

**THE MULTICULTURAL NATURE OF PORTS IN ANCIENT  
MEDITERRANEAN: CULTURAL EXCHANGE, ECONOMIC INTERACTION  
AND REPRESENTATION OF IDENTITY OF AFRICANS IN OSTIA**

**LA NATURALEZA MULTICULTURAL DE LOS PUERTOS DEL  
MEDITERRÁNEO ANTIGUO: INTERCAMBIO CULTURAL, INTERACCIÓN  
ECONÓMICA Y REPRESENTACIÓN DE LA IDENTIDAD DE LOS  
AFRICANOS EN OSTIA**

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**ABSTRACT:**

The consolidation of the Roman Empire in the vast Mediterranean area produced a series of changes in the role that each area had, giving rise to new realities that materialized in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Ostia was the main provider of goods to Rome and its strategic position between Tiber River and the sea would have made Ostia the most propitious place for the arrival of noteworthy immigration. It is possible to attest an important African community that seems to have acquired a prevalent role in Ostian economy. This paper will try to analyse the place of these immigrants in Ostian society and to understand their decisions, motivations and the manifestations of their identity, being foreigners in Ostia or natives in their hometowns, both settlements under Roman rule. Different types of cultural material will be analyzed where self-representation of identity can be potentially extracted: epigraphy, the Square of the Guilds and the African background.

**RESUMEN:**

La consolidación del imperio romano en las vastas áreas mediterráneas produjo una serie de cambios en el papel que cada zona tenía, dando lugar a nuevas realidades que se materializaron en el siglo II y III d.c. Ostia fue el principal proveedor de bienes a Roma y su posición estratégica entre el río Tíber y el mar habría hecho de Ostia el lugar más propicio para la llegada de una notable inmigración. Es posible atestiguar a una importante comunidad africana que parece haber adquirido un papel predominante en la economía de Ostia. Este trabajo tratará de analizar el lugar de estos inmigrantes en la sociedad ostiense y entender sus decisiones, motivaciones y manifestaciones de identidad, siendo extranjeros en Ostia o nativos en sus ciudades natales, ambos asentamientos bajo el dominio romano. Se analizarán diferentes tipos de cultura material donde la autorepresentación de la identidad puede ser potencialmente extraída: epigrafía, la Plaza de las Corporaciones y la realidad de las zonas de origen africanas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Antigua, Roma, Ostia, Africanos, identidad, multiculturalidad

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KEY-WORDS: Ancient, Rome, Ostia, Africans, identity, multiculturalism

## I. Introduction

Nowadays the multicultural nature of our cities is a topic that promotes great reflexion. Aspects such as cultural coexistence, adaptation and adoption of habits have a fundamental place when a city characterized by its diversity is the main centre of interest. Rome became the metropolis of the Empire in a quick historical process and, as such, developed a multi-ethnic and multicultural physiognomy in which the extraordinary presence of foreigners was characterized by its diversity and quantity. Roman influence was present in large areas of the Mediterranean, exporting economic, political, social and cultural practices, fomenting the exchange of these practices on an unprecedented scale. Movement of people is taken for granted in this context, especially in the first three hundred years of the Empire, from August to the end of the Severian Dynasty<sup>2</sup>.

Ostia<sup>3</sup> would have been strongly affected by these changes occurring especially in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD. Its role as main provider of goods to Rome, the strategic position between Tiber River and the sea, would have made Ostia the most opportune place for the arrival of immigrants. Due of being Rome's main harbour, Ostia was strongly linked to the dimension and redistributive nature of the imperial city<sup>4</sup>. Even after the construction of Claudius' and Trajan's new harbours in the first and beginning of the second centuries<sup>5</sup>, Ostia experienced magnificent reconstruction and continued to have a crucial role in supplying goods to Rome, which among others included the *annona*<sup>6</sup>. Due to the exceptional nature of such a development, this case study is considered an exception, rather than a rule.

As was characteristic of other important port cities<sup>7</sup> such as Alexandria and Puteoli, the presence of foreigners in Ostia was abundant<sup>8</sup>. Many cosmopolitan societies manifest an interesting phenomena related to ethnicity and identity, sense of belonging and necessity to reaffirm a group identity, distinct from others. This situation of "confused" identity has, as a consequence, the real need to redefine the place individuals have within a society. A place that must be carefully negotiated in order to establish rights and privileges, or the lack of them.

African foreigners in Ostia have been chosen as they seem to have acquired a prevalent role in Ostian economy in the second and third centuries AD<sup>9</sup>. The predominance of references to African cities in the Square of the Guilds and the abundance of people who attest to occupations related to *annona* seem to support this idea. In addition, it is possible to detect the intention of individuals to express their African origin voluntarily through the funerary epigraphic evidence: onomastics pointing to Africa and the specification of the *origo*, as a subjective identifying attribute. This paper will try to address the following questions: What was the place of the immigrants in Ostian society? and What were their decisions, motivations and manifestations of identity in settlements under Roman rule; both as immigrants in Ostia or natives in their hometowns?

Despite being a modern construction<sup>10</sup>, identity was part of a social reality in the ancient Mediterranean, in which individuals and groups experienced different kinds of

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<sup>2</sup> Ricci 2005,3.

<sup>3</sup> Mar 2002; Pavolini 2002, 325-52.

<sup>4</sup> Bruun, Zevi 2002, 123-134; Stöger 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Keay 2011; Keay, Parcak, Strutt 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Hermansen 1982; Peacock 1986, 57.

<sup>7</sup> Falck 2003; Morley 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Bailey 1984; Delia 1988; Camodeca 1994; Terpstra 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Keay 2008 12.

<sup>10</sup> Demetriou 2002,9.

identities subjectively, whether these were self-representations or imposed by outsiders. Characterized by its fragility and the innumerable factors that can contribute to its configuration, identity is far from being homogeneous or static. Self- image can be modified and redefined by the changing circumstances of the individual or collective perception, showing a constant duality between the consideration and perception of self and the views of others. Choices are the key to understand personal representation of identity. Select and discard are opposite actions that are paradoxically experienced simultaneously. While one choice is made, the other options are automatically discarded, highlighting the – not always voluntary- identification with the cultural, political and economic background of the context to which the individual belongs. The act of choosing certain attributes and elements that an individual feels identified with generally implies a specific meaning, belonging to a complicated system of symbols, ideologies and/or mechanisms of power. Inspired by postcolonial analysis of imperial discourse<sup>11</sup> as discrepant experience and its application to the Roman World<sup>12</sup>, it will be attempted to understand how this African community constructed their identity in Ostia.

