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Article *in* Mouseion Journal of the Classical Association of Canada · January 2010

DOI: 10.1353/mou.2010.0073

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## Temples and Priests of Sol in the city of Rome

### Summary

It was long thought that Sol Invictus was a Syrian sun-god, and that Aurelian imported his cult into Rome after he had vanquished Zenobia and captured Palmyra. This sun-god, it was postulated, differed fundamentally from the old Roman sun-god Sol Indiges, whose cult had long since disappeared from Rome. Scholars thus tended to postulate a hiatus in the first centuries of imperial rule during which there was little or no cult of the sun in Rome. Recent studies, however, have shown that Aurelian's Sol Invictus was neither new nor foreign, and that the cult of the sun was maintained in Rome without interruption from the city's earliest history until the demise of Roman religion(s). This continuity of the Roman cult of Sol sheds a new light on the evidence for priests and temples of Sol in Rome. In this article I offer a review of that evidence and what we can infer from it the Roman cult of the sun. A significant portion of the article is devoted to a temple of Sol in Trastevere, hitherto misidentified.

### The Roman sun god

Over the past decade or so, scholars have convincingly challenged the long popular notion that *Sol Invictus* was a distinct, late imperial sun god whose cult was imported from Syria. It has become quite clear that Romans themselves venerated the sun as a god continuously, in the city of Rome, from at least the mid Republic (and probably much earlier) until the end of the fourth century AD. This sun god was simply called *Sol*, often with the addition of epithets such as *oriens* or *invictus*. His cult was a public one, and though not particularly important, it was of greater significance to Roman religion than has long been thought. Conversely, while the cult of the sun did gain greater prominence in the third century AD, notably under the impetus of Aurelian, it never came to dominate late Roman religion to the extent that is often suggested. There is no real evidence in Rome for any form of officially sanctioned pagan solar henotheism or monotheism.<sup>1</sup>

The antiquity of Sol's Roman cult is undisputed. Learned antiquarians like Varro held

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<sup>1</sup> This article grew out of chapter 5 of my unpublished dissertation *Sol: the Sun in the Art and Religions of Rome*. For the traditional understanding of Sol, see Halsberghe 1972. For current views see Carbó Garcia 2010, Berrens 2004, Matern 2002, Wallraff 2001 and Hijmans 1996.

that the cult of the sun and the moon had entered Rome in the very first years of the city's existence, in the wake of the Sabines and Titus Tatius.<sup>2</sup> Festus links the introduction of the cult to the Aurelii, a family reputedly of Sabine origin, which suggests it may initially have been one of the *sacra gentilitia*.<sup>3</sup> Sol was considered one of the region's ancestral deities, as he was the father of Circe (of Monte Circeo), and thus the grandfather of Latinus. As one of the *Di Indigetes* he had a shrine and/or sacred grove on the banks of the Numicius, near Lavinium.<sup>4</sup> Early imperial *fasti* record a public sacrifice or festival for Sol Indiges on August 8<sup>th</sup> and/or 9<sup>th</sup> on the Quirinal, and *agonalia* on December 11<sup>th</sup>.<sup>5</sup> The *agonalia* in particular attest to both the antiquity and the public nature of Sol's cult. Only four such *agonalia* were held each year, performed at the Regia by the *rex sacrificulus* for the quintessentially Roman deities Janus (January 9<sup>th</sup>), Mars (March 17<sup>th</sup>), and Vediovis (May 21<sup>st</sup>), as well as Sol.<sup>6</sup> Castagnoli suggests some linkage of the latter with the *Matralia* for Mater Matuta on June 11, as they were held exactly six months apart.<sup>7</sup> There was also a festival of some sort for Sol and Luna together, probably celebrated on August 28<sup>th</sup>.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Varro *L.* 5,74, cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant.* 2,50,3, and Aug. *C.D.* 4,23.

<sup>3</sup> Paul. Fest. 22,5 *L. s.v. Aureliam*. Santi (1991) is skeptical.

<sup>4</sup> On Latinus and Sol cf. Verg. *Aen.* XII, 161-4. A *lucus Solis* by the Numicius is mentioned by Pliny, *Nat.* 3,56. *Solis* is the unanimous mss reading here, and the emendation *Iovis*, proposed in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century by the Venetian scholar Ermolao Barbaro and adopted by most editions until recently, is unnecessary; cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant.* 1,55,2. Jaia 2009 reports on an excavation, currently still underway, of the probable remains of the temple of Sol Indiges. The meaning of *indiges* is not certain, but the notion that the *di indigetes* were ancestral Roman deities seems fairly secure. Cf. Koch 1933; Schilling 1979. On the name of the stream - Numicus or Numicius - cf. *Kleine Pauly* vol. 4, 197 s.v. Numicus.

<sup>5</sup> On the *sacrificium publicum* for Sol Indiges on the 8th of August, and/or *feriae* on the 9th of August cf. *Fast. Vall.* (*InscrItal* XIII.2, 148-9), *Allif.* (*InscrItal* XIII.2, 180-1), and *Amit.* (*InscrItal* XIII.2, 190-1). The 11th of December is marked as *agonalia Indigeti* in the *Fast. Amit.* (*InscrIt* XIII.2, 198-9), *Ost.* (*InscrIt* XIII.2, 106), *Maff.* (*InscrIt* XIII.2, 83), *Praen.* (*InscrIt* XIII.2, 136-7), and *Ant. Min.* (*InscrIt* XIII.2, 210). Lyd. *Mens.* 4, 155 links this specifically to Sol Indiges.

<sup>6</sup> Scullard 1981: 60-1, 91-2, 122, 203.

<sup>7</sup> Castagnoli 1977: 472.

<sup>8</sup> A festival celebrated on the 28th of August in honour of Sol and Luna is recorded in the Calendar of Filocalus which dates to AD 354. A fragment of the *Fast Praen.* (*InscrIt* XIII.2, 134) also mentions Sol and Luna together and may be an early imperial reference to the same festival. Where this fragment belongs in the shattered calendar is uncertain. In its current state of preservation only four of the twelve months can be (partially) reconstructed and August is not one of them.

Further evidence for the public role of Sol is provided by the Oath of Drusus of 91 BC, by which Italians were enfranchised. It is quoted by Diodorus Siculus (37.11D) as opening with the invocation of Jupiter Capitolinus, Vesta, Mars, Sol Indiges, Tellus, and the semi-divine founders of Rome. Aeneas swears an almost identical oath to Latinus (Verg. *Aen.* 12.176-182), although he pointedly replaces Vesta with Juno. Apparently this was a standardized formula, well-known to Romans, used for treaty-oaths involving the Roman state.<sup>9</sup>

Two Republican temples for Sol are well attested in Rome, one at the Circus Maximus and the other on the Quirinal. The temple at the Circus Maximus was deemed by Tacitus (*Ann.* 15,74,1) to be a *vetus aedes* and the shrine of Sol on the Quirinal was also old, as Quintilian (*Inst.* 1,7,12) quotes an inscription in quite archaic Latin there mentioning the evening star. It seems likely that the *sacrificium publicum* of August 8<sup>th</sup> was held at this shrine on the Quirinal.

The sun god, then, was an integral part of Roman public religion from an early date, and given the evidence of the early imperial ritual calendars, he continued to be so at the beginning of the imperial era. Indeed, there is ample epigraphic and iconographic evidence attesting that the cult flourished in the first and second centuries AD,<sup>10</sup> and this continued in the third and fourth centuries AD without hiatus or significant change.<sup>11</sup> In other words, there is absolutely no indication that the Roman tradition of solar cult diminished or disappeared in the imperial period, let alone that it was replaced at any time by a different, Syrian one. Berrens (2004: 194-198), for example, demonstrates conclusively that there are no grounds for the notion that the epithet *invictus* was used to differentiate some new sun god, Syrian or otherwise, from the old Roman Sol Indiges. The epithet is used completely haphazardly, both before and after Aurelian's reforms

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<sup>9</sup> For a different view, cf. Rose 1937.

<sup>10</sup> Relevant, datable inscriptions of the first and second centuries AD in Rome include *AE* 1984, 144, CIL VI, 701-3, 706, 709, 712, 715, 740, 1027, 2270, 25990, 30799, 30975, 31032-4, 31043, 31139, and 31171. For second-century statues of Sol, cf. Papini (2002). Sol was prominently visible adorning the facade of the temple of Apollo built by Augustus on the Palatine hill (Prop. II,31,11; 2) as well as that of Jupiter Capitolinus after the restoration of Domitian (LIMC Helios/Sol 354). The latter is echoed on a number of Antonine sarcophagus lids in Rome (Wrede 2001: 28; Matern 2002: 222-4, Q100-8). Other representations of Sol include a second-century architrave from Ostia, now in Berlin (Matern 2002: 239-40, I50), a votive relief of the early 2<sup>nd</sup> c. in the Capitoline museum (Schraudolph 1993: 204, G16, pl. 21), etc. Sol was a common adornment in contexts ranging from breastplates of early imperial statues (LIMC Helios/Sol 214, 215, 218, 366, all Julio-Claudian to Hadrianic) to lamps (LIMC Helios/Sol 43-7, 55, 57, 76-7; many more in Matern 2002).

<sup>11</sup> On the significance of Sol's raised right hand, a new characteristic of his iconography in the later empire, cf. Hijmans (1996, 124-6).

(see below) and was clearly optional for Sol, just as it was for the two other most common *invicti* of the imperial period, Hercules and the emperor.

The Syrian priest-emperor Heliogabalus (218-222) did, of course, try to impose the cult of his sky-god Elagabal on Rome, but this was no more than a brief episode, lasting less than four years. It is true that the official Roman title of the Emesan god was Sol Invictus Elagabal, but there are numerous parallels for this hybrid type of name: one need but think of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus. Just as we have no reason to believe that the presence of Jupiter Dolichenus on the Aventine in Rome substantially changed the cult or identity of the Capitoline Jupiter, there is no reason to believe that the brief presence of Sol Invictus Elagabal in Rome transformed the nature of the Roman sun god. On the contrary, Sol Invictus Elagabal is always immediately identified as a distinct deity in both name and iconography, and can never be confused with the standard Roman Sol.<sup>12</sup>

With the death of Heliogabalus, the Emesan Elagabal immediately disappeared from Rome, while the cult of Sol continued unabated.<sup>13</sup> As for Aurelian, there can be no doubt that he implemented major reforms in the cult of Sol which served to increase its status. But there is no evidence that he introduced a new cult of the sun, intended to somehow replace the existing Roman one.<sup>14</sup> On the contrary: Aurelian's principal reforms (discussed in more detail below) were to elevate the priests of Sol to the rank of *pontifices*, to build a magnificent new temple for Sol, and to institute quadrennial *agones* in his honour on October 19<sup>th</sup> -22<sup>nd</sup>. As such they offer evidence only of continuity in the Roman cult of Sol.<sup>15</sup> Berrens (2004: 115-120) argues persuasively that their foremost purpose was to evoke associations with Augustus and his religious reforms, a common element being the patronage of the sun, Sol/Apollo. Similar considerations may have played a role in Constantine's initial interest in Sol, before he turned to

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<sup>12</sup> Pace Carbó Garcia (2010), who contends that under the Severans the Roman Sol Invictus became syncretized with Elagabal, the main deity of Julia Domna's home town of Emesa. He acknowledges, however, that while Elagabal has a distinct name and iconography, it is impossible to differentiate between a pre-Severan, Severan, and/or post-Severan Sol in Rome either iconographically or epigraphically. If they were in no way differentiated, I do not see how we can postulate that they were different.

<sup>13</sup> A glance at the catalogues of the LIMC s.v. 'Helios-Sol', or Matern 2002, is enough to show that a majority of depictions of Sol date to the latter part of the second century and the whole third century.

<sup>14</sup> Wallraff 2001: 12-13; Matern 2002: 35-39; Berrens 2004: 235-242; Neue Pauly 11, 694 s.v. Sol D.

<sup>15</sup> Berrens 2004: 103-120.

Christianity.<sup>16</sup> In short, Sol had a clear, though modest place in the religious landscape of Rome throughout antiquity, and his cult gained significant importance after Aurelian's reforms.

This summary of Sol's cult in Rome would be straightforward and uncontroversial, were it not that it is exactly the opposite of what previous generations of classicists had concluded. How can it be that men like Wissowa, Cumont, and others - no mean scholars - could be so adamant that the imperial Sol was Syrian, when the evidence clearly shows he was not? Elsewhere I have explored that question in detail, and it is a cautionary tale of inductive reasoning and selective use of evidence in support of a grand narrative that far transcended simply the cult of Sol. That narrative is suffused with the racism, orientalism, imperialism, and even misogyny characteristic of the period. Its basic tenet: that Rome's decadence was intimately connected to the Orient's ascendancy. Chief culprits in Rome's orientalising were the Severans. Réville (1886: 240), on Heliogabalus, is typical:

"Cette fois le triomphe de l'Orient était complet. L'empire du monde dévolu à un enfant de quatorze ans, choisi par des soldats parce qu'il était beau et parce qu'il était prêtre! Le gouvernement dirigé par des femmes d'Émèse! Un Baal affirmant cyniquement sa souveraineté à la barbe du Jupiter Capitolin! Et le Sénat de Rome s'inclinant platement devant le dieu et devant son prêtre!"

Wissowa (1912: 365) similarly sees Rome succumbing to the "filth and bombast" of oriental despotism and its companion cults. Taking the Ba'alim to be sun gods, scholars postulated that a far-reaching solar syncretism characterized Syrian religion under Roman rule, and provided the inspiration for the religious reforms of, in particular, Aurelian. The whole argument is remarkably unencumbered by any supporting evidence,<sup>17</sup> and is in fact circular. The sun's prominence in Late Roman religion - under Heliogabalus, Aurelian, and Constantine - makes Sol a protagonist in Rome's decline; Sol therefore cannot be Roman, and must be oriental; being oriental, his cult is a prominent exponent of the orientalising of Rome and a culprit in her

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<sup>16</sup> On Constantine and Sol cf. Marlowe 2006; Bergmann 2006; Löhr 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. e.g. Seyrig (1971), for a thorough deconstruction and blanket dismissal of the notion that the Ba'alim were sun-gods or that veneration of the sun was important in Syrian religion.

decline.<sup>18</sup>

As we have already discussed, the evidence adduced to support this does not stand up to scrutiny. The real evidence, for these scholars, was bound up in history itself. Rome, in Late Antiquity, was no longer Roman, they felt, or she would not have declined. Ergo, the cult of Sol could not have been Roman, given its prominence during Rome's decline.

