

ROMAN AND BRITON WOMEN FROM *BRITANNIA*

Tais Pagoto Bélo¹

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to reflect on women from the ancient society and their studies, especially from *Britannia*. This work is made up of Romans and Britons women, who composed different costumes, which interspersed, which lived there and which were in some way evidenced by written and/or material vestiges.

This was not a homogenous group, both for the population that had already lodged there and for the one that came later, there was a great variety of ideas about their status and how they should lead their lives.

Materials on Roman and Briton have already been found epigraphically, on altars, tombstones and burials. However, this work will compare these first sources with the work of Tacitus, *Annals*, since this author always seems to place women with pejorative characteristics, very different from the loving and amorous words given to them in these places of death.

Keywords

Romans; Britons; women.

¹ Postdoctoral Researcher, CNPq, State University of Campinas, Campinas, Brazil. E-mail: taispbelo@gmail.com

Resumo

A proposta deste artigo é refletir sobre a mulher na sociedade antiga, em especial na *Britannia*. O trabalho engloba romanas e bretãs que compuseram diferentes costumes, que se entremearam, que ali viveram e que foram, de alguma forma, evidenciadas por vestígios escritos e/ou materiais.

Este não era um grupo homogêneo, ou seja, tanto para a população que ali já havia se alojado quanto para a que veio depois, deveria existir uma grande variedade de ideias a respeito do *status* dessas mulheres e do modo como elas deveriam conduzir suas vidas.

Materiais sobre romanas e bretãs já foram encontrados de maneira epigráfica em altares, lápides e sepultamentos. Contudo, este trabalho compara essas primeiras fontes com a obra de Tácito, *Anais*, uma vez que esse autor parece sempre colocar as mulheres com características pejorativas, muito diferentes das palavras carinhosas e amorosas dadas a elas nesses locais de óbito.

Palavras-chave

Romanas; bretãs; mulheres.

Studies on women of the ancient world

The reconstitution of the past is fundamentally located within the context of the present, just as current policies and social issues impact on the reconstruction of societies (Shanks & Tilley, 1992; Revell, 2016: 5) of the ancient times.

Inspired by some proposals by Lowenthal (1985), we believe that the past is fundamental to know our place today. We are not asserting that there is a direct line between the Roman past and our daily life today in Brazil (Garraffoni & Funari, 2012), as if we were sole heirs and direct of its conquests, or that we are nostalgic of some moment of History, but, on the contrary, our interest in the past lies in understand its multiplicity, how it has different roles in cultures, how it is shaped - in short, how the past is constructed and narrated (Funari & Garraffoni, 2012: 11).

Current feminine segregation creates the necessity of studies which demonstrate that this segregation also existed in other times, since, according to Revell (2016), in a not-so-distant past, ruling elites were shaped in accordance with Greco-Roman policies, using textual and material evidence to justify their current position of power (Revell, 2016: 5).

Studies of gender concerned with Antiquity, as stated by Marilyn Skinner (1993), are still very conservative, hierarchical, and patriarchal (Skinner, 1993; Funari, 1995: 179). This conservatism tends to rely on empirical readings from textual sources, from a common sense. Funari (1995) suggests that this type of approach should be avoided because "only a critical analysis allows understanding of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' as social constructs that vary in terms of social class, gender and ethnicity in different historical periods and in different societies" (Morgan, 1993: 194, Funari, 1995: 180).

Women began to appear in classical studies after Finley, in 1965, published a paper called *The Silent Women of Ancient Rome*, arguing that the sources for the study of women in this area were scarce and that, consequently, scholars could not propose a faithful image of them. Even so, the number of papers on the subject has increased, because new ways of studying them have been found.

Therefore, conditions for better interpreting sources have been developed and various types of expanded studies could encompass women, such as the study of the Roman family, which shows how the relationship between husband and his wife was, the inclusion of patronage for women, which eventually involved them into an economic and social life. Furthermore, it can be also included the theme

of professionalism, found in the works and legal texts. Representations, especially in art, literature and funerary inscriptions, also revealed personal relationships, from mother to father and children. Anthropology and Demography helped in studies about health and diseases, and interest in subjects such as sexuality and eroticism also encouraged scholars to look at the Roman world with other eyes (Rawson, 2006: 324).

In the 1990s, a number of contextual works emerged, putting gender theory into practice and serving as a starting point for criticism of androcentrism. However, some of these approaches were locked in the language of the Second Feminist Wave and in the 'women's discovery', with themes related to the dress and style of female hair, thus ignoring the complexity of sex, sexuality, age, status, ethnicity and other possibilities (Meskell, 1999, Bélo, 2014: 28-29).