This work aims to understand how the identity of this minority group was manifested in a port city. A which also supplied the capital of the empire, and was therefore already multicultural in nature. It will also be taken into account the cultural phenomena that were occurring in parallel. In the places of origin, where the impact of the Roman culture<sup>13</sup> has a clear incidence and where mechanisms of power could have possibly affected the definitions, reactions and constructions of identity. In addition, it will be considered the degree of freedom these individuals had to build their identity. Three different types of fundamental material culture will be analyzed, from which the self-representation of identity can be potentially extracted. Firstly, the epigraphic evidence coming essentially from Ostia and Isola Sacra<sup>14</sup>. Secondly, The Square of the Guilds in Ostia which provides precious information about African economic activity. Finally, African background will be included as cultural parallels can be of importance to understand the reality of the Africans in Ostia.

## II. Epigraphic evidence

For the identification of the Africans in Ostia and their representation, the inscriptions found in Ostia have been analyzed. This source is the one that provides the most qualified information for this type of analysis. Inscriptions are not objective documents as they normally only present is what it is wanted to be known<sup>15</sup>. The specification will be essential to know an individual's origin, but also the conscious intention to show it. It is the choice that determines the representation of identity since there must be a reason for a person to specify it. It will be taken into account the context of the inscriptions as well, such as location (outside/inside the city, funerary areas or buildings, for example) or nature (funerary tombstone, mosaics, etc.). Not only will inscriptions sourced from Ostia be analysed, but also those from Isola Sacra, the necropolis next to the city<sup>16</sup>. Because of the strong relationship between Ostia and Rome, the latter will be considered briefly to better understand the local reality<sup>17</sup>.

The observations presented on the origins of Africans are usually based on explicit information given in the inscriptions. For the purposes of identifying African immigrants from Ostia, onomastics and direct reference to African cities or regions will be deeply studied.

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<sup>11</sup> Chomsky 1987; Cohen, Frerichs 1993; Said 1994; Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1995; Brah 1996; Bhabha 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Mattingly 2011, 2004; Mullen, James 2012.; Webster 2001, 209-225; Wallace-Hadrill 2008; Terrenato 1998, 20-27.

<sup>13</sup> Keay, Terrenato 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Baldassarre 1978, 1980, 1987, 1990, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Cooley 2012, 222.

<sup>16</sup> Calza 1940; Zevi 1967; Baldassarre 1978, 1980, 1987, 1990, 1996, 2001, 2002; Germoni 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Descoedres 2001; Prowse 2007.

Publications of previous studies of immigrants in Ostia and Rome have allowed collecting information about specific *nomina* which point to Africa. In this manner, Salomies provided an onomastics profile of Ostia and a comparison with Rome. Through this analysis it can be easily noticed that Ostia, as much as Rome, must have been an important centre of immigration<sup>18</sup>. The importance of Salomies' contribution relies on the observations on the origins of Ostians, where Africans are included. From these observations information about tribes was obtained, combinations of *praenomina* and *nomina*. These were rather popular in Africa and normally indicate African origin or, as the case of the *nomina*, have been found exclusively in Ostia and Africa. Other supporting sources have been Cebeillac-Gervasoni<sup>19</sup> and Tersptra<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand, the study of Africans in Rome made by Ricci<sup>21</sup> has contributed with the most frequent African origins present in the inscriptions and the possible ways to represent them, providing *natione*, city, province or territorial area. Even though Rome is not the scene of this analysis, it has been very useful due to the close link between this city and Ostia<sup>22</sup>. Other works which make reference to Africans have helped secondarily in this first stage of the research, such as Meiggs, Noy and Cooley<sup>23</sup>.

A list with onomastics and origin places has been created and used to identify the Africans in the inscriptions. The epigraphic material has been collected from online databases. These databases have confirmed their extreme usefulness equally for identifying inscriptions as for searching for linguistic parallels. Cooley in her *Manual to Latin Epigraphy*<sup>24</sup>, offered a list with the main online databases, which have proven to be most adequate for this research; Epigraphische Datenbank Heidelberg (EDH), Epigraphic Database Roma (EDR) and Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss/Slaby (EDCS). The first two are included in Electronic Archive of Greek and Latin Epigraphy (EAGLE), which has as its aim the inclusion of all known Greek and Latin inscriptions dating from before the seventh century AD. In this manner, EDH includes Latin inscriptions from the provinces as well as epigraphic bibliography and photographic database. EDR includes inscriptions from Italy, Sicily and Sardinia and allows a wide range of categories to be searched, not just by text, but also by ancient and modern location, social status, date, etc. EDCS provides by far the most extensive breadth of Latin Epigraphy as it includes almost all known Latin inscriptions from 18600 places and very recent publications.

The analysis concerns aspects such as dates, origin of the Africans expressed in the inscriptions, onomastics (including *cognomen*, *nomen* and tribes) that point to Africa, the occupations that show a relation with Africa and the *annonna*. The inscriptions attested reveal some information about their representation of identity implied by the use of African names, a specific African origin and their professional occupations, mainly related to the *annonna*. The evidence is meaningful since it is possible to extrapolate the historical outline as follows: economic and political aspects seem to have played a crucial role in the positions held by Africans in Ostia in the 2nd-3rd c. AD, showing a constant integration in the Ostian economy and society.

Although dates are not provided in all the inscriptions by the databases, the existent ones belong to the period between the second and the third century to the fifth (98 AD/138 AD - 271 AD/400 AD). This datum corresponds with the economic expansion attested in the whole Mediterranean in this period<sup>25</sup> and the Golden Age of Ostia, as Hermansen defined it<sup>26</sup>. Despite the difficulty to determine a clear date for our inscriptions, the correlation with

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<sup>18</sup> Salomies 2002, 138; Noy 2000; Ricci 1993, 1994, 2005, 2009, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Cebeillac-Gervasoni 1996.

<sup>20</sup> Tersptra 2013, 118.

<sup>21</sup> Ricci 1994.

<sup>22</sup> Bruun 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Meiggs 1973; Noy 2000; Cooley 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Cooley 2012, 332-333.

<sup>25</sup> Bang 2008; Meijer 1992.

<sup>26</sup> Hermansen 1982, 2.

pottery analysis indicating an important proportion of African *amphorae* destined to Ostia in this period<sup>27</sup>, the presence of African cities in the Square of the Guilds<sup>28</sup> and the current changes taking place in North Africa,<sup>29</sup> allow this period (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> AD centuries) to be considered as representative of Africans' importance in Ostia.

