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Sol

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Chapter 5

Temples of Sol in Rome

At the end of our long review of the images of Sol we concluded that in the most basic sense the image type [sol] is an indexical sign that connotes concepts of order and permanence. This does not mean that the image type [sol] does not depict a god. Sol is a god, deployed visually as index and as visible divine cog of the cosmic order. He is also a divinity with a long tradition of cult in Rome. The direct evidence for that cult is meagre but unmistakable, for as we have seen we have a small number of votive altars or reliefs vowed to Sol and we also know of a number of temples and public festivals for the sun god in the city of Rome.¹ It is worth reviewing what we know about these temples to see what light that sheds on the cultic tradition of Sol (and Luna) in Rome, if only to remind ourselves that Sol was not merely a cosmic metaphor, but also a fully fledged Roman deity.

The *Pulvinar Solis* on the Quirinal

Rome had at least four temples or sanctuaries for Sol, not including those for Sol Elagabal and other non-Roman solar deities. Of these, at least two, possibly three were founded in the Republic (or even earlier), while the fourth dates to AD 274. One of the Republican temples we know only from a chance remark by Quintilian (1,7,12). His interest was piqued by a linguistic peculiarity in one of the inscriptions on display at a *pulvinar Solis* on the Quirinal, near the temple of Quirinus.² The designation *pulvinar Solis* suggests that this was not a *templum* with an *aedes*, but something less monumental.³ On the other hand the 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.⁴ Although we cannot be certain, it seems safe to assume that the annual public sacrifice for Sol Indiges on August 9th *in colle Quirinali* took place at this sanctuary, further attesting to its importance.⁵ Sanctuaries to Sol are often unroofed,⁶ which may explain why Quintilian refers to it as a *pulvinar*, strictly speaking a couch on which a statue of a divinity reclined. We have almost no further information about this temple or its subsequent history.

¹ See cat. C2a and C2b.

² On the temple of Quirinus and the early topography of the Quirinal, cf. Carafa 1993.

³ On the meanings associated with *pulvinar* see van den Berg 2008, esp. p. 260 and n. 35.

⁴ The inscription mentioned Vesperugo, the evening star, which suggests that it was not on the site of the *pulvinar Solis* by chance.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Vitruvius 2,5; Matern 2002, 26 n. 193.

The temple at the Circus Maximus

We are slightly better informed about the temple of Sol at the Circus Maximus. Tacitus describes it as old, which means that it too must have dated to the Republic.⁷ It is depicted on coins of M. Antony (L1.12), Trajan, and Caracalla (plate 4.4-5), and Tertullian confirms its continued importance some 150 years after Tacitus.⁸ It remained a prominent feature of the circus through the 4th century AD.⁹ The temple was incorporated in the stands of the circus on the Aventine side, about halfway and level with the finish line.¹⁰ Little is known of the appearance of this temple, other than that it was adorned with a prominent statue of Sol atop the roof. According to the regionary catalogue the temple was also dedicated to Luna, and the feast of Sol and Luna of August 28th may have been connected with it.¹¹ There is some evidence for temples of Sol in connection with other circuses as well.¹²

Aurelian's temple to Sol

No doubt the most lavish temple of Sol was the one in the Campus Martius, dedicated by Aurelian in AD 274 following his victory over Palmyra in 272. So little is known about the actual temple that its axis - North-South or East-West - and even its actual location were the subject of much debate well into the 20th century.¹³ There is now consensus that it stood on the site of S. Silvestro in Capite and the adjacent post office. Sources describe it unanimously as a magnificent temple,¹⁴ and drawings by Palladio suggest that it consisted of two porticoed enclosures with niches, 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.¹⁵ Aurelian instituted a new college of pontifices for Sol connected with this temple, which

⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 15, 74: *vetus aedes apud circum*. Matern 2002, 24-26

⁸ Cf. RRC 496/1; RIC II, 284 nr. 571; RIC IV.1, 295 nr. 500. Tert. *Spect.* 8,1

⁹ Matern 2002, 24, citing the regionary catalogue.

¹⁰ Humphrey 1986, 232-3.

¹¹ 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 mention Sol and Luna together and may be an early imperial reference to the same festival. It is not certain to which specific day this fragment belongs, but August 28th is a possibility.

¹² Giordani 1988.

¹³ Matern 2002, 43-45. A good summary of the debates in *LTUR* s.v. Sol, Templum, 331-3.

¹⁴ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 35.7; *HA Aurel.* 39,2 & 39.6; Eutr. 9.15.1; Moneti 1993.

¹⁵ 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). It is generally assumed that the round *peripteros* drawn in the larger enclosure is a Renaissance fantasy.

underlines its Roman character.¹⁶ 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. Aurelian also instituted quadrennial *agones* for Sol from 19-22 October in the Circus Maximus, probably an expansion of a preexisting festival of Sol on October 19th.¹⁷

There is nothing foreign or unroman about these three temples, including that of Aurelian. It is true that most scholars have held Aurelian's Sol to be Syrian, but we have already noted that the actual evidence for this does not stand up to scrutiny (chapter 1). The new college of *pontifices Solis* instituted by Aurelian was responsible for the cult of a sun god with a long, uninterrupted tradition in the religion of Rome.

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; only the nature and continuity of the cult or cults they serve has been debated. A fourth temple or shrine for Sol in Rome is known to us only through inscriptions, and has only recently been the object of scholarly scrutiny. There are two substantial studies concerning this fourth temple, one by Palmer (1981) and the other by Chausson (1995). Both proceed from the now discredited premiss that the cult of the sun in Rome was of Syrian origin, and both conclude that this Syrian solar cult had a significant sanctuary of some sort from the late 1st c. AD onwards in the southern section of Trastevere, roughly on the site of the present Piazza Ippolito Nievo.¹⁸

This cult centre deserves our particular attention because of its apparent date, and because it may be the provenance of a small number of votive reliefs in our catalogue.¹⁹ We shall see that there was indeed probably a sanctuary of Sol in this part of Trastevere, but that there is no reason to postulate that in this sanctuary Sol was Syrian, rather than Roman.

The clearest evidence for some sort of sanctuary of Sol in this general area is provided by two inscriptions of C. Iulius Anicetus, discovered in the 19th century in the "vigna Bonelli" just South of the Porta Portese in Trastevere. The one commemorates the restoration of a *porticus*

¹⁶ For the next century, pontifices Solis are frequently documented and invariably were drawn from the highest echelons of Roman society. See *FS* p. 606..

¹⁷ There is no evidence for the widely held belief that Aurelian inaugurated the temple on December 25th (on which cf. chpt. 8; Salzman 1990, 150 n. 106). On the agones, cf. Salzman 1990, 150-1. The early imperial *fasti* indicate that an annual *armilustrium* was celebrated in or near the circus on October 19th. Quinn Schofield (1969), followed by Salzman 1990, 150, suggest that by Aurelian this festival had evolved into one for Sol.

¹⁸ Cf. Savage 1940; Equini Schneider 1987.

¹⁹ Of the eight reliefs in this section (C2a and b) that are from Rome itself (C2a.3, 4, 5, 7, 14, C2b.1, 2, 3), only four are connected with varying degrees of certainty to sanctuaries, namely two different sanctuaries in Trastevere (C2a.4, C2b.1, 3) and the Dolichenum of the Aventine (C2b.2). To these one should add the altar dedicated to Malakbel/Sol Sanctissimus (C2q.1). The provenance of the other four is either not known (C2a.3, 5) or not specifically religious (C2a.7, 14).

