THE FLAMINICA IN ANCIENT ROMAN SPAIN

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Abstract- This paper aims to exploring the position of the flaminica who composing with the flamen, the flaminate office in ancient Hispania, at the provincial –municipal and conventus levels , what was her social status, duties, ,advantages ,how she was appointed and whose were in charge of this matter , especially there are a paucity in ancient literature and modern materials related the theme . So I will depend primary on the analysis of the epigraphic evidences; especially there were a huge number of it from Spain related the matter.

Index terms- Flaminica ,Flamen, Imperial cult, Hispania, Iberian peninsula.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Roman Republic was first drawn into the Iberian peninsula on account of the second Punic war with Carthage, which began in Spain, in 218 BC. So in the same year the Roman senate decreed Hispania (roughly modern Spain and Portugal) to be a province. In 197 BC the Roman Senate sent two praetors to Spain each with a proconsular rank.[1] From that date Hispania was divided into two provinces: Hispania *Citerior* (nearer to Rome) in the north and Hispania *Ulterior* (farther from Rome) in the south. During the years of the Roman Republic, Spain was an almost constant battleground, and so far as the Roman state and its leaders were concerned, Spain remained of purely military interest until the time of Augustus. During the empire, on the other hand, Spain was very peaceful and Roman civilization gradually penetrated throughout the Iberian Peninsula**.**

During the period of Augustus (31 BC– AD 14) the two provinces of Hispania Citerior and Ulterior were remolded. A vast new Hispania *Citerior* was formed and soon became more generally known as Tarraconsis and its capital was Taracco (modern Tarragona in Catalonia) The old Hispania *Ulterior*, by contrast, was divided into two provinces, Baetica (modern Andalusia in southern Spain) and its capital was Cordoba; and Lusitania whose capital was Emerita Augusta (modern Merida in south west of Spain) So the two Roman provinces in Hispania became three at the beginning of the imperial era.

Who are the flamens , flaminica?

The flamens in ancient Rome were group of priests each of them devoted to the worship of a single deity . They formed the college of the pontiffs with the *rex sacrodos*, *augurs*, the pontiffs, and the six Vestal. They were fifteen flamens ,three major for Jupiter,(flamen Dialis)for Mars(flamen Martilias)and for Qurinus ,(flamen Quirinalis)and the another twelve assigned for twelve minor deities . The Flaminica was the title of the wife of both the Flamen Dialis , and Flamen Martialis . There is no record of there also having been a Flaminica Quirinalis ,though her existence is probable.[2] She served as assistant to her wife in the sacred rituals. During the imperial period the flamen and flaminica become devoted to the imperial cult. While the flamen was appointed for the service of the Emperor's cult, the flaminica served that of the Impress On behalf of the Senate this college interpreted the sacred law in the service of the state. Service to the Imperial cult was a means of prestige and influence in the provinces, and a way in which a wealthy citizen could, as we shall see, distinguish himself or herself.[3] The major flamens were subject to strict rules or taboos; this applied in particular to the flamen Dialis. Aulus Gellus (10-15-30) mentioned some taboos , and noted that the same taboos may imposed upon the flaminica, from these taboos that he,(or she) could not mount a horse, or even look upon an army. Also he wasn't allowed to swear an oath, nor spend more than three nights away from Rome. He must always appear in public wearing festival garb. Moreover, he couldn't eat nor even mention a goat or beans. However, some scholars referred that such restrictions were released step by step in the later Republic.

The Flaminica, as mentioned before, was the title of the wife of both the Flamen Dialis , and Flamen Martialis , And according to Auleus Gellius, "the restrictions imposed upon the flaminica were similar to those by which her husband was fettered." (Aul.Gell.,10.15) Since, her assistance was essential in the performance of certain rituals, the Flamen Dialis was not permitted to divorce her and was obliged to resign if she died. Her dress consisted of a dyed robe, her hair was plaited up with a purple band in a conical form (*tutulus*) and she wore a small square cloak with a border (*rica*) to which was

[1] G.V.Sumner, "Notes on Provinciae in Spain (197-133 B.C.)" Classical Philology, Vol. 72, No. 2, p.127, Apr 1977.

[2] C.E. Schultz, Women in the Republican Religion, USA, p. 133, 2002.

