

Mars and Rhea Silvia *

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RESUME

This paper presents a new typology of the works of art in various media with the depictions of the Mars and Rhea Silvia myth. The analysis of the iconography, the literary and visual sources of the representations has led to the new identification of several figures, which we here present. In addition, a classification of the types and of the media based on their frequency and chronology is also included.

RESUMEN

Las autoras presentan en su trabajo una tipología nueva de las obras de arte, en sus distintas formas, con representaciones del mito de Marte y Rhea Silvia. Analizan la iconografía, las fuentes literarias y visuales de las representaciones y presentan una nueva identificación de varias figuras. Asimismo, los tipos y la "media" (i.e. pintura, escultura y artes menores) son clasificados según su frecuencia y cronología.

* The idea for this joint article arose during a tour in South Italy. As we looked at the RHEA SILVIA sarcophagus in the cloister of the cathedral of Amalfi, it became clear then that we were both working on the representations of the MARS and RHEA SILVIA myth in Roman works of art. We therefore decided to merge our data, as well as the ideas formulated in this joint article.

The state of research

The representations in art of MARS and RHEA SILVIA myth have not been entirely ignored by art historians. Since the days of Winckelmann, scholars have mentioned this theme, often including no more than one work of art; lists of the works of art known at the time were first compiled after 1914¹. A few writers have presented the myth in so-called "iconographic" studies. Robert², in addition to his description of the sarcophagi of MARS and RHEA SILVIA, mentions in a short introduction the same subject in other media, as well as some of the literary sources of the myth. In a simple footnote, Dawson (in *Romano-Campanian Landscape Painting*)³ adds several monuments to those already presented by Robert, and divides these in four groups:

- A. RHEA SILVIA lies asleep while MARS steps down toward her.
- B. RHEA SILVIA lies asleep and MARS walks along the ground.
- C. MARS flying horizontally, RHEA SILVIA asleep.
- D. RHEA SILVIA awake.

Even Aichholzer⁴ in an extensive and inclusive study does not, in fact, add directly or indirectly to what had been already proposed by Robert and Dawson.

Thus, the state of research indicates that a re-examination of the representations of the MARS and RHEA SILVIA myth in art is called for. Therefore this paper proposes:

- A typology of the representations in the various media, based on the position of Mars in relation to RHEA SILVIA.
- An iconographical analysis, a study of the literary as well as of the visual sources.
- An examination of the chronology and frequency of the types and media.

Topology

Type A

MARS descends from the skies, coming down from the right towards RHEA SILVIA, who is reclining asleep on a mound on the left, supporting herself on her right arm, her left arm over her head. A himation covers partly her

¹ *RE* IA, 1, col. 345; Roscher *Lexikon* IV, cols. 65-69; *EAA* VI, 665-666; *LIMC* II, c.v. Ares/Mars, nrs. 390-407; 489-493; Pietrangeli, *L'Urbe* VIII (1943), 4-9.

² Robert, *ASR* III/2, 227 ff.

³ Dawson, 169-170, note 200.

⁴ Aichholzer, 68-76, kat. 143-174.

lower body, leaving her upper body nude. MARS is nude but for a chlamys floating in the wind; he has a shield, a spear and a helmet.

MARS and RHEA SILVIA are the sole figures represented in two of the four works of art of this type: the gem in the B.M. (fig. 1)⁵ and the Belvedere relief in the Vatican (fig. 2)⁶. Other figures are added in the two remaining works of art of this type. In the gem of The Haag (fig. 3)⁷ a flying EROS is included, holding a burning torch, as HYMENAEOS⁸; in the painting of the Domus Aurea (fig. 4)⁹ a figure of an old bearded man with wings or horns on his head, leans on a mound on the left, holding a branch. This figure has been interpreted as SOMNUS¹⁰. However, in other representations of MARS and RHEA SILVIA, SOMNUS is shown with wings on his back and holding a horn from which a sleep juice flows onto RHEA SILVIA (figs. 26, 27, 28); as these elements are lacking here, this figure may be seen as the personification of the place¹¹.

Type B

The position of MARS and of RHEA SILVIA in the six works of art of this type is opposite to that of type A. The representations of MARS are very similar, though with slight variations, whereas RHEA SILVIA is shown lying in three different poses. Similar in the Antoninus Pius coin (fig. 5)¹² and in the sarcophagus from Aquincum (fig. 6)¹³, her pose is here the negative of that in type A. Although she is also asleep in the mosaic of Ostia (fig. 7)¹⁴ her head rests on her arms, as she lies on an overturned vase from which water flows. In another unique pose, RHEA SILVIA is shown, her back turned to the spectator on the bronze vase (fig. 8)¹⁵. Though she is awake, it is obvious that she is not aware of the two figures above her, MARS and EROS, as HYMENAEOS¹⁶, for she turns her head in the opposite direction.

⁵ Walters, *BMGems*, 115, pl. XIV, n. 982; Aichholzer, kat. 173; *LIMC* II, 551, n. 407.

⁶ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 227; Amelung, *Skulpturen VatMus* II, n. 36, taf. 9; Vermeule *JHS* 77 (1957) 294; Aichholzer, kat. 149; *LIMC* II, 550, n. 395a.

⁷ Maaskant-Kleibrink I, 271, n. 740; Aichholzer, kat. 174, Abb. 172; *LIMC* II, 551, n. 407a.

⁸ This identification is according to Robert, *ASR* III/2, 236.

⁹ Roscher, *Lexikon* IV, cols. 67, 68, n. 12, fig. 3; Reinach *RPGR*, 58.7; Strong, *Art* II, 25, fig. 286; Aichholzer, kat. 144; *LIMC* II, 550, n. 392.

¹⁰ Aichholzer, 71.

¹¹ A similar figure is depicted on a sarcophagus of the Museo Nazionale Romano, cf. Giuliano *MusNR*, I, 1,323, cat. 190.

¹² Aichholzer, kat. 163, Abb. 162; *LIMC* II, 551, n. 403.

¹³ Robert, *ASR* II, 236-237, n. 192; *LIMC* II, 550, n. 397; Aichholzer, kat. 150.

¹⁴ Pietrangeli, *L'Urbe* VIII (1943) 4-9, tav. IV; Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia* IV, 36-37, 308-310. Tav. CV, 59; Aichholzer, kat. 145; *LIMC* II, 550, n. 393.

¹⁵ Reinach, *RRGR* II, 52,2; Aichholzer, kat. 161; *LIMC* II, 567, n. 493.

¹⁶ Cf. note 8 (supra).

In the Aquincum and Ostia representations she is shown lying under a tree; in the Pompeian painting (fig. 9)¹⁷ where the meeting of MARS and RHEA SILVIA is part of the scene of the foundation of Rome, she lies on the slope of a hill with a temple of Vesta on its summit¹⁸. The fragmentary state of the Arlon relief (fig. 10)¹⁹ does not permit a detailed examination.

Type C

MARS, as in type B, approaches RHEA SILVIA from the left, but instead of flying in the air, is shown here striding toward her. This type includes two mosaics, one from Lixus (fig. 11)²⁰ and another from Bell-Lloch (fig. 12)²¹, the pediment of the Igel monument (fig. 13)²², a sarcophagus (fig. 14)²³, the Ara Casali (fig. 15)²⁴, coins of Antoninus Pius (fig. 16)²⁵ (fig. 17)²⁶, and of Gallienus (fig. 18)²⁷, a clay medallion (fig. 19)²⁸ and a gem (fig. 20)²⁹.

RHEA SILVIA in this type, as in the Aquincum relief (fig. 6) and on the coin of Antoninus Pius (fig. 5) of type B, reclines on her side with her right arm raised over her head, with two exceptions: the clay medallion (fig. 19) and the London gem (fig. 20). The scene is reduced to the main figures on the coins (figs. 16, 17, 18), as well as in the mosaic of Bell-Lloch (fig. 12), where as in the remaining works of art, other details are added.