Solis dedicated on May 25th, AD 102.²⁰ The other is a plea “*ex imperio Solis*” to refrain from defacing the walls with graffiti.²¹ Anicetus’ connections with the cult of Sol are further confirmed by an altar dedicated to Sol Divinus now at the church of S. Cecilia, about 1 km North of the site.²²

Also likely to be from this shrine is a votive relief dedicated by Eumolpos - a freedman of Nero - and his daughter Claudia Pallas to Sol and Luna. This relief is now in Florence (C2b.1) but was in the Mattei collection in Rome in the late 15th century, and was probably found in Rome. Bergmann points out that Iulius Anicetus was almost certainly the son-in-law of Eumolpus, and believes that both were members of the circle of Sol worshippers in Rome associated with this shrine in Trastevere.²³

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. That gives the complex a *terminus ante quem* of roughly the third quarter of the 1st century AD, and of course it may have been much older. This is all we know with certainty, for no physical traces of this portico or any other part of the complex to which it belonged have been identified. However, both Palmer and Chausson argue that the portico was one component of a more extensive sanctuary. They do so by adding a substantial number of inscriptions and reliefs to the ones of Anicetus and Eumolpus, all of which they believe came from the same “vigna Crescenzi/Bonelli/Mangani”²⁴ in Trastevere. They argue furthermore that these inscriptions form such a cohesive group that they must all come from the same sanctuary, of which this *porticus Solis* was merely a part. Given the Syrian and, in particular, Palmyrene character of the inscriptions they adduce they conclude that there was a major Syrian sanctuary to solar cult(s) somewhere in the area of the *vigna Bonelli*.²⁵

Palmer and Chausson are not the first to suggest there was a sanctuary to Eastern solar

²⁰ CIL VI, 2185 (1d, below).

²¹ CIL VI, 52 (1c).

²² CIL VI, 709. It is tempting to link Anicetus' predilection for Sol with his name, the Latinized form of the Greek word *νίκητος*, *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 (C2a.3), 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).

²³ Bergmann 1998, 197. A C. Iulius Anicetus dedicated a funerary inscription for his wife Claudia Pallas and three-year-old daughter Iulia Pallas (CIL VI, 15527). Bergmann points out that the name Claudia Pallas is not a common one, nor is the name C. Iulius Anicetus.

²⁴ On this vigna cf. Palmer 1981, 372-3 n. 50 and Chausson 1995, 663-4.

²⁵ Cf. Visconti (1860).

cults here,²⁶ but their studies are by far the most extensive. The case they make hinges on two assumptions: that all the inscriptions they adduce do indeed come from the same area in Trastevere, and that in that area there was one temple where they were all displayed. Their evidence for these assumptions consists of three groups of inscriptions: 1. A number of inscriptions discovered in the 19th c. in the *vigna Bonelli*; 2. Inscriptions from the “old Mattei collection” on display in the *giardini Mattei* in the late 15th century;²⁷ 3. Various other inscriptions from Trastevere or of unknown provenance which one may add by analogy. These are the inscriptions they adduce:²⁸

1. *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 • [Παλμυρην] ς κα Γ(άιος) Λικίνιος N— —] / τ ν να ν • Βή[λ] Ιαριβώλ Μαλαχβήλ θεο ς] / Παλμυρην[ο ς κ τ ν δίων νέθηκαν].

A 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 Trajan, AD 98-117.

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] // ['Η]λιόδω[ρος] / [Παλμυρην] ς κα Γ(άιος) Λικίνιος [N— — Βήλ] / [Ιαριβώλ] Μαλαχβήλ Θε[ο ς Παλμυρηνο ς] / L(ucio) Lamia [Sex(to) Carminio co(n)ss(ulibus)].

Dated to AD 116. The provenance of this 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].

A request by Gaius Iulius Anicetus, at the behest of Sol, to refrain from defacing the walls with

²⁶ Cf. Lanciani 1902, 116.

²⁷ Johannes Jucundus describes them as being *in horto d Baptistae Mattei in regione Transtiberina*; Bergmann 1998, 195.

²⁸ The list is based on Palmer 1981, 372-3 n. 50 and Chausson 1995. All inscriptions are mentioned by both Palmer and Chausson unless otherwise stated.

graffiti. An unrelated inscription on the reverse.

d. CIL VI, 2185 = Chausson p. 664, inscr. A

[3] Iulius / [3 A]nicetus / [3 vo]to suscepto / [3] primam porticum / [3 S]olis cum
marmoribus / [3] opere novo ampliato / [3]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]esperii
/ [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 Epaphroditii / 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).

Dated to May 25th, 102. This inscription was discovered in two parts, the bottom half in 1860, the upper part in 1885. In it Gaius Iulius Anicetus commemorates the refurbishment of a portico of Sol at his own expense and in accordance with a vow he had made. The inscription is damaged and other parts of a temple-complex may also have been mentioned. Quite remarkable is the recorded permission of the *kalatores* of the *pontifices* and the *flamines*. We know very little about the tasks and activities of the *kalatores*, but their position of assistants to the pontifices and flamines links them firmly to public Roman cult.²⁹

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

(Palmyrene and Greek; Latin translation of the Palmyrene by Chabot)

“το ς Bêl, Iarhibôl et Aglibôl fecerunt Maqqai, filius Malê, (filii) Lišam]š, et So’adu,
filius Taimê, (filii) Lišamšai, et obtulerunt.”

θεο ς πατρ ος Βήλωι Ιαριβώλωι κα Αγλιβώλωι — — — — — — — —]
/ νέθηκαν Μακκα ος Μαλ τ[ο Λισάμσου κα Σόαδος Θαίμου το
Λισαμσαίου]

An 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

π ρ • τ ς • σωτηρίας / Α τοκράτορος / Καίσαρος • Τραιανο / 'Αδριανο • /

²⁹ Palmer also lists CIL VI, 817=30834:]C[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).

Σεβαστο / Λούκιος • Λικίνιος / Ἑρμίας / Ἀρ • θε • πατρ / πηκό •
 νέθηκεν / τους • εμυ • μην / Ξανδικό η.

The inscription is dated according to the Seleucid calendar to AD 134 and commemorates a votive set up by Lucius Licinius Hermias for his ancestral god Ares.

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

[π ρ τ ς σωτηρίας Α τοκράτορος Καίσαρος Τίτου Α λίου Ἀδ[ριανο
 Αντωνείνου] / [Σεβαστο Ε σεβο ς σ ν παντ κόζμ Κόϊντος Ιούλιος • [—
 — — νέθηκεν].

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 κόζμ also points to a Syrian background.

To these we must add another inscription found in the vigna and published by Visconti (1860, 448-50) but not deemed relevant by either Palmer or Chausson:

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[endrophori(?)] / [3]us Felix e[t 3] /
 [3]s Paris imm[unes] / [c]ollegi idem [cu]/[rat]ores aedic[ulam] / [3] a solo
 ampli[ficavit(?) 3] / [3]o qui sunt cult[o]/[res] Silvani d[endrophori(?)].

This inscription is dated to AD 97 and mentions a certain Felix and Paris, *dendrophori* of Silvanus, who refurbished or enlarged an *aedicula* dedicated to Silvanus.

2. Giardini Mattei

The following inscriptions were reported in the garden of the Mattei in Trastevere in the late 15th or early 16th century.

a. CIL VI, 115 = Chausson p. 672, inscr. I.

P(ublius) Acilius Felix / d(onum) d(edit) dia(e!) Suriae cum suis.

A votive inscription to Dea Syria erected by Publius Acilius Felix.

b. CIL VI, 116 = Chausson p. 672, inscr. J.

Deae Suriae sacr(um) / voto suscept(o) pro / salute / [[-----]] / [[-----]] / Aug(usti)
 Germanici / pontificis maximi tr(ibunicia) pot(estate) / D(ecimus) Veturius Antigonus /
 D(ecimus) Veturius Sp(urii) f(ilius) Philo / D(ecimus) Veturius Albanus / pater cum
 fili(i)s posuit.

Inscription on the base of a statue of the seated Dea Syria. The date of the inscription is not

certain. Some argue that the emperor whose name is erased was Maximinus, others Nero.

c. CIL VI, 117 = Chausson p. 673, inscr. K.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) sacr(um) / voto suscept(o) pro salute / [[-----]] / [[-----]] /
Aug(usti) Germanici / pontificis maximi tr(ibunicia) pot(estate) / D(ecimus) Veturius
Antigonus / D(ecimus) Veturius Sp(uri) f(ilius) Philo / D(ecimus) Veturius Albanus /
pater cum fili(i)s posuit.

Inscription on the base of a statue of Jupiter which stood next to the previous statue.

d. CIL VI, 429 = Chausson p. 674, inscr. L.

