vestals and placing it either in a temple dedicated to his preferred god, Elagabal (a sun deity), or in his palace. Yet, once again, the deed was performed by the *pontifex maximus* and the statue never left Rome. Approximately a century later, Constantine reportedly took the Palladium from Rome and transported it to his new city, Constantinople. There he placed the talisman in the sanctuary located under the base of his porphyry column in the Forum of Constantine. If true, such an act would have marked the first time the Palladium had left the *pomerium* of Rome in centuries.

The symbolism of the Palladium was considerable, both due to its own nature and history and for its connection to Vesta and her cult in Rome. Consequently, this chapter first provides an overview of the legendary origins of the Palladium from its arrival in Rome. The symbolic nature of the statue for the Romans and its connection to Vesta and her priestesses is of paramount importance and consequently is discussed at length. Any precedent for the removal of the Palladium from the Temple of Vesta during the Republic are then provided, followed by detailed accounts for its alleged relocation under emperors (and *pontifices maximi*) Augustus, Elagabalus, and Constantine. Considerable incongruity exists between what some of these emperors are believed to have done and what later sources attribute to them, a point especially true for Constantine. The legend that this Emperor relocated the Palladium to his eponymous city must be examined from multiple angles. This requires not only tracing the evolution of this belief as it appears in literary sources, but also comparing these accounts to historical events and other evidence that may have lent support to the idea that he had moved the talisman. Ultimately I argue that if and when the Palladium was moved by an emperor is not the primary question. What is most significant is why various Roman emperors, or more specifically the authors who

wrote about them, wanted their contemporaries—and perhaps also their descendants—to think that they had.

Origin Stories of the Palladium

The Palladium was a miniature wooden statue of the goddess Pallas (Athena) wearing armor. If it conformed to the Athena Promachos-type (“Athena who fights in the front lines”) the statue would have portrayed the goddess with a shield resting upright against her leg, and a spear in her right hand. However, the most precise description of the Palladium and its creation comes from Pseudo-Apollodorus and most likely dates to the 2nd century CE. This late source states that the Palladium was three cubits tall (approximately 54 inches) and that the figure appeared standing with feet together, holding a spear in its right hand and a distaff and spindle in the left.⁴⁷⁴ The same author also provides the most complete account of how and why the statue came into being: as a girl Athena was play-fighting with Pallas, the daughter of Triton with whom Athena was raised, when Pallas was mortally wounded. Out of remorse Athena created the Palladium, giving it the image of her former friend.⁴⁷⁵

The Palladium was much more than a statue for it was believed to possess special powers and the city that held it would be impregnable. Its nature as a protective object especially over cities is most likely tied to the guardian role of Athena herself who bore multiple epithets in this realm including *Polias* and *Poliouchos*.⁴⁷⁶ Thus the Palladium was not a cult statue per se, but

⁴⁷⁴ Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 3.12.3: ἦν δὲ τῷ μεγέθει τρίπηχυ, τοῖς δὲ ποσὶ συμβεβηκός, καὶ τῇ μὲν δεξιᾷ δόρυ διηρμένον ἔχον τῇ δὲ ἐτέρᾳ ἡλακάτην καὶ ἄτρακτον. Many artistic representations of the Palladium make it appear significantly smaller, often appearing as an object that could be held in the hand. See: Jean-Marc Moret, *Les pierres gravées antiques représentant le rapt du Palladion*, (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1997).

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid. For further information see Fernand Chavannes, “De Palladii Raptu,” (Berolini, 1891) which discusses the works of art (“Opera artificum”) 1-22, and the literary references (“Scriporum testimonia”) 26-76 of the Palladium.

⁴⁷⁶ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: archaic and classical*, John Raffan trans. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1985), 140.

rather a “highly specialized talisman”.⁴⁷⁷ For Faraone, a talismanic statue proves its special power by either “biological” omens (movement, sweat tears or voices), or supernatural ones (glowing, shooting fire). According to this criteria and Vergil’s description of the Palladium, this particular talisman in fact fell into both categories:

*Vix positum castris simulacrum, arsere coruscae
luminibus flammae arrectis, salsusque per artus
sudor iit, terque ipsa solo—mirabile dictu—
emicuit, parmamque ferens hastamque trementem.*⁴⁷⁸

Indeed, with both conditions met the Palladium could be considered an even stronger talisman than the average.

Most origin stories claim that the Palladium fell from the sky, a point that further underlines both its divine origins and explains its strong protective properties. One version states that it landed at Ilium on the slopes of Mt. Ida and the people, following the advice of an oracle, built a temple at that place. The most popular accounts, however, claim that the fallen Palladium was found either by Electra, her son Dardanus, or his son (or descendent) Ilus.⁴⁷⁹ The latter founded or gave his name to a new city, Ilium (Troy), to which place the Palladium was brought and consecrated by a priest.⁴⁸⁰ There it remained until the reign of the Trojan king Priam and

⁴⁷⁷ Christopher A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 7.

⁴⁷⁸ Vergil, *Aeneid*, 2.172-75: “Just as they set her statue up in camp, the eyes, cast upward, glowed with crackling flames, and salty sweat ran down the body. Then—I say it in awe—three times, up from the ground, the apparition of the goddess rose in a lightening flash, with shield and spear atremble,” Robert Fitzgerald, trans. See also Servius 2.16: *verum tamen [Palladium] agnoscitur hastae oculorumque mobilitate: unde est 'vix positum castris simulacrum, arsere coruscae luminibus flammae' vel 'hastamque trementem'.*

⁴⁷⁹ Electra the daughter of Atlas and Pleione and not to be confused with Electra, daughter of Agamemnon, and main character in the works of Sophocles and Euripides. She was raped by Zeus and gave birth to Dardanus, a mortal man with divine parentage, who fathered Ilus. The comparison between Dardanus-Ilus and Aeneas-Ascanius (Iulus) should not be ignored.

⁴⁸⁰ *Scholia* to Lycophron, 363, and Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Epitome*, E5.10, both state that the Palladium fell from heaven; *Suda* s.v. “Palladion” (pi, 34) gives both origin stories: the Trojan Palladium was a *telesmenon* (consecrated by special rites) at the founding of the city by a “philosopher and *telestês* (consecrator)” named Asius; John of Antioch, *FHG*, 4.551.24.7: Τὸ ἐν Τροίᾳ Παλλάδιον ζώδιον ἦν μικρὸν, ὑπὸ Ἀσίου τινὸς φιλοσόφου κατασκευσθὲν εἰς φυλακὴν τῆς πόλεως; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 68.3-69.1, provides a different backstory, stating that Chryse, the daughter of Pallas, brought the Palladium as part of her dowry when she married Dardanus. He later took the Palladium and founded a new city. From there his descendants removed the Palladium to Ilium

the Trojan War. By its very presence the city that held it, in this case Troy, was believed to be indestructible. Most accounts claim that it was the removal of the Palladium by Diomedes, with or without the aid of Odysseus, which allowed for the sack and fall of the city.⁴⁸¹ Throughout antiquity the Palladium continued to carry close associations with its Trojan ancestry, and this became a principal reason why many cities claimed to possess it.

Due to the Palladium's protective properties and ancient associations as part of early Greek myth and the Trojan War, it is clear why the Romans would wish to claim its ownership. The canonical Roman tradition holds that Aeneas brought the Palladium to Italy after the fall of Troy, which was possible because Odysseus and Diomedes only stole a copy of the statue that had been created to prevent theft.⁴⁸² How it made its way to the city of Rome is never explicitly stated, and even the Romans of the early first century CE do not seem to have had a clear explanation for how they came to possess it.

Ilus, scion of Dardanus, had founded a new city
 (Ilus was still rich, holding the wealth of Asia)
 A sky-born image of armed Minerva was said
 To have fallen on the hillside near to Troy.
 (I was anxious to see it: I saw the temple and the site,
 That's all that's left there: Rome has the Palladium.)
 Apollo Smintheus was consulted, and gave this answer
 From truthful lips, in the darkness of his shadowy grove:
 'Preserve the heavenly goddess, and preserve
 The City: with her goes the capital of empire.'
 Ilus preserved her, closed in the heights of the citadel.
 The care of it descended to his heir Laomedon.

when the city was founded and placed it within a temple on the citadel where it served as a guarantee of the city's safety (σωτηρίας κύρια τῆ πόλει).

⁴⁸¹ Variations of this story are found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 1.68-9; Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.419-436, and *Metamorphoses*, 12.328-349; Vergil and Servius, *Aeneid*, 2.162-181; Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 13.40-50; Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 3.143, and *Epitome*, 5.10.

⁴⁸² Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 1.69.2-4, 2.66.5; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 2.23.5. Accounts by Silius Italicus, *Punica*, 13.50-78, and sixth-century CE versions by Procopius, *Gothic War*, 1.15. and Malalas, *Chronographica*, 6.23, state that Diomedes gave Aeneas the statue of Athena that he had taken with Odysseus. However, versions of Aeneas' flight from Troy and what he brought with him differ. Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.422 mentions the *pignora* with specific reference to the fire that Aeneas brought from Troy that was also placed in the *aedes Vestae*, but the Palladium is not mentioned by name; likewise Vergil's *Aeneid* mentions that he brought the eternal fire (2.289-297) and the Penates (3.10-12 and 3.148-50).

Priam failed to take like care: so Pallas wished it,
 Judgement having gone against her beauty.
 They say it was stolen, whether by Diomede,
 Or cunning Ulysses, or taken by Aeneas:
 The agent's unknown, but the thing's in Rome:
 Vesta guards it: who sees all things by her unfailing light.⁴⁸³

Obviously, for the Romans knowing that they held the Palladium was much more important than the question of how they acquired it.⁴⁸⁴

Scholars have attempted to trace the development of the Aeneas story in early Etruria and Latium as well as the arrival of the Palladium in Rome. Gruen argues that the Aeneas legend would have been circulating in the city of Rome by the late fourth century BCE, and by the third century it would have been part of the Romans cultural identity.⁴⁸⁵ Attempts to date the statue's arrival or presence in Rome are also problematic. The first distinction to be made is between when the Romans claim they held the Palladium, versus the date that the account was written or some other "proof" that it was in Rome. A second concern is from what point in time the talisman was believed to be housed in the *aedes Vestae*; had it been there from its arrival in Rome (whenever that was), or was this fact added at a later date?

⁴⁸³ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.419-436: *moenia Dardanides nuper nova fecerat Ilus (Ilus adhuc Asiae dives habebat opes): creditur armiferae signum caeleste Minervae urbis in Iliacae desiluisse iuga. cura videre fuit, vidi templumque locumque: hoc superest illic, Pallada Roma tenet. consulitur Smintheus lucoque obscurus opaco hos non mentito reddidit ore sonos: 'aetheriam servate deam, servabitis urbem: imperium secum transferet illa loci.' servat et inclusam summa tenet Ilus in arce, curaque ad heredem Laomedonta redit, sub Priamo servata parum: sic ipsa volebat, ex quo iudicio forma revicta sua est. seu genus Adrasti, seu furtis aptus Ulixes, seu pius Aeneas eripuisset eam, auctor in incerto, res est Romana: tuetur Vesta, quod assiduo lumine cuncta videt.* Boyle and Woodard, trans.

⁴⁸⁴ Opt. cit. Moret, 258 fn. 75: "Sa distinction entre présence réelle du Palladion dans le temple de Vesta et croyance populaire en cette présence, nous semble subjective."

⁴⁸⁵ Gruen, *Culture and national identity in Republican Rome*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 28-29. Sergio Casali, "The Development of the Aeneas Legend," in Joseph Farrell and Michael C. J. Putnam, *A Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and its Tradition*, (Chichester : Wiley-Blackwell, 2010): 37-51, 46-49, provides a good overview of the scholarship in this area. However, it is possible that the roots could be significantly earlier. Marianne Maaskant-Kleibrink, "Bearers of idols: Iphigeneia, Cassandra and Aeneas," in *La glyptique des mondes classiques*, (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1997): 23-34, 32, believes that according to scarabs, coins and other evidence, Aeneas was considered a founder in Central Italy from the 6th c. BCE onwards, but the refugee motif, was known even earlier in the 7th century.

If the Romans believed that the Palladium was introduced into Italy by Aeneas (either having taken it himself or having received it from Diomedes), a plausible story for the transfer of the Palladium can be made that starts with the city of Lavinium.⁴⁸⁶ This was the first city founded by Aeneas in Italy, and strong ties connected Lavinium and Rome. First the Romans believed their own Penates came from Lavinium (again, likely through Aeneas).⁴⁸⁷ Moreover, every new year Roman magistrates made sacrifices first to Capitoline Jupiter in Rome, then they travelled to Lavinium where they sacrificed to Vesta, the Trojan Penates and Jupiter *Indiges* (a divine name of Aeneas who is sometimes referred to as Father *Indiges*).⁴⁸⁸ Additionally, there is significant evidence that this city worshipped a version of Athena. Lycophron states that Aeneas built a shrine to Myndia Pallens (Athena) in his new city.⁴⁸⁹ Given the name by which Athena was worshipped here, Pallas, the implication is that the Palladium was connected to, and may have once been at Lavinium.⁴⁹⁰ Indeed, archaeological evidence has confirmed a sanctuary of Athena there. One large, armed statue of Minerva as well as votive deposits that mention an

⁴⁸⁶ Silius Italicus, 13.36-78, has a version in which Diomedes sails to Italy after the fall of Troy and establishes his own city, but later decides to find the “Trojans” and turns the Palladium over to Aeneas. His account is likely derived from a fragment of Cassius Hemina (mid 2nd c. BCE) transmitted by Solin, wherein Diomedes brought the Palladium to Lavinium and gave it to Aeneas: *Nec omissum sit Aenean aestate ab Ilio capto secunda Italicis litoribus adpulsum, ut Hemina tradit, sociis non amplius sescentis, in agro Laurenti posuisse castra: ubi dum simulacrum, quod secum ex Sicilia adeuexerat, dedicate Veneri matri, quae Fructis dicitur, a Diomede Palladium suscepit.* Moret, 286, believes that in giving the Palladium to Aeneas in this way Diomedes himself became one of the protectors of Rome.

⁴⁸⁷ Annie Dubourdieu, *Les origines et le développement du culte des penates à Rome*, (Rome, 1989), 366.

⁴⁸⁸ Tim Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, 66, 68 and 109; Emma Dench, *Romulus' Asylum: Roman Identities from the Age of Alexander to the Age of Hadrian*, (Oxford University Press, 2005), 202; Arnaldo Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, (Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 272.

⁴⁸⁹ Lycophron, *Alexandra*, 1261-1262, states that Aeneas will build a shrine to Myndia Pallens (Athena) in his new city (Lavinium): δείμας δὲ σηκὸν Μυνδία Παλληνίδι, πατρὸς ἀγάλματ' ἐγκατοικεῖ θεῶν. Casali, 42, points out that the versions of the Aeneas legend by Lycophron and Varro (who merely mentions the sow of Aeneas at Lavinium in *Rerum Rusticarum*, 2.13) may be taken from Timaeus or Fabius Pictor. Strabo, 6.1.14, states that in both Lavinium and Rome Athena is referred to as “Trojan Athena” as though brought from Troy: καὶ γὰρ ἐν Ῥώμῃ καὶ ἐν Λαουινίῳ καὶ ἐν Λουκερίῳ καὶ ἐν Σερίτιδι Ἰλιάς Ἀθηναῖα καλεῖται ὡς ἐκεῖθεν κομισθεῖσα.

⁴⁹⁰ F. Castagnoli, *Lavinium I: Topografia generale, fonti e storia delle ricerche*, (Rome, 1972), 106 no. 13. See also F. Castagnoli, *Il Culto di Minervia a Lavinium*, Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, (1979).

image of the goddess (the Palladium?) has all been found.⁴⁹¹ The temple there may have also included one or more priestesses with similarities to the Vestal Virgins.⁴⁹² Although this point is never explicitly confirmed, the implication is that the Palladium was first located in Lavinium and at some point—maybe with a stopover in Alba Longa, the place of birth of Romulus and Remus—it was brought to Rome.⁴⁹³

I am skeptical as to how worthwhile of an endeavor it is to trace the earliest possible existence of the Palladium in Rome given the multitude of dates that have been proposed.⁴⁹⁴ No literary or visual reference that specifically tied the Palladium to Rome exists before the first century BCE, although the Romans of this period provided stories about the talisman that would date it chronologically to much earlier in their history.⁴⁹⁵ Thus only legends exist to “prove” that Rome had the Palladium before this time. Indeed, the fact that it was a sacred object hidden away from the world would allow the Romans to claim they had it whether they did or not.

⁴⁹¹ Fenelli, *Enea nel Lazio. Archeologia e Mito*, (Roma, 1981), 193-4. For Sordi, *Lavinio, Roma e il Palladio, in Politica e religion nel primo scontro tra Roma e l’Oriente*, (Milan, 1982), 65-78, the statue dates from between the early 5th and late 3rd c. BCE. The Palladium in Lavinium is a fake; the original went to Rome and a copy stayed in Lavinium. For the idea of the Palladium being copied in literature see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 1.68-9 (attributed to Arctinus). According to Dubourdieu, 465, “...la presence du Palladium à Rome...suppose une duplication de la statue de Lavinium...elle trouve un correspondant exact dans la duplication des Pénates publics de Rome, honorés à la fois à Lavinium et à Rome.”

⁴⁹² Carcopino, *Virgile et les origines d’Ostie*, (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1919), 336.

⁴⁹³ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 1.67, and Valerius Maximus, *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*, 1.8.7, relate that there were two unsuccessful attempts to move the Palladium from Lavinium to Alba Longa but the statues of the gods (Penates) returned of their own accord. In order to not anger them further the people of Alba sent 600 men to Lavinium to worship them there. Opt. cit. Dubourdieu, 497-8.

⁴⁹⁴ W. Volgraff, “Le Palladium de Rome,” *Bulletin de la classe des Lettres de l’Académie royale de Belgique*, (1938): 34-56, 34, suggests the 3rd c. BCE; Dubourdieu, 467, traces the mention of the Palladium in the Forum to the mid 4th c. BCE. Moret, 290, “...tous les témoignages sont concordants: c’est tardivement, dans le courant du II^e siècle avant J. – C., au plus tard à l’époque de Varro (1st c. BCE), que la conception du Palladion comme *pignus imperii* s’est officialisée à Rome.” Sordi, 74-5, proposes 192 BCE (conflict with Antiochus) and believes the Romans did not attempt to appropriate the gods of Lavinium in the 4th c. BCE but rather traveled there to worship them: “Al tempo di Augusto il possesso da parte dei Romani del Palladio e la sua conservazione nel tempio di Vesta erano dati per certi.” She uses Cicero, *Phil.* 11.10.24, Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.69.4 and 2.66, and Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.424, as “proof”. Sordi also sees the arrival of Magna Mater (represented by a black rock that had fallen from the sky) in Rome in 205 BCE as the *terminus post quem* for the arrival of the Palladium in Rome since the talisman obviously was not considered yet the *pignus imperii* or else Magna Mater would not be necessary, and the *terminus ante quem* as the mid 2nd century as since this is when the earliest reference to the Palladium being given to Aeneas by Diomedes dates in a fragment of Cassius Hemina, 76.

⁴⁹⁵ See also A. Preuner, *Hestia-Vesta*, (Tübingen: Lauppschen, 1864) 425-9, for an additional discussion on the Palladium.

Moreover, the only people who even would have been eligible to see the object would be a small group of Vestal priestesses and perhaps the *pontifex maximus* (although the stories indicate that he was not supposed to look upon it). If they were supposed to be guarding a sacred object which in fact they did not have, it seems unlikely that they would advertise the fact.

An alternative version found in Appian's *Bello Mithridatico* allows for the possibility that Rome gained the Palladium much later in her history. In 53 BCE, C. Flavius Fimbria, a partisan of Marius and enemy of Sulla during the Civil Wars, sacked the city of Ilium:

So much worse was the city now treated by one of its relations [Fimbria] than it had been by Agamemnon, that not a house, not a temple, not a statue was left. Some say that the image of Athena, called the Palladium, which was supposed to have fallen from heaven, was then found unbroken, the falling walls having formed an arch over it; and this may be true unless Diomedes and Ulysses carried it away from Ilium during the Trojan War.⁴⁹⁶

Servius also mentions stories of the Palladium including the actions of Fimbria stating, *adhibito Mamurio fabro multa similia facta sunt*.⁴⁹⁷ However, Fimbria died a few months after the sack of the city, never to return to Rome.⁴⁹⁸ If the Palladium was brought to Rome at this late date, it must have arrived by some other agent. Assenmaker attributes the act to Sulla. The primary sources state that he came to the aid of many cities in Asia Minor damaged by Fimbria, making them “friends” of the Romans once more.⁴⁹⁹ In doing so, Assenmaker argues that Sulla must have acquired the statue and then returned to Rome with the Palladium at the end of 82.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁶ Appian, *Bello Mithridatico*, 53: ἡ μὲν δὴ χεῖρονα τῶν ἐπὶ Ἀγαμέμνονος παθοῦσα ὑπὸ συγγενοῦς διωλόλει, καὶ οἰκόπεδον οὐδὲν αὐτῆς οὐδ' ἱερὸν οὐδ' ἄγαλμα ἔτι ἦν: τὸ δὲ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἔδος, ὃ Παλλάδιον καλοῦσι καὶ διοπετέες ἡγοῦνται, νομίζουσι τινες εὐρεθῆναι τότε ἄθραυστον, τῶν ἐπιπεσόντων τειχῶν αὐτὸ περικαλυψάντων, εἰ μὴ Διομήδης αὐτὸ καὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐν τῷ Τρωϊκῷ ἔργῳ μετήνεγκαν ἐξ Ἰλίου. Horace White, trans. Austin, *Aeneidos, Liber Secundus*, 84, comments that this passage “is mentioned with some caution” by Appian and “sounds remarkably like a hoax by some sceptic.”

⁴⁹⁷ Servius, *ad Aeneas*, 2.166.

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. J. Muñiz Coello, “C. Flavius Fimbria, consular y legado en la provincial de Asia (86-84 a. de C.),” *SHHA* 13-14 (1995-1996): 257-275.

⁴⁹⁹ Appian, *Bello Mithridatico*, 53 and 61; Strabo, 13.1.27; Orosius, *Historiae Adversus Paganos*, 6.2.11.

⁵⁰⁰ Pierre Assenmaker, “*Pignus salutis atque imperii*: L'enjeu du Palladium dans les luttes politiques de la fin de la République,” *Les Études Classiques* 75 (2007): 381-412, 396-7 and note 60, further argues that the murder of the *pontifex maximus* Q. Mucius Scaevola at the temple of Vesta offered Sulla an opportunity to place a new sacred

Moreover, a study by Erskine argues that archaeological evidence does not lend support to the idea that Fimbria totally destroyed the city. He concludes that the literary sources purposely exaggerated the extent of the damage in order to hurt Fimbria's reputation. Thus, the Palladium was used as propaganda to increase the popularity of Sulla. He assisted the people of Ilion and was responsible for bringing the Palladium to Rome, simultaneously bolstering his own reputation and monopolizing on the legendary connection between the two cities.⁵⁰¹

How did the Romans reconcile the differing accounts? There is no reason to think that they did. For all intents and purposes, how they acquired the Palladium was significantly less important than the fact that they possessed it. No matter what version of events was the "real" one, the end result was the same and in their favor. This also allowed for the manipulation of the story, and the ability of authors to maximize on the symbolic importance of the Palladium. Indeed, according to one Palladium scholar, "Nous sommes d'avis que les divergences ou les contradictions que l'on observe dans le mythe romain du Palladium sont dans une large mesure le reflet de diverses tentatives de "récupération" de ce symbole [Palladium]."⁵⁰²

It is also necessary to bear in mind that while Aeneas and the Palladium are legends, they are ones that the Romans thoroughly believed in. Through Aeneas they were the descendants of the Trojans, and he had brought the Palladium and other sacred objects to Italy from Ilium. Thus Rome was the offspring of Troy and they had the Palladium. How this came into being was of secondary importance, and the fact that multiple accounts existed was largely overlooked. However, if any of the stories about the Palladium are to be accepted as true, then we have to accept that the Romans had a real statue that they believed originated from Troy. The origins of

object inside the temple that had recently been polluted. While the assassination occurred, I very much doubt one act had any influence on the other. With or without the Scaevola's murder there were few places that the Palladium could be housed in Rome, and none more plausible than the *aedes Vestae*.

⁵⁰¹ A. Erskine, *Troy between Greece and Rome. Local Tradition and Imperial Power*, (Oxford, 2001), 239-45.

⁵⁰² Assenmaker, "Pignus," 382.

this statue are, naturally, unknown. It seems most likely that either the Romans fabricated one in secret or they appropriated a statue of Athena for this purpose and called it “the Palladium”.⁵⁰³ In possessing this object the Romans gained all the virtues and powers the statue embodied and claimed their rightful place as the successor of the Trojans, and that Rome was the daughter city of Troy.⁵⁰⁴

Symbolic Importance of the Palladium and ties to Vesta

In Rome the Palladium was housed in the *aedes Vestae* and placed under the guard of the Vestal Virgins. This choice was not random. This temple guarded by Vesta housed most of Rome’s most sacred objects, and so it was the obvious location. Of secondary importance may have been the chaste nature of the goddesses Vesta and Athena, and their attendants. Sources indicate that the priestesses of Athena and the Palladium at Troy were also virgins.⁵⁰⁵ Thus in keeping with this practice when the Palladium came to Rome it fell under the care of Rome’s only official college of priestesses who likewise were chaste and devoted to a virgin goddess—the Vestal Virgins.⁵⁰⁶ The Palladium was hidden in the *penus Vestae*, an inner sanctuary where Rome kept its other *sacra*.⁵⁰⁷ Only the Vestals and the *pontifex maximus* were normally allowed

⁵⁰³ For the idea of fabrication compare the *ancile* (shields) of the Salii (priests of Mars). According to tradition the original fell from heaven during the reign of King Numa who ordered 11 copies be made to protect the real one. Cf. Livy 1.20, which in the same paragraph mentions the priestesses of Vesta but not the Palladium. Opt. cit. Assenmaker, “Pignus,” 397.

⁵⁰⁴ A. Audin, “Le Palladium de Rome,” in *Revue Archéologique* 30 (1929): 46-57, 49.

⁵⁰⁵ Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Epitome*, 6.20-22.

⁵⁰⁶ Consider Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.289-294, who, although speaking of Vesta, could equally be describing Athena: *quid mirum, virgo si virgine laeta ministra admittit castas ad sua sacra manus? Nec tu aliud Vestam quam vivam intellege flammam, nataque de flamma corpora nulla vides. Iure igitur virgo est, quae semina nulla remittit nec capit et comites virginitatis amat.* “What wonder if a virgin delights in virgin servants, and only allows chaste hands to touch her sacred relics? Realize that Vesta is nothing but living flame, and you’ll see that no bodies are born from her. She’s truly a virgin, who neither accepts seed nor yields it, and she loves virgin companions,” A. S. Kline, trans.

⁵⁰⁷ Once a year the *aedes* was opened to Roman women for a brief time during the festival for Vesta, the *Vestalia*, on June 9. It is unlikely that they were granted access to the *penus*.

to enter, but even Rome's high priest was not supposed to look at the Palladium.⁵⁰⁸ There it remained hidden from the world for both its own—and more importantly for the city's—protection.⁵⁰⁹

The Palladium was foremost among Rome's sacred objects and one of the few that is frequently mentioned. In fact, some authors indicate that there was disagreement about what other objects the Vestals guarded. Like the Palladium, the sacred fire of Vesta was also believed to have been brought from Troy by Aeneas and was likewise kept in the *aedes Vestae*. Indeed, general consensus existed about the sacred fire (probably because it was more visible than the rest being in the main part of the temple and not hidden in the *penus*), but many thought this was the only treasure within.⁵¹⁰ Some sources also believed that Aeneas had brought images of the Samothracian gods with him from Troy.⁵¹¹ Likewise, he is credited for bringing the public cult of the Roman people, the Penates (*Penates Publici Populi Romani*), from Troy to Italy, and setting them up in his new city, Lavinium.⁵¹² From there the Penates, like the eternal fire, Palladium, and goddess Vesta herself, were later brought to Rome.⁵¹³ The Penates were given a temple on the Velia on the site formerly occupied by the house of King Tullus Hostilius, not far from the *Forum Romanum* and temple of Vesta.⁵¹⁴ Likewise the *ancile*, a sacred shield belonging to Mars that was believed to have fallen from the sky, was greatly important to the

⁵⁰⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 2.66; Plutarch, *Camillus*, 20.

⁵⁰⁹ Opt. cit. Faraone, 4 and 136, where he allows as a secondary motive for keeping the Palladium hidden (both in Troy and Rome): the fear of the malevolent power of the talisman.

⁵¹⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 2.66; Plutarch, *Camillus*, 20.3.

⁵¹¹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 1.69, 2.66; Plutarch, *Camillus*, 20.5.

⁵¹² Ovid, *Fasti* 3.615; Propertius 4.1; Varro, *De lingua latina*, 5.32, says of Lavinium that "this is where our Penates are": *oppidum quod primum conditum in Latio stirpis Romanae, Lavinium; nam ibi dii Penates nostri*. On the *penates* cf. Wissowa, "Die Überlieferung Über die Römischen Penaten," *Hermes*, 22 Bd., H. 1 (1987): 29-57; Dubourdieu, 463-7.

⁵¹³ Where Alba Longa, the city planned by Aeneas but built by his son Ascanius/Iulus, comes into play varies. Livy, 1.20, states that Vesta was brought from Alba Longa, not Lavinium, and he does not mention the Palladium in this early context.

⁵¹⁴ Varro, *De lingua latina*, 5.8; Solinus, *de Mirabilibus Mundi*, 1.22; Donatus, in *Eunuchum Terenti commentum*, 256.

Romans—so much so that 11 copies were made in order to protect the original. The *ancile* and Palladium were connected in that the Romans believed king Numa Pompilius gave them both objects.⁵¹⁵ The shield is generally believed to have been guarded by the *Salii* (priests of Mars) and was not housed in Vesta’s temple.⁵¹⁶ However, according to Servius who wrote in the late fourth and early fifth centuries CE, there were seven *pignora*: the stone (conical image) of Magna Mater (Cybele), the four-horse chariot brought from Veii, the ashes of Orestes, the scepter of Priam, the veil of Ilione (daughter of Priam), the Palladium and the *ancile*.⁵¹⁷

The Romans saw the Palladium, along with the fire of Vesta brought from Troy, as the guarantees of their strength and prosperity. An additional assurance—and one that I would argue was of equal importance as these objects—was the *castitas* (chastity) of the Vestal priestesses, who served as the earthly representatives of “Trojan” Vesta.⁵¹⁸ This explains the reason why broken vows of Vestal chastity were dealt with so harshly (ie. death). It is also a logical extension since so many of Rome’s most important safeguards (fire, Palladium, Vestals) were located within the same building, the *aedes Vestae*. As for the *pignora* as a group, it is obvious that many of the alleged objects bear a connection to Troy and the Trojan War. Two additional considerations include the number of *pignora* reported by Servius, seven, and how they were protected. For example, did he choose the number seven for a particular reason, for example as a reflection of the number of religious women in the temple (ie. the six Vestal priestesses and the goddess herself, perhaps in the form of the sacred fire)? In addition, some sources report that the

⁵¹⁵ Florus, *Epitome Rerum Romanorum*, 1.1.2 (Loeb, 1929).

⁵¹⁶ The *ancilia* were moved during the months of March and October. During these times the *Salii* stopped at certain spots along their route. Scholars have not been able to identify these locations, so it is unknown if the *ancile* was ever housed in the *aedes Vestae*. Cf. Plutarch, *Numa*, 13.

⁵¹⁷ Servius, 188: *septem fuerunt pignora, quae imperium Romanum tenent: fœtus matris deum, quadriga fictilis Veientanorum, cineres Orestis, sceptrum Priami, velum Ilionae, palladium, ancilia*.

⁵¹⁸ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.227-8 and 6.365-6: *Iliaca Vesta*.

pignora were further hidden within one or more earthenware jars.⁵¹⁹ If true, this would conform to the ancient practice of using manufactured objects as talismans, and these were usually buried underground, secretly, and in specially sealed jugs.⁵²⁰

Due to the great symbolic meaning the Palladium held for the Romans it appears in both their visual imagery and literature. Sulla, and then shortly thereafter Caesar and Augustus, all used the Palladium to present themselves as guardians and guarantors of the state. The tie between the figure of Aeneas and the Palladium is never clearly attested in Rome before the middle of the first century when Caesar put them both on one of his coins. This example dates to the period immediately after Pharsalus (48-46 BCE) and includes Venus on the obverse, and Aeneas, Anchises, and the Palladium on the reverse.⁵²¹ Serafin describes the role of the Palladium here as “to precede the hero as if to reveal to him the path like a tutelary deity and sign in the path.”⁵²² In using these specific images, Caesar represented a version of the Palladium legend that, as far as can be determined, was never used before in Rome.⁵²³ By making Aeneas the savior and guardian of the Palladium, Caesar projected this role upon his own person, not only in his various offices but also as the descendent of the legendary hero.⁵²⁴ Thus he and the later Julio-Claudians were tied by lineage to Aeneas, and by extension to the Palladium. They

⁵¹⁹ Plutarch, *Camillius*, 20.6: “Others still, pretending to have larger knowledge in these matters, say that two small jars are stored away there, of which one is open and empty, and the other full and sealed up, and that both are visible only to the holy virgins. But others think that these knowing ones have been led astray by the fact that the virgins, at the time of which I am now speaking, cast the most of their sacred treasures into two jars, and hid them underground in the temple of Quirinus, whence that place, down to the present time, has the name of ‘Doliola,’ or ‘Jars.’”; cf. *Historia Augusta*, *Elagabalus*, 6.6.

⁵²⁰ Faraone, 6. Of the examples he cites, the most comparable to the Palladium seems to be tin sheets inscribed with the mystic rites (*teletai*) of the Great Goddess which were buried in a bronze hydria in Messene (Pausanias, 4.20.4; 4.26.7-8).

⁵²¹ The first mention of Venus as the ancestor of the Julii Caesares (although most likely in use earlier) dates to 125 BCE when Sex. Julius Caesar put the goddess in a *biga* on his *denarii* (RRC 258). Op cit. Jane DeRose Evans, *The Art of Persuasion: Political Propaganda from Aeneas to Brutus*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992).

⁵²² Patrizia Petrillo Serafin, “La *Pietas* di Enea : due monete a confronto,” *Bolletino d’Arte* 13 (1982): 35-38, 35.

⁵²³ Assenmaker, “Pignus,” 402-3, believes that the presence of the Palladium here may be attributed to the fire of 47 BCE that caused the Vestals to remove the *sacra* from the temple. However, our main source for the incident, Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae*, 42.31.3, does not specifically mention the Palladium.

⁵²⁴ Serafin, 35; Assenmaker, 404.

were also connected to the statue and to Vesta due to their position as *pontifex maximus*, overseer of the Vestals, the guardians of the Palladium.⁵²⁵ Hence, “The earlier tradition of Aeneas’s arrival with the Penates is thus changed into Aeneas with the Palladium, for both Caesar and Augustus, a motif redolent of power.”⁵²⁶ However, Augustus sometimes fell back on the older version of the coin that included the *penates* rather than Palladium, which is a point that I will return to below.

The Palladium frequently appears on coins during the empire. It is often joined by an image of Vesta, but sometimes also by Roma, victory or an emperor or empress.⁵²⁷ The popularity of the Palladium on coinage decreased under the Julio-Claudians after Augustus, but experienced a revival after the death of Nero. Galba appeared on an *as* with Vesta and the Palladium (see), while Vespasian (69-70) appeared on a coin where Victoria presents him the Palladium.⁵²⁸ The latter marked an increasing trend for imagery of the Palladium without a connection to the goddess Vesta, although examples of them together still occurred.⁵²⁹ The Palladium was also a common image for the Flavians. For example, a *sesterius* from 80 CE shows Roma presenting the Palladium to Titus, and Domitian appears on a coin with Minerva

⁵²⁵ Two additional coins issued by Caesar, *RRC* 452/3 and *RRC* 466, may depict the goddess Vesta on the obverse although I am not convinced of this identification. *RCC* 452/3, a *quinarius* from 48/7 BCE does depict a veiled, feminine looking figure with what appears to be a *culullus* (a vessel associated with the *pontifices* and Vestals); however no writing appears to assist the identification, and the reverse depicts a trophy, round shield, sword, and wreath, objects more relevant to Caesar’s military victories and not usually associated with Vesta. The other coin, *RCC* 466, an *aureus* from 46 BCE, depicts a similar veiled figure as the previous coin, but she appears less feminine. The reverse shows a *lituus*, jug and axe.

⁵²⁶Maaskant-Kleibrink, p. 33. Cf. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, vol. 1, s.v. “Aineias”, 128.

⁵²⁷Harold Mattingly, R. A. G. Carson, and Philip V. Hill, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, Reprinted with revisions, (London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum by British Museum Publications, 1975) 111, 180 and 276-8. Koch, “Roma Aeterna,” *Gymnasium* 59 (1952): 128-143 and 196-209. Koch, p. 196, holds that the Palladium was not a symbol of eternity in the Republic or Augustan age, merely a *pignus salutis et imperii*.