The grand narrative of Rome's orientalised and decline has long since been abandoned. It is no surprise, therefore, that a component of that narrative - Aurelian's introduction of a Syrian sun god as supreme deity of Rome - has now been rejected as well. The only surprise is that it took so long, for it is only in the last two decades that concerted efforts have been made to balance our views on Sol with the available evidence. It is in the context of this recent research that we turn now to the main topic of this article: the temples and priests of Sol in the city of Rome.

## Temples

As Rome's sun god, Sol naturally had temples in Rome. Our sources are meagre, but nonetheless provide unambiguous evidence for four Roman sanctuaries of the sun-god in the city. Three of these have long been recognized, and I will deal with them fairly briefly. Most of this section will discuss a fourth temple of Sol, in Trastevere, which has hitherto been misidentified, in part as a result of the now untenable assumption that in the imperial period Sol was a Syrian rather than a Roman god.

## The *Pulvinar Solis* on the Quirinal

Quintilian (1,7,12) comments on an old Latin inscription that he saw at a *pulvinar Solis* near the temple of Quirinus.<sup>19</sup> While the designation *pulvinar*, strictly speaking a couch on which a statue of a divinity reclined, suggests that this was not an *aedes* but something less monumental, the

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<sup>18</sup> There were scholars who took issue with the predominant view: Koch (1933) emphasized that the Republican cult of Sol was not as marginal and unimportant as others had made it out to be. Noiville (1936) concluded unambiguously that there was no trace of an oriental influence on Aurelian's Sol. Seyrig (1971) likewise rejected the notion that Aurelian introduced a Syrian sun god into Rome. But these views were ignored or dismissed because they ran counter to the popular notion that imperial Rome was inundated with Oriental cults. For an extensive analysis of the scholarship postulating that the imperial sun-god was foreign to Rome, cf. Hijmans 1996.

<sup>19</sup> On the temple of Quirinus and the early topography of the Quirinal, cf. Carafa 1993.

presence of an inscription that was already old in the time of Quintilian suggests a substantial degree of permanence and at least a (mid?) Republican date for the sanctuary, if not earlier. Although we cannot be certain, it is reasonable to assume that the annual public sacrifice for Sol Indiges on August 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> *in colle Quirinali* took place at this sanctuary, further attesting to its importance.<sup>20</sup> As we shall discuss in the conclusion of this article, sanctuaries to Sol were often unroofed,<sup>21</sup> which may explain why Quintilian refers to it as a *pulvinar*.

We have almost no further information about this temple or its subsequent history. It is worth noting, however, that Cola di Rienzo recorded that an inscription to Sol Invictus was found in the vineyard of a certain Mancini in the environs of the S. Susanna.<sup>22</sup> If that vineyard lay to the west of that church, this would place the inscription in the immediate vicinity of the temple of Quirinus near which the *pulvinar Solis* was situated.<sup>23</sup>

### **The temple of Sol at the Circus Maximus**

We are slightly better informed about the temple of Sol at the Circus Maximus. Tacitus characterizes it as old, which means that it too must have dated to at least the Republic.<sup>24</sup> It is depicted on coins of M. Antony, Trajan, and Caracalla, and its continued importance is also attested by Tertullian.<sup>25</sup> It remained a prominent feature of the circus through the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>26</sup>

The temple was incorporated in the stands of the circus on the Aventine side, about level with the finish line.<sup>27</sup> Little is known of the appearance of this temple, other than that it was

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<sup>20</sup> The sacrifice is mentioned in various *fasti*. Cf. Arnaud 1986: 401-3; CIL VI, 2298; probably CIL IX, 2319; CIL IX, 4192. On the sanctuary, Matern 2002: 21-4.

<sup>21</sup> Vitr. I 2,5; Matern 2002: 26 n. 193; Scullard 1981: 182.

<sup>22</sup> CIL VI, 728.

<sup>23</sup> Carandini 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15, 74: *vetus aedes apud circum*. Matern 2002: 24-26.

<sup>25</sup> RRC 496/1; RIC II, 284 nr. 571; RIC IV.1, 295 nr. 500. Tert. *Spect.* 8,1.

<sup>26</sup> Matern 2002: 24.

<sup>27</sup> Humphrey 1986: 232-3.

adorned with a prominent statue of Sol. According to the regionary catalogue the temple was also dedicated to Luna, and the feast of Sol and Luna of August 28<sup>th</sup> may have been connected with it.<sup>28</sup> There is some evidence for temples of Sol in connection with other circuses as well.<sup>29</sup>

### **Aurelian's temple to Sol**

The most lavish temple of Sol was dedicated by Aurelian in the autumn of AD 274, following his victories over Zenobia in 272 and Tetricus in the summer of 274.<sup>30</sup> So little has survived of the actual temple that its axis - north-south or east-west - and even its actual location were long the subject of much debate. Most now agree that it stood on the site of S. Silvestro in Capite and the adjacent post office, and based on remains of porticoes indicated on sixteenth century maps its orientation appears to have been East-West.<sup>31</sup> Sources describe it unanimously as a magnificent structure,<sup>32</sup> and drawings by Palladio, supplemented with plans by Pirro Ligorio, suggest that it consisted of two porticoed enclosures connected by a rectangular transition room. The largest enclosure measured about 130 x 90 m and the combined length of the two enclosures was 280 m.<sup>33</sup> The presence of these enclosing porticoes is fairly certain, as they are also mentioned in our ancient sources.<sup>34</sup> We do not know, however, whether there was any structure such as an actual temple building within the enclosed space of the porticoes. It is quite likely that there was not, and that the sanctuary was open to the sky.<sup>35</sup>

Aurelian instituted the new college of pontiffs for Sol in connection with this temple, and

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<sup>28</sup> *Notitia & Curiosum* (Filocalus) Reg. XI.

<sup>29</sup> Giordani 1988.

<sup>30</sup> Matern 2002: 43-45.

<sup>31</sup> A good summary of the debate concerning this temple can be found in *LTUR* s.v. Sol, Templum, 331-3.

<sup>32</sup> *Aur. Vict. Caes.* 35.7; *HA Aurel.* 39,2 & 39.6; *Eutr.* 9.15.1; Moneti 1993.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Castagnoli 1978; Moneti 1990, 1993; Torelli 1992; De Caprariis 1991-2. The smaller of the two porticoes is drawn by Palladio as having an apse on both short sides. Some have suggested that this was not an enclosure, but a monumental semicircular portico as entrance (the "apse" facing the larger enclosure) while the second "apse" on the opposite end is an invention of Palladio (*LTUR* p. 332 s.v. Sol, Templum).

<sup>34</sup> SHA Aurelian 48,1-5.

<sup>35</sup> It is generally assumed that the round *peripteros*, drawn by Palladio in the larger enclosure, is a Renaissance fantasy.

this underlines its Roman character as the *pontifices* were quintessentially Roman priests. This is in line with the other scattered evidence we have for this temple, and indeed for Aurelian's religious policies in general, which suggest above all a significant conservatism and conscious linkage with the Augustan period.<sup>36</sup> It is not far-fetched to see an echo of Augustus' Apollo in Aurelian's Sol.

Once completed, the temple became something of a fixture in Roman life, particularly for the less well-off. Here fiscal wine, i.e. wine collected as a tax in kind, was stored and sold to the poor at less than market price, a practice that continued well into the fourth century.<sup>37</sup> It would appear that the temple was still substantially intact when Belisarius occupied Rome in AD 536. Codinus reports that at this time a widow named Marcia owned the property and that she arranged for eight porphyry columns from the temple to be shipped to Constantinople where they were incorporated in the Hagia Sophia.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Excursus: the Date of the Dedication of the Temple***

It is widely accepted that Aurelian's temple was inaugurated on December 25<sup>th</sup>, AD 274, but there is no evidence for this. On the contrary, there is strong circumstantial evidence for a date in late October, although all we know with certainty is that the inauguration took place in the latter part of AD 274. December 25<sup>th</sup> has nonetheless become the consensus date primarily because the conventional, albeit slightly inaccurate Roman date for the winter solstice was December 25<sup>th</sup>. Scholars have accepted as self-evident that the winter solstice was a major feast day in the cult of Sol, and thus the idea was born that it was the "logical" choice for the inauguration.

All this would be of minimal importance, were it not that December 25<sup>th</sup> was first celebrated in Rome as the birthday of Christ in the 320s.<sup>39</sup> Much has been made of the supposed rivalry between paganism and Christianity over this solstice festival. The fact that Aurelian did not dedicate his temple on December 25<sup>th</sup> has major implications for this presumed rivalry and

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<sup>36</sup> Berrens 2004: 103-120; Watson 1999: 201-2.

<sup>37</sup> Watson 1999: 140.

<sup>38</sup> Codin. *De Antiquit. Const.* 4 P 65 (p. 131-2 Bekker - Corpus Script. Hist. Byz.); Watson 1999: 192.

<sup>39</sup> Hijmans 2003; Wallraff 2001.

the pagan-Christian dynamics it is thought to portray. That makes it worthwhile to establish the actual date of the inauguration, which is the purpose of this ‘detour’.

One might think that celebrating the sun on the winter solstice was so obvious that we need hardly doubt that such a festival had a long tradition. That line of thought is anachronistic, however, in terms of both time perception and calendar practice. As we have already seen, the traditional feast days of Sol were August 8<sup>th</sup> and/or August 9<sup>th</sup>, August 28<sup>th</sup>, and December 11<sup>th</sup>. That these dates are unrelated to any important celestial alignments of the sun, such as the solstices and equinoxes, is not only obvious - it was inevitable prior to the Julian calendar reform. Annual astronomical events never fell on a fixed day of the year of the Republican calendar.<sup>40</sup> It was only after the Julian reforms that it became possible to celebrate a recurring astronomical event on a fixed day in the calendar, but that does not, of course, mean that the Romans now immediately availed themselves of that possibility. On the contrary, none of the many ritual calendars put on display in the decades after the calendar reform show any connection between the dates of the solstices and equinoxes, and the religious festivals, if any, that happened to be celebrated on them.<sup>41</sup> In fact, there is no evidence that the Romans had any religious traditions associated with the solstices prior to the fourth century AD.<sup>42</sup> A Roman feast day for Sol on December 25<sup>th</sup> is attested by only two sources, dating to AD 354 and 362 respectively: the calendar of Filocalus, and Julian’s hymn to Helios.<sup>43</sup> Both are problematic.

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<sup>40</sup> The degree to which the Republican Roman calendar could be off is significant. The eclipse of March 14<sup>th</sup>, 190 BC took place on July 11<sup>th</sup> of that year’s Republican calendar and the eclipse of June 21<sup>st</sup> 168 BC took place on that year’s September 3<sup>rd</sup> (Liv. 37.4.4 & 44.37.8). Cf. Bennett 2004.

<sup>41</sup> We should also bear in mind that instead of calculating the real winter solstice, imperial practice was simply to identify, incorrectly, December 25<sup>th</sup> as such (cf. e.g. Columella 9.14; Plin. *NH* 2.17; Jones 2000). If celebrating the actual winter solstice had been religiously important, would not this known inaccuracy have run counter to the scrupulous observance of correct ritual that so characterized Roman religion?

<sup>42</sup> On the lack of evidence for a sun-related winter solstice festival not just in Rome, but also in the Roman East, Noiville (1938) is still the most comprehensive.

<sup>43</sup> *Fasti Fil.* and Julian, *Or.* 11 (4), 42-3. An astronomical calendar from Egypt, attributed to Antiochus of Athens, states for December 25<sup>th</sup>: “birthday of the sun; light increases”, but this brief comment is difficult to evaluate: we do not know when Antiochus lived, do not know if the calendar has been correctly attributed to him, cannot be sure that the words did not enter the text at a later date as a gloss, and in any case cannot interpret this as more than an indication of the winter solstice, as the calendar does not list any religious festivals. Cf. Boll *et al.* 1910: 7-10; Wallraff 2001: 176. Against Wissowa’s (1912: 367) suggestion that this festival was instituted by Aurelian, cf. Wallraff 2001: 175-7 (especially n. 12); Salzman 1990: 151 n. 106; Heim 1999: 643.

The entry in the calendar, *Natalis Invicti C M XXX*,<sup>44</sup> is anomalous as it differs from all other entries in two ways: it is the only one which does not mention by name the deity or emperor celebrated that day, and the only one which prescribes a number of chariot races that is not a multiple of 12.<sup>45</sup> The entry for December 25<sup>th</sup> thus has all the hallmarks of a later interpolation, which means that the *Natalis Invicti* of December 25<sup>th</sup> was not yet part of the ritual calendar which formed the blueprint for that of Filocalus to use in AD 354. That blueprint must be the one adopted in the late 320s AD, after Constantine banned sacrifices at these festivals and replaced them with chariot races. The interpolation, if that it is, would thus postdate the 320s, though by how much we cannot say. It certainly implies that the festival of December 25<sup>th</sup> did not enter the ritual calendar until some 60 years or more after Aurelian inaugurated his temple.

As we shall see below, Julian's hymn to Helios also suggests that this festival was a newcomer, but that is tangential to the main purpose of this *excursus*: establishing the date of the inauguration of Aurelian's temple. More important from that perspective is the fact that both our late sources mention other festivals of Sol as well. The Calendar of Filocalus for the year AD 354 actually lists three: August 28 (Sol and Luna), multi-day games from October 19<sup>th</sup> to October 22<sup>nd</sup>, and December 25<sup>th</sup>. Of these the October *ludi* were the most important, judging by the high number of chariot races associated with them.<sup>46</sup>

These *ludi* are suggestive, because we know that in AD 274 Aurelian instituted *agones*, probably quadrennial, in honour of Sol. At first glance one would think it evident that the Calendar of 354 records their 21<sup>st</sup> celebration from October 19<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> that year, calling them *ludi* rather than *agones*.<sup>47</sup> Many scholars have nonetheless preferred December 25<sup>th</sup> as the date of Aurelian's *agones*, because Julian (*Or* 11 (4), 43) characterizes the winter solstice feast he had just celebrated at the end of AD 362 as a "most splendid *agon*" for Sol. "Damit kann eigentlich

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<sup>44</sup> Birthday of the Unconquered One - 30 chariot races.