The natural background is suggested by some plants, by the rocks on which MARS walks, and by the object—a bush or rock—under RHEA SILVIA's head and upper body in the Lixus mosaic (fig. 11). In the Igel pediment (fig. 13), this is indicated by the rocks on the left side, as well as by the vase on the

¹⁷ Dawson, 103-104, pl. XVIII, n. 46; Aichholzer, kat. 143; *LIMC* II, 549, n. 391.

¹⁸ The hill is identified as the Palatine by Dawson, 103. On the temple of Vesta, Type F hereby.

¹⁹ *LIMC* II, 567, n. 490; Aichholzer, kat. 151.

²⁰ *FA* III, 1948 (1950), col. 334, n. 3490, fig. 83; Sichtermann, *AA*, 69 (1954), 442 ff. Abb. 117-118; Aichholzer, kat. 146, Abb. 141b; *LIMC* II, 550, n. 394.

²¹ Balil, *BRAH*, 151 (1962), 314-315, lam. 29, fig. 6; Aichholzer, kat. 147; Blázquez et alii, *AEArq* 59 (1986), 130-131, fig. 60.

²² Zahn, *Igeler Säule*, 35; Aichholzer, kat. 159; *LIMC* II, 566-567, n. 489.

²³ Robert, *ASR* II/2, 235-236, n. 192; Aichholzer, kat. 153; *LIMC* II, 544-545, n. 351; 550, n. 399.

²⁴ Amelung, *Skulpturen VatMus*, II, n. 87a, Taf. 15; Schefold, *Wort u. Bild*, 122, Taf. 10.1; Robert, *Hermeneutik*, 242, Abb. 190; Aichholzer, kat. 154; *LIMC* II, 550, n. 398.

²⁵ Mattingly, *BMC* IV, pl. 6.14; Vermeule, *JHS* 77 (1957), 293, pl. II.7; Aichholzer, kat. 162, Abb. 164.

²⁶ Vermeule, *JHS* 77 (1957), 293, pl. II.8.

²⁷ Cohen, *Monnaies* V, 438, n. 1003; Aichholzer, kat. 167; Roscher, *Lexikon* IV, col. 65, n. 2, fig. 2.

²⁸ Wuilleumier/Audin, *Medaillons*, 154-155, n. 293, four identical medallions are included Aichholzer, kat. 160, Abb. 160; *LIMC* II, 567, n. 491.

²⁹ Walters, *BMGems*, 160, n. 1433, pl. XX; Smith, *BMGems*, 183; Aichholzer, kat. 169, Abb. 167.

right. This vase, from which water flows, is similar to that in Ostia (fig. 7). But, whereas this last is the vase she had taken to the fountain, in the Igel pediment it may be interpreted as the symbol of the river, as another vase is placed near RHEA SILVIA.

The scene of MARS and RHEA SILVIA in the sarcophagus (fig. 14), as in the Ara Casali relief (fig. 15) is part of a representation comprising several scenes. The sarcophagus includes pairs of lovers, whereas the Ara Casali is dedicated to the legend of Romulus and Remus. In both these reliefs other elements are added to the main figures: EROS, with a burning torch, as HYMENAEOS, in the sarcophagus; a fig tree, as well as a bearded man holding a branch, in the Ara Casali. The bearded man, who resembles the figure in the painting from Nero's Domus Aurea (fig. 4), seems here as there, to be the personification of the place, although theof Bell-Lloch (fig. 12). Where as in the remaining works of art, other details are added.

The natural background is suggested by some plants, by the rocks on which MARS walks, and by the object—a bush or rock—under RHEA SILVIA's head and upper body in the Lixus mosaic (fig. 11). In the Igel pediment (fig. 13), this is indicated by the rocks on the left side, as well as by the vase on the right. This vase, from whhe woman on the clay medallion, though named 'ILIA' by the inscription, is RHEA SILVIA, since both names refer to the same figure³³.

Type D

This type, the negative of the last one, is represented on the Terme Museum relief (the so-called pediment of the Venus and Dea Roma temple) (fig. 21)³⁴ and on a gem (fig. 22)³⁵. On the relief the scene is placed in the right part, with the scene of the Lupa Romana in the left; on the gem, the two figures are accompanied by a moon and star.

Type E

In the three examples of this type RHEA SILVIA is shown in the right side, while MARS stands on the left, looking at her. The state of preservation of the gem (fig. 23)³⁶ does not permit more than a summary examination:

³⁰ Amelung, *Skulpturen VatMus*, 239; Robert, *Hermeneutik*, 242; Aichholzer, 74; cf. iconographic analysis, hereby.

³¹ Walters, *BMGems*, 160.

³² Aichholzer, 74.

³³ Cf. iconographical analysis, hereby.

³⁴ Dawson, 168, note 196; Strong, *Roman Sc.*, 239, pl. XXII; Aichholzer, kat. 148; *LIMC* II, n. 395.

³⁵ *AGD* I.2, n. 1467, Taf. 143, and same type n. 1468, Taf. 143; Aichholzer, kat. 172; *LIMC* II, 551, n. 406.

³⁶ Aichholzer, kat. 170; *LIMC* II, 551, n. 405.

MARS stands with his left leg bent, while nothing can be seen of RHEA SILVIA.

A personification is shown behind RHEA SILVIA on a coin (fig. 24)³⁷ and on a medallion of Faustina Maior (fig. 25)³⁸. On the latter the figure sits under a tree holding what seems to be a cornucopia or a branch; if what the figure holds is a cornucopia, then this would be the personification of the river. But, if it is a branch, this would indicate that it is the personification of the place, as shown in the Domus Aurea painting and the Ara Casali (figs. 4, 15). An overturned vase on which RHEA SILVIA seems to lean, is shown on the medallion³⁹ as well as on the coin; in the last, an EROS-HYMENAEOS is included between MARS and the personification.

Type F

This type, which includes four sarcophagi (fig. 26)⁴⁰ (fig. 27)⁴¹ (fig. 28)⁴² (fig. 29)⁴³ is based on the location of MARS and RHEA SILVIA in the centre of a complex composition, though the figures surrounding them vary. As Robert described in detail these sarcophagi, we will mention only those figures on whose identification we disagree, or those important for the comparison with other figures.

Two seated figures are shown in the upper corner of the two sarcophagi of the Palazzo Mattei. On one (fig. 27) these are placed on both sides of Minerva, on the other (fig. 26), on both sides of the temple. These figures are identified as VENUS and VULCAN by Robert⁴⁴, and the temple as that of Venus and Dea Roma⁴⁵. Robert's identification of the goddess as VENUS based on the seated cult statue of the goddess, which is mentioned by Cassius Dio (LXIX, 4,4-5) should be re-examined. This image is more similar to that of JUNO⁴⁶ on VESTA⁴⁷. According to Plutarch (Par. 314,36), RHEA SILVIA was JUNO's priestess. But other ancient writers agree in considering RHEA SILVIA as a priestess of VESTA⁴⁸. Since no connection exists between JUNO

³⁷ Alföldi, *Kontorniat*, 87, n. 264, Taf. 112.9; Aichholzer, kat. 168, Abb. 166.

³⁸ Gneccchi, *Medaglioni*, II, 24.7, Tav. 57.3; Aichholzer, kat. 165; *LIMC* II, 551, n. 404.

³⁹ Gneccchi, *Medaglioni* II, 24.7.

⁴⁰ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 228 ff., n. 188; Aichholzer, kat. 156; *LIMC* II, 550, n. 401.

⁴¹ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 233-235, n. 190; Aichholzer, kat. 157; *LIMC* II, 550, n. 401a.

⁴² Robert, *ASR* III/1, 108-110, n. 88; Aichholzer, kat. 158; *LIMC* II, 550, n. 400.

⁴³ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 237-238, n. 193.

⁴⁴ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 230-233.

⁴⁵ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 230; Aichholzer, 73.

⁴⁶ Reinach, *RSGR* II, 245.5; Bieber, *Copies*, fig. 761 (though she is standing).

⁴⁷ *EAA* VII, 1149, fig. 1281.