Following the Third Feminist Wave, gender studies on age, sexual orientation and ethnicity began, since gender identity should have been conceived as complex, classified by a network of meanings, ranging from individual to individual over time, alongside other networks of symbolic practices located within the concepts of class and race. It was thus defined that female exploitation varies according to the social class, race and ethnic division in which it is inserted (Meskell, 1999, Bélo, 2014: 29).

Eleonor Scott (1995), a British archaeologist, has shown how the study about women is still being suppressed from Academia. Firstly, about the exclusion itself, this scholar mentions that women are completely ignored because of the narratives of the Roman world, which were concentrated in activities in which men were dominant, as well as political activity in Rome and in the provinces; Secondly, she mentions that there is a pseudo-inclusion, which happens when women are included, but they only appear when they are anomalous to male norms; and, finally, she defends the existence of an alienation, in which women are only considered in relation to men or when they threaten the male view of their 'correct' behaviour (Scott 1995: 176-9, Revell, 2016: 2).

Revell (2016) stresses that these types of work should not be minimized and it does not mean that they do not bring contributions, but that these interpretations of the social organization of the Roman world are problematic in relation to the categorization of the individual. This difficulty comes from the Roman sources themselves, who were used to construct hierarchies about idealized discourse, rather than providing a

true narrative that would show the lives of children, women, or slaves. Like material culture, these sources are parts of the meanings by which the Romans defined their 'minorities' (Revell, 2016: 3).

This study was grounded on a holistic approach to the analysis of gender relations (Funari, 1995), which was based on textual and material sources, following the fact that it is the nature of classical studies to have an interdisciplinary approach, and for this reason, open to a multicultural and pluralistic themes, such as women and gender relations (Rabinowitz, 1993: 16, Funari, 1995: 181).

Finally, the proposal of this study is to reflect on women in the ancient society, with a criterion that started from the analysis that relates society, individuals and relationships. This text then focused on women of *Britannia*, Romans and Britons, who composed different customs, which interspersed, which lived there and which were in some way evidenced by written and/or material vestiges.

Textual sources and women

During the reading of some ancient texts, the depreciation of women by some authors can be noted. An example can be seen in the characteristics given by Tacitus and Cassius Dio in their description of Boudica, a Briton queen of the Iceni tribe, who led an army against the Roman Empire in the first century AD. After refusing to surrender her lands to the Romans, Boudica was flogged and her daughters raped - an event that occurred after her husband's death, Prasutago (Bélo, 2014: 43). As a consequence of this act, she, her tribe and the neighbouring tribe, the Trinovantes, united to destroy the Roman settlements of Camulodunum, Londinium and Verulamium. She was in charge and was characterized by these authors as someone who countered the conception of woman and leadership that they had (Bélo, 2014: 9).

Thus, in the works *Annals* and *The Life of Agricola*, of Tacitus, and *History of Rome*, of Cassius Dio, Boudica was described in a very controversial way and characterized as a masculinized woman, with the voice and arms of a man, aggressive and hostile, and incapable of leading an army, but very intelligent whether compared to other women (Bélo, 2014: 9). The figure of the warrior queen, in the position of ruler of the natives, went against the gender standard accepted by the Romans (Braund, 1996, Bélo, 2014, 45), since their wives generally had limited power within a society governed by men, although they

could possess wealth and be influential (Hingley & Unwin, 2005, Bélo, 2014: 45).

According to Johnson (2012), Tacitus makes the following comparison between the women he quotes in his work: Cartimandua, another Briton queen, from the Brigantes tribe, ally of Rome, was considered as a symbol of Roman servitude and as morally corrupt as Messalina, Claudius' first wife accused of adultery.² In Agrippina's case, she was very striking, extremely political, of ethical degeneration, and seen as another imperial woman who symbolized the decomposition of Rome. Tacitus cites that, Agrippina, such as Cartimandua and Messalina, destroyed the family unit and disturbed the civic leadership, destabilizing it. The author contrasted this Briton with Boudica, who was with her husband during his death, consolidating remnants of her family and her tribe, and fought for the freedom of her people (Johnson, 2012; Bélo, 2014).