<sup>45</sup> Of the 63 race-days listed in the calendar, 59 had 24 races, the only exceptions being February 25<sup>th</sup> and June 1<sup>st</sup>, when only 12 races were held, December 25<sup>th</sup> with 30 races, and October 22<sup>nd</sup> with 36 races. The 48 races of November 8<sup>th</sup> are actually two festivals of 24 races, for Nerva and Constantius respectively, who happened to share the same *natalis*.

<sup>46</sup> The 36 chariot races of October 22 are the highest number of the year.

<sup>47</sup> Jerome, *Chron.* 223b (Helm); Salzman 1990: 150; Watson 1999: 192.

nur der aurelianische *agon Solis* gemeint gewesen sein" according to Berrens (2004, 109).<sup>48</sup>

However, a more careful reading of Julian's hymn shows that this is mistaken. Julian actually mentions two separate *agones* for Helios in his hymn, as the following three passages illustrate (the translations are my own).

1. "Come now, however we can let us sing the praises of his [i.e. Helios'] feast (heortên), which the queen of cities exalts with annual sacrifices." (3, 131d)
2. "If, after this, I were to say to you that we also honour Mithras and conduct quadrennial *agones* for Helios, I would speak of quite recent matters (neotera)." (41, 155b)
3. "Before the new month, immediately after the end of the month of Kronos, we celebrate the most splendid *agon* in honour of Helios, the feast (heortên) for Helios nicknamed 'invincible' (aniketos), after which none of the shady - though necessary - spectacles concluded in the preceding month are allowed (themis)." (42, 156c)

The first passage establishes the occasion for which Julian is writing as an *annual* (epetesios) festival (heortê, singular) for Helios celebrated in Rome. This can obviously not be the same as the *quadrennial* (tetraetêrikoi) *agones* (plural) for Helios of the second passage, which - like the cult of Mithras - Julian characterizes as relatively recent. The third passage clarifies that it was in fact an *agon* (singular) for Helios Anikêtos (Sol Invictus) that Julian had just celebrated after the end of the month of Kronos (December) prior to the beginning of the new month. In the intervening text Julian claims that contrary to the quadrennial *agones*, this annual festival was not recent at all, but very ancient - ascribing it to none other than Numa - and that it was to celebrate

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Mommsen (CIL I<sup>2</sup> p. 355). Of the *ludi* of October 19th - 22nd he states: "Origo incerta. De agone Solis, quem teste chronographo a. 354 et Hieronymo instituit Aurelianus noli cogitare; agones enim diversi fuerunt a ludis neque illi celebrabantur nisi quarto quoque anno." (Origin uncertain. One should not think of the *agon Solis* which, according to the chronographer of 354 and Jerome, Aurelian had founded, for *agones* differed from *ludi*, and they were celebrated every fourth year). Technically, there was indeed a difference between *ludi* and *agones*, at least in the late Republic and early Empire. Whether that distinction was still maintained in 354 is unclear. The Calendar lists a number of *ludi* but no *agones*, and it seems to me hard to maintain that in terms of word-choice the *natalis Invicti* of December 25th refers more accurately to the *agon Solis* of our other sources than the *ludi Solis* of October 19th-22nd. It is also not clear to me which point Mommsen wishes to make with the fact that the games were celebrated only once every four years. Assuming that the *agon Solis* was first held in AD 274, they would have been held in 354 (Calendar) as well as 362 (date of Julian's hymn). Cf. Watson 1999: 191-2.

the beginning of the new year on the winter solstice even though it was held a few days after the actual winter solstice.<sup>49</sup> Julian clear distinction between the two shows that the quadrennial *agones* were not celebrated on the winter solstice.

Those ‘new’ quadrennial *agones* to which Julian refers in AD 362 must surely be the games instituted by Aurelian 88 years previously. It is true that no other source mentions that Aurelian’s solar games were quadrennial,<sup>50</sup> but Jerome (*supra* n. 40) does state explicitly that they were held for the first time in AD 274, and at less than a century old the games certainly deserve Julian’s qualification as ‘new’. Can there be any doubt that these quadrennial games were the *ludi Solis* of October 19<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup>, recorded eight years earlier in the Calendar of Filocalus for the year 354. The fact that Julian calls these games quadrennial and ‘new’ accords perfectly with their having been held for the first time in AD 274, with their 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> editions falling in 354 (Filocalus) and 362 (Julian) respectively.

We thus have a fixed date for one element of Aurelian’s celebration of his victories in the autumn of AD 274, namely the *ludi Solis* of 19-22 October. This probably means that he held his triumph on October 18<sup>th</sup>, although the only evidence for that is provided by the notoriously unreliable *Historia Augusta*.<sup>51</sup> It would certainly have been an historically appropriate time for a triumph, coinciding as it did with the age-old rituals of the October Horse, celebrated to mark the traditional end of the fighting season. Choosing such a day would be in line with Aurelian’s religious conservatism stressed by Berrens.

Did Aurelian also inaugurate his temple to Sol at this time? It is a reasonable assumption, in particular as the temple was being financed with the spoils of the victories celebrated. It is also difficult to imagine that the first solar games would not have coincided with the inauguration of the new temple. Hence we can conclude that in all likelihood the temple’s inauguration also took place in the latter part of October 274, at the same time as Aurelian’s triumph and first Solar

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<sup>49</sup> Julian *or* 11 (4), 41-2. On the exalted status of Numa in Julian’s work, cf Bouffartigue 1992: 436, 447-8.

<sup>50</sup> Julian’s term τετραετηρικός (quadrennial) technically might mean that the games were held every *three* years in view of the Roman practice of inclusive counting (the Olympic games are generally referred to as πεντετηρικός in antiquity). But the word is late - aside from Men. Rh. 367.7 (Spengel) this is the earliest instance - and used regularly to describe the Olympics or other quadrennial games (cf. Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 7,15, referring to the Nemean games).

<sup>51</sup> HA Aurel. 33-34, ending (34.6) with the remark that in the days following the triumph the Romans enjoyed theatre performances, circus games, gladiatorial games, hunts, and *naumachiae*; cf. Watson 1999: 178-179.

games. Although we lack absolute proof, such a date is certainly the one best supported by the available evidence.

But what, then, of Julian's claim that the winter solstice festival was as old as Numa? There may be more behind this than first meets the eye. To begin with, there is no evidence of earlier celebrations of Sol on December 25<sup>th</sup> to back up Julian's claim. Furthermore, his explanation for the date - a few days after the astronomical solstice - is hopelessly convoluted and clearly fabricated, as it would not make any sense in the calendar of Numa's day. One gets the distinct impression that Julian protests too loudly, going to great lengths to "prove" the great antiquity of the winter solstice festival precisely because that claim was false. The fact is, that Julian's hymn contains no evidence to counter the *terminus post quem* we established for the interpolation of the *Natalis Invicti* in the calendar of Filocalus. That *terminus* is especially interesting because the bishop of Rome first celebrated the winter solstice as birthday of Christ in the 320s. As Wallraff (2001: 175) has pointed out, it is quite possible that the mid-fourth century pagan celebration of the winter solstice had arisen in response to the Christian claim of December 25<sup>th</sup> as the birthday of Christ a quarter century or so earlier.<sup>52</sup> In general, the extent to which late pagan festivals copied, incorporated, or responded to Christian practices and celebrations deserves more attention than it has received.<sup>53</sup> But that is a topic well beyond the scope of this article, and it is time we end our *excursus*.

### **A Temple of Sol *Trans Tiberim***

The three previous temples are all mentioned by ancient literary sources, however briefly, and their existence has been undisputed. A fourth temple or shrine for Sol in Rome is known to us only through inscriptions, and it has not received much attention until fairly recently. There are two substantial studies concerning this fourth temple, by Palmer (1981) and Chausson (1995). Both understandably proceeded from the then still accepted premiss that the imperial cult of Sol in Rome was of Syrian origin, and both interpret epigraphic evidence as indicating that there was a temple for Syrian solar cults in Trastevere as early as the first century AD, roughly on the site

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<sup>52</sup> On Sol and pagan responses to Christianity cf. Watson 1999: 198. On the winter solstice and Christmas, cf. Hijmans 2003.

<sup>53</sup> Bowersock 1990: 26-7, 44-53.

of the present Piazza Ippolito Nievo.<sup>54</sup> Given that we now know that *Sol per se* was not specifically Syrian at all, their analyses of the evidence as a whole needs to be reexamined.

The inscriptions mentioning *Sol* directly are unambiguous. There was without a doubt some sort of sanctuary of *Sol* in the general area of the Piazza Nievo. This is shown in the first place by two inscriptions of C. Iulius Anicetus, discovered in the mid-nineteenth century during excavations in the *vigna Bonelli* which then occupied that area. The one, dedicated on May 25<sup>th</sup>, AD 102, commemorates the restoration of a portico, described as the *prima porticus Solis*.<sup>55</sup> The other begs visitors *ex imperio Solis* to refrain from defacing the complex's walls with graffiti.<sup>56</sup> The first inscription is fragmentary and may have mentioned more structures, but that is not certain. It goes on to state that the refurbishment was carried out by Anicetus *permissu kalatorum pontificum et flaminum*, i.e. with the permission of the *kalatores*, assistants of Rome's most important state priests, and it lists all *kalatores* by name. This involvement of the *kalatores* confirms the sacred nature of the structure or structures restored by Anicetus.

Other inscriptions provide further evidence of Anicetus' close connections with the cult of *Sol*. He dedicated an altar to *Sol Divinus* that is now at the church of S. Cecilia, about one kilometre north of the area where the other inscriptions were found.<sup>57</sup> He is also almost certainly the same as the C. Iulius Anicetus who erected a funerary inscription for his wife Claudia Pallas and their three-year-old daughter Iulia Pallas.<sup>58</sup> This in turn suggests that a votive relief for *Sol* of Neronian date, now in Florence but found in Rome, may also have come from the sanctuary of

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<sup>54</sup> This possibility had already been entertained by Borsari 1887 ( Lanciani 1902: 116), but Palmer and Chausson are the first to explore it in detail. Cf. Savage 1940: 52-4; Equini Schneider 1987.

<sup>55</sup> *CIL* VI, 2185=31034; see appendix 1d. Inscriptions relevant to the sanctuary of *Sol* in Trastevere are collected and briefly discussed in an appendix at the end of this article.

<sup>56</sup> *CIL* VI, 52; cf. app. 1c

<sup>57</sup> *CIL* VI, 709; cf. app. 3a. It is tempting to link Anicetus' predilection for *Sol* with his name, the Latinized form of the Greek word ἀνίκητος, *invictus*. Cf. Palmer 1981: 375. There are other examples of dedicants who are linked to *Sol* by name. Cf. *CIL* VI, 700 (C. Ducenius *Phoebus*) and 703 (C. Iulius *Helius*). It is true that our earliest securely dated epigraphical reference to *Sol* with the epithet *invictus* is over half a century later (*CIL* VI, 715), but the vast majority of inscriptions mentioning *Sol Invictus* lacks a precise date and it is extremely unlikely that this oldest dated inscription was not preceded by a significant number of undated, older ones. Cf. E.g. *CIL* VI, 732 *Soli Invicto Mithrae*, which is generally accepted to be Trajanic in date (Beck 1998: 118-9 n. 27).

<sup>58</sup> *CIL* VI, 15527.

Sol with which Anicetus was involved.<sup>59</sup> It is a dedication to Sol and Luna by a Claudia Pallas and her father Eumolpus, who identifies himself as a high-ranking slave of Nero. As neither Claudia Pallas nor C. Iulius Anicetus had common names, the Claudia Pallas who was married to Iulius Anicetus was presumably that daughter of Eumolpus.<sup>60</sup>

One further inscription is also quite likely related to this *porticus Solis* and is perhaps even connected with the same refurbishment during Trajan's reign. It is a votive altar dedicated to *Sol Victor* by a wine merchant named Daphnicus.<sup>61</sup> The inscription mentions that Daphnicus financed the building of a *trichia* with permission of the *kalatores* and states that they also gave him dispensation from performing sacrifice. The *kalatores* thus fulfilled the same role for Daphnicus' activities as they did for those of Anicetus, which is noteworthy, because these assistants of the *pontifices* and *flamines* are mentioned only rarely in inscriptions.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, Anicetus' second inscription, requesting that people refrain from defacing the shrine with graffiti, also mentions *trichiae*. This rare word is a variant of *trichila* (bower, gazebo),<sup>63</sup> and it appears likely that the *trichia* financed by Daphnicus is one of the *trichiae* Anicetus is trying to protect. The fact that Daphnicus' altar is dedicated to Sol *victor* rather than *invictus* suggests it dates to the earlier part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD, when *invictus* had not yet become the epithet of choice to indicate Sol's power,<sup>64</sup> and so it is quite possible that Anicetus' and Daphnicus' inscriptions are contemporary and refer to the same "building permit" of the *kalatores* (to whom we shall return

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<sup>59</sup> *CIL* VI, 3719=310331; cf. app. 2f. The relief was in the Mattei collection in Rome in the 15th century, which suggests that it came from Rome.

<sup>60</sup> Bergmann 1998: 197.

<sup>61</sup> *CIL* VI, 712; cf. app. 3b.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *CIL* VI, 2184; VI, 31426; VI, 36932; VI, 40684 (AD 227 or 232) X, 1726. None of these other inscriptions can be connected to a specific cult or deity. The Arval Brothers also had *kalatores* (also spelled *calatores*) as assistants, mentioned frequently in Arval inscriptions, and there is also mention of a *calator* of the augurs (*CIL* VI, 2187). The antiquity of this sacred title is clear from the fact that the term occurs in the oldest surviving Latin inscription, the *lapis niger* (*CIL* I<sup>2</sup>, 1), but the *kalatores* were not of high social rank.

<sup>63</sup> *Copa* 8: *trichia umbrosis frigida harundinibus* (a cool bower under shady thatch); cf. Caes. *B.C.* 3.96, Besides the inscriptions of Anicetus and Daphnicus, I know of only five inscriptions in which the word *trichia* occurs: *CIL* VI, 4711; 15593; 29394; 29958; XIV, 1636.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *AE* 1968, 282, the only other case of Sol Victor I know of. The inscription has VI[ictori, with no space before the V for additional letters, making the reading in]VI[cto impossible (*pace* van Haepren 2006: 47).

below).<sup>65</sup>

The evidence of these inscriptions is clear. There was, in Trastevere, a *porticus Solis*, and by AD 102 it was in need of restoration, which means that it must have been built at least some decades earlier. If Eumolpus' votive altar was set up at the same shrine, that would give us a late Neronian date as *terminus ante quem* for the sanctuary. We have no further indication of its age nor do we know more about its architecture, for no physical traces of this complex have been securely identified.<sup>66</sup> We have already noted that temples to Sol were often open to the sky, and there is no need, therefore, to postulate anything more elaborate than the portico and gazebos attested by the inscriptions. The use of marble suggests a degree of elegance, however, as do the inscriptions. This was more than a rustic sacred enclosure.