Iovi Sabaz(io) / C(aius) Nunnius / Alexander / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)

Votive altar decorated with garlands and rams' heads, dedicated by Gaius³⁰ Nunnius³¹ Alexander to Jupiter Sabazius. According to Lane it dates to the Flavian era.³²

e. CIL VI, 430 = Chausson p. 674, inscr. M.

<<C(aius) Nunnius>> / Alexander / donum dedit / Iovi Sabazio.

A second dedicatory inscription to Jupiter Sabazius by the same Nunnius Alexander. It is on a small base of white marble.

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

Aquila / Soli / Alagabalo / Iulius Balbillus.

Inscription on a small base which presumably supported the eagle which, the inscription states, Julius Balbillus dedicated to Sol Elagabal. The inscription itself does not survive and 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 same spelling was also reported for a second inscription connected with Balbillus (below, 2j). In the latter case the transmission proved to be incorrect when that inscription was rediscovered in the 1890s, the correct reading being simply *Elagabalo*. If our fifteenth and sixteenth century sources could misspell *Elagabalo* once, it is quite possible they did so twice.

g. CIL VI, 710 = Chausson p. 675, inscr. N = C2q.1.

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

³⁰ The *praenomen* is usually given as Q(uintus), but Chausson cites Dessau as having corrected it to C(aius). The altar is currently in the Detroit Institute of Arts (37.185), but I have not seen it.

³¹ Chausson gives his name as Nummius.

³² Lane 1985, 30 nr. 61.

coh(orte) III // L(ucius) Umbricius / Priscus / libens animo / d(onum) d(edit). //
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!³³

A magnificent votive altar dating to the late first century AD. For a full description see our
catalogue C2q.1.

h. 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),

Inscription on a small marble base, dated to January 20th, 201. The abbreviations in line 4 have
also been read as *s(acra) sol(e) ded(icata)*, but this reading strikes me as less likely in view of the
other inscriptions on which Balbillus identifies himself as *sacerdos Solis*. The inscription
commemorates a dedication to Claudius Iulianus, the prefect of the *annonae*, by Tiberius Iulius
Balbillus, priest of the sun.³⁴

i. 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
Ceriali / co(n)s(ulibus).

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* seems the preferable choice. The inscription was erected by Iulius Balbillus, a
priest of the sun, in honour of the Vestal Virgin Terentia Flavola.

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

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

A small, square marble base, probably erected during the reign of Heliogabalus (218-222), by the
freedman Eudemon in honour of his patron Titus Iulius Balbillus, here identified as priest of Sol
Elagabal, although *Elagabali* was later erased. Jucundus saw the base in the Mattei gardens in the
late 15th 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 19th century the inscription was rediscovered in the palazzo Rossi-Ferraioli on the

³³ Translation based on the French translation in Chausson (1995, 675).

³⁴ On Claudius Iulianus, cf. Sijpesteijn 1990, 124-5.

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*.³⁵ Chausson overlooked Gatti's corrections and builds a substantial argument on the assumption that *Alagabali* is the correct reading.³⁶

k. CIL VI, 3719 = 310331 = C2b.1.

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

A marble altar erected by Eumolpus, an imperial slave responsible for the furniture in Nero's Golden House and his daughter Claudia Pallas 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.³⁷

l. (IGUR 119 = Chausson p. 677, inscr. O)

This is a bilingual inscription in Greek and Palmyrene commemorating the dedication of a silver statue to Aglibol and Malachbel. Although Chausson lists it here it is unclear whether it stood in the Mattei collection.³⁸ See 3m.

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

Ἡλί _ νικήτ / Βάλβιλλος ουοκάτος / ξ δάτων σωθε ς / δατα νενκα
λέοντι / π Βάσσου ερέως

This was a Greek inscription on a small base in the Mattei gardens. It is now lost and the manuscript copies made 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.

3. Other

³⁵ *NSc* 1897, 418.

³⁶ 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 practice. 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.

³⁷ Bergmann 1998, 195.

³⁸ Pirro Ligorio places this aedicula relief in the vineyard of Mario Scapuccio on the Janiculum (*LTUR* p. 335 s.v. Sol Malachbelus).

a. CIL VI, 399 (Palmer only)

Iovi O(ptimo) M(aximo) / et deae Suriae / et Genio venalici(i) / C(aius) Granius Hilarus / cum Lissia Sabina / u(ti) v(overant).

This inscription is listed by Palmer because it is dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Dea Syria, and the *Genius* of the slave market. He sees an analogy with CIL VI 115-7 (2a-c) in the *giardini Mattei*, but there is a closer analogy, in my opinion, with CIL VI, 396 *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) et Genio / venalic(ii) (...)*, CIL VI, 397 *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) et / Genio p(opuli) R(omani) et venalici(i) (...)*, or to CIL VI, 398: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / et Soli Divino / et Genio / venalici(i) (...)* dated to respectively AD 60, AD 63, and AD 86.

b. CIL VI, 405 = 30757 (Palmer only)

Iovi Optimo / Maxim(o) Damasceno / T(itus) Cassius Myron / veteranus Augg(ustorum) / d(onum) d(edit)

Palmer argues that this inscription - a dedication to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Damascenus is relevant because it is currently at the S. Maria in Trastevere.

c. CIL VI, 699 = Chausson p. 684, inscr. *Vbis*.

Domino Soli v(otum) s(olvit) Ti(berius) Cl(audius) / Amerimnus lictor curiatus.

Palmer does not mention this inscription but Chausson lists it on the grounds that it was in the house of the Porcari. This family also owned an inscription dedicated to a second Vestal Virgin by Balbillus (CIL VI, 2129 - 3j) and closely similar to CIL VI, 2130 (2i) which was in the *giardini Mattei*. Both inscriptions must come from the same location he feels, making it likely that the Porcari also acquired other inscriptions from that site - i.e. the *vigna Bonelli*. Chausson's reasoning on this is somewhat confusing as he states that the inscription was later acquired by Paolo de Alexiis and then reacquired by the Porcari (it is now lost), for which he quotes Lanciani.³⁹ In fact, Lanciani merely states that it was Giulio Porcari who acquired at least 14 pieces from Paolo de Alexiis in, or shortly before, 1521.⁴⁰ He gives no indication that the Alexii had acquired some or all of these pieces from the Porcari previously, nor that they were found in Trastevere (cf. CIL VI, 728 - 3f). On the other hand, Giulio Porcari senior was married to Girolama Mattei, and Giulio Porcari junior to Faustina Mattei, so that it is conceivable that some of the inscriptions in the Mattei collection, such as CIL 2130 (2i), were acquired from the Alexii and given to the Mattei by the Porcari. Speculation, of course, which simply shows how problematic the line of reasoning is that Palmer and Chausson take.

³⁹ Chausson 1995, 683-5. For a drawing of the inscription see *Boll.d'Arte* 18 (1983), 82.

⁴⁰ Lanciani 1902, 100, 116.

- d. CIL VI, 709 = Chausson p. 667, inscr. C
] / C(aius) Iulius Anicetus / aram sacratam Soli Divino / voto suscepto animo libens
d(onum) d(edit).

An inscription now incorporated in the 18th-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), and hence it is included by both Chausson and Palmer.

- e. 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].

An altar erected by Quintus Octavius Daphnicus commemorating that he built a *tricia* for Sol Victor with permission of the *kalatores*, who also allowed him to perform a sacrifice. The *tricia* is interpreted as a gazebo (*trichila*) by Palmer and is taken to be short for *triclinium* (dining room) by Chausson.⁴¹ The mention of the *triciam* recalls the *tricias* 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 (see C2a.4). A range of readings has been proposed for *a sei[3]*; none are convincing, but the reading *a sep[tem Caesaribus]* preferred by Palmer must be rejected. It is either too long for the available space or requires highly unusual abbreviations. This votive altar was found "fuori posto" in the *vigna Velli*.⁴²

- f. CIL VI, 728 = Chausson p. 684, inscr. *Vquater*.
Soli Invicto / sacrum / Cornelius Maximus / (centurio) coh(ortis) X pr(aetoriae) ex voto.