Cartimandua was described in the *Annals* of Tacitus as unfaithful to her husband. According to his reports, she would have delivered Carataco³, leader of a rebellion against the Romans on the island, in the year 51 AD. Tacitus portrays her as treacherous, immoral, and adulterous, while Boudica, on the contrary, was described as a devout and moral woman, but a mistaken one (Hingley & Unwin, 2005; Bélo, 2014: 44). Agrippina participated in the Carataco episode and, for Tacitus, her presence in State issues, such as this, had no established precedents, especially when she claimed a partnership in the empire that her ancestors had created (Barrett 1996: 124). In Tacitus's view, it was rather strange to see her go beyond Roman standards, which is why he characterized her as a partner of the empire, which her ancestors had won (Tacitus, *Annals*, 12.37).

Subsequently, the perception about these women spread. Nowadays, Boudica is the one that attracts more interest, having, then, a greater number of artistic and written works about her compared to Cartimandua. This justification is related to the period of the Nineteenth century, when these works were more evidenced,

² The law of Augustus, *lex Iulia de adulteriis*, has always defined adultery as a female crime. However, the men and the lover, who was always considered guilty, could take some penalties. The preservation of women's sexual property was important for man's confidence and for the legitimacy of his children, which was part of an economic and moral issue (Rawson, 2006: 328).

³ Caratacus led a rebellion against the Roman Empire years before Boudica, queen of the Iceni (Johnson, 2012, Bélo, 2014, p.10), more specifically in 51 AD (Hingley & Unwin, 2005, Bélo, 2014: 44).

considering that Cartimandua's private life was not considered a model to be followed (Allason-Jones, 2012: 469).

Roman women, different from Briton ones, did not go to the battlefield as did Boudica, but during the later period of the Republic and at the beginning of the Empire, some of them began to gain more independence, as did Livia, Augustus' wife, which was the great example. She diffused a tendency that women of the imperial family could enjoy considerable influence through a representative. However, during the period in which Tacitus and Cassius Dio wrote their works, some of these powerful women of royalty were already conspicuously better acquainted with the political environment, mainly due to the activity of patrons, such as the women of Claudius, Messalina, who was executed, and Agrippina, Nero's mother, admired and feared, as well as the wife of Augustus, Livia (Aldhouse-Green, 2006, Bélo, 2014: 9). However, women were always subject to some degree of limitation in their ability to be independent. The authority to act was obtained by the father, husband or guardian (tutor). However, until the time of Augustus, the only exceptions were vestal virgins (Gardner, 1990: 5).

According to Fischler (1994), who was the director and the supervisor of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, Imperial women of the Julio-Claudian period were generally characterized as transgressive and violators of their roles in society. The second century of the Julio-Claudian period was taken as an aberration in the history of Rome, given that, in that context, emperors violated the privileges and threatened the lives of senators or other leading figures. The scholar mentions that these points represent a common characteristic for the authors of that time, mainly because it constitutes a moment of transition (Fischler, 1994: 120).

Another fact that must be considered refers to the literary tradition, which always had a particular interest within its making, suggesting the need to comment on these women, who, before Roman eyes, strayed from the standards. This fact reveals the abuses that were commonly committed in describing women, as well as what was particularly blameworthy. The description of women and their behaviours are made to illuminate the character of "bad" imperial woman for the reader and to show what they expected from a ruling-class woman. These attitudes lead us to inquire about how societies react to women who have access to authority or power (Fischler, 1994: 121).

These imperial women, such as Livia, Julia, and Agrippina, often had to deal with demands for activities that were beyond the boundaries of household chores to fill family responsibilities, as well as getting in contact with domestic and public affairs. In this way, women of the Roman elite began to conduct the family business and sought to influence any decision made by the ruler of the house, the emperor. Thus, women's position was a source of tension, revealing that state power could never be in their hands (Fischler, 1994: 122). These activities led these women to play the role of patronage, or *matresfamilias*, to take care not only of the extended family itself, but also of other senatorial families, as well as families of foreign monarchs (Fischler, 1994: 123). Patronage, in this sense, occurred when an individual provided a gift from their wealth to benefit the city or a small group within it (Meyers, 2012: 461). In relation to women, they began supervising family businesses, possessing slaves and protecting emancipated slaves (Fischler, 1994: 124).

According to Fischler (1994), activities that involved imperial women turned to a standard category that was used by these authors to qualify the emperors, thus portraying the quality and nature of the "bad" ruler. Fischler (1994) argues that, for the Romans, the "good" emperors had women and mothers whom they could control and who would never exceed the limits. Inherently, these women were part of the empire and seen by elite men as threats to a "good" governor. For this reason, writers such as Tacitus and Cassius Dio used the "bad" imperial women as synonymous of State disordered (Fischler, 1994: 127-128).