⁴⁸ Ovid, *Fasti* III, 11; Plutarch, *Romulus*, III, 2-3; Serv. *Aen.* I, 273.18-20/21 [I, 273.13-16], VI, 777 Cassius Dio, *Roman History* I, Tzetzes in *Lycophr. Alex.* V. 1232; Dionys. Halic. I, 76.3.

and VULCAN, while that between VESTA and VULCAN is evident, we believe the seated couple to be VESTA and VULCAN. Livy (XXII, X,9) makes this relationship clear, for he writes that in the celebrations of the *lectisternium* among the couches displayed were those of VULCAN and VESTA. Consequently, the temple should be considered as Vesta's temple, where RHEA SILVIA served as priestess.

The scene on the right half of the Lateran sarcophagus (fig. 28) is dedicated to SELENE and ENDYMION, thus occupying that part where VULCAN and VESTA were placed in the two sarcophagi mentioned above. As a result, the scene of MARS and RHEA SILVIA is not represented in the centre of the panel, and the number of the figures accompanying them is reduced to eight only.

The three sarcophagi mentioned above, have some elements in common: SOMNUS, who pours sleep juice from the horn in his hand onto RHEA SILVIA, EROS, and the personification of the river.

The fourth sarcophagus, of Amalfi (fig. 29) belongs also, in our opinion, to this type. Though the main figures are usually identified as MARS and VENUS⁴⁹, we believe these are MARS and RHEA SILVIA, which are accompanied by the gods and goddesses, as well as by two personifications. From left to right: APOLLO LYKEIOS, DIANA, with a dog at her feet, VULCAN, SOL, HERCULES, DIONYSOS-BACCHUS with a panther, MERCURIUS, JUNO, JUPITER and MINERVA. CAELUS and TELLUS are represented at JUPITER's feet.

At first, it may seem that no connection links these figures with representations of the myth of MARS and RHEA SILVIA on sarcophagi. But, in fact, all these figures, with the exception of Caelus and Hercules are shown also on the sarcophagi of the Palazzo Mattei: SOL, VULCAN, and TELLUS on one (fig. 26), and on the other (fig. 27) in addition to these, MINERVA, APOLLO, DIANA, JUPITER, JUNO, MERCURIUS, and DIONYSOS-BACCHUS. HERCULES, absent from these two sarcophagi, is shown on the upper corner of the Lateran sarcophagus (fig. 28).

Therefore, and as, to the best of our knowledge, there is no similar representation of MARS and VENUS, the scene on the Amalfi sarcophagus should be considered as a representation of the MARS and RHEA SILVIA myth. The LUPA ROMANA shown on one of the sides of this sarcophagus⁵⁰ is a further argument for this identification.

⁴⁹ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 237-238; *LIMC* II, 545, n. 358, 549, n. 387. However, Dulière, *Lupa Romana*, 95, n. 286, mentions the Amalfi sarcophagus among other representations of MARS and RHEA SILVIA.

⁵⁰ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 238, fig. 193b.

Unclassified

Four works of art are difficult to classify within the types established above. The state of preservation of the fragment from Capua (fig. 30)⁵¹ makes it impossible to know whether it may have belonged to type C (if it included none but the figures of MARS and RHEA SILVIA), or to type F (if, as on the sarcophagi, these were part of a larger composition).

The position of MARS in relation to RHEA SILVIA on the silver relief (fig. 31)⁵² differs from all the types, for in all those RHEA SILVIA lies on one side and MARS approaches her from the opposite direction. Here, the form of the handle dictates the position of the figures: RHEA SILVIA lies with two Erotes near her, in the central lower zone, while MARS walks above, or behind her, in the narrow part of the object, and turns his head backwards.

The scenes in two works of art: the Esquiline wall painting (fig. 32)⁵³ and the sarcophagus panel (fig. 33)⁵⁴ diverge from the scheme adopted in the other works of art. Both are part of a cycle of the foundation of Rome, and therefore the main figures have been identified as MARS and RHEA SILVIA. In the Esquiline painting these are depicted in the centre of the composition: RHEA SILVIA has let her vase fall as she is surprised by MARS on her way to the fountain; MARS approaches from the left. Behind him the personification of the place reclines, holding a branch, while FORTUNA stands with a cornucopia in her hand; a flying VICTORIA and two shepherds are shown on the right side of the painting.

The presence of FORTUNA and of VICTORIA seems to be out of context, although they have been explained as announcing the birth of Romulus⁵⁵. The scene, accepted as the meeting of MARS and RHEA SILVIA⁵⁶, includes one peculiar feature: MARS, represented nude in all the other works of art, is here fully dressed. In the light of our iconographical analysis⁵⁷ the identification of this figure should, we think, be reviewed. This is true also of the figure that leads RHEA SILVIA on the side panel of the Vatican sarcophagus (fig. 33). Here, the two principal figures are placed in the left upper corner, while the personification of the place, holding a branch, is seated on a mound or rock in the opposite corner. In the inferior zone of the panel the per-

⁵¹ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 227; Aichholzer, kat. 152; *LIMC* II, 550, n. 396.

⁵² Walters, *BM Silver Plate*, n. 73, pl. IX; *LIMC* II, 550-551, n. 402.

⁵³ Paribeni, 257-258, n. 801; Borda, *Pittura*, 172-173; Alföldi, *Vater des Vaterlandes*, 11-12, Taf. III, 2; Reinach, *RPGR*, 177.4; *LIMC* II, 549, n. 390.

⁵⁴ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 232, n. 188a.

⁵⁵ Roscher, *Lexikon* IV, cols. 68, 69, n. 17.

⁵⁶ Cf. note 53 (*supra*).

⁵⁷ Cf. iconographical analysis a) literary sources.

sonification of the river sits on the right side and two lambs lie in the fields on the left.

Iconographical analysis

a) *Literary sources*

The comparison between the literary sources and the works of art seems to point out that the visual representations do not conform textually to any single source. It was therefore, necessary to have recourse to several literary sources to find parallel features; while some are not contemporary to the works of art, they often reflect earlier traditions. Dionysius of Halicarnassos (I, 77,1-2) himself quotes versions of other writers, probably relying on earlier sources:

"The fourth year after this, Ilia, upon going to a grove consecrated to Mars to fetch pure water for use in the sacrifices, was ravished by somebody or other in the sacred precinct. Some say that the author of the deed was one of the maiden's suitors, who was carried away by his passion for the girl; others say it was Amulius... he had arrayed himself in such armour as would render him most terrible to behold and that he also kept his features disguised as effectively as possible. But most writers relate a fabulous story to the effect that it was a spectre of the divinity to whom the place was consecrated; and they add that the adventure was attended by many supernatural signs, including a sudden disappearance of the sun and a darkness that spread over the sky, and that the appearance of the spectre was far more marvellous than that of a man both in stature and in beauty. And they say that the ravisher, to comfort the maiden (by which it became clear that he was a god) commanded her not to grieve at all at what had happened, since she had been united in marriage to the divinity of the place, and as a result of her violation would bear two sons... And having said this, he was wrapped in a cloud, and being lifted from the earth, was borne upwards through the air."

When he uses the name ILIA he means RHEA SILVIA, for both names refer to the same character (I, 76,3). Other writers do the same⁵⁸. The name ILIA inscribed on the clay medallions (fig. 19)⁵⁹ seems to imply that artists were also aware of the identity of these figures.

⁵⁸ Serv. *Aen.* I, 273. 18 ff., VII, 569; Cassius Dio, Tzetzes in Lycophr. Alex. V. 1232; Lydus, *Mag.* I, 21; Ovid, *Fasti* IV, 54-56; Plut. *Moralia*, 314 F., *Rom.* III, 3; Statius, *Silvae* I, 2.243.

⁵⁹ Cf. note 28 (supra).

The version of AMULIUS's deception mentioned also by Plutarch (Rom. IV, 2) seems reflected in the Esquiline painting (fig. 32) identified unanimously as the scene of the meeting of MARS and RHEA SILVIA. However, the anomalies observed above in this work of art ⁶⁰, has led us to think that the scene should be interpreted as showing AMULIUS "dressed in armor". A similar interpretation may be assumed for the figure on the side panel of the sarcophagus in the Vatican (fig. 33).