This inscription, not included by Palmer, is already mentioned by Cola di Rienzo in his *sylloge* of inscriptions written between 1344 and 1347. He indicates that it was found on the Quirinal near the church of S. Susanna.⁴³ It is mentioned by Chausson because it came into the Alexii collection and was acquired from them by the Porcari in or before 1521 (see above). The inscription is a dedication to Sol Invictus by a centurion Cornelius Maximus.

- g. CIL VI, 739 = Chausson p. 684, inscr. *Vter*.
Deo / Soli Invicto / P(ublius) Pomponius / Clitus / ex voto.

⁴¹ Palmer's definition is preferable; cf. *Copa* 8: *tricia 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 *tricia* occurs: *CIL* VI, 4711; 15593; 29394; 29958; XIV, 1636.

⁴² *LTUR* s.v. Sol Malachbelus, 335).

⁴³ Lanciani 1902, 39.

salute?..] / [.....]liae / [....]niv[...].

This inscription, a dedication to Sol Invictus Malachbel, was found in the Tiber near the Ponte Rotto.

m. (IGUR 119 = Chausson p. 677, inscr. O)

Chausson and Palmer locate this inscription in the Mattei collection, but that is not certain; cf. Inscription 2l.

n. IGUR 121 = Chausson p. 670, inscr. *Fbis*.

A fragment of an inscription consisting only of the name *Astarte*.

o. IGUR 125.⁴⁵

An inscription for Helios Mithras Astrobrontos.

The evidence: How many temples?

Do these votive reliefs, inscriptions and family connections amount to convincing evidence for a small group of Sol-worshippers in the milieu of oriental freedmen in Rome centred on a Syrian shrine?⁴⁶ There are a number of reasons for caution. In the first place the very concept of “Sol-adherent” is problematic in the context of Roman religion. Bergmann characterizes Eumolpus (Cat C2b.1) as an “echten Anhänger des Sonnenkultes” whose votive relief was not a “Gelegenheitsweiheung” but was rooted in his longstanding membership of a congregation of worshippers connected with the solar cult(s) attested in Trastevere.⁴⁷ In particular her use of the word *Gemeinde* for that “congregation” gives this whole concept strong Christianizing overtones, no doubt unintended, but introducing an element into the discussion for which we have no evidence. The inscriptions and reliefs that we have certainly indicate interest variously in Sol or some regional deity such as Malakbel assimilated with Sol. But they do not give any indication of a “congregation of Sol worshippers”.

But christianizing assumptions aside, there are more fundamental reasons for caution. In my opinion Palmer and Chausson over-interpret the scattered evidence they have gathered. I see no evidence to support their contention that all these inscriptions come from the *vigna Bonelli* area, and even if they do I do not see why we must assume that they also then come from one ancient sanctuary with dedicants and deities who are uniformly oriental, Syrian in particular, and to a large degree Palmyrene.

That most of the inscriptions come from either the *vigna Bonelli* or the *Giardini Mattei* seems fairly certain, but neither Palmer nor Chausson offer any evidence for their assertion - fundamental to their whole argument - that the two provenances are essentially the

⁴⁵ Not listed by Chausson.

⁴⁶ Palmer (1981, 372-381) proposes a “sanctuary of the sun” on the *Via Longa Aquilae* which ran alongside the Tiber at the foot of the Janiculum.

⁴⁷ Bergmann 1998, 195.

This is another inscription from the house of the Alexii that later came into the possession of the Porcari. It too is not included by Palmer. The inscription is a dedication to Sol Invictus by Publius Pomponius Clitus.

h. CIL VI, 755.

Soli Invic/to et Lunae / Aeternae / C(ai) Vetti Ger/mani lib(erti) / duo Para/tus et Her/mes dederunt.

Chausson does not include this inscription, but Palmer does as it was found near the S. Cecilia in Trastevere. It is a dedication to Sol Invictus and Luna Aeterna by two freedmen of Gaius Vettius Germanus, Paratus and Hermes.

i. 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).

A small base with an inscription dated to AD 199. It too stood in the house of the Porcari, but was lost when the collection was dispersed in the early 17th century after the death of Francesco Porcari.⁴⁴ It is a dedication by Balbillus, priest of Sol, to Septimius Severus.

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

Numisiae Ma/ximillae v(irgini) V(estali) / max(imae) Ti(tus) 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).

This inscription, dated to AD 201, is closely similar to CIL 2130 (2i) of AD 215. However, it stood in the house of the Porcari rather than in the garden of the Mattei. It is dedicated to the Vestal Virgin Numisia Maximilla by Iulius Balbillus, priest of Sol.

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

Ti(to) 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).

Dated to AD 199, this inscription was set up by Eutyches, an imperial freedman, for his excellent friend Iulius Balbillus, priest of Sol. This inscription was not found in Trastevere and was not part of either the Mattei or the Porcari collection.

l. CIL VI, 31036 = Chausson p. 679, *Pbis*.

[D]eo Soli Inv[ic]to / Malachibe[lo] / Aelius Long[...] / (centurio) frument(arius) / pr[o

⁴⁴ Lanciani 1902, 116

same. The location of the 19th c. vigna at site of the Piazza Ippolito Nievo a few hundred metres South of the Porta Portese, is secure. But Chausson thinks that the *vigna Bonelli* is also the site of the fifteenth century *Giardini Mattei*, stating baldly that these gardens were “dans le Trastévère au delà de la Porta Portese, vers le sud”.⁴⁸ That could coincide with the Vigna Bonelli, but Chausson is frustratingly vague and gives no source for this statement.⁴⁹ He also states explicitly that the garden of Battista Giacomo Mattei where 15th century witnesses report that the inscriptions were *displayed* must coincide with the place where they were *found* - i.e. outside the Porta Portese.⁵⁰ Judging by the (unnamed) “anciens recueils” cited by Chausson himself he is mistaken on both counts, for the lost inscription IGUR 124 is placed “in imo horto domus Matheiorum Transtiburtinae”,⁵¹ and that garden is also described as a “small garden by the bridge to the Tiber island.”⁵² This *domus* of the Mattei was their 15th century residence at the Piazza in Piscinula, up by the Tiber island about 1.5 km north of the Piazza Nievo.

The *giardini Mattei*, then, were *not* south of the Porta Portese, but quite a distance north of it and hence their location does not support the hypothesis that the Mattei inscriptions must come from the general area of the vigna Bonelli. Of course, it is still possible that the Mattei found the inscriptions in the area of the vigna Bonelli and carried them off to their palazzo. This is what Lanciani thought, but he did so solely because he believed that these inscriptions of “culti superstiziosi” form a cohesive group and therefore must have been found together, with the Vigna Bonelli being the closest likely provenance. Coarelli rejects this with good reason, pointing out that basically the antiquities in that garden could have been found anywhere.⁵³ Even if we limit ourselves to Trastevere, the vigna Bonelli area is not the only likely place whence the Mattei could have acquired inscriptions of this nature. For despite the fact that, as Palmer (1981, 372-3) himself emphasizes, our archaeological knowledge of this corner of Rome is relatively superficial and quite confused, we know of at least one other Syrian sanctuary only about 200 m from the vigna Bonelli, namely the one in the *Lucus Furrinae* on the grounds of the Villa

⁴⁸ Chausson 1995, 671-2. Palmer (1981, 372 n. 50) simply states that “the old collezione Mattei contained pieces from the same area” (as the vigna Bonelli), without elaborating or providing supporting evidence.

⁴⁹ Chausson (1995, 671) also 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 15th 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. Cf. Palmer 1981, 371 fig. 1.

⁵⁰ Chausson 1995, 671-2 n. 16.

⁵¹ Chausson 1995, 678.

⁵² Lanciani 1902, 112.

⁵³ According to Coarelli (1982, 50) “la presenza di un reperto negli Orti Mattei in Trastevere non garantisce affatto, come per lo più si ritiene, la provenienza di esso da questa zona di Roma, dal momento che in questi Orti furono concentrati certamente materiali di varia origine”. Chausson (1995, 671) takes a different position, arguing that the internal cohesion of the Mattei collection indicates that they must have all come from the same spot.

Sciarra.⁵⁴ The presence of a second Syrian shrine - unknown to Lanciani - so close to the one postulated by Chausson and Palmer makes it impossible to maintain that all the inscriptions in 15th c. garden of the *domus Mattheiorum* must have come from only the one sanctuary - namely the one they locate in the vigna Bonelli - rather than a number of different shrines including, for example, the one higher up the slopes of the Janiculum at the *Lucus Furrinae*.