## II.1. Onomastics pointing to Africa

*Nomina* often can be connected with a certain city or region therefore the origin can be inferred with, at least, some probability. As North African nomenclature shows certain originality, it is possible to establish and African origin for a person through the *cognomina* and *nomina*. Salomies<sup>30</sup> facilitated a list of them (see Table 1<sup>31</sup>):

Cognomina	Epigraph - Source	Nomina	Epigraph - Source
Gemina Credula	EDCS-05701098	Baesius	EDCS-09300822
Gemina M.F. Donata	EDCS-05701099	Bombius	EDCS-58900600
Other Donatus/a	EDCS-05701100, EDCS-05701101, DCS-53700520	Gargilii	EDCS-11900203; EDCS-09300822; EDCS-53700520; EDR-031052; EDCS-23900056; EDCS-61700721
Pomp. Datulus	EDCS-53700520	Hynnerius	EDCS-09300812
Caecilius Maiulus	EDCS-05700259	Mundius	EDCS-11900320
Plautius Rogationus	EDCS-58900600	Munnenius	EDCS-05700102
Ponponius Rogationus	EDR078830	Obrulanius	EDCS-52600305
Other Rogationus	EDCS-05700264		
D. Pomponio	EDCS-11900846		
Quietulus			

All names facilitated by Salomies have been found in the databases (EDCS, EDR, EDH) attested in Ostia. These *cognomina* have been searched in the epigraphic database in order to find parallels. As it was stated by this author<sup>32</sup>, the *cognomina* only appear in Ostia and Africa: mainly in *Mauretania Caesariensis*, *Numidia* and *Africa Proconsularis*. In the same manner, the *nomina* only appear in Ostia and in Africa. The most popular *cognomen* seems to be *Donatus/Donata* that, although appearing in other places, it is attested mostly in *Numidia*, *Africa Proconsularis* and *Mauretania Caesariensis*. The same popularity in Africa is demonstrated by the *nomen Gargilii*.

For Egyptians, Ricci offered some *cognomina* than indicate almost explicitly their origin<sup>33</sup>. These are *Aegyptus* or *Alexandrinus*. This author also mentioned some names that can be misleading regarding to the origin of the person, like *Cleopatra* (3 inscriptions found), *Ptolemaeus* (2 inscriptions), *Sarapias* (1 inscription) and *Arsinoe* (4 inscriptions). Despite their appearance, they appear not to imply an Egyptian origin. Terpstra made reference to Egyptian names<sup>34</sup>: *Apollonius*, *Aphrodisius* and *Arpocraton*, all of them present in one single inscription, which also specified their Alexandrian origin referred above. It has been attested another *Arpocraton* related to the cult of Serapis.

<sup>27</sup> Stone 2009, 127-49.

<sup>28</sup> Van der Meer 2012, 33-36.

<sup>29</sup> Cooley 2012 259; Mattingly 2011, 239.

<sup>30</sup> Salomies 2002, 138

<sup>31</sup> Table 1 shows the list of names that indicate African origin (on the left) and the inscriptions in database code (on the right) from Ostia where these names appear, as a result of the Database research.

<sup>32</sup> Salomies 2002, 152.

<sup>33</sup> Ricci 1993, 78.

<sup>34</sup> Terpstra 2013, 120.

In addition, it has been attested that in Ostia existed a high number of individuals called *Alexander/Alexandria*. Some of them were slaves or freed men/women. This name could point to Alexandria, as sometimes slaves present the name of the place where they come from or where they were bought. As Noy expressed, the habit of attributing slaves an ethnic name seems to have been fairly common, but some of these names acquired wider popularity and finally people did not have any connection with the place to which the name refers<sup>35</sup>. Noy gave *Gallus* as an example, which could be apparently pointing to Gaul, but according to him, it does not. The same could be true of *Alexander/Alexandria*. Actually, if all the people named *Alexander/Alexandria* were considered originally from Alexandria, the percentage of this group in Ostia would be much higher than any other. However, this cannot be confirmed due to the popularity of this name and the lack of bibliographical and analytical support.

Regarding the tribes, *Quirina* often points to Africa, according to the observations made by Meiggs, Cébeillac-Gervasoni and Salomies<sup>36</sup>. Meiggs determined Tribe *Quirina* as the most widely spread of the tribes in Africa and the most common non-Ostian tribe<sup>37</sup>. In fact, Tribe *Quirina* often appears in the inscriptions from Ostia. However, in the process of looking for parallels, it was noticed that not only was this tribe present very often in North Africa, but also in Hispania. Indeed, this evidence fits with the Flavian municipalisation in Hispania in the second half of the 1st c. and early 2nd c. AD<sup>38</sup>. According to Andreu, the enrolment to the Tribe *Quirina* would be part of the political programme under Flavian Dynasty in order to provide the citizenship to the inhabitants of these *municipia*<sup>39</sup>. These changes would have become effective and reflected in epigraphy some time later. The dates of the inscriptions that refer to Tribe *Quirina* found in Ostia (for all of which a rough date is known, dated from 98 AD to 200 AD) coincides with this period. Consequently, it would be difficult to affirm that all the individuals attested in Ostia related to this tribe have a direct link with an African origin, as they could have come from *Hispania* as well being attracted by the same economic incentives. If Africa had a predominant role in supplying grain to Rome, *Hispania* could be considered to be the main source of olive oil, as Monte Testaccio makes apparent<sup>40</sup>. Nevertheless, coming from Africa or *Hispania*, those ascribed to any tribe enjoyed certain privileges and the social status of a citizen<sup>41</sup>. It seems clear that this group ascribed to Tribe *Quirina* citizens was very present in Ostia, as the epigraphy makes evident, being the most abundant tribe in Ostia with respect to any other non-Ostian tribe<sup>42</sup>.

But there are other tribes that were of importance in Africa. According to Cebeillac-Gervasoni Carthage was ascribed in Tribe *Arnensis*, as being of great importance in Africa after *Quirina*. Also Tribe *Papiria* seems to have been present in Africa<sup>43</sup>, but there is no evidence in our inscriptions. On the contrary, two individuals ascribed to *Arnensis*<sup>44</sup> have been found.

Finally, it is frequent to find somatic references as part of the characterisation of a person. It would be another way to identify people's origins, as appearance has always been noticed, especially for people of colour. Adjectives were added to the language to indicate this feature. *Niger* could be a good example for people coming from Africa (Mauretans,

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<sup>35</sup> Noy 2000, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Forni 1984, 160-2; Salomies 2002, 150; Cébeillac-Gervasoni 2006, 563; Tersptra 2013, 119.

<sup>37</sup> Meiggs 1973, 215.

<sup>38</sup> McElderry 1913, 124; 1918, 68-70; Andreu 2004, 344.

<sup>39</sup> Andreu 2004, 345.

<sup>40</sup> Rodríguez 1989, 219; Blázquez 1992, 173; Ricci 2012, 162.

<sup>41</sup> Andreu 2004, 343.

<sup>42</sup> Tersptra 2013, 119.

<sup>43</sup> Cebeillac-Gervasoni 1996, 563.

<sup>44</sup> Publius Adius (EDCS-08500080) and Marcus Umbilius (HD007874). In addition, already mentioned Lucius Caelius, *curator navium Karthaginensium* (EDCS-11900405) is ascribed to this Tribe.

Ethiopians, Numidians...)<sup>45</sup>. In this research, three inscriptions offer this adjective *Niger*<sup>46</sup>. In two others, its derived adjective *Nigrinus* appears<sup>47</sup>.