⁵²⁸ *BMCRE* I, 335, 326, 356. For examples from Galba through the mid third century CE, see Gross, “Dass Palladium,” 90-91, especially note 101.

⁵²⁹ K. Stemmer, *Untersuchungen zur Typologie, Chronologie und Ikonographie der Panzerstatuen*, (Mann, 1978), 123 and 159, who argues that after the Flavian Dynasty, especially under Hadrian, the Palladium appears on the statues and cuirasses of emperors as a symbol of grandeur specifically tying the prosperity of the state to the emperor.

and the Palladium.⁵³⁰ Pera argues that these examples were intended to demonstrate the legitimacy of the Flavian succession and the eternity (*aeternitas*) of their family and of the Roman people.⁵³¹ The Palladium reappears on coins from the Antonine Dynasty, both with and without direct references to Vesta.⁵³² Of particular note are an *aureus* (119-122 CE) that shows the statue of Roma Aeterna with the Palladium, a coin series (147-8 and 153-4) wherein Vesta appears with a *simpulum* (“ladle”) and the image of Athena (the Palladium) on her left shoulder, and coins from the reign of Commodus on which the word *aeternitas* appears along with the Palladium.⁵³³ Pera believes that “The presence of the Palladium with the scepter in the hand of Vesta, an innovation in the coin emissions of Galba onward, seems an additional throwback and recovery in the political religiosity undertaken by Augustus in regard to this goddess.”⁵³⁴ However, I would argue that both the Palladium and Vesta carried enough individual and combined symbolic value that it is not necessary to read Augustus into this analysis. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, the degree of affiliation between Augustus and Vesta is often overemphasized.

The descriptions and epithets given to the Palladium and the fire of Vesta are even more prominent than the numismatic examples. Herbert-Brown has pointed out that portrayals of the Palladium by late Republican and first century authors repeatedly use the same terms to describe

⁵³⁰ For the *sesterius* of Titus see: *BMCRE* II, 260. For the mentioned coin of Domitian see: *BMCRE* II 355. For other coins connecting Domitian and Vesta see: *BMCRE* II 46-7; *RIC* II, 43; Rossella Pera, “L’Imperatore e il divino: il simbolismo del Palladio,” in *La Tradizione iconica come fonte storica: il ruolo della numismatica negli studi di iconografia: atti del I Incontro di studio del Lexicon Iconographic*, M. Caccamo Caltabiano, D. Castrizio, and M. Puglisi eds., (Falzea, 2004): 75-91, 78.

⁵³¹ Pera, 78.

⁵³² Trajan see: Pera, 79.

⁵³³ For the *aureus*: *BMCRE* III, 329. Pera, 80, believes the coins of Vesta may have been in honor of Faustina. For the reign of Commodus see: *BCMRE* IV, 726.

⁵³⁴ Pera, 82. Philip V. Hill, *The Monuments of Ancient Rome as Coin Types*, (London: Seaby, 1989), 85-6, argues that it is surprising that the Palladium does not appear more often. Despite the examples above, he contends that the Palladium only appeared as a “main time” three times, and all in the second century CE.

this object and its importance for Rome.⁵³⁵ From Cicero onward, when referring to the Palladium authors describe it either as a *signum*, or more often as the *pignus imperii*. The same pattern is true for the epithet *aeternus* which is applied to the fire of Vesta. This idea began under the Republic by authors such as Cicero, and was continued by Vergil, Livy, Ovid and Horace.⁵³⁶ In addition, Mellor observed that Tibullus was the first author to use *aeternus* in conjunction with the *urbs Roma*, which is the earliest example of the idea of *Roma Aeterna*.⁵³⁷

Cicero was the first author to use the terms *pignus imperii* and *signum* in reference to the Palladium. In the *Pro Scauro* (54 BCE), he mentions Lucius Caecilius Metellus, the *pontifex maximus* who saved the Palladium from fire in the third century BCE.

[L.] Metelli, pontifice maximi, qui, cum templum illud arderet, in medios se iniecit ignis et eripuit flamma Palladium illud quod quasi **pignus** nostrae salutis atque **imperi** custodiis Vestae continetur. Qui utinam posset parumper existere! eriperet ex hac flamma stirpem profecto suam, qui eripisset ex illo incendio di...⁵³⁸

This is the earliest example of *pignus imperii*, and of the two terms (*pignus imperii* and *signum*) it is the one most often repeated by later authors. In addition, this passage expresses the belief that the safety (*salutis*) of the Roman people was closely tied to the Palladium. Cicero then uses the other term, *signum*, to introduce the Palladium in the *Philippics* (44-43 BCE): ...*qui [Brutum] ita conservandus est ut id signum quod de caelo delapsum Vestae custodiis*

⁵³⁵ Geraldine Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti: an historical study*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 76-7.

⁵³⁶ Cicero, *Pro Fonteio*, 47: *ille ignis aeternus*; Virgil, *Aeneid*, 2.296: *ignis aeternus*; Livy, 26.27.14: *Vestae aedem petitam et aeternos ignes*; Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.421: *ignibus aeternis*; Horace, *Odes*, 3.5.11, refers to *aeternae Vestae* and not specifically the fire.

⁵³⁷ Ronald J. Mellor, *Dea Roma: the development of the idea of the Goddess Roma*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 107-8. Cf. Tibullus, 2.5.23-24: *Romulus aeternae nondum formauerat urbis moenia*.

⁵³⁸ Cicero, *Pro Scauro*, 48: "That great Lucius Metellus, the Pontifex Maximus, who, when that temple was on fire threw himself into the middle of the flames, and saved from the fire that image of Minerva, which, as if it were a pledge of our safety and of the empire, is guarded by the protection of Vesta;—would that that great man could be among us, though but for a short time; he, forsooth, would save from the flames this man, his descendant, as he before saved from that other conflagration [that heavenly pledge of our safety]." C. D. Yonge trans.

*continentur ; quo salvo salvi sumus futuri.*⁵³⁹ This example likewise expresses the idea that the Palladium was necessary for the survival of the state.

Livy uses the term *pignus imperii* twice and *signum* once. The first is in a speech delivered by Camillus, the dictator who played a large part in the expulsion of the Gauls from Rome c. 387 BCE, wherein he attempts to convince the Romans against the idea of abandoning the city and fleeing to Veii. Religion and devotion to the gods are the primary themes of his discourse: *quid de aeternis Vestae ignibus signoque, quo imperii pignus custodia eius temple tenetur, loquar?*⁵⁴⁰ This phrase applies both the terms *pignus imperii* and *signum*, and again demonstrates the belief that the city of Rome would endure as long as Vesta's eternal fire burned. The second example comes from Livy's discussion of the Hannibalic War. During this time a fire broke out inside the city that threatened to destroy the temple of Vesta. Many believed that this was a deliberate attack: *Vestae aedem petitam et aeternos ignes et conditum in penetrali fatale pignus imperi Romani.*⁵⁴¹ This sentence serves as a further example of the term *pignus imperii* and also of the concept of Vesta's eternal fire, a motif that would be further developed by Ovid.⁵⁴² Further, it gives rise to an interesting image of an enemy using fire in an attempt to defeat the Romans by extinguishing the eternal fire in the Temple of Vesta. The alleged conspirators literally fought fire with fire.

⁵³⁹ Cicero, *Philippics*, 11.10.24: “[Brutus] whom we ought to preserve like that statue which fell from heaven, and is guarded by the protection of Vesta: which, as long as it is safe, insures our safety also.” C. D. Yonge trans.

⁵⁴⁰ Livy, 5.52.7: “What of Vesta's eternal fires, or of the image preserved in her shrine as a pledge of Rome's dominion?” Aubrey de Sélincourt trans.

⁵⁴¹ Livy, 26.27.14: “...an attempt had been made on the temple of Vesta, on the Undying Fire, on the Palladium, that most solemn pledge of Roman sway, laid up there in the temple's inmost shrine.” Sélincourt trans.

⁵⁴² Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.234: *ignea cum pura Vesta nitebit humo.*

Varro dedicated his work *Rerum divinarum libri* to Caesar who was dictator and *pontifex maximus*, around the same time as the latter issued his coin with the Palladium in 47 BCE.⁵⁴³ This work, now lost (but the content of which has been passed down from St Augustine), provides the earliest account of Metellus, the famous *pontifex maximus* who saved the *sacra*—without specifically mentioning the Palladium—from the temple of Vesta. Given the content of this work it might seem logical that Varro would dedicate it to Caesar. However, Varro was also in the dictator’s debt: he had sided with Pompey and even led one of his armies during the Civil Wars, for which actions Varro was twice pardoned by Caesar. Also in 47 BCE—the same year the work was published—Caesar asked Varro to plan and organize the first public library in Rome. Whether or not it was the outcome of deliberate planning, the inclusion of the Metellus story and the dedication to Caesar would have nicely coincided with the Aeneas coin Caesar issued at roughly the same time. However, at least one scholar suggests that this message may in fact have been a veiled warning. In 47 BCE Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio Nasico (in whose name can easily be seen the connection to the famous *pontifex maximus* Metellus), the former father-in-law and general of the now deceased Pompey, still commanded the latter’s forces until committing suicide after a defeat in 46 BCE.⁵⁴⁴

In the *Fasti* Ovid uses both the terms *signum* and *pignus imperii* to refer to the Palladium, although the connection is not as clear in the second example. Ovid’s application of *signum* comes from a section where the author discusses the original home of the Palladium:

Creditor armiferae **signum** caeleste Minervae
urbis in Iliacae desiluisse iuga.
cura videre fuit, vivi templumque locumque:

⁵⁴³ Francesco Della Corte, *Varrone, il terzo gran lume romano*, (Firenze: la nuova Italia, 1970); N. Horsfall, “Varro and Caesar: Three Chronological Problems,” in *University of London – Institute of Classical Studies*, no. 109 (1972): 120-8.

⁵⁴⁴ C. Pellegrino, “La Cecità del Pontefice Massimo L. Cecilio Metello,” *Latomus* 277 (2003): 503-512, 512: “Ho l'impressione che il Reatino volesse qui ammonire, tra le righe, il destinatario Cesare a non dimenticare che, se i suoi antenati avevano fondato Roma, erano stati i Metelli, in un passato molto più recente, a preservarne l'esistenza...”.

hoc superest illic, Pallada Roma tenet.⁵⁴⁵

In this passage it is clear that *signum* stands for statue, specifically the Palladium. The second reference applies the other phrase, *pignus imperii*, but it incorporates considerably more symbolism. The eternal nature not only of the Trojan (Vesta's) fire, but also that of the new emperor, Augustus Caesar, are explicitly linked.

Ignibus aeternis aeterni numina praesunt
 Caesaris: **imperii pignora** iuncta vides,
 di veteris Troiae, dignissima praeda ferenti,
 qua gravis Aeneas tutus ab hoste fuit,
 ortus ab Aenea tangit cognata sacerdos
 numina : cognatum, Vesta, tuere caput!
 quos sancta fovet ille manu, bene vivitis ignes:
 vivite inextincti, flammaque duxque, precor.⁵⁴⁶

Herbert-Brown specifically remarks on the significance of this passage, "...*Imperii pignora iuncta*' means that the *Pontifex Maximus* himself is now equated and united with the Palladium as the pledge of empire. Vesta is now burdened with a double responsibility of guardianship. The notion is thus conveyed that the eternal flame, the Palladium, and Augustus form a very tight-knit trinity."⁵⁴⁷ It is worth noting, however, that the Palladium is not specifically named.

In all it is clear that the Palladium was much more to the Romans than a mere wooden statue inherited from Troy. By the late Republic it was also a sign (*signum*) and pledge of empire (*pignus imperii*); Rome would endure as long as it possessed the Palladium. Yet this was not enough. The eternal fire (*ignibus aeternis*) also had to burn in Vesta's temple, and her priestesses had to remain pure and within the city. Moreover the popular conceptions of the

⁵⁴⁵ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.421: "A heavenly statue of armed Minerva, it's thought, dropped on the hills of Ilium's city. I was curious to see it, and saw the temple and site. That is what remains there; Rome has Pallas." Boyle and Woodard, trans.

⁵⁴⁶ Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.421-28: "Eternal Caesar's godhead oversees eternal / Fires: you see empire's tokens joined. / Gods of old Troy, your bearer's most deserving prize, / Whose burden saved Aeneas from the foe, / A priest sprung from Aeneas handles kindred gods: / Guard, Vesta, the head of your kinsman. / You fires quicken with the care of his hallowed hand: / Live on deathless, I pray, leader and flame." Boyle and Woodard, trans.

⁵⁴⁷ Herbert-Brown, 77.

Palladium, the eternal fire, Vesta, and the city of Rome were so closely connected that they overlapped, perhaps to the point of being used as synonyms for one another: “When *signum* and *Vesta* occur together, as they do in the *Fasti*, they take on a very special meaning. In such cases, the reference is not to the goddess, but is instead to the Palladium.”⁵⁴⁸ Even if the terms were not completely synonymous, by invoking one the other should be brought to mind (ie. mentioning the Palladium should bring to mind Vesta or vice versa). Moreover, Audin argues that the goddess Pallas is identical to Vesta.⁵⁴⁹ If the Romans saw her thus, by extension the Palladium could be considered a statue of Vesta. This fact would go a long way in explaining the confusion over if there was or was not a cult statue of the goddess in the *aedes Vesta*; the answer would be that there was not, but that the Palladium was present. In addition Ovid informs his readers *nec tu aliud Vestam quam vivam intellege flammam* (“understand Vesta is nothing other than living flame”).⁵⁵⁰ The flame that naturally would be associated with Vesta was the one housed in her temple, which was the fire brought from Troy and the *ignis aeternis* of the Romans. From these associations it is not difficult to conclude, as Parker does, that “For the poets, Vesta was the metonym for Rome.”⁵⁵¹ The city would not exist without Vesta, embodied by the living flame, who watched over Rome’s sacred fire and most sacred object, the Palladium, with the help of her virgin priestesses.

⁵⁴⁸ Mary Joann McDaniel, “Augustus, the Vestals and the Signum Imperii,” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1995), 84.

⁵⁴⁹ Audin, 54-5: “...Pallas, que est identique à Vesta”.

⁵⁵⁰ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.291.

⁵⁵¹ H. N. Parker, “Why were the Vestals Virgins? Or the chastity of women and the safety of the Roman state,” *AJP* 125 (2004): 563-60, 567. See also: Horace, *Odes*, 3.5.9-12: *sub rege Medo, Marsus et Apulus anciliorum et nominis et togae oblitus aeternaeque Vestae, incolumi Iove et urbe Roma?*; Vergil, *Aeneid*, 1.292.

Moving the Palladium during the Republic and Empire through the third century CE

The Palladium was to remain inside the temple of Vesta at all times. However, there are a few Republican examples that indicate that the statue was either temporarily removed or better hidden than normal. When this occurred it was usually due to the threat of fire reaching the building. The earliest date for a possible removal of the Palladium is the Gallic invasion of Rome in the early fourth century BCE. Ovid indicates that at this time the *pignora* were removed from the temple of Vesta, although he does not specifically mention the Palladium.⁵⁵² Other authors provide more detailed accounts, recording that a *flamen* (according to Livy and Valerius Maximus the *flamen Quirinalis*) and the Vestal Virgins, realizing that they could not carry away all of the sacred objects in their care, decided to leave some behind in the city stored in jars and buried. The rest they carried with them as they fled the city.⁵⁵³ All of these accounts use the term *sacra* or ἱερά, never mentioning the Palladium specifically.

Next, Lucius Caecilius Metellus, *pontifex maximus* from 243 BCE onwards, is often mentioned for saving the Palladium.⁵⁵⁴ In 241 BCE a fire ravaged the city of Rome. It

⁵⁵² Ovid, 3.365-6: *vidimus Iliacae transferri pignora Vestae / sede: putant aliquos scilicet esse deos.*

⁵⁵³ Livy, 5.39.11 and 5.40.7-8: *flaminem sacerdotisque Vestales sacra publica a caede, ab incendiis procul auferre, nec ante deseri cultum eorum quam non superessent qui colerent...flamen interim Quirinalis virginesque Vestales omissa rerum suarum cura, quae sacrorum secum ferenda, quae, quia vires ad omnia ferenda deerant, relinquenda essent, consultantes, quisve ea locus fidei adservaturus custodia esset, optimum ducunt condita in doliolis sacello proximo aedibus flaminis Quirinalis, ubi nunc despui religio est, defodere; cetera inter se onere partito ferunt via, quae sublicio ponte ducit ad Ianiculum.* The next passage details how on the road to Caere the priestesses came across a man named Albinus who in deference to the gods, threw his own family out of his cart and put the Vestals and their sacred objects inside. It is also worth noting that this is the sole example I am aware of when the Vestals left the city of Rome. Valerius Maximus, 1.1.10: *Quod animi iudicium in priuatorum quoque pectoribus uersatum est: urbe enim a Gallis capta, cum flamen Quirinalis uirginesque Vestales sacra onere partito ferrent, easque pontem sublicium transgressas et cliuum, qui ducit ad Ianiculum, ascendere incipientes L. Albanus plaustrum coniugem et liberos uehens aspexisset, propior publicae religioni quam priuatae caritati suis ut plaustrum descenderent inperauit atque in id uirgines et sacra inposita omissa coepto itinere Caere oppidum peruexit, ubi cum summa ueneratione recepta.* Plutarch, *Camillus*, 20.3: ἐν πρώτοις δὲ τῶν ἱερῶν ἃ μὲν εἰς τὸ Καπιτώλιον ἀνεσκευάσαντο, τὸ δὲ πῦρ τῆς Ἑστίας αἱ παρθένοι μετὰ τῶν ἱερῶν ἔφευγον ἀρπασάμεναι. Florus, 1.13.11-12: *Pontifices et flamines quidquid religiosisissimi in templis erat, partim in doleis defossa terra recondunt, partim inposita plaustris secum Veios auferunt. Virgines simul ex sacerdotio Vestae nudo pede fugientia sacra comitantur. Tamen excepisse fugientis unus e plebe fertur Albinus, qui depositis uxore et liberis uirgines in plaustrum receipt.*

⁵⁵⁴ Pseudo-Plutarch, *Parallela Minora*, 14, has an interesting and unusual anecdote about, presumably, this Metellus: Ποινῶν καὶ Σικελιωτῶν τὴν κατὰ Ῥωμαίων συμμαχίαν ἐτοιμαζόντων, Μέτελλος στρατηγὸς μόνη τῇ Ἑστία οὐκ

especially threatened the *aedes Vestae*, and Metellus rushed in to save one or more of the sacred objects. The earliest account of Varro, preserved by St. Augustine, has already been mentioned. Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Ovid provide similar accounts. The former reports that the Vestal Virgins fled from the fire, but Metellus ran into the temple and saved the sacred things they had left behind.⁵⁵⁵ Ovid's account corresponds with this, but has more details.⁵⁵⁶ Of note is the fact that he records Metellus saved "the goddess" (*dea*), which although ambiguous, could

ἔθυσεν: ἡ δὲ πνεῦμα ἀντέπνευσε ταῖς ναυσί. Γάιος δὲ Ἰούλιος μάντις εἶπε λωφῆσαι, ἐὰν προθύσῃ τὴν θυγατέρα. ὁ δ' ἀναγκασθεὶς Μετέλλαν τὴν θυγατέρα προσῆγεν ἡ δὲ Ἑστία ἐλέησασα δάμαλιν ὑπέβαλε καὶ αὐτὴν ἐκόμισεν εἰς Λανούσιον, καὶ ἰέρειαν τοῦ σεβομένου παρ' αὐτοῖς δράκοντος ἀπέδειξεν ὡς Πυθοκλῆς ἐν τρίτῃ Ἰταλικῶν. ἐν Αὐλίδι τῆς Βοιωτίας τὰ περὶ Ἰφιγένειαν ὁμοίως ἱστορεῖ Μένυλλος ἐν πρώτῳ Βοιωτικῶν. "While the Carthaginians were treating an alliance with the Sicilians against the Romans, the Roman general Metellus was observed to omit sacrificing only to Vesta, who revenged herself upon him by sending a cross wind to the navy. But Caius Julius, a soothsayer, being consulted in the matter, gave answer, that this obstacle would be removed upon the general's sacrificing his daughter so that he was forced to produce his daughter Metella for a sacrifice. But Vesta had compassion for her, and so sent her away to Lamusium, substituting a heifer in her stead, and made a priestess of her to the dragon that is worshipped in that place.—*So Pythocles, in the Third Book of his Italian History*. Something like this happened to Iphigenia in Aulis, a city of Boeotia.—*See Meryllus, in the First Book of his Boeotic History*." Frank Cole Babbitt, trans. This passage has no known precedent that I am aware of. Why the author chose to show Metellus as specifically insulting Vesta before becoming *pontifex maximus* is uncertain. Moreover, the name of Gaius Julius cannot be a coincidence. Presumably the location was misunderstood as well; Vesta had a temple at Lavinium which reportedly included the presence of snakes.

⁵⁵⁵ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 2.66.4: ἐμπρησθέντος γὰρ τοῦ τεμένου καὶ τῶν παρθένων φευγουσῶν ἐκ τοῦ πυρός τῶν ἱεροφαντῶν τις Λεύκιος Καϊκίλιος ὁ καλούμενος Μέτελλος ἀνὴρ ὑπατικός... ὑπεριδὼν τῆς ἰδίας ἀσφαλείας τοῦ κοινῆ συμφέροντος ἔνεκα παρεκινδύνευσεν εἰς τὰ καιόμενα βιάσασθαι καὶ τὰ καταλειφθέντα ὑπὸ τῶν παρθένων ἀρπάσας ἱερὰ διέσωσεν ἐκ τοῦ πυρός: ἐφ' ᾧ τιμὰς παρὰ τῆς πόλεως ἐξηνέγκατο μεγάλας, ὡς ἡ τῆς εἰκόνας αὐτοῦ τῆς ἐν Καπιτωλίῳ κειμένης ἐπιγραφή μαρτυρεῖ. "For when the temple caught fire and the virgins fled from the flames, one of the pontiffs, Lucius Caecilius, called Metellus, a man of consular rank, the same who exhibited a hundred and thirty-eight elephants in the memorable triumph which he celebrated for his defeat of the Carthaginians in Sicily, neglecting his own safety for the sake of the public good, ventured to force his way into the burning structure, and, snatching up the holy things which the virgins had abandoned, saved them from the fire; for which he received the honours from the State, as the inscription upon his statue on the Capitol testifies."

⁵⁵⁶ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.437-454: *heu quantum timere patres, quo tempore Vesta arsit et est tectis obruta paene suis! flagrant sancti sceleratis ignibus ignes, mixtaque erat flammae flamma profana pia. attonitae flebant demisso crine ministrae: abstulerat vires corporis ipse timor, provolat in medium, et magna 'succurrite!' voce 'non est auxilium flere' Metellus ait. 'pignora virgineis fatalia tollite palmis: non ea sunt voto, sed rapienda manu. me miserum! dubitatis?' ait. dubitare videbat et pavidas posito procubuisse genu. haurit aquas tollensque manus, 'ignoscite,' dixit 'sacra! vir intrabo non adeunda viro. si scelus est, in me commissi poena redundet: sit capitis damno Roma soluta mei.' dixit et inrupit, factum dea rapta probavit pontificisque sui munere tuta fuit.* "Ah, how terrified the Fathers were when Vesta burned and was almost buried by her roof. The holy fires were blazing with the fires of sin, flame mingled with flame, pious with profane. Her dumbstruck attendants untied their hair and wept; fear itself had removed their bodies' strength. Metellus flies into their midst and in a great voice cries, 'To the rescue! Tears are no help. Take the tokens of fate in your virgin palms: you require hands, not prayers, to grasp them. O pity! Do you waver?' He saw them waver and collapse on to their knees in panic. He scoops water and lifts his hands: 'Forgive this man, Holiness: I'll go where no man may enter. If this is a crime, let me be punished for the act and Rome be absolved by my life's forfeit.' He spoke, and burst in. The abducted goddess approved, and was saved by the service of her priest." Boyle and Woodward, trans. An alternate account by Juvenal, 3.138-9, states that the objects he saved from the fire came *ex aede Vestae*.

arguably be the flame from the hearth, or possibly the Palladium.⁵⁵⁷ However, Cicero and Valerius Maximus use this word specifically when they refer to Metellus' action of rescuing the Palladium.⁵⁵⁸ Seneca the Elder in his *Controversiae* also mentions that Metellus saved the Palladium but adds the fact that in doing so he lost his sight. Seneca uses this anecdote for one of his imaginary legal cases arguing that Vesta was unjust to blind Metellus since he broke with sacred custom for good reason, and because his bodily defect would cause him to lose his priesthood.⁵⁵⁹ A similar story, possibly based on that of Seneca, is also found in pseudo-Plutarch's *Paralella Minora* wherein Ilius, king of Troy, is compared to Metellus. The temple of Minerva in Ilium caught on fire; Ilius ran in and rescued the Palladium, was struck blind for looking upon it, but later regained his sight after appeasing the gods. Likewise in Rome the temple of Vesta caught fire; Metellus ran inside and rescued the Palladium, was blinded for his efforts, but eventually was given back his sight.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁷ Dubourdieu, 490, allows that the Palladium is possible, but unlikely here due to the possessive *sui* after *pontifices* (since, the Palladium did not have its own priest). Then again, neither did Vesta (at least not before the literary references of Ovid; see discussion in Chapter 5).

⁵⁵⁸ Cicero, *Pro Scauro*, 46-49, especially 48; Valerius Maximus. 1.4.5.

⁵⁵⁹ Seneca, *Controversiae*, 4.2: *Metellus pontifex, cum arderet Veste templum, dum Palladium rapit oculos perdidit. Sacerdotium illi negatur.* Michael Winterbottom, *Seneca the Elder*, (Loeb: 1974) points out that this passage is the first example of the Metellus story that included the fact that he was blinded, arguing that it is an "invention of the declamation schools." See also Brelich, "Il Mito nella Storia di Cecilio Metello," in *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, 15 (1939): 30-41, 35, who, in analyzing the various stories compared to historical data and the other events in Metellus' life declares that the "cecità di Cecilio Metello è facile dimostrare che non è un fatto storico...". Indeed, another interesting aspect is the name "Caecilius" with its connection to the idea of blindness. Although this Metellus was not the first of his family to bear it, the connection cannot be ignored. Brelich, 36-37, determines that the name Caecilius derives from legends of the family's semi-divine ancestor, Caeculus, son of Vulcan and founder of Praenestae. The name is a derivative of *caecus*, thus the name 'Caecilius' would mean something along the line of "little blind boy." Most likely it inspired Seneca's (or any popular belief) that Metellus was blinded in the fire.

⁵⁵⁹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 2.66.4: ἐμπρησθέντος γὰρ τοῦ τεμένουσ καὶ τῶν παρθένων φευγουσῶν ἐκ τοῦ πυρός.

⁵⁶⁰ Pseudo-Plutarch, *Paralella Minora*, 17 "Ilius and Anytus": ἐν Ἰλίῳ τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἐμπρησθέντος, προσδραμῶν Ἴλος τὸ διοπετὲς ἤρπασε παλλάδιον καὶ ἐτυφλώθη οὐ γὰρ ἐξῆν ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς βλέπεσθαι ὕστερον δ' ἐξίλασάμενος ἀνέβλεπεν ὡς Δέρκυλλος ἐν πρώτῳ Κτίσεων. Ἀντύλος ἀνὴρ τῶν ἐπισήμων πορευόμενος εἰς τὸ προάστειον ὑπὸ κοράκων ἐπεσχέθη παιόντων ταῖς πτέρυξι. φοβηθεὶς δὲ τὸν οἰωνὸν εἰς Ῥώμην ὑπέστρεψεν. ἰδὼν δὲ τὸ τέμενος τῆς Ἑστίας καίόμενον καὶ τὸ παλλάδιον ἀρπάσας ἐτυφλώθη: ὕστερον δ' ἀνέβλεπεν ἐξίλασάμενος: ὡς Ἀριστείδης Μιλήσιος ἐν Ἰταλικοῖς. Winterbottom believes this version may be based on the Roman one (Seneca), and also compares the accounts to the myths concerning the blinding of Tiresias. Later sources (Augustine, *de Civitatis Dei*, 6.2; Orosius, 4.9.14-15) also mention the Metellus story, but with quite a different purpose. Augustine's remarks on the Palladium will be discussed below. One additional account from Livy, 26.27.14, records that in 210 BCE the Campanians set fire to the Forum and slaves saved sacred items from the *aedes Vestae*,

Moving into the principate, in 14 BCE a fire in the city of Rome spread to the temple of Vesta forcing the Vestal Virgins to remove the sacred objects, possibly up the Palatine to the house of the *Flamen Dialis* (priest of Jupiter).⁵⁶¹ How much damage was done to the *aedes Vestae* is unclear. Scholars often link this event to a dedication made to Vesta on the Palatine approximately two years later. Some believe that Augustus used the fire and his new position as *pontifex maximus* (after the death of Lepidus in 12 BCE) to relocate the Palladium (the other sacred objects from the *aedes Vesta* are not generally included in the arguments) to a shrine he had built for Vesta on the Palatine Hill.⁵⁶²

None of the literary sources mention a permanent removal of the Palladium, and the visual images used to support this theory are open to interpretation, especially given that they are often damaged. Vergil's *Aeneid* only mentions the Palladium in reference to its capture by Diomedes and Ulysses.⁵⁶³ Beyond this it can at most be implied where the other *sacra* and the *penates* are mentioned. Scholars interpret allusions from Ovid to fit their argument for a new cult of Vesta on the Palatine, but no definitive connection to this talisman is made in this author's works. Moreover, images such as the two comparable coins of Caesar and Augustus indicate that Augustus did not intend to make the Palladium a popular image in his propaganda since he removed this item from his version of the coin strike. In the 40s BCE at least, demonstrating his filial *pietas* was more important than any symbolic meaning the Palladium might bring.⁵⁶⁴

although the Palladium is not specifically mentioned. Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae*, 42.31.3, also mention that the Vestals were forced to leave Vesta's temple with the *sacra* while Marc Antony was in charge of the city of Rome while Caesar chased Pompey and was in Egypt, but, to my knowledge, he is the only author to mention this event: ὥστε καὶ τὰ ἱερά ποτε ἐκ τοῦ Ἑστιαίου ὑπὸ τῶν ἀειπαρθένων ἐκκομισθῆναι.

⁵⁶¹ Dio Cassius, 54.24.2-3: ἢ τε στοὰ ἢ Παύλειος ἐκαύθη, καὶ τὸ πῦρ ἀπ' αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸ Ἑστιαῖον ἀφίκετο, ὥστε καὶ τὰ ἱερά ἐξ τε τοῦ Παλάτιου ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων ἀειπαρθένων ἢ γὰρ πρεσβεύουσα αὐτῶν ἐτετύφλωτό ἀνακομισθῆναι καὶ ἐς τὴν τοῦ ἱερέως τοῦ Διὸς οἰκίαν τεθῆναι.

⁵⁶² For more on these events, their significance, the primary sources and the secondary scholarship, see chapter 1.

⁵⁶³ Vergil, *Aeneid*, 2.166.

⁵⁶⁴ *BMCR* 2: 469 no. 1, states the coin was minted in 48 (not long after the battle of Pharsalus). Crawford, *RRC* dates it to 47/46. Cf. S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 253. The Trojan claims of the Iulii can of course be documented earlier, cf. N. Horsfall, "Enea: la leggenda di Enea," in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*,

Indeed, Assenmaker believes that the “traditional” version of the capture of the Palladium by Diomedes and Ulysses remained the most popular during the Augustan period, and that the circumstances by which the Palladium arrived in Italy and from there to Rome are generally left in silence during the Augustan period.⁵⁶⁵

Although it seems fairly certain that Augustus built an altar or shrine (or both) to Vesta on the Palatine, I do not support the idea that the Palladium was permanently relocated here. In addition to the absence of any convincing primary evidence, many further objections to doing so can be put forward. First, someone surely would have recorded such a significant act. Next, to take away one of Rome’s most holy objects from a patron deity and her sacred priestesses seems a bold move, and one that posed more potential risk of public reprisal than any good that could be gained from Augustus having it with him on the Palatine. Moreover, compared to the sacred and forbidden *penus Vestae* it seems unlikely that a shrine would be considered secure enough to guard this talisman—even if it were located in sight of the emperor and *pontifex maximus* himself.

It is uncertain what next happened to the Palladium after the fire of 14 BCE. Although this fact is not mentioned in the literary sources, I argue that the statue would have been returned along with the other *sacra* to the *aedes Vestae* after the reconstruction of the temple was complete, probably in or around 12 BCE. There the sacred objects should have remained until the Great Fire of 64 CE that ravaged much of the city of Rome, including the *Regia* and the *aedes Vestae*.⁵⁶⁶ There is no mention of what happened to the Vestals or the *pignora* during this time. Due to their religious significance these buildings should have been among the first to be

vol 2, F. della Corte, ed. (Rome, 1985):221-229, esp. 227-9; opt. cit. Pierre Assenmaker, “La Place du Palladium dans l’idéologie Augustéenne: entre Mythologie, religion et politique,” *Storia della Religioni e Archeologia*, Igor Baglioni, ed. (Rome: Alpes Itlaia, 2010):35-64, 41-2.

⁵⁶⁵ Assenmaker, “Place,” 60.

⁵⁶⁶ Tacitus, *Annales*, 15.41.1: *Numaque regia et delubrum Vestae cum Penatibus populi Romani exusta.*

rebuilt, but again the sources fail to provide any details. Moreover, after the fire Nero was preoccupied with building his new palatial complex, the *Domus Aurea*, and there is no indication that he showed any particular attention to Vesta and her cult.

The next reference to the Palladium falls in the reign of Commodus. Herodian writes of another fire which also did great damage to the city during the rule of this *princeps*.

When the temple of Vesta went up in flames, the image of Pallas Athena was exposed to public view - that statue which the Romans worship and keep hidden, the one brought from Troy, as the story goes. Now, for the first time since its journey from Troy to Italy, the statue was seen by men of our time. For the Vestal Virgins snatched up the image and carried it along the Sacred Way to the imperial palace.⁵⁶⁷

Unfortunately, Herodian's is the only account of these events. He fails to mention where in the imperial palace the Palladium was kept or when it was returned to the *aedes Vesta*, although this presumably happened upon completion of the rebuilding of the temple.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus ("Elagabalus") reportedly committed many outrages against traditional Roman religion and the Vestal Virgins, including the transfer of the Palladium away from their care. He established a cult of the god Elagabal (assimilated with the god Sol Invictus) complete with a Palatine temple near the imperial palace, and declared him the only deity that could be worshipped by the Romans. The author of the *Vita Antonini Heliogabali* claims that Elagabalus intended to transfer the emblem of the Great Mother, the fire of Vesta, the Palladium, the shields of the *Salii* and all the objects the Romans held sacred (*omnia Romanis ueneranda*) to the temple of his god.⁵⁶⁸ The latter phrase is likely an allusion to the other *sacra* believed to be housed in the temple of Vesta.

⁵⁶⁷ Herodian, 1.14.4-5. Edward C. Echols, trans., *Herodian of Antioch's History of the Roman Empire*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961).

⁵⁶⁸ Historia Augusta, *Vita Antonini Heliogabali*, 3.4. Cf. *ibid* 6.6-7.1; Michael Lipka, *Roman Gods: A Conceptual Approach*, (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 20-1, believes that "The god [Elagabal] was redesigned by the emperor, as it were, in order to embrace and eventually subdue Roman polytheism in its entirety."

The decision to remove the fire of Vesta and all the sacred objects to the temple of Elagabal demonstrates the emperor's intent to replace Vesta with his own god. This would have been shocking to most Romans, not to mention a severe insult to the Vestals. This was compounded by the fact that Elagabalus married one of the Vestal Virgins, Aquilia Severa. His appropriation of these items and also the person of one of Vesta's priestesses would have given this emperor and his preferred god possession over all of the guarantees of the Roman state.⁵⁶⁹ This same source also states, however, that Elagabalus did not fully succeed in his plan on account of the cunning of the *virgo Vestalis maxima*.

He also attempted to carry away the sacred shrine [the Palladium], but instead of the true one he seized only an earthenware one, which the Senior Vestal had shown him in an attempt to deceive him, and when he found nothing in it, he threw it down and broke it. The cult, however, did not suffer at his hands, for several shrines had been made, it is said, exactly like the true one, in order that none might ever be able to take this one away. Though this be so, he nevertheless carried away the image which he believed to be the Palladium, and after washing it over with gold he placed it in the temple of his god.⁵⁷⁰

The author of the *Historia Augusta* likely drew some of his information about the inner workings of the temple from Plutarch's *Camillus*, which records that two earthenware vessels, one full and one empty, were kept inside the temple.⁵⁷¹ Presumably the Vestals, or at least in this case the chief priestess, knew which container held the sacred objects and which one was a copy.