The supernatural phenomena of the moon and the sun, mentioned by Dionysius of Halicarnassos above, is also described by Plutarch (Moralia, 320B):

... "the sun was eclipsed and came into exact conjunction with the moon at the time when Mars, a god, consorted with the mortal Silvia..."

These phenomena are suggested in several works of art by elements such as a star with a crescent moon close to it shown on the gem in Munich (fig. 22); the chariot of the Sun or the Moon moving across the sky in the left upper corner of the Pompeii painting (fig. 9) ⁶¹. A similar chariot is included in the upper corner of the sarcophagus of the Palazzo Mattei (fig. 26) which Robert identifies as SOL ⁶²; the presence of LUCIFER nearby further underlines the super natural phenomena mentioned. SOL is also represented on the other sarcophagus of the Palazzo Mattei (fig. 27) under the guise of ZODIAC; moreover, APOLLO and DIANA shown on this, as well as on the Amalfi sarcophagus (fig. 29) may also be interpreted in these as the Sun and the Moon. Another strange occurrence is mentioned by Dionysos of Halikarnassos in the above text:

"...he was wrapped in a cloud, and being lifted from the earth, was borne upwards through the air."

However, this event was not depicted on any of the works of art, but MARS is shown flying down through the air as Juvenal (Sat. XI, 106-107) writes:

⁶⁰ Cf. unclassified hereby.

⁶¹ Dawson, 103.

⁶² Robert, *ASR* III/2, 231.

"...the nude effigy of the God coming down in a swoop with spear and shield..."

This image of the god, though mentioned by Juvenal in different circumstances, seems however, appropriate to the representations in the works of art of types A and B. Of these the wallpainting from Nero's Domus Aurea (fig. 4) seems to be the only one in which clouds are shown surrounding the figure of MARS as he flies through the air.

The place of the event was, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassos, as well as Cassius Dio (Roman History I, Tzetzes in Lycophr. Alex. 1232), a grove sacred to MARS to which RHEA SILVIA had come to fetch water. The personification of this sacred grove is shown holding a branch in the Domus Aurea painting (fig. 4), the Ara Casali relief (fig. 15), the Faustina Maior medallion (fig. 25), the Esquiline painting (fig. 32), and a sarcophagus (fig. 33). In other works of art a tree or bush are included, probably to suggest the same grove: in the sarcophagus from Aquincum (fig. 6), the Ostia mosaic (fig. 7), the clay medallion (fig. 19), and the Lixus mosaic (fig. 11).

Another ancient writer who provides a detailed description of this event is Ovid (Fasti, III, 11ff.):

"Silvia the Vestal (why not start from her?) went in the morning to fetch water to wash the holy things. When she had come to where the path ran gently down the sloping bank, she set down her earthenware pitcher from her head. Weary, she sat her on the ground and opened her bosom to catch the breezes, and composed her ruffled hair. While she sat, the shady willows and the tuneful birds and soft murmur of the water induced to sleep. Sweet slumber overpowered and crept stealthily over her eyes, and her languid hand dropped from her chin. Mars saw her; the sight inspired him with desire, and his desire was followed by possession, but by his power divine he hid his stolen joys. Sleep left her..."

RHEA SILVIA's pitcher of water, an element connected with the circumstances of the myth, mentioned by Ovid, was often ignored by the artists. In fact, only five works of art include it: the Ostia mosaic (fig. 7), the Igel pediment (fig. 13), the Faustina Maior medallion (fig. 25), the coin (fig. 24), and the Esquiline wallpainting (fig. 32). Another vase, included as the attribute of the personification of the river, is represented in three works of art, all of which are sarcophagi: of the Vatican (fig. 32), the Lateran (fig. 28), and the Palazzo Mattei (fig. 27). This overturned vase as the symbol of the river, is depicted in addition to that of RHEA SILVIA, in the Igel pediment.

RHEA SILVIA, "...o'ercome by deceitful slumber, laid her side on the river's bank..." according to Statius (Silvae, I, 2,243), and she "...opened her bosom to catch the breezes..." as Ovid mentions. This image is adopted in all the

types, with only two exceptions: the bronze vase (fig. 8), and the Palazzo Mattei sarcophagus (fig. 14). In the first she lies with her back to the spectator, whereas in the second she is shown with her upper body covered. It is difficult to ascertain in some cases whether RHEA SILVIA is asleep or awake, in spite of her reclining pose: on the clay medallions (fig. 25) and the Bonn vase (fig. 8). On two sarcophagi: the Palazzo Mattei (fig. 26) and the Lateran (fig. 28) she is no doubt, awake, for she is shown with open eyes. These heads are portraits, probably of the deceased⁶³, a fact which could explain the divergence between these representations and the literary sources, which describe RHEA SILVIA as asleep. She is depicted standing, fully dressed in two works of art connected with the Amulius' versions, mentioned above⁶⁴.

The union of the god with RHEA SILVIA referred to by Dionysius of Halicarnassos, Plutarch (*Moralia*, 320B), and Virgil (*Aen.* VII, 659-661) is suggested by the presence of HYMENAEOS, mentioned by Statius (*Silvae*, I, 2,238). This figure is represented on the gem from the Haag (fig. 3), on the bronze vase (fig. 8), on the Palazzo Mattei sarcophagus (fig. 14), on the relief from Capua (fig. 30), and on the silver relief of the British Museum (fig. 31).

The above mentioned sources contribute to clarify the iconography of most of the works of art. Though not mentioned directly in the literary sources, the iconography of some of the figures represented on the sarcophagi is however, implicitly suggested within the context of the MARS and RHEA SILVIA myth.

Thus, TELLUS (figs. 26, 27, 29) and CAELUS (fig. 29) seem clearly connected with the supernatural event, especially with MARS' divine and RHEA SILVIA's earthly natures. SOMNUS and the EROTES seem to symbolize the ideas expressed in the literary sources: SOMNUS (figs. 26, 27, 28) emphasizes the fact that RHEA SILVIA was asleep when MARS saw her, and EROS symbolizes MARS' desire, expressed by Ovid (*Fasti*, III, 21-22).

HERCULES' presence on two sarcophagi (figs. 28, 29) may be interpreted as the parallel of ROMULUS, for his conception also occurred in extraordinary circumstances, according to Plutarch (*Moralia*, 320B, C). Moreover the inclusion of HERCULES, as well as DIONYSOS-BACCHUS, MERCURIUS, JUNO, JUPITER, and MINERVA, may be interpreted as the "modus operandi" of the artists to ascribe a cosmic significance to the meeting of MARS and RHEA SILVIA.

b) *The Visual Sources*

The similarity of the scene of the meeting of MARS and RHEA SILVIA with the scenes of MARS and VENUS, of DIONYSOS and ARIADNE, as

⁶³ Robert, *ASR* III/2, 229.

⁶⁴ Cf. note 57 hereby.

well as of ENDYMION, in Roman art, seems to indicate identical or parallel sources of inspiration. These may have been scene of DIONYSOS and ARIADNE⁶⁵ depicted in South Italian, Greek, and Hellenistic traditions⁶⁶ reflected on Etruscan pediments of Civita Alba⁶⁷ and on Pompeian paintings⁶⁸.

Furthermore, parallels may be observed between the image of RHEA SILVIA and the that of ARIADNE: both figures are shown partially nude, with one arm over the head, or with the head resting on one arm.

Other affinities may be seen in the various forms in which MARS and DIONYSOS are represented; the same is true also of the personifications and of the EROTES who figure in the MARS and RHEA SILVIA, as well as in the DIONYSOS-ARIADNE scenes.

These analogies cannot be considered pure coincidence, for the myths share several features: the love of a god for a mortal woman; in both myths god surprises a sleeping woman. Both scenes occur in an area sacred to the god: one, in Naxos, DIONYSOS' birthplace⁶⁹, the other, in MARS' sacred grove⁷⁰. Therefore, it seems evident that the connection between these two myths is not only of visual form, but also of content.