## II.2. African Origins

Origin can be indicated in different levels of completeness. It can be found in the formula *natio* and city, or just expressing the second one, as the first one is perfectly understood and it is unnecessary to be written down. Additionally, it can be found with the indication of the province and also only the connotation *Afer*, indicating the territorial area<sup>48</sup>. In addition, other ways are expressing the form “from ...”, as it is the case of *Ex Africa* or implicitly in the *cognomen*, as are the cases of *Africanus* or *Alexandrino*<sup>49</sup>.

From Table 2<sup>50</sup> it is noticeable that the highest number of references point to Africa as a province, but also the cities mentioned with the exception of Alexandria, belong to Africa as well. This difference can be because different reasons. Firstly, it is possible that the preservation of evidence is unequal. Also, that the feeling of manifestation of identity is different for people with a North African background than people with Egyptian background. Finally, the history of the relationships between Ostia with North Africa and with Egypt had different development, thus different influences over people<sup>51</sup>.

Place of origin	Nº of Inscriptions	Epigraph - Source
Egypt	7	EDCS-05700238; EDCS-16300266; EDCS-62500021; EDCS-12000334; EDCS-12000341; EDCS-12000340; EDCS-05700190
Africa	10	EDCS-11900168; EDCS-14501031; EDCS-13700394; EDCS-05700482; EDCS-05701858; EDCS-38702069;

<sup>45</sup> Ricci 2005, 7.

<sup>46</sup> EDCS-38702082, EDCS-38701943 and EDCS-05700400.

<sup>47</sup> EDCS-38702083 and EDCS-08300186.

<sup>48</sup> Ricci 1994, 197.

<sup>49</sup> *Ex Africa* (EDCS-05700099), *Africanus* (EDR121630), *Alexandrino* (EDCS-05700480).

<sup>50</sup> This Table contains the number of inscriptions that mention the African cities (on the left column) and the inscriptions code from the database source.

<sup>51</sup> On the one hand, direct Roman rule was established in North Africa before than in Egypt. This took place after the destruction of Carthage in 146 BC. North Africa was not homogeneous: some cities were Greek, Libyan or Phoenician foundations and became Roman colonies. Numidia came under Roman control in 46 BC and Mauretania was incorporated into the Empire in AD 42/43 after being a client kingdom (Noy 2009, 251). It is assumed that Rome's dealings with Carthage and other cities would have favoured the arrival of people from there to Rome, such as ambassadors, prisoners of war and slaves. But also the colonization programme of Julius Caesar and Augustus in North Africa would have motivated the movement of people due to the increasing contacts between these two areas since early moments (Ricci 1994, 198).

The fact that Africa became in the second and third centuries AD the main source of Rome's grain supply at expenses of Egypt ( Mattingly 1995; Lo Cascio, 2002, 99; Keay 2008, 12) might have contributed to this population flow, becoming a very attractive focus to develop commercial activities.

On the other hand, Egypt became part of the Empire as province in 30 BC. Because of its old tradition and background, the circumstances were different to North Africa. Despite contacts between Egypt and Rome existed from long time before it became a Roman province, Egypt was always perceived by Romans as a very different world. Indeed, Egypt was strongly more linked with Middle East than with North Africa (Ricci 1993, 73), being the latter considered as part of West provinces whereas Egypt stayed conforming Orient.

Initially, people from Egypt used to arrive as slaves or prisoners of war. Also Alexandrian dancers, actors or musicians were at the service of the upper Roman class, as classical sources revealed (Ricci 1993, 76). This would help their low attestation in the epigraphic evidence with respect to Africans.

Alexandria	2	EDCS-38702070; EDR121630;
Carthage	5	EDCS-05700548; EDCS-05700099
Gummi	1	EDCS-05700480; EDCS-11900305; EDCS-11900295; EDCS-11900405; EDCS-05700099;
Hippone Regio	2	EDCS-05700475;
Iulia Curubis	1	
Iulia Hippo Diarrhytus	1	EDCS-11900203;
Leptis Minor	1	HD023740; EDCS-05700302;
Mauretania	4	EDCS-11900295
Caesarensis		EDCS-11900290
	1	EDCS-60200111
Misua	1	EDCS-60200113; EDCS-11900183; EDCS-05700190;
Musluvium	1	EDCS-11900308
Sabratha	2	
Syllectum	2	EDCS-11900288
Thebeste		EDCS-11900289
		EDCS-11900291
		EDCS-11900299; EDCS-05700478
		EDR110168; EDCS-05700175

It can be noticed that some of the most important cities in Africa are attested in Ostia. Notable centres and ports such as Carthage or Alexandria have been found. On the contrary, other cities of significance such as *Leptis Magna* or *Oea* are not present in this compilation. From all the cities mentioned in Table 2, not all of them implied the origin of a single individual. Some inscriptions make reference to the *origo* of a person and others are related with occupations, normally related with *annona* services. In addition, the references found in the inscriptions belonging to the Square of the Guilds are included in this Table, as they mention African cities. However the number of people involved in these references cannot be treated with the same parameters: a person who specified his/her origin is one individual. Meanwhile the references provided by the inscriptions in the Square do not refer to an exact number of people involved. They could be people from those cities, settlers in Ostia or just itinerants.

### II.3. Occupations of the Africans in Ostia

The Africans into Roman society seem to have experienced an evolution from a first stage of poor relevance activities to more qualified occupations<sup>52</sup>. By the second century AD there was a significant group of African-born senators, very active in the development of rural infrastructures but always within a political framework that depended on the state<sup>53</sup>. In Rome the number of senators with an African origin is indeed considerable<sup>54</sup>, especially in relation to the supply of grain. In Ostia it seems to be similar. Not only its production but also its transportation was the main source of wealth for the Africans<sup>55</sup>, especially in the 2nd c. AD.

<sup>52</sup> Cebeillac-Gervasoni 1996, 563-567.

<sup>53</sup> Mattingly 2011, 152.

<sup>54</sup> Ricci 1994, 203.

<sup>55</sup> Ricci 2012, 163/167.

Most of the positions related to administration, senatorial and equestrians (see Table 3<sup>56</sup>). The production of grain, oil and the accumulation of wealth referred to above could have offered the opportunity for Africans to start their career as part of the Senate and *Ordo Equester*. Fifteen inscriptions have been attested<sup>57</sup>, being ten surely of an African origin as they are ascribed to Tribes *Quirina* and *Arnensis*<sup>58</sup>.