Britannia women

To study *Britannia* women, it should be borne in mind that this was not a homogeneous group. In *Britannia*, before the arrival of the Romans, independent tribes inhabited (Allason-Jones, 2012: 467) this area and performed activities, religions, customs and traditions different from that of the invaders. Actually, for both the population that had already settled there and those who came later, there was a wide variety of ideas about the status of women and how they should lead their lives (Allason-Jones, 2012: 467). In this way, it is not so simple to characterize an identity of women from that region and period through written sources, which often are contradicted by material sources.

The impact of different ways of life regarding the culture of the 'other' can be seen in Tacitus, who, in describing the Germans, for example,

pointed out that they did not live in cities, but in disorganized settlements, and inexpertly built their houses (Tacitus *Germania* 16), classifying them as not 'civilized.' Another example was given by García (1997), in relation to the Greek Strabo, who, when dealing with the Cantabrians of the Iberian Peninsula, mentioned that those who did not have a city were not considered 'civilized' because they lived as animals (García, 1997: 162).⁴ According to Hingley (1997), the existence of round houses, typical of the natives, but made by the Romans, for example, demonstrated the possibility of non-resistance or even the non-imposition of one culture on the other (Revell, 2016: 46). Such fact can be demonstrated by the material culture of Vindolanda (fig. 1), since the Romans began to incorporate this type of round building in their own constructions. For Revell (2016), there may have been a process of group integration, which may also have led to significant transformations (Revell, 2016: 55).⁵

⁴ Since the period of Herodotus the Greek conception of 'other' was articulated according to the concept of 'barbarian'. Initially associated with the Persians, the term 'barbarian' connoted to Herodotus and other Greeks an inclination for subservience and tyranny. For the Roman writers who subsequently appropriated the concept in their narratives, they ended up giving a political ideology to the empire. In this way, the term 'Barbarism', for the Romans, implied a lower condition, as well as a lower nature (McCoskey, 2005: 60-61, Saavedra 1999: 60).

⁵ This subject implies in the debate about the term *Romanization*, a concept that was created in the early Twentieth century by Francis Haverfield to explain the growth of the Roman Empire. He was one of the founders of Roman-British Archaeology, and elaborated the concept of *Romanization* from his studies and excavations in British territory, along with the ideas of the German Mommsen (Funari & Garraffoni, 2004: 11).

According to Funari and Garraffoni (2004), Hingley and other scholars who follow a postcolonial perspective emphasize that the idea of *Romanization* was linked to the imperialist English view. For Hingley it is impossible to understand the concept of *Romanization* without resorting to the historical moment that had been created, that is, a period in which Englishmen believed that progress and civilization could only come under imperial leadership, as if there were a transposition of English values to the Roman past. It was believed that the British inherited from the Romans, via Briton descent, the mission of civilizing barbarian people in the world (Funari and Garraffoni, 2004: 11 - 12).

The term *Romanization* was linked to the concept of acculturation, in which the prefix "a" comes from the Latin *ad*, that indicates a movement of approximation, and was created in 1880 by J. W. Powell, American anthropologist, who saw acculturation as an acting of a one direction (Coche, 1999). Facing and evolutionist vision, the strongest would always prevail over the weakest, and it was thought that the colonizer would always subjugate the colonized. It was only in the 1950s that the Frenchman Roger Bastide, disciple of Franz Boas (German geographer and anthropologist who worked in the USA), devoted himself to work on Afro-Brazilian culture and introduced in France research on acculturation. In his analysis he took



Figure 1. Vindolanda Site, north of England (Bélo, 2017).

With the arrival of the Romans in *Britannia*, it can be imagined that a variety of reactions in relation to social ideals arose, with the possibility of the rejection of the norms, resulting, for instance, in the revolts of the natives, such as that ones of Caratacus and Boudica. However, rejection can only be understood within a given context of the discourse of society itself (Revell, 2016: 10), because people's actions are subject to the notion of what is appropriate for a particular aspect of the identity of the group to which they belong, according to categories such as social status and ethnicity. In addition, the idea of appropriation is shaped by the expectation of social norms (Revell, 2016: 10) belonging to the group in which people are accustomed to living.

An example of the cultural heterogeneity in human relations existing in *Britannia* is the tomb of Julia Velva (*RIB* 688) and family, made of stone,

into account both the giving group and the receiving group, since for the scholar there was neither a culture solely "donor", nor a culture solely "receptive" itself. Acculturation never takes place in one direction. All culture is in a permanent process of construction (Coche, 1999).