Both Palmer and Chausson go much further, however. They believe that Anicetus' *porticus solis* was but one component of an extensive sanctuary that was dominated by Syrian deities in general and Palmyrene gods in particular. They base this in the first place on dedications to the Palmyrene deities Bel, Aglibol, Iarhibol, Malakbel and Ares Patroios, also found during excavations in the *vigna Bonelli*. To these they add a substantial number of additional inscriptions and reliefs that they believe were all discovered in the same region long before the nineteenth century excavations.<sup>67</sup> They argue that taken together all these inscriptions form such a cohesive group that they must all come from one sanctuary, of which this *porticus Solis* was merely a part.

Their argument, which is an elaboration of a proposal put forward by Lanciani (1902: 112), hinges on the postulated cohesion both in content and provenance of this amalgamated set

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<sup>65</sup> Quite possibly also from this site is *CIL* VI, 2186 (app. 3f), a dedicatory inscription dated to AD 109 that may well record similar kalatorian permission as well as dispensation for sacrifice in almost identical terms. Unfortunately in this case neither the name of the dedicant nor that of the recipient deity have survived. Also of interest is *CIL* VI, 40684 (app. 3h), dating to the reign of Severus Alexander, as it was found near the via Aurelio Saffi, just above the Piazza Nievo in Trastevere, i.e. in the general area where Anicetus' inscriptions were found. It too is incomplete, but records a dedication carried out with permission of the *kalatores* of the pontiffs.

<sup>66</sup> During the construction in 1885 of the first Trastevere train station (not to be confused with the present one), a portico was found about halfway up the slope of the hill, extending towards the West, and consisting of pilasters of *opus reticulatum*. The top part of Anicetus' inscription (*CIL* VI, 2185=31034) was found "a breve distanza" of these ruins, and Gatti and Borsari (1887: 18-19) believe they were the remains of Anicetus' *porticus Solis* although they provide no additional evidence beyond the inscription-fragment. On remains in *opus reticulatum* in this area cf. Nibby 1827, 19-20.

<sup>67</sup> On this *vigna*, at various times the property of the Crescenzi, Bonelli, and Mangani families, cf. Palmer 1981: 372-3 n. 50 and Chausson 1995: 663-4. For the report on the excavations, cf. Visconti 1860.

of inscriptions. And yet as we shall see that cohesion is not obvious at all. Palmer and Chausson actually draw their evidence from three distinct groups of inscriptions:

- a. inscriptions discovered during nineteenth-century excavations in the *vigna Bonelli*;
- b. inscriptions on display in the *giardini Mattei* in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, noteworthy for the fact that they were almost all related to oriental cults;<sup>68</sup>
- c. a range of other inscriptions from Trastevere or of unknown provenance, which they adduce because of their close analogy with inscriptions from one of the two previous groups.

Two assumptions thus underlie their hypothesis. The first is that all the inscriptions they adduce do indeed come from that one particular part of Trastevere, and the second is that within that area there was but one temple in which all these inscriptions were housed together.

Both assumptions are hard to accept. As far as the provenance is concerned, even in broad terms only that of the inscriptions of the first group, discovered in the nineteenth century in the *vigna Bonelli*, is actually known. It does not tell us very much, for the excavations in the vineyard covered a large terrain and their report is short on detail.

Much more problematic is the presumed provenance of the crucial second group of inscriptions, the old Mattei collection in the Mattei gardens. With two possible exceptions, discussed below, no provenance was recorded for any of these inscriptions. When Lanciani proposed the *vigna Bonelli* as the site where the whole Mattei collection must have been found, he did so solely because he felt that all the inscriptions in the Mattei garden, being dedications to oriental deities, formed a cohesive group that must have been found together. He based the assumption that they were found in the *Vigna Bonelli* on the location of the Mattei palazzo in Trastevere; at the time the *Vigna Bonelli* was the only known provenance in Trastevere of inscriptions related to oriental cults. Subsequent discoveries have of course shown that in Trastevere alone there were numerous sanctuaries that could have housed one or more of the Mattei inscriptions. Indeed, only a few years after Lanciani wrote the now most famous Syrian sanctuary of Trastevere was discovered on the grounds of the Villa Sciarra, higher up on the

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<sup>68</sup> Bergmann 1998: 195.

Janiculum,<sup>69</sup> and at least some of the Mattei inscriptions, namely those for Dea Syria and Jupiter, would not have been out of place there.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, there is, of course, no imperative reason to assume that all inscriptions the Mattei collected in their garden came from the Trastevere district only.<sup>71</sup>

Nonetheless, Palmer does not question Lanciani's suggestion and Chausson goes even further. He asserts that the fifteenth-century Mattei gardens were actually "dans le Trastévère au delà de la Porta Portese, vers le sud",<sup>72</sup> i.e. in the same area as the nineteenth century *vigna Bonelli* and the present *Piazza Ippolito Nievo*, and he postulates that the inscriptions on display in those gardens had been found on the spot.<sup>73</sup> This is incorrect. The Renaissance scholars who recorded the inscriptions state that they were displayed in the lowest garden of the Palazzo Mattei

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<sup>69</sup> The 17<sup>th</sup> c. wall of Urban VIII now physically separates the site, identified as the *Lucus Furrinae*, and its Syrian shrine (inside the wall) from the area of the *vigna Bonelli*, but that was not yet the case in the 15<sup>th</sup> c, when both areas lay outside what remained of the Aurelian Wall (Coarelli 1982, map opposite p. 38, nr. 7; the *vigna Bonelli* lay directly South of the shrine). Excavations at the *Lucus Furrinae* site commenced in 1906, four years after Lanciani's study appeared. Cf. Goodhue 1975; Ensoli 2003.

<sup>70</sup> *CIL* VI, 115 = 30696, 116, and 117; cf. Gauckler 1909: 255 n. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Coarelli 1982: 50.

<sup>72</sup> Chausson 1995: 671-2. He does not indicate which Porta Portese he uses as landmark. The current city gate of that name and the wall it is in were built by pope Urban VIII in the 1630s, i.e. long after the 15<sup>th</sup> c. finds made their way into the Mattei collection. The ancient Porta Portuensis in the Aurelian wall was significantly further South, roughly parallel to the northern end of Piazza Ippolito Nievo. The Mattei had sold a vineyard South of the Aurelian gate to the Alberini in 1354 (Lanciani 1902: 101); cf. Palmer 1981: 371 fig. 1. Palmer (1981: 372 n. 50) does not specify the location of the Mattei gardens, but simply states that "the old collezione Mattei contained pieces from the same area" (as the *vigna Bonelli*), without elaborating or providing supporting evidence.

<sup>73</sup> Chausson (1995: 671-2 n. 16) finds it hard to imagine that the Mattei would collect only inscriptions connected to oriental deities, and argues that this unity of theme must reflect a single provenance for the collection rather than a specific purpose of the collector(s). He feels that such a thematic collection, if built purposefully rather than by chance, should have garnered more attention. In point of fact this part of the Mattei collection did of course garner significant attention of, among others, Giovanni Giocondo. One could easily imagine that the quite magnificent altar to Malachbel-Sol Sanctissimus (Musei Capitolini NCE 2412; cf. *CIL* VI, 710=30817, Dirven 1999: 175-180, pl XXI), which was part of the Mattei collection at this time, constituted the focal point (and impetus) for a thematic collection of inscriptions related to comparable cults. The necessary scholarship would not have been hard to come by, for in the latter part of the fifteenth century Rome was a major center of Classical scholarship. One need but think of Pomponius Laetus (1425-1498) and his academy. Barbaro (*supra* n. 4) was one of Laetus' students in Rome and one could even speculate that his emendation of Plin. *Nat.* 3,56 (*Iovis* for *Solis*) was inspired by the altar to Malachbel-Sol and the Mattei collection built around it. On Giocondo, cf. Fontana 1988, Ciapponi 1961, Brenzoni 1960; on Pomponius Laetus, cf. Cassiani & Chiabò 2007; on Barbaro cf. *CHRP*: 808-809.

in Trastevere, by the bridge to the Tiber island,<sup>74</sup> which means that the collection was displayed in one of the gardens of the palazzo Mattei at the Piazza in Piscinula, over a mile north of the vineyard. Furthermore the vaguely recorded provenances of two of these inscriptions suggests that they at least did not come from the area of the *vigna Bonelli*,<sup>75</sup> while on the other hand the dedication to Sol and Luna by Eumolpus and Claudia Pallas, also part of the Mattei collection, may well have come from the *porticus Solis* of Anicetus. In short, what little evidence we have suggests that the inscriptions in the Mattei garden had *not* all been found on one site, and although some may have well have come from the *vigna Bonelli* area, it is now impossible to determine which. Hence in the first instance only the heterogeneous group of inscriptions discovered in the *Vigna Bonelli* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is relevant for our understanding of the *porticus Solis* of Anicetus.

### **The *vigna Bonelli* excavations**

Visconti (1860) describes the nineteenth century excavations, conducted by Giambattista Guidi, as revealing a number of structures. He first mentions the remains of a temple of early imperial date which he identifies tentatively as the ancient temple of Fors Fortuna which stood in this area.<sup>76</sup> The presence of extensive gardens, which Visconti identifies as the *horti Caesaris*, was attested by numerous remains, such as a large number of poorly preserved, headless herms as well as a statue of Venus, now in the Hermitage.<sup>77</sup> Uphill from the temple extensive ruins were found of excellent brickwork "che doveano far parte di fabbriche assai vaste", but Visconti professes himself unable to give a clear idea of the layout and nature of the building or buildings.<sup>78</sup> What emerged were large, barrel-vaulted rooms with collapsed ceilings, colonnaded

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<sup>74</sup> CIL VI, 116, e.g., quotes Pighi as locating the garden *ad pontem insulae Tiberinae* (by the bridge to the Tiber island) and Lanciani (1902:112) quotes an unnamed source describing the garden as a *hortulus ad pontem insulae Tiberinae*; cf. CIL VI, 115 = 30696 (Smetius: *prope Tiberim*); Chausson 1995: 678.

<sup>75</sup> IGUR 119, which Pirro Ligorio places in the vineyard of Mario Scapuccio on the Janiculum (*LTUR* p. 335 s.v. Sol Malachbelus). Ferrarinus states that CIL VI, 708 was found in the area of the "Sforza buildings" (*aedium Sfortiadum*). This may refer to the Palazzo Sforza Cesarini which is by the Corso Vittorio Emanuele in rione V.

<sup>76</sup> Visconti 1860: 416-7.

<sup>77</sup> Visconti 1860: 419-21.

<sup>78</sup> Visconti 1860: 422: "Io non ho saputo farmi un'idea chiara della totalità di questo edificio (...) perchè non ho potuto vederne se non poco alla volta".

walks, corridors and the like, "tantochè dette costruzioni pareano piuttosto simili ad un'abitazione che ad un tempio (...)." Based on brick stamps he dates the building-complex to the end of the reign of Hadrian.<sup>79</sup>

Despite the apparently domestic nature of these ruins, Visconti argues that they were not of a villa but of a temple, because of inscriptions found there. He associates three inscriptions directly with this complex, namely an undated bilingual Palmyrene-Greek dedication to Bel, Iarhibol, and Aglibol<sup>80</sup>, a bilingual Latin-Greek dedicatory inscription of Trajanic date for an *aedes* for Bel, Iarhibol and Malachbel<sup>81</sup>, and a Greek dedication to Ares Patroios dated in the Seleucid calendar to AD 134.<sup>82</sup> He sees these three inscriptions as clear evidence for a Palmyrene temple to Bel among these ruins, identifying Bel incorrectly as the sun-god of Palmyra.<sup>83</sup> Visconti gives no indication of the precise provenance or find context of any of these inscriptions.

Visconti next mentions the inscription with Anicetus' plea to refrain from defacing the walls of the newly refurbished *porticus Solis*, "trovata pure in vicinanza dei monumenti testè dichiarati".<sup>84</sup> According to him this inscription belonged likewise to the temple of Bel, only in this case Bel is called Sol. That interpretation is, of course, untenable, as Bel was not Sol. An incomplete black granite Egyptian clepsydra also "undoubtedly" formed part of the cult

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<sup>79</sup> Chausson (1995) identifies the brickstamps published by Visconti as *CIL* XV, 792 (mid first century AD), 1008 (shortly after AD 108), and 1103 (late first century AD).

<sup>80</sup> Visconti 1860: 423; *IGUR* 120, cf. app. 1e. The initial publication of this inscription, by D. Michelangelo Lanci, cited by Visconti, misread the Palmyrene, reading *Seems* rather than the patronymic *Lisams*, and concluding that Yarhibol is equated in the inscription with Shamash, the sun (*BullCorr* 1860, 58-9). Visconti further muddled the waters by claiming that a relieffragment of unknown provenance with an image and the name Astarte also belonged to this monument (*IGUR* 121), a suggestion since rejected (Chausson 1995: 669).

<sup>81</sup> Visconti 1860: 428; *CIL* VI, 50 = *IGUR* 117, cf. app. 1a.

<sup>82</sup> Visconti 1960: 431; *IGUR* 122, cf. app. 1f.