Occupation	Nº Individuals	Epigraph - Source
Aedil	1	·EDCS-11900168
Duovir	1	·EDCS-05700364
Quaestor aerarii	3	·EDCS-05700302; HD029991; EDCS-05700168
Tribuno cohortis	2	·EDCS-05700190; EDCS-
Decurio	5	62500021 ·EDCS-05700363; EDCS-
Praefectus aegypti	5	05700364; EDCS-12000340; EDCS-05700302; EDCS-14501031
Praefectus fabrum	3	·EDCS-14501031; EDCS-
Praefectus annonae	4	62500021; EDCS-12000334; EDCS-12000341; EDCS-12000340
Praefectus vehiculorum	2	·EDCS-12000341; EDCS-
Praetor provinciae	1	12000340; EDCS-05700302
Praetor vigilum	1	· EDCS-11900168; EDCS-
Procurator ad alimenta	1	05700160; EDCS-12000341;
Procurator ad annonam	3	EDCS-12000340
Procurator bibliothecarum	2	· EDCS-11900168
Procurator monetae	2	· EDCS-12000334
Procurator provinciae	2	· EDR111444
Procurator rationibus	2	·EDR110168; EDCS-11900183;
Patronus	7	EDR111444
Navicularii	9	· EDCS-12000341; EDCS-
Tribuno fabrum nav[alium]	1	12000340
Curator navium	3	· EDCS-16300266; EDR072626 · EDR072626; EDCS-05700190
Corpus mensorum frumentarum	2	· EDCS-16300266; EDR072626
Corporatus in templo fori vinari	1	· EDCS-05700364; EDCS-
Corpus mensorum Ostiensium	2	12000334; EDCS-12000341; EDCS-12000340; EDCS-

<sup>56</sup> Table 3 shows a list (left) of the occupations attested in Ostia related with African origin and/or the annona services. On the right, the inscriptions database codes in which the information appears.

<sup>57</sup> Inscriptions codes in databes: EDCS-11900405, EDCS-05700363, EDCS-05700364, EDCS-16300266, EDR072626, EDCS-12000334, EDCS-12000341, EDCS-12000340, EDCS-11900168, EDCS-05700302, EDR110168, EDCS-11900183, EDR111444, EDCS-05700160, EDCS-05700190.

<sup>58</sup> Cebeillac-Gervasoni 1996,559.

Corpus fabrum navalium	1	EDCS-13700394	
Corpus mercatorum frumentationum	2	· EDCS-05700168	
Collegium fabrum tignuariorum Ost	2	· EDCS-11900405,	EDCS-
		05700363; EDCS-05700364	
		· EDCS-05700363;	EDCS-
		05700302	
		· EDCS-14501031	
		· EDCS-05700302;	EDCS-
		05700364	
		· EDCS-05700168	
		· EDCS-05700302;	EDCS-
		05700160	
		· EDR110168; EDCS-12000334	

It is noticeable that positions related to *annonae* are numerous, but also those occupations related with the transportation, trade and control of the grain: merchants and shipmasters<sup>59</sup>. *Naviculari* have an important place in our evidence, but also *curatores navium* and *corpus fabrum navalium*. It deserves attention the fact that Africans who assumed dominant occupations in their origin cities seem to have their positions reflected also in Ostia. Finding *mercatores frumentarii* and *mensores* seem to support this idea. It is possible to find examples such as *P. Aufidius Fortis*<sup>60</sup>, who apart from being *Decurion*, had the position of *patronus et quinquennialis* of some corporations in Ostia<sup>61</sup>. Nevertheless, it seems apparent that in the 2nd c. AD Africans had a great influence in economy, having an important role in the grain commerce and its transportation. It is Cebeillac-Gervasoni who expressed the idea that these Africans were progressively acquiring the control of the commercial, political and intellectual life of Ostia. Their more abundant inclusion in civil occupations seems to reflect the accumulation of honours that made an African elite to acquire the monopoly of the traffic of grain to/from Ostia, thus the control of the public and economic life in the port. It has been attested also that two *quaestori aerarii*<sup>62</sup> related with accounts of the state finances, one a member of the praetorian guard, a *decurio*, and a second, *duumvir in Aelia Uluzibira* had come to Ostia and were involved in the wine trade there<sup>63</sup>.

However, there is a possibility that many other people were involved in the process or in other commercial activities and be archaeologically unnoticed. In some way, it makes sense that the occupations mentioned in the inscriptions are those related to the *annona*. It is common that only occupations with such importance were sufficiently significant to be commemorated. This would explain why there is more evidence of services related to *annona* than any other occupation. It needs to be considered that the role of the African economy was not limited to the production of grain. As the study of Stone allows to establish, 2/3 of the stamped amphora coming from *Syllectum*, *Hadrumetum* and *Leptis Minus* appear to go to Ostia and many of those amphora have been recognized as containing fish products<sup>64</sup>. These products also needed to be transported and distributed in Ostia, involving a high number of people. Nevertheless, the mosaics in the Square of the Guilds seem to make reference to this kind of activity too, as it will be further explained below.

<sup>59</sup> Ricci 2012, 163.

<sup>60</sup> EDCS-05700302.

<sup>61</sup> Cebeillac-Gervasoni 1996, 562-64.

<sup>62</sup> HD029991, EDCS-05700168.

<sup>63</sup> Tersptra 2013, 119.

<sup>64</sup> Stone 2009, 127-149; Franco 2012, 2014

### III. The Square of the Guilds

This place is the clearest indication of the predominant activity of Africans in Ostia. The role of this place is not clear but the stalls that compound the square seem to have served as offices where commercial arrangements took place. The approximated purpose of the Square is indicated by the floor mosaics, dated after 140 AD (more precisely to 190-200). These mosaics represent seafaring and harbour activities with motifs such as lighthouses, fish, dolphins, Nereids and ships (Fig. 1)<sup>65</sup>, grain trade and measurers and other goods<sup>66</sup>. However, perhaps the most important evidence that these mosaics provide is the text that they often include, which record the proprietors and their place of origin. This information is extraordinarily useful for this argument, not only for the geographical references, but also because many socioeconomic factors are involved.

The prevalence of Africans in the Square is marked by the fact that 10/14 cities attested in the preserved mosaics are Africans, whose distribution is presented in Fig. 2<sup>67</sup>. Also one marble tympanum refer to African shippers, found in the east portico<sup>68</sup>. The rest of them constituted the mosaics floor corridor in front of the stalls.

Most of them refer to shipmasters and allude to the sea shipping trade and the *annona*. Different interpretations exist for *naviculari*<sup>69</sup>. It is not clear if these shipmasters were obliged or not to exploit the ship in person or, on the contrary, they were personally on board their boats<sup>70</sup>. What seems clear is that being on board or not, they used a boat to offer certain services and retain profits. These boats should have served to transport goods from the referenced cities to Ostia. This fact highlights not only the importance that African production must have had in Ostia and Rome, but also the implications that this production must have had all over Africa, as a consequence of a large-scale production<sup>71</sup>.