The chronology and frequency of types and media (Tables I-III)

We assumed that the dates of the works of art would contribute data on the scenes of MARS and RHEA SILVIA that would permit us to deduce the following:

- a) The chronology of the types hereby established.
- b) The prevalence of certain types in different periods.
- c) The medium most frequent at certain dates.

These however, could not be determined since for some works of art no definite dating has been established. The most evident example of a problematic dating is the relief of the Terme Museum (fig. 21), for the dates proposed by scholars range from the Augustan to the Hadrianic periods⁷¹. Another flagrant example of wide divergencies in the dates proposed is that of the coin (fig. 24) which Alföldi dates to 260-265 A.D., whereas Aichholzer dates it 356-395 A.D.⁷².

⁶⁵ A visual parallel between the MARS and RHEA SILVIA scene and that of Dionysos finding Ariadne has already been suggested by some scholars: Aichholzer, 75, Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia* IV, 37, 309, Dawson, 169, Balil *BRAH* 151 (1962), 314, but they went no further than a reference.

⁶⁶ Brendel, *Etruscan*, 426-427.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pl. 324.

⁶⁸ Reinach, *RPGR*, 112-113; Rizzo *PER*, Tav. CIX, CX; Borda, *Pittura*, 293, 365.

⁶⁹ *Homeric Hymns. To Dionysus* I, 2; Diod. Sic. III, 66, 1.

⁷⁰ Cf. p. 9 hereby.

⁷¹ Dawson, 168, n. 196.

⁷² Alföldi, *Kontorniat*, 87, nr. 264; Aichholzer, kat. 168.

In general, we adopt Aichholzer's dating, but the dates he proposes for some works of art are so far apart that this does not allow us to draw any of the conclusions mentioned above. Such are the cases of the clay medallions (fig. 20), as well as the Bonn bronze vase (fig. 8), and the gems (figs. 1, 20, 22). Aichholzer does not mention several works of art; the dates we adopted for these are based on Robert, Dawson, Alföldi, and others.

Thus, in spite of these limitations, several conclusions have been deduced and summarized in tables I-III. As can be observed in table I, the MARS and RHEA SILVIA scenes are first represented in art in the Republican period (probably the late Republican), and continue till the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century A.D. The materials adopted vary greatly: semi-precious stones, used in gems; gold and bronze in coins; silver, clay, limestone, sandstone, and marble for the various kinds of reliefs.

The largest number of works of art belong to type C (cf. table II), which is also the only type that is adopted throughout all the periods (cf. table I). In the first centuries B.C. and A.D. all the types occur, with the exception of type F, which is adopted only from the second century onwards. The second century is the period with the largest number of works of art. In this period all the types are adopted (cf. table I), unless the relief of the Terme (fig. 21) be considered of the first century; consequently, type D would then be the only type not represented in the second century. In the third century Types C and F are predominant (cf. table I).

Table III shows the correlation between the various types and media. Type C is also predominant here, for it is adopted in all the media, with the exception of wall painting. Type B is used in five media, while the other types are adopted in one to three media only. But if the sarcophagi are included with the reliefs, then all the types, except E, are represented in this medium. Therefore it seems possible to conclude that no single specific type predominates in all the media (cf. table III) or a specific medium in all the types.

In this paper thirty three works of art were examined under different aspects: typology, iconographical analysis, the chronology and the frequency of the types. The conclusions deduced from these can be applied also to other works of art such as gems, coins, and medallions; thus these have not been included.

The frequent representation of the various versions of the myth in such a wide range of media, through an extended period of time, indicate clearly the importance that the Romans attached to the MARS and RHEA SILVIA myth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to thank Professor Asher Ovadiah for reading our article, as well as for his helpful suggestions.

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TABLE I

M E D I A

Fig.	Date	Period	Material	Coins	Gems	Medall.	Mosaics	Wall pts.	Reliefs	Sarcophagi
20		Republican	Sardonyx		Type C					
23	1st c.BC	Republican	Carnelian		Type E					
32	1st c.BC							Unclas.		
22	1st c.BC/AD		Glasspaste		Type D					
1	1st c.BC/AD		Plasma		Type A					
9	1st c.AD	3rd style						Type B		
4	1st c.AD	Neronian						Type A		
19	1st c.AD		Clay			Type C				
21	1st-2nd c.AD		Marble						Type D	
2	2nd c.AD		Marble						Type A	
10	2nd c.AD		Stone						Type B	
30	2nd c.AD		Stone						Unclas.	
31	2nd c.AD		Silver						Unclas.	
29	2nd c.AD		Marble							Type F
14	2nd c.AD		Marble							Type C
6	2nd c.AD		Limestone							Type B
3	2nd c.AD		Jasper		Type A					
7	2nd c.AD	Hadrianic					Type B			
5	2nd c.AD	Antonine	Bronze	Type B						
16	2nd c.AD	Antonine	Gold	Type C						
17	2nd c.AD	Antonine		Type C						
25	2nd c.AD	Antonine	Bronze			Type E				
8	2nd-3rd c.AD		Bronze						Type B	
15	203 AD	Severan	Marble						Type C	
26	3rd c.AD	Severan	Marble							Type F
33	3rd c.AD		Marble							Unclas.
28	3rd c.AD		Marble							Type F
27	3rd c.AD		Marble							Type F
13	3rd c.AD		Sandstone						Type C.	
11	3rd c.AD						Type C			
12	2nd-3rd c.AD						Type C			
18	3rd c.AD	Gallaerian	Gold	Type C						

TABLE II

Types	A	B	C	D	E	F	Unclassified
Number of works of art	4	6	10	2	3	4	4

TABLE III

Types	A	B	C	D	E	F	Unclassified
Coins		-	-		-		
Gems	-		-	-	-		
Medallions			-		-		
Mosaics		-	-				
Wall paintings	-	-					-
Reliefs	-	-	-	-			-
Sarcophagi		-	-			-	-



Fig. 1. Gem, London, British Museum.



Fig. 2. Belvedere relief, Rome, Vatican.



Fig. 3. Gem, The Haag, Royal Coin Cabinet.



Fig. 4. Wall Painting, Rome, Domus Aurea.



Fig. 5. Coin Antoninus Pius.

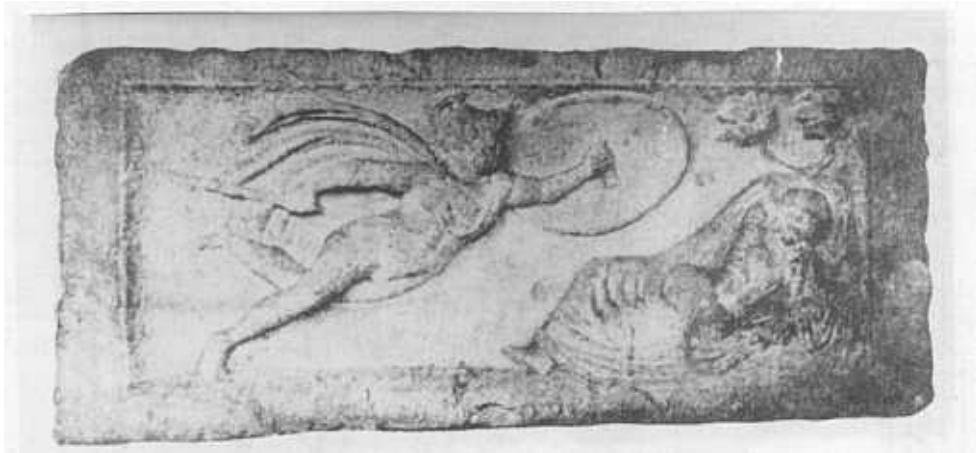


Fig. 6. Sarcophagus, Aquincum, Budapest, National Museum.



Fig. 7. Mosaic, Ostia, Rome, Palazzo Altieri.



Fig. 8. Bronze Vase, Bonn, Rhein Landesmuseum.



Fig. 9. Wall painting, Pompeii Domus Fabii Secundi.