[3] L.A. Curshin **,** The Romanization of Central Spain , Rutledge press , New York and London, pp. 169-174 **,** 2004.

attached a slip cut from a *Felix arbor*.[4] Unfortunately, because of the brevity of the inscriptions related to the dress of the Flaminica during the imperial period and the loss of almost all statues and reliefs that belonged to these inscriptions, the evidence is flimsy about the dress of the Flaminica during this period. So we have to depend on some modern scholars; Fishwick assumes that, in addition to her white or purple dress, the priestess of the imperial cult, like the Flaminica Dialis, wore purple *vittae*, woolen *bandalettes* or fillets that were bound around the head or braided through the hair.

The Flaminica performed ritual functions and therefore complemented her husband's role. She was perhaps originally a priestess of Iuno, for together, the flamen Dialis and the flaminica represented the divine duality of Jupiter and Iuno.[5] In the Imperial era, Flaminica became a generic title for a municipal priestess serving the cult of the living and deified empresses and female members of the imperial family.

The *Flamincia* in Hispania

As was the case in Rome, the *flamines* and *flaminicae* were chosen from high status Roman citizens who had already held the chief magistracy in their home towns. Fortunately we have a huge number of Latin inscriptions from Hispania on which we find the names of *flamines* and *flaminicae* who were closely associated with the imperial cult. From some thirty-four towns of Baetica alone we have thirty-four inscriptions mentioning the *flamines*, and eighteen mentioning the *flaminicae*. In nine towns of Lusitania the *flamines* were mentioned ten times; the *flaminicae*, eight times. In forty-five towns of Tarraconensis the *flamines* were mentioned sixty-five times; the *flaminicae*, ten times.[6] From these inscriptions we know that the full title of the flamens in Hispania *citerior* province was *flamen Romae et divorum Augustorum provinciae Hispaniae cirterior* (The flamen of Roma and deified Augustus in Nearer Hispania). And in Lusitaniae the capital of Hispania *ulterior*, the title was *flamen divorunm Augustorum provinciae Lusitaniae* (The flamen of deified Augustus in Lustania province).

In Rome the first priestess of the Imperial cult was Livia who was appointed as a priestess after the death of Augustus her deified husband.[7] But was it the same case in Hispania? Was the flaminica the wife of the *flamen*? It seems certain that in Tarraconsis province the provincial *flaminica* was the wife of the provincial *flamen*. This is proved by many inscriptions. From this region we have a record stating that "the citizens of Tarraconsis (*cives Tarraconenses*) have set up a statue with inscribed base to the provincial flaminica Aurelia Marcellina, whose husband was the provincial flamen (*CIL,* 2.4198). In Lusitania province also the same relationship may have existed between the flamen and the flaminica, but we lack to the epigraphic evidence.

The necessity that the flaminate should be a flamen and his wife, flaminica, is evident from the requirement that the flamen should leave his office if his wife died; the same rule being also applied on the flaminica when she become a widow. So the flaminate should be viewed as a single priestly position that required the services of a married couple.[8] It is interesting; however, that we have some inscriptions from the province of Baetica which assure that the Flaminca may have been a daughter, and not the wife, of the flamen. Thus we have an inscription dating to the first century AD which refers to "Lucretia Campana, the flaminica of the imperial house, the daughter of Lucius Lucretius Fulvianus, the flamen of the province of Baetica" (*ILS*, 5080=*CIL,* 2.1660). Takačs also points out that the community council may offer this office to a charismatic women, one who had made a positive impression, as a reward.

In sum the flaminica in provincial Spain was generally the wife of the flamen, but it seems that the matter was somewhat different when it came to the municipal flamincia. There is a certain number of inscriptions which rather tend to show that the municipal flaminica was elected. An inscription, was set up by a certain "Terentianus, a duumvir (two juridical magistrates) to his parents, Lucius Acilius Barba and Acilia Lepidina, and his wife, Cornelia, who was a *"flaminica municit Saciliensis"* (*CIL,* 2.2188). The absence of the title flamen in this inscription, where the husband expressly calls himself duumvir, confirms that Terentianus did not hold that office. If this be correct, his wife would have obtained the office of flaminica as the result of an election. Thus, it can be safely stated that the provincial flaminica was a wife of the same provincial flamen, but the office was elective on the municipality level. They were elected from a relatively small group of very high-ranking families.

The inscriptions also inform us that in western provinces (especially in Hispania) there were various titles used to denote a priestess of the imperial cult. She was either called a flaminica or a *sacerdos*. Many questions arise. Is the difference in the two titles a

[4] A. Staples, From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins: Sex and Category in Roman Religion, Rutledge Press ,London, p.124, 2002.

[5] M. Lipka, Roman Gods A Conceptual Approach. Boston Brill press, Leiden , p. 53, 2009.