The number of people involved in these activities would have been high, high enough to make it possible for such activities to function. However, in contrast with the facility to enumerate people from their *nomina*, as they have been named individually, it is not possible to determine how many people were behind the stalls of the Square of Guilds. The evidence offers interesting information about the Africans in Ostia, based on representations of identity and their economic role. Firstly, it is noticeable that still in this period there is an intention to manifest an African origin, either through the indication of the hometown or the continuity of the use of African names. In total, 73 individuals indicate, in one way or another, their origin. It deserves to be highlighted the importance of the onomastics as indicators, as it reveals the African connection for 22/73 inscriptions. In addition, it needs to be considered that 13/22 of these inscriptions belong to a funerary context, while the rest is undetermined. That is pointing to a clear intention of self-representation and maintenance of their African identity, as epitaphs let us detect individuals' choices. Secondly, it is perceptible that the majority of occupations mentioned are linked to services to the *annona*. This fact could be due to the intentionality of these new African elite to differentiate themselves from the others, as they had acquired prevalence in the social scale. Only these occupations would be considered important enough to be reflected in epigraphy, meanwhile other less valued occupations are just not specified, thus unattested. The amount of occupations related to the supply of grain is a clear reflection of the important economic role acquired by Africans in Ostia. This data allows extrapolating the politico-economic changes that took place in these provinces, North Africa and Egypt, which seems to have had a clear impact over the population, fomenting

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<sup>65</sup> Fig. 1. Mosaic from the Square of the Guilds. Sea motifs. Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ee/Ostia\\_antica-07.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ee/Ostia_antica-07.jpg) (26.08.2017).

<sup>66</sup> Meiggs 1972, 326; Terpstra 2013, 108.

<sup>67</sup> Fig. 2. Plan of the Square of the Guilds in Ostia with the indication of trades and cities mentioned. Source: <http://www.ostia-antica.org/piazzale/corpstat.gif> (26.08.2017).

<sup>68</sup> EDCS-13700394.

<sup>69</sup> De Salvo 1989; De Salvo 2009, 651.

<sup>70</sup> Broekaert 2013, 219.

<sup>71</sup> Leone 2012.

their movement and establishment in Ostia. These motivations could have been through the offer of new professional opportunities or socio-economic promotion. The important presence of African cities in the Square of the Guilds seems to support this idea.

Nevertheless, the number of Africans attested is not especially high, being in total 73 individuals in the space of three centuries. As expressed before, the eleven inscriptions found in Square of the Guilds do not provide a specific number of people involved, but due to the predominant economic role that Africa seems to have had in this period, it is plausible that it must have been many. Finally, it deserves to be mentioned that many other Africans and Egyptians might have passed unnoticed to us, as the indicators used, onomastics and mention of hometowns, are characterized by its fragility. Many factors might have been involved in the choice to add this information or not to, such as status, level of integration, adoption of Roman forms, background, emplacement of the inscriptions, etc. Those who did adopt Roman names and did not specify their African origin cannot be attested according this methodology. But this fact would also introduce the debate about the new generations born in Ostia, which would have had African roots, maybe involved in African traditions but ultimately they were Ostians.

#### IV. African background

The scarce number of inscriptions related to Africans declared in Ostia seems surprising due to the important role that Africans acquired in Ostia in the 2nd-3rd centuries AD<sup>72</sup>. It is taken for granted that not all the Africans that lived in Ostia left a trace that allows identifying them as such. This lack of evidence of Africans in Ostia does not mean an absence of them. The criteria to identify Africans in Ostia have been mainly onomastic and place of origin. As these are dependent of voluntary specification, the possibility of attesting the evidences depends on the choice made by the individuals to reflect any clues. That makes it necessary to focus on the realities in the hometowns, in order to determine if the cultural phenomena occurring there could have influenced the manifestation of identity of the Africans in Ostia.

As a consequence of the impact of the Roman arrival, the phenomenon that occurred in North Africa relies essentially on the binary opposition based on the persistence of previous Punic traditions and introduction of new Roman forms, from the epigraphic habit to the construction of typical Roman buildings, as baths. This is clearly illustrated by the appearance of Neo Punic in Latin script: Latin alphabet is introduced, but Punic is still spoken despite its script not being in use any more. Nevertheless, the scope for action between these two cultural backgrounds is considerable, which explains the multiple ways of manifestations and mixtures.

Leptis Magna offers a clear example of this. Impressive Roman type buildings and togate statues of citizens with Roman inscriptions were introduced by the early second century. However, the main public inscriptions were bilingual texts (Fig. 3)<sup>73</sup> with same information in Latin and Neo Punic script. Punic evidently was still spoken and, as Mattingly defined it, Leptis was “far from a complete triumph of a “Roman” identity”<sup>74</sup>. The evidence in the funerary sphere seems to support this idea. The work of Fontana reveals the gradual change in burial practices and the incorporation of Roman aspects, giving as a result interesting mixtures: it is possible to find typical Punic hypogeum tombs with inscriptions in Latin, both in the second century and still into the third<sup>75</sup>. Also it is possible to attest linguistic

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<sup>72</sup> Cebeillac-Gervasoni 1996.

<sup>73</sup> Fig. 3. Bilingual Inscription from Leptis Magna. Source:

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2c/Inscription\\_Theatre\\_Leptis\\_Magna\\_Libya.JPG](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2c/Inscription_Theatre_Leptis_Magna_Libya.JPG) (26.08.17).

<sup>74</sup> Mattingly 2011, 239.

<sup>75</sup> Fontana 2001,163.

transition from Punic to Latin and evolution of personal names from indigenous to the tria nomina system. Indeed, the entire habit of erecting inscribed tombstones was borrowed from the Romans, as Meyer pointed out<sup>76</sup>, although it is not present everywhere in North Africa.

The diversity of burial practices is huge and is closely related to social status. It is possible to notice that the elite emulated Roman norms in order to, according to Mattingly, identify themselves strongly with the imperial project<sup>77</sup>. This emergence of monumental public epigraphy was a new phenomenon of the Augustan era. As Cooley and Wilson pointed out, the adoption of Latin was carried out by the local elite, as Leptis did not come under direct Roman administrative control until the Flavian period<sup>78</sup>. The spread of Roman practices thus seems to be a phenomenon that depended more on the local population than on Roman pressure<sup>79</sup>. If social status seems to be determinant, also the status of the cities seem to be so as well. It is possible to find cities such as Theveste or Maktar where the rise of tombstones coincides with the moment in which they received the colonial status<sup>80</sup>. This last point could indicate a sort of pressure, as Meyer illustrated, although the epitaphs imitated Rome type, these showed a very simple formula, just with the name of the deceased in nominative. At the same time, these were coexisting with pre-existing traditions present in cities such as Cirta or Carthage. Another very different and representative case of cultural interaction is the military outpost of Bu Njem. There, the ostraca found records of the contact between soldiers and the local population. The exceptionality of these records is that they reflect the process of learning detected in the ostraca by the local people recruited, who did not speak fluent Latin as there are misspellings phonetically inspired<sup>81</sup>.