As for the inscriptions found in the 19th c. in the vigna Bonelli. Chausson and Palmer both take for granted that they all come from a single sanctuary. To argue this one must show that they were found more or less *in situ*, and fairly close together. Neither Chausson nor Palmer provides such evidence and Palmer acknowledges that the area from which these inscriptions derive was “extensive”.⁵⁵ The fact is that as far as the precise provenance of the inscriptions from within that extensive area is concerned, what evidence we have paints a rather muddled picture. One inscription - Anicetus’ plea to refrain from defacing the walls with graffiti (CIL VI, 52 - 1c) - has an unrelated inscription on the reverse side, suggesting re-use before it was deposited, though which side is oldest is not clear. The two surviving parts of Anicetus’ other inscription from the vigna - CIL VI, 2185 (1d), commemorating his restoration of the *porticus Solis* - were found separately, in 1859 and 1887. The two similar but very fragmentary, bilingual Latin/Greek inscriptions commemorating the dedication of an *aedes* to Bel (CIL 50, 51 - 1a-b) were also found on separate occasions. A fragment of a relief with Astarte (IGUR 121 - 3n) that was long deemed to be the upper corner of the bilingual Palmyrene/Greek inscription and relief (IGUR 120 - 1e) from the vigna Bonelli, actually does not belong to it at all, although it too was found in the

⁵⁴ The 17th c. wall of Urban VIII now physically separates the site of 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 15th 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.

⁵⁵ Palmer 1981, 372. Visconti (1860) is rather vague about the exact find spot of these inscriptions. He first describes (p. 422) the architecture as “avanzi d’ottimo laterizio, che doveano far parte di fabbriche assai vaste”, and states: “Io non ho saputo farmi un’idea chiara della totalità di questo edificio (...) perchè non ho potuto vederne se non poco alla volta”. Bits and pieces of the building(s) were excavated and then covered again, but what emerged were large, barrel-vaulted rooms with collapsed ceilings, colonnaded 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 to the end of the reign of Hadrian, and he concludes that it was a temple, despite appearances, because of inscriptions found there. On p. 423 he states that IGUR 120 “fu qui trovato” (and that the corner with Astarte was found later); of CIL VI, 50/IGUR 117 he states (p. 428) that it “tornò in luce poco appresso”; of IGUR 122 he says that it was “estratto dalle stesse ruine” (p. 431). He sees these three inscriptions as clear evidence for a Palmyrene temple to Bel and then turns to CIL VI, 52 which he also connects with the same temple (p. 434). It seems likely, however, that this inscription was not found in the same ruins as the previous three, for Visconti simply states that it was “trovata pure in vicinanza dei monumenti testè dichiarati” which implies that it was found in the general area, but not in the same spot. That Anicetus’ other inscription, CIL VI, 2185=31034 was not found on the same spot emerges clearly from Visconti’s description (p. 439) of the discovery of the lower section of this inscription in 1859 (the upper part was found 28 years later): “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.” Apparently this inscription was found at a different time and on a different spot than the Palmyrene ones, although Visconti is tempted to connect both it and the Daphnicus altar C2a.4 to the temple of Bel nonetheless.

vigna.⁵⁶ To these we should add the Greek dedication of AD 134 to Ares Theos Patroios (IGUR 122 - 1f), a fragment of a Greek inscription of the mid second c. AD on the remains of an entablature of a building (IGUR 123 - 1g), and, finally, CIL VI, 642 (1h) commemorating the expansion of an *aedicula* for Silvanus.

There is no unity in this group either of date, of language, of deity, or of inscription, which makes it all the more necessary for Palmer and Chausson to provide some other form of firm evidence that the inscriptions were found in clear relation to one another. Given the degree of damage the inscriptions had suffered it is possible that they were not found *in situ*, and as Palmer and Chausson themselves affirm, inscriptions can travel, for they argue that Anicetus' votive inscription to Sol Divinus, incorporated in the 18th c. porch of the S. Cecilia, probably also originated from the same area as Anicetus' other two inscriptions, in their view the vigna Bonelli a kilometer south of the church. Fair enough, but then we must also admit the possibility that other inscriptions travelled *to* the vigna. The fact that Anicetus' most famous inscription, recording the permission of the kalatores for the refurbishment of the portico of Sol, was found in two pieces surely indicates that it was not found *in situ*. Is it not possible that some of the Syrian inscriptions found their way downhill from the Syrian sanctuary in the Lucus Furrinae, on much higher ground and a mere 200 metres away? It is worth noting that the higher sanctuary yielded fragments of a lintel with scant remains of an inscription tentatively restored as B]ELO [Pal]M[yreno3] / [3] Auc[// [3]M].⁵⁷ It also yielded a relief of Atargatis⁵⁸, a triangular altar with busts of Sol and Luna (C2b.3),⁵⁹ a fragment of an inscription dedicating a bronze Fortuna to, possibly, Iarhibol⁶⁰, and the like.⁶¹ On that evidence at least some of the inscriptions found in the vigna Bonelli would not have been out of place further up-slope in the Lucus Furrinae area.

But even if none of the vigna Bonelli inscriptions "travelled" there, one still need not postulate only one shrine on the extensive site. Visconti certainly did not believe that. He noted the presence of an *aedicula* of Silvanus in the same area (inscr. 1h), as well as an unidentified temple, and there is no reason why there cannot have been more sanctuaries.⁶² Closely clustered shrines and temples to a variety of deities were hardly a rarity in the Roman world.⁶³

⁵⁶ Chausson 1995, 669 - 670, citing Moretti.

⁵⁷ CIL VI, 36794. Cf. Goodhue 1975, 13. 1. Ensoli 2003, 45-59.

⁵⁸ Goodhue 1975, 23.

⁵⁹ Not to be taken as an indication of cult for Sol and Luna of course.

⁶⁰ Goodhue 1975, 34-5; CIL VI, 36795:] / Fortu[nam 3] / aene[am 3] / Iar[ibolo(?) 3] / L(ucius) Lar[cius

⁶¹ Phase 1 of the Syrian shrine in the Lucus Furrinae is dated to the mid 1st c. AD, and it remained in use, with two subsequent building phases, until the 4th c. (Goodhue 1975, 41, 48-53).

⁶² Visconti 1860, 416-7, 448-50.

⁶³ In Rome one need but think of the four adjacent temples in the Largo Argentina and the three temples incorporated in the S. Nicola in Carcere; for a more haphazard cluster, one can also think of the four closely grouped temples in Ostia regio 1, XV (temple of Hercules, tetrastyle temple perhaps for Aesculapius, temple of the Round

What emerges from the preceding is that we cannot assume *prima facie* that all inscriptions in the lists of Palmer and Chausson necessarily came from one and the same shrine. Chausson repeatedly argues that they form such a coherent group that they cannot have come from more than one site,⁶⁴ but I do not see that cohesion at all, nor do I see any significant overlap between the inscriptions discovered at the vigna Bonelli in the 19th century and those known to have been in the old Mattei collection. In terms of the deities mentioned, the inscriptions adduced by Palmer and Chausson can be broken down as follows:

Vigna Bonelli	Giardini Mattei	Other⁶⁵
Deities:		
Aglibol	(Aglibol) OR:	Aglibol (see 2l/3m)
Ares (theos patroios)	-	-
-	-	Astarte ⁶⁶
Bel	-	-
-	Dea Syria	Dea Syria
Iarhibol	-	-
-	Jupiter Optimus Maximus	-
-	-	Jupiter Optimus Maximus Damascenus
-	Jupiter Sabazios	-
-	-	Luna
-	-	Luna Aeterna
Malachbel	Malachbel/Sol Sanctissimus	Malachbel ⁶⁷
Silvanus	-	-
Sol	Sol	Sol
-	-	Sol Dominus
-	-	Sol Divinus
-	Sol Invictus	Sol Invictus
-	Sol Elagabalus	-
-	-	Sol victor

Altar for an unknown deity, and the Hall of the Altars, possibly of the *Sodales Arulenses*).