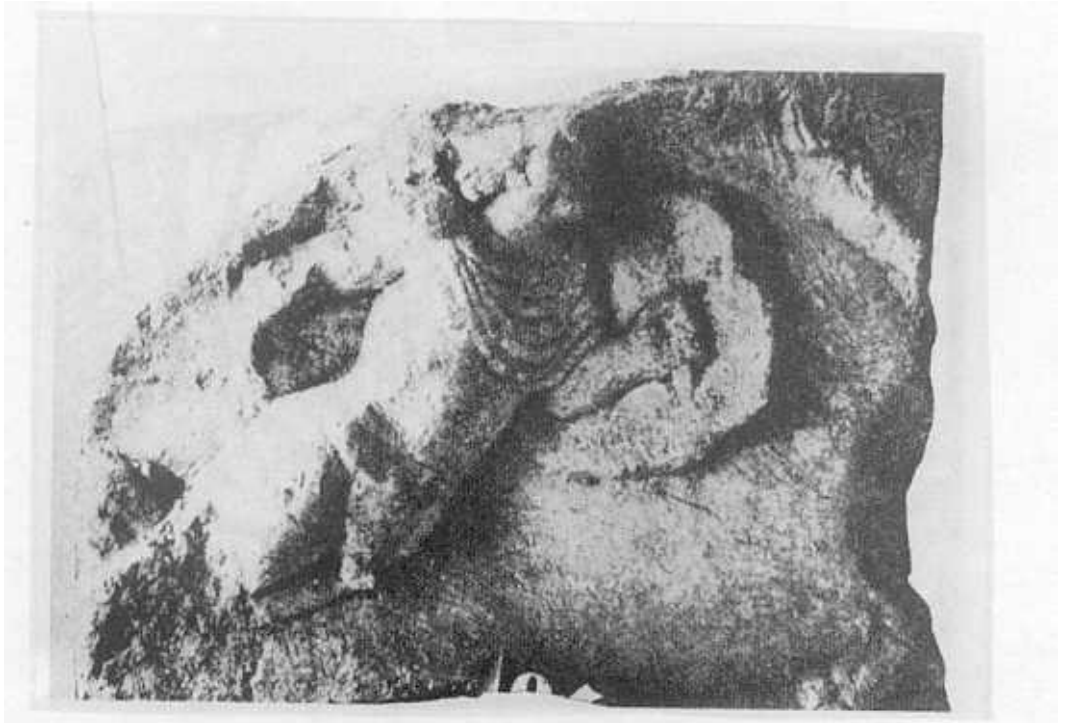


Fig. 10. Funerary relief, Arlon Museum.

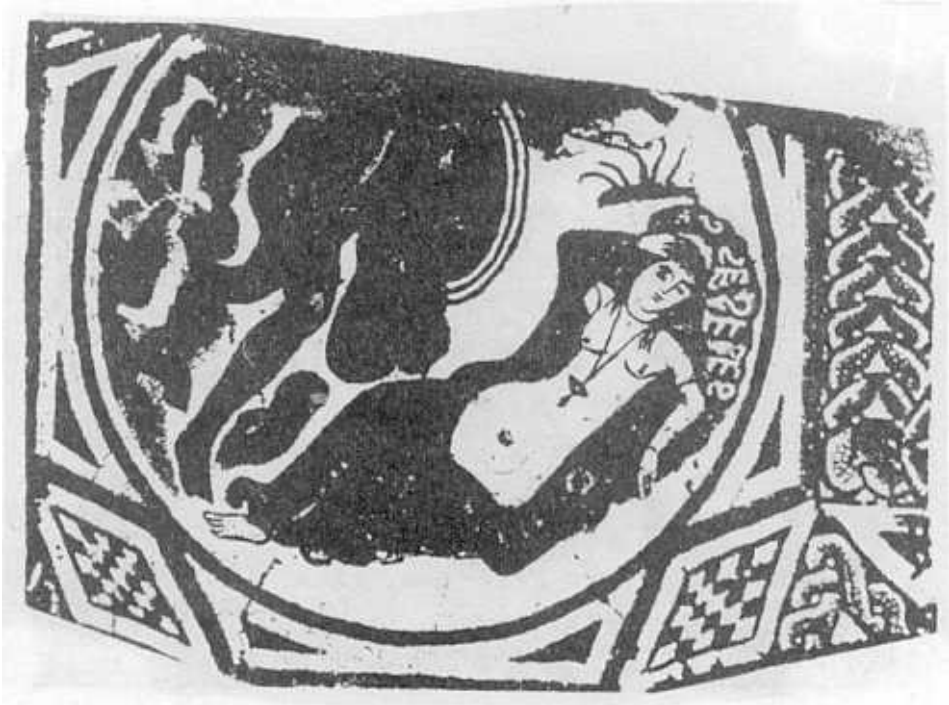


Fig. 11. Mosaic, Lixus (North Africa).

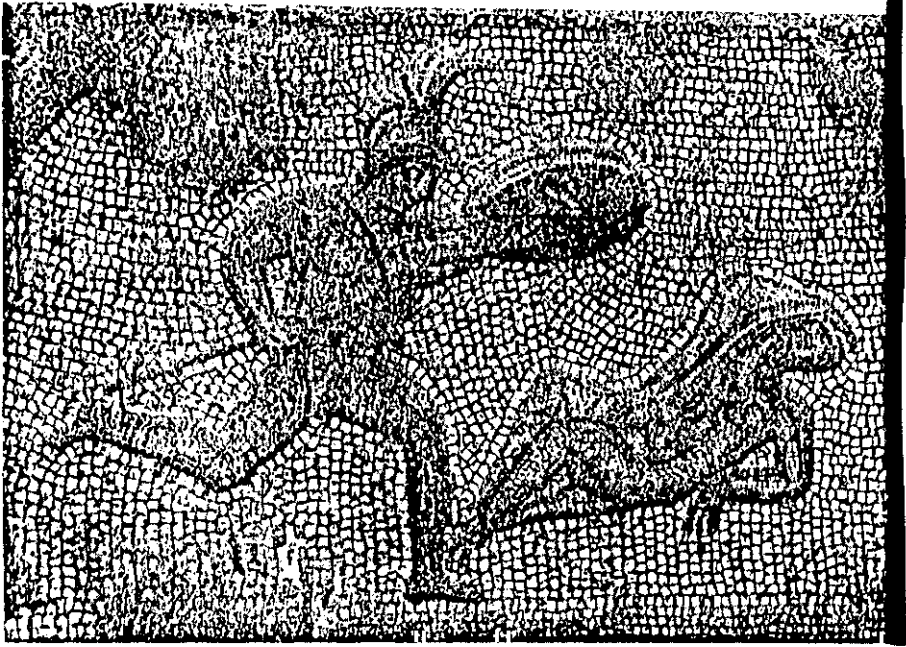


Fig. 12. Mosaic, Bell - Lloch, Gerona.