<sup>83</sup> This mistaken notion that the Palmyran Bel was a sun god was widely held in 1860, and has been remarkably tenacious in Classical scholarship. Visconti (1860: 422-8) speculates fairly extensively on the nature of the various Palmyrene deities mentioned in these inscriptions, but knowledge about the Palmyrene pantheon was still very limited in his day. On the Syrian solar deities in general, cf. Seyrig 1971. On the cult of Bel in Palmyra see Dirven 1999: 51-7. She makes it quite clear that Bel's Jovian nature was unambiguous, referring *inter alia* to the ceiling of the north *thamos* of the temple of Bel in Palmyra in which Bel is represented by the planet Jupiter, around which Sol, Luna, and the other four planets are grouped. For a review of recent relevant scholarship, see Lieu 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Visconti 1860: 434; for the inscription see *CIL* VI, 52, app. 1c.

furnishings according to Visconti.<sup>85</sup>

It seems clear that Anicetus' other inscription (*CIL* VI, 2185=31034) was not found anywhere near the first three. Of the discovery of the lower section of this inscription in 1859 (the upper part was found 28 years later) Visconti (1860: 439) states: "Non so poi se appartenga medesimamente al tempio di Belo questa gran lapide, venute in luce assai malconcia (...). Venne questa scoperta verso la fine della stagione idonea ai lavori." Following a long discussion concerning the year of the consulate of Sura, to which this inscription is dated, Visconti turns to one other inscription found during the excavations; it commemorates the expansion in AD 97 of a small shrine (*aedicula*) for Silvanus.<sup>86</sup> Summing up the evidence, he concludes that multiple temples had been erected in the excavated area.<sup>87</sup>

This presence of multiple shrines or temples in the *vigna Bonelli* area is a crucial point. Equally important is the fact that Visconti groups the inscription of Anicetus with the Palmyrene dedications on the basis of content - he mistakenly believes that Sol and Bel are identical - rather than provenance or context. His information on the provenance of the inscriptions is too vague to allow any inferences based on their location relative to each other. In fact, given the heavily damaged state of all the inscriptions it seems unlikely that any of them were found in their original positions. They have all the hallmarks of *spolia* reused at a later time in the excavated area. This would explain why the two halves of Anicetus' dedicatory inscription were discovered on separate occasions, decades apart.

Taken together these points explain why there is actually no unity in the group of inscriptions recovered from the vineyard either of date, of language, of cult, or of type. There is, in fact, absolutely no evidence that Anicetus' *porticus* of Sol was any more connected to the temple of Bel than the *aedicula* of Silvanus was, and strong reasons to think it was not. To begin with, Bel is not equated with Sol but with Jupiter, and a *porticus Solis* is therefore not a portico "of (the temple of) Bel". In the second place, the inscriptions of Anicetus give no evidence of any Palmyrene connections: their language is uniformly Latin, the deity is given his Latin name only

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<sup>85</sup> Visconti 1860: 437. The Clepsydra is now in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, inv. 19556.

<sup>86</sup> *CIL* VI, 642 cf. app. 1h.

<sup>87</sup> Visconti 1860: 448. Visconti does not mention the fragmentary entablature inscription *IGUR* 123, also discovered at this time (app. 1g); cf. Chausson 1995: 671, inscription H.

(with no indication that a non-Roman deity is meant), permission of the *kalatores pontificum et flaminum* is involved (indicating Roman rather than foreign cult), and the consular rather than the Seleucid dating system is used. By contrast the Palmyrene inscriptions are all bilingual, all deities are unambiguously identified as Palmyrene, in most cases the dedicants are also explicit about their heritage, and the one dated inscription uses the Seleucid calendar. Clearly the inscriptions of Anicetus have nothing in common with these Palmyrene ones and the only reasonable conclusion is that Anicetus' inscriptions belong to a porticoed sanctuary of Sol that stood in the same general area as a Palmyrene sanctuary of Bel, but was unrelated to it.

All told, we thus actually have evidence for four temples or shrines in the excavated area of the *vigna Bonelli*. One is the *porticus Solis* restored by Anicetus, with a consular date of AD 102 marking a refurbishment of the shrine. The second is the temple for the Palmyrene triad of Bel, Aglibol and Iarhibol, which presumably also housed the Palmyrene dedication to Ares *Patroios* dated in the Seleucid calendar to AD 134.<sup>88</sup> The third is the shrine of Silvanus that was enlarged in AD 97. In addition to these we have the excavated foundations which, in Visconti's opinion at least, dated to the (early?) first century AD and were of a temple apparently not connected with any of these inscriptions, given that Visconti believed it to have been the temple of Fors Fortuna.

### ***Kalatores, sacerdotes and slaves: the social status of the cult of Sol***

That the portico of Sol was indeed a temple or part of one follows from the fact that Anicetus (and Daphnicus) needed permission of the *kalatores* for their activities there (appendix 1d & 3b). Evaluating this involvement of the *kalatores* is somewhat problematic, however, because it is virtually unparalleled in our sources, leading some to believe that their role must have been informal rather than official. Rüpke (2005: 1532-6) suggests that one of the *kalatores*, Ti. Claudius Heronas, and/or his patron Ti. Claudius Pollio may have been an adherent of the cult of Sol and that this provided a link with the *kalatores*.<sup>89</sup> Van Haepelen (2006: 47-8) argues that the involvement of the *kalatores* with private cult may have occurred more often, supporting this

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<sup>88</sup> IGUR 122, app. 1f. On Ares (Arsu) of Palmyra cf. Dirven 1999: 117-124. The combination of the triad of Bel, Aglibol and Yarhibol with Arsu/Ares is attested at Jebel al-Merah (Dirven 1999: 117). For the use of the epithet *Patroios* with Ares in Palmyra cf. Dirven 1999: 123.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *CIL* 6, 3720=31032.

with examples of *pontifices* involved in matters concerning - in part at least - foreign cults. Scheid (2005: 231-3) wonders whether the involvement may have been connected with the fact that the temple stood on public land in the *horti Caesaris*, but he also points out that such land would normally have been administered by magistrates rather than priests.

The problem with all these hypotheses is that they don't really explain on what grounds the *kalatores* were able to grant actual *permissus* for the cultic activities of Daphnicus and Anicetus. The term, after all, is a powerful one that indicates the authority to do the opposite, i.e. withhold permission for the building activities and, in the case of Daphnicus, associated dispensation from the obligation to sacrifice. Such authority was not granted or delegated lightly. Furthermore, the *kalatores* granted dispensation from sacrifice in closely similar terms in AD 109, but unfortunately the name of the sanctuary or deity involved has been lost.<sup>90</sup> Of much later date but quite similar content is the permission mentioned in an inscription found in the same general area and dating to the reign of Severus Alexander.<sup>91</sup> There is too much of a pattern here, covering too long a period, for these kalatorian activities all to have been informal or *ad hoc*.

The involvement of the *kalatores* becomes rather more straightforward, of course, if one accepts that the sanctuary of Sol in Trastevere was unconnected with any nearby Syrian temple(s) and was considered public and Roman rather than private and foreign. That would bring it squarely within the normal purview of Roman priests such as the *pontifices* and *flamines* and their assistants the *kalatores*, who had no formal role to play in private or foreign sanctuaries.<sup>92</sup> We have already seen that the Roman cult of Sol was an integral part of Roman religion in the period under discussion, and as we know that such quintessentially Roman temples and cults as that of Fors Fortuna were located in the same general area of Trastevere, there is no reason why a temple for the Roman sun god there should surprise us. In my view, therefore, the role played by the *kalatores* is simply further evidence that the *porticus Solis* and its complex in Trastevere was dedicated to the traditional Roman Sol.

### **A cult for the lower classes?**

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<sup>90</sup> *CIL* 6, 2186 (app. 3f).

<sup>91</sup> *CIL* 6, 40684 (app. 3h); cf. *CIL* 6, 36932.

<sup>92</sup> Scheid 2005: 232.

This still leaves us with the question why it is that we know so little about this apparently official and obviously quite substantial authority over the cult of Sol and, perhaps, other cults, that was vested in the *kalatores*, a question that is all the more intriguing because the position of *kalator* was clearly a very ancient one, mentioned as it is in one of the oldest extant Latin inscriptions, the Lapis Niger. Social class may be the key here. Old though the position of *kalator* was, it was not one for Romans of high social rank. Most of the *kalatores* of AD 101/2, whose names we know, were freedmen of the equestrian or senatorial priests they served.<sup>93</sup> Nothing further is known of any of them. It is thus quite striking that these *kalatores* had the authority to grant or withhold their permission for the cult-related activities carried out by Anicetus, Daphnicus, and anonymous others. It is hard to imagine that members of the Roman elite would submit with good grace to such authority vested in freedmen. Hence the implication appears to be that the cult of Sol was somewhat "lower class", below the dignity of the elite pontiffs. If it could be shown that the religious role of the *kalatores* was restricted to a limited group of Roman cults that were sub-elite, that would go some way towards explaining why neither those cults nor the *kalatores* loom large in our sources, in which the lower strata of society are poorly represented.

In Rome's class-based society the existence of lower class cults is a given. One need but think of Cicero's dismissive rejection of Fortuna Primigenia, stating that no magistrate would ever consult this oracle that remained so popular among "commoners" (*volgus*).<sup>94</sup> What little we know about the persons involved with Sol's shrine in Trastevere supports the view that it too was anchored in segments of Roman society with which our elite sources did not associate. Daphnicus was a wine-merchant, Eumolpus a slave, and Anicetus the son-in-law of that slave. These men shared the status (and the preponderance of Greek names) that characterized the *kalatores* themselves, and were beneath the dignity of the equestrian and senatorial *flamines* and *pontifices* for whom the *kalatores* worked.

Of course as far as we know, Daphnicus, Eumolpus and Anicetus were not priests of Sol. But the few *sacerdotes* of Sol we know of, who served prior to Aurelian's reforms of the cult and its priesthood, also do not appear to have had high social status. Inscriptions provide us with the names of five *sacerdotes* of Sol in the city of Rome: Ti. Iulius Balbillus, who was active from

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<sup>93</sup> Rüpke 2005: 1517-1536.

<sup>94</sup> Cic. *Divin.* 2, 86-7.

before AD 199 until after AD 218,<sup>95</sup> M. Aurelius Bassus<sup>96</sup>, M. Aurelius Victor<sup>97</sup>, T. Aelius Tryfon<sup>98</sup> and M. Antonius Sotericus Haruspex.<sup>99</sup> To these we can add L. Aemilius Iulianus, *sacerdos* of Sol and Luna in Ostia,<sup>100</sup> and a certain Verus, whose family tomb stood near Osteria dell'Osa.<sup>101</sup>

The inscriptions of Balbillus accurately date his period of activity, but we do not know precisely when any of these others were priests of Sol. There is only some rather feeble evidence that may indicate that Bassus was priest of Sol before Balbillus, i.e. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD,<sup>102</sup> and T. Aurelius Victor should probably be placed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, judging by the lettering style of his inscription.<sup>103</sup> Thus even though we do not know when Tryfon and Sotericus Haruspex were *sacerdotes*, we do have continuous evidence for priests and cult-activities for Sol in Rome from the reign of Nero (Eumolpus), the first decade of the second century (Anicetus, Daphnicus and,

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<sup>95</sup> *CIL* VI, 708 (app. 2a), 1027 (app. 3d), 1603 (app. 2c), 2129 (app. 3e), 2130 (app. 2d), 2269=32456 (app. 2e), 2270 (app. 3g); *IGUR* 124 (app. 2g). Cf. *FS* nr. 2001.

<sup>96</sup> *CIL* VI, 30799; *FS* 810; *fl.* middle imperial period.

<sup>97</sup> *CIL* VI, 1358; *FS* 887; *fl.* early to mid 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD. Jones, Martindale and Morris (1992, 960) erroneously date this inscription to after Aurelian on the assumption that a *sacerdos Solis* must be attached to Aurelian's temple. The priests of that temple, however, were *pontifices*.

<sup>98</sup> *CIL* VI, 659; *FS* 488; *fl.* middle imperial period.

<sup>99</sup> *AE* 1960, 365; *FS* 672; 3rd-4th c. AD.

<sup>100</sup> *CIL* XV, 2160.

<sup>101</sup> *AE* 1899, 142 & 208. In a few other cases, the name of the *sacerdos* has not survived: Ferrua 1959: nr. 60; *ICUR* 6, 16791a.

<sup>102</sup> The evidence is drawn from one inscription, *IGUR* 124 (app. 2g). Unfortunately only a fragment of the inscription survives. The rest of the inscription was reportedly still extant in the sixteenth century, but was so poorly legible and dubiously recorded that no part of it can be considered certain. While the precise meaning is obscure, the inscription is generally read as a thanks-offering to Helios Aniketos (Sol Invictus) by one Balbillus, who was "saved from the water", during the priesthood of Bassus. It is not clear whether this Balbillus - if that was indeed the dedicant's name - is the same as our *sacerdos Solis*. One wonders why the priest Balbillus would have erected this one inscription in Greek, while all his others are in Latin. Be that as it may, if the name was correctly read, and this Balbillus is the later *sacerdos* - or perhaps his (grand)father - then this Bassus, who one may assume is M. Aurelius Bassus, must have been priest before him. All this is highly speculative, however, the more so because the inscription was part of the old Mattei collection, which contained a number of Balbillus' inscriptions (*CIL* VI, 708, 1603, 2130, and 2269). It is quite possible that the poorly legible name of the dedicant of this Greek inscription was inferred by the transcribers from those other inscriptions.

<sup>103</sup> Rüpke (2005: 813) believes he may have been a *pontifex Solis*, rather than a *sacerdos*, given his high rank. It seems unlikely, however, that a *vir religiosissimus* (as the inscription describes him) or his client would treat the distinction between *sacerdos* and *pontifex* lightly.

possibly, others), perhaps the later second century (Bassus), certainly the early third century (Balbillus), and probably the mid third century (Aurelius Victor) - all prior to the reforms of Aurelian. This is in line with the literary and epigraphical evidence discussed earlier for the continuous presence of temples of Sol in and around Rome from at least the mid Republican period, and it gives context to the fairly regular occurrence of Sol on votive inscriptions from the first centuries of the imperial period.<sup>104</sup>

The suggestion that some of these *sacerdotes Solis* were actually priests in the cult of Mithras has been rightly rejected.<sup>105</sup> In none of these cases is there any intimation of a connection with the cult of Mithras, and it is rare for priests in that mystery cult to be titled *sacerdotes*. There are only scattered examples of *sacerdotes Solis Invicti Mithrae*, *sacerdotes Mithrae*, or unspecified *sacerdotes* from Mithraic contexts, and to the best of my knowledge no example of a person who styled himself specifically as *sacerdos Solis* in a Mithraeum, either in Rome or any other part of the Empire.<sup>106</sup> What we do have are examples of men who were both priest of Sol Invictus Mithras *and* priest of Sol, listing each priesthood separately.<sup>107</sup> Given the number of temples of Sol attested in and around Rome in the imperial era - in the Circus Maximus, on the Quirinal, in Trastevere, near Lavinium - the presence of *sacerdotes Solis* unconnected with Mithraism can garner no surprise. If anything, it is their low numbers that is surprising.