As stated before, the use of the language in North Africa is the best exponent of this binary opposition based on what persisted and what was introduced. This region offers extraordinary linguistic evidence through its epigraphic record that illustrates the effects of Roman influences and the evolution of the interaction between Latin and Punic. Bilingualism, borrowings, literal translations, transliterations can be attested<sup>82</sup>, but also an outstanding use of the language whose exceptionality relied on the presence of Neo Punic and Latino Punic inscriptions. This contrasts with a context where simultaneously Latin did eclipse other languages in other regions<sup>83</sup>. Despite the maintenance of many previous elements, as Punic language, the success of the Roman culture in North Africa relies on the voluntary reproduction of Roman practices. Thus the new cultural phenomenon occurred from the interaction of these two cultural backgrounds promoted essentially by local inhabitants. Roman ideas were adopted and adapted to the Punic tradition. As Revell expressed, the adaptation to live within the Roman Empire altered their previous ways of living. People realized that it was necessary to function within a new imperial landscape<sup>84</sup>. This author established that the public architecture that is incorporated into their daily use is determinant to their new identity. The routines are the ones which represent and maintain a particular form of identity, as these routines mark the way in the sense the world is perceived and the place people have within it<sup>85</sup>. Ideology served to present the world and the reproduction of Roman culture implied the reproduction of the Roman identity.

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<sup>76</sup> Meyer 1990, 83.

<sup>77</sup> Mattingly 2011, 236.

<sup>78</sup> Cooley 2012, 253; Wilson 2012, 313.

<sup>79</sup> Cooley 2002, 82; 2012, 253.

<sup>80</sup> Meyer 1990, 83-85.

<sup>81</sup> Adams 1994, 87-91.

<sup>82</sup> Some inscriptions bring out the change in nomenclature through different generations of the same family, where the Latin names adoption can be identified in the later ones (Adams 2003, 218). In the same way, Roman titles in Punic versión (Szynger 2003, 115-124) are rendered into Punic, where, as Adams stated, the translator must have been a native speaker of Punic and did attempt to identify the titles with the pre-existing institutions (2003, 222). Illustrative examples of this are transcriptions such as 'MYNKD' used to render imperator, which meant something like leader (Wilson 2012, 276). In contrast, Punic honorific titles can be found calqued in Latin, such as 'lover of his country' or 'lover of the members of the populace' (Wilson 2012, 299).

<sup>83</sup> Sears 2013, 7.

<sup>84</sup> Revell 2008, 11.

<sup>85</sup> Revell 2008, 7.

In this manner, constructing the buildings does not have to mean that Africans were representing themselves as Romans<sup>86</sup>. It was the fact of using the spaces what made Africans reproduce *Roman*. This can be related to the impact that the massive construction of buildings promoted by Septimius Severus would have had<sup>87</sup>, referred to above. Similarly, finding inscriptions in Latin is not as important as the fact that Africans chose to use Latin, they could read it and they preferred Latin to Punic as a way to represent themselves. In essence, choices: the motivations that drove people to do or not to do something are the base of an individual identity configuration.

For all these reasons, and especially because Africans in their hometowns show a progressive adoption of Latin forms, the possibility that many Africans passed unnoticed in Ostia cannot be ruled out; at least in the epigraphic records.

As North Africa, Egypt offers extraordinary manifestations of cultural interaction marked, in this case, by native Egyptian and Greek cultures<sup>88</sup>. The reality in Egypt for the moment that became a Roman province was far from being homogeneous. On the one hand, there was the Egyptian tradition, but on the other, there were Greek cities and Alexandria, which had different status and privileges, such as the capacity to administrate themselves with their own Greek institutions<sup>89</sup>. The impact of Rome would not have been as strong as in North Africa, as Egypt already had a rich and developed economy. Indeed, the existing bureaucracy was retained, the structure of taxation remained the same and Greek continued to be the official language of administration. On the other hand, Egyptian language, culture and religion continued, being Demotic the most commonly spoken language. It is possible to attest in Egypt some eclectic manifestations of culture and identity, but this one was not a consequence of the Roman arrival, but the result of the interaction between Greek and Egyptian backgrounds. Roman influence can be noticed in Egypt, but maybe not with the same strength as can be attested in North Africa.

The best exponents of cultural interaction and representation of identity are the use of language and burial practices. In Egypt it is possible to establish, as well as other main characteristics, the binary opposition based on what remained and what was newly introduced. Firstly, in contrast to the North African language phenomenon, bilingualism in Latin and Egyptian is unattested<sup>90</sup>. The Latin attested in some documents is defective as only the use of Latin script and Roman numerals is employed. Adams stated that Romans made little effort to address Egyptian speakers through their own language at the level of public communication<sup>91</sup>. This is consistent with the fact that there was no imposition of Latin. The use of Latin in the common use of the language seems not to have been substantial either. It is not possible to find the progressive introduction of Roman practices that can be noticed in North Africa. Greek was the official language of administration and Romans seem to have allowed it<sup>92</sup>.

Secondly, the burial practices found in Roman Egypt characterized by naturalistic portraiture came to dominate Egyptian funerary art<sup>93</sup>. The development that society experienced implied the gradual cultural changes producing many interesting results, such as Roman hairstyle models and fashionable East Greek dresses were copied in the portraits in conjunction with Egyptian texts and images and Egyptian mortuary practices. The exceptionality of Roman Egypt burials relies on the artistic impact of Egyptian, Greek and Roman art present together. One illustrative example given by Riggs is the only case of a Roman *tria nomina* attested among the funerary art. This adorned the back of a traditional

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<sup>86</sup> Vertovec 1996, 49-69.

<sup>87</sup> Raven 1993, 103-05; Sears 2013, 6.

<sup>88</sup> Heinz 2001, 82.

<sup>89</sup> Capponi 2005, 172.

<sup>90</sup> Adams 2003, 529.

<sup>91</sup> Adams 2003, 533.

<sup>92</sup> Adams 2003, 578, 758.

<sup>93</sup> Venit 1997, 702-21; Riggs 2005, 246.

mummy mask, but the name, *Titos Flavius Demetrios*, was written in Greek script (Τίτος Φλαυγιος Δημητριος)<sup>94</sup>. This person is showing a double identity marked by the own cultural extraction and the introduction of new Roman forms. This coexistence of multiplicity of cultural backgrounds and these representations can be considered as another form of bilingualism or multilingualism, not just transmitted by language, but also through images, art and burial practices.

References to Egypt attested in Ostian inscriptions concern mostly those of the *praefecti annonae*, with the exception of one individual who specified this in an epitaph. Apart from that, only Alexandria is attested: in one of the stalls of the Square of the Guilds<sup>95</sup> and in another epitaph, presenting a family. However, Alexandria's population must have been compounded of immigrants from the entire Greek World<sup>96</sup>, thus not purely Egyptians. It can be deduced then, that there is the possibility that references to Alexandrian origin found were based more on the predominant role of the city where people passed through than providing the specific person's origin<sup>97</sup>. These people, thus, would not have identified themselves as Egyptians, explaining why Egyptian manifestations of identity are not attested in Ostia.