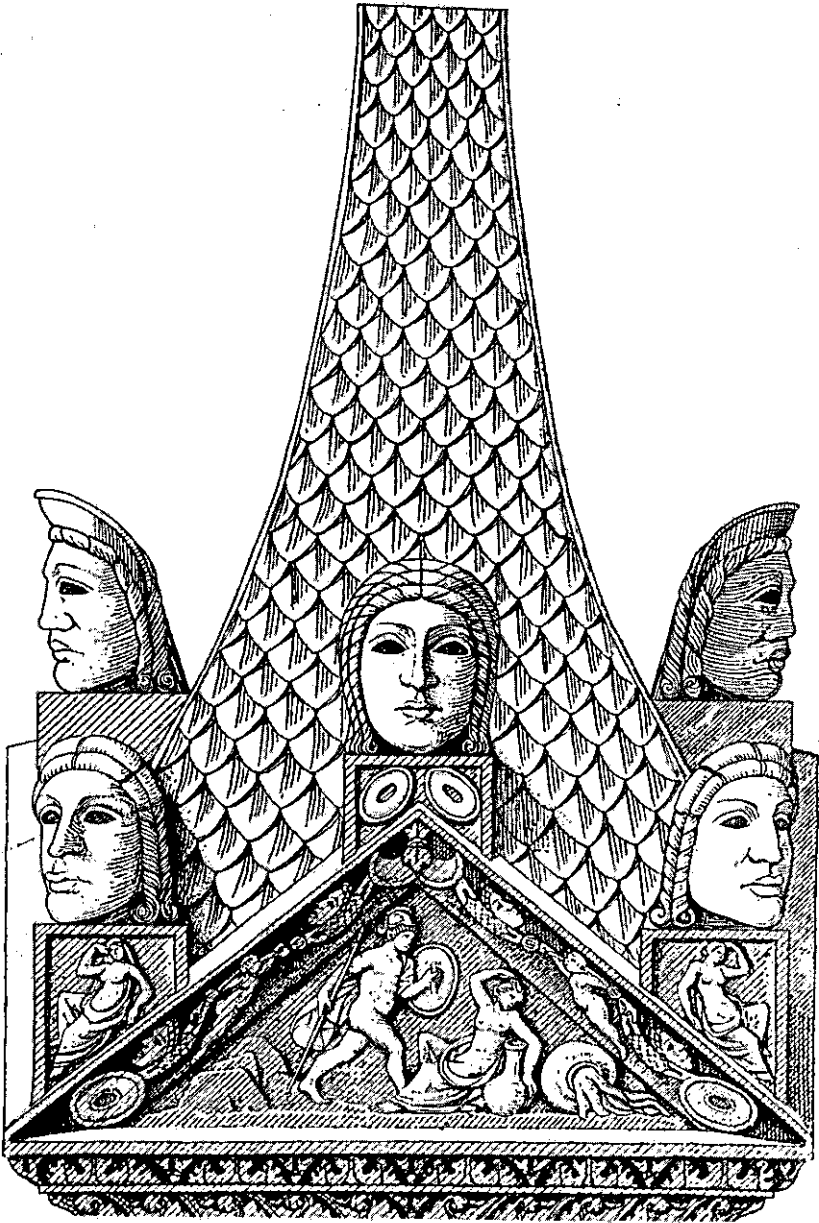


Fig. 13. Funerary relief Igel monument, Trier.

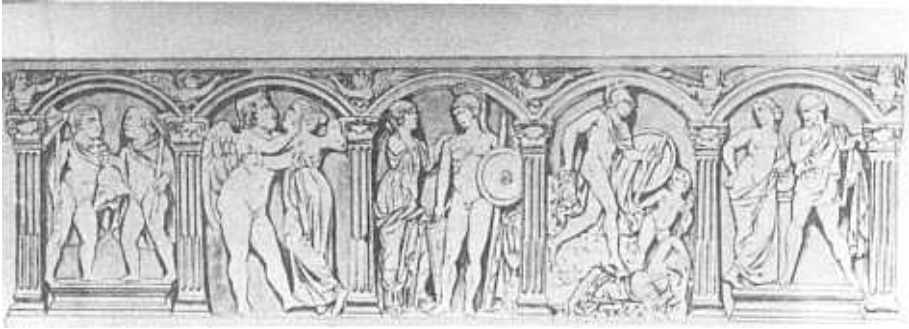


Fig. 14. Sarcophagus, Rome, Palazzo Mattei.

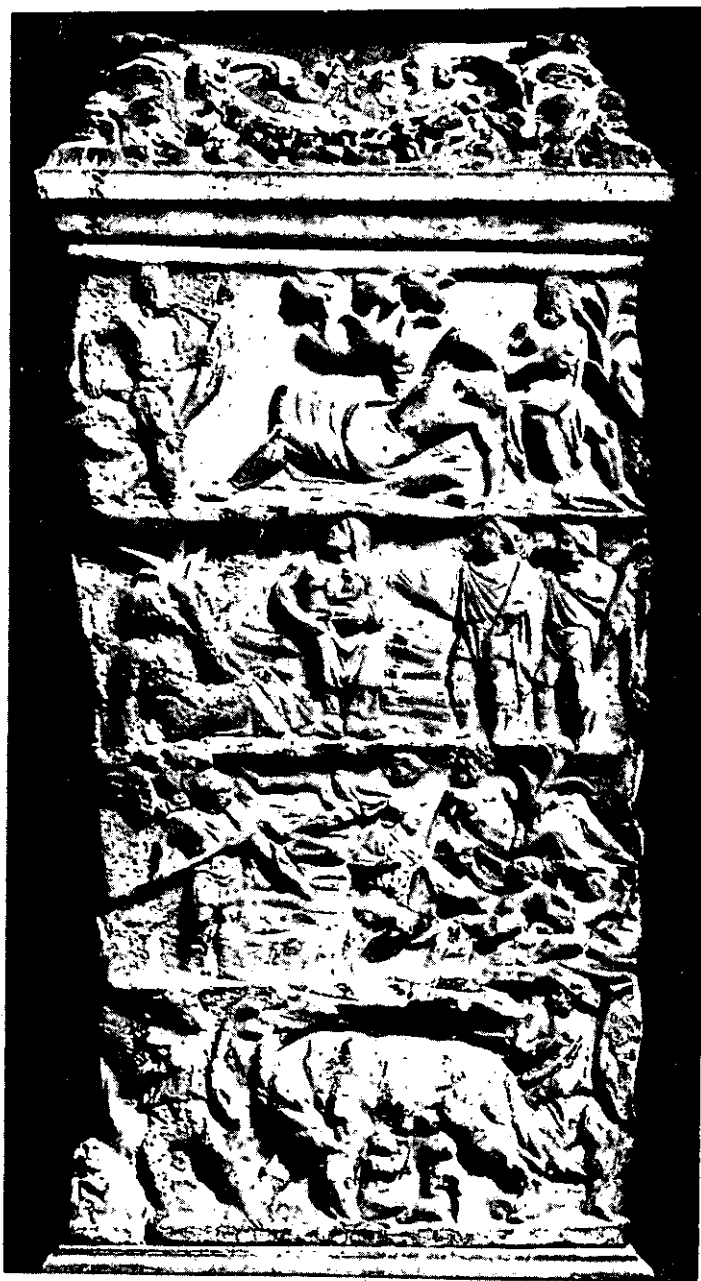


Fig. 15. Ara Casali, Rome, Vatican.



Fig. 16. Coin, Antoninus Pius, London, British Museum.



Fig. 17. Coin, Antoninus Pius.

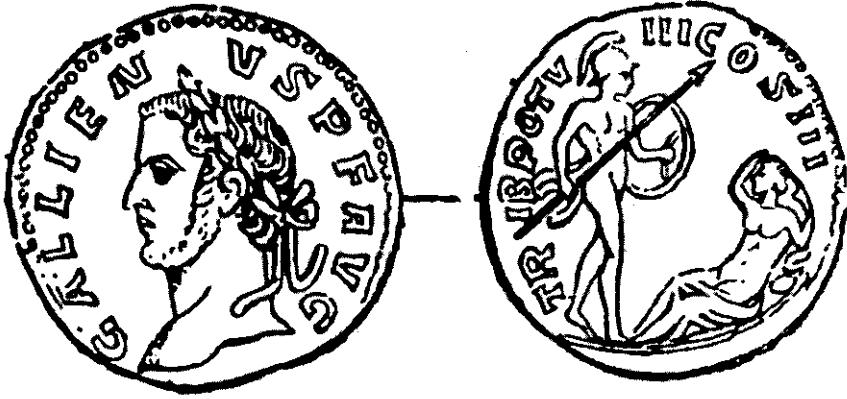


Fig. 18. Coin, Gallienus.



Fig. 19. Clay medallion, Lyon, Musée archéologique.



Fig. 19. Clay medallion, Lyon, Musée archéologique.



Fig. 20. Gem, London British Museum.