In the point of view of this debate, it is suggested not to use the term acculturation anymore but other, such as interaction, used by the archaeologist Ian Hodder (2009), or contact.

which was found in 1922, during the construction of a new road that was built in the southeast of Mount, towards South Bank, York, now exhibited at the Yorkshire Museum (fig. 2).⁶ Such tombstone demonstrates that Aurelius Mercurialis refers to himself in the epitaph as heir of Julia Velva and that he built this tomb for himself and his family. The lack of a common name between her and her heir suggests that she was neither her daughter nor her sister, but part of the family. She could be his mother-in-law, but the terms “lived as the most obedient” were most commonly used for wives or free lovers. Some epigraphic evidence from Rome shows that free women could be part of the family and buried together (Allason-Jones, 2005: 12-13), but would hardly leave an inheritance for a man. According to the information on the website, *Roman Inscription of Britain*, Velva was not a Latin name, but a Celtic one, suggesting that Julia could be a free woman, who did not have to strictly follow Rome’s laws.⁷

Another example of union between Romans and natives is demonstrated in the burial of Regina, found in South Shields, dated from the 2nd century AD (fig. 3), which, in addition to the inscriptions, presents its image with clothes, jewellery and furniture, characterizing a real altar. The inscription says that she was a native of the tribe of the Catuvellaunian, who died at the age of thirty (*RIB* 1065), and was a free woman, wife of Barates, from Palmyra (Allason-Jones, 2012: 470).

The altar of Regina is divided into four fragments and framed in two pilasters in which the deceased is seated in a wicker chair facing forward. She wears a long-sleeved robe over a tunic, which reaches down to her feet. Around her neck, there is a necklace and bracelets in her wrists. In her lap, she has a distaff and a spindle. Also, while on her left side is a working basket, with balls of wool, and with her right hand she holds an open jewellery-box.⁸

⁶ Available at <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/688>, accessed in 11/04/2017.

⁷ Available at <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/688>, accessed in 11/04/2017.

⁸ Available at <http://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/1065>, accessed in 02/11/2015.



Figure 2. Familiar tombstone of Aurelius Mercurialis and Julia Velva. Image courtesy of York Museums Trust :: <http://yorkmuseumstrust.org.uk/> :: CC BY-SA 4.0

Epitaph:

D(is) M(anibus)

Iulie Velve pientissi-

me vixit an(nos) L Aurel(ius)

Mercurialis he(es) faci-

undum curavit vivus

sibi et suis fecit⁹

Translation:

To the spirits of the departed (and) of Julia Velva: she lived most dutifully 50 years.

Aurelius Mercurialis, her heir, had this set up, and in his lifetime made this for

himself and his family.¹⁰

⁹ Available at <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/688>, accessed in 11/04/2017.

¹⁰ Available at <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/688>, accessed in 11/04/2017.



Figure 3. Tombstone of Regina, found in South Shields, dated II AD. © Newcastle University all rights reserved.

Epitaph:

D(is) M(anibus) Regina liberta et coniuge
Barates Palmyrenus natione
Catvallauna an(norum) XXX¹¹

Translation:

To the spirits of the departed (and to) Regina, his freedwoman and wife, a
Catuvellaunian by tribe, aged 30, Barates of Palmyra (set this up).¹²

According to Allason-Jones (2005), firstly, Regina could have been a slave with an apparent domestic trade in activity. Because of the fact

¹¹ Available at <http://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/1065>, accessed in 02/11/2015.

¹² Available at <http://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/1065>, accessed in 02/11/2015.

that the inscriptions show that she was a free woman, it is assumed that she may have been a slave for a certain time. By the end of the 2nd century AD, it was difficult to understand how a member of a freeborn Briton tribe could have become a slave. Allason-Jones (2005) suggests that the only way for this happen would be that she should have been sold by her parents. This practice was banished by Rome until 313 AD, but in the face of evidence in Noricum and other parts of the Empire, it seems that this activity occurred in all regions between the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD (Allason-Jones, 2005: 14). This hypothesis about Regina can also be applied to the case of Julia Velva.