⁵⁶⁹ Cassius Dio, 80.9.3-4: ὁ μηδεπώποτε ἀθρόον ἐγγένοι. εἶτα τὴν Παῦλαν ὡς καὶ κηλῖδά τινα περὶ τὸ σῶμα ἔχουσαν ἀποπέμψας Ἀκυλία Σεουήρα συνώκησεν, ἐκφανεστάτα παρανομήσας: ἱερωμένην γὰρ αὐτὴν τῇ Ἑστία ἀσεβέστατα ἤσχυεν. ἐτόλμησε δὲ καὶ εἰπεῖν ὅτι 'ἵνα δὴ καὶ θεοπρεπεῖς παῖδες ἕκ τε ἐμοῦ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως ἕκ τε ταύτης τῆς ἀρχιερείας γεννῶνται, τοῦτ' ἐποίησα.' καὶ ἐφ' οἷς αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ αἰκισθέντα εἶτα ἐς τὸ δεσμοτήριον ἐμβληθῆναι κἀνταῦθα θανατωθῆναι ἔδει, ἐπὶ τούτοις ἐκαλλωπίζετο. καὶ οὐδ' ἐκείνην μέντοι ἐπὶ πολὺ κατέσχευ, ἀλλὰ ἐτέραν, εἴθ' ἐτέραν καὶ μάλα ἄλλην ἔγημε, καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο πρὸς τὴν Σεουήραν ἐπανήλθεν.

⁵⁷⁰ *Historia Augusta, vita Heliogabali*, 6.8-9: *et penetrale sacrum est auferre conatus cumque seriam quasi veram rapuisset, quam ei virgo maxima falsam monstraverat, atque in ea nihil reperisset, adplosam fregit. nec tamen quicquam religioni dempsit, quia plures similes factae dicuntur esse, ne quis veram umquam possit auferre. haec cum ita essent, signum tamen quod Palladium esse credebat abstulit et auro tinctum in sui dei templo locavit.* David Magie, trans.

⁵⁷¹ Plutarch, *Camillus*, 20.3-6. It is also unclear who and how much access the Vestals and the *pontifex maximus* had to all parts of the *penus Vestae*. Pellegrino, 507-8, provides an overview of the primary and secondary scholarship, concluding that the *penus* was in fact divided into two parts, exterior and interior, and only the Vestal Virgin *maxima* would have been allowed access to the interior.

Another version of the story by Herodian states that Elagabalus removed the Palladium not to the temple of his god, but rather to his own bedchamber.

Not content with making a mockery of human marriage, he even sought a wife for the god whose priest he was. He brought into his own bedroom the statue of Pallas which the Romans worship hidden and unseen. Even though this statue had not been moved from the time when it was first brought from Troy, except when the temple of Vesta was destroyed by fire, Heliogabalus moved it now and brought it into the palace to be married to his god.⁵⁷²

There are two interesting things to note in this passage. The first is the choice, either made by Elagabalus and recorded by the author or fabricated by the latter for his own purposes, to remove the Palladium specifically to the emperor's bedchamber. Regardless of whether it went to the temple of Elagabal or to the emperor's own home, the intention clearly was to paint Elagabalus in an unfavorable light. Still, to specifically relate that the Palladium was taken to the emperor's bedroom is a significant decision on many levels. It indicates that in removing Rome's most sacred objects from their traditional dwellings Elagabalus's intention was not to honor his new god since they (or at least the Palladium) never made it to the new temple of Elagabal. Secondly, the report of a transfer of one of Rome's most sacred objects not to another religious space but rather to his bedchamber, a room potentially associated with lewdness, would underline the depravity and irreligiousness of this emperor. This also leads to another important aspect, Aquilia Severa, the Vestal Virgin who was briefly married to the emperor. She too was symbolically "removed" from the temple of Vesta and "relocated" to Elagabalus's bedchamber.

The second half of Herodian's account is also noteworthy since it indicates that the Palladium had only ever left the care of the Vestals when the temple was destroyed by fire. This ignores two potential, earlier examples. The first is the sack of Rome by the Gauls in the 390s

⁵⁷² Herodian, 5.6.3: ἔπαιζε δὲ γάμους οὐ μόνον ἀνθρωπεύουσ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ θεῷ, ὃ ἱεράτευε, γυναῖκα ἐζήτει. καὶ τῆς τε Παλλάδος τὸ ἄγαλμα, ὃ κρυπτὸν καὶ ἀόρατον σέβουσι Ῥωμαῖοι, ἐς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ θάλαμον μετήγαγε. καὶ μὴ κινήθην ἐξ οὐπερ ἦλθεν ἀπὸ Ἰλίου, εἰ μὴ ὅτε πυρὶ κατεφλέχθη ὁ νεῶς, ἐκίνησεν οὗτος, καὶ πρὸς γάμον δὴ ἐς τὴν βασιλείον αὐλὴν τῷ θεῷ ἀνήγαγε. Echols trans.

BCE when the Vestals were said to have fled the city with all the sacred objects (an event that the Romans would have preferred to forget).⁵⁷³ The other is the alleged transfer of the Palladium to Augustus's palatine residence in 14/12 BCE. Although the initial removal of the Palladium in the latter incident was due to fire and thus fits Herodian's criteria, this passage would indicate the relocation was only temporary and that Augustus never intended to move the Palladium there on a permanent basis.

The veracity of these two accounts must also be questioned. Elagabalus in his role as *pontifex maximus* had every right to enter the temple of Vesta. Beyond this his actions should have enraged the people, just as it seems to have angered the authors who document it. Moreover, while it is indicated that Elagabalus intended to take away Vesta's fire as well, there is no indication that he followed through or succeeded in doing so. However, overall disapproval of the emperor may have led these authors to exaggerate in order to persuade their audience. One sure way of doing so would be to accuse Elagabalus of acts such as these, and his marriage to Aquilia Severa would have assisted in their acceptance.

The Palladium, Constantine, and "New Rome"

The Palladium is not mentioned again until the reign of Constantine. Popular legend reports that this emperor removed the Palladium from Rome and transported it to his new, eponymous city, Constantinople. The problem with these accounts is that they are all quite late; there is no mention of this act from any source, the earliest reference occurring approximately 200 years later. Given the discrepancy between when Constantine could have moved the Palladium, and the dates when the legends attributing the move to him were written, several

⁵⁷³ Livy, 5.41. Although some objects are said to have been buried and left in the city. Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.365-6, mentions only the *pignora*: *vidimus Iliacae transferri pignora Vestae sede*.

scholars have attempted to analyze the reports in order to “prove” whether this happened or not. I will provide the main sources and arguments on this matter, including my own opinion that the legend is entirely fictitious. For my purposes, however, I am more concerned about why later authors would claim that Constantine had moved the talisman, and what “evidence” they used to prove that the Byzantines did in fact possess the Palladium.

The symbolism in removing the Palladium from Rome to Constantinople would have been significant for both cities. Such an act would have been unprecedented and should have caused great fear among the pagans living in the city of Rome—they were now vulnerable for the first time in centuries. Beyond this, it would be expected that they should feel considerable outrage, yet not one word of comment or censure crossed the pen of any source. As emperor and *pontifex maximus* Constantine would have had every right to enter the temple of Vesta, although there is no indication that he ever did so. It could also be argued that he had no right to remove an object protected by Vesta, but Herodian and the *Historia Augusta* both claimed that Elagabalus had done so (or at least attempted to), thus a definite precedent for the act existed. The unprecedented aspect was the permanent removal of the Palladium from Rome’s city walls. True adherents to the power of the Palladium and traditional Roman religion should have taken such an act as the precursor to the fall of Rome. For Constantinople, the new capital would receive all the powers associated with the Palladium, especially its “talismanic authority”, or the idea that the city would endure as long as it possessed the ancient statue.⁵⁷⁴ It would also lend authority to Constantinople as the official seat of Rome’s emperor who was still also *pontifex*

⁵⁷⁴ Elizabeth Jeffreys, “Malalas’ world view,” in *Studies in John Malalas*, Elizabeth Jeffreys, ed. with Brian Croke and Roger Scott, Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, *Buzantina Australiensia* 6 (Sydney, 1990): 55-66, 58-9.

maximus. Indeed, it would only be natural for “New Rome” to “inherit” one of the most sacred objects from her mother city.⁵⁷⁵

Depending on one’s interpretation, the argument can be made that the city of Rome had fallen—and to Constantine—with his defeat of Maxentius in 312 CE at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Although Constantine visited the city at this time, there is no record that he entered the *aedes Vestae* or that he made any of the customary religious (pagan) sacrifices.⁵⁷⁶ Constantine’s second trip to the city of Rome did not occur until July 14, 326 CE (the *vicennalia* of his rule), and by all accounts the visit did not go well. Disagreements with the Senate prevented him from ascending to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and he was denied purification by the *flamines*, ostensibly for killing his son Crispus and wife Faustina that same year.⁵⁷⁷ Another interpretation of the events told by Zosimus (but originally from Eunapius of Sardis) claims that Constantine refused to ascend the Capitol for a state festival, thus causing a breach between the emperor and the city.⁵⁷⁸ After these proceedings the emperor could not have been well pleased with the pagan aristocracy in Rome, and he never again returned. In this light removing the Palladium could be interpreted as an act of dominance over the city. However, it seems unlikely that this would have been Constantine’s primary or sole reason.

There is also a possible psychological component to the sixth century and later reports that the Palladium had been moved to Constantinople by Constantine. To the Byzantine mind, the fact that they had the talisman could explain why the city of Rome fell and they endured.

⁵⁷⁵ According to Gilbert Dagron, *Naissance d’une Capitale : Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), 30, this act was “une manière d’insister sur la romanité de la ville, d’associer les destinées de la nouvelle Rome a celles de l’ancienne.”

⁵⁷⁶ John R. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 169.

⁵⁷⁷ Lellia Cracco Ruggini, “Vezzio Agorio Pretestato e la fondazione sacra di Constantinopos,” *Miscellanea di studi classici in onore de Eugenio Manni*, vol 2 (1979): 595-610, 607-610.

⁵⁷⁸ Zosimus, *Historia Nova*, 2.29.1-5.

Moreover, they owed their preservation to the forethought of the re-founder of their city.⁵⁷⁹ However, it is likely incorrect, as it has been proposed in the past, to see the removal of the Palladium as some kind of rivalry between the city of Rome and Constantinople, especially considering the majority of such accounts come from the sixth century or after.⁵⁸⁰ Rather, it is probably more indicative of a transfer of power (*translatio imperii*) from one city to the other; by the sixth century the city of Rome had fallen, but the Roman Empire continued but with a new capital city, Constantinople.⁵⁸¹

In the discussion of any possible removal of the Palladium by Constantine to the “New Rome”, several additional aspects should be considered. While Constantine typically did not promote pagan practices within the city, he did not eradicate them either. In Constantinople, the Palladium was allegedly placed in the sanctuary below the Porphyry Column (aka the Column of Constantine) located in the Forum of Constantine, which was approximately in the center of the city. However, the sources indicate that this building contained only Christian objects, with the exception of the Palladium. The only other pagan element was the statue atop the column, which originally was an image of Apollo but was refashioned to represent the emperor. Surely the location of the Palladium in the Column of Constantine was chosen with care (either by the emperor himself or by the later authors), but generally it would seem more logical for a sacred pagan object to be placed in a pagan temple or religious space, preferably one that honored or had some ties to either Pallas or Vesta. Thus the choice of the column as the location of the Palladium was also significant. There in the center of the “New Rome” the talisman could be seen to be under the protection of Constantine, who served as its guardian. And, by extension,

⁵⁷⁹ Opt. cit. Averil Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire, AD 284-430*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 170.

⁵⁸⁰ Clifford Ando, “The Palladium and the Pentateuch: Towards a Sacred Topography of the Later Roman Empire,” *Phoenix* 55, no. 3-4 (2001): 369-410.

⁵⁸¹ Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 610.

he could still be seen as the protector of the Roman Empire; after all he was emperor, *pontifex maximus*, and now custodian of the Palladium.

Literary evidence, the construction of Constantinople, and possible meaning

References to the Palladium dating from the fourth century CE are few, and the earliest source attesting to the removal of the Palladium belongs to the sixth century.⁵⁸² Augustine refers to the Palladium in each of the first three books of his *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos*. Not surprisingly, he does his best to minimize the power of the talisman. In book one he states that “the statue does not protect men, but men protect the statue,” and that Troy fell to the Greeks because the Palladium had no real power.⁵⁸³ The Palladium also makes two appearances in book three. Augustine, following an account of Livy, mentions the statue of Minerva standing intact among the ruins of Troy after the attack of Fimbria and questions the sagacity of Rome taking in the gods of Ilium considering the misfortunes this city experienced.⁵⁸⁴ He also discusses a time of crisis in the city when floods and a fire plagued the city, commenting on the impotence of the Vestal Virgins to prevent or stop them; and that although Metellus ran into the *aedes Vestae* to

⁵⁸² One possible inscription dating to the years between 357 and 370 CE references a person with the title *praeposito Palladii Palatini* (CIL X 6441). However, unlike the few scholars who mention this inscription, I am not convinced that it directly relates to the Palladium statue and therefore cannot be used as proof that it was still in Rome. See: A. Degrassi, “Esistette sul palatino un tempio di Vesta?,” *RM* 62 (1955): 144-54, especially 149-151, identifies the inscription as referring to Elagabalus’ transfer of the Palladium to his Palatine temple of Sol; Rosanna Cappelli, “Augusto e il culto di Vesta sul Palatino,” *Bollettino di Archeologia*, 2, (1990): 29-33; 345.

⁵⁸³ Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, 1.2: *Tot bella gesta conscripta sunt uel ante conditam Romam uel ab eius exortu et imperio: legant et proferant sic aut ab alienigenis aliquam captam esse ciuitatem, ut hostes, qui ceperant, parcerent eis, quos ad deorum suorum templa confugisse compererant, aut aliquem ducem barbarorum praecepisse, ut inrupto oppido nullus feriretur, qui in illo uel illo templo fuisset inuentus. Nonne uidit Aeneas Priamum per aras Sanguine foedantem quos ipse sacrauerat ignes? Nonne Diomedes et Vlixes caesis summae custodibus arcis Corripuere sacram effigiem manibusque cruentis Virgineas ausi diuae contingere uitas? Nec tamen quod sequitur uerum est: Ex illo fluere ac retro sublapsa ferri Spes Danaum. Postea quippe uicerunt, postea Troiam ferro ignibusque deleuerunt, postea confugientem ad aras Priamum obrunauerunt. Nec ideo Troia periit, quia Mineruam perdidit. Quid enim prius ipsa Minerua perdidit, ut periret? an forte custodes suos? Hoc sane uerum est; illis quippe interemptis potuit auferri. Neque enim homines a simulacro, sed simulacrum ab hominibus seruabatur. Quomodo ergo colebatur, ut patriam custodiret et ciues, quae suos non ualuit custodire custodes?* Cf. Firmicus Maternus, *de errore profanarum religionum*, 15.3, who first argued that the Palladium was saved by men and not as a result of its own powers.

⁵⁸⁴ Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, 3.7-8.

save the *sacra*, these object had no power to help men.⁵⁸⁵ However, Augustine never mentions anything in connection with the alleged transfer of the statue from Rome to Constantinople, nor should we expect him to even if he had heard such a rumor. The Palladium was, after all, a famous pagan talisman and it is unlikely that he would give any indication that people still believed in its power, or that it was considered important enough to be sent to the new eastern capital of the Roman Empire.⁵⁸⁶ Moreover, Prudentius (late fourth or early fifth century) in his *contra Symmachus* states: *Sic Vesta est, sic Palladium, sic umbra Penatum* (“Thus we have Vesta and the Palladium and the image of the penates”), which suggests that the Palladium was still in Rome with Vesta and the *penates*.⁵⁸⁷

Another source worthy of consideration is the *Life of Elagabalus* in the *Historia Augusta*. Fowden reads many parts of this work as a veiled joke and attack of Constantine. He comes to this conclusion by comparing events in the *Life of Elagabalus* to facts from the life of Constantine. For example, “Like Constantine, Elagabalus refused to ascent the Capitol and to

⁵⁸⁵ Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, 3.18: *Nec mala illo tempore grauissima intra moenia defuerunt. Nam exundante nimis ultra morem fluuio Tiberino paene omnia urbis plana subuersa sunt, aliis impetu quasi torrentis impulsis, aliis uelut stagno diurno madefactis atque sublapsis. Istam deinde pestem ignis perniciosior subsecutus est, qui correptis circa forum quibusque celsioribus etiam templo Vestae suo familiarissimo non pepercit, ubi ei ueluti uitam perpetuam diligentissima substitutione lignorum non tam honoratae quam damnatae uirgines donare consuerant. Tunc uero illic ignis non tantum uiuebat; sed etiam saeuiebat. Cuius impetu exterritae uirgines sacra illa fatalia, quae iam tres, in quibus fuerant, presserant ciuitates, cum ab illo incendio liberare non possent, Metullus pontifex suae quodam modo salutis oblitus inruens ea semiustus abripuit. Neque enim uel ipsum ignis agnouit, aut uero erat ibi numen, quod non etiam, si fuisset, fugisset. Homo igitur potius sacris Vestae quam illa homini prodesse potuerunt. Si autem a se ipsis ignem non repellebant, ciuitatem, cuius salutem tueri putabantur, quid contra illas aquas flammisque poterant adiuuare? sicut etiam res ipsa nihil ea prorsus potuisse patefecit. Haec istis nequaquam obicerentur a nobis, si illa sacra dicerent non tuendis his bonis temporalibus instituta, sed significandis aeternis, et ideo, cum ea, quod corporalia uisibiliaque essent, perire contingeret, nihil his rebus minui, propter quas fuerant instituta, et posse ad eosdem usus denuo reparari. Nunc uero caecitae mirabili eis sacris, quae perire possent, fieri potuisse existimant, ut salus terrena et temporalis felicitas ciuitatis perire non posset. Proinde cum illis etiam manentibus sacris uel salutis contritio uel infelicitas inruisse monstratur, mutare sententiam, quam defendere nequeunt, erubescunt.*

⁵⁸⁶ Moret, 290, sees these references as “proue que saint Augustin n’en sous-estimait pas la puissance idéologique [du Palladium].”

⁵⁸⁷ Prudentius, *contra Symmachus*, 1.195. Cf. *ibid* 2.965-7: *His, ni fallor, ager ritiis corruptus et ante / subiacuit, quam Palladium, quam Vesta Penates / sub lare Pergameo seruarent igne reposto*; Prudentius, *Peristephanos*, 2.509-12: *Mors illa sancti martyris / mors vera templorum fuit, / tunc Vesta Palladios lares / impune sensit deseri*. “That day Vesta saw her Palladian house-spirits deserted and no vengeance follow,” H. J. Thomson, trans.

perform customary ceremonies, in his case those connected with his assumption of the consulate in 222.”⁵⁸⁸ Another point of similarity between the two emperors includes the preference of each for one particular god, and the confiscation of sacred objects belonging to other deities.⁵⁸⁹ Also comparable are Constantine’s Porphyry column and Elagabalus’ proposal to erect a column of large size in Rome; if meant to provide a real comparison, the *Life of Elagabalus* would be the most accurate, and one of the earliest literary allusions to Constantine’s column.⁵⁹⁰ But for the purpose of this chapter, Fowden’s most striking argument is his comparison between the two emperors and their respective relationships with the Palladium (and, by extension, the cult of Vesta). The *Historia Augusta* claims that Elagabalus removed the Palladium from the *penus Vestae* and placed it in a temple he had built for his preferred god on the Palatine.⁵⁹¹ In like fashion Fowden reads the account of Elagabalus and the Palladium as indicative of the fact that Constantine had done the same: “...there is every reason to suppose that this particular Constantine joke was not just Roman salon-chat or literary invention, but authentically echoed the attitudes of Constantinople’s ordinary citizens.”⁵⁹² Fowden’s theory is an interesting one, but given the lack of any other source contemporary with Constantine that mentions the removal of the Palladium it is not one that can be easily proven.

Procopius (sixth century CE) also contributes to the debate over the location of the Palladium, and is the first source to suggest that it was in Constantinople:

⁵⁸⁸ Fowden, “Constantine’s Porphyry Column: The Earliest Literary Allusion,” *JRS* 81 (1991): 119-31, 120-1. Cf. *Historia Augusta, Vita Antonini Heliogabali*, 15.7; Zosimus, 2.29.5 with Paschoud’s note.

⁵⁸⁹ *Historia Augusta, Vita Antonini Heliogabali*, 3.4, and 6.7-7.5; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, 3.54. Constantine is known to have raided the temples and sanctuaries of pagan gods to pay for and adorn Constantinople. The point concerning his preference for one god is trickier. If this is read as Constantine showing favoritism to the “Sun god” (either Apollo or Sol Invictus), the comparison to Elagabalus and his preference for the sun god Elgabal becomes stronger.

⁵⁹⁰ Fowden, 131. Cf. *Historia Augusta, Vita Antonini Heliogabali*, 24.7.

⁵⁹¹ *Historia Augusta, Vita Antonini Heliogabali*, 3.4 and 6.9.

⁵⁹² Fowden, 131.

And as to where in the world the statue itself is, the Romans say they do not know, but even up to my time they shew a copy of it chiseled on a certain stone in the temple of Fortune, where it lies before the bronze statue of Athena, which is set up under the open sky in the eastern part of the temple. And this copy on the stone represents a female figure in the pose of a warrior and extending her spear as if for combat; but in spite of this she has a chiton reaching to the feet. But the face does not resemble the Greek statues of Athena, but is altogether like the work of the ancient Aegyptians. ***The Byzantines, however, say that the Emperor Constantine dug up this statue in the forum which bears his name and set it there.***⁵⁹³

Although lacking in detail, the idea that Constantine moved the Palladium to Constantinople is clear. However, the location of the temple and bronze statue of Athena to which Procopius refers is not. It is possible that he means the Temple of Fortuna Primigenia at Praenestae, which was located not far from Rome.

While this passage from Procopius does not appear to be metaphorical, an attempt at analysis may be worthwhile. The “Fortune” could reference the bad luck that the city of Rome has experienced since they lost the Palladium (for example the sack of the city by the Goths in 410 CE), and the (at least comparatively) good luck Constantinople has had. It could also indicate the luck “Tyche” of Constantinople, often characterized as a tutelary deity, which was represented in the Forum of Constantine. An image of this tyche may have been on the stone base of the Porphyry Column, and the fact that the base depicted a female figure in the pose of a warrior with spear brings to mind descriptions of the Palladium. The reference to Egypt could also indicate the marble porphyry drums used to support the statue that came only from this area. Thus, Cracco-Ruggini believes Procopius’ real intention may have been to convince the Byzantines that the statue was authentic and that it was located in the Forum of Constantine in

⁵⁹³ Procopius, *de bello Gothica*, 5.15.11-14: Βυζάντιοι δέ φασι τὸ ἄγαλμα τοῦτο Κωνσταντῖνον βασιλέα ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ, ἣ αὐτοῦ ἐπώνυμός ἐστι, κατορύξαντα θέσθαι. H. B. Dewing, trans.

Constantinople since, although given as a certainty in patriographic writing, it was evidently a belief not shared by all of the people.⁵⁹⁴

The *Chonichon Paschale* is an anonymous chronicle from the early 7th century. It addresses several topics relevant to the present discussion including the foundation of Constantinople, the Forum and Column (including the statue) inside, and Constantine's removal of the Palladium from Rome.

He renewed the first wall of the city of Byzas, and after making considerable extensions also to the same wall he joined them to the ancient wall of the city and named it Constantinople...And he also built a Forum which was large and exceedingly fine; and he set in the middle a great porphyry column of Theban stone, worthy of admiration, and he set on top of the same column a great statue of himself with rays of light on his head, a work in bronze which he had brought from Phrygia. The same emperor Constantine secretly took away from Rome the Palladium, as it is called, and placed it in the Forum built by him, beneath the column of his monument, as certain of the Byzantines say who have heard it by tradition.⁵⁹⁵

Thus, although the Easter Chronicle presents the location of the Palladium under the Column of Constantine as a fact, the last phrase also indicates that this is the traditional belief of the Byzantines of the time. For how long the people had accepted this story as fact is unknown.

Other accounts mention how and why the location of the emperor's new city was chosen, as well as the significance of the Forum of Constantine and the Porphyry Column. They indicate that Constantine chose his seat in the East with great care, considering more that one location in the region. One report by Sozomen states that he wished to found his city on the plains of Ilium.⁵⁹⁶ Another, written by Cedrenus, states that Constantine strongly considered Thessalonica and spent two years there building and beautifying the city; however he then moved on to Chalcedon (near Chrysopolis) and began efforts at this site until such time that eagles carried off

⁵⁹⁴ Cracco-Ruggini, "Costantino e il Palladio," in *Roma Costantinopoli Mosca*, (Napoli 1983): 241-251, 251.

⁵⁹⁵ *Chronicon Paschale*, Bonn p. 528; Whitby and Whitby (1989), trans.

⁵⁹⁶ Sozomen, 2.3.2.

the foundation stones, dropping them at Byzantium.⁵⁹⁷ Similarly Zonaras states that the emperor first began his efforts at Serdica, then at Sigeum, and then Chalcedon, and he likewise includes the story of the eagles.⁵⁹⁸ Then there is also the belief that Constantine intended to rebuild Troy itself.⁵⁹⁹

The location that he ultimately selected was the old city of Byzantium, not too far removed from the site of the ancient city of Troy. Byzantium was originally founded as a Greek colony in the seventh century BCE. Legend states that this was done by Byzas from Megara who named the city Byzantion after himself (Byzantium being the Latinized version of this name). The mere location of Constantinople would seem to support the idea that the Palladium was moved by Constantine. It was also located near enough to the long-ago destroyed city of Troy, hometown of the Palladium, for people to associate the two cities. Moreover, at least one source, Malalas, states that the bronze statue on top of the Porphyry Column was “brought from where it had stood in Ilium, a city of Phrygia.”⁶⁰⁰ Despite the possible practical advantages to reusing this statue that was already fashioned to look like Apollo and was located relatively close, the symbolism that it would carry having come from Ilium should not be ignored. Accordingly, just as the city of Rome was the “new Troy” and a daughter city of Troy, Constantinople was the “new Rome” or another daughter (or even granddaughter) city. However, Alföldi studied the dates and the proposed sites for the new city and concluded that all of these discussions were “pure fantasy” and that “These legendary connections with Troy illustrate the effort made by leading circles in Constantinople to appropriate the ancestor of

⁵⁹⁷ Credenius, 495.22-496.17.

⁵⁹⁸ Zonaras, 13.3.

⁵⁹⁹ Zosimus 2.30.1; Sozomen, 2.3.2. For discussion of possible sites and potential Constantinian remains reported in the area at various times, see J. M. Cook, *The Troad: an Archaeological and Topographical Study*, (Clarendon Press, 1973), 158-9. The various accounts are well summarized by F. G. B. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*, (London, 1977), 53-4.

⁶⁰⁰ Malalas, 13.5.

Rome—Ilium—so that their city should seem more ancient, more noble, and more eternal than the original Rome.”⁶⁰¹ To this end, the stories served their purpose. As Ando aptly points out, “In the ancient Mediterranean, a city without a past was no city at all.”⁶⁰²

In addition to the symbolic connections with Troy, Byzantium was also significantly located near and the site of Constantine’s victories over Licinius at Adrianople (July 3, 324 CE) and Chrysopolis (September 18, 324), leading scholars to believe that this city was chosen as a sort of memorial.⁶⁰³ Moreover, it seems likely that some redevelopment of Constantinople occurred prior to 324 CE, possibly during the tenure of Licinius and even at his instigation.⁶⁰⁴ It is uncertain how much he had accomplished at the time of his death, but it is possible that Constantine was able to take over the project of his former co-ruler. Constantine referred to the city as the “New Rome”, but it quickly became known as the “City of Constantine.”⁶⁰⁵

Despite the symbolic nature of the choice of this location by Constantine, it was also a very practical one. It does not seem that Constantine’s purpose in building a new city was to replace Rome, or to deprive the capital of its prestige and status.⁶⁰⁶ Byzantium was closer than Rome to the army and the problematic Danube and Euphrates frontiers. It was also situated nearer to the major recruiting grounds for the Roman army at that time, the provinces of Thrace,

⁶⁰¹ A. Alföldi, “On the Foundation of Constantinople: A Few Notes,” *JRS* 37 (1947): 10-16, 11.

⁶⁰² Clifford Ando, *The Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 187.

⁶⁰³ *Origo Constantini Imperatoris* (Anonymous Valesianus D), 29-30: *Constantinus autem ex se Byzantium Constantinopolim nuncupavit ob insignis victoriae [memoriam]*. Cf. Paul Stephenson, *Constantine: Roman Emperor, Christian Victor*, (New York: The Overlook Press, 2009), 192.

⁶⁰⁴ Albrecht Berger, “Streets and Public Spaces in Constantinople,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 54 (2000): 161-172.

⁶⁰⁵ The earliest reference is Optatianus Porfirius, 4.6: *altera Roma*, and 18.33-34; Augustine, *de Civitatis Dei*, 5.25; Bordeaux Pilgrim, in P. L. Migne, 8 col. 738 et seq.; Eusebius, *vita Constantini*, 4.58; Eutropius, 10.8; Julian, *Orations*, 1.8b; Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1.16; Sozomen, 2.2-3; Themistius, *Orations*, 3.41c-42b. Cf. Ducange, *Hystoria Byzantia Constantinopolis Christiana*, I, 6.30; Dagron, 43-7; S. Calderone, “Costantinopoli: la ‘seconda Roma’,” in *Storia di Roma*, vol. 3 part 1, A. Momigliano and A. Schiavone, eds. (Turin, 1993): 723-49.

⁶⁰⁶ Alföldi, “Foundation,” 12. However a rivalry soon occurred. See: Ando, *The Matter of the Gods*, 158-60, for an overview of this discussion.

Macedonia, Illyrica and Dalmatia.⁶⁰⁷ The city was also at “a nodal point on the map of the Empire, linking north and south, east and west” through a series of roads in every direction that made it a prime location for communication by land and sea.⁶⁰⁸ The city was also easily defensible. Byzantium was surrounded by water on three sides, and on the fourth side it was protected on land by a series of hills.

Various dates between the years of 324 and 330 CE have been proposed for the different milestones for the re-founding and dedication of the city of Byzantium as the “New Rome”. In 324 Constantine officially decided to refound the city and the *inauguratio* may have occurred that same year on 8 November.⁶⁰⁹ The *Chronicon Paschale* indicates that 328 was a year of major construction within the city, including the renewal of the city walls.⁶¹⁰ This is also the most likely year for the *limitatio* ritual (essentially an *inauguratio* ceremony) which defined the new *pomerium* of Constantinople. During the latter rite, privileges were most likely bestowed on the city, probably including the grant of *ius Italicum*. Moreover, according to the Easter Chronicle this was the year that the statue of Constantine was erected in the forum of the city and the Palladium was placed beneath it.⁶¹¹ Constantine presided at the dedication ceremony on 11 May, 330, which became the “birthday” of the city. It received its name as the “Second Rome,”

⁶⁰⁷ Christopher Coleman, *Constantine the Great & Christianity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914), 148.

⁶⁰⁸ Krautheimer, 42. “Two major road started into Europe: westward the Via Egnatia to Thessalonikē and across northern Greece to Durazzo and Brindisis; northward and far more important by the fourth century the highway to Adrianople, Sofia, Niš, and the Danube province beyone, and thence to North Italy, the Rhineland, Gaul, and Britain. Across the Sea of Marmara a corresponding network of roads through Asia Minor linked up southeast with Ankara and Kaisarye in Cappadocia and beyond with Mesopotamia and the ever-threatened Persian frontier, south across the Taurus Mountains with the south coast of Asia Minor and with Syrian Antioch, Palestine, and Egypt, and east with Armenia.”

⁶⁰⁹ Cracco Ruggini, “Vezzio,” 605. Cf. Themistius, *Oratio*, 4.357. Krautheimer, 42-3 and 134 footnote 7, believes the tracing of the city wall took place on Sunday November 8, 324 (six weeks after the battle at Chrysopolis) and that Constantine performed the rite himself. He also contends that the dedication occurred in 328, and the concecration transpired on May 11, 330.

⁶¹⁰ *Chronicon Paschale*, Bonn p. 528.

⁶¹¹ Ibid. Cf. Cracco Ruggini, “Vezzio,” 602-3. Cf. Malalas, *Chronographica*, 13; Procopius, *De bello Vandalico*, 1. 15. 14.

and sanctioned its religious affiliation to a patron deity.⁶¹² At some uncertain date he also gave the city its proper, official name, Anthousa (a translation of *Flora*).⁶¹³

A passage by John Lydus states that certain individuals were necessarily present at one or more of these ceremonies, (*inauguratio, consecratio, or dedicatio*). A *limitatio* ritual implied the existence of Italian soil and required the presence of an *augur*, a *pontifex*, and a magistrate with *imperium*, and accordingly these officials were likely present at the city's *consecratio*. Following Lydus' description, the most popular argument is that these roles were filled by the Neo-Platonist philosopher Sopatrus of Apamea, "Praetextatus", and Constantine respectively.⁶¹⁴

The reference to Praetextatus is the most problematic since no further names are supplied. It is generally presumed that it refers to Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, the famous pagan senator of the fourth century. However, this identification is problematic since this Praetextatus would have been very young at the time.⁶¹⁵ This fact has been used to support later dates for the foundation ceremonies of Constantinople. Indeed, several scholars maintain that his presence at any events prior to 326 would have been impossible.⁶¹⁶ However, by the fourth century priesthoods were typically inherited from close male relatives, often at a young age, allowing for the possibility. As such, she believes that Vettius Agorius Praetextatus participated in the

⁶¹² Cracco Ruggini, "Vezzio," 601. It is also possible that given the close connection between *consecratio* and *dedicatio*, so much so that the two ceremonies came to constitute a single legal act and the two terms were used interchangeably, that the *consecratio* also took place in 330 CE, just before the *dedicatio*. On the founding and dedication, see: The *Chronicle* of Hydatius and the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, s.a. 330; *Chronicon Paschale*, p. 527-9; Eutropius, 10.8.1; Hesychius, *Patria Constantinopoleos*, 39-42 (Preger pp. 16-18); Jerome, *Chronicon*, s.a. 330: "Constantinople is dedicated by denuding nearly every other city."; Malalas, *Chronographica*, 13.7-10; Origin, 30; Philostorgius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 2.9 and 2.17; Praxagorus, 1.7 (FGH 2B219:949); Socrates, 1.16.1-4; Sozomen, 2.3.1-8; Zonaras, 13.3.5.

⁶¹³ Malalas, *Chronographica*, 13.7; *Chronicon Paschale*, Bonn p. 528; John Lydus, *de mensibus*, 4.75. Cf. Cracco Ruggini, "Costantino," 241-2; Ando, *The Matter of the Gods*, 189.

⁶¹⁴ John Lydus, *De mensibus*, 4.2.24-6. It is uncertain as to where he got his information. On the dedication cf. A. Frolov, "La dédicace de Constantinople dans la tradition byzantine," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 127 (1944): 61-127; Cracco Ruggini, "Vezzio," 605-6.

⁶¹⁵ Maijastina Kahlos, *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus – Senatorial Life in Between*, *Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae* no. 26, (Roma, 2002), 17. Some speculate that it may have been his father, but the latter's identity is not certain.

⁶¹⁶ Cracco Ruggini, "Vezzio," 605. An opinion shared by Cameron, *Later*, who refers to Praetextatus as "a memory of the pagan Roman senator of that name," and suggests that this account by Lydus "...is probably a later attempt to invest Constantinople with the prestige of Rome."

capacity of *pontifex* next to the *augur* Sopatrus in every one of the pagan rituals of religious foundation (*inauguratio, consecratio, dedicatio*), and that these all occurred between the end of 328 (26 November) and spring of 330 (11 May).⁶¹⁷ Also, if a transfer of the Palladium from Rome to the new capitol did occur, the presence of a *pontifex* such as Praetextatus may have been required (although Constantine himself was *pontifex maximus*).⁶¹⁸

Constantine's connections to solar imagery, Apollo, and Augustus

The Palladium was only one of many objects reported to have been moved to Constantinople from locations around the empire. In order to increase its reputation, beautify, and fund building projects (especially Christian churches) in his new city, Constantine confiscated so much wealth and art from pagan temples in the East that he was criticized.⁶¹⁹ Some of these objects were famous pieces of statuary including that of Athena Promachos, Olympian Zeus and the serpent column from Delphi.⁶²⁰ More notably, the list also included a marble porphyry column brought from Rome and a statue of Apollo that came from Phrygium (near Ilium). Contemporaries of these events, such as Libanius, do not mention the Palladium.

Central to the plan for the rebuilding of the city was a large main street (the Mese) which led to the Forum of Constantine. Various accounts attempt to explain the location and shape of this Forum. It was set just outside the Old Gate of the Severan town of Byzantium and “was the kingpin which linked Constantine’s government area and palace in the old town to the new residential sectors extending north and west.”⁶²¹ It was circular or oval in shape, which conforms to the style of other circular piazza known from the Roman East. Preger suggested that

⁶¹⁷ Cracco Ruggini, “Vezzio,” 610.