⁶⁴ Chausson 1995, 671-2, 685, 693.

⁶⁵ Inscriptions adduced by Chausson and/or Palmer in support of their argument that are either from the Porcari and/or Alexii collections, are of unknown provenance, or are known not to be from Trastevere.

⁶⁶ Provenance unknown because the relief fragment does not belong to insc 1e as was long thought; cf. Chausson 1995, 669.

⁶⁷ Calzini Gysens in *LTUR* 335 s.v. Sol Malachbelus quotes Pirro Ligorio who states that the aedicula relief IGUR 119 was found “nel monte ianiculo nela vigna di Mess. Mario Scappuccio”. This is not the vigna Bonelli.

Dedicants (only those with more than one inscription)

Iulius Anicetus

-

Iulius Anicetus

-

Ti. Iulius Balbillus

Ti. Iulius Balbillus

The difference between the various groups of deities is quite marked and the distribution of the dedicants also does not show any overlap between the groups of inscriptions. These inscriptions clearly do not cohere into a single group. In fact, upon closer inspection it seems fairly clear that the vigna Bonelli inscriptions form three clusters to which the Mattei group adds at least one other. Of the vigna inscriptions, one cluster is related to the *porticus Solis* restored by Anicetus (mid 1st - early 2nd c. AD) with a consular date of AD 102. The second is centred on a temple for the Palmyrene triad of Bel, Aglibol and Iarhibol, with a dedication to Ares Patroios dated according to the Seleucid calendar to AD 134 as the only dated inscription. This use of the Seleucid calendar is a notable feature of the second cluster, as is the consistent use of either Greek or Palmyrene in often multilingual texts (on only two inscriptions one of those languages is Latin). In one way or another the dedicants also identify themselves as Palmyrene and with the exception of the dedication to Ares, they include the Palmyrene names of their gods on their dedications. The third group consists of the single Silvanus inscription, which is not connected with either of these two clusters, but stands on its own.

There is no evidence that Anicetus' *porticus* was connected to the temple of Bel, and strong reasons to think it was not. To begin with, Bel is not Sol,⁶⁸ and the inscription cannot, therefore, refer to a porticus "of the temple of Bel". In the second place, the inscriptions of Anicetus give no evidence of any Palmyrene connections: their language is Latin only, the deity is given a Latin name with no indication that a non-Roman deity is meant, permission of the *kalatores pontificum et flaminum* is involved, implying Roman rather than foreign cult, and the consular rather than the Seleucid dating system is used. The only reasonable conclusion is that Anicetus' inscriptions belong to a portico (and sanctuary?) of Sol that stood in the same general area but was unrelated to a Palmyrene sanctuary of Bel.

Of the monuments in the Mattei collection, the impressive altar for Sol sanctissimus (C2q.1) is the only one that is clearly Palmyrene, with its bilingual inscription. It was in the gardens of their Palazzo in Piscinula by the 15th c., and its provenance is unknown. It could certainly be from the temple of Bel in the area of the Vigna Bonelli, but if the aedicula relief from the vigna Scapuccio (inscr. 2l/3m) dedicated to Aglibol and Malachbel in the year 547 of the Seleucid era (= AD 236) represents a different Palmyrene shrine on the Janiculum, the provenance of the Sol Sanctissimus altar becomes less certain. Certainly I see no reason to insist that there can only have been one Palmyrene sanctuary in Rome or even in Trastevere.

As for the other inscriptions from the giardini Mattei, Chausson argues that they must all come from the same site - which he presumes to be the actual gardens themselves - because it is

⁶⁸ 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 thalamos 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. On Syrian solar deities in general, Seyrig 1971, 1973.

hard to imagine that the Mattei would collect only inscriptions connected to oriental deities.⁶⁹ Besides being condescending, this line of thought assumes rather a lot. Do we have any reason to believe that the ancient monuments in the garden of their palazzo in Piscinula were the only antiquities the powerful Mattei family collected in the 15th century? What of their palazzo across the river, also built in the 15th century, on the Piazza Mattei? Furthermore, I see no reason to reject the possibility of careful thematic collecting on the part of the Mattei. One could easily imagine the quite magnificent altar to Sol Sanctissimus (C2q.1) coming into their possession and forming the focal point (and impetus) for a collection of inscriptions related to foreign cults in the little garden by the Tiber of their *domus Transtiburtina*.

We do not actually know how the antiquities came into their possession, and certainly cannot exclude a single provenance, but the fact that the Balbillus inscriptions ended up in two different collections is noteworthy, especially because this happened to the two most closely related inscriptions of the group, CIL VI 2129 and 2130 (2i and 3j). It is reasonable to assume that all the Balbillus inscriptions (with the obvious exception of CIL VI, 2250, dedicated on behalf of rather than by Balbillus) came from the same site, and that must almost certainly be the case with these two, given their close similarity. Thus the fact that these two did not both end up in the *giardini Mattei* suggests that the Mattei did not necessarily control the site where they were found, but acquired their Balbillus inscriptions from another party such as the Porcari. And if they acquired Balbillus inscriptions from a third party, then why not some of their other inscriptions as well? Of course it is equally possible that the Porcari acquired their Balbillus inscription from the Mattei. Without more specific evidence one could speculate at length, but on the present evidence, the assumption that the Mattei inscriptions were not all from one location is clearly preferable to Chausson's contention that they were.

Leaving the question of acquisition aside, what is obvious is that the Mattei collection in their garden in Trastevere is rather more heterogeneous than Palmer and Chausson acknowledge. Besides the Palmyrene element, discussed above, and the Balbillus group, only part of which ended up in the Mattei collection, we have two dedications to Dea Syria of which one is twinned with a dedication to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, and two dedications by the same person to Jupiter Sabazius. Chausson makes a point of the onomastic possibility that all the dedicants of these monuments were Palmyrenes, but it is very risky to attempt to establish a Roman's ethnicity by his name, and none of the names in these inscriptions are overtly Palmyrene or Syrian.⁷⁰ That alone constitutes a marked contrast between these inscriptions and the Palmyrene ones from the vigna Bonelli discussed earlier. In addition, these five "Syrian" inscriptions from the Mattei collection are in Latin only, rather than bilingual. We should note, finally, that there is nothing particularly 'Palmyrene' about the Syrian goddess, whose cult centred on Hierapolis-Bambyce, and that Sabazius has no particular Syrian connections at all, far less Palmyrene ones. While not impossible, it is rather unlikely that we should find them all together in a Palmyrene

⁶⁹ Chausson 1995, 171-2 n. 16

⁷⁰ The names are primarily Greek and occur widely, including Palmyra. Such Greek names tell us very little about a person's ethnicity, and even less about his religious activities and responsibilities. Most of the *kalatores* listed in Anicetus' inscription had Greek names, and yet as assistants to the *flamines* and *pontifices* were actively involved in Roman public religion

sanctuary. Dea Syria in particular is much more likely to have had her own temple in Trastevere.⁷¹

Further, closer examination of archival material and old excavation reports pertaining to these inscriptions and reliefs will possibly clarify and probably further complicate our understanding of the religious centres in Trastevere to which they pertain. What is clear at this point is that the evidence presented by Chausson and Palmer does not support the hypothesis of a single shrine of Syrian solar cults in which this whole mixed group of inscriptions and reliefs was displayed. It makes far more sense to assume a number of different sanctuaries, of which at least one was Palmyrene, one was dedicated to Silvanus, and one to Sol. The Mattei inscriptions also offer evidence of sanctuaries, somewhere in Rome, to Dea Syria and, perhaps, Jupiter Sabazius.

About that sanctuary for Sol we know very little, but on the strength of Anicetus' two inscriptions we can probably safely assume an open-air sanctuary - temples to the sun were often unroofed⁷² - with, apparently, a porticus of the first century AD (or earlier), restored by Anicetus early in Trajan's reign. Based on the family connections it is not unreasonable to attribute Eumolpus' votive relief to this sanctuary (inscr. 2k, cat. C2b.1). To this we can probably also add a votive altar dedicated by Quintus Octavius Daphnicus, a wine merchant (inscr. 3e, cat. C2a.4). Besides being dedicated to Sol, the altar mentions Daphnicus financing the building of a *triclina* with *permissu kalatorum* and states that the kalatores also gave him dispensation to perform a sacrifice. The kalatores thus fulfilled the same role for Daphnicus' building activities as they did for Anicetus. The fact that he calls Sol *victor* rather than *invictus* suggests this altar dates to the earlier part of the 2nd c. AD, when *invictus* had not yet become the established term to indicate Sol's power,⁷³ 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 below).⁷⁴ Anicetus' votive relief to Sol Divinus (CIL VI, 709) presumably also belongs to this sanctuary.