As already stated, it would appear that the social rank of these *sacerdotes* was not particularly high. Balbillus had an equestrian patron, Claudius Iulianus, which implies that he himself was of lower than equestrian rank. This is confirmed by the fact that a freedman sculptor considered him an *optimus amicus*.<sup>108</sup> Of Bassus, Tryfon and Sotericus Haruspex we know nothing, except that Sotericus Haruspex was not only a priest of Sol, but also a *sacerdos Iovis*

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<sup>104</sup> *CIL* VI, 398, 699-706, 715, 717, 720-, 728, 729, 739-40, 755, 2821=32551, 3720-1, 14098-9, 30941, 30975, 31139, 31171, 31181, *AE* 1984, 144

<sup>105</sup> Clauss: 1992: 17 n. 2.

<sup>106</sup> In those rare case invariably the name Mithras is included, leaving no ambiguity about the identity of the god. Cf. *AE* 1975, 54, *CIL* III, 3260, *CIL* V, 5893, *CIL* VI, 968, *CIL* XIV, 403.

<sup>107</sup> *CIL* VI, 2151.

<sup>108</sup> *CIL* VI, 1603, dating to AD 201. Iulianus was the *praefectus annonae* in AD 201 and soon after *praefectus* of Egypt. Cf. Brunt 1975: 147 nr. 77. Chausson (1995: 697-705) speculates that Balbillus arrived in Rome in AD 199 as part of the Emesan entourage of Julia Domna to whom he thinks Balbillus was related. It strikes me as unlikely that a relative of the empress would have an equestrian patron.

*Dolicheni* and *sacerdos Liberi Patris*.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand M. Aurelius Victor was a *vir clarissimus*, i.e. of senatorial rank. This is confirmed by his position of *praefectus feriarum Latinarum* - the only other one mentioned in the inscription - which was normally reserved for men of senatorial rank, although within a senatorial career it was of minor importance.

While most priests and dedicants related to Sol were not of the highest ranks of society, they are not without clout either. Eumolpus was an imperial slave with a notable degree of responsibility. His son-in-law Anicetus had money to spend as did the wine merchant Daphnicus, while Bassus was able to erect a fountain house *de suo* which implies certain means. All tout their benefactions or take notable pride in their priesthood of Sol, none more so than Balbillus. Besides the dedicatory inscription to his patron Iulianus,<sup>110</sup> he is responsible for two honorary statues for senior Vestal Virgins,<sup>111</sup> a dedication to Septimius Severus,<sup>112</sup> and the dedication of an eagle to Elagabal.<sup>113</sup> His freedman Eudemon erects a dedication in Balbillus' honour,<sup>114</sup> as does Eutyches, the imperial freedman and sculptor who addresses Balbillus as 'best friend'.<sup>115</sup> All these inscriptions make a point of including Balbillus' function of *sacerdos Solis*, but mention no other function or honorific. It would thus appear that being *sacerdos Solis* afforded him considerable social standing relative to his status.

With such sparse evidence we should be careful not to jump to conclusions, but there does also appear to be a gradual rise in the social standing of the *sacerdotes* and others who occupied themselves with Sol. In the first and early second century AD the status of those involved - a slave, his son-in-law, and a wine merchant - is quite low, which may be enough to explain why the *kalatores* were tasked with supervising the cult, rather than their upper class

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<sup>109</sup> At Osteria dell'Osa a certain Verus was also *sacerdos* of both Liber Pater and of Sol, but not Jupiter Dolichenus. Cf. *AE* 1899, 142.

<sup>110</sup> *CIL* VI, 1603 (app. 2c).

<sup>111</sup> *CIL* VI, 2129 (app. 3e), for Numisia Maximilla in AD 201, and 2130 (app. 2d) for Terentia Flavola in AD 215; the latter was also honored with a statue by the baker of the Vestal Virgins, Cn. Statilius Menander (*CIL* VI, 32413). Cf. *FS* 2548 and 3219.

<sup>112</sup> *CIL* VI, 1027 (app. 3d), dated to AD 199.

<sup>113</sup> *CIL* VI, 708 (app. 2a), undated. On Balbillus and Elagabal cf. *infra*.

<sup>114</sup> *CIL* VI, 2269=32456 (app. 2e).

<sup>115</sup> *CIL* VI, 2270 (app. 3g), dated to AD 199.

superiors. At first glance little appears to have changed during the next century. Around AD 200, Balbillus too ranks a freedman among his best friends and has an equestrian patron. Thus in formal terms his status is no higher than that of the *kalatores* whose role in the cult Anicetus had touted a century earlier. Balbillus does work very hard, however, to promote himself as a person and priest of some standing.<sup>116</sup> Particularly noteworthy are the two honorary statues he was allowed to erect for Vestal virgins. There is a palpable difference between Balbillus the *sacerdos Solis*, honouring Vestals with statues, and Anicetus the private citizen and son-in-law- of a slave, listing the *kalatores* on an inscription in gratitude for permissions granted. That difference may explain why a little later we find in Aurelius Victor a *sacerdos Solis* who is actually of senatorial rank, albeit one with no significant positions to his name. Whether he was still young or lacked the clout to acquire more prominent priesthoods we do not know.

Tempting though it is to see these increasingly prominent members of the “middle class” all involved in the same shrine of Sol somewhere in southern Trastevere, we must stress again that our knowledge of the provenance of the various inscriptions is too inadequate to allow us to affirm confidently that they belong together. What is clear, however, is that those involved with the cult of Sol in Rome emphasize their connections with core sectors of Roman religion, from the *kalatores pontificum et flaminum* to the senior Vestal Virgins. Despite their sometimes foreign names, both the cult itself and those active in it are firmly rooted in Roman society and religion.

What, then, should we make of the one dedication *Soli Alagabalo* by Balbillus (*CIL* VI, 708, app. 2a), and the one mention of him as *sacerdos Solis Elagabali* (*CIL* VI, 2269=32456, app. 2e)? Do these not prove that Balbillus was priest of the Emesan Elagabal rather than a Roman Sol? That is what Chausson and others have concluded, but in doing so they read far more into these two inscriptions than is warranted, overlooking in particular a key aspect of the latter inscription. It is important to note that Balbillus actually has the same title of *sacerdos Solis* here as he has on five other inscriptions, because the addition *Elagabali* was subsequently erased. This erasure is the key to understanding this episode in the history of his long priesthood. It demonstrates what common sense suggests, namely that in a city with its own long-established temples for Sol, a *sacerdos Solis* was not the same as a *sacerdos Solis Elagabali*; otherwise there

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<sup>116</sup> On the variants of his name, cf. *FS* nr. 2001.

would be no point to the erasure.<sup>117</sup>

The inscriptions of Balbillus dated between 199 and 215 confirm that he was simply priest to Sol, but any priest of Sol who flaunted his priesthood with as much energy as Balbillus, cannot have escaped the notice of the young priest-emperor Elagabalus after he arrived in Rome in AD 219. Whether because Balbillus sought imperial favour or because the new emperor wanted a Roman connection for his Emesan sky god, Balbillus briefly became priest of Sol Elagabal, either alongside the pre-existing priesthood of Sol or combined with it. After the emperor's death and his god's return to Emesa, Elagabalus was quite literally erased again from the Roman priesthood of Balbillus.

### ***Pontifices Solis***

After AD 274 we no longer hear of *sacerdotes* of Sol, but of *pontifices dei Solis* instead, in line with Aurelian's reforms of the priesthood. We know the names of fourteen pontifices: L. Caesonius Ovinus Manlius Rufinianus Bassus<sup>118</sup>, Virius Lupus<sup>119</sup> Iunius Gallienus<sup>120</sup>, L. Aelius Helvius Dionysius<sup>121</sup>, T. Flavius Postumius Titianus<sup>122</sup>, L. Crepereius Rogatus<sup>123</sup>, M. Iunius

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<sup>117</sup> Palmer (1981: 378) suggests that the erasure was an error of someone who thought *Elagabali* referred to the emperor rather than the god. Chausson (1995: 694-705) does not mention the erasure and makes these two mentions of Elagabal the cornerstone of his extensive section on Balbillus, in which he argues that Balbillus was probably from Emesa, possibly related to Julia Domna, and certainly priest of Elagabal in Rome (under imperial patronage) well before Elagabalus became emperor, having arrived in Rome from Emesa in AD 199. There is no actual evidence that Balbillus was a Syrian, from Emesa, and related to Julia Domna nor is it plausible that a relative of Julia Domna would have an equestrian patron (CIL VI, 1603; app. 2c). It also cannot be that in a city with established temples and *sacerdotes* of Sol both before and after the Severan period, Balbillus could simply call himself a *sacerdos Solis* if he actually meant a very specific and in many respects quite different god, Sol Elagabal.

<sup>118</sup> AE 1980, 215; FS 1034; late 220s - after AD 285.

<sup>119</sup> CIL VI, 31775=41235; FS 3541; 220s - after AD 280.

<sup>120</sup> CIL XIV, 2082; FS 2115; *fl.* 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD.

<sup>121</sup> CIL VI. 1673=31901a; FS 467; *fl.* mid 3<sup>rd</sup> c. - after AD 302.

<sup>122</sup> CIL VI, 1418; FS 1705; *fl.* mid 3<sup>rd</sup> c. - after AD 306.

<sup>123</sup> CIL VI, 1397; FS 1408; *fl.* Mid 3<sup>rd</sup> to early 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD.

Priscillianus Maximus<sup>124</sup>, Iunius Postumianus<sup>125</sup> Iulius Aurelianus<sup>126</sup>, C. Ceionius Rufus Volusianus<sup>127</sup>, Memmius Vitrasius Orfitus (father-in-law of Symmachus)<sup>128</sup>, Publius Vettius Agorius Praetextatus (one of the leading figures in the pagan Renaissance of the late 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD)<sup>129</sup>, C. Vettius Cossinius Rufinus<sup>130</sup>, and Q. Clodius Flavianus<sup>131</sup>.

It would be wrong to conclude that the higher number of post-Aurelian *pontifices* is indicative of an increased popularity of the cult of Sol. The most obvious change is in the social rank of Sol's priests, for every *pontifex Solis* was a prominent member of the Roman senatorial elite. As such they were far more likely to erect inscriptions than the earlier *sacerdotes* who, as we saw, were not in the same league. But the fact that Sol was now admitted to the circle of elite gods does not mean that the cult of Sol had become as preeminent as scholars have long thought. In almost all these senatorial inscriptions the priesthood of Sol is mentioned as merely one of a litany of priestly and political positions. Iulius Aurelianus (n. 122), for instance, was *XVvir sacris faciundis*, *pontifex dei Herculis*, *pontifex dei Solis*, governor of Bithynia, and governor of Campania, listed in that order. Likewise, although Praetextatus is Macrobius' main mouthpiece for the latter's exposition of an all-embracing solar pantheism<sup>132</sup>, this is not reflected in the inscriptions of Praetextatus himself.<sup>133</sup>

None of these senatorial inscriptions were erected in connection with the actual cult of Sol.<sup>134</sup> Titianus did build a temple for Sol between AD 286 and 293 in Como at the command of

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<sup>124</sup> AE 1895, 119; *FS* 2121; *fl.* end of 3<sup>rd</sup> and beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD.

<sup>125</sup> CIL VI, 2151; *FS* 2120; *fl.* Ca. AD 325-250.

<sup>126</sup> AE 1969/70, 116; *FS* 1999; *fl.* 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD..

<sup>127</sup> CIL VI, 846; *FS* 1130; *fl.* 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD.

<sup>128</sup> CIL VI, 1739-1742; *FS* 2433; AD 320s - ca. AD 369.

<sup>129</sup> CIL VI, 1778-9; *FS* 3468; ca. AD 320-384.

<sup>130</sup> CIL VI, 32040 (?), CIL X, 5061; *FS* 3470; *fl.* AD 280s - after AD 316.

<sup>131</sup> CIL VI, 501=30779e; *FS* 1259; the inscription is dated to AD 383.

<sup>132</sup> *Macr. Sat.* 1,17,1.

<sup>133</sup> This is especially obvious in the lengthy funerary inscription, *CIL* 1779.

<sup>134</sup> The incomplete inscription of Iunius Gallienus is a possible exception.

the emperors,<sup>135</sup> and Orfitis built a temple for Apollo<sup>136</sup>, but these activities are mentioned in inscriptions which omit their pontificates of Sol. In fact, what emerges clearly is that while the pontificate was a prestigious priesthood reserved for men of the highest rank in Rome, it was by no means the most prestigious priesthood a senator could hold; it was at best on par with various other religious positions.

Although the priesthood of Sol was now a privilege of the elite, his cult did not wholly shed its lower class connections. The distribution of low-cost fiscal wine to the poor was closely associated with Aurelian's lavish temple for the sun god.

### Conclusions

The evidence for the four temples of Sol and their priests in Rome is generally meagre, but it allows us to trace the cult of Sol in the city continuously from the Republic (Quirinal, Circus Maximus) through the first centuries of Empire (Quirinal, Circus Maximus, Trastevere) to Aurelian (Circus Maximus, Campus Martius, possibly Trastevere) and beyond. That this cult was public and official throughout is clearly indicated by the public sacrifices for Sol recorded in the *fasti*, the involvement of the *kalatores* at the sanctuary in Trastevere, and the college of *pontifices* instituted by Aurelian. In short, the evidence reviewed here fully supports the emerging consensus that Sol was a Roman god with deep roots and a modest, continuous presence in the city's religious landscape and calendar.

Until well into the second century AD the social status of those involved with the cult was fairly low, and this may explain in part, at least, why the cult of Sol is poorly represented in our ancient sources. By the time Aurelius Victor became *sacerdos Solis* in the third century AD this had begun to change, and that change was formalized with Aurelian's reforms in 274; the new pontificate of Sol was strictly reserved for men of senatorial rank. While this elevated the status of the cult of Sol, there is nothing to suggest that it marked the introduction of some kind of solar heno- or monotheism. On the contrary, it is increasingly accepted that Aurelian was quite conservative in his religion, and that his reforms were consciously modelled to echo religious reforms of Augustus. Closer analysis of Aurelian's religious predisposition falls beyond the

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<sup>135</sup> *AE* 1919, 52.

