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**A Relief of a Mater and Three Genii from Stratton,
Gloucestershire**

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Good fortune in the face of uncertain weather and uncertain markets was of vital concern to countrymen in Roman times as it is now. The Frocester intaglio is certainly an appropriate find on a villa site. It may be noted that the hoard of mid 2nd-century gems recently found near Snettisham (Norfolk) included fourteen showing Fortuna (ten with cornucopia and patera and four with cornucopia and rudder). Other popular rural deities represented in the hoard were Ceres and her male counterpart Bonus Eventus (respectively twenty and twenty seven intaglios).⁶

The Frocester stone apparently provides the only known representation of Fortuna on an intaglio found in Gloucestershire. She is depicted in sculpture from Cirencester, Gloucester, the temple site at Lydney, and the rural settlement at Kingscote. There is also a relief of uncertain provenance in Gloucester City Museum.⁷

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Notes

1. M. Henig, *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstones from British Sites* (BAR British Ser. 8, 1978), 35 fig. 1 A6. For probable setting, *ibid.* plates xlv (no. 417) and lxx (no. App. 177).
2. *Ibid.* plate x (nos. 322–3); E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Die Antiken Gemmen des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien 2* (Munich, 1979), nos. 1545–52.
3. M. Henig, *Roman Engraved Gemstones*, plates xxix (no. App. 144) and xxvi (no. App. 73).
4. M. Maaskant-Kleibrink, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems in the Royal Coin Cabinet, The Hague: the Greek, Etruscan and Roman Collections* (The Hague, 1978), 326–45.
5. A. Hamburger, 'Gems from Caesarea Maritima', *Atiqot* 8 (1968), plate iv (no. 74); M. Henig and M. Whiting, *Engraved Gems from Gadara in Jordan: the Sa'd Collection of Intaglios and Cameos* (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology Monograph 6, 1987), no. 107. See also Zwierlein-Diehl, *Die Antiken Gemmen 2*, no. 1552, Fortuna facing right but style similar and ascribed to the 3rd century.
6. M. Henig, 'The iconography of the engraved stones', in C. Johns, *The Snettisham Roman Jeweller's Hoard* (London, 1997), 20–4.
7. M. Henig, *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani, Great Britain. I fasc. 7 Roman Sculpture from the Cotswold Region* (British Academy, Oxford, 1993), nos. 24–6, 29–31, 80.

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A RELIEF OF A *MATER* AND THREE *GENII* FROM STRATTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

A Roman sculptured relief has been discovered in a garden in Stratton, near Cirencester, within 100 m of the line of Ermin Street and *c.* 1 km from the site of the villa or temple at Daglingworth (RCHME 1976, 41). Although found buried amongst a quantity of walling stone, the relief is likely to have been used in fairly recent times to ornament a garden, many blocks of crystals and an ammonite having been recovered in the same area. The finder, an amateur archaeologist, recognized the Roman origin of the relief and passed it to Neil Holbrook of Cotswold Archaeological Trust who, subsequently, brought it to the attention of the author of this note.



Fig. 1. Relief from Stratton (R.L. Wilkins and Alison Coveley).

The relief (Fig. 1) is carved within a recessed panel upon a slab of oolitic limestone, dressed on each side; it has a pronounced curve on the back. The upper part of the block, comprising about a third of the whole, is now lost. The stone is 240 mm in width; its maximum depth is 70 mm and its surviving height 155 mm.

A female deity is portrayed on the right of the relief; she sits frontally, presumably on a chair or throne which, in distinction to some analogous representations where the goddess is figured at an oblique angle (Henig 1993, nos. 102, 133), is not visible. She wears a long tunic which reaches to her feet. On her lap is a large round object which can probably be understood as a fruit; if it were to scale it would have to be a melon, but comparable representations, notably the three fruit held or on the lap of a free-standing statuette of a goddess from the Ashcroft site in Cirencester (Henig 1993, no. 120), strongly suggests that it is, in fact, an apple. Unfortunately because of the break in the stone the subject's head is missing. To her left, and standing in a line before her, are three identical male votaries (or subsidiary godlings), each dressed in a tunic and cloak and holding a fruit in his right hand. Once again the heads are lost.

There are a number of comparable images from the Cotswolds and their distribution is sufficiently discrete for the cult to be regarded as essentially a local one. Although she is more often shown with fruit than with children, the goddess is conventionally described as a *mater*. Epigraphic evidence (see below) provides some basis for such a description. Her specific ancient designation is uncertain although a relief from Daglingworth was inscribed with the name *Cuda*, a name not attested elsewhere (Collingwood and Wright 1965, no. 129; Birley 1986, 67 no. 19). If the Stratton relief came from Daglingworth it may well be that the goddess it depicts was the

same *Cuda*. The three men, often (though not always) wearing the hooded cape (*cucullus*), are described as *genii* or *genii cucullati*. As stated above they presumably represent both human votaries of the goddess and subsidiary nature gods.