None of these inscriptions give any indication that a specific, regional solar cult from, say, Syria was located at this shrine. The fact that Anicetus refers to Sol as *divinus* has been taken as proof of his Syrian character, but this is not supported by any evidence that I am aware of.⁷⁵ Sol Divinus is not often mentioned in inscriptions, but occurs primarily in Rome, in Northeastern

⁷¹ Coarelli 1982, 52.

⁷² The lack of an actual *aedes* for Sol would explain why none is mentioned in Anicetus' inscription. To speak of a porticus of a god (*porticus solis*) without mentioning a building - such as an *aedes* - to which that porticus is connected is quite rare. Cf. IG 12.3, 1079 = CIL III, 490 *porticula Minervae*; CIL VI, 256 *Herculea porticus*; CIL VI, 542 *Silvani signum <et?> porticus*; Slightly less rare, but also uncommon are dedications of a porticus to a god, without the explicit mention of an *aedes* or *templum*. Cf. CIL X, 5779, dedicated to Jupiter Atratus and the Di Indigetes *cum aedicula et base et porticu*; CIL XIII, 2873, 3063. Normally, some connection is made in the inscription between porticus and a temple to which it was attached.

⁷³ Cf. AE 1968, 282, the only other case of Sol Victor I know of.

⁷⁴ The inscription has VI[ictori, with no space before the V for additional letters, making the reading in]VI[cto impossible, although one still comes across it (e.g. van Haepere 2005, 47).

⁷⁵ Scheid (2005, 231)

Italy, and in Pannonia, and only once (in Latin) in Syria.⁷⁶ I do not know of any direct Greek translation for Sol Divinus in any part of the Empire.⁷⁷ Chausson points out that Anicetus is a Greek name and that pope Anicetus (155-166) was a Syrian, but in Greek inscriptions the name Aniketos is actually rather rare, while in Latin inscriptions it is more common and quite widespread. Again we should be careful not to read more ethnicity into a name than it actually reveals. It is true that Eumolpus, Daphnicus and Anicetus all have Greek names and that the sanctuary stood outside the pomerium in an area where foreign cult centres abounded. But this part of Trastevere was by no means exclusively foreign. Somewhere here stood the temple of Fors Fortuna, reputedly founded by Servius Tullius and restored by Tiberius, and we also find Juno, Hercules, Silvanus, the Lares, and the like in this part of Rome.⁷⁸

It seems possible that the *sacerdos Solis* Balbillus was also attached to this sanctuary, but again we cannot be certain. As discussed above, the find circumstances surrounding the group of Balbillus inscriptions are not clear. It is worth noting, however, that Balbillus is not the only *sacerdos Solis* we know of from Rome, the others being M. Aurelius Bassus,⁷⁹ M. Antonius Sotericus Haruspex,⁸⁰ and M. Aurelius Victor.⁸¹ We also know a *sacerdos Solis Invicti*, T. Aelius Tryfon.⁸² Whether these were all *sacerdotes* at the same temple we cannot be certain, but there is possibly a connection between Bassus and Balbillus. In a Greek inscription from the giardini Mattei that is now lost, a certain Balbillus thanks Helios Aniketos for saving him from drowning and he dates his offering “in the priesthood of Bassus”.⁸³ Whether this is the same Balbillus as the *sacerdos Solis* or a relative - his father perhaps - is difficult to say; in fact, the dedicant may not have been named Balbillus at all, as only the final s was clearly legible. Be that as it may, it is hard to imagine the two Bassi not being the same. Bassus was therefore probably priest of Sol

⁷⁶ Rome: CIL VI, 398 (dated to AD 86), 709 (Anicetus’ inscription), 31139 (dated to 25 December AD 128; cf. CIL VI, 31171 simply with Soli and Lunae; Irby-Massie 1996, 298 nr. 8 and 299 nr. 21); Venetia et Histria (Regio X): CIL V, 4948 (= AE 1991, 847); Pannonia: CIL III, 11146, 11147, AE 1977, 630; Syria: AE 1984, 898. The term of *divinus* is rare in general in inscriptions, but does not suggest an “oriental” connotation. Cf. CIL II, 2005, CIL IX, 949, InscrAqu 1, 208.

⁷⁷ The logical translation for *divinus* is $\delta\iota\omicron\varsigma$, a common epithet for Zeus Hypsistos, but I do not know of it occurring with Helios. Greek inscriptions from Rome and environs regularly refer to Zeus Helios *Megalos* Sarapis (IG XIV, 1127; IGUR 77, 99, 106, 189-90, 193-4; cf. CIL VI, 402, 707) and more rarely to Helios Mithras Aniketos, but nothing resembling Sol Divinus.

⁷⁸ Palmer 1981; Scheid 2005, 232-3

⁷⁹ CIL VI, 30799; *FS* 810.

⁸⁰ *AE* 1960, 365; *FS* 672; 3rd-4th c. AD.

⁸¹ CIL VI, 1358; *FS* 887. 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.

⁸² CIL VI, 659; *FS* 488.

⁸³ IGUR 124

before Balbillus, i.e. in the 2nd century AD.⁸⁴

There may also be some connection between Bassus and Aelius Tryfon, as both are known from dedications they made to Silvanus. It is not immediately apparent why priests of Sol should make dedications to that god, but the evidence for a shrine of Silvanus in the same area as Anicetus' portico for Sol thus gains extra significance. T Aurelius Victor should probably be placed in the 3rd c. AD, judging by the lettering style of his inscription,⁸⁵ which means that if these *sacerdotes* were all attached to the same temple and if that temple was the same as the one in which Eumolpus, Anicetus and Daphnicus were active, then we have a significant degree of continuity in that shrine from at least the mid first to the third century AD.

We know very little about these priests. Aurelius Victor was a *vir clarissimus*, i.e. of senatorial rank. This is confirmed by his position of *praefectus feriarum Latinarum*, which was normally reserved for men of senatorial rank, although within a senatorial career it was of relatively minor importance. Balbillus had a powerful patron in the equestrian Claudius Iulianus, as this *praefectus annonae* of AD 201 became the prefect for Egypt a few years later.⁸⁶ A Marcus Aurelius Bassus of equestrian rank shows up in Pannonia in the late 2nd century to bury his grandson,⁸⁷ but we have no evidence that he is the same as our priest of Sol. Nonetheless the priest Bassus was able to erect a fountain house *de suo* which implies certain means. Likewise Anicetus had money to spend as did the wine merchant Daphnicus, while Eumolpus was an imperial freedman with a notable degree of responsibility. Of Aelius Tryfon we know nothing.

These are not men of the highest ranks of society, but they still rank high. They tout their benefactions and take notable pride in their priesthood of Sol, which would appear to afford them considerable social standing, especially when one considers that in the case of Aurelius Victor it is mentioned in one breath with the position of *praefectus feriarum Latinarum*. From the *kalatores pontificum et flaminum* to the chief Vestal Virgins these priests of Sol in Rome highlight their connections with core sectors of Roman religion. Despite their sometimes foreign names, both those active in the cult and the cult itself come across as firmly rooted in Roman society and religion.

What, then, should we make of the one dedication to Soli Alagabalo by Balbillus (CIL VI, 708), and the one mention of him as *sacerdos Solis Elagabali* (CIL VI, 2269)? On the latter inscription *Elagabali* was subsequently erased, and this erasure, I think, gives us the key to understanding this episode in the history of Balbillus' long priesthood.⁸⁸ It would appear, from

⁸⁴ FS. 810 places him in the "mittlere Kaiserzeit".