<sup>136</sup> *CIL* VI, 45.

scope of this article, but the date of his solar games is suggestive, following on the heels of the October Horse (Oct. 15) and coinciding with the Armilustrum (Oct. 19), two ancient Roman festivals celebrating the traditional end of the fighting season.<sup>137</sup> If Aurelian's reforms were indeed designed to echo those of Augustus, they may, indirectly at least, shed further light on the hybrid nature of Augustus' Apollo, whose strong solar connotations are undeniable.<sup>138</sup>

What little we know about the architecture of Sol's four temples in Rome - and it must be stressed that it really is very little - has been so well discussed by others that there was no need to repeat their findings in detail.<sup>139</sup> One rather striking new element to emerge from our discussion, however, is the similarity between the *porticus Solis* in Trastevere and Aurelian's lavish temple. In both cases the design appears to follow the same, unique pattern of two connected porticoes,<sup>140</sup> that contained no other structures, except the bowers or gazebos mentioned by Anicetus and Daphnicus. The shrine in Trastevere thus offers the closest parallel for the otherwise unique plan of Aurelian's temple for Sol. Given how little we know of the actual appearance of both temples, it may be that they differed far more from each other than this common emphasis on porticoes perhaps implies, but the idiosyncrasy of both designs is striking. It would certainly suit Aurelian's religious conservatism if he modelled his temple for Sol on one of the venerable, pre-existing ones in Rome.

The design itself, with a *prima* and a *secunda* portico of Sol can be understood as a response to the need for an unroofed sanctuary for Sol: the first portico may have been the *templum*, the open, sacred space common to most Roman sanctuaries, while the second portico could be seen as the open-air alternative to the *aedes*, the actual temple building one would normally expect to encounter, housing the cult statue.

Whether the shrine on the Quirinal conformed to the same model we simply do not know, but as we saw, that shrine may well have been open to the sky as well - why else refer to it as a *pulvinar* - and yet was quite old in Quintilian's day, indicating a significant degree of

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<sup>137</sup> Scullard 1981: 193-195.

<sup>138</sup> Hijmans 2004; Hijmans 2006.

<sup>139</sup> *Supra*, nn. 23, 24, 27, 28, and 30.

<sup>140</sup> The fact that Anicetus restored the *first (prima)* portico must surely imply that there was at the very least one other.



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## Appendix: the inscriptions

The appendix provides the full text, a translation, and short comments on inscriptions relevant to the sanctuary of Sol in Trastevere, discussed in the article. It is divided into three parts. The first contains the inscriptions found in the *Vigna Bonelli*; the second is a selection of relevant inscriptions from the Mattei gardens, and the third concerns inscriptions found elsewhere or of unknown provenance. All translations are my own, except those from the Palmyrene, where I have based myself on published translations. I have made a conscious effort to adhere to the word order in the inscription. Even though this often results in awkward English, it gives a better sense of the flavour and emphasis of the inscription.<sup>142</sup>

### 1. Inscriptions from the Vigna Bonelli

a. CIL VI, 50 = IGUR 117 = Chausson p. 668, inscr. D

Pro salute Imp(eratoris) [Caesaris Traiani Augusti] / C(aius) Licinius N[3 et Heliodorus] /  
Palmyrenus [aedem Belo Iaribolo Malachbelo] / constitu[erunt 3] // 'Ηλιόδωρος • ὁ

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<sup>142</sup> I am indebted to O. van Nijf and C. Mackay for their help with questions that arose as I prepared the appendix. Remaining errors are, of course, my own.

[Παλμυρηνὸς καὶ Γ(άιος) Λικίνιος Ν— —] / τὸν ναὸν • Βή[λω] Ἰαριβώλω  
Μαλαχβήλω θεοῖς] / Παλμυρην[οῖς ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ἀνέθηκαν].

For the well-being of the Emperor Caesar Trajan Augustus, Gaius Licinius  
[*lacuna*] and Heliodorus of Palmyra founded this temple for Bel, Iarhibol, and  
Malakbel.

Greek: Heliodorus of Palmyra and Gaius Licinius [*lacuna*] founded this temple  
for the gods Bel, Iarhibol, and Malakbel with their own means.

A bilingual dedication of a temple to Bel, Iarhibol, and Malakbel by the Palmyrene Heliodorus  
and a certain Gaius Licinius. The Latin states that it is for the well-being of the emperor,  
presumably Trajan, if the next inscription may be twinned with this one.

b. CIL VI, 51 = IGUR 118 = Chausson p. 668, inscr. E.

[Pro salute Imp(eratoris) Caesaris Traiani Augusti] / [C(aius) Licinius N 3 et Heliodorus  
Palmyrenus] / [ae]dem Belo Iar[ibolo Malachbelo] // [Ἡ]λιόδω[ρος] / [ὁ  
Παλμυρην]ὸς καὶ Γά(ιος) Λικίνιος [Ν— — Βήλω] / [Ἰαριβώλω] Μαλαχβήλω  
θε[οῖς Παλμυρηνοῖς] / L(ucio) Lamia [Sex(to) Carminio co(n)ss(ulibus)].

Latin: For the well-being of the Emperor Caesar Trajan Augustus, Gaius Licinius ? and  
Heliodorus of Palmyra <founded> this temple for Bel, Iarhibol, and Malakbel.

Greek: Heliodorus of Palmyra and Gaius Licinius [*lacuna*] founded this temple for the  
Palmyrene gods Bel, Iarhibol, and Malakbel.

Latin: during the consulships of Lucius Lamia and Sextus Carminius.

Dated to AD 116. The provenance of this bilingual inscription is unknown, but it is closely  
similar to the previous so that it is assumed to be from the *vigna Bonelli* as well.

c. CIL VI 52 = Chausson p. 665, inscr. B

C(aius) Iulius Anicetus / ex imperio Solis / rogat ne quis velit / parietes aut triclias /  
inscribere aut / scariphare // P(ublius) Scantius Suru[s] / sibi et cognatis s[uis] /  
D(ecimus) Folius Succe[ssus].

Gaius Iulius Anicetus asks, on the command of Sol, that nobody should write on, or sully,  
the walls or bowers.

Reverse: Publius Scantius Surus, for himself and his relatives; Decimus Folius Successus.

A request by Gaius Iulius Anicetus, at the behest of Sol, to refrain from defacing the walls of the  
portico of Sol with graffiti. The inscription on the reverse is unrelated.

d. CIL VI, 2185 = 31034 = Chausson p. 664, inscr. A.<sup>143</sup>

[--- C(aius)] Iulius / [--- A]nicetus / [--- vo]lto suscepto / [---] primam porticum / [---  
S]olis cum marmoribus / [---] opere novo ampliato / [---]ntis inchoatis sua / [pecuni]a a  
solo restituit / [perm]issu ka[l]atorum pontificum et / [fl]aminum / [P(ubli) C]orneli  
Ialissi / [M(arci) A]tili Eutychi / [D(ecimi)] Valeri Alexandri / [A(uli) L]appi Thalli /  
[P(ubli) D]uceni Euprepes / [T(iti) Tet]tieni [Felicis] / [P(ubli) Calvisi] Trophimi /  
[L(uci) Ceioni H]esperis / [L(uci) Corneli] Heli / [L(uci) Corneli] Blasti / [C(ai) Asini  
H]ieracis / [L(uci) Ciarti Do]ryphori / [M(arci) Rutili A]dmeti / [3] Amurcan // M(arci)  
Anni [3]fidi / Q(uinti) Pomponi Xu[t]hi / [L(uci)] Iavoleni Phoebi / Ser(vi) Iuli Paederotis  
/ L(uci) Calventi Eunomi / Ap(pi) Anni Falerni / M(arci) Iuni Epaphroditi / M(arci) Licini  
Comici / Ti(beri) Cla(udi) Diotimi / A(uli) Corneli Herae / Sex(ti) Atti Iusti / M(arci)  
Asini Silvestri / L(uci) Baebi Polybi // [dedi]cavit VIII K(alendas) Iunias / [C(aio) Iulio  
Urso S]erviano II L(ucio) Licinio Sura II c[o]n(s)ulibus).

Gaius Iulius [—?] Anicetus, [—?] having taken a vow, restored from the ground up, with  
his own money [—] the first portico [—] of Sol with marble [—] having been enlarged  
with new work [—] with permission of the *kalatores* of the pontiffs and flamens  
(list of names).

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<sup>143</sup> I would like to thank my colleague Dr. Chris Mackay for his excellent suggestions for the translation and interpretation of this inscription.

He dedicated this on the ninth day before the kalends of June during the second consulships of Gaius Iulius Ursus Servianus and Lucius Licinius Sura.

Dated to May 24<sup>th</sup>, 102. This inscription was discovered in two parts, the bottom half in 1859, the upper part in 1885. The upper part of the inscription is damaged, and it is difficult to say how many letters are missing at the beginning of each line (see sketch in Borsari 1887, 94). Borsari (*ibid.* 95) tentatively suggests *et aram* or *cellam* at the beginning of line 5 - *aedem* would also be a possibility - and *pavime]ntis* at line 7.<sup>144</sup>

e. IGUR 120 = Chausson p. 669, inscr. F

(Palmyrene and Greek; Palmyrene transcription after Chausson, Latin translation of the Palmyrene by Chabot).

BL WYRHBWL W 'GLBWL WL 'BDW MOY BRML' LSMS W S 'DW BR TYM'  
LSMSY WQRBW

“τοῖς *Bêl, Iarhibôl et Aglibôl fecerunt Maqqai, filius Malê, (filii) Lišam]š, et So'adu, filius Taimê, (filii) Lišamšai, et obtulerunt.*”

θεοῖς πατρώοις Βήλῳ Ἰαριβώ[λωι καὶ Ἀγλιβώλωι — — — — — ]  
/ ἀνέθηκαν Μακκαῖος Μαλή τ[οῦ Λισάμσου καὶ Σόαδος Θαίμου τοῦ  
Λισαμσαίου]

Palmyrene: For Bel, Iarhibol and Aglibol, Maqqai, son of Male son of Lishams and So'adu, son of Taime son of Lishamshai built and dedicated <this>.

To the ancestral gods Bel, Iarhibol and Aglibol, [*lacuna*] Makkaios <son of> Male, son of Lisams and Soados, son of Thaimos son of Lisamsaios dedicated this.

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<sup>144</sup> Palmer also lists CIL VI, 817=30834: *JC[3] / [te]mpl[um 3 ma]rmaribus [3] / [3]um port[icum 3 s]caenico [3] / [3 crepi]dinem ext[3]a fecit / [3] Q(uinto) Aquilio [3]*. According to him this is “paired” with the inscription of Anicetus. The evidence for this is not clear, and this inscription is 15 years later than Anicetus', assuming that the *Q(uinto) Aquilio* [at the end of the inscription is a consular dating beginning with Quintus Aquilius Niger, who was consul in AD 117 (and who is the only Aquilius on the consular list).

A Palmyrene and Greek inscription commemorating a donation for Bel, Iarhibol and Aglibol, gods of their fatherland, by Maqqai and So'adu.

f. IGUR 122 = Chausson p. 670. inscr. G

ὑπὲρ • τῆς • σωτηρίας / Αὐτοκράτορος / Καίσαρος • Τραϊανοῦ / Ἰαδριανοῦ • /  
Σεβαστοῦ / Λούκιος • Λικίνιος / Ἑρμίας / Ἰαρη • θεῶ • πατρῶν / ἐπηκόων •  
ἀνέθηκεν / ἔτους • εμ • μηνὸς / Ξανδικοῦ η.

For the well-being of the Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Augustus, Lucius Licinius Hermias dedicated this to the ancestral, receptive<sup>145</sup> god Ares, in the xxxx year on the fifth day of the month Xandikos.

The inscription is dated according to the Seleucid calendar to AD 134.

g. IGUR 123 = Chausson p. 671, inscr. H

[ὑπὲρ τῆς σωτηρίας Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος Τίτου Αἰλίου Ἰαδριανοῦ  
Ἰαντωνεῖνου] / [Σεβαστοῦ Εὐσεβοῦς σὺν παντὶ κόσμῳ Κόϊντος Ἰούλιος • [—  
— — ἀνέθηκεν].

For the well-being of the Emperor Caesar Titus Aelius Hadrian Antoninus Augustus Pius, with the whole Cosmos, Quintus Julius [*lacuna*].

A very fragmentary inscription on the central part of an entablature, probably dating to the reign of Antoninus Pius. Chausson, citing Moretti, states that Quintus Iulius is “probably Palmyrene” and states that the zeta instead of sigma in κόσμῳ also points to a Syrian background.

h. CIL VI, 642

[Imp(eratore) Ne]rva Caesa[re Au]/[gusto III] L(ucio) Vergin[io Ru]/[fo I]II  
co(n)s(ulibus) IX K[al(endas) 3] / [Silvano] sancto d[---(?)] / [3]us Felix e[t 3] / [3]s Paris

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<sup>145</sup> “He who hears”.

imm[unes] / [c]ollegi idem [cu]/[rat]ores aedic[ulam] / [3] a solo ampli[ficaverunt (?) 3] /  
[3]o qui sunt cult[o]/[res] Silvani d[---(?)].

During the third consulships of the Emperor Nerva Caesar Augustus and Verginius Rufus, on the ninth day before the Kalends of [lacuna], Felix and [lacuna] Paris, *immunes* of the *collegium* and also <its> *curatores* expanded this *aedicula* from the ground up for Holy Silvanus [lacuna] who are adherents of Silvanus [lacuna].

This inscription is dated to AD 97 and mentions a certain Felix and Paris, who refurbished or enlarged an *aedicula* dedicated to Silvanus, being *curatores* (members of the board) of the association (presumably responsible for the cult), in which they enjoyed *immunitas*, i.e. were exempt from certain obligations (not specified). The *D* after Silvanus is sometimes read as *Dendrophoro/i*.

## 2. Inscriptions of other or unknown provenance, formerly in the Mattei collection.

a. CIL VI, 708 = Chausson p. 679, inscr. Q.

Aquila / Soli / Alagabalo / Iulius Balbillus.

An eagle for Sol Elagabalus, <dedicated by> Iulius Balbillus.