In terms of composition, the closest surviving parallels to the Stratton relief are two very similar carvings, one from Cirencester (Henig 1993, no. 101) and the other the Daglingworth relief evidently dedicated to *Cuda* (Henig 1993, no. 102). In both the male figures are *cucullati*, grouped on the Cirencester relief under a shell-canopy set within a gable and on the Daglingworth relief simply under a gable. Another, now lost, relief from Easton Grey (Wilts.) depicted three males evidently bare-headed in front of a seated figure, probably a *mater*, within a pedimental frame supported on columns; the pediment is inscribed with the name *Civilis*, that of the carver or perhaps the dedicator (Cunliffe and Fulford 1982, no. 120). Another representation from Price's Row, Cirencester, is carved partly in the round and shows three *cucullati* on the right and a *mater* on the left (Henig 1993, no. 103). Three other reliefs also deserve a mention. The first, from Cirencester, is incomplete and depicts a single *cucullus* holding an apple before a *mater* who is shown frontally, probably seated (Henig 1993, no. 104). The second, from an unknown site in the Cotswolds, is a pedimental relief showing three bare-headed warriors (rather than the more usual *genii*) carrying shields in front of a seated goddess (Henig 1993, no. 133). The third, a corner fragment of a relief from Daglingworth showing a standing male figure (*genius cucullatus?*) (Henig 1993, no. 100), is perhaps the closest stylistic parallel to the Stratton relief.

The concept of the mother goddess is shown in two ways in the Cotswold region. On the one hand the Stratton relief and the other finds cited above show her as a single figure. She is shown in this way too in the case of the statuette from the Ashcroft site at Cirencester (Henig 1993, no. 120) and probably in the broken figure from a roadside building beside the Fosse Way, south-east of the Bath gate of *Corinium*, (Henig 1993, no. 121) and a similar example from Colerne Park (Wilts.) (Cunliffe and Fulford 1982, no. 121). On the other hand the Ashcroft site has yielded two reliefs of mother goddesses represented as a triad (Henig 1993, nos. 116–17) as well as an altar dedicated to the *Suleviae* whose name is both feminine and plural. A third relief of a triad of *matres* was found in the Leases, Cirencester (Henig 1993, no. 118), and a fourth has survived from an unknown Cotswold site (Henig 1993, no. 119). In this context it is worth noting that a stone reused in the Middle Ages as a window frame in Daglingworth church (Collingwood and Wright 1965, no. 130) bears an inscription to the *matres* (plural) and the *genius loci* (singular).

The *Suleviae* altar (Collingwood and Wright 1965, no. 105) was set up by the sculptor Sulinus. The first part of his name is theophoric, that is it was derived from the name of a deity, and, as well as the *Suleviae*, it recalls the goddess *Sulis Minerva* (whose great sanctuary at Bath was known as *Aquae Sulis*, 'the waters of Sulis'). Sulinus certainly had connexions with Bath as he erected a statue to the *Suleviae* there (Collingwood and Wright 1965, no. 151). It may be suggested that there was a confusion in the dedicator's own mind, between *Sulis Minerva* and the *Matres Suleviae*. The *Suleviae* are also attested epigraphically outside the south gate of *Corinium* (Collingwood and Wright 1965, no. 106) but they were far from being merely local; they were venerated well beyond the Cotswold region, for instance at Colchester where they are called *Matres Suleviae* (Collingwood and Wright 1965, no. 192). Indeed, they are frequently recorded in Upper and Lower Germany and it would seem that their cult originated in the Rhineland and was imported into Britain (Birley 1986, 53 no. 19) alongside other aspects of the cult of the three *matres* and took root in the province as an aspect of Romanization. One indigenous element of the cult was perhaps represented by the single mother *Cuda* and her

three male companions, but Roman influence centred on nearby *Corinium* can be observed in the dedication to the (three?) *matres* in Daglingworth church.

As for *genii*, their depiction ranges from the classical figure on an altar from Sheep Street, Cirencester (Henig 1993, no. 32), to the triads of *cucullati* from the Ashcroft site, Cirencester (Henig 1993, no. 96), Lower Slaughter (Henig 1993, nos. 95, 98) and elsewhere. It seems that the idea of the *genius* was manifested in different ways, 'Roman' or 'native' to suit the individual worshipper. The Daglingworth relief, as noted above, shows the three *genii cucullati* with *Cuda*, while the inscription in the church associates the classical *genius loci* with the Romanized *matres*, perhaps the three *Suleviae*.

The Stratton relief certainly strengthens the evidence for the importance of the cult involving the mother (or mothers) and the *genii cucullati* in the Cotswold region. The evidence from Cirencester is very compelling and the most likely explanation of the 1899 Ashcroft finds is that it is a cache associated with a temple. Equally the sculpture and inscriptions from Daglingworth are suggestive of another, but in this case rural, centre of the cult.

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