Both natives, Regina and Julia Velva, seem to have experienced a discrepant experience, which has been expanded because of an opposing identity. It should be borne in mind that multiple factors can be recognized as those that form a person's life experiences, some of which may have impacted on their identity, such as disparity in status, location, religion, origin, language, gender, age, etc (Mattingly, 2004, Revell, 2016: 14). Another explanation relates to the fact that Regina may have been a victim of the impact of Roman imperialism and power relations, which can be characterized as a transformation that was not neutral but a strategy of control by the imperial authorities (Revell, 2016: 56). Marriage between Romans and natives could potentially be a process of removal of native identity. Although natives may have remained, relations within this group and potentially between groups may have been redone within a Roman ideology, and this assimilation may have been variable, just as it might have been encouraged by the mechanism of forgetfulness. Allanson-Jones (2005) suggests that many of these women may have felt displaced, confused, and psychologically ill, and that suicide could have happened (Allanson-Jones, 2005: 76).

In several of these tombstones, the affection that the husbands had for their wives is evident, as well as inscriptions that mentioned expressions of love and tenderness, such as 'beloved wife' (*RIB* 621), 'much beloved wife' (*RIB* 959) and 'the most devoted of wives' (*RIB* 17) (Allason-Jones, 2004: 280). From this perspective, it can be concluded that this material culture seems to show, in addition to affection, something quite different from the way in which the written sources characterized the women of antiquity, as evidenced by works of ancient writers in the first part of this work.

An example is the Aurelia Aureliana tomb (*RIB* 959) (fig. 4), made of buff sandstone, found in 1819, at the Roman cemetery at Gallows Hill, south of Carlisle (*Luguvalium*), England, found when they made a cut to

the main road. The deposit was transferred to the Newcastle Antiquities Museum. Nowadays it belongs to the Great North Museum, Hancock.¹³



Figure 4. Tombstone of Aurelia Aureliana. © Newcastle University all rights reserved.

Epitaph

D(is) M(anibus) Aur(elia) Aurelia(na) vixit
annos XXXXI Ulpus

Apolinaris coniugi carissime
posuit¹⁴

Translation

To the spirits of the departed; Aurelia Aureliana lived 41 years. Ulpus Apolinaris set this up to his very beloved wife.¹⁵

¹³ Available at: <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/959>, accessed in 04/07/2017.

¹⁴ Available at: <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/959>, accessed in 04/07/2017.

¹⁵ Available at: <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/959>, accessed in 04/07/2017.

The Romans, by burying their relatives, honouring their benefactors, vowing to their gods, worshipping their emperors or inaugurating buildings, usually made inscriptions to be preserved permanently. However, in describing their dead women, for example, they have used highly stereotyped and standardized formulas for centuries (Riess, 2012, p. 491), which makes it difficult, nowadays, to recognise more deeply those women of ancient times.

Conclusion

According to Susan Fischler (1994), tombstones were designed to commemorate the desolate family, showing the traditional virtues of the deceased, with the purpose of describing the dead woman in the highest standards expected by the social community, exemplifying it as the ideal Roman matron, who was known for her beauty, fertility, and fidelity to her husband, as well as for her ability to run the home (Fischler 1994: 117). Thus, relations of power, which support a meaning of identity, can show in material culture the result of the product of a process, which involves certain groups that were barely visible (Revell, 2016: 17) in their entirety.

Around all these aspects Riess (2012) raises the idea that the husband carefully balanced the gender game with the invocation of the traditional stereotypes of values, and the inscriptions did not really describe who the person was, but a type that was enumerated with collective value and that reproduced a code of norms. The aim was for the honorary text and ostentation material to provoke a sampling of the dead's virtues in order to leave her memory alive, which turned out to be a benefit to the husband who was still alive (Riess, 2012: 497). The Latin language of epigraphy was generated and worked as an instrument of maintenance of masculine dominance over feminine, thus demonstrating that the inscriptions confirm a dimension of the historical variety of gender formation, which is a social construction and transmitted to a community through certain vehicles of meanings or symbols. The inscriptions served as representations of harmony, in the sense of idealizing relationships between individuals and between social classes as 'appropriate', showing values, norms, behaviours, with long duration, as a constant and firm medium (Riess, 2012: 499 - 500).

When dealing with women of native peoples, ancient writers did so when information collided with the traditional concept of these authors, as well as the position of women in the family and society, taking these

models as prototypes to exalt the Roman virtues (Franco, 1999: 57). Thus, the works of Tacitus and Cassius Dio, for instance, must be taken as a reflection of a complex phenomenon, which involves a consideration related to the diversity of identity, culture and gender seen from a foreign perspective in relation to the 'other', which encompasses the debate on the contact between Romans and natives during the Roman Empire.

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