Inscription (lost) on a small base which presumably supported the eagle which Iulius Balbillus dedicated to Sol Elagabal. Its transmission, in Renaissance manuscripts, is not without problems. The nominative case for *Aquila* is puzzling and the spelling of *Alagabalo* is so uncommon that it is suspect, the more so because the manuscripts report the same spelling, incorrectly, for a second inscription connected with Balbillus (below, 2j). In the latter case the inscription itself was rediscovered in the 1890s, and the correct reading proved to be simply *Elagabalo*.

b. CIL VI, 710 = Chausson p. 675, inscr. N

Soli Sanctissimo sacrum / Ti(berius) Claudius Felix et / Claudia Helpis et / Ti(berius)  
Claudius Alypus fil(ius) eorum / votum solverunt liben(te)s merito / Calbienses de  
coh(orte) III // L(ucius) Umbricius / Priscus / libens animo / d(onum) d(edit). // 'LT' DH

LMLKBL WL'LHY TDMR / QRB TBRYs QLWDYS PLQS / WTDmRY' L'LHYHN  
SLM

Sacred to most holy Sol. Tiberius Claudius Felix and Claudia Helpis and their son Tiberius Claudius Alypus fulfilled their vow willingly and deservedly, being inhabitants of the third courtyard of the *horrea* (?) of Galba.<sup>146</sup>

*Palmyrene inscription:* This is the altar that Tiberius Claudius Felix and the Palmyrenes have offered to Malakbel and to the gods of Palmyra. To their gods: peace!<sup>147</sup>

A magnificent votive altar dating to the late first century AD, with two inscriptions and relief-decoration on four sides. Side A: frontal bust of Sol, radiate nimbus (7 rays), fairly long curly hair, chlamys, above an eagle with outstretched wings; Latin inscription. Side B: Sol (?), bare-headed, dressed in chlamys, tunica and trousers, whip in his right hand, stepping into a chariot drawn by griffins; behind him, a winged Victory holding a crown above his head; Palmyrene inscription: Side C: a cypress, with a ribbon at the top and a small boy carrying a sheep on his shoulders emerging from the branches just to the right of the top. Side D. Saturn (?), bearded, capite velato, holding a harpé in his right hand.

c. CIL VI, 1603 = Chausson p. 679, inscr. S.

Cl(audio) Iuliano p(erfectissimo) v(iro) / praef(ecto) annon(ae) / Ti(berius) Iul(ius)  
Balbillus / s(acerdos) Sol(is) ded(icavit) XIII Kal(endas) / Feb(ruarias) L(ucio) Annio  
Fabian[o] / M(arco) Noni[o] Mucian[o] c[o(n)]s(ulibus),

To Claudius Iulianus, most perfect man,<sup>148</sup> prefect of the grain supply, Tiberius Iulius Balbillus, priest of Sol, dedicated this on the 13<sup>th</sup> day before the Kalends of February when Lucius Annius Fabianus and Marcus Nonius Mucianus were consuls.

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<sup>146</sup> The interpretation of *Calbienses de cohorte III* has not been settled.

<sup>147</sup> Translation based on the French translation in Chausson (1995, 675).

<sup>148</sup> I.e. of the equestrian order.

Inscription on a small marble base, dated to January 20<sup>th</sup>, 201. The abbreviations in line 4 have also been read as *s(acra) Sol(e) ded(icata)*, but this reading is unlikely given other inscriptions on which Balbillus identifies himself as *sacerdos Solis*.<sup>149</sup> For Ti(berius) one can also read Ti(tus).

d. CIL VI, 2130 = Chausson p. 680, inscr. T.

Terentiae Fla/volae v(irgini) V(estali) ma/ximae Aurel(ius) / Iulius Balbil/lus sac(erdos)  
Sol(is) ob / plura eius in se merita // D(e)d(icata) / pr(idie) Non(as) April(es) / Laeto II et  
Ceriale / co(n)s(ulibus).

For Terentia Flavola, senior Vestal Virgin, Aurelius Iulius Balbillus, priest of Sol, <set this up> in return for her many good deeds towards him.

Dedicated the day preceding the Nones of April during the consulships of Laetus (second) and Cerialis.

Inscription on a marble base dating to AD 215. For the first line of the second part of the inscription, which is on the left side of the base, Chausson reads *D(onum) D(edit)* rather than *D(e)d(icata)*, but in view of the wording of the closely similar inscription *CIL VI, 2129* below (3j), *dedicata* is preferable.

e. CIL VI, 2269 = 32456 = Chausson p. 679, inscr. R.

Ti(berio) Iulio Balbillo / s(acerdoti) Sol(is) [[Elagabali]] / Eudemon lib(ertus) / patrono  
optimo.

The freedman Eudemon <set this up> for Tiberius Iulius Balbillus, priest of Sol [Elagabal *erased*], best patron.

A small, square marble base, probably erected during the reign of Heliogabalus (218-222), by the freedman Eudemon in honour of his patron Tiberius Iulius Balbillus, here identified as priest of Sol Elagabal, although *Elagabali* was later erased. Jucundus saw the base in the Mattei gardens

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<sup>149</sup> On Claudius Iulianus, cf. Sijpestijn 1990, 124-5.

in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. It subsequently disappeared and the first publication in the CIL was based on fifteenth and sixteenth century reports. Most of these misspelled *Elagabali* as *Alagabali* (the spelling initially accepted by the CIL) and did not mention that the name was later erased. Near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the inscription was rediscovered in the palazzo Rossi-Ferraioli on the piazza d'Aracoeli during the restoration of a wall in which the (damaged) inscription had been inserted as a building block. Gatti studied the inscription and reported the correct spelling and the erasure of *Elagabali*.<sup>150</sup> Chausson overlooked Gatti's corrections and bases a substantial part of his argument concerning the heritage of Balbillus on the assumption that *Alagabali* is the correct reading.<sup>151</sup>

f. CIL VI, 3719 = 310331; not in Chausson

Eumolpus Caesaris / a supellectile domus / auriae et Claudia Pallas f(ilia) / Soli et Lunae donum posuerunt.

Eumolpus, <slave of> Caesar responsible for furnishings of the Domus Aurea, and his daughter Claudia Pallas set up this gift for Sol and Luna.

A marble altar erected in honour of Sol and Luna. Chausson does not include this altar in his list, but Palmer does as it certainly formed part of the Mattei collection.<sup>152</sup>

g. (IGUR 124 = Chausson p. 678, inscr. P).

Ἡλίῳ ἀνικῆτῳ / Βάβιλλος ἡουοκάτος / ἐξ ὑδάτων σωθεὶς / ὑδατα ἦγενκα  
λέοντι / ἐπὶ Βάσσου ἱερέως

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<sup>150</sup> NSc 1897, 418.

<sup>151</sup> Citing CIL VI, 708 (2f in our list) and this inscription, Chausson (1995, 678-82) suggests that the spelling *Alagabal* is closer to the Syriac pronunciation than *Elagabal*, and that Balbillus' preference for this spelling shows that he must have been Syrian himself. Gatti has no doubts, however, about the reading *Elagabali*, stating that despite the erasure it was still quite clear. This is in line with normal practise, for the norm, from the time of Antoninus Pius onwards was (H)Elagabalus or the similarly pronounced Aelagabalus, both in private and imperial use, by Syrians and non-Syrians alike. If the reported spelling *Alagabalo* on the lost inscription CIL 708 is correct, which is by no means certain, one could argue that Balbillus' uncommon spelling of the god's name betrays his unfamiliarity with the new cult rather than intimate knowledge.

<sup>152</sup> Bergmann 1998, 195.

For Helios Aniketos, Balbillus *evocatus*, saved from the water, brought water to the lion, during the priesthood of Bassus.

This inscription, on a small base in the Mattei gardens, is now lost, although a fragment is reportedly preserved in the pavement of the S. Crisogono,<sup>153</sup> and the manuscript copies we have of it differ substantially from each other. It is generally read as a thanks-offering of Balbillus to Helios Aniketos (Sol Invictus) who was “saved from the water” and who made an offering of water “to the lion” during the priesthood of Bassus. Whether this is correct is difficult to say because the actual text is not clear. Chausson offers two quite distinct readings.

### 3. Other cited inscriptions

a. CIL VI, 709 = Chausson p. 667, inscr. C

] / C(aius) Iulius Anicetus / aram sacratam Soli Divino / voto suscepto animo libens  
d(onum) d(edit).

Gaius Iulius Anicetus, having made a vow, willingly gave the altar dedicated to Sol Divinus as a gift.

An inscription now incorporated in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century portico of the S. Cecilia in Trastevere. It commemorates the offering of an altar to Sol Divinus by Iulius Anicetus. This is most likely the same Anicetus of whom inscriptions were found in the *vigna Bonelli* (CIL VI, 52 and 2185 - 1c-d).

b. CIL VI, 712 = Chausson p. 666, inscr. *Bbis* = C2a.4.

D[eo] / Soli Vi[ctori] / Q(uintus) Octavius Daphnicu[s] / negotia(n)s vinarius a sei[3] /  
triciam fec(it) a solo inpe[sa] / sua permissu kalator(um) pon[tif(icum)] / et flaminum cui  
immunitas / data est ab eis sacrum faciend[i].

For the god Sol Victor, Quintus Octavius Daphnicus, wine merchant out of [*lacuna*] built

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<sup>153</sup> ICUR 1, 218. The fragment contains the letters that are not underlined.

a bower from the ground up at his own expense, with permission of the *kalatores* of the pontiffs and flamens, by whom he was granted immunity with regards to bringing sacrifice.

This votive altar, found "fuori posto" in the vigna Velli, was erected by Quintus Octavius Daphnicus to commemorate that he had built a *triclina* for Sol Victor with permission of the *kalatores*. The *triclina* is interpreted as a gazebo (*trichila*) by Palmer, but is taken to be short for *triclinium* (dining room) by Chausson. The mention of the *triclina* recalls the *triclinae* of CIL VI, 52 (1c) while the reference to the *kalatores* is closely similar to CIL VI 2185/31034 (1d) which makes it all but certain that Daphnicus' building activities coincided with those of Anicetus. This is in line with the most likely date for the inscription. A range of readings has been proposed for *a sei*[3]; none are convincing. The exact meaning of *immunitas sacrum faciendi* is not entirely clear, but the most likely interpretation seems to be that this donation absolved Daphnicus of the duty to bring sacrifice (at his own expense) to Sol.

c. CIL VI, 728 = Chausson p. 684, inscr. *Vquater*.

Soli Invicto / sacrum / Cornelius Maximus / (centurio) coh(ortis) X pr(aetoriae) ex voto.

Sacred to Sol Invictus. Cornelius Maximus, centurion of the tenth cohort of the praetorians, set this up in accordance with his vow.

This inscription, not included by Palmer, is already mentioned in the collection of inscriptions which Cola di Rienzo compiled between 1344 and 1347. He indicates that it was found on the Quirinal near the church of S. Susanna.<sup>154</sup>

d. CIL VI, 1027 = Chausson p. 683, inscr. *V*.

Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) L(ucio) Septimio / Severo Pio Invic(to) / Aug(usto) Iul(ius)  
Balbillus / sac(erdos) Sol(is) ded(icata) prid(ie) / Non(as) Ap(riles) Anullino II / et  
Frontone co(n)s(ulibus).

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<sup>154</sup> Lanciani 1902, 39.

In honour of the emperor Caesar Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Invictus Augustus, Iulius Balbillus <set this up>; dedicated on the day before the Nones of April during the consulships of Anullinus (second) and Fronto.

A small base with an inscription dated to AD 199. It stood in the house of the Porcari family, but was lost when the collection was dispersed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century after the death of Francesco Porcari.<sup>155</sup>

e. CIL VI, 2129 = Chausson p. 683, inscr. U.

Numisiae Ma/ximillae v(irgini) V(estali) / max(imae) Ti(berius) Iul(ius) Bal/billus  
s(acerdos) Solis / ded(icata) Idib(us) Ian(uariis) / L(ucio) Annio Fabiano / M(arco) Nonio  
Muciano co(n)s(ulibus).

For Numisia Maximilla, senior Vestal Virgin, Tiberius Iulius Balbillus, priest of Sol, <set this up>; dedicated on the Ides of January during the consulships of Lucius Annius Fabianus and Marcus Nonius Mucianus..

This inscription, dated to AD 201, is closely similar to CIL 2130 (appendix 2d) of AD 215. However, it stood in the house of the Porcari rather than in the garden of the Mattei.

f. CIL VI, 2186

]MA[3 per]/[missu] kalatorum [pontifi]/[cum et] flaminum a q[uibus immuni]/[tas ei]  
data est sac[rum faciendi] / dedicavit / A(ulo) Cornelio Palma [II] Q(uinto) [Baebio Tullo  
co(n)s(ulibus)]

[—] with permission of the kalatores of the pontiffs and flamens, by whom he was granted immunity with regards to bringing sacrifice, he dedicated this, during the consulships of Aulus Cornelius Palma (second) and Quintus Baebius Tullus.

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<sup>155</sup> Lanciani 1902, 116

A fragmentary dedicatory inscription from AD 109. To which deity it was dedicated is unknown, but the text can plausibly be restored as referring to the permission of the *kalatores* for sacred activities in terms similar to CIL VI, 31034 (app. 1d) and 712 (app. 3b).

g. CIL VI, 2270 = Chausson p. 682 *Tbis*.

Ti(berio) Iul(io) Balbillo sac(erdoti) Solis / Eutyches Augg(ustorum) lib(ertus)  
of(f)ici/nator a status amico / optimo dedic(ata) Kal(endis) Ian(uariis) / P(ublio) Cornelio  
Anullino II / et M(arco) Aufidio Frontone co(n)s(ulibus).

For Tiberius Iulius Balbillus, priest of Sol, Eutyches, imperial freedman and dealer in statues, <set this up> for his best friend. Dedicated on the Kalends of January during the consulships of Publius Cornelius Anullinus (second) and Marcus Aufidius Fronto.

Dated to AD 199.

h. CIL VI, 40684

[[[Iuliae Mamaeae sanctissimae(?) Augustae matri]]] Aug(usti) n(ostri) et castrorum /  
[3]us ac superficiis permissu kalatorum pontificum / [et flaminum 3 et M]aximo  
co(n)s(ulibus) a solo coeptum exornavit dedicavitque cum / [3]ta coniuge sua itemque  
fili(i)s tunc constituerat

For the most holy Iulia Mamaea, mother of our emperor and the barracks [*lacuna*] with permission of the *kalatores* of the pontiffs and flamens, [*lacuna*] during the consulships of ? and Maximus, beginning from the ground up he embellished and dedicated with [*lacuna*] with his wife and children he had then decided.

An inscription from AD 227 or 232, the left half of which is lost. It commemorates refurbishment activities carried out with the permission of the *kalatores*. The inscription was found in the general area of the Vigna Bonelli.