⁶¹⁸ Kahlos, 19; Cracco Ruggini, 606-7. See also: Servius, 166; Zosimus; and Lido, *de magistratibus*, II, 30.

⁶¹⁹ Libananius, *Orations*, 30.6; *Anonymi Auctoris de rebus bellicis*, 2. -2; Julian, *Orations*, 7.22b.

⁶²⁰ Opt. cit. Cameron, *Later*, 63.

⁶²¹ Krautheimer, 55.

the shape imitated either the form of the ocean, or the round tent that Constantine used at this place during the siege of Byzantium.⁶²² It seems possible that Constantine modeled certain aspects of his forum on the *Forum Romanum*. The shapes arguably were dissimilar, the *fora* of Rome typically being rectangular in shape and not oval. However, the Senate houses of both Constantinople and Rome (the *Curia*) were positioned on the north side of their respective *fora*. Moreover, the *aedes Vesta*, the round sanctuary of Vesta, was located in the *Forum Romanum*; thus if the Palladium was in fact moved to Constantinople, its new home bore a similar shape (oval or elliptical) in addition to being placed in the center of both cities.⁶²³

Theophanes states the Column of Constantine (known today as the *Çemberlitaş*) was placed on the spot where construction of the new city began, and marked the center of Constantinople.⁶²⁴ The Column takes the other version of its name, the Porphyry Column, from porphyry, a very hard stone of deep purplish-red color that comes from Egypt. As the Column of Constantine, it was made from nine drums of this stone and capped with a Corinthian capital. In addition to the fact that the Forum was located on a hill and thus was already one of the highest points of the city, the column measured over 35 meters high and consequently would have been visible from quite a distance, even to travelers approaching Constantinople by sea.⁶²⁵

Constantine reportedly placed several religiously affiliated objects inside the marble base of his Column. Of these the Palladium is the only one with pagan ties.⁶²⁶ The Christian relics were rumored to include: the crosses of the two thieves crucified together with Jesus Christ, the

⁶²² Theodore Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, II, 174, and III, 218,

⁶²³ Stephenson, 198, states that due to its location in the center of the city the Column of Constantine was referred to as “omphalos,” the Greek word for “navel”. If in anyway regarded in similar fashion as the omphalos at Delphi, this would indicate the Porphyry Column as the center of the world.

⁶²⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia*, 1.28. Cf. Krautheimer, 55, who calls the column the “true raison d’être” of the Forum.

⁶²⁵ Charles Matson Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, (New York : Routledge, 2004), 541.

⁶²⁶ Procopius, *BG*, 5.15.14 states that he moved the Palladium to Constantinople; *Chronicon Paschale*, (p. 528 Bonn) claims that Constantine did so in secret; Malalas, 13.321; Zonaras, 13.3.18.

baskets from the loaves and fishes miracle, and an alabaster ointment jar belonging to Mary Magdalene believed to have been used by her for washing the feet of Jesus.⁶²⁷ In addition to the Column serving as the symbolic center of the city, it was (likely due to this sanctuary) the location of several religious ceremonies: “On an altar inside the tetrapylon which enclosed socle and base of the column, Mass was celebrated, lamps were lit, incense was burned, and prayers and supplications were offered ‘to Constantine’s image on the column...as if to God to avert disasters’.”⁶²⁸ Yet, of all the objects that were rumored to be inside, the Palladium is the one most spoken of. Wortley writes, “We never know when or how the legend started but, whether it was due to the interment of the Palladium beneath or to some other factor, the great porphyry column soon came to be regarded itself as the Palladium or guardian of the city.”⁶²⁹

The Column of Constantine also appears on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, a thirteenth-century copy of an original second-century document that was revised in the fifth century. For the city of Constantinople this map depicts the personification of the city as seated and pointing with its right hand toward the west. The Porphyry Column appears on the left side of the figure, which gives the impression that the personification of the city is pointing to it (and perhaps beyond it towards Rome). In fact, the Porphyry Column is the only city structure that appears on the map for Constantinople. Not much detail can be discerned about the column and the statue on top, however the latter appears to be naked, and holds a spear in its left hand (just like the seated personification of the city) and a globe in its right.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁷ Howard Clarke, *The Gospel of Matthew and its Readers*, (Indiana University Press, 2003), 204.

⁶²⁸ Krautheimer, 62. Quote from Photius who recalled the report of Philostorgius, *HE*, 3.17.

⁶²⁹ John Wortley, *Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1240*, (Aldershot, 2004), 493.

⁶³⁰ This is the reverse of the actual statue that held a lance in its right hand and a globe in its left. Erika Zwierlein-Diehl, “Constantinopolis et Roma Intailles du IV^e et du V^e siècle après Jésus-Christ,” in *La glyptique des mondes classiques*, (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1997): 83-96, 85, points out the similarities to the attributes of Victory (globe and lance) and Roma (lance, shield and helmet).

Constantine's decision to use this particular statue of the Sun-god Apollo many not have been arbitrary. Like emperors before him, Constantine frequently presented himself as a Sun deity through the mid 320s CE. By the early fourth century the Romans had a variety of different names for the Sun god. The standard had been Apollo (or Helios in Greek) who was favored by Augustus. Emperors Claudius Gothicus and Aurelian had also introduced the worship of Sol or "Sol Invictus" (Unconquerable Sun), an epithet that carried additional connotations for the military. Then, of course, there also was Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and his preference for the god Elgabal. Constantine made a connection with this precedent, using both Apollo and Sol Invictus as part as his visual and literary program.

An anonymous panegyric dating to 310 relates that after defeating Maximian, Constantine visited a temple of Apollo (probably at Grand, Vosges) where he had a vision of this god:

For you saw, I believe, O Constantine, your Apollo, accompanied by Victory, offering you laurel wreaths, each one of which carries a portent of thirty years. For this is the number of human ages which are owed to you without fail – beyond the old age of a Nestor. And – now why do I say "believe"? – you saw, and recognized yourself in the likeness of him to whom the divine songs of the bards had prophesied that rule over the whole world was due.⁶³¹

This vision, which reportedly occurred in daylight near the temple of Apollo, was interpreted to have been sent from none other than the Sun-god himself. Furthermore, this "Apollonian vision" bears striking similarities to Constantine's reported vision at the Milvian Bridge just two years

⁶³¹ *Panegyrici Latini*, 6.21.4-5: *Vidisti, enim, credo, Constantine, Apollinem tuum comitante Victoria coronas tibi laureas offerentem, quae tricenum singulae ferunt omen annorum. Hic est enim humanarum numeros aetatum quae tibi utique debentur ultra Pyliam senectutem. Et—immo quid dico 'credo'?—uidisti teque in illius specie recognovisti, cut totius mundi regna deberi uatum carmina diuina cecinerunt.* C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: the Panegyrici Latini*, (University of California Press, 1994), with commentary and bibliography, 248-51.

later. Modern scholarship has been apt to view Constantine's vision of Apollo as part of his religious development toward monotheism.⁶³²

Constantine drew on the earlier precedents for his own Sun god coinage that started in at approximately the same time as the "Apolline Vision" and continued until at least the early 320s, perhaps as late as 324-5.⁶³³ Up to this time Constantine had most often affiliated himself with the god Mars or Hercules, but from this year forward he favored Apollo and Sol Invictus.⁶³⁴ Nixon and Rodgers emphasize that "...Many suppose that this demonstration of Apollonian patronage is a political ploy, and that with it Constantine announces new divine legitimation intended to replace that hitherto provided by the Tetrarchic Hercules."⁶³⁵ They find support for this argument in the fact that Sol Invictus suddenly became very prominent on Constantine's coinage starting exactly in 310.⁶³⁶ During the period from approximately 310-325 CE coins frequently appeared that bore obvious imagery related to the the Sun god; in contrast "Christian" references were ambiguous at best.⁶³⁷

⁶³² For more on the "Apollonian Vision" see: B. Rodgers, "Constantine's Pagan Vision," *Byzantion: revue internationale des études byzantines*, 50 (1980): 259-278, 259-61; R. MacMullen, "Constantine and the Miraculous," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 9 (1968): 81-96.

⁶³³ For Constantine and "Helios" see Julian, *Orations*, 4.131C, 7.228DJ. For the meaning of Sol for Constantine see: H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion*, (Oxford, 1979), 281ff.

⁶³⁴ Cameron, *Later*, 49. See also: Bruun, "The Disappearance of Sol from the Coins of Constantine," *Arctos* 2, (1958): 15-37; M. R. Alföldi, "Die Sol-Comes- Münze vom Jahre 325: Neues zur Bekehrung Constantins," *Multus: Festschrift für Antike und Christentum*, Ergänzungsband 1 (Münster, 1964): 10-16; D. Christodoulou, *The Figures of Ancient Gods on the Coinage of Constantine the Great*, (Athens: Monographs of the Hellenic Numismatic Society, 1998), 56-65.

⁶³⁵ Nixon and Rodgers, comm., 249-50 and note 92. J. Maurice, "Les discours des Panegyrici Latini et l'évolution religieuse sous le règne de Constantin," *CRAI* (1909), 168; id., *Numismatique constantinienne*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1911), 20ff.; Édouard Galletier, *La mort de Maximien d'après le panégyrique de 310 et la vision di Constantin au temple d'Apollon*, (Bordeaux: Faculté des lettres, 1950), 288-99; C. H. V. Sutherland, *RIC*, 6.111, (London: Spink and Son, 1965), 161-2. For arguments against regarding the panegyrics as "official", see C. E. V. Nixon, "Latin Panegyric in the Tetrarchic and Constantinian Period," in *History and Historians in Late Antiquity*, B. Croke and A. M. Emmett, eds. (Sydney, 1983): 88-99; B. Muller-Rettig, *Der Panegyricus des Jahres 310 auf Konstantin den Grossen*, (F. Steiner, 1990).

⁶³⁶ Nixon and Rodgers, comm., 249-50 and note 92.

⁶³⁷ H. A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 27; P. Bruun, ed., *Roman Imperial Coinage*, vol 7 (London, 1966), 61-64.

In many cases the coin representation—if not identified—could be interpreted as either Apollo or Sol, although there are more examples of the latter. The reverses usually were dedicated to SOLI INVICTO COMITI (“to Sol Invictus, comrade [of the emperor]”), where *comes* could also be translated as “companion” or “preserver”.⁶³⁸ In other examples the obverse of the coin bears the image of Constantine wearing a radiate crown (but the reverse is not dedicated to Sol). One example of a gold coin struck at Ticinum (Cisalpine Gaul) in 313 CE bears the image of Constantine and Sol Invictus on the obverse, while the reverse depicts Constantine’s victorious entry into Rome with the inscription “INVICTUS”.⁶³⁹ As late as 324-5 he had a new coin strike (an Antiochene *solidi*) commemorating his victory over Licinius that bore the inscription SOLI COMITI AUG N. Coins with the image of Constantine wearing the radiate crown also continued until 325-6.⁶⁴⁰ After this time his imagery changed but, “...it is very possible that he initially saw the Christian God in the same light as Apollo and Sol Invictus, as a protector who would grant favours in return for his own attachment.”⁶⁴¹

The most famous example of Constantine as a Sun god is the radiate bronze statue of Constantine atop the Porphry Column. It is believed that the original statue came from Phrygia and was the work of Phidias, a sculptor from the fifth century BCE.⁶⁴² It initially bore the image of Apollo and was recut to look like Constantine, but in the guise of an emperor-god. The figure wore a radiate crown with seven points reminiscent of a Sun god, and held a globe in the left

⁶³⁸ Noel Lenski, “The Reign of Constantine,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, Lenski, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2005): 59-90, 66-7.

⁶³⁹ Stephenson, 157-8.

⁶⁴⁰ Fowden, 129. See also R. Delbrueck, *Spätantike Kaiserporträts von Constantinus Magnus bis zum Ende des Westreichs*, Studien zur spätantiken Kunstgeschichte 8, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1933), 56.

⁶⁴¹ Cameron, *Later*, 55-6.

⁶⁴² Leo Grammaticus (early eleventh century), 87, and Cedrenus, 1.518, assert that the statue was a Pheidian work from Athens; See also: A. Frantz, *The Athenian Agora XXIV: Late Antiquity: A.D. 267-700*, (American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1988), 76, who follows Overbeck in suggesting that it may have been Pheidias' Apollo Parnopius from the Acropolis; T. Preger, “Konstantinos-Helios,” *Hermes* 36 (1901), 457-62, especially 460; Mango, *The Brazen House: a Study of the Vestibule of the imperial Palace of Constantinople*, (Istanbul: Kommission Hos Ejnar Munksgaard, 1959), 44 note 34, suspects Cedrenus had access to an early source on the monuments of Constantinople; but here he merely follows the earlier chroniclers:

hand and a spear in the right (opposite of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*). Like the column itself, the statue on top may have been called *Palladium*.⁶⁴³ It is possible that this sculpture was associated with other imperial *colossi*, such as that of Nero in Rome.⁶⁴⁴ Vespasian added a radiate crown to the original statue and renamed it after the god Sol, *Colossus Solis*.⁶⁴⁵ Later Commodus replaced the head of the statue with one of himself in the guise of Hercules, but the original was restored after his death.⁶⁴⁶ A further example of Constantine as a Sun god comes from an equestrian statue of the Emperor erected by the city of Termessus in Pamphylia that they dedicated to “Constantine Augustus the all-seeing Sun.”⁶⁴⁷

This statue of Constantine has led to great controversy over what or whom exactly it was intended to represent: Constantine the Emperor, Constantine the Sun god (as indicated by the radiate crown). Although likely reworked to purposely cast Constantine in this fashion, Fowden argues for at least some caution when considering the emperor’s motives: “If Constantine did reuse an older statue on the porphyry column, we must admit the possibility of the minimalist view: that his motive was at least in part the same one that made him search at Thebes for a ready-cut column, namely the purely practical consideration of timing.”⁶⁴⁸ He also points out that the earliest direct reference to the statue comes from Philostorgius (died c. 439 CE) who

⁶⁴³ Dagron, 39. See also: Procopius, *BG*, 1.5; Malalas, Bonn p. 320; Hesychios, Preger I, p. 17, (39-41; pseudo-Kodinos, 45.

⁶⁴⁴ Jaś Elsner, “Perspectives in Art,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, Lenski, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2005): 255-277, 263. See: Fowden, 125-31; C. Mango, “Constantine’s Column,” in *Studies on Constantinople*, (1993), 1-6; id. “Constantine’s Porphyry Column and the Chapel of St. Constantine,” *Studies on Constantinople*, (1980/1): 103-10; Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Instanbuls*, (Wasmutti, 1997), 255-7; La Rocca, “La fondazione di Costantinopoli,” in *Costantino il Grande dall’antichità all’umaneismo*, (1993): 553-84, 557-61.

⁶⁴⁵ Suetonius, *Vespasian*, 18; Pliny, *Natural History*, 34.45; Cassius Dio, 65.15.

⁶⁴⁶ *Historia Augusta, vita Commodi*, 17; Cassius Dio 72.22; Herodian, 1.15.9.

⁶⁴⁷ *Tituli Asiae Minoris* 3(I).45: Κωνσταντεῖνω Σεβ(αστῶ) Ἡλίω Παντεπόπτῃ ὁ δῆμιος. Fowden, 129 “Since there is no room on the base for a statue of Helios as well, Constantine and Helios are unambiguously identified. The date is not 'intra 310 et 324 p. Chr. n.' but 324, when Constantine became sole ruler of the East as well as the West, or very soon afterwards, while the new emperor's religious policies were still quite diplomatic.”

⁶⁴⁸ Fowden, 129-30.

refers to it as the “statue of Constantine on the porphyry column”.⁶⁴⁹ However, by the sixth century more details begin to appear. John Malalas, a chronicler from the era of Justinian writes: “On this column he [Constantine] set up a statue of himself (ἐαυτῷ ἔστησεν ἀνδριάντα), having seven rays on its head.”⁶⁵⁰ Direct claims that the original statue bore the image of Apollo do not appear until the 10th century, but could have been in circulation earlier.⁶⁵¹ Moreover, when the radiate crown, the globe and spear (which was replaced with a scepter after the earthquake of 554 CE) were viewed together, the impression of the viewer could be that of an emperor since these images were normal in imperial imagery, but they could just as easily be taken as the gods Sol or Apollo.⁶⁵² Thus, the statue atop the Porphyry Column in the Forum of Constantine possessed traditional images from solar iconography that often held multiple meanings and could be associated with an emperor or any sun deity.⁶⁵³ It is entirely possible that the statue was intentionally designed in this fashion.

Despite the possible pagan associations, some scholars now argue that Constantine’s associations with the Sun god were rather “safe” choices that could be made acceptable to both pagan and Christian audiences. Ambiguous references were applied to inscriptions, panegyrics and iconography after 312.⁶⁵⁴ In many of these the god was referred to merely along the lines of “the highest divinity” (*summa divinitas*) and “whatever divinity in the seat of heaven” (*quicquid divinitatis in sede caelesti*).⁶⁵⁵ Pagans had long worshipped the Sun god in many manifestations

⁶⁴⁹ Philostorgius, *HE*, 2.17. Cf. Socrates, *HE*, 1.17: Constantine places part of the True Cross inside; Theodoret, *HE*, 1.34.3.

⁶⁵⁰ Malalas, 13.320. Cf. *Chronicon Paschale*, 1.528; Georgius Monarchus, p. 500.

⁶⁵¹ Fowden, 125-6 and 129. For the 12th century reference see: Anna Comnena, 12.4 (trans. E. R. A. Sewter, with adjustments); Zonaras, 13.3.25-6.

⁶⁵² Fowden, 127.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid*, 129-30.

⁶⁵⁴ Peter J. Leithart, *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom*, (IVP Academic, 2010), 76.

⁶⁵⁵ H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance*, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 195-7.

(Apollo, Helios, Sol, Sol Invictus, etcetera), however, the sun was also a symbol to early Christians who saw Christ as the “true Sun”.⁶⁵⁶ Thus “The gap between the pagan notion and sun-oriented Christianity was deep, but the bridge was short. In the early fourth century it was the bridge on which the two ways, old and new, increasingly met.”⁶⁵⁷

In addition to his affiliations with Sun deities, scholars also argue that Constantine purposefully styled himself after Augustus. Going back once again to Constantine’s vision of Apollo, Rogers suggests that in the person whom the gods prophesied world rule lurks Augustus: Constantine is the new Augustus, fulfilling an old prophecy of the return of the Golden Age.⁶⁵⁸ Similarities between the coinages of both emperors also occur. Elsner argues that early on Constantine followed the standard model portrait type used during the Tetrarchy (square head, cropped hair, moustache), but believes that shortly after 306 CE (when Constantine was first called Augustus by his troops) that a shift in portrait type occurred that depicted Constantine more on the model of Augustus: youthful, handsome, clean-shaven and with “Trajanic coiffure”.⁶⁵⁹ It is also tempting to see Constantine imitating Augustus in other areas, such as city planning. For example in Constantinople he had built the Philadelphion, a plaza filled with statues honoring members of his own family, which brings to mind the Forum of Augustus in Rome. Another notable comparison is the statue of “Constantine the Augustus” originally

⁶⁵⁶ Consider also the Biblical “Sun of Righteousness” (*Sol Iustitiae*) and “Sun of Salvation” (*Sol Salutis*). See: Drake, *In Praise*, 73; Stephenson, 172-3.

⁶⁵⁷ Drake, *In Praise*, 73.

⁶⁵⁸ Rodgers, 273. Cf. Nixon and Rodgers, 250-1 and note 93; Odahl, 315 note 32, connects the vision specifically to Vergil’s fourth *Eclogue*.

⁶⁵⁹ Elsner, 261. He cites specifically the following coins: *RIC* 6 [Rome] 141 (pl. 6); *RIC* 7 [Trier] 21 (pl. 3). See also: Fittschen and Zanker, *Katalog der römischen Portrats in den Capitolinischen Museen und den anderen kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom, Band I: Kaiser- und Prinzenbildnisse*, (Mainz: von Zabern, 1985), 147-52, no. 122; Wright, “The True Face of Constantine the Great,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987): 493-507; R. R. Smith, “The Public Image of Licinius I: Portrait Sculpture and Imperial Ideology in the Early Fourth Century,” *JRS* 87 (1997): 170-202, 185-7; Hannestad, “The Ruler Image of the Fourth Century: Innovation or Tradition,” in *Imperial Art as Christian Art*, J. R. Brandt and O. Steen eds. (2001): 93-107, 95-8.

placed in the Constantinian *thermae* on the Quirinal Hill in Rome. The person being depicted is undeniably Constantine, but the statue also bears striking similarities to Augustus's portrait type.

Comparisons of Constantine with Augustus and references to the Palladium may have also brought to mind the figures of both Apollo and Aeneas due to Augustus' own association with them. Constantine had his own, direct ties with Apollo, so affiliation to the god through Augustus would have only served to reinforce the strength of the connection. Indeed, it is possible that one of the reasons Constantine chose to favor Apollo is because Augustus himself had done so previously. Moreover, Augustus could link Constantine to Aeneas, the ancestor of the Romans—and specifically the Julian family—who brought them the Palladium from Troy. Indeed, authors of the fourth century frequently reinterpreted the story of Aeneas to suit their own purposes, often giving a “Christian” twist to the account, often to exalt emperors—especially Constantine and Theodosius. For example, Prudentius envisioned Rome's final moment taking place when “the successor of Aeneas, in the imperial purple prostrates himself in prayer at the house of Christ, and the supreme lord adores the banner of the cross.”⁶⁶⁰

If people of the later Roman Empire and Byzantine periods associated Augustus with the Palladium, and more specifically if they believed he had moved the talisman to his own home, is unknown. It is my belief that no exceptionally strong ties between this emperor and the Palladium existed, and that the Palladium was never located on the Palatine for any period of time longer than a couple of years (the time it would take to rebuild the *aedes Vestae*). However, if the perception existed that Augustus (or to a lesser extent Elagabalus) had done so, then the sources may have been more inclined to state the same for Constantine. Augustus symbolically

⁶⁶⁰ Prudentius, *Divinity of Christ*, 2.446ff. Cf. Marie Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 34. This author obviously adapted Vergil for Christian purposes. See: Jill Harries, *Prudentius and Theodosius*, *Latomus* 43 (1984), 69-84; Macklin Smith, *Prudentius' Psychomachia: A Reexamination*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

joined himself to Apollo and Vesta on the Palatine, and whether or not he moved the Palladium he was connected to it through Vesta and his role of *pontifex maximus*. Now, Constantine allegedly performed a similar act in the “New Rome” by combining these same elements at the Porphyry Column in the Forum of Constantinople: Apollo and Constantine (either as separate or combined figures) watched over his city from a hill, and guarded it with the help of the protective properties of the Palladium (Vesta), which he had returned to its homeland.

Conclusion

The Palladium was widely recognized as a powerful talisman in the ancient world, first for Troy and then for the multitude of cities that afterwards claimed it—especially Rome. There is in fact no way to definitively prove its existence; indeed, the Palladium was quite conveniently always hidden away from the world. However, for the Romans their faith in the fact that they held the statue was greater than their need to physically see it. Most likely a statue of some sort was supplied and hidden within the *penus Vestae* with Rome’s other *sacra* that had Trojan origins. From there it served as a *signum* and *pignus imperii*, the primary guarantee for the prosperity of *Roma Aeterna*.

The Palladium began to appear regularly in the literature and visual imagery of the Late Republic. Evidently by this time the symbolic importance of the talisman was commonly accepted, and so it was used—and often manipulated—for personal advantage. Caesar and Augustus both emphasized their connection to the statue through their ancestor Aeneas. Moreover, they began the trend of the Palladium having a connection to the *pontifex maximus*, and office held by both. Thus, by the early principate an interconnectivity existed that linked the Palladium, Vesta, Aeneas and the emperor/high priest (and to a lesser extent Apollo). Once

these ideas were joined in popular mentality, they became even more useful for only one needed to be invoked for the others to be brought to mind.

Three emperors allegedly removed the Palladium: Augustus, Elagabalus and Constantine. I have argued that it is unlikely that Augustus did so, and that any claims that he did are the result of the (erroneous) interpretation of modern scholarship. However, it seems possible that Elagabalus did so. If he did move the Palladium, it would not have been for a long duration given his short tenure as emperor (218-222 CE). Yet what is more important that if he did or did not perform this act is why the sources report that he had done so. It confirms that even in the third century the traditional beliefs in the power of the Palladium remained, otherwise the act would not have provoked so much outrage among the authors, which they hoped to pass along to their readers. The same can be said for the status of the Vestals. The emperor marrying the Vestal Virgin Aquilia Severa was quite a scandal. Accordingly, these two offences should be considered jointly for their similarities (Elagabalus claimed both, one a statue of a virgin goddess and the other the closest human embodiment to one), their greater symbolic effect when combined, and due to the connection between the Palladium and the cult of Vesta.

It is unlikely that Constantine moved the Palladium to Constantinople given the lack of contemporary references for the act and the potential fallout he would have risked from the pagan aristocracy of Rome. Once again, whether Constantine removed the Palladium from Rome or not is not of primary importance. The main point is that by the sixth and seventh centuries CE the people living in Constantinople—and possibly beyond—thought that Constantine had done so. The motivations of the authors pushing this belief are not hard to fathom; even to this time it must have been considered a powerful talisman and it had ties to both Troy and Rome. Thus by appropriating it as part of the history of Constantine and “New Rome”

the Byzantines gained both protection and ties to two illustrious cities. This idea was not novel. The Romans had used the Palladium in essentially the same way 1000 years before.

In order to support their claim that they held the Palladium, the authors drew on historical events and the landscape of the city around them. Constantine was the linchpin that tied everything together. As sole emperor of the Roman Empire and *pontifex maximus*, if anyone held the authority to remove the Palladium from the city of Rome, it was Constantine. He was largely responsible for the reconstruction of Constantinople and brought objects from all over the empire to adorn the city. Most particularly, he brought a porphyry column from Rome and a statue of Apollo from near Troy—the two cities most closely connected with the Palladium. In Constantinople these two objects were combined in the Forum, the geographical and symbolic center of the city, to form the Column of Constantine. Moreover, Constantine's connections to the Sun-god—especially Apollo—and to Augustus (and by extension Aeneas) all could be used to reinforce his connection with, and removal of, the Palladium. Thus, sufficient and varied sources of “proof” were found to support the Byzantine contention that Constantine had brought the Palladium “home” to them. Constantinople held the Palladium.

Chapter 5: The *Pontifices Vestae*

On the most basic level the title *pontifex Vestae* suggests a strong connection with the goddess Vesta, yet even this supposition is problematic. No obvious need suddenly emerged in fourth century CE Rome that would have necessitated supplementary personnel to serve this deity whose ties to Rome stretched back to the mythological foundations of the city. The cult of Vesta continued with its six virgin priestesses, and they still comprised one branch of the pontifical college. Consequently, adding male priests to Vesta's cult seems redundant, even improper, since the cult of a female deity was not commonly served by male priests.

Given this apparent incongruity, and especially in light of the fact that the cult of Vesta was the only example of an official state priesthood of women in the Roman world, the *pontifices Vestae* present a real problem in the historiography of Roman religion in Late Antiquity, and one which needs to be addressed directly. When they are mentioned in primary documents—and even in modern scholarship—it is accepted as a matter of course. There were priests of Vesta in late antiquity. The ancient sources fail to explain precisely when and why this title came into being, thus they are only helpful to the extent that they provide examples of men who bore the title. Modern scholars have all accepted the same theory that claims that the *pontifices Vestae* were the traditional Roman *pontifices*, just under a new title. However, they do so without providing any additional analysis or debate, and only consider this issue from the perspective of an evolution of this priesthood and never from that of the cult of Vesta. Accordingly, this chapter begins with a discussion of known and possible *pontifices Vestae* based on the ancient evidence and provides an overview of the scholarship related to this topic. From this groundwork I will include additional evidence and provide a revised theory about when and

why the “priests of Vesta” came into being, the role they played in Roman religious practice of the fourth century, and more specifically their purpose within the cult of Vesta.

The known examples and existing scholarship on the “priests of Vesta”

I am aware of four men specifically mentioned by inscriptions as priests of Vesta during the fourth century. This short list is augmented by one more possible candidate whose association is based on an ambiguous literary passage, plus the names of two men who are frequently referred to in scholarship as priests of Vesta. The following is a brief biographical sketch on each of these individuals. They are listed in approximate chronological order based on their estimated years of birth and death, but a definitive sequence is difficult since we do not have exact dates, nor do we know when they received their priesthoods. However, their identification and examination offer some clues into what was transpiring within traditional state cult in fourth century Rome.

An honorific inscription for C. Iulius Rufinianus Ablabius Tatianus provides the earliest reference to a priest of Vesta. Tatianus held several civic and religious positions during the reign of Constantine and immediately after. He is known only from this one dedication made by the people of Abellinum where he served as a governor.⁶⁶¹ I have removed all suggested punctuation for the purposes of the present discussion since it varies in the different reconstructions.

Tatiani
C(aio) Iulio Rufiniano
Ablabio Tatiano c(larissimo) v(iro) Rufi
niani oratoris filio fisci pa
trono rationum summarum
adlecto inter consulares iudi
cio divi Constantini legato pro

⁶⁶¹ *CIL* 10, 1125.

vinc(iae) Asiae correctori Tusciae
 et Umbriae consulari Ae
 miliae et Liguria **pontifici**
Vestae matris et in colle
gio pontificum proma
gistro sacerdoti Her
 culis consulari Cam
 paniae, huic ordo splen
 didissimus et populus
 Abellinatium ob insignem
 erga se benevolentiam et
 religionem et integrit(atem) eius
 statuum conlocandam censuit

From this one inscription it is clear that Tatianus was a *pontifex Vestae matris*. He was also a *promagistro*, but without any punctuation the argument can be made that this title could refer to either the preceding phrase *in collegio pontificum* or the following *sacerdoti Herculis*. It is more likely, however, that Tatianus was a *promagister* of the former since two probable examples of *promagistri* of the pontifical college exist, whereas I am not aware of any examples from among the priests of Hercules.⁶⁶² The dating for Tatianus' religious functions can only be speculated upon. The inscription itself dates to 337 CE or just after based on the mention of *divi Constantini*. Van Haepereen has suggested that sometime after 337, possibly in the year 340, Tatianus took up the title *pontifex Vestae matris*, but it is unclear upon what information this is based.⁶⁶³

As the first known bearer of the title priest of Vesta, both the family and career of Tatianus deserve a detailed examination. His inscription states that he was "son of the orator Rufinianus", presumably a reference to Iulius Rufinianus, the author of *De Figuris Sententiarum*

⁶⁶² One uncertain example comes from *CIL* 6,1700, an inscription that honors Marcus Aurelius Consius Quartus Junior, *pontifici maiori / promagistro iterum / duodecimviro*. Once again, phrasing is an issue: was he a *promagister* of the *pontifices* or the *duodecimviri*? I have been unable to find any other examples of a *promagister* for the cult of Hercules or the *duodecimviri*. Another likely example of a *promagisterium* of the priests comes from *CIL* 6.2158. This inscription and the significance of the role of promagistrates will be discussed at greater length below.

⁶⁶³ Françoise Van Haepereen, *Le Collège Pontifical (3^{ème} s. a. C.-4^{ème} s. p. C.)*, (Bruxelles, 2002), 84.

et Elocutionis.⁶⁶⁴ Tatianus' ancestry may be one of the reasons why modern scholars evaluate him as a "new man" in Rome. Salzman believes he came from a non-aristocratic, provincial family.⁶⁶⁵ She notes that Tatianus was *adlecto inter consulares*, which she takes to mean that he was adlected to the Senate after 324 CE and this is presumably the reason why she argues that he had non-senatorial origins. Alan Cameron likewise suggests that Tatianus was a man from an undistinguished family who was moderately successful, and for his achievements was rewarded towards the end of his career by being made a priest of Vesta and a *sacerdos* of Hercules.⁶⁶⁶

It may be presumptuous to claim that Tatianus experienced such a considerable rise in social status. First, there is insufficient information to determine the social standing of his family at the start of his career. The inscription of Tatianus displays rather than hides the fact that his father was an orator. This designation is insufficient to automatically label Rufinianus as belonging to the equestrian rather than the senatorial order.⁶⁶⁷ By stressing his father's occupation, Tatianus could be demonstrating pride in his father, a wish to make clear how much he himself had accomplished, or both. Furthermore, his career path does not suggest non-Senatorial origins. Mennen argues for an increasing trend in the early and mid-third century wherein the senatorial elite served in the roles of *curator*, *corrector*, *iudex (vice sacra)*, *iuridicus*, and *censor*.⁶⁶⁸ Accordingly, Tatianus' positions of *corrector Tusciae et Umbriae* and

⁶⁶⁴ *PLRE* I, "Julius Rufinianus 2", 773; Robert Browning, "Oratory and epistolography," in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature* II, E. J. Kenney ed, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 755-761, 755: "...the *De figuris sententiarum et elocutionis* ("On figures of thought and speech") of Aquila Romanus, probably written in the third century, and completed by Julius Rufinianus in a work of the same title dating probably from the fourth century. Two short works, *De schematis lexios* ("On figures of speech") and *De schematis dianoeas* ("On figures of thought") are also attributed to manuscripts of Rufinianus."

⁶⁶⁵ Michele Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and religious Change in the Western Roman Empire*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 104-5, 117.

⁶⁶⁶ Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 137.

⁶⁶⁷ "Rufinianus" is not a common name in the late third and early fourth centuries. Although Roman naming practices vary greatly during this time, the possibility exists that the family was connected to L. Caesonius Ovinus Manlius Rufinianus Bassus, consul, *praefectus urbis* and *pontifex maior* in the late third century. *PLRE* I, "L. Caesonius Ovinus Manlius Rufinianus Bassus 18", 156-7.

⁶⁶⁸ Inge Mennen, *Power and Status in the Roman Empire, AD 193-284*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 69.

consularis Aemiliae et Liguriae as mentioned in his inscription are senatorial in rank. The only title that could be questioned is that of *fisci patrono rationum summarum*, and this may be another reason why scholars refer to him as a “new man”.⁶⁶⁹ However, it is important to note that the word used here is *patronus*; most often equestrians of the period who supervised a *fiscus* were identified as an *advocatus* or a *procurator*.⁶⁷⁰ As such, it is unclear in what way (if any) that Tatianus in his title of *patronus* differed, but this evidence alone is not enough to argue for equestrian origins. It is also uncertain if such positions within the organization of the *fiscus* were held solely to the equestrian class during the first half of the fourth century.

Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus (Honorius) is the next known individual to be identified as a priest of Vesta. He was well-connected socially and politically; Orfitus claimed descent from the Republican Scipio family, and was also married to a distant relative of Constantius.⁶⁷¹ He held numerous civic positions including those of consul *suffectus* and urban prefect.⁶⁷² However, the inscriptions that mention his religious offices use various titles to describe his position as a priest of Vesta: he was a *pontifex deae Vestae*, *pontifex maior Vestae*, and *pontifex Vestae*.⁶⁷³ As it happens, none of these examples are the same as that of Tatianus, who was identified as *pontifici Vestae matris*. Inscriptions honoring Orfitus from around 350 CE make him the first known man to serve as both a *pontifex Solis* and a *pontifex Vestae*. He died c. 369.

⁶⁶⁹ Positions regarding the *fiscus* are most often association with the *perfectissimi*.

⁶⁷⁰ I have not been able to find any contemporary example of another *patronus fisci*. The title does appear, however, several times in the *Codex Theodosianus*. For example, 10.8.5: *vir spectabilis proconsul praesente fisci patrono...*

⁶⁷¹ M. T. W. Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 127.

⁶⁷² His inscriptions are very similar except for the variations in the title of priest of Vesta. They all date to the period between 357 and 360 CE. For example: *CIL VI 1741 = ILS 1243: Memmio Vitrasio Orfito...praef(ecto) urbi, non multo interposito tempore iterum praef(ecto) urbi, proconsuli Africae, comiti ordinis primi, item comiti intra consistorium ordinis primi, legato petitu senates populiq(ue) Romani, comiti ordinis secundi, consular provinciae Siciliae, pontifici maiori Vestae, quindecimviro s(acris) f(aciundis), pontifici Solis, consuli, praetori, quaestori.... PLRE I, “Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus signo Honorius 3”, 651-53.*

⁶⁷³ *CIL VI 1740, 1741, and 1742* respectively. Cameron, 133-4, refers to Orfitus as the first known example of a priest of Vesta, in which he is mistaken.

The most famous priest of Vesta is Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. He was probably born between the years 314-319, and died between 8 and 10 December, 384 CE.⁶⁷⁴ Several inscriptions list Praetextatus's multiple religious offices, including that of *pontifex Vestae*.⁶⁷⁵ However, Praetextatus was a veritable poster-boy for fourth century paganism. Generally considered to be the most important pagan senator of his time, he was also an *augur*, *pontifex Solis*, *quindecimvir*, *curialis* of Hercules, and the holder of many titles associated with non-Roman cults.⁶⁷⁶ Some scholars see him as the most likely pagan leader, becoming the figurehead and de facto *pontifex maximus* of Rome when Gratian no longer fulfilled this role.⁶⁷⁷ Praetextatus has even been referred to as the 'anti-pope' and 'pope of the pagans'.⁶⁷⁸ Once again, it is impossible to determine at what point in time Praetextatus gained his many religious roles. A full description of all his offices is found in only one inscription, *CIL* 6, 1778, which dates to 387 CE. Earlier ones, such as *CIL* 6,102 from 367 CE, record other information such as the fact that Praetextatus reconstructed the statues of the Dei Consentes, but they do not mention any of his priesthoods. Thus, a chronology or timeframe cannot be reasonably established for his religious offices.

