## Abstract

In his work *Historiae* the Roman politician and historian Tacitus (ca. AD 56-117) describes how a man, who had lost his sight, and another, who had a sick hand, in the late summer of AD 69 turned to the Roman emperor Vespasian (AD 69-79), who, at this time, sojourned at Alexandria in Egypt. Under the auspices of the god Serapis, the two men were convinced that the emperor could cure them if he moistened the eyeballs of the blind with his spittle and touched the hand of the invalid. The Emperor hesitated and doubted his own abilities, but made the attempt. The results did not fail to appear – miraculously the blind regained his sight and the hand of the invalid recovered.

This thesis examines *how* and *why* Vespasian and his two sons, Titus (79-81 AD) and Domitian (81-96 AD), used this healing myth and the notion of 'Egypt' as part of a continuous ideological quest for legitimacy and acceptance. The miraculous healings in Alexandria endowed Vespasian with a great reputation and helped to underpin his popularity among the people, the Senate and the army. The thesis argues, inter alia, that the myth of the miraculous healings 'materialized' and in that sense 'proved itself' in the sculptural decoration of two sanctuaries dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Isis, located in Beneventum and Rome. In these two sanctuaries a number of Egyptian and egyptianising sculptures ranging over a considerable time span of more than two millennia (ca. 1985-1650 BC (12th-13th dynasties) to the 2$^{nd}$-3$^{rd}$ century AD) have been uncovered.