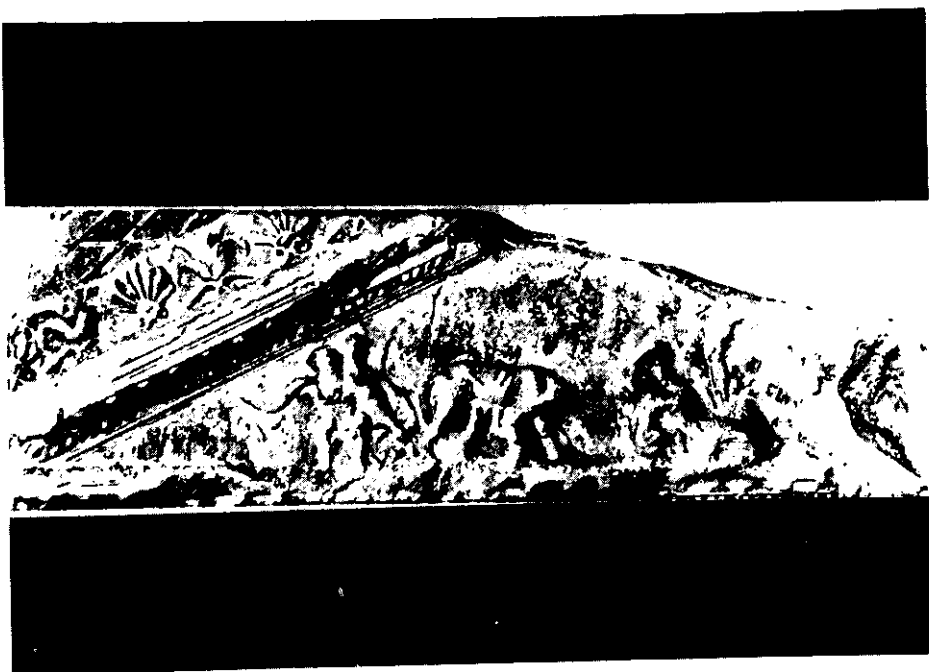


Fig. 21. Relief, Rome, Museo Nazionale delle Terme.



Fig. 22. Gem, München, Staatliche Münzsammlung.

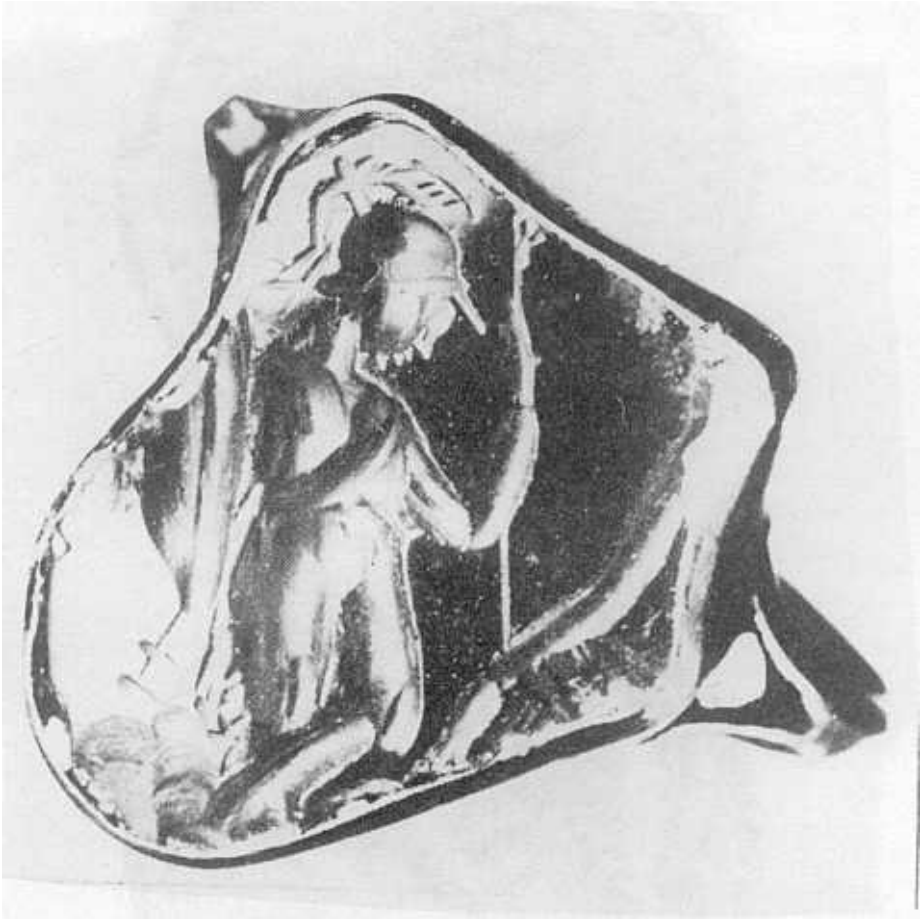


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Fig. 24. Coin, Leningrad, Hermitage Museum.

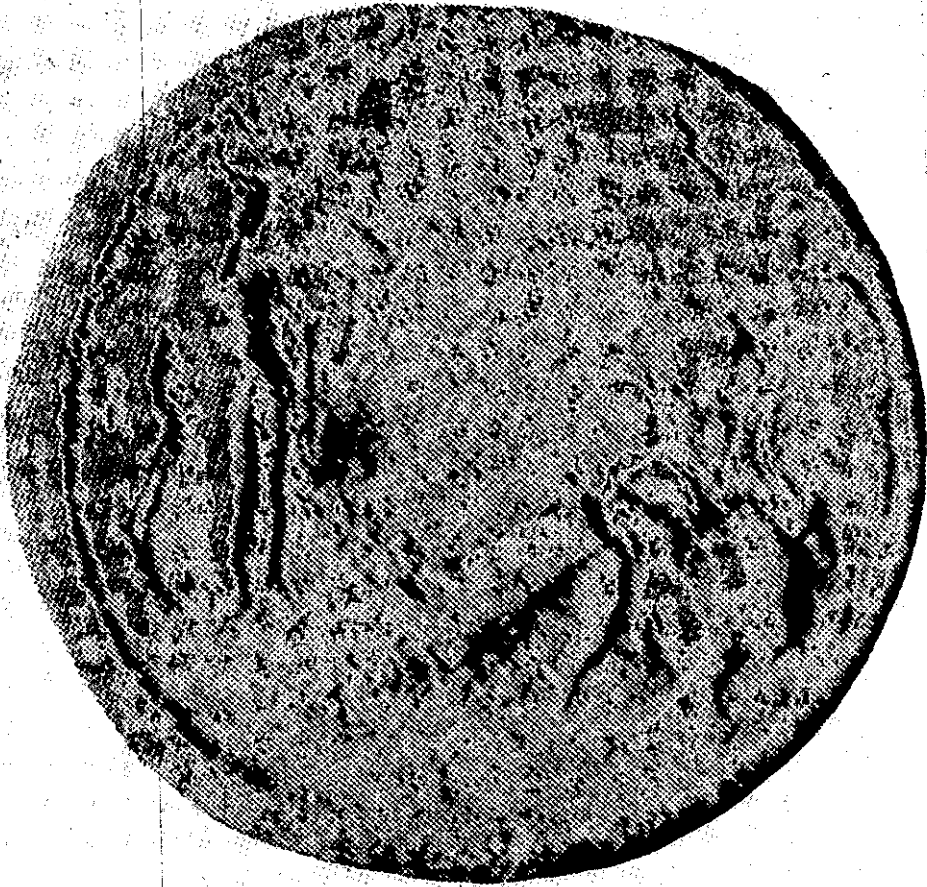


Fig. 25. Medallien, Faustina Maior.



Fig. 26. Sarcophagus, Rome, Palazzo Mattei.



Fig. 27. Sarcophagus, Rome, Lateran Museum.



Fig. 28. Sarcophagus, Rome, Lateran Museum.



Fig. 29. Sarcophagus, Amalfi, Cathedral.



Fig. 30. Relief, Capua Museum.



Fig. 31. Silver relief, Trulla, London, British Museum.



Fig. 32. Wall painting, Esquiline, Statilii Colombarium.



Fig. 33. Sarcophagus, Rome, Vatican.