⁶⁷⁴ Maijastina Kahlos, *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus: A Senatorial Life in Between*, (Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2002), 17.

⁶⁷⁵ *CIL* 6, 1778: Agorii. / Vettio Agorio Praetextato, v(iro) c(larissimo), // (first column) pontifici Vestae, / pontifici Soli(s), /(5) quindecimviro, / auguri, / tauroboliato, / curiali, / neocoro, /(10) hierofantae, / patri sacrorum, // (second column) quaestori / candidato, / praetori urbano, /(5) correctori Tus/ciae et Umbriae, / consulari / Lusitaniae, / proconsuli /(10) Achaiae, / praefecto urbi, / praee(ecto) (sic, for 'praefecto') praet(orio) II (sic) / Italiae et Illyrici, / consuli /(15) designato. // (on the side) Dedicata Kal(endis) Febr(uariis) / d(omino) n(ostro) Fl(avio) Valentiniano Aug(usto) III / et Eutropio cons(ulibus). *PLRE* I, "Vettius Agorius Praetextatus I", 722-724. It is also interesting to note that two Vestals also bore the name "Praetextata"; Licinia Praetextata Crassi in the late first or early second century, and Calpurnia Praetextata in the third century. However, no known connection exists between these priestesses and Praetextatus.

⁶⁷⁶ *Pontifex*, *augur* and *quindecimvir* were three of the four priesthoods of the *sacerdotum quattuor amplissima collegia*. The other was that of *septemvir*. Opt. cit. Kahlos, 68, Praetextatus is also the last known *pontifex Dei Solis*.

⁶⁷⁷ Gratian, his role (or lack thereof) as *pontifex maximus*, and its effect on the cult of Vestal will be discussed at greater length below and in chapter 6.

⁶⁷⁸ Kahlos, 121.

Lucius Ragonius Venustus is the fourth known example of a priest of Vesta, and the last whose identification in this role is secure. Any civic offices he may have held are not recorded in the one inscription honoring him. Venustus appears to have reached the height of his career around 390 CE, a point in time when he received many distinctions and took part in a *taurobolium* and *criobolium*.⁶⁷⁹ He was also a *pontifex Vestalis maior*, and the last known *augur* after the death of Praetextatus.⁶⁸⁰

A possible fifth candidate for a priest of Vesta is Celsinus Titianus. This man was the son of L. Aurelius Avianus Symmachus, and the brother of the famous Q. Aurelius Symmachus. No inscriptions exist for Titianus, which considerably limits what is known about his career. Consequently, his possible identification as a *pontifex Vestae* is based on a letter written to him by his brother that includes a vague passage: “*effice, oro te, ut divinitus videatur oblatum tui honoris auxilium, et utriusque te sacerdotii antistitem recordare.*”⁶⁸¹ Unfortunately, the two priesthoods Titianus held are not mentioned by name. Symmachus himself was a *pontifex maior* and in the letter he suggests that his brother would have more influence in this matter, which indicates that either Titianus was not a *pontifex maior*, or there was some kind of hierarchy within the order that positioned Titianus above Symmachus.⁶⁸² The former explanation is most likely to be correct. Seeck first suggested that one of Titianus’ priesthoods was that of *pontifex Dei Solis*.⁶⁸³ Rüpke disagrees, and favors the argument that since their father Avianus Symmachus, was a *quindecimvir sacris faciundus* and a *pontifex maior*, the sons should have

⁶⁷⁹ *CIL* 6, 503: Diis(!) Omnipotentibus / Lucius Ragonius / Venustus v(ir) c(larissimus) / augur publicus / p(opuli) R(omani) Q(uiritium) pontifex / Vestalis maior / percepto taurobolio / criobolioque / X Kal(endas) Iun(ias) / d(omino) n(ostro) Valentiniano / Aug(usto) IIII et / Neoterio cons(ulibus) / aram consecravit. *PLRE* I, “Lucius Ragonius Venustus 3”, 948.

⁶⁸⁰ Kahlos, 64-5. The *taurobolium* and the *criobolium* were closely linked ceremonies in honor of the Great Mother Goddess and her consort Attis, the former involving the sacrifice of a bull and the latter the sacrifice of a ram.

⁶⁸¹ Symmachus, *Epistles*, 1.68. *PLRE* I, “Celsinus Titianus 5”, 917-18.

⁶⁸² It is usually presumed that Tatianus was older than Symmachus, although this cannot be proven. If

⁶⁸³ Otto Seeck, *Q. Aurelii Symmachi Quae supersunt*, (Berolini, apud Weidmannos, 1883), 106.

held the same offices. Thus Titianus became a *quindecimvir* and Symmachus a *pontifex maior*. Moreover, whatever Titianus' second priesthood may have been, Rüpke does not believe that Titianus was any sort of *pontifex (Solis, maior, or Vestae)*.⁶⁸⁴ One potential flaw in his reasoning is apparent; Titianus and Symmachus had two other brothers, both of whom are believed to have died before Titianus in 380 CE.⁶⁸⁵ As such, it is entirely possible that they held religious offices as well. Accordingly, Celsinus Titianus remains a possible (although unlikely) *pontifex Vestae*.

In addition to the five individuals above, modern scholars often include two additional men to the list, Plotius Acilius Lucillus and Vitrasius Praetextatus. The recent tendency has been to refer to these men as “priests of Vesta”.⁶⁸⁶ Yet, this categorization is based on only one inscription (*CIL* 6, 2158), and most scholars openly admit that these men are otherwise unknown.

CIL 6, 2158 [*ILS* 4944]: *Mansiones Saliorum Palatinorum a veteribus ob armorum magnalium custodiam constitutes longa nimis aetate neglectas pecunia sua reparaverunt pontifices Vestae viri clarissimi promagisterio Plotii Acilii Lucilli Vitrasii Praetextati viri clarissimi.*

A careful reading of this inscription makes it clear that these individuals were not priests of Vesta, but rather promagistrates. Accordingly, they should not be included among the known *pontifices Vestae* although it is obvious that they had some connection to them due to their appearance with the anonymous priests of Vesta mentioned in the same text.

The traditional and undisputed theory contends that the *pontifices Vestae* were the same as the *pontifices maiores*, but that some men unilaterally chose to use a title that associated

⁶⁸⁴ Jörg Rüpke, *Fasti Sacerdotum*, 2 (München: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), “Celsinus Titianus”, no. 1134, 870.

⁶⁸⁵ Symmachus, *Epistles*, especially 3.6: *tertius hic mihi de optimis fratribus luctus est.*

⁶⁸⁶ Herbert Bloch, “A New Document of the Last Pagan Revival in the West, 393-394 A.D.,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 38 no. 4 (Oct., 1945): 199-244, 211-2, labels them properly as *promagistri*. However, more recent scholarship describes them as “priests of Vesta”. Kahlos, 67 note 77, following C. L. LaBranche, “Roma Nobilis. The Public Architecture of Rome, 330-476,” (PhD Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1968), 186-7; Jörg Rüpke, “Religiöse Zentralisierung in der späten Kaiserzeit: Neue Perspektiven auf traditionelle Priesterschaften und die Rolle des pontifex maximus”, in Hubert Cancik, Alfred Schäfer, and Wolfgang Spickermann (eds.), *Zentralität und Religion*, (Tübingen 2006), 61-2; Cameron, 134.

themselves with the goddess Vesta.⁶⁸⁷ Thus, every *pontifex maior* was inherently a *pontifex Vestae* (and vice versa). Unfortunately the scholarship on this topic is neither abundant nor innovative. Once the theory was proposed that the *pontifices maiores* and the *pontifices Vestae* were the same, it has never been questioned. Recently Cameron has attempted to reconcile the various titles used for “priest of Vesta” claiming that, “...Praetextatus is twice styled *pontifex Vestae*, but true conservatives like Symmachus and Flavian preferred the more traditional *pontifex maior*.”⁶⁸⁸ Yet his reasoning that the conservative pontiffs chose the title *pontifex maior* and that the more—for lack of a better term—“progressive” priests chose *pontifex Vestae*, seems too simplistic an explanation, nor do I believe that trying to classify these men as one or the other is the right direction to take.

The acceptance of the *pontifices maiores* and the *pontifices Vestae* as one and the same is the most likely reason why no scholar has attempted any detailed analysis of just the priests of Vesta as either a separate group or as part of the cult of Vesta. Van Haepere comes closest, stating that the expression *pontifex Vestae* makes clear the tie between the pontiffs and the cult of Vesta since the Vestal Virgins were supervised by the College of Pontiffs. However, she also admits it is interesting that the earliest use of the title appeared around the time of the death of

⁶⁸⁷ The development of the *pontifices maiores* is a separate issue. The current scholarship holds that Aurelian increased the status of the priests of Sol, elevating them from *sacerdotes* to the level of pontiffs under the name of *pontifices Dei Solis* (often abridged as *pontifices Solis*). As a result, the traditional *pontifices* amended their title (presumably with the permission of the emperor/*pontifex maximus*) to the *pontifices maiores*. This theory comes originally from Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, III, 450: “Also Aurelian für die Priester seines Sonnengottes den ehrwürdigen Namen usurpierte (oben S. 307), nannten im Gegensatze zu diesen *pontifices Solis* de Vertreter des alten Priestertums sich stolz *pontifices maiores*, eine Bezeichnung, die sich neben der bescheideneren als *pontifices Vestae* oder mit ihr zu dem Titel *pontifices maiores Vestae* kombiniert bis zum Ausgange des Altertums behauptete.” It has been followed most notably by L. Homo, *Essai sur le règne de l'empereur Aurélien*, (Paris, 1904), and later by G. Halsberghe, *The Cult of Sol Invictus*, (Leiden: Brill, 1972). To my knowledge it has been accepted by all scholars. However, the hypothesis stems from just one passage in the *Historia Augusta*, *Vita Aureliani* 35.3, and both of these scholars admit that “interpretational difficulties” exist. See: Homo, 187-8; Halsberghe, 145.

⁶⁸⁸ Cameron, 133-4.

Constantine, the first emperor to bear the title *pontifex maximus* while also being a Christian.⁶⁸⁹ Van Haeperen’s explanation has merit, but she does not attempt further analysis even though additional facts support her argument. For example, the cults of all of the primary male deities in Rome already had priests assigned to them, which would necessarily preclude additional personnel even if it were in name only. In contrast, Vesta would have been a convenient choice: her priestesses were already part of the pontifical college, and the goddess did not have any male officials with whom the pontiffs would need to compete for prestige.

My analysis of the “priest of Vesta” phenomenon

The explanation that the *pontifices maiores* were the same as the *pontifices Vestae* is too simplistic and fails to consider adequately the historical background and all relevant source materials. The earliest documented examples of *pontifices maiores* predate the first known use of the title priest of Vesta by approximately 60 years. There is no reason to believe that after this amount of time the major priests spontaneously decided that some of them—but not all—would attach “Vesta” to their official title, or that the emperor would allow them to do so without good reason. Moreover, the *pontifices maiores* did not suddenly disappear during the reign of Constantine, but continued to hold this office through the 390s as inscriptions testify. As such there was no apparent need to replace *pontifex maior* with some new alternative, such as *pontifex Vestae*. Furthermore, the idea that the *pontifices* were able to choose their official titles also does not work. Why would it be a choice? Roman titles both civic and religious had a purpose (even if we do not always fully understand their meaning). Accordingly, there must have been a motive for the title of “priest of Vesta” that distinguished its holders in some way and a reason why it initially appeared in the late 330s or early 340s CE.

⁶⁸⁹ Van Haeperen, 84-5.

If the very fact that *pontifices Vestae* were present during the fourth century is not confusing enough, the men who held this office failed to conform to any standardized naming practice. Five deviations of the title are used. Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus demonstrate the greatest amount of variation in the title since he was designated as *pontifex dea Vestae*, *pontifex Vestae*, and *pontifex maior Vestae*. In addition, the earliest known priest of Vesta, Tatianus, was the only one to use the name *pontifex Vesta matris*. The reason for this choice is unknown. It is possible that this was his official title, but perhaps this was purely the way it was (incorrectly) recorded by the people of Abellinum who erected the statue and inscription to honor him. However, this exact phrasing was not repeated in the inscriptions of any of the priests that came after him. In contrast, a statue and base honoring Praetextatus and erected by the Vestal Virgins themselves used the simple title of *pontifex Vestae* without additional modifiers. This seems especially odd considering Praetextatus was the most religiously decorated of the group. The last confirmed priest of Vesta, Lucius Ragonius Venustus, is the only one to repeat a particular title (although not exactly), and like Orfitus is identified as a *pontifex Vestalis maior*.⁶⁹⁰

The use of *maior* also provides an additional set of difficulties since it is not clear what it means in this context. Two possibilities exist. First, the *maior* could indicate some sort of hierarchy within the priesthood and as such would show that Orfitus and Venustus ranked above the others priests of Vesta. The second possibility is that instead of choosing either *pontifex maior* or *pontifex Vesta*, they combined the two options into one title. I believe the latter is possible—and even the most likely explanation—due to the fact that while several men of the fourth century held multiple religious roles, none of them ever claimed to be both a *pontifex maior* and a *pontifex Vestae*. Moreover, at this time a *pontifex maior* cannot be placed in a

⁶⁹⁰ Cameron, 154, has a different interpretation: “Note the way...L. Ragonius Venustus lovingly spin[s] out...his pontificate into *pontifex Vestalis maior*.”

superior position over a *pontifex minor*; although the latter was once an official position in Rome's history they are only documented from the early imperial period through 222CE. Thus although they were at one time a group, they did not endure into the fourth century.⁶⁹¹ Moreover, a few men like Orfitus and Praetextatus held the pontificate of *Dei Solis* in conjunction with being a priest of Vesta, or were also an *augur* like Venustus, but not once do the titles *pontifex maior* and *pontifex Vestae* appear on the same man's *cursus*. The only reasonable explanation for this is that the *pontifices maiores* and the *pontifices Vestae* were part of the same college of priests.

There is also little reason to require the priests of Vesta to have a unified title since her priestesses did not. Until the first century BCE the most common title used for the Vestal Virgins was either "sacerdos Vestalis" or "Sacerdos Vestae", after which the phrasing "virgo Vestalis" or "virgo Vestae" became more common.⁶⁹² However, variations on the title continued throughout antiquity. It is also quite possible that the dedicators of the various bases and statues honoring these priests either did not know (since it was a recent development), or took liberties with, the authorized formulation. Whereas the people of Abellinum or a guild of bakers or contractors might manage to do so without criticism, there would be no excuse for the Vestal Virgins recording the office incorrectly. Moreover, when the five variations of the title priest of Vesta are compared, what they all have two points in common: *pontifex* and *Vesta*.

⁶⁹¹ Cf. Rüpke, *Fasti*, I, 20: "Ursprünglich bloße Hilfskräfte der Pontifices, entwickelten sich die *cribae pontificum* an der Wende vom dritten zum zweiten Jahrhundert v.Chr. zu einer priesterlichen Gruppe, die in der Kaiserzeit aus den Reihen der Ritter besetzt wurde."

⁶⁹² Mekacher, 20-21. Cf. Gellius 10.15.31; *CIL* 6, 2128; She provides a comprehensive list of primary source examples in Latin, but also in Greek sources. This may also explain the one inscription that scholars claim mentions a *sacerdos* (priest) of Vesta. *CIL* 6, 2158: *D(ecimus) Licinius / D(ecimi) l(ibertus) Astragalus / sacerdos virginum Vestalium*. Mommsen believes that the *Sacerdotes Virginum Vestalium* were the same as the *sacerdotes sacrae urbis*, but I find this most unlikely. This has led to some debate over the nature of the *Sacerdos Urbis* (*Romae* and *Romae Aeternae*). Cf. Rüpke, *Fasti* I, 22-3; Mellor, *Dea Roma*, 102. However, there is no reason to associate the two groups, and a simple explanation resolves the issue of *CIL* 6, 2158: the "sacerdos" is not a priest, but rather a priestess (Vestal Virgin).

Given this information, I argue the following two points. First, that the official title of a fourth century CE priest of Vesta was *pontifex Vestae*. Second, that the reason for the title of priest of Vesta is that it identified one or more members of the college of *pontifices (maiores)* who had ties explicitly to Vesta and her cult.

The next problem involves what the *pontifices Vestae* did for the goddess and for Roman religion. Due to the suggested dating for the first known priest of Vesta falling in the years just after the death of Constantine, this period is a logical point of departure and it seems unlikely that the two events are mere coincidence. Emperors before Constantine were frequently far away from Rome, and this situation continued throughout the fourth century. To this fact should also be added their (in general) increasing personal preference for Christianity over traditional Roman religion. This meant that the pontifical college was typically without its official leader, and the various priesthoods must have adapted to this circumstance. In actual fact, the presence of the emperor was not necessary for the majority of the priesthoods. As a rule they nominated their own candidates when vacancies occurred, and their choices only needed to be confirmed by the Senate without the need for approval by the emperor.⁶⁹³ However, unlike the other groups that were largely self-sufficient, the cult of Vesta required a *pontifex*—traditionally the *pontifex maximus*—to fill vacancies in their college. Presumably this duty could go to another *pontifex* if given the authority by the high priest to act in his stead. It is probable then that starting with Tatianus (if not even earlier) the *pontifices Vestae* assumed the duties of the *pontifex maximus* with regard to the cult of Vesta. This would include the general supervision of the Vestal Virgins, the selection of new priestesses, and their punishment if necessary.

⁶⁹³ Rita Lizzi Testa, “Augures et pontifices; Public Sacral Law in Late Antique Rome (Fourth-Fifth Centuries AD),” in *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, Andrew Cain and Noel Lenski, eds. (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2009): 251-276, 265-6.

It is also possible that the *pontifices Vestae* purposefully meant to invoke a return to a time of more traditional Roman religious practices when the *pontifex maximus* was the person who held the most control over the Vestal Virgins and was even considered a priest of Vesta. Indeed, as far back as the Augustan age (although the association may have started earlier) a precedent existed that established the *pontifex maximus* as a “priest of Vesta”. A brief overview of its use in the poetry of this period may help to provide a stronger foundation for the appearance of the title in the fourth century CE.

Ovid uses the title “priest of Vesta” to describe the *pontifex maximus* several times in the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses*, a phenomenon that can only be explained by the terms acting as synonyms for one another. Julius Caesar served as *pontifex maximus* from 63 until his death in 44 BCE. Yet, Ovid refers to Caesar as Vesta’s priest twice in the *Fasti* and once in the *Metamorphoses*: Vesta calls Caesar her priest (*Fasti*, 3.699),⁶⁹⁴ Ovid has Octavian refer to Caesar as such while swearing an oath (*Fasti*, 5.573),⁶⁹⁵ and Venus names Caesar Vesta’s priest (*Metamorphoses*, 15.778).⁶⁹⁶ Since Caesar held the highest priesthood in Rome it may not have been a far stretch for popular mentality to see the supreme pontiff as a *de facto* priest of Vesta; after all, it was the *pontifex maximus* who chose the priestesses of Vesta, punished them when necessary, and was the man with the greatest access to the goddess’s temple. Likewise, in the

⁶⁹⁴ Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.697-700: *Praeteriturus eram gladius in principe fixos, cum sic a castis Vesta locuta focus: ‘ne dubita meminisse: meus fuit ille sacerdos, sacrilegae telis me petiere manus.* This conveniently falls under the entry for the Ides of March.

⁶⁹⁵ Ovid, *Fasti*, 5.569-576: *Voverat hoc iuvenis tunc, cum pia sustulit arma: a tantis Princeps incipiendus erat. Ille manus tendens, hinc stanti milite iusto, hinc coniuratis, talia dicta dedit: si mihi bellandi pater est Vestaeque sacerdos auctor, et ulcisci numen utrumque paro: Mars, ades et satia scelerato sanguine ferrum, stetque favor cause pro meliore tuus.* Note how the author continues the connection of Caesar to Vesta by saying that Augustus will avenge both his father and the goddess.

⁶⁹⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.778-779: *Quos prohibete, precor, facinusque repellite, neve caede sacerdotis flammam exstinguite Vestae!*

Fasti Ovid writes that Metellus, a *pontifex maximus* from the third century BCE, was also a “priest of Vesta”, and that he saved the Palladium from Vesta’s temple when it was on fire.⁶⁹⁷

Despite these allusions in Ovid’s works to *pontifices maximi* from earlier in Rome’s history who were also priests of Vesta, Ovid himself was a contemporary of Augustus. He did not write any of these passages until well after Augustus himself became high priest of the Romans in 12 BCE, which was also the same year he dedicated an altar and statue to Vesta on the Palatine.⁶⁹⁸ Price sees this dedication as providing the impetus for the subsequent passages of Ovid wherein he refers to Augustus as “priest of Vesta”; the two inhabit the same space (Augustus Vesta and Apollo now shared one “house”), and the public hearth in the Temple of Vesta which ensured the success of Rome would henceforth be confused with the imperial hearth of Augustus.⁶⁹⁹ Although I am not convinced that the dedication was absolutely necessary to the connection between the high priest and Vesta, it certainly did not hurt any possible association.

Regardless of whether the idea of the *pontifex maximus* also being a priest of Vesta predated the principate of Augustus or not, during his reign the connection was unmistakably put down in writing. Augustus was now to be considered a priest of Vesta, and the concept was also applied retroactively to Metellus and Caesar. Looking forward, if the association between the *pontifex maximus* and Vesta continued in popular mentality beyond the reign of Augustus, then all later emperors were also priests of Vesta. Then, once Rome’s leaders were no longer willing

⁶⁹⁷ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.443-54: *provolat in medium, et magna ‘succurrite!’ voce ‘non est auxilium flere’ Metellus ait. ‘pignora virgineis fatalia tollite palmis: non ea sunt voto, sed rapienda manu. me miserum! dubitatis?’ ait. dubitare videbat et pavidas posito procubuisse genu. haurit aquas tollensque manus, ‘ignoscite,’ dixit ‘sacra! vir intrabo non adeunda viro. si scelus est, in me commissi poena redundet: sit capitis damno Roma soluta mei.’ dixit et inrupit, factum dea rapta probavit pontificisque sui munere tuta fuit.* This passage has sometimes led to confusion over the exact role of Metellus in Roman religion (*pontifex maximus*, priest of Vesta, or both). Q. Mucius Scaevola (d. 82 BCE) is another example of an earlier individual to be described as “pontifex Vestalis”, but this is done so by Florus (c. CE 75-140?), who appears to have picked up the idea from Ovid. See: Geraldine Herbert-Brown, *Ovid and the Fasti: an historical study*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 69-71. It is also necessary to remember that Scaevola was murdered near or inside the Temple of Vesta while *pontifex maximus*.

⁶⁹⁸ See chapter 1.

⁶⁹⁹ Simon Price, *CAH* 10, 2nd ed., 825-7.

or able to perform the duties that the cult of Vesta required, the priests who filled this role may have appropriated the unofficial title for themselves.

A further consideration is the number and tenure of the *pontifices Vestae*. The paucity of verifiable holders of the position gives the impression that there was only one priest of Vesta at any given time. This possibility remains if analyzing only the information provided in their career inscriptions. C. Iulius Rufinianus Ablabius Tatianus held the position in approximately the late 330s and into the 340s. The next *pontifex Vestae*, Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus Honorius, died in 369. If Celsinus Titianus was in fact a priest of Vesta, he would be the next in line since his death is dated to late in 380 CE.⁷⁰⁰ This would have allowed Vettius Agorius Praetextatus to become the next *pontifex Vestae* and fill the role until his death in 384. Lucius Ragonius Venustus consequently would be the last priest of Vesta. Thus, even if the presumption is followed that the office of *pontifex Vestae* was a lifelong appointment (as was the position of *pontifex maior*), it is possible that all of these men could have filled the role without their dates of service overlapping based on the evidence from their personal career inscriptions alone.

In contrast, the examination of two additional inscriptions indicates that there was more than one *pontifex Vestae* at any given time. The first, *CIL* 6, 2158, has already been mentioned since it is frequently misread as saying that two additional priests of Vesta existed. More importantly for the present discussion, it states that the *pontifices Vestae* (plural) provided funds for the repair of the stations of the *Salii Palatini*.⁷⁰¹ Another inscription, *CIL* 6, 2145, was dedicated to the *virgo Vestalis maxima* Coelia Concordia and should be considered in this

⁷⁰⁰ Celsinus's death is referred to in the letters of his brother Symmachus, *Epistles*, 1.54. The *PLRE* dates this event to late in 380 CE.

⁷⁰¹ *CIL* 6, 2158 [ILS 4944]: *Mansiones Saliorum Palatinorum a veteribus ob armorum magnalium custodiam constitutes longa nimis aetate neglectas pecunia sua reparaverunt pontifices Vestae viri clarissimi promagisterio Plotii Acilii Lucilli Vitrasii Praetextati viri clarissimi.*

context. It was funded by Fabia Paulina in gratitude to the Vestal Virgins who honored her recently deceased husband Praetextatus (d. 384 CE).

Coeliae Concordiae virgini / Vestali maximae Fabia Paulina clarissima femina
statuam faciendam conlocandamque / curavit cum propter / egregiam eius pudicitiam
insignemque / circa cultum divinum / sanctitatem tum quod / haec prior eius viro / Vettio
Agorio Praetextato viro clarissimo omnia singulari / dignoque etiam ab huius / modi
virginibus et sacerdotibus coli statuam conlocarat.

There are many aspects worth noting in this text. First, the statue of Praetextatus was being dedicated by the *virginibus et sacerdotibus*. There can be little doubt that the former refers to the Vestal Virgins, and the latter most denotes the *pontifices Vestae*.

Symmachus mentions a disagreement among the priests over if the Vestals should be given permission to make this dedication to Praetextatus. It appears in a letter Symmachus wrote to Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, a *pontifex maior*.⁷⁰² Symmachus calls him “our Praetextatus” (*Praetextato nostro*), which could be taken to indicate that they were all part of the same group of priests. Whether Symmachus intended to include the Vestals in this collectivity is less certain. That the priestesses consulted the *pontifices* for permission also indicates that these men were acting as the combined leaders of the pontifical college. Although Symmachus (and he indicates a few other priests) disapproved of the project going forward, permission was granted to the Vestals. It is uncertain if Symmachus’ position as a *pontifex maior* and not a *pontifex Vestae* gave him less influence or if he was simply overruled. It is possible that the only reason the priestesses were allowed to honor Praetextatus in this way is due to the fact that he was a *pontifex Vestae* and therefore part of their cult. Indeed, several examples of statues honoring the *Virgo Vestalis maxima* exist, and so there was a custom in place for them to follow if they decided a member of their cult was worthy of distinction.

⁷⁰² Symmachus, *Epistles*, 2.36.2: *Praetextato nostro monumentum statuae dicare destinant virgines sacri Vestalis antistites. Consulti pontifices, priusquam reverentiam sublimis sacerdotii aut longae aetatis usum vel condicionem temporis praesentis expenderent, absque paucis qui me secuti sunt, ut eius opificium statuerent adnuerunt.*

One additional consideration should be kept in mind when considering the number of *pontifices Vestae*; it is unlikely that all of their names have been passed down to us. Given what is known—and what can reasonably be presumed—about the *pontifices maiores* of the fourth century, the amount of men known to be part of the priesthood does not come close to being a comprehensive list. The same is true for the identities of Vestal Virgins during this century. Accordingly, it is unlikely that we know the names of every priest of Vesta, or how our understanding of their group might change if we did.

Promagistrates

The priests of Vesta should not be confused with promagistrates. An analysis of the sources confirms that these were separate positions with different functions, and, most likely, different tenures of office. I have argued that the *pontifices Vestae* were part of the college of *pontifices maiores*, and that the priests of Vesta filled the role that the *pontifex maximus* used to perform for the cult and priestesses of Vesta. In similar fashion, the evidence suggests that the promagistrates were also members of the college of priests and that they acted on behalf of the emperor in his absence. Their purview, however, would have been wider and less specific.

The office of promagistrate was used in many ways during the Imperial period. Epigraphic evidence decisively points to individuals who carry this title, although the exact powers of *promagistri* varied since there were multiple types. In matters of religion, especially ones that also mention the *pontifici*, it is logical to presume that the promagistrates were usually in charge of the pontifical college. By the reign of Constantine when more frequently than not the emperor was absent from the city, he would have needed someone (at least on occasion) to manage affairs of official state religion. Presumably this person would have been called a

promagister. Borghesi suggested that starting with Constantine the emperors when absent from Rome deputized someone called a *promagister* (and not a *maestro* or *magister* out of respect for the emperors' continued position as *pontifex maximus*) to oversee the pontifical college.⁷⁰³

If correct, the next question is how a *promagister* acting on behalf of the emperor was chosen, and what his duration of office would have been. Examination of the few fourth century examples of promagistrates provides some clues. The first inscription chronologically (325-345 CE) belongs to Marcus Aurelius Consius Quartus Iuniorus, who was a *promagistro iterum*.

CIL VI, 1700 = *ILS* 1249: Singularis integritatis / et bonitatis exsimiae / M(arco) Aur(elio) Consio Quarto / Iuniori c(larissimo) v(iro) correctori / Flaminiae et Piceni / pontifici maiori / promagistro iterum / duodecimviro / Anconitani et / Fanestres clientes / patrono.

This example indicates two important facts: that he was a *pontifex maior* and a promagistrate *interum*. The first clearly tells us that Quartus was part of the pontifical college. It also supports my theory that the *promagister* was selected from among the *pontifices maiores*. Secondly, the modifier *interum* suggests that the position of *promagister* was not lifelong, but perhaps annual, a term of service that was more common among civic than religious offices.⁷⁰⁴

Another honorific inscription for a Vestal Virgin *maxima* also supports these points. The name of the honoree has been erased, but it can be firmly dated to 9 June 364 CE.

CIL VI 32422 [*ILS* 4938]: Ob meritum castitatis / pudicitiae adq(ue) in sacris / religionibusque / doctrinae mirabilis / C[[3]]e v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) / **pontifices** vv(iri) cc(larissimi) / **promag(istro) Macrinio** / Sossiano v(iro) c(larissimo) **p(ontifice) m(aiore?)** // Dedicata V Idus Iunias / divo Ioviano et Varroniano / conssulibus)

⁷⁰³ Bartolomeo Borghesi, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Vol. VII, (Paris 1862): 376-82, 381.

⁷⁰⁴ Borghesi, 381; Regula Frei-Stolba, "Coelia Concordia, la dernière grande vierge Vestale, et la participation des femmes au discours politique du IVe s. apr. J.-C.", in: Regula Frei-Stolba, Anne Bielman, and Olivier Bianchi (eds.), *Les femmes antiques entre sphère privée et sphère publique*, (Frankfurt 2003), 286. John Scheid, *Romulus et ses frères. Le collège des frères arvaies, modèle du culte public dans la Rome des Empereurs*, BEFAR 275, (Rome, 1990), 266.

⁷⁰⁴ Borghesi, 381 ; Van Haepere, 197; Rüpke, *Fasti*, vol 1, 19-20.

This example identifies Macrinus Sossianus as a *promagister* and he is almost certainly a *pontifex maior*.⁷⁰⁵ Accordingly, it should be taken that at the time the statue and base were commissioned Sossianus served as the promagistrate of the *pontifices* who were responsible for this dedication.

If *CIL* 6, 2158, is read correctly it states that Plotius Acilius and Lucillius Vitrasius Praetextatus were promagistrates (and not priests of Vesta). It also records that the *pontifices Vestae* financed this reconstruction project, which once again connects the pontiffs with the promagistracy. However, the standard interpretation of the inscription's dedication during the *promagisterio* of Plotius Acilius Lucillius and Vitrasius Praetextatus does not conform to the theory that there was only one promagistrate at any time. This is a result of another misreading of the text, and can be resolved by a re-examination and new translation of the inscription:

CIL 6, 2158 [ILS 4944]: *Mansiones Saliorum Palatinorum a veteribus ob armorum magnalium custodiam constitutes longa nimis aetate neglectas pecunia sua reparaverunt pontifices Vestae viri clarissimi promagisterio Plotii Acilii Lucilli Vitrasii Praetextati viri clarissimi.*

“The priests of Vesta, of the most esteemed rank, have repaired with their own money the stations of the Salii Palatini which were established by our ancestors for the storage of the great shields and which had been neglected for far too long. They have done this when Plotius Acilius Lucillus Vitrasius Praetextatus, of the most esteemed rank, held the position of promagister.”⁷⁰⁶

This new rendering disentangles all the potential problems by arguing that Plotius Acilius Lucillus Vitrasius Praetextatus was one person—not two, and that he was a promagistrate and

⁷⁰⁵ Christian Hülsen, *The Roman forum: its history and its monuments*, trans. Jesse Benedict Carter, (New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1906), 203-4, identifies Sossianus as a *pontifex maximus*. Rüpke also reconstructs the designation *p m* as *pontifex maximus*. This seems extremely unlikely. Most scholars believe that all emperors until Gratian retained this title, and Macrinus Sossianus would be the only example of such a phenomenon. Rather I believe that the *p(ontifice) m(aiore?)* adopted by the *CIL* to be the better solution.

⁷⁰⁶ Kleijwegt and Stark, “A Reexamination of *CIL* VI, 2158,” (forthcoming). Although we came by this conclusion independently, see also Borghesi, 380: “Anch’io ho sempre pensato che Plotio Acilio Lucilio Vitrasio Pretexxtato fosse una persona sola, e che il duplice VV · CC, nell’ ultima riga, non provenisse se non che da una congettura scusabile ai giorni dell’ Apiano, nei quali credevasi che niuno avesse portato al di là di tre o al più di quattro nomi.”

not a priest of Vesta. Moreover, Borghesi's theory that Plotius Acillius Lucillius Vitrasius Praetextatus became a *promagister* because he was already a *pontifex* appears to be correct.⁷⁰⁷

These points are further confirmed by the dedicatory inscription for the first priest of Vesta, Tatianus. He was: *pontifici Vestae matris et in collegio pontificum promagistro*. Thus, the first known *pontifex Vestae* was also a promagistrate of the pontifical college.

The pattern accordingly holds that during the fourth century promagistrates acted on behalf on the emperor in religious matters, that they had ties to the *pontifices maiores* and were chosen from among this group, that their appointment was for one year (although a person could serve more than once), and that there was only one *promagister* of this type at any time. A couple of further suggestions have also been made in the scholarship concerning this office. Van Haepereen proposes that a *promagister* was selected from among the pontiffs who were present in Rome during the year of office.⁷⁰⁸ To this Saquete adds that the promagistrate was responsible not only for acting on behalf of the emperor in religious matters, but also for carrying out or enforcing actions decided by the pontifical college.⁷⁰⁹ Indeed, since the Republic the role of *pontifex maximus* did entail some unique responsibilities, and one of these appears to have been carrying out the decisions on the pontifical college. For example, a passage of Livy discusses the trial of the Vestal Postumia (420 BCE) who was accused of *incestus* on account that she was too showy in her dress and the too free in her speech, more so than was proper of a *virgo*. This led to suspicion about her purity. Postumia was found innocent, but she received a warning from the *pontifex maximus*—in the name of the college—to dress and act properly.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁷ Borghesi, 380.

⁷⁰⁸ Van Haepereen, 197.

⁷⁰⁹ J. C. Saquete, *Las Vírgines Vestales. Un sacerdocio femenino en la religion pública romana*, (Madrid, 2000), 89.

⁷¹⁰ Livy, 4.44.11-2: *eodem anno Postumia virgo Vestalis de incestu causam dixit crimine innoxia, ab suspitione propter cultum amoeniorem ingeniumque liberius, quam virginem decet, parum abhorrens. eam ampliata, deinde absolutam pro collegii sententia pontifex maximus abstinere iocis colique sancte potius quam scite iussit.*

The formerly problematic inscription *CIL* 6, 2158, is also used by scholars as a source in the debate over changing religious practices in fourth century Rome, especially under Gratian. Its importance depends in large part on its dating, which is not clearly stated and has been the topic of speculation. Scholarship generally dates it to 364 CE or after. The main reasons for this are cited as the decline in pagan sentiment among Rome's rulers, and potential ties to *CIL* 6, 32422, a particular inscription in honor of an unknown Vestal Virgin dated to the same year and carried out by the promagister Sossianus.⁷¹¹ Indeed, Saquete believes that by 382, and likely for some time before, the Pontifical College had assumed control over matters of traditional Roman religion, but that there still would have been need for a *promagister* to carry out specific actions it decided. As such, the term *promagister* was used rather than *pontifex maximus* out of respect for Gratian.⁷¹² Attempts have also been made to date the creation of *CIL* 6, 2158, more specifically to 382 CE or after. This argument is based upon the "anti-pagan" legislature he made during his rule, which included the removal of the Altar of Victory from the *curia*, the withdrawal of financial support from the pagan cults, and the revocation of certain privileges of the Vestal Virgins and, in December of 382.⁷¹³ This situation may have forced the *pontifices Vestae* to fund the repairs to the stations of the *Salii* themselves.