## V. Conclusion

As it has been noticed through the analysis of the epigraphic evidence, most of the African presence in Ostia belonged to the 2nd-3rd c. AD. Indeed, the politico-economic changes occurring in the African hometowns at that time seem to have had a crucial influence on the presence of Africans in Ostia. It is possible to consider two main factors. Firstly, because of the fundamental role of Ostia in receiving and redistributing the grain and other goods to Rome<sup>98</sup>, the arrival for immigrants, in which Africans are included, was fomented. Secondly, the strong link of this city-port with North Africa in the 2nd-3rd c. AD appears to have been motivated by Rome's demands of grain. This implied the development of North African economy and stronger influences of Roman practices in North Africa that would have involved the whole population. New opportunities would have encouraged immigrants to voluntarily establish in Ostia, but also it helped the development of an African ruling class that acquired the occupations related to the *annona*<sup>99</sup>.

This group of African foreigners in Ostia was a minority relegated to the imperial control, therefore the operation of the power would have defined different reactions and construction of new identities. On the one hand, it is attested that the emergence of an African elite related to economic roles. On the other, there is significant evidence of a North African representation of identity, based on onomastics and specificity of origin of the people not directly related with *annona* services. An important number of them belong to the funerary sphere. Therefore, there was a number of foreigners who maintained their North African roots present until they passed away. Any manifestation of African identity is indicating self-representation linked with African cultural background, in which some level of confusing sense of identity is considered. These immigrants moved from a defeated territory to the capital's port of the imposed empire and the unstable realities of their backgrounds must have affected in the way they redefined their conception of themselves. There is a contrast between the progressive Romanized identities in North Africa and the evidence of maintenance of North African attributes (onomastics and specificity of origin place). This could be considered as a voluntary reinforcement of identity as a consequence of being abroad, in which the North African foreigners needed to find a new identity that let them fit into a new reality where they were neither North Africans nor Ostians. This idea must be

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<sup>94</sup> Riggs, 2005, 246.

<sup>95</sup> EDCS-11900305.

<sup>96</sup> Delia 1988.

<sup>97</sup> Noy 2000, 47.

<sup>98</sup> Hermansen 1982; Peacock 1986, 57.

<sup>99</sup> Lo Cascio 2002, 99.

taken into account, especially when considering the new generations. Their ambiguous position would be that of the descendants of the Africans, being culturally differentiated as Africans within the Roman sphere while they were progressively losing the feeling of belonging to Africa, as they were not born there but in Ostia.

However, the evidences of North Africans seem scarce considering the important economic role that their massive references to African cities in the Square of the guilds and people dedicated to these occupations lets us assume. The cultural phenomena occurring in North Africa characterized by the progressive adoption of Roman forms in self-representation could be one important reason to explain why they passed unnoticed, as they would not have presented any identifiable African attributes. But also, it is possible that an important number of North Africans were itinerants or did not die in Ostia. Finally, new generations would not have manifested old African traditions, but would have progressively adopted the practices of the place they belonged to.

Egypt still seems to have held a certain importance in providing grain in this period, although with less predominance than North Africa<sup>100</sup>. Indeed, the majority of Egyptian references concern to *praefecti annonae* and one of the stalls of the Square of the Guilds. Changes did take place once Egypt came under Roman control, however they were mainly of an administrative nature. Culturally, there was a persistence of previous practices in Egypt. However, none of them has been attested in the evidence found in Ostia. The scarce number of Egyptians seems more related to the nature of the migration. If this nature involved mostly slaves/freedmen it is possible that they did not have the chance to specify their origin, neither through onomastics nor origin place. If, as Ricci stated<sup>101</sup> the Egyptian immigration concerned especially Alexandrians, the cosmopolitan population of this city would have characterized its inhabitants with a non-firmly defined identity or maybe showing more hellenized attributes typical of people of Greek extraction.

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<sup>100</sup> Lo Cascio 2002, 99; Keay 2008, 12.

<sup>101</sup> Ricci 1993, 74.

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Fig. 1: Mosaic from the Square of the Guilds. Sea motifs. Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ee/Ostia\\_antica-07.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ee/Ostia_antica-07.jpg) (26.08.2017)

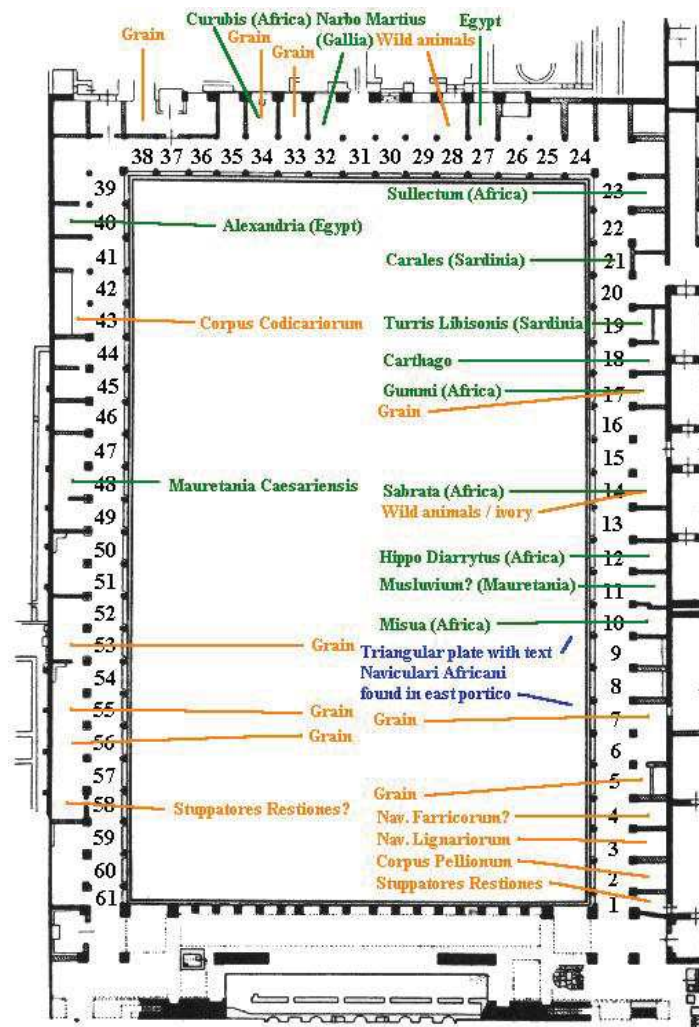


Fig. 2: Plan of the Square of the Guilds in Ostia with the indication of trades and cities mentioned. Source: <http://www.ostia-antica.org/piazzale/corpstat.gif> (26.08.2017)



Fig. 3: Bilingual Inscription from Leptis Magna. Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2c/Inscription\\_Theatre\\_Leptis\\_Magna\\_Libya.JPG](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2c/Inscription_Theatre_Leptis_Magna_Libya.JPG) (26.08.17)