⁸⁵ FS 887 suggests he may have been a *pontifex Solis*, rather than a *sacerdos*, given his high rank. It seems unlikely, however, that a *vir religiosissimus* or his client would treat the distinction between *sacerdos* and *pontifex* lightly.

⁸⁶ Brunt 1975, 147 nr. 77.

⁸⁷ Šašel Kos 1992.

⁸⁸ Palmer's (1981, 378) suggestion that the erasure was an error of someone who thought *Elagabali* referred to the emperor rather than the god is unnecessary, and overly dismissive of Romans' abilities to read and understand such inscriptions. For Chausson (1995, 694-705) these two mentions of Elagabal are the cornerstone of his extensive

the inscriptions of Balbillus dated between 199 and 215, that he was simply priest to Sol. But a priesthood to Sol as socially important as the one of Balbillus cannot have escaped Heliogabalus' notice when 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' Sol briefly became Sol Elagabal, only to revert back to Sol again after Heliogabalus' death and his god's return to Emesa. After 222, Elagabal was quite literally erased again from Balbillus' title.⁸⁹

Tempting though it is to see these members of the "upper 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 these inscriptions belong together. What they do demonstrate is a continuity of cult for Sol in Rome from the 1st to the 3rd century AD, thus bridging the gap between the Republican cult for Sol and that of Aurelian. There is nothing surprising in this, for the uninterrupted presence, from the Republic to late antiquity, of a temple for Sol connected with the Circus Maximus is undisputable (though often forgotten). That the Sol in Trastevere was also Roman is therefore to be expected. What has wrong-footed both Chausson and Palmer is the unfounded *communis opinio* of earlier scholarship that the cult of Sol in the imperial era was of Syrian origin. Hence they have overlooked the fact that in all the examples discussed above Sol is consistently identified by his Latin name only, without foreign epithet with the (telling) exception of Elagabal, quickly erased. That practise stands in marked contrast to the nomenclature of non-Roman deities in Rome, which consistently highlights their non-Roman origins.⁹⁰

This brings us, finally, to the role of the *kalatores* in the building activities of Anicetus and Daphnicus. Their involvement was apparently official (indicated by the term *permissus*) and covered both the building activities and, in the case of Daphnicus, associated sacrifice. Surely this must mean that the cult of Sol involved was a public and Roman cult rather than a private and foreign one, for the pontifices and flamines and their assistants the *kalatores* were

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 Heliogabalus became emperor, having arrived in Rome from Emesa together with Julia Domna in AD 199. There is no evidence at all, however, that Balbillus was a Syrian, far less that he came from Emesa, and none at all that he travelled with Julia Domna. Chausson does not explain why an Emesan high priest and protégé of the empress had to make do with an equestrian *patronus* still at the beginning of his career in the person of the *vir perfectissimus* Claudius Julianus (CIL VI, 1603). But most importantly: in a city with established temples and *sacerdotes* of Sol, Balbillus cannot simply call himself a *sacerdos Solis* if he actually means a very specific and in many respects quite different god, Sol Elagabal. Chausson fails to mention the erasure of *Elagabali*.

⁸⁹ Cf. *FS* p. 1056 n. 5.

⁹⁰ This is also true in the case of the votive altar for Sol Sanctissimus (C2q.1) from the old Mattei collection. The Palmyrene inscription, the names of the dedicants, and the virtually unparalleled use of the adjective *sanctissimus* for Sol combine to make it perfectly clear to the viewer that this Sol is Malachbel of Palmyra. I know of one other case of Sol Sanctissimus in an inscription, also from Rome (CIL VI, 711), and one case of Sol Sanctus (IDacSMA 271).

responsible for public cult, but had no role to play in private or foreign cult centres.⁹¹ Various ingenious suggestions have been put forward to explain why the *kalatores* played a role in this purportedly private and supposedly Syrian cult of Sol anyway, but none are really satisfactory, nor are they necessary if we simply take the involvement of the *kalatores* at face value, as an indication that the temple of Sol in Trastevere was a public Roman one, on the same footing as, for example, the nearby one for Fors Fortuna.⁹²

Conclusions

The evidence for these four temples is generally tenuous, but allows us to trace the cult of Sol in the city of Rome 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, Sol was a Roman god with deep roots and a modest yet clear presence in the city's religious landscape and calendar.

How can that be reconciled with the highly symbolic, abstract use of the image type [sol] presented and discussed in chapter 4? The issue goes to the heart, I think, of our understanding of Roman notions of divinity and is too complex a subject for a full discussion here. We can raise a few points, however, which can serve as food for thought and future discussion. Most at issue are the assumptions which shape our own notion of divinity, and which clearly colour for example Bergmann's notion, quoted above, of a "congregation" of sun-worshippers at the temple of Sol in Trastevere. I can find no evidence for such "congregations" in our sources, unless one turns to Mithraism. And even if one includes Mithraism, I think the notion of a "congregation of sun worshippers" paints a misleading picture. Within the context of Roman polytheism the notion that Sol was a god was not restricted to those actively involved in the cult of Sol. The godhead of Sol was not a matter of faith but of knowledge, primarily astronomical. The public cult of Sol in Rome was not one to which one chose to adhere, or not, but was a matter of observing proper ritual (sanctified by venerable traditions) in order to maintain correct relations with this particular divine entity. The personal participation in the mysteries of Mithras was likewise not a personal affirmation of faith in the divinity of Sol Invictus Mithras. That would still imply that the divinity of Sol Mithras was a matter of belief, which it was not. Beck argues persuasively that Roman Mithraism was rooted in an understanding of the cosmos that was astronomical, and that Mithraism offered its congregants an experiential cult of which the core principles were rooted in

⁹¹ Scheid 2005, 232.

⁹² Rüpke (*FS* pp. 1532-6) suggests that one of the *kalatores* was an adherent of this cult, and that their involvement was at his request. Van Haepelen (2006, 47-8) suggests that the involvement of the *kalatores* with private cult may have occurred more often, and gives examples of pontifices involved in matters concerning - in part at least - foreign cults. Scheid (2005, 231-3) argues that the public involvement may be connected with the fact that the temple - which he identifies as Syrian and centred on Bel - stood on public land in the *horti Caesaris*, although this land would normally have been administered by magistrates rather than priests. The fact that we know little about the activities of the *kalatores* or *calatores* may be because their activities primarily concerned "lower class" cults, or were otherwise restricted.

perceived fact (i.e. astronomy as the Romans saw it), not a doctrinal religion requiring belief in the metaphysical.⁹³ Mithraists were not congregations of followers of the sun god, but people with a specific, Mithraic understanding of how our core being (“soul”, perhaps) relates to and navigates the divine cosmos. Others may have had different ideas, but almost all agreed that the sun was divine.

The Romans did not differentiate between the physical sun and the sun god. Sound philosophy confirmed ancient tradition that the sun was divine; advanced astronomy furnished the complex and accurate data on which that philosophy was based. This means that in using the image type [sol] as an indexical sign the Romans were, to some degree, envisaging a god as an indexical sign. This is not strange, but it does shed an interesting light on Roman concepts of divinity. At the same time, but on the other end of the spectrum, Aurelian could claim to have seen Sol, suitably anthropomorph, in support of the Roman army at the battle against Zenobia in AD 272. Sol, apparently, is a planet with fixed, predictable, divine motion and as well as a youthful divine charioteer who shows up at battles. My sense is that this is a paradox only if we choose to consider these two aspects of Sol to be incompatible, but that there is no reason why the Romans should do so. In fact, the visual evidence clearly shows that they reconciled these diverse aspects in a single Sol, given that the anthropomorph image type [sol] is more a cosmic symbol than a mythical god. The image types do not inform us of the philosophical or theological lines of thought that enabled Romans to maintain this unity. That is a complex issue well worth exploring, but with the aid of different sources than those discussed here and hence not within the scope of this study.⁹⁴

⁹³ Beck 2006. I am not saying that there was no Mithraic doctrine or story of some sort in which the bull-slaying Mithras played a major role. But the core of Mithraism was cosmic and the divinity of stars and planets as well as what lay beyond. The proof of that divinity was furnished by Graeco-Roman astronomy and was accepted by Mithraists and non Mithraists alike.

⁹⁴ Cf. Ando 2008.