Neither explanation is sound. The idea that *CIL* 6, 2158, can be dated to the same approximate period of Sossianus since both inscriptions mention promagistrates does not work since Tatianus also held this role as early as the late 330s CE. Moreover, no firm ground exists for dating this inscription to the reign of Gratian. During this time the pagan cults continued, as did the pontifical college. Moreover, these cults would have had treasuries they could draw from to supplement their missing financial support. This would be in addition to the personal fortunes

⁷¹¹ Rüpke, "Religiöse," 61-2.

⁷¹² Saquete, 89. Cf. Cameron, 134.

⁷¹³ Symmachus, *Relatio*, 3.7; Ambrose, *Epistles*, 17.3; Zosimus, 4.36.5.

of the priests and priestesses which in most cases would have been considerable. Testa also attacks this theory on the grounds that Gratian's order, which is generally taken as cutting the funding for all pagan cults, pertained only to the Vestals.⁷¹⁴ Furthermore, recent scholarship argues that Gratian maintained the title of *pontifex maximus* until at least 379, and possibly as late as 383 CE.⁷¹⁵ Naturally, keeping the title and performing the duties of the office is not necessarily the same thing, but this point does nothing to assist with the dating of this inscription. Rüpke suggests that the restoration of the *mansiones Saliorum* by the *pontifices Vestae* may date even to before Emperor Julian (355-363).⁷¹⁶ In short, it is not possible to determine an exact date for *CIL* 6.2158, and even coming up with a general timeframe is difficult. Although the reign of Gratian could be correct, it cannot be established on the basis of the available information.

The dating could be assisted by any additional information about the promagistrate of *CIL* 6, 2158, Plotius Acilius Luciullius Vitrasius Praetextatus, but nothing else is known about him. It seems highly likely that there was a familial connection between Vitrasius Praetextatus and both Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus and Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. During the Empire it was usual to draw names from both the paternal and maternal sides of the family, which is part of the reason why one individual could have five or more name (such as the earliest priest of

⁷¹⁴ Testa, 273.

⁷¹⁵ Dates between 375 and 383 have been suggested for the abandonment of the title *pontifex maximus*. For 376 see: F. Paschoud, "La fin du regne de Gratien dans l'Histoire nouvelle de Zosime", in F. Paschoud, *Cinq études sur Zosime*, Paris, 1975, 63-99: 77. For 379 CE see: A. Chastagnol, *La prefecture urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire*, (Paris, 1960), 157; K. L. Noethlichs, *Die gesetzgeberischen Massnahmen der christlichen Kaiser des vierten Jahrhunderts gegen Haretiker, Heiden und Juden*, (Cologne: 1971), 202. For 382 CE (in connection with the fiscal measures) see: J.F. Matthews, "Symmachus and the Oriental Cults," *JRS* 63, (1973), 175-95, 176; L. Cracco Ruggini, "Il paganesimo romano tra religione e politica (384-394): per una reinterpretazione del Carmen contra paganos," *RAL* ser. 8, 23, (1979): 3-141, 4 n. 3. For 383 CE see: Alan Cameron, "Gratian's Repudiation of the Pontifical Robe," *JRS* 58 (1968): 96-102, 96-9; A. Alföldi, *A Festival of Isis in the Fourth Century*, (Budapest: Pázmány, 1937), 36; Curran, 204.

⁷¹⁶ Rüpke, "Religiöse," 61-2.

Vesta, C. Iulius Rufinianus Ablabius Tatianus).⁷¹⁷ Praetextatus' family ancestry remains uncertain, but he married Fabia Aconia Paulina, a member of the noble Aconii family, which suggests he came from a distinguished family.⁷¹⁸ The sources indicate that Praetextatus and Paulina had at least one child according to a funerary poem (*CIL* 6, 1777) was dedicated to Praetextatus soon after his death by a child.⁷¹⁹ Most scholars assume this dedication to have been made by a son, but a daughter is also possible.⁷²⁰ Praetextatus was also connected to the Symmachii family through friendship and shared offices (if not also in some way by marriage).⁷²¹ Indeed, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus was married to Rusticana, the daughter of Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus, who was a *pontifex Vestae*. Thus known ties between all of these individuals existed. This increases the likelihood that Plotius Acilius Lucillius Vitrasius Praetextatus was related to both Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus and Vettius Agorius Praetextatus.⁷²² Moreover, aristocratic pagans were often favored for the grant of a priesthood if a close family member had previously held the same role. As a promagistrate, Vitrasius Praetextatus must have been a *pontifex maior*; this position held by both the elder Symmachus and Aurelius Symmachus, but was also closely connected to the group of *pontifices Vestae* that included Orfitus and Vettius Agorius Praetextatus. Still, it is not possible, to establish a firm family

⁷¹⁷ Kahlos, 20. Maternal lineage is most likely to be found in the cognomen 'Vitrasius'. See: Olli Salomies, *Adoptive and Polyonymous nomenclature in the Roman Empire*, (Helsinki, 1992). (Most examples seem to be from the second century CE.).

⁷¹⁸ Maijastina Kahlos, *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus: A Senatorial Life in Between*, (Rome, 2002), 22.

⁷¹⁹ *CIL* 6, 1777: Vettio Agorio Praetextato, v(iro) c(larissimo) et inl(ustrissimo), / correctori Tusciae et Umbriae, / consulari Lusitaniae, proconsuli / Achaiae, praef(ecto) urb(i), praef(ecto) praetorii / Illyrici, Italiae et Africae, cons(uli) designato, / legato amplissimi ordinis septies / et ad impetrandum reb(us) arduis / semper opposito, / parenti publice privatimq(ue) reverendo; / ut etiam statuae ipsius domus / honoraret, insignia constitui / locarique curavit.

⁷²⁰ Kahlos, 24.

⁷²¹ Opt. cit. Christiana Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: A Political Biography*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 41.

⁷²² It seems unlikely that Orfitus (c. 270-369) could have been Vitrasius Praetextatus's father (more likely his [maternal] grandfather) since he is not known to have produced a son. However, Vettius Agorius Praetextatus (c. 315-384) seems a potential candidate for his father or uncle.

relationship for Vitrasius Praetextatus, and without knowing how he fit into this network his identification as a promagistrates cannot be used for the dating of *CIL* 6, 2158.

Conclusion

The evidence in this chapter supports the theory that from the time of Constantine through the remainder of the fourth century the aristocratic pagan senators in Rome took more control over traditional religious practice. The absence of the Emperors from the capitol and the growing interest in Christianity would almost demand it. Thus in the fourth century the *pontifices Vestae* appear, and men held the office of *promagister* in order to act on behalf of the emperor in religious matters.

Although Aurelian's religious changes in the late third century have traditionally been seen as the reason for the creation of the title priest of Vesta, this has been proven incorrect. He may have been responsible for the creation of the change in title of the priests to *pontifices maiores*, but nothing more. The origins for the title *pontifex Vestae* can be traced back to the reign of Constantine or just after. He, or his immediate successor, created a new role for the leadership of the traditional pagan cults in Rome that gave some of them direct authority over the Vestal Virgins, the only priesthood that required the direct oversight of a priest for—at a minimum—the addition of new members.

Accordingly, the prior theory that the titles *pontifex maior* and *pontifex Vestae* could be used interchangeably is only partially correct; while every *pontifex Vestae* was also a *pontifex maior* or at least a member of this college, not every *pontifex maior* was a *pontifex Vestae*. This argument also helps to explain why some priests of Vesta added the modifier *maior* to their designations—they were part of the *pontifices maiores*, but they had a more specific function to

perform on behalf of the Roman emperor and in honor of the goddess that the cult of these priestesses served.

**Chapter 6: The Vestal Virgins in the 3rd and 4th centuries:
official policy and popular perception**

The Vestal Virgins continued to serve and perform their duties on behalf of the Roman state and the goddess Vesta through the late fourth century CE. Our main source of information for the cult in the third century comes from archaeological remains, and particularly from a group of statues and inscriptions found in the *Atrium Vestae*. These were dedicated in honor of several *virgines Vestalis maximae* and most of the examples belong to the period between 240 and 300 CE. Literary references to Vesta or her priestess are seriously limited after the reign of Elagabalus (218-212 CE) until the second half of the fourth century. During this time the primary argument for the continuation of cult without any major incident is the lack of documentation rather than the existence of it; no charges of *incestum* occurred and no new duties or privileges are recorded. Still, what information we do have provides an indication of the various roles the Vestals continued to play in Roman society. This discussion comprises the first section of this chapter.

The second part considers the possible, but relatively undocumented, changes that the cult of Vesta may have experienced in the fourth century. Since emperors were increasingly away from Rome and the cults without their *pontifex maximus*, some adaptation to traditional practices must have been instituted to ensure the continuation of the priesthoods. The Vestal cult should have been established enough to run on its own and for the priestesses to perform all of their customary duties without the constant supervision of the high priest. However, someone with proper religious authority would need to step in on occasion, especially when it was necessary to fill a vacancy in the college. This resulted in the first expansion of the cult since the Roman monarchy period when the number of priestesses was increased from four to six. Thus,

only in the last few decades of its existence a group of men called the *pontifices Vesta* became part of the Vesta's official worship in Rome. Official policies regarding religious practices also began to change in the fourth century. Some of these may have affected the manner in which the Vestals performed their traditional duties at specific festivals and ceremonies, but this is not recorded. As such it seems that the Vestals were able to work around this new legislation, and no major impact on the cult is mentioned until the reign of Gratian (375-383 CE).

The last 30 years of the cult of Vesta are especially eventful and also better documented. One *virgo Vestalis maxima* was honored by the priests with a statue and base in 364 CE, but her name was subsequently erased. Her identity and the reason for this are unknown, although the inscription has been tied to several other events in the last years of the cult. The reign of Gratian also marked a turning point for the decline of the cult of Vesta, although the amount of negative impact he conferred remains a matter of debate. The writings of Symmachus provide the greatest quantity of information about the Vestals during the 380s and early 390s. They cover several topics, but common themes throughout are the importance of the cult and the proper conduct of its priestesses. Meanwhile, Christian authors attacked the Vestals, a fact that supports their continued symbolic importance during this period. Indeed, both pagans and Christians used the Vestals to support their beliefs, even after the temple of Vesta was closed in 394 CE.

The Vestal Virgins: 200 – 360 CE

The status and perception of the cult of Vesta and the Vestal Virgins during the third and fourth centuries is a subject that deserves renewed attention. Recent scholarship has made attempts to do so by examining the evidence that demonstrates their role as patrons, the possible changes that Gratian's legislation had on the cult and the critical pagan dialogue that followed these acts, or on the negative comments made by Christian authors about the priestesses. In one

of the earliest attempts to situate the cult of Vesta into late Roman imperial society, Arthur Nock suggested that a “rise in religious sentiment towards Vesta” occurred in the third century CE. He based this theory on several factors including the abuse of the Vestals and their cult by several emperors (specifically Caracalla and Elagabalus) that “may have evoked a certain religious sentiment towards Vesta”.⁷²³ He further notes the return in popularity of the phrase *Romae aeternae* on coins and dedications, and the appearance of Vesta on several coin types, especially under Gallienus and Salonina (between the years of 257-259).⁷²⁴ Nock also contends that during a time of organized persecutions of Christians (the second half of the third and early fourth centuries) the wellbeing of the Roman Empire depended on the traditional state religions.⁷²⁵ As part of his study he compiled a list of statues and inscriptions found in the *Atrium Vestae*.⁷²⁶ Nock realized that the majority of the examples date to the third century, a fact that he used to support his theory about the rise of the cult at this time.

I am not convinced by Nock that the cult of Vesta experienced an increase in popularity during the third century since this would indicate that a decline had occurred. Despite the negative treatment of the Vestals by some emperors, the evidence does not support an overall waning in the status of the cult. For example, Raepsaet-Charlier has determined that priestesses from the period between Augustus and Domitian continued to come from high-ranking families.⁷²⁷ The prevalence of statues and bases in honor of the *virgines Vestalis maximae* are an

⁷²³ Arthur Darby Nock, “A Diis Electa: A Chapter in the Religious History of the Third Century”, in *Essays on Religion in the Ancient World*, Zeph Stewart, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972): 252-273, 253 and 257 [original essay 1930].

⁷²⁴ Nock, 258. Cf. *RIC* V 109 no. 9; 115, nos. 70-71.

⁷²⁵ Nock, 259. Cf. Eduard Schwartz, *Kaiser Constantin und die christliche Kirche*, (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1913), 42.

⁷²⁶ See also: Esther Boise van Deman, “Notes on a few Vestal inscriptions,” *AJPh* 29, (1908): 172-8, especially 176; M. M. McGlannan Linder, “The Vestal Virgins and their Imperial Patrons: Sculptures and Inscriptions from the Atrium Vestae in the Roman Forum” (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 1995).

⁷²⁷ Marie-Thérèse Raepsaet-Charlier, “Les sacerdoces des femmes sénatoriales sous le Haut-Empire”, in *Prosopographie et Histoire Religieuse*, Marie-Francoise Baslez and Francoise Prévot eds, (Paris : De Boccard, 2005): 283-304, 285: “Non seulement la moitié d’entre elles appartiennent à l’ordre sénatorial, mais plusieurs étaient

interesting point of consideration, but one that can be explained in multiple ways. Although most belong to the third century CE, I doubt that this sort of dedication was a practice that occurred predominately in this period, and it seems unlikely that the practice of honoring the *virgo Vestalis maixima* suddenly stopped. Rather, it is more likely that this was an act that took place for some time, since similar examples exist from the first and fourth centuries CE, just not with the same level of frequency.⁷²⁸ Some of the statues and bases also may have been damaged in one of the several fires that spread to the Temple of Vesta and the *Atrium Vestae*. Indeed, the last major reconstruction in the precinct of Vesta prior the increase in the number of inscriptions began under Septimius Severus and Julia Domna at approximately the beginning of the third century. Another possibility is that some were purposefully destroyed. The statues were found separated from their bases, heaped up in a pile, and presumably waiting to be destroyed in a medieval lime kiln.⁷²⁹ Thus, it is entirely conceivable that some statues were destroyed—either incidentally in antiquity or purposefully in latter centuries. The examples that remain could largely be due to chance, or the fact that they were merely the last in the pile for destruction. Furthermore, although these inscriptions identify several *virgines Vestalis maximae* from the third century even this does not appear to be an exhaustive list given some large periods of time between dedications, especially from 215-240 and 257-286 CE.

The *Atrium Vestae* was the home of the priestesses and their servants, and in this way it is comparable to a *domus familiae*. As such it is not surprising that important figures like the *Vestal Virgin maxima* would be honored in this semi-private and semi-public space. Public statues honoring Vestal priestesses have only rarely been found in other contexts, and I am aware

members de familles patriciennes, et de familles qui fournissaient à l'Etat romain des grands sacerdoce masculins.” The only priestess proven to be from the equestrian order was Vettienia Sabinilla in the mid 3rd century.

⁷²⁸ Cf. *CIL* 6, 2127 and 2178 (Junia Torquata who may not have been a *maxima*), and *CIL* 6, 32409 (Praetextata).

⁷²⁹ Christian Hülsen, *The Roman forum: its history and its monuments*, trans. Jesse Benedict Carter, (New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1906).

of only two examples. One was as statue for Claudia Quinta who, according to the various legends, was either a matron or a priestess of Vesta. Tradition states that she pulled the boat carrying the Magna Mater (in the form of a stone) ashore near Rome.⁷³⁰ Accordingly a statue of her was erected at the entrance of Cybele's temple in Rome, located on the Palatine Hill.⁷³¹ The second possible example is a statue for the Vestal Gaia Taracia who donated the Tiber Island to the city of Rome.⁷³² However, a report of Pliny gives the impression that it may no longer have been displayed in the first century CE.⁷³³ The remains of either statue have not been found. Still, these references indicate that it was possible for Vestal priestesses who had performed some exceptional service for the state to be commemorated in a public place.

Scholars have also tried to compare the statues of the Vestals to those of high ranking magistrates who received honorific statues (in contrast to ones that were funerary or located in cemeteries). Eck determined that only in rare cases were honorary statues for Senators and high ranking equestrian officials placed in the Forum or a Basilica (public property). All other examples belong to the private sector, and are found in large houses or atriums.⁷³⁴ The atrium,

⁷³⁰ Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 34; Livy, *History of Rome*, 29.14; Propertius, 4.10.51-52; Statius, *Silvae*, 1. 2. 245-246; Ovid, *Fasti*, 5.155-158.

⁷³¹ Valerius Maximus, 1.8.11. E. S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome*, (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1992), 118-9, believes the statue was placed there during the dedication of the temple in 191 BCE. See also: J. Gérard, "Légende et politique autour de la Mère des dieux," *Revue des études latines* 58 (1980): 153-175.

⁷³² The original accounts come from Plutarch, *Publicola* 8.8.101b, and Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 7.7.2-4 (although he says the donated land was the Campus Martius). Gellius also records that Gaia Taracia was honored with a law which set out the central prerogatives of the Vestals (*lex Horatia*).

⁷³³ Pliny, *Natural History*, 34.11.6: *invenitur statua decreta et taraciae gaeae sive fufetiae virgini vestali, "ut poneretur ubi vellet," quod adiectum non minus honoris habet quam feminae esse decretam. meritum eius ipsis ponam annalium verbis: "quod campum tiberinum gratificata esset ea populo"*. "A statue appears also to have been decreed to Taracia Caia, or Furetia, a Vestal Virgin, the same, too, to be placed wherever she might think fit; an additional honour, no less remarkable, it is thought, than the grant itself of a statue to a female. I will state her merits in the words of the Annals: "Because she had gratuitously presented to the public the field bordering on the Tiber," John Bostock, trans.

⁷³⁴ Werner Eck, "Ehrungen für Personen hohen soziopolitischen Ranges im öffentlichen und privaten Bereich," in *Die römische Stadt im 2. Jh. N. Chr., Kolloquium Xanten vom 2. bis 4. Mai 1990*, H.-J. Schalles, H. von Hesberg, and P. Zanker, eds. (Köln, 1994): 359-376, 363-7. He finds approximately 13 examples of statues placed with express permission and with the reason for the dedication identified.

however, may be best understood as a public area on private land.⁷³⁵ Frei-Stolba compares the Atrium of the Vestals to those of senators whose atria contained several statue bases and finds that (in general) friends and clients erected statues for the Senators, while family members, servants and priests, and clients erected them for the *Virgo Vestalis maxima*. She further concludes that the statues were a sort of gallery of ancestors and intended as an honor.⁷³⁶

The dedicatory inscriptions for the Vestals clearly show their role as patrons in the third century.⁷³⁷ Clients honoring them demonstrate a considerable range in social status from equestrians to *liberti*. Campia Severina, *V.V. max.* received two such dedications. She helped Aemilius Pardalas to become tribune of cohort I *Aquitanae*, and Q. Veturius Callistratus, *suffragio eius*, to achieve the position of procurator and chief librarian.⁷³⁸ Other examples are less explicit about the particular help given by the priestess being honored. For instance, in an inscription for Numisia Maximilla, *V.V. max.*, the dedicator, C. Helvidius Mysticus, describes himself as *devotus beneficiis eius*.⁷³⁹ Several inscriptions honoring Flavia Publicia, *V.V. max.*,

⁷³⁵ A. Zaccaria Ruggiu, *Spazio private e spazio pubblico nella città romana*, (Rome: École française de Rome 210, 1995).

⁷³⁶ Regula Frei-Stolba, “Flavia Publica, virgo Vestalis maxima. Zu den Inschriften des Atrium Vesta,” in *Imperium Romanum. Studien zu Geschichte und Rezeption*, P. Kneissl and V. Losemann eds., (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998): 233-251, 247.

⁷³⁷ First century examples of inscriptions showing Vestals as patrons also exist. Cf. *CIL* 6, 2128 (= *ILS* 4923) dedicated to the *Juno* of Junia Torquata honors her as a *patronae* of a freedman Actius; *CIL* 6, 2127 is dedicated by a freedman Juvenio. See: Marie-Thérèse Raepsaet-Charlier, *Prosopographie des femmes de l'ordre senatorial (I^{er}-II^e siècles)*, (Louvain, 1987), 406; Barbara Scardigli, “Servi private delle Vestali,” in *Schiavi e dipendenti nell'ambito dell' 'oikos' e della 'familia'*, eds. M. Moggi and G. Cordiano, (Pisa: ETS, 1997): 233-248; J. C. Saquete, *Las Virgines Vestales. Un sacerdocio femenino en la religion pública romana*, (Madrid, 2000), 117. Scardigli also cites two literary references to slaves of the Vestals. One comes from Livy, 8.15.7-8 and mentions their slaves in conjunction with a charge of *incestus* against the Vestal Minucia in 337 BCE. The other is from Pliny, *Epistles*, 4.11.6-9, which refers to a freedman of the Vestal Cornelia who was accused by Domitian of *incestum*.

⁷³⁸ *CIL* 6, 2131 (= *ILS* 4929) [21 March, 242]: *Campiae Severinae / v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) / sanctissimae benignissimae / pro conlatis in se beneficiis / equestri(is) ord(inis) item secundae militiae / Aemilius Pardalas trib(unus) coh(ortis) I / Aquitanae petito eius ornatus // Dedicata IIII Idus Maias / Sabino II et Venus[t]o co(n)s(ulibus)*; and 2132 (= *ILS* 4928): *Campiae Severinae / v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) sanctissimae / cuius sinceram pudicitiam / senatus comprobata aeterna / laude publice cumulavit / Q(uintus) Veturius Callistratus v(ir) e(gregius) / suffragio eius factus proc(urator) rat(ionum) / summ(arum) privatarum bibliothecarum / Augusti n(ostri) et procurator eius*.

⁷³⁹ *CIL* 6, 32411 [13 January, 201]: *Numisiae L(uci) f(iliae) / Maximillae / v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) / C(aius) Helvidius mysticus / devotus beneficiis eius*.

also speak of her assistance or general goodness.⁷⁴⁰ The same is true in a dedication for Coelia Claudiana V.V. *max.* made by Aurelius Fructosus, *cliens et candidatus benignitatae eius probatus*.⁷⁴¹ Accordingly, it is clear that Vestal Virgins, and especially the head of the order, continued to have sufficient status and social connections to promote men to at least minor appointments if they chose to exert their influence.⁷⁴² Frei-Stolba also sees the inscriptions and Statue bases of the *Atrium Vestae* as an indication that the position of *virgo Vestalis maxima* was increasingly regarded as a public one, recognized by the senate in a semi-official capacity, and that the holder of the office carried enough prestige and influence to act in non-religious capacities as a patron.⁷⁴³

The statue bases also provide considerable evidence for the role of the Vestal Virgins served as patrons to former slaves. General references of a priestess as a *patrona* are not definitive examples to prove freedman status.⁷⁴⁴ In cases where the dedicator identifies himself

⁷⁴⁰ CIL 6. 2134 [March 11, 247]: *Fl(aviae) Publiciae v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) / sanctissimae et piissi/mae / ac super omnes / retro religiosissimae / purissimae castissimaeque / cuius religiosam / curam sacrorum et / morum praedicabilem / disciplinam / numen quoque Vestae comprobabit / Q(uintus) / Veturius Memphius v(ir) e(gregius) / fictor v(irginum) V(estalium) dignation<i=E>s / erga se honorisque causa / plurimis in se conlatis / beneficiis // Coll(ocata) V Idus Mart(ias) / Imp(eratore) Caes(are) [[[Philippo]]] Pio Felic(e) Aug(usto) II et / [[[Philippo]]] nobilissimo Caes(are) co(n)s(ulibus); CIL 6, 2135: Fl(aviae) Publiciae v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) / merito sanctissimae ac piissi/mae quae rite et pervigili adminis/tratione omnes gradus laude / cumalata sacra sua venerata vi/vit ut saeculari aetate ministerio / adsit et in fut<u=O>ro perseveret / Q(uintus) Terentius Rufus et Caenia / Verissima parentes / Terentiae Rufillae v(irgini) V(estali) / cuius multi temporis bonitatem / et humanitatem eius circa se / in brevi senserunt // Dedic(a) [3] / dd(ominis) nn(ostris) Vale[riano 3] / Gallien[o 3 co(n)s(ulibus)]. CIL 6. 32415 [30 September, 257] (=ILS 4932): Flaviae L(uci) f(iliae) Publiciae / religiosae / sanctitatis v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) / cuius egregiam morum / disciplinam et / in sacris peritissimam / operationem merito / res publica in dies / feliciter sentit / Ulp(ianus) Verus et Aurel(ius) / Titus [(centuriones) deputati / ob eximiam eius erga se / benivolentiam / g(ratis?) p(osuerunt). CIL 6, 32417: Flaviae Publiciae / v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) / sanctissimae / ac religiosissimae / M(arcus) Aurelius Hermes / ob eximiam eius / erga se benivolentiam / praestantiamque. For more on Flavia Publicia, see: Frei-Stolba, "Falvia Publicia".*

⁷⁴¹ CIL 6, 32420 [1 March, 286] (=ILS 4937)

⁷⁴² Raepsaet-Charlier, "Les sacerdocs," 289. Documented examples of Vestals interceding on behalf of others go back to the Republican period, but in these cases the person they sought to assist was usually of the senatorial order and often had a family connection.

⁷⁴³ Frei-Stolba, 251.

⁷⁴⁴ For example, CIL 6, 32418 (=ILS 4933): *Fl(aviae) Publiciae / sanctissimae / ac piissimae / v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) / T(itus) Fl(avius) Apronius / fictor v(irginum) V(estalium) / loci secundi / dignissimae / ac praestantissi/mae patronae / cum suis ; CIL 6, 2143: Dedicata pri(die) Non(as) Mai(as) / Titiano II et Nepotiano co(n)s(ulibus) / curante Aur(elia) Niceta / mirae sanctitatis adque / in cerimoniis antistiti deorum / Terentiae*

or herself as a *libertus* or the context suggests it, the general impression is that he or she considered one Vestal—and not the entire group—to be his *patrona*.⁷⁴⁵ In a funerary inscription for Teia Asclepiadotis she is identified as the freedwoman of the Vestal Virgin Teia Rufina.⁷⁴⁶ Moreover, several inscriptions mention multiple *liberti* of the priestesses Junia Torquata.⁷⁴⁷ Altogether, the impression is that these were all personal slaves of one priestess.⁷⁴⁸ Beyond this not much else is known about the Vestals and their relationship with slaves. A couple of rare cases indicate that a *servus* had a particular function, but in general there is no indication what they did for the priestess or the cult.⁷⁴⁹ Moreover, we have no indication as to how many slaves individual priestesses or the college as a whole may have kept. The example of Junia Torquata suggests that it may have been common for each Vestal Virgin to own several slaves at any given time. The individual fortune of a Vestal surely would have permitted her to afford this, however the cult was also funded by the state and accordingly it can be presumed that some slaves of the cult belonged to the state.⁷⁵⁰

The inscriptions from the *Atrium Vestae* also confirm that the Vestal Virgins were regarded as priestesses of all the gods, they served on behalf of all the Roman people, and their

Rufillae v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) / Aur(elius) Eutyches voti compos redditus / patronae erga se praestantissimae.

⁷⁴⁵ Mekacher, 125-128.

⁷⁴⁶ *CIL* 6, 27132a: *Teiae Asclepiodote / Teiae Rufinae v(irginis) V(estalis) lib(ertae) / coniugi carissimae item / P(ublio) Teio Rufo fil(io) dulciss(imo) / P(ublius) Teius Asclepius et / Teia Zoe parentes b(ene) m(erenti) / fecerunt et sibi lib(ertis) liber/tabusq(ue) posterisq(ue) eorum / h(oc) m(onumentum) ext(erum) n(on) rec(ipit).*

⁷⁴⁷ *CIL* 6, 2127: *Iunia C(ai) Silani f(iliae) / Torquatae vir(gini) Vest(ali) / maximae / Iuvenio l(ibertus); CIL* 6, 2128: *Iunoni / Iunia C(ai) Silani f(iliae) / Torquatae / sacerdoti Vestali / annis LXIII / Caelesti patronae / Actius l(ibertus) ; CIL* 6, 20788: *C(aio) Iunio Torquatae / v(irginis) V(estalis) lib(erto) Felici / Iunia Phyllis colliberto / carissimo fecit et sibi / posterisque suis et eorum / in fronte p(edes) XIII in agro p(edes) XIII ; CIL* 6, 20852: *Iunia / Torquatae / v(irginis) V(estalis) l(iberta) Alce / fecit sibi et / carissimo / C(aio) Iunio Epapho / conliberto et / viro optimo.*

⁷⁴⁸ Scardigli, 253-4.

⁷⁴⁹ The example of Callistratus indicates that he was well educated and probably performed a specific duty, *CIL* 6, 2132 (= *ILS* 4928): *Campiae Severinae / v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) sanctissimae / cuius sinceram pudicitiam / senatus comprobata aeterna / laude publice cumulavit / Q(uintus) Veturius Callistratus v(ir) e(gregius) / suffragio eius factus proc(urator) rat(ionum) / summ(arum) privatarum bibliothecarum / Augusti n(ostri) et procurator eius.* Several inscriptions mention the *fictores* of the cult, it is a matter of debate if they were slaves during their time of service. Cf. *CIL* 6, 32413, 2134, 32418, and 32419.

⁷⁵⁰ Mekacher, 118-9.

existence allowed for the eternity of the state. This fact goes far in also explaining the extreme punishment they received for broken vows of chastity; any misdeed committed by a Vestal was an offense against all of the gods and hurt the relationship between the deities and all Romans. For example, Coelia Claudiana is described in one inscription as *a diis electa* (“elected by the gods”), and in another as *divinis eius admonitionibus semper provecta*.⁷⁵¹ Nock himself noticed the repetition of ideas and specific phrases on the Vestal inscriptions “which suggests a common model”, and that the ideas they conveyed, such as “..the supernatural testimony to a Vestal’s excellence, the importance of her conduct to the state’s welfare, and the view that she holds her officice as the result of a vocation—are old.”⁷⁵²

Indeed, although these phrases from the inscriptions of the *Atrium Vestae* date to the late third century CE, the general idea existed both before this time and continued to have an appeal into the fourth century. Aulus Gellius, citing Fabius Pictor c. 200 BCE, states that when a Vestal was taken into the college: *quae sacra faciat, quae ius siet sacerdotem Vestalem facere pro populo Romano*.⁷⁵³ Cicero expresses a similar idea, and says that a Vestal was in the service of not just *Vestae matris*, but all of the gods.⁷⁵⁴ This idea can also be seen in examples from late

⁷⁵¹ CIL 6.2139: *Coeliae Claudianae / v(irgini) V(estali) max(im)ae / a diis electa merito / sibi talem antistitem / numen Vestae reservare / voluit / Coelia Nerviana soror una / cum Pierio coniuge ac liberis / suis orantes ut per tot(a) saecula / facere dii permittant ; CIL 6, 2138: Coeliae Claudianae / v(irgini) V(estali) max(im)ae / religiosissimae benignissimaeque / cuius pius ritus ac plenam sacrorum erga deos administrationem / urbis aeterna laude <d=B>(e) s(enatus) s(ententia) comproba[vit] / Octavia Honorata v(irgo) V(estalis) divinis / eius admonitionibus semper provecta. Nock, 261, “The phrase *a diis electa* means generally ‘chosen by heaven’.” See also: CIL 6, 2132 (note 16 above) and 32416: *Fl(aviae) Publiciae v(irgini) V(estali) max(im)ae / sanctissimae ac religiosissimae quae per omnes gradus / sacerdotii aput(!) divina altaria / omnium deorum et ad aeternos ignes / diebus noctibusque pia mente rite / deserviens merito ad hunc / locum cum aetate pervenit / Bareius Zoticus cum Flavia / Verecunda sua ob eximiam eius / erga se bene<v=B>volentiam praestantiamq(ue) // dedicata pr(idie) Kal(endas) Oct(obres) / dd(ominis) nn(ostris) Valeriano Aug(usto) IIII et / Gallieno Aug(usto) III co(n)ss(ulibus).**

⁷⁵² Nock, 253. Cf. Frei-Stolba, “Flavia,” 241-2; Nina Mekacher, *Die vestalischen Jungfrauen in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2006), 212-124.

⁷⁵³ Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 1.12.14.

⁷⁵⁴ Cicero, *Pro Fonteius*, 21: *quae pro vobis liberisque vestris tot annos in dis immortalibus placandis occupata est ut ea nunc pro salute sua fratrisque sui animos vestros placare possit. [47] cui miserae quod praesidium, quod solacium³ reliquum⁴ est hoc amisso? nam ceterae feminae gignere ipsae sibi praesidia et habere domi fortunarum omnium socium participemque possunt; huic vero virgini quid est praeter fratrem quod aut iucundum aut carum esse possit? nolite pati, iudices, aras deorum immortalium Vestaeque matris cotidianis virginis lamentationibus de*

antiquity. The *Exposito totius mundi et gentium* (mid-4th century CE) describes the Vestals as: *quae sacra deorum pro salute civitatis secundum antiquorum morem perficiunt et vocantur virgines Vestae.*⁷⁵⁵ Later in the century Symmachus also writes of the continued importance of the Vestals stating that *saluti publicae dicata virginitas* and *saluti publicae castum corpus dicare.*⁷⁵⁶

Changes within the cult of Vesta and the duties of the Vestal Virgins

Although events of the fourth century must have resulted in changes for the cult of Vesta, most of these are not recorded by our sources. During Constantine's reign all the traditional cults in Rome remained intact as far as celebrations, state financing, and legal status were concerned. Nevertheless, Constantine was not always favorable toward pagan practices and temples. In the eastern half of the Empire he closed many of the pagan sanctuaries, stripped them of their artistic objects, and absconded with the treasure inside in order to adorn his new capital at Byzantium.⁷⁵⁷ Within his eponymous city of Constantinople, this emperor also deprived several pagan temples of their revenues.⁷⁵⁸ In the west Constantine reportedly performed one act that—if true—should have provoked outrage from the Vestal Virgins and the pontifical college at the very least, if not from the entire pagan community in Rome. Later Byzantine tradition states that he removed the Palladium from the care of the Vestal priestesses and placed it in the Forum of Constantine in the new eastern capitol. Such an act would have

*vestro iudicio commoneri*⁵; *prospicite ne ille ignis aeternus nocturnis Fonteiae laboribus vigiliisque servatus sacerdotis vestrae*⁶ *lacrimis exstinctus esse dicatur. [48] tendit*⁷ *ad vos virgo Vestalis manus supplices easdem quas pro vobis dis immortalibus tendere consuevit. Cavete ne periculosum superbunque sit eius vos obsecrationem repudiare cuius preces si di aspernarentur, haec salva esse non possent.*

⁷⁵⁵ G. Lumbroso, ed. *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*, (Roma: Accademia dei Lincei, 1896) p. 72 f., line 466.

⁷⁵⁶ Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3.11 and 3.14. Cf. Maijastina Kahlos, *Vettius Agorius Praetextatus: A Senatorial Life in Between*, (Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2002), 111 and note 260.

⁷⁵⁷ A. Alföldi, "On the Foundation of Constantinople: A Few Notes," *JRS* vol. 37, Parts 1 and 2 (1947): 10-16, esp. 15.

⁷⁵⁸ Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 54-5.

most likely had a very negative impact on the status of the cult of Vesta. As it happens, however, it was no more than a rumor that circulated a few centuries later.⁷⁵⁹

Whatever Constantine's personal religious feelings may have been, he retained the official title of *pontifex maximus* as did all of his successors at least through Gratian. How actively these emperors pursued this role is not always clear. Holding an office and active participation are not the same. Distance from Rome and their own religious convictions may have kept some from performing many of the duties themselves. Thus it seems likely that many emperors chose someone—either in an official or unofficial capacity—to fulfill this function in their stead.

I argue that in order to fulfil their duties as *pontifex maximus* the emperors made greater use of the priests of Rome. First, emperors selected men from this group to fill the office of *promagister*. The holder would have already held the title of *pontifex maior*, and in his new role he would have been responsible for performing the general duties of the *pontifex maximus*, and for carrying out the decisions of the pontifical college. This position was an annual one, although it is uncertain if it was filled at all times. Second, the *pontifices Vestae* were created. These priests appear in records starting in the years immediately after the death of Constantine. Although little evidence exists about this group, the name at a minimum suggests ties to the goddess Vesta. The Vestal Virgins were a unique priesthood in regards to how new members were chosen; vacancies in the cult were traditionally filled by the selection of a suitable volunteer by the *pontifex maximus*. In order to keep the college full, a group of priests named after this goddess were created to oversee the Vestal Virgins. They were *pontifices* and on the

⁷⁵⁹ See chapter 4.

same level as the *pontifices maiores* in the hierarchy of priesthoods, and like these priests and the Vestal Virgins the *pontifices Vestae* were also members of the college of priests.⁷⁶⁰

Each emperor after Constantine had his own policies regarding religion and their own unique relationship with the pagans in Rome. Some were tolerant, others repressive, and many merely chose to keep the *status quo*. Moreover, joint rulers of the empire often had differing opinions on religious practice. High on their list of concerns was the pagan use of magic and divination. This began under Emperor Constantius II (337-361), who is generally considered the ruler most hostile to traditional state religion before the reign of Gratian. In particular, in 341 CE he prohibited all religious sacrifices.⁷⁶¹ Although an imperial decree, it is unclear how much of an effect it had in Rome. Curran concludes that fear of reprisal from the emperor likely led to some attempt to impose the ban, but that the problems involved in doing so required clarifications and refinements to the law.⁷⁶² Accordingly, Constantius II reinforced the decree with a general edict in 356 issued jointly with Julian wherein he prohibited sacrifices; defiance was subject to capital punishment.⁷⁶³

How much effect these measures had on the traditional practices of the Vestal Virgins is not recorded. If the legislation was not enforced, perhaps there was none, or at least not until the decree was issued the second time in 356 CE. The rites the priestesses performed strictly for Vesta did not require animal sacrifice (at least as far as we are aware). However, rituals they took part in for other gods did. For example, they likely performed such a sacrifice for the rites

⁷⁶⁰ See chapter 5.

⁷⁶¹ *Codex Theodosianus*, 16.10.2 : *Cesset superstitio, sacrificiorum aboleatur insania. Nam quicumque contra legem divi principis parentis nostri et hanc nostrae mansuetudinis iussionem ausus fuerit sacrificia celebrare, competens in eum vindicta et praesens sententia exeratur.* John Curran, *Pagan city and Christian capital : Rome in the fourth century*, (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 2000), 183-185.

⁷⁶² Curran, 186.

⁷⁶³ *Codex Theodosianus*, 16.10.6 : *Idem a. et Iulianus caes. Poena capitis subiugari praecipimus eos, quos operam sacrificiis dare vel colere simulacra constiterit. Dat. XI kal. mart. Mediolano Constantio a. VIII et Iuliano caes. cons.* [356 febr. 19]. Cf. Curran, 188.

of the Bona Dea, a nocturnal festival for female matrons held in December.⁷⁶⁴ The Vestals were also present at the annual sacrifice of the October Horse. Although they did not kill the chosen animal victim, one or more of the priestesses reportedly collected some of its blood (and possibly ash from its cremated remains) in order to make a special offering (*suffimen*) for use at another ceremony, the *Parilia*.⁷⁶⁵ If and how these and other rites were altered to fit the decree is unknown, but it seems possible that the new law resulted in some changes in the role the Vestals played at these festivals. Moreover, the calendar of Philocalus (354 CE) indicates that priestesses continued to perform all of their traditional duties.⁷⁶⁶

Constantius II next made a trip to Rome in 357 CE where he planned to speak before the senate. However, the emperor had reservations in doing so since the senate house contained the Augustan Altar of Victory upon which sacrifices had been performed for centuries. Constantius II ordered that the altar be removed before his arrival, an act for which he earned censure and that continued to be an issue of contention between him and the senators of Rome.⁷⁶⁷ Still, the administrative structures of the ancient cults continued.⁷⁶⁸ Sources even indicate that Constantius II acted in his role as *pontifex maximus*: he issued instructions to other *pontifices*, filled vacancies in the priesthoods and did not reduce their funding.⁷⁶⁹ It also seems that after his visit to Rome in 357 that he relaxed some of his previous restrictions—at least as far as this

⁷⁶⁴ On the rites of Bona Dea see: H. H. J. Brouwer, *Bona Dea. The sources and a description of the cult*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989).

⁷⁶⁵ On this rite see: Jens Henrik Vanggaard, "The October Horse," *Temenos* 15 (1979): 81–95; C. Bennett Pascal, "October Horse," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 85 (1981): 261-291.

⁷⁶⁶ For the Vestals, see Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 51-5, 194 and 382. For the calendar of Philocalus see: Michele Renee Salzman, *On Roman time: the codex-calendar of 354 and the rhythms of urban life in late antiquity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 157-161.

⁷⁶⁷ Symmachus, *Relatio*, 3.6; Ambrose, *Epistles*, 18.32.

⁷⁶⁸ Curran, 187.

⁷⁶⁹ Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3.7. The *Codex Theodosianus* contains more information on the acts Constantius II is reported to have performed, but the interpretation and dates for these are debated. See: *Codex Theodosianus*, 9.16.4, 9.16.5, 9.16.6, 16.10.2, 16.10.4, and 16.10.6.

city was concerned. Traditional sacrifices unrelated to divination were allowed, and the Altar of victory was returned to the senate house (although the emperor did not explicitly permit this).⁷⁷⁰

Although Julian (361-363 CE) professed Christian beliefs early in his public career, as Emperor he passed edicts for the entire Empire—not just the city of Rome—that show pagan sympathies. Libanius portrays Julian as an emperor driven to restore the customs of ancient worship and right the wrongs done to its adherents and institutions.⁷⁷¹ He continued to appoint pagans to important administrative positions; for example, he sought out the then “retired” Vettius Agorius Praetextatus in order to give him the proconsulate of Achaëa.⁷⁷² He ordered Christian churches to return lands and restore temples to the pagan cults that had been given to them under Constantine. Julian also withdrew grants of money from the imperial treasury to the clergy and Christian poor, and removed preferential treatment in rights of inheritance and exemptions of the clergy from personal taxation.⁷⁷³ Indeed, enough evidence exists to convince at least one scholar that Julian intended a “reconstruction of paganism” with him at the helm as *pontifex maximus*.⁷⁷⁴

The final decades of the cult of Vesta

The number of references to Vesta and her priestesses increase again during the last 30 years of the cult’s history. The majority fall into one of two categories. First, several inscriptions mention either a priest or priestess of Vesta that can be dated to this period.

⁷⁷⁰ Ambrose, *Epistles*, 18.32; Symmachus, *Relatio*, 3.4. Scholars debate whether this occurred under the more pagan friendly Julian, or if perhaps only the altar but not the statue of victory was removed from the Senate house at this time. See: Cristiana Sogno, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus: a political biography*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 45.

⁷⁷¹ Libanius, *Oratio*, 19. 23.

⁷⁷² W. T. W. Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 92.

⁷⁷³ T. M. Lindsay, “The Triumph of Christianity,” in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. I, Bury (planned by), Gwatkin and Whitney eds., (Cambridge: University Printing House, 1911): 87-117, 103.

⁷⁷⁴ Lindsay, 107.

Moreover, Symmachus discusses the cult many times and in multiple contexts stretching from the 360s through the 390s.

On 9 June, 364 CE, the *pontifices* made a dedication of a statue and base in the *Atrium Vestae* in honor of the current *virgo Vestalis maxima*.⁷⁷⁵ Of all the honorific inscriptions for Vestal Virgins, this one is noteworthy since it is the only example of one made by the priests. It is also important for its reference to the *promagister* Macrinus Sossianus. Most significant, however, is the fact that the name of the priestess was erased.

Ob meritum castitatis / pudicitiae adq(ue) in sacris / religionibusque / doctrinae
mirabilis / C[[3]]e v(irgini) V(estali) max(imae) / pontifices vv(iri) cc(larissimi) /
promag(istro) Macrinio / Sossiano v(iro) c(larissimo) p(ontifice) m(aiore?) // Dedicata
V Idus Iunias / divo Ioviano et Varroniano / conssulibus)⁷⁷⁶

According to the notes of early scholars who saw the inscription before it was further damaged, the first letter of her name which is recorded in line five should be read as a “C”, and the last as an “E”.⁷⁷⁷ Traditionally it has been presumed that this indicated an inscription dedicated “to Claudia”. However, Mekacher points out that the spacing suggests a longer name since nine or ten letters appear to have been erased.⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷⁵ *CIL* 6, 32422 (= *ILS* 4938). An earlier example from 286 CE to Coelia Claudiana records that it was authorized by the Senate. Cf. *CIL* 6, 2138: *s(enatus) s(ententia) comproba[vit]*.

⁷⁷⁶ *CIL* 6.32422 [= *ILS* 4938].

⁷⁷⁷ R. Lanciani, *L'Atrio di Vesta*, (Notizie degli scavi, December 1883): 434-487, 454f.

⁷⁷⁸ Mekacher, 114-5.



Lanciani was the first to publish this inscription and interpreted the erasure of her name as the result of *damnato memoriae*.⁷⁷⁹ He proposes two possible explanations: either the Vestal was convicted of *incestus* or she converted to Christianity. Since it is likely that the first option would have been mentioned in contemporary sources, Lanciani favored the second theory.⁷⁸⁰ Hülsen endorsed this idea, but on an even grander scale suggesting, “It is accordingly much more

⁷⁷⁹ Lanciani, 454f. Followed (exactly) by Christian Hülsen, *The Roman forum: its history and its monuments*, trans. Jesse Benedict Carter, (New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1906), 203-4.

⁷⁸⁰ Lanciani, 454f.

likely that the Vestal of her own will withdrew from the college. It is a very plausible suggestion therefore that this Claudia later became a Christian, possibly a nun in a cloister near S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura. This would naturally cause the *pontifices* to erase her name from the honorary statue.”⁷⁸¹ How Hülsen came to the conclusion that “Claudia” not only became a Christian, but more specifically a nun and in particular convent is not clear, but surely the latter points come from his imagination since there is no evidence to support such claims.

Returning to the “vandalism” of the name on the inscription, I find the argument that this Vestal received *damnatio memoriae* to be only one possible solution. If she did leave the cult of Vesta and convert, it should be expected that one of the Christian authors would have mentioned this fact among their attacks of the Vestals. Pagan sources would understandably prefer to leave out this information. Furthermore, if “Claudia” was charged with *incestum* this too should have been noticed. The Christian authors certainly could spin this event to their advantage. Moreover, we know that such matters continued to be discussed through the late fourth century since Symmachus writes both about a Vestal who considered leaving the cult and a Vestal from Alba who was convicted of this crime.⁷⁸²

A further consideration is that there is no way to know at what point in time the name of the Vestal priestess was erased. This could have easily been done after the cult ended in 394 CE. Moreover, many centuries passed before the inscription was found. It is also significant that this is the only example of an honorary statue of a Vestal found in the *Atrium Vestae* for almost the entire third century: three inscriptions honoring the *virgo Vestalis maxima*, Terentia Rufilla, are dated to around 300 CE, and an inscription also exists for Coelia Concordia, but it was not

⁷⁸¹ Hülsen, 203-4.

⁷⁸² Both incidents are discussed in greater length below.

placed in the house of the Vestals.⁷⁸³ This alone is odd and indicates that originally other statues were erected there honoring priestesses of this century, but they must have been destroyed. Perhaps the one for “Claudia” was left behind for reasons that may have something to do with the damage that was inflicted to it.

Many of the scholars that reconstruct the name of the Vestal in the inscription as “Claudia” have attempted to connect this priestess to a poem of Prudentius. The text dates to the time of Theodosius (during whose reign the Temple of Vesta was closed), and praises the triumph of Christianity over the pagan cults: “the *pontifex* lays aside his fillet and takes the cross, and the Vestal Claudia enters your house of Laurentius (*villatus olim pontifex adscitur in signum crucis aedemque Laurenti tuam Vestalis intrat Claudia*).⁷⁸⁴ This identification of Prudentius’ Claudia as the missing name from the statue and base began almost immediately after the first publication of this inscription.⁷⁸⁵

There are many problems with this thesis. The most compelling is the identification of the priestess’ name as “Claudia” which is unlikely given the amount of space that was erased. In addition, there is no reason to believe that in his poem Prudentius intended to refer to a contemporary person. The inscription can be internally dated to 364 CE and the poem was produced approximately 30 years later. Moreover, if he did have a real Vestal named Claudia in mind, Prudentius might have also named a well-known priest of the age, but he did not. It is of course possible that there was a Vestal named Claudia when the cult ended, but this is not verified by any of the sources. Another issue concerns the popularity of the name Claudia

⁷⁸³ See *CIL* 6, 2141, 2142 and 2143 for the inscriptions honoring Terentia Rufilla; *CIL* 6, 2145, for the dedication to Coelia Concordia. Frei-Stolba, 251, suggests that this may have been because the *Atrium Vestae* had already been abandoned in 384 (the date of the dedication). However, I believe that context is the more likely cause; the Vestals with Coelia Concordia as their leader, dedicated a statue in honor of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus who had recently died. It is therefore unlikely to be a coincidence that this priestess was in turn honored by his widow, Fabia Paulina, with a statue in base in their home.

⁷⁸⁴ Prudentius, *Peristephanos*, 2.525-528.

⁷⁸⁵ O. Marucchi, *Bolletino di Archeologia Cristiana* (1899), 207; Hülsen, 203-4; *PLRE* I “Claudia 4” 206.

among the Vestal Virgins throughout the cult's history. The most famous was Claudia Quinta who in 204 BCE played a crucial role in bringing the Magna Mater to Rome. Sometimes she is described as a matron, but in other sources she was a Vestal. Several scholars have made the connection between Claudia Quinta and the Claudia of the poem, and argue that Prudentius chose this particular name for its historical reference.⁷⁸⁶

The remaining years of the 360s and the 370s witnessed a return to imperial preference for Christianity. Jovian's eight-month rule is difficult to put into context, in part due to its brevity. Christian authors (such as Socrates and Sozomen) portray Jovian as highly favorable toward Christians and as passing anti-pagan legislation, while contemporary sources contradict these accounts in favor of a more moderate policy.⁷⁸⁷ Valentinian I (364-375) and Valens (364-378) permitted some religious sacrifices, and late in 364 CE they gave instructions permitting Christians to reclaim land that Julian had given to pagan temples. However, they also prohibited nocturnal celebrations as well as "wicked prayers" (*nefarias preces*), "magic preparations" (*magicos apparatus*) and "bloody sacrifices" (*sacrificia funesta*) upon penalty of death.⁷⁸⁸

How much difficulty the religious legislation of the 360s and 370s caused the pagan cults of Rome as whole is difficult to measure, but there is no reason to think they affected the cult of Vesta to any significant degree.⁷⁸⁹ Once again, the Vestal Virgins may have needed to adjust the details of their traditional practices in order to conform to the prohibitions imposed by Valentinian I and Valens, especially regarding animal sacrifice (and its byproducts like blood

⁷⁸⁶ H. J. Thomson, *Prudentius*, (Harvard University Press, 1949), 139 note d); Mekacher, 114-115.

⁷⁸⁷ For a fuller discussion see Curran, 196-198.

⁷⁸⁸ R. H. Barrow, *Prefect and emperor: the Relationes of Symmachus, A.D. 384*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 32; Curran, 198-9; *Codex Theodosianus*, 9.16.7: *Imp. Valentinianus et Valens aa. ad Secundum pf. p. Ne quis deinceps nocturnis temporibus aut nefarias preces aut magicos apparatus aut sacrificia funesta celebrare conetur. Detectum atque convictum competenti animadversione mactari, perenni auctoritate censemus. Dat. V. id. sept. divo Ioviano a. et Varroniano coss.*

⁷⁸⁹ Curran, 200.

and ash). However, by and large these acts of “anti-pagan” legislation should have had only minimal impact on the cult of Vesta and the duties of the priestesses.

Modern historians have been apt to see the reign of Gratian as a major turning point for the pagan cults in Rome, and the cult of Vesta in particular. The actual legislation does not survive, but scholars have been able to discern its basic tenets by drawing on the *Codex Theodosianus*, the third *Relatio* of Symmachus, and Ambrose’s letters to Valentinian II (375-392).⁷⁹⁰ These indicate that Gratian withdrew public subsidies for Roman cults, canceled some of the immunities and privileges of pagan priests, confiscated the revenues of pagan temples and seized the property that furnished these revenues.⁷⁹¹

Outrage against these measures by the pagans in Rome was considerable if the writings of Symmachus are any indication of popular sentiment and in his written rebuttals to these acts he focused specifically on the damage that was done to the cult of Vesta and her priestesses. Symmachus fought to have their privileges reinstated, and developed his counter attack from multiple angles. First he mentions that not only had Constantius II maintained the privileges of the Vestals, but he also continued to fill the priesthoods with men of noble birth and continued to fund pagan religious ceremonies.⁷⁹² The implication is, of course, that if Valentinian II would do the same he would earn more respect.

Symmachus next questions the emperor’s logic in removing the privileges of the priestesses.

Quanto commodo sacri aerarii vestry Vestalium virginum praerogativa detracta est? sub largissimis imperatoibus denegetur, quod parcissimi praestiterunt? Honor solus est in illo veluti **stipendio castitatis**: ut vittae earum capiti decus faciunt, ita insigne ducitur

⁷⁹⁰ Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3.7; Ambrose, *Epistles*, 17.3.

⁷⁹¹ Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3.12-14; Ambrose, *Ep.* 18.13-16. Opt. cit. Sogno, *Symmachus*, 45.

⁷⁹² Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3.7: *accipiat aeternitas vestra alia eiusdem principis facta, quae in usum dignius trahat. Nihil ille decerpit sacrarum virginum privilegiis, replevit nobilibus sacerdotia. Romanis caerimoniis non negavit impensas...*

sacerdotii vacare **muneribus**. Nudum quoddam nomen inmunitatis requireunt, quoniam paupertate a dispendio tutae sunt. Itaque amplius laudi earum tribuunt, qui aliquid rei detrahunt; siquidem saluti publicae dicata virginitas crescit merito, cum caret praemio.⁷⁹³

The *munera* and *stipendium castitatis* appear to have been privileges specific to the Vestals not shared with other members of the pontifical college.⁷⁹⁴ Thus it is difficult to see these provisions as nothing less than an attack on the Vestals. The third penalty, the prohibition of receiving requests from the dying, pertained to both *virginibus et ministris*.⁷⁹⁵ Whether the latter included the *pontifices* is not made clear. However, this implies that the Vestals, at a minimum, were now *legatariae incapaces* (unqualified to receive bequests).⁷⁹⁶ It also suggests that the practice of leaving a legacy to the Vestals was a common enough observance to draw the attention of the emperor.⁷⁹⁷ In this light “Gratian’s measures, far from proving that official paganism was dying, appear on the contrary as testimony to an attempt to check the economic effects, which excessive devotion to the cult of Vesta was still producing in terms of legacies and donations of large landed estates.”⁷⁹⁸

Symmachus’ next strategy was to focus on the importance of the cult of Vesta for the well-being of the state. The clearest expression of this belief comes from two passages in the same *Relatio*. In the first he reminds the emperor that their “virginity was dedicated to the

⁷⁹³ Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3.11: “The privileges of the Vestal Virgins have been taken away from them, and what does the benefit to your sacred treasury amount to? Is it to be said that generous emperors refused what parsimonious emperors granted? Their sole glory lies in their enlistment, so to speak, in the service of chastity ; but the outward expression of their priesthood is held to be freedom from ‘state-services’ , very much as the bands they wear give distinction to their heads. All they ask for is the title of immunity, nothing more, for their poverty saves them from making any payments. In fact, anyone who deprives them of anything actually contributes to their repute—if, as is true, a virgin sisterhood dedicated to the well-being of the state deservedly grows in esteem when reward is out of the question,” R. H. Barrow, trans.

⁷⁹⁴ Testa, “Christian Emperor,” 255.

⁷⁹⁵ Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3. 13: *quod nomen accipiet ablative facultatum, quas nulla lex, nullus casus fecit caducas?*

⁷⁹⁶ Testa, “Christian Emperor,” 255-257. In a broader context this measure was not dissimilar to policies passed by Valentinian I that removed privileges from certain groups, including Christian priests.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 258 note 66, and 262.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 262.

wellbeing of the state” (*saluti publicae dicata virginitas*).⁷⁹⁹ He next points out that freedmen and slaves were allowed to receive legacies and benefits, and questions why noble virgins (*nobiles virgines*) who served the state are excluded.⁸⁰⁰

Symmachus continues by expressing his disapproval that the Vestals were no longer getting corn at state expense. He even suggests that a current famine was sent down on the Romans by the gods for this very reason.

Nemo me putet tueri solam causam religionum! Ex huiusmodi facinoribus orta sunt cuncta Romani generis incommoda. Honoraverat lex parentum Vestales virgines ac ministros deorum victu modico iustisque privilegiis. Stetit muneris huius integritas usque ad degeneres trapezitas, qui ad mercedem vilium baiulorum sacra castitatis alimenta verterunt. Secuta est hoc factum fames publica et spem provinciarum omnium messis aegra decepit.

Quid tale provinciae pertulerunt, cum religionum ministros honor publicus pasceret? Quando in usum hominum concussa quercus, quando vulsae sunt herbarum radices, quando alternos regionum defectus deseruit fecunditas mutua, cum populo et virginibus sacris communis esset annona? Commendabat enim terrarum proventum victus antistitum et remedium magis quam largitas erat. An dubium est semper pro copia omnium datum, quod nunc inopia omnium vindicavit?⁸⁰¹

In this passage the Vestal Virgins are the only priesthood specifically mentioned. Thus the focus is on them. They were Rome’s primary “servants of the gods”, the religious intermediaries that ensured the continuation of the state—and its food supply. By taking away their privileges the emperor had removed Rome’s insurance policy and exposed everyone to danger.

⁷⁹⁹ Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3.11.

⁸⁰⁰ Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3.14.

⁸⁰¹ Symmachus, *Relatio*, 3.15 and 17: “Let no one imagine I am pleading the cause only of religion; it is from acts of the kind I have described that all the disasters to the Roman race have arisen. The law of our fathers had honoured the Vestal Virgins and the servants of the gods by granting them means for a moderate livelihood and reasonable privileges. This gift stood intact right up to the time of those worthless dealers in small change who had diverted the subsidies of sacred chastity to pay the wages of common porters. On this act followed a general famine; the hopes of all the provinces were betrayed by a miserable harvest....What comparable disaster did the provinces have to endure when the public conscience provided food for the servants of religion? During the period when free corn was made available alike to populace and to holy virgins, was there any occasion when to satisfy human needs, oak trees were shaken, when the roots of plants were torn up, when provinces came to the relief of each other, good harvests here supplying the deficiencies of bad harvests there? The public maintenance of the priests promoted the yield of the regions and was an insurance rather than an act of generosity. There is no doubt that the funds which the general scarcity of today has appropriated were always in the past granted to secure abundance for everyone,” R. H. Barrow, trans.

Despite Symmachus' bluster, the actual damage done to the Vestal college and its priestesses seems to have been more symbolic than actual. Financially the priestesses were independent individuals who would have possessed a great amount of personal wealth. Moreover, their college would have had its own treasury to draw from. Having their ability to receive legacies taken away may have been a significant blow, but this only eliminated one avenue of future financing—others remained.⁸⁰² There is no doubt that Gratian's measures took away some of the rights and privileges. However, they were allowed to keep the temple and *Atrium Vestae*. Some cults lost parts of their land (which could be used as another source of revenue), but there is no proof that the cult of Vesta owned any at this time.⁸⁰³ Indeed, the only evidence suggesting that the cult possessed property comes from the Republican period and a unique statement that Augustus assigned the Vestals part of the *ager Lanuvinus*.⁸⁰⁴ All available evidence supports the idea that the Vestal Virgins adapted and continued their service to the state without any major impact for the remaining years of their cult.

Gratian is also infamous for two other acts: he removed the Altar of Victory from the senate house and he abandoned the title of *pontifex maximus*. The removal of the Altar came in 382 CE, a year before Gratian's death. In doing so he followed the precedent set by Constantius II who, during a trip to Rome in 357, would not appear in the senate while the Altar was still located there. It was returned, only to be taken away again by Gratian. How significant this event was for the Romans as a whole is questionable, and even though Augustine and Jerome were present in Rome when the Altar was removed the second time both fail to mention the

⁸⁰² Testa, "Christian Emperor," 258.

⁸⁰³ Ibid, 256.

⁸⁰⁴ Suetonius, *Divi Augusti*, 31: *ager eius limitibus Augusteis, pro parte est adsignatus militibus veteranis, et pro parte virginum Vestalium lege Augustiana fuit.*

act.⁸⁰⁵ However, it appears to have been taken as a considerable insult to the Senate, and since the Altar of Victory was its symbol of prestige and power its removal may have offended both pagans and Christians. At this time Symmachus held the office of *praefectus urbi* in Rome, and he continued to fight for the return of the Altar with the support of many of the senate members. On their behalf he first wrote to the emperor, and when this did not procure the desired result an embassy was sent.⁸⁰⁶ The envoys were refused admission to Gratian's court, probably due to the influence of Ambrose.⁸⁰⁷ Symmachus was nominated for the consulship as late as 391, at which time he again asked for the restoration of the Altar, but it was not returned.

Gratian's refusal to continue the title *pontifex maximus* is usually combined with the phrase that he "refused the pontifical robe". The only source for this idea comes from a passage in Zosimus.

All the kings after Numa Pompilius (who was the first to do so) and all the Roman emperors from Octavian have held this office [*pontifex maximus*]: as soon as each assumed supreme power, the priestly robes were brought to him by the *pontifices* and he was styled *pontifex maximus*. All the earlier emperors seem to have been very pleased to accept the honour and to use this title, even Constantine (who, when he came to the throne, was perverted religiously and embraced the Christian faith) and all his successors, including Valentinian and Valens. When, however, the *pontifices* as usual brought the robes to Gratian, he rejected their offer, considering it impious for a Christian to wear such a thing. When the robe was given back to the priests, their leader is reputed to have said: 'If the emperor does not want to be called pontifex, there will soon be a pontifex maximus'.⁸⁰⁸

⁸⁰⁵ Curran, 206.

⁸⁰⁶ Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3.

⁸⁰⁷ Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 117.

⁸⁰⁸ Zosimus, 4. 35. 3-5: Καὶ ἔτυχε τούτου Νομᾶς Πομπίλιος πρῶτος, καὶ πάντες ἐξῆς, οἳ τε λεγόμενοι ῥήγες καὶ μετ' ἐκείνους Ὀκταβιανός τε αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ μετ' ἐκείνων τὴν Ῥωμαίων διαδεξάμενοι μοναρχίαν· ἅμα γὰρ τῷ παραλαβεῖν ἕκαστον τὴν τῶν ὅλων ἀρχὴν ἢ ἱερατικὴ στολὴ παρὰ τῶν ποντιφίκων αὐτῷ προσεφέρετο, καὶ παραχρῆμα ποντίφεξ μάζμιος ἀνεγράφετο, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος. Οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι πάντες αὐτοκράτορες ἀσμενέστατα φαίνονται δεξάμενοι τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τῇ ἐπιγραφῇ χρησάμενοι ταύτῃ, καὶ δὴ καὶ Κωνσταντῖνος ἐπειδὴ εἰς αὐτὸν ἦλθεν ἡ βασιλεία, καὶ ταῦτα τῆς ὀρθῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς περὶ τὰ θεῖα τραπεῖς καὶ τὴν Χριστιανῶν ἐλόμενος πίστιν, καὶ μετ' ἐκείνων ἐξῆς οἱ ἄλλοι καὶ Οὐαλεντινιανός τε καὶ Οὐάλης. Τῶν οὖν ποντιφίκων κατὰ τὸ σῆμα προσαγαγόντων Γρατιανῷ τὴν στολὴν ἀπεσεύσατο τὴν αἴτησιν, ἀθέμιτον εἶναι Χριστιανῷ τὸ σχῆμα νομίσας· τοῖς τε ἱερεῦσι τῆς στολῆς ἀναδοθείσης φασὶ τὸν πρῶτον ἐν αὐτοῖς τεταγμένον εἰπεῖν 'εἰ μὴ βούλεται ποντίφεξ ὁ βασιλεὺς ὄνομάζεσθαι, τάχιστα γενήσεται ποντίφεξ μάζμιος. Ronald T. Ridley, *Zosimus: New History*, (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies Byzantina Australiensia 2), 1982.

This text has been picked apart by scholars. Cameron points out that there never was any such thing as a “pontifical robe” in antiquity, thus one could not have been offered to any emperor.⁸⁰⁹ Ridley also argues for the unlikelihood of Gratian refusing to be *pontifex maximus* when he became emperor since he was only eight years old at the time. However, he does believe that Gratian was maintaining the title in 379, but that it was not offered to Theodosius when the latter acceded in January of that year.⁸¹⁰ Alföldi has also shown a change in Gratian’s numismatic practice that dates to 379.⁸¹¹ Although scholars continue to debate the year Gratian ceased to use the title, it is clear that this occurred by no later than 383.⁸¹² No emperor ever used it again.

It is unlikely that Gratian’s decision had any considerable impact on the Vestal Virgins. Clearly, his reign would be the last possible period in which a new priestess could have been brought into the cult by the personal selection of the emperor although there is no evidence that he did so. Testa believes that Constantius II may have been the last to bring a Vestal into the cult during his trip to Rome in 357.⁸¹³ Still, she allows for some doubt in this matter since she

⁸⁰⁹ A. D. E. Cameron, “The Imperial Pontifex,” *HSCP* 103 (2007) 341-84, in whose opinion no Roman emperor refused the title, which nevertheless was changed from *maximus* to *inclitus*; the emperor is celebrated as *pontifex inclitus* in an edict by Marcian and Valentinian III in 452 and in a letter from Anastasius to the senate of 516.

⁸¹⁰ Ridley, 195-6 and note 106..

⁸¹¹ A. Alföldi, *A Festival of Isis in the Fourth Century*, (Budapest: Pázmány, 1937), 36.

⁸¹² A. D. E. Cameron, “The Imperial Pontifex,” *HSCP* 103 (2007) 341-84, in whose opinion no Roman emperor refused the title, which nevertheless was changed from *maximus* to *inclitus*; the emperor is celebrated as *pontifex inclitus* in an edict by Marcian and Valentinian III in 452 and in a letter from Anastasius to the senate of 516.

⁸¹² Dates between 375 and 383 have been suggested for the abandonment of the title *pontifex maximus*. In 376 CE by F. Paschoud, “La fin du règne de Gratien dans l’Histoire nouvelle de Zosime”, in F. Paschoud, *Cinq études sur Zosime*, Paris, 1975, 63-99: 77; in 379 CE by A. Chastagnol, *La Préfecture Urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire*, (Paris : Presses Universities de France, 1960), 157 and K. L. Noethlichs, *Die gesetzgeberischen Massnahmen der christlichen Kaiser des vierten Jahrhunderts gegen Häretiker, Heiden und Juden*, (Koln 1971), 202; in 382 CE in connection with the fiscal measures by J. F. Matthews, “Symmachus and the Oriental Cults,” *JRS* 63, (1973), 175-95: 176, and L. Cracco Ruggini, “Il paganesimo romano tra religion e politica (384-394): per una reinterpretazione del Carmen contra paganos”, *RAL* ser. 8,23, 1979, 3-141: 4 n. 3; in 383 CE by Alan Cameron, “Gratian’s Repudiation of the Pontifical Robe,” *JRS* 58 (1968), 96-102: 96-9.

⁸¹³ This Vestal is usually connection with one in an anecdote of Zosimus, 5.38.3-4: Τότε τοίνυν ἐπεγγελάωσα τούτοις ἡ Σερῆνα τὸ μητρῶον ἰδεῖν ἐβουλήθη, θεασαμένη δὲ τῷ τῆς Ῥέας ἀγάλματι περικείμενον ἐπὶ τοῦ τραχήλου κόσμον τῆς θείας ἐκείνης ἄξιον ἀγιστείας, περιελούσα τοῦ ἀγάλματος τῷ ἑαυτῆς ἐπέθηκε τραχήλῳ· καὶ ἐπειδὴ πρεσβυτίς ἐκ τῶν Ἑστιακῶν περιλελειμμένη παρθένων ὠνειδίσεν αὐτῇ κατὰ πρόσωπον τὴν ἀσέβειαν, περιύβρισέ τε καὶ ἀπελαύνεσθαι διὰ τῶν ἐπομένων ἐκέλευσεν. Ἡ δὲ ἀπιούσα, πᾶν ὃ τι ταύτης ἄξιον τῆς ἀσεβείας ἐλθεῖν αὐτῇ Σερῆνα καὶ ἀνδρὶ καὶ τέκνοις ἠράσατο· ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐδενὸς τούτων ποιησαμένη λόγον ἀνεχώρει τοῦ τεμένου ἐγκαλλωπιζομένη τῷ κόσμῳ, πολλάκις μὲν ἐπεφοίτησεν ὄναρ αὐτῇ καὶ ὕπαρ τὸν ἐσό- μενον θάνατον προμηνῶν, ἐθεάσαντο δὲ καὶ

follows the theory that by this time Vestal Virgins may have been chosen by one of his delegates.⁸¹⁴ However, given the absence of the emperor and the presence of the *pontifices Vestae*, it seems unlikely that emperors regularly continued to select new priestesses for the cult in the fourth century.

The next question is whether the college of Vestals was kept full with six priestesses until the time the temple was closed in the 394 CE. Very little evidence for the Vestal Virgins exists for the fourth century—especially compared to the third. Indeed, the identities of only three are known, and all were *virgines Vestalis maximae*: Terentia Rufilla (c. 300 CE), our unnamed Vestal from the inscription, and Coelia Concordia (c. 384). Since the inscriptions on the honorary statues are an important source of information for imperial Vestals—and we have so few—it is perhaps not surprising that we do not know more about the cult. It would also be expected that some author would mention a permanent reduction in the number of priestesses if one occurred, yet authors such as Symmachus definitely refer to the priestesses in the plural. Thus, without any indication that fewer than six Vestal Virgins continued to serve the goddess and the state, the safer presumption is that this remained unchanged.

Although Symmachus seems in many ways to have been the Vestals' greatest supporter, he was not above censuring them as well. After the death of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus the

ἄλλοι πολλοὶ τὰ παραπλήσια· καὶ τοσοῦτον ἴσχυσεν ἢ τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς μειοῦσα Δίκη δρᾶσαι τὸ οἰκεῖον, ὥστε οὐδὲ μαθοῦσα τὸ μειοῦσα Δίκη δρᾶσαι τὸ οἰκεῖον, ὥστε οὐδὲ μαθοῦσα τὸ ἐσόμενον ἐφυλάξατο, ὑπέσχε δὲ τῇ ἀγχόνῃ τὸν τράχηλον ᾧ τὸν τῆς θεοῦ κόσμον ἔτυχε περιθεῖσα. Λέγεται δὲ καὶ Στελίχων[α] δι' ἑτέραν οὐ πόρρω ταύτης ἀσέβειαν τῆς Δίκης τὰ ἀπόρρητα μὴ διαφυγεῖν· καὶ οὗτος γὰρ θύρας ἐν τῷ τῆς Ῥώμης Καπιτωλίου χρυσίῳ πολὺν ἔλκοντι σταθμὸν ἡμφιεσμένας ἀπολεπίσαι προστάξει, τοὺς δὲ τοῦτο πληρῶσαι ταχθέντας εὐρεῖν ἐν τινὶ μέρει τῶν θυρῶν γεγραμμένον *misero regi seruantur*, ὅπερ ἐστὶν 'ἀθλίῳ τυράννῳ φυλάττονται'· καὶ εἰς ἔργον ἐξέβη τὸ γεγραμμέ-νον· ἀθλίως γὰρ καὶ ἐλεεινῶς τὸν βίον ἀπέλιπεν. This passage dates to the end of the fourth or early fifth century and in it the priestess is called "old". See: F. Paschoud (ed.), *Zosime: Histoire Nouvelle*, 3.1 (Livre V), (Paris, 1986), 258-66, and recently S. Conti, "Tra integrazione ed emarginazione: le ultime Vestali," *SHHA* 21 (2003): 209-22, 218-20.

⁸¹⁴ Rita Lizzi Testa, "Augures et pontifices : Public Sacral Law in Late Antique Rome (Fourth-Fifth Centuries AD)," in *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, Andrew Cain and Noel Lenski, eds. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009): 251-278, 267. A passage of Symmachus alludes to this issue but does not explicitly state that Constantius II selected a Vestal Virgin. Cf. Symmachus, *Relationes*, 3.7: *Accipiat aeternitas vestra alia eiusdem principis facta, quae in usum dignius trahat. Nihil ille decerpit sacrarum virginum privilegiis, replevit nobiles sacerdotia.*

Vestals, led by the *virgo Vestalis maxima*, Coelia Concordia, wanted to erect a statue in his honor. Praetextatus was a *pontifex Vestae*, and as such had connections with their college. He was also an *augur*, *pontifex Solis*, *quindecimvir*, and a member of several other priesthoods. For these reasons, most scholars also view him as the figurehead for the pagan cults during the reign of Gratian.⁸¹⁵ Still, this idea could also be influenced by the *Carmen contra paganos* in which Praetextatus is the leading pagan figure. Praetextatus also financed the rebuilding of *Porticus deorum consentium*; thus he was known to have used his own finances in order to support pagan religions. Some scholars also suspect that he, and perhaps the other *pontifices Vestae*, may have provided financial support to the Vestals after Gratian took away some of their privileges.⁸¹⁶

The Vestals apparently discussed the matter among themselves and then requested official permission from the pontifical college to erect a statue and base in Praetextatus' honor.⁸¹⁷ Symmachus was urban prefect and a member of the pontifical college (*pontifex maior*) at the time of Praetextatus' death. The two men were friends and members of the same social circle. Despite these ties, Symmachus opposed the idea of the Vestals honoring Praetextatus. According to his own words, he believed that it was inappropriate for the virgin priestesses to honor a man in such a way, and there was no precedent for the Vestals to follow in doing so.⁸¹⁸ However, Symmachus indicates that he only expressed these opinions privately in a letter to

⁸¹⁵ James J. O'Donnell, "The Demise of Paganism," in *Traditio* vol. 35 (1979): 45-88, 76; Sogno, *Symmachus*, 56.

⁸¹⁶ See: Koch, 1760. Kahlos, *Praetextatus*, 66.

⁸¹⁷ Symmachus, *Epistles*, 2.36.2: *Praetextato nostro monumentum statuae dicare destinant virgins sacri Vestalis antistites. Consulti pontifices priusquam reverentiam sublimis sacerdotii aut longae aetatis usum vel condicionem temporis praesentis expenderent, absque paucis qui me secuti sunt, ut eius opificium statuerent adnuerunt.*

⁸¹⁸ Symmachus, *Epistles*, 2.36: *Ego qui adverterem neque honestati virginum talia in viros obsequia convenire neque more fieri quod Numa auctor, Metellus conservator religionum omnesque pontifices maximi nunquam ante meruerunt, haec quidem silui, ne sacrorum aemulis enuntiata noxam crearent insusitatum censentibus.* According to Seeck, Symmachus' letter was written while he was still urban prefect. Against Seeck's theory, Callu argues that Symmachus would not have been as insecure about the final decision of the *pontifices* had he still been in office. Cf. Seeck, "Q. Aur. Symmachi ipera quae supersunt", in *MGH Auctores Antiquissimi* 6.2, cxxii, (1883); Callu *Symmaque: Lettres*, vol 1 (1972), 179. See also: Lellia Cracco Ruggini, *Il paganesimo romano tra religione e politica: Per una reinterpretazione del Carmen contra Paganos*, (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1979), 114; J. F. Matthews, "Symmachus and the Oriental Cults," *JRS* 63 (1973): 175-195, 192 and note 111; Cecconi, *Commento storico al libro II dell'Epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco*, (2002), 267.

another *pontifex maior* since he did not want to harm the pagan cults (which he was fighting to maintain) or create discord among its members.⁸¹⁹ The pontifical college gave its permission, and the *virgo Vestalis maxima* Coelia Concordia dedicated the statue and base on behalf of the priestesses. The latter has never been found, but it is very unlikely that it was placed in the *Atrium Vestae*—this act may have pushed the proposal beyond acceptable levels.⁸²⁰ His widow, Fabia Paulina, was grateful for the act of the priestesses and in return made a similar dedication for the head of their order, Coelia Concordia.⁸²¹ This statue, now also lost, was found on the Esquiline hill and as such it did not belong to the group honoring the *virgines Vestalis maximae* in the *Atrium Vestae*.⁸²²

Another aspect frequently overlooked in this matter is the fact that Symmachus himself made requests to the emperor to erect statues in honor of Praetextatus.⁸²³ It is quite possible that Symmachus believed his right to honor Praetextatus was both greater and more appropriate. Moreover, his request would have taken some time to reach the emperor and return with a response, whereas the Vestals were able to expedite their request by keeping the matter within the pontifical college in Rome. This also suggests that Symmachus was not planning to honor Praetextatus as much for the role he played in traditional Roman religion, but rather for the civic

⁸¹⁹ Kahlos, 66; Sogno, *Symmachus*, 56. See also: O'Donnell, 76-77, who suggests a further motive. He sees the proposal of the statue to Praetextatus as the Vestals honoring the latter as a traditional *pontifex maximus*, at least in the mind of Symmachus. Accordingly, Symmachus did not approve because "...[he] assumed that the rejection of the title was a momentary aberration, and that by refusing to recognize the abdication, the college would clear the way for the emperors quietly to resume their title when they realized the error of their ways." This is a strong claim, and I am of the opinion that this author overstates his case. It presumes too much knowledge of the private thoughts of Symmachus and a certain nativity that the situation for pagans would improve.

⁸²⁰ Kahlos, 155-6 note 24, mentions the little scholarly debate over this issue. She also concludes that the statue must have been placed outside of the precinct of Vesta, if for no other reason that "Paulina would have mentioned if Praetextatus, as the first man in the Roman history, had received a statue in the *Atrium Vestae*."

⁸²¹ See *CIL*, 6, 2145: *Coeliae Concordiae virgini / Vestali maximae Fabia Paulina c(larissima) f(emina) statuam facien/dam conlocandamque / curavit cum propter / egregiam eius pudici/tiam insignemque / circa cultum divinum / sanctitatem tum quod / haec prior eius viro / Vettio Agorio Praetexta/to v(iro) c(larissimo) omnia singulari / dignoque etiam ab huius / modi virginibus et sa/cerdotibus coli statu/am conlocarat.*

⁸²² It is possible that it was placed in the atrium of Praetextatus and Paulina's home. It was found in the sixteenth century, but is now lost. Cf. Kahlos, 156, note 25.

⁸²³ Symmachus, *Relationes*, 12.

and administrative positions that he held; the former (obviously) could be approved by the *pontifices*, the latter needed imperial support. Still, it is likely that Symmachus' objection to the Vestal's dedication for Praetextatus stemmed from more than just concern over appropriateness, although given his other interactions with the priestesses it was assuredly a factor.

Symmachus further demonstrated his traditional stance toward pagan religion in his dealings with individual Vestals in at least two other instances. In one case, Symmachus had learned that a Vestal wished to be released from her vows before the completion of her thirty years of service—an unprecedented request. Unfortunately her name and reasons for wanting to leave are not mentioned. Symmachus was strongly against the idea. In a letter to the priestess he writes:

All talk which goes around without anyone to vouch for it is uncertain, but I permit no talk to make free with the reputation of the sacred virgin. Wherefore by my office as a priest, by my honor as a senator, I am constrained to state what I have learned. You are said to wish to retire from the Vestal office before the number of years fixed by the laws. I do not yet believe the rumor, but I am waiting for a personal statement in which you either admit the truth of this doubtful rumor or refute it.⁸²⁴

The Vestal in question apparently took the hint. In Symmachus' next letter to the priestess he expresses pleasure that she is continuing in her duties.⁸²⁵

Symmachus became involved once more with an individual Vestal named Primigenia who was accused of breaking her vow of chastity. Although she was a Vestal at Alba and not Rome, it seems that the matter was put before the pontifical college. Symmachus, as one of its members, recommended the traditional punishment of inhumation. This was a significant regression to the days of the Republic, or in more recent history the reigns of Domitian and Caracalla.

⁸²⁴ Symmachus, *Epistles*, 9.108. John Alexander McGeachy, Jr., trans.

⁸²⁵ Symmachus, *Epistles*, 9.109.

The investigation of our college, in the manner instituted by our ancestors, has discovered the incest of Primigenia, formerly priestess of Vesta at Alba. Our findings bear witness that this is evident, on the confessions both of Primigenia herself, who has defiled her sacred chastity, and of Maximus, with whom she admits her impious crime. It remains that upon them, who have polluted the public ceremonies with an abominable crime, the severity of the laws should be inflicted, the procedure of which has been preserved for you from the example of a recent time. And so you will consent, considering the laws and the advantage of the Empire, to avenge in a suitable way this crime, which has been punished with the utmost severity by all ages even to the present day. Farewell.⁸²⁶

The severity of this decision can be put further into context. Even Domitian had allowed several of the priestesses condemned during his reign to choose the manner of their punishment rather than suffer the customary penalty of live burial and death by slow suffocation.⁸²⁷ Thus Symmachus demonstrates once again the strength of his traditionalist beliefs by demanding the customary, strict penalty, despite the fact that Vestal admitted her crime.

This situation was complicated by the fact that Primigenia was tied to the cult of Vesta at Alba. An ancient temple and cult of this goddess was located there, and from where Vesta's worship had been brought to Rome.⁸²⁸ The above letter of Symmachus indicates that Primigenia was a "former" Vestal at Alba, but it is probably safe to assume that she was removed from her duties because of the current scandal. Although the matter was handed over to the *pontifices* in Rome who had the authority to recommend her manner of punishment, this power apparently did not extend to carrying out the act.⁸²⁹ Hence, Symmachus wrote the above letter, most likely to the prefect of the city, asking him to do so.

A second letter from Symmachus relates that the *praefectus urbi* found a way around carrying out Primigenia's punishment.

⁸²⁶ Symmachus, *Epistle*, 9, 147-8. Croke & Harries, trans.

⁸²⁷ Suetonius, *Domitian*, 8.

⁸²⁸ See chapter 3.

⁸²⁹ M. G. Granino Cecere, "Vestali non di Roma," in *Studi di Epigrafia Latina*, 20 (2003) : 67-80, 76; Cf. A. Chastagnol, 97 and 141 note 1. Although there are contemporary examples of *promagisteri* carrying out the decisions of the pontifical college, it seems that either there was no promagistrates at this time or that executing the punishment of a Vestal was not a task which fell under his purview.

According to the examples of a recent age, the punishment of Primigenia, the Vestal virgin who administered the shrine at Alba, has been transferred from our college to that most eminent and most excellent man, my brother the prefect of the city. But because in his letter commendable reasons are set forth—that it is neither permissible for a woman accused of so great a crime to enter the walls of the eternal city, nor possible for himself to make an extended journey, although the crime ought to be expiated where it was committed—we have perceived that necessarily it must fall to him who has been invested with a closely related power and the laws of the provinces⁸³⁰, to see that the severity always applied to these crimes is inflicted upon Primigenia, who has defiled the sacred secrets of the chaste goddess, and her corruptor Maximus, who indeed does not deny his shameful deed. You will consent therefore, when you have considered their confessions which have recorded the tragedy of this heinous crime, to avenge the injury of our most chaste age by the punishment of the defendants.⁸³¹

Primigenia was not allowed in the city of Rome on account of the severity of her crime, while at the same time the prefect of the city, to whom the responsibility of carrying out the punishment fell, was reluctant to leave Rome. Although Symmachus found these explanations sufficient, it is quite possible that the city prefect did not agree with Primigenia's sentence, or at least did not wish to be the person who carried it out. His identity, and as such his religious beliefs, are unknown. The intended recipient of this second letter is not clear, but its context suggests that Symmachus sent it to the current *vicarius urbis Romae*, who would have been the next officeholder in the established hierarchy to carry out Primigenia's sentence.

No further mention of the case exists and thus there is no way to know if the *vicarius* completed the request.⁸³² Most scholars believe that if Primigenia suffered some sort of punishment she was at least saved from inhumation, and her lover, Maximus, from the traditional penalty for seducing a Vestal, stoning. Indeed, they suspect that she did not receive any further chastisement at all.⁸³³ The reason for their doubt is unclear. In part, the fact that Symmachus or

⁸³⁰ Sogno, *Symmachus* 56.

⁸³¹ Symmachus, *Relatio*, 9, 148. John A. McGeachy, *Quintus Aurelius Symmachus and the senatorial aristocracy of the West*, (Chicago, 1942), 135-7.

⁸³² Barbara Scardigli, "L'Imperatore-Pontefice Massimo e le Vestali," in *Forme di aggregazione nel mondo romano*, (Bari: Conv. Ischia, 2006): 315-327, 327.

⁸³³ R. A. Bauman, *Crime and Punishment in Ancient Rome*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 97; Sogno, *Symmachus*, 58.

any other author fails to mention Primigenia's actual punishment is one likely factor. However, since he supported her conviction, he may have been less pleased about the lack of its execution and chose not to write about the matter further. The late date of these events, which took place c. 390 CE, could be another factor. However, this presumes a foreknowledge of anti-pagan legislation still to come in the next few years. Moreover, of all the convictions of Vestal *incestus* recorded throughout Roman history, this is the only documented example for a priestess outside of Rome. If one had never occurred, this may account for the complications regarding the execution of Primigenia's punishment as determined by the *pontifices*.

As late as 393 CE Symmachus wrote to Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, who was a *pontifex maior*, asking him to return to Rome for the celebration of the *Vestalia*.⁸³⁴ Surely the presence of the pontiffs would and could only have been symbolic since they are not known to have had any known role in the festivities (although perhaps there was more to the ritual than the cleaning out of the temple by women that is described in the sources).⁸³⁵ Why Symmachus singles out Flavianus is not clear. Perhaps he was the only *pontifex maior* outside the city at that time, or it could be that Symmachus wrote to all of them, but only this letter was preserved. More likely, however, are the facts that the two were friends (several of Symmachus' letters were addressed to Flavianus, and they were also (recently) connected by the marriage of Symmachus' son to Flavianus' daughter. Thus, Symmachus would feel comfortable sending such a letter to this man in particular.

While Symmachus continued to argue for the importance of the Vestal Virgins for the security of the state, praise them for their service, and chastise them for any transgressions, during the last few decades of the fourth century the priestesses were simultaneously attacked by

⁸³⁴ Symmachus, *Epistles*, 2.59.

⁸³⁵ Françoise Van Haepelen, *Le Collège Pontifical (3^{ème} s. a. C.-4^{ème} s. p. C.)*, (Bruxelles, 2002), 379.

Christian authors. Some writings seem to refer to the Vestals but are not specific; others are quite clear. Augustine in the *de civitate Dei* quotes a passage from Vergil (*Aeneid* 1.278-9) but rewrites it and instead mentions a time when there will no longer be a Vestal hearth.⁸³⁶ However, the major point of comparison between the Vestals and Christian virgins comes down to choice; the Vestal Virgins are forced into a life of celibacy as children whereas the Christian virgin is able to choose this lifestyle. Thus, Christian virgins are superior to Vestal priestesses.⁸³⁷ This same idea is expressed in the writings of Ambrose and Prudentius but in even greater detail. These authors also focus on the public nature of the Vestal Virgins in contrast to Christian virgin recluses, and the differences between the purity of the body (Vestals) versus the purity of the spirit (Christian virgins).⁸³⁸ Prudentius, at the end of his second book of the *contra Symmachus* goes so far as to entreat the emperor to wipe out pagan vestiges like the Vestals.⁸³⁹

Conclusion

The Vestal Virgins continued to serve the Roman state through the late fourth century. Unfortunately, for most of the imperial period they only appear in the literary sources when something negative occurred. This pattern remained in place during the third and fourth

⁸³⁶ Augustine, *de civitate Dei*, 2.29. In contrast to the abundance of attacks against Magna Mater, the cult of Vesta is usually passed over with few remarks or in silence. Augustine, *de civitate Dei*, 4.10 only contrasts Vestal virgins and Christ who was born of a virgin and in his argumentation proceeds to pagan identifications of Vesta with Venus whose depravity is easier to reprove.

⁸³⁷ John Chrysostom, *On Virginity*; cf. Maijastina Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue: Christian and Pagan Cultures c. 360-430*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 81, sees Jerome's reference to the "devil's virgins" as a likely allusion to the Vestals.

⁸³⁸ Ambrose, *de Virginitate*, 1.4, 1.15, 3.13; and *Epistles*, 1.18.11-12; Prudentius, *contra Symmachus*, 2.1055.

⁸³⁹ Prudentius, *contra Symmachus*, 2.1095-1100. For scholarship on the late Vestals and their comparisons to Christian virgins see: Robert Schilling, "Vestals et vierges chrétiennes dans la Rome antique," *Revue des Sciences religieuses* 35 (1961): 114-129; L. Desanti, "Vestali e vergini cristiane," in *Atti dell'Accademia romanistica costantiniana*, (1990): 473-488; Corinne Leveleux, *Des prêtresses déchuës: l'image des Vestales chez les pères de l'église latine (fin IIe-début Ve s.)*, (Paris: L. G. D. J., 1995); Rita Lizzi, "Vergini di Dio, vergini di Vesta: il sesso negato e la sacralità," in *L'eros difficile: amore e sessualità nell'antico cristianesimo*, S. Pricoc, ed. (Rubbettino: Soveria Mannelli, 1998): 89-132; Stefano Conti, "Tra integrazione ed emarginazione: le ultime Vestali," *Stud. hist., Ha antig.* 21 (2003): 209-222.

centuries CE. Other than sources that mention their mistreatment under two emperors, the literary sources have little to offer in the way of information about the cult until the second half of the fourth century. In contrast, the archaeological evidence for this period is considerably more abundant due to the find in the *Atrium Vestae* of several statues and bases erected in honor of several *virgines Vestales maximae* primarily from the third century. Their inscriptions show the role that the priestesses continued to play in Roman society as patrons with enough influence to assist their clients in gaining important offices, and as slave owners whose *liberti* wanted to honor them. Indeed, the majority of the dedications were made by clients (free and freed) or by family members of the priestess, which demonstrates that family ties remained an important aspect in the lives of these priestesses.

Changes to imperial policy concerning the pagan cults and the absence of the *pontifex maximus* from Rome must have affected the cult of Vesta by the mid fourth century; however, little direct evidence concerning the cult exists before the rule of Gratian. It can be inferred that the new legislation, especially that concerning animal sacrifice, may have required the priestesses to make adjustments to some of their traditional practices. It is unknown whether they did. Moreover, the cult required a *pontifex* to select the next priestess when a vacancy in the college occurred. This had traditionally been done by the *pontifex maximus*, but due to the increasing absence of the emperor from Rome (and perhaps their own religious beliefs) they would have needed to delegate this duty to another religious official. There is no evidence that this change hurt the cult in any way. If anything the regular absence of the emperor may have contributed to the fact that no Vestal Virgin in Rome was accused of *incestum* after Caracalla. Moreover, the cult gained a new group of members with ties to their goddess, the *pontifices Vestae*.

A sudden increase in the number of literary references to the Vestals occurs for the final decades of the fourth century. There is no doubt that this was a time of change for the cult. For example, many of their benefits and some of their financial support from the state treasury were taken away. However, many of the authors, both pagan and Christian, used the status of the Vestals to supporter their larger arguments or causes. This proves the continued symbolic importance of the cult of Vesta into the late fourth century; if invoking their name had no meaning, it would not have been done.

Theodosius (375-395) was co-ruler with Valentinian II until he became sole emperor in 392 CE. They increasingly imposed restrictions on pagan practices and in 391 passed legislation prohibiting all polytheistic practices including sacrifice, approaching shrines, entering temples or revering (pagan) images.⁸⁴⁰ For the moment, public ceremonies, processions and spectacles were still allowed and temples were permitted to stay open if they were used in traditional civic ceremonies. Although this did not put an immediate end to the pagan cults in Rome, it does seem to have been a significant step toward their decline, especially for the Vestal priestesses who seem to disappear earlier than the other priesthoods. The Temple of Vesta was closed in 394.⁸⁴¹ How many priestesses were still in the cult, their identities, and what happened to them are all unknown.

A story from Zosimus provides the latest possible information about a former Vestal Virgin and also demonstrates the continued symbolic importance of the priestess in popular

⁸⁴⁰ Libanius, *Oratio*, 30.7; Valentinian's letter: *Codex Theodosianus*, 9.16.9; *Codex Theodosianus*, 16.10.10; Noethlichs, 182; M. F. Martroye, "La repression de la magie et le culte des gentils au IVE siècle," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 9 (1930): 669-701, 692-695; F. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianisation c. 370-529*, (Leiden, 1993), 3; Garth Fowden, "Public Religion" in *The Cambridge Ancient History XII*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1998): 553-572, 553; Michelle Renee Salzman, "The Evidence for Conversion in Book 16 of the Theodosian Code," *Historia* 42.3, (1993): 362-378.

⁸⁴¹ This occurred after his defeat of Eugenius on 6 September, 394 CE. Cf. Zosimus, *Historia Nova*, 5.38.2: ὅτε Θεοδοσίος ὁ πρεσβύτερος, τὴν Εὐγενίου καθελῶν τυραννίδα, τὴν Ῥώμην κατέλαβε καὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς ἀγιστείας ἐνεποίησε πᾶσιν ὀλιγωρίαν, τὴν δημοσίαν δαπάνην τοῖς ἱεροῖς πᾶσιν ὀλιγωρίαν, τὴν δημοσίαν δαπάνην τοῖς ἱεροῖς χορηγεῖν ἀρνησάμενος, ἀπηλαύνοντο μὲν ἱερεῖς καὶ ἱέρειαι, κατελιμπάνετο δὲ πάσης ἱερουργίας τὰ τεμένη.

mentality. It allegedly took place in 408 CE, fourteen years after the Temple of Vesta was closed. In it he claims that Serena, niece and adopted daughter of Theodosius, went to a statue of Rhea Silvia on the Palatine Hill that was adorned with jewels. There she removed a necklace from the statue and put it around her own neck. A former Vestal was still alive and watched over the objects associated with the cult. She happened to see Serena steal the ornaments and chastised the woman for her sacrilege.

Serena, insulting the deities with derision, was determined to see the temple dedicated to the mother of the gods. In this perceiving some ornaments around the neck of the statue of Rhea, suitable to the divine worship that was paid to her, she took them off the statue, and placed them upon her own neck. An aged woman, who was the only one remaining of the vestal virgins, upbraided her severely for so impious an action. Serena not only returned very violent language, but commanded her attendants to drive or carry her away. Notwithstanding, the old woman, as she was leaving the place, prayed that whatever was due to such impiety might fall on Serena, her husband, and children. Serena did not notice what she had said, but left the temple pleased with the ornaments she had obtained. Yet afterwards she was frequently visited by an appearance, not only imaginary, in her dreams, but real, when she was awake, which predicted her death. Other persons likewise beheld the same appearance. So far did that just power of vengeance, whose office it is to punish the wicked, discharge its duty, that although Serena knew what would happen, she was without caution, and submitted that neck which she had decorated with the attire of the goddess, even to a halter.⁸⁴²

Why and how the former priestess happened to be at the temple at this exact moment is not explained, but divine intervention is inferred. Moreover, the moral of the story appears to be the poor character of Serena which contributed to her execution—by beheading—soon after. It is also unfortunate that Zosimus does not provide the name of the Vestal, but she is not the real subject of the passage.

⁸⁴² Zosimus, *Historia Nova*, 5.38.3-5: Τότε τοίνυν ἐπεγγελῶσα τούτοις ἡ Σερῆνα τὸ μητρῶον ἰδεῖν ἐβουλήθη, θεασαμένη δὲ τῷ τῆς Ῥέας ἀγάλματι περικείμενον ἐπὶ τοῦ τραχήλου κόσμον τῆς θείας ἐκείνης ἄξιον ἀγιστείας, περιελούσα τοῦ ἀγάλματος τῷ ἑαυτῆς ἐπέθηκε τραχήλῳ· καὶ ἐπειδὴ πρεσβῦτις ἐκ τῶν Ἑστιακῶν περιλειμμένη παρθένων ὠνείδισεν αὐτῇ κατὰ πρόσωπον τὴν ἀσεβειαν, περιύβρισε τε καὶ ἀπελαύνεσθαι διὰ τῶν ἐπομένων ἐκέλευσεν. Ἡ δὲ ἀπιούσα, πᾶν ὃ τι ταύτης ἄξιον τῆς ἀσεβείας ἐλθεῖν αὐτῇ Σερῆνα καὶ ἀνδρὶ καὶ τέκνοις ἠράσατο· ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐδενὸς τούτων ποιησαμένη λόγον ἀνεχώρει τοῦ τεμένους ἐγκαλωπιζομένη τῷ κόσμῳ, πολλάκις μὲν ἐπεφοίτησεν ὄναρ αὐτῇ καὶ ὕπαρ τὸν ἐσό- μενον θάνατον προμηνῦον, ἐθεάσαντο δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ τὰ παραπλήσια· καὶ τοσοῦτον ἴσχυσεν ἡ τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς μειτιούσα Δίκη δρᾶσαι τὸ οἰκεῖον, ὥστε οὐδὲ μαθοῦσα τὸ ἐσόμενον ἐφυλάξατο, ὑπέσχε δὲ τῇ ἀγχόνῃ τὸν τράχηλον ᾧ τὸν τῆς θεοῦ κόσμον ἔτυχε περιθεῖσα. Green and Chaplin, trans.

Conclusion

Although each chapter in this work examines one or more specific issues about the worship of Vesta during the Roman Imperial period, several overarching themes reoccur. As such, this conclusion combines elements of multiple chapters in order to exhibit how the various subjects work together in order to provide a “big picture” of the status, role, and perception of Vesta both in Rome and throughout the Empire. In particular, I will focus on two main ideas: the relationship between Vesta and the *pontifex maximus* of Rome, and the symbolic importance of the goddess and her attributes (temple, priestesses, Palladium, etcetera) for the people.

The relationship between Vesta and her cult with the emperors of Rome is the single most unifying component to these chapters and is vital to understanding the worship of the goddess during the Imperial period. The *pontifex maximus* had always been the person with ultimate authority over the cult, but starting with Augustus this individual was also the most powerful man in Rome. High priests during the Republic were always senatorial men from important families. Julius Caesar, however, was the most esteemed of all and he began the consolidation of important offices into the prerogative of one person. Augustus had to wait until later in his career to become *pontifex maximus*, but once he was elected to this office the precedent was set for the emperor to also hold the highest priesthood in Rome.

The repercussions of this for the worship of Vesta were many, and they developed over several centuries. Immediate effects can be seen in the relationship between the goddess and her priestesses with the emperors and imperial family. Perhaps Augustus had a preconceived plan to connect himself to Vesta, but if he did he restrained from implementing it until just after he became *pontifex maximus*. He brought the worship of Vesta to his home on the Palatine where he had already honored his preferred deity, Apollo, with a grand temple. Augustus paid tribute

to the goddess there with an altar and a statue, but nothing more. Although some scholars believe otherwise, the evidence neither supports a temple for Vesta on the Palatine, nor the idea that the Palladium was removed from the *aedes Vestae* in the Forum and taken there. Beyond making this dedication, which likely served his own purposes more than it honored the goddess, Augustus did only a little to promote Vesta and her cult. He did expand some of the duties of the Vestals to include sacrifices and participation at new rites, but these were all connected to the imperial family. Accordingly, the question can be raised whether his greater intent was to honor the priestesses or to take advantage of them. Indeed, it seems that his main goal was to maintain the status of the goddess and her Vestals, but not to privilege them in any exceptional way.

The same can be said of every following emperor until the fourth century. They did what was necessary to preserve the cult, such as rebuilding the Temple of Vesta or the *Atrium Vestae* when they were damaged or destroyed. Some used the image of Vesta, her temple, the priestesses, and the Palladium in their visual program, especially on coinage, but no emperor (or empress) closely affiliated himself with Vesta again. Indeed, the only other notice that they paid to the goddess or her cult was negative. Accusations of Vestal *incestum* occurred during the reigns of Domitian and Caracalla, and Elagabalus married a Vestal Virgin (twice). Thus attention from the emperor often did more harm to the cult than it ever did good.

This pattern continued until the fourth century when the emperor's physical distance from Rome, if not also his religious beliefs, forced one (perhaps Constantine or his immediate successor) to make changes to the college of Vestal Virgins. On the whole there is no indication that the cult needed much attention from the *pontifex maximus*: he selected new priestesses and imposed punishment on them when necessary. Beyond this there is no reason to presume that his relationship with the Vestals was markedly different from those he had with any of the other

traditional Roman priesthoods. Nevertheless, in the absence of the emperor the college of Vestals required someone to make those decisions. As a result, the emperor who remained the *pontifex maximus* of Rome (until Gratian) entrusted the general supervision of the priestesses to a few men known as the priests of Vesta. This was one significant change that the Vestals experienced in the fourth century. The other was the amount of legislation that increasingly limited pagan religious practices and their state funding. However, it appears that the priestesses were able to adapt to all of these changes until their order ended in 394 CE.

The fact that the emperor in his role as *pontifex maximus* was responsible for the supervision of the cult of Vesta has led to errors in modern scholarship, especially in studies that discuss the similarities between the empresses of Rome and the Vestal Virgins, and ones about the Palladium. The first issue is vexed for many reasons. Scholars have purposefully looked for a connection between the imperial women and Vesta and her cult. In many ways, this can be tied to Augustus. On one hand, there exists the modern conception of his strong preference for Vesta. On the other, misleading primary source accounts that report Augustus' declaration that he would nominate one of his own family as a Vestal Virgin if one were eligible have resulted in the search for a female substitute, and there scholars find Livia. If we remove this obstacle (Augustus), the argument begins to fall apart. The sources fail to demonstrate any strong ties between Livia and Vesta; if anything fewer examples exist to connect them than might be expected. Still, some references—especially ones found in the poetry of Ovid—are quite strong, but they too can be traced back to the author's desire to connect Augustus to Vesta in order to please the emperor. Moreover, scholars have tried to affiliate Livia with the Vestal Virgins. Although some overlap exists in the realm of privileges, the reasons why the empress and the priestesses received them often differed, and most of Livia's post-date the death of Augustus.

Thus, the mere fact that two categories of women (imperial women and Vestals) with rights not held by others of their sex existed in Rome does not mean that one was intentionally modelled on the other, or that it is useful to compare them.

The connection between emperors and Vesta has also led to claims, both ancient and modern, that they controlled the most sacred object in her care, the Palladium. Ambiguous visual imagery depicting Augustus and Vesta and her priestesses has caused modern scholars to claim that he moved the Palladium to the Palatine. No contemporary literary source claims that this occurred (although they have been used to support the assertion), and consequently there is no reason to believe that it ever happened. However, once again the purported strong ties between Augustus and Vesta have misled scholars. In contrast, a couple of hundred years after the death of Constantine, Byzantine writers claimed that this emperor removed the Palladium from Rome and brought it to the Forum of Constantinople. Constantine's role as *pontifex maximus* would have theoretically given him the right to do so, and the literary references that Elagabalus had removed the statue would have established a precedent that he could have followed. However, the irony here should not be ignored: the Byzantines were claiming that the first "Christian" emperor had brought a sacred pagan talisman to Constantinople in order to protect the city. Rather than condemning Constantine for this act, they very nearly praised him for his foresight in protecting them from danger. This clearly demonstrates the continued symbolic value of the Palladium (either in addition to or in spite of its connections to Vesta) even into the Byzantine period.

To a lesser, more theoretical extent, it is possible that the worship of Vesta outside of Rome became connected to the Imperial cult and the veneration of the emperor and Roma. Few examples documenting the worship of Vesta in the provinces exist, but they do occur. In the

East, the most notable references come from the Acropolis of Athens where Vesta was most likely honored at an altar within or near the Temple of Augustus and Roma. It is more difficult, however, to form a hypothesis about the worship of Vesta in the West. Since these areas were generally newly acquainted with Greco-Roman religion, it is unlikely that the worship of Vesta ever became widespread, and unlike other Roman divinities Vesta was never syncretized with any of the local gods. Given her close association with altars and the precedent from Athens, it is possible that Vesta was considered to be present at places of sacrifice for the Imperial cult. However, due to the lack of any known temples or officials dedicated to Vesta outside of Latium, it is impossible that her worship occurred in the provinces in the same way that it did in Rome.

The second major theme that runs through this work is the nature and symbolism that the Romans bestowed on Vesta. She had traditionally been a tutelary deity, a protector of the people, state, and its most sacred objects. Vesta was also—and likely in part for these reasons—considered a mother figure, but one that was chaste with no apparent divine consort. The qualities that she possessed by the late Republic continued into the imperial period, but with some additions. Once again, these began during the reign of Augustus. During this time several things occurred. First, Vesta obtained a more developed history which included stronger ties to Rome's mythological mother-city Troy. This also helps to explain why she of all gods in Rome was given most of Rome's *sacra* to guard since several of these also had Trojan origins.

How the Romans perceived the relationship between Vesta and the *pontifex maximus*, and later the priests of Vesta, is another interesting point of consideration. Surely the people connected the goddess and *pontifex maximus* to some extent, if for no other reason as a result of his responsibilities over the Vestal Virgins. It would be interesting to know if the fact that the most powerful man in Rome was also its high priest affected the perception of Vesta's cult in

any way. It seems possible that his prominence could have added to theirs, even if he showed them no special attention. Two outcomes seem possible when an emperor abused the cult in some way: either the offence against the priestesses would have been regarded as even greater, or his actions held even greater justification and authority. Moreover, literary allusions suggest that the *pontifex maximus* may have been considered a priest of Vesta in popular mentality from at least the principate of Augustus if not earlier. For this reason the same question must also be raised regarding his connection to Vesta. Did the eminence of Vesta's high priest add to her own?

There is also the matter of the *pontifex maximus* handing over his duties to other priests in the fourth century. Logically, the two most likely responses from pagans would be: praise for ensuring the continuation of the cults by empowering other priests to act on his behalf (as priests of Vesta, promagistrates, etcetera), or censure for not performing the duties of his office although he still retained the title. Besides, he did not turn the cult of Vesta over to just anyone; the new priests of Vesta all belonged to the senatorial order, and most were distinguished as regards their family or careers, often both. Still, would the perception of the cult have increased as a result of having a few distinguished pagans living in the city supervising its activities, or would it have decreased since the emperor no longer did so himself? The fact that emperors began to distance themselves from traditional Roman religious beliefs can only be taken as a decision that Christians in the empire generally approved of.

What Vesta may have represented to people living outside the city of Rome is also difficult to determine. Surely, she was closely tied to the capitol city; this was the location of her main temple and the most famous Vestal priestesses. Moreover her role as a protector of Rome and its people furthered her connection to the city, to the point that it is conceivable that newer

areas of the empire may have been offended by her presence. In this capacity she may have been considered in the same realm as Roma, although it was the latter goddess who was pushed in the worship of the Imperial cult. It is possible that for peoples of the West that Vesta meant very little, except for those more familiar with traditional Roman religious practices (provincial governors, soldiers, etcetera). Indeed, the evidence suggests that she received some worship in these areas, but not a considerable amount. For the people of the East, it appears that Vesta was by and large considered to be equivalent to Hestia. For them, Vesta likely held the same approximate symbolic value and nature as Hestia, thus she belonged at hearths and altars, and had a role both in the home and also in the public realm in the prytaneum. When a difference between Hestia and the “Roman Vesta” is clearly expressed, it is usually because Vesta had a connection to the imperial cult.

The sources further indicate that after the changes the reign of Augustus had on the cult were established, that the symbolic nature of Vesta and her cult remained relatively unchanged until the fourth century. Naturally, some allowance must be made for periods of accusations of Vestal *incestum*, as well as the choice of some emperors to include Vesta or one of her attributes on imagery, but none of these things should have had a lasting, significant impact. Vesta continued to represent what she always had. The priestesses carried on with all of their sacred duties, and they maintained their status as influential women with independent means (legal and financial) in Roman society.

The changes made to official state policy regarding pagan religious practices that were legislated in the fourth century do not appear to have had a considerable impact on the cult, but the effects on their funding and other financial privileges (for example free grain) were greater. These caused considerable outrage at least among some of pagan aristocracy of Rome (and likely

beyond). For senators and pagan priests like Symmachus, the restrictions were a considerable insult, and while all of the pagan cults were affected to some degree the greatest outrage seems to have been for the impact on the Vestals and the insult to all of the gods since the priestesses served not only Vesta but all of Rome's gods. Symmachus's response also demonstrates the continued symbolic importance of this goddess since, of all the gods and priesthoods that could have been singled out, Vesta and her priestesses were the ones that Symmachus believed would have the greatest impact. Likewise, the lasting symbolic nature of the goddess and her priestesses was recognized by even Christian authors who, although they found no way to attack Vesta directly (or at least refrained from doing so), went after her priestesses. Vestal virginity was neither true nor equal to that of Christian virgins since the priestesses did not freely choose this lifestyle as adults. For this reason, Christian writers targeted some of their attacks against pagan practices at the Vestals.

The importance of Vesta and her priestesses continued even after the end of the cult in 394 CE. Naturally, just because Vesta's temple was closed and her priestesses were no longer recognized (there is no indication of what happened to them), it did not mean that pagans immediately stopped believing in the goddess or her power. The story of Serena and the Vestal who continued to watch over Rome's pagan shrines which was used by its author to foreshadow this woman's trial and execution for treason establishes that even a century later the mention of Vesta and her priestesses had meaning. The legends recording the removal of the Palladium, which was closely associated with Vesta, also prove the continued belief in the power of pagan gods and sacred talismans. The "Hestia Polyolbos" ("Hestia of many blessings") tapestry from sixth century CE Egypt also proves this. Although it mentions Hestia and not Vesta, as demonstrated the two goddesses were generally equated in the eastern Roman Empire and as

such it is not too much of a stretch to view it as also a reflection of Vesta. The blessings that the tapestry attribute to Hestia (Vesta) such as “wealth, mirth, praise, festivity, excellence, and progress” also show that the goddess had experienced an expansion of her provinces and acquired a greater universality. Thus, even in the Byzantine period these goddesses still had enough popular meaning (if not also prolonged religious belief) for authors and artists to continue evoking them. Indeed, the symbolic importance of Vesta and her priestesses endured beyond the closing of the *aedes Vestae* in 394 CE, and they remain popular subjects even in modern scholarship and culture.

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