[6] S. A. Tackas ,Vestal Virgins, Sibyls, and Matrons:"Women in Rome Religion" University of Texas Press. USA, p.215, 2010.

[7] E.A Hemelrijk , p. 328,2007.

[8] J. Scheid , The Religious Roles of Roman Women, A History of Women in the West , vol.1: From Ancient Goddess to Christian Saints, Edit by: P.S. Pantel , Translated by A. Goldhammer, Cambridge Harvard University press. P. 57 ,2008.

matter of terminology or does it point to different duties or a difference in the social standing of the priestess? Many attempts had been made to answer these questions. Some scholars believe that the female *sacerdos* served in the cult of the *divae* (dead impresses) and flaminica that of the living ones.[9] Other scholar suggests that these titles were interchangeable and that their use reflects the terminological confusion about these titles in the Spanish provinces. But it may be noticed that different conditions existed in different locations. In Baetica both titles were used whereas in Tarraconsis the main title was flaminica. In Castulo, both titles were used as well. Therefore, it seems likely that the titles for both male and female priests were synonymous, their use depending on regional or local preference.

The Class of Flaminica

As mentioned before, the major flamens in ancient Rome were chosen from the Patricians and the minor ones were from the local class. In Hispania we may fairly say that the flamens were held by the outstanding men in the community.

The imperial priesthood required wealth, not only because of the *summa honoraria* (sum of money for the honorary office) that had to be paid when entering it, which constituted a high sum that usually exceeded that for local magistracies, but also because of the numerous festivities in the imperial cult, most of which were paid for by the officiating priest out of his (or her) own pocket. Holding a normal office in the same town more than once was in itself a sign of exceptional generosity. Because of the wealth it required, a priesthood of the imperial cult is often regarded as proof that the person in question belonged to the elite.[10] So the Spanish Flamens were usually wealthy Roman citizens of the Italian descent. As evidence of their wealth, it may suffice to refer to the monumental amphitheatre of Tarraco which was constructed, thanks to the kindness of a *flamen of Hispania citerior*.[11] A number of flamens benefactors distributed free grain or supported its price; such donations were gratefully remembered by the council of many local towns in the inscriptions.[12] From Clunia in Tarraconsis the flamen of the imperial cult of the city, Gaius Clavisius, had given the people the corn without money.[13]

It is also interesting to note that the Flaminica, like the Flamines, belonged to the equestrian order, and only in few cases did they come from the senatorial families. Although of varying social status, priestesses of the imperial cult, like their counterpart the other priestesses must also have been persons of wealth.[14] Thus, we may reasonably suppose that priestesses of the imperial cult were very much in the public eye. The considerable wealth of such women is well illustrated by a dedication made in the early third century at the Traianeum in Italica in Baetica. To mark her second holding of the local flaminica, Vibia Modesta dedicated a huge silver statue to deified Augustus Trajanus. The statue was bedecked with jewels: earrings with three clusters of ten pearls, 40 gemstones, eight beryls, and a gem-encrusted gold wreath. Inside the temple she dedicated her own flaminica's gold wreath together with gold busts of Isis, Ceres, and Juno Regina.

Duties of the Flaminica

The main duty of the flamens in Spain was of course the religious one; they were priests of the Imperial cult.[15] Added to his above mentioned main duty, the provincial flamen had to organize the gladiatorial games at the yearly festival in the provincial capital and to preside over the annual meeting of the provincial council.[16] Like their male colleagues, the flaminca probably performed sacrifices before the statues of the living and deified empresses and lead the procession of the Imperial images on Imperial birthdays and other festal days and presided, probably from a special seat, over the public games, which were a set element of Imperial celebrations. Thus, for the duration of their priesthood they must have been among the most prominent citizens of their town.[17]

The flamen and flaminica, moreover, lead many annual imperial ceremonies like Augustus birthday, his accession to the power and his triumph over Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC. Later the birthdays and the dates of accession of good emperors like Tiberius, Vaspasian, Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius were added.[18] Imperial festivities usually provided a great deal of entertainment and Imperial priests were expected to organize such entertainments and contribute to the costs. During such festivals the portable portraits (probably busts) of the emperors and empresses were carried in procession from the temple to the amphitheatre for the plays or games that they presided over, and which were often paid for, by the officiating priests and priestess. [19]

[9] Ibid, p. 139, 2007 .

[10] E.A., Hemelrjk "Priestesses of the Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Benefactions and Public Honor" L'Antiquité Classique, 75, p. 88, 2006 .

[11] E.A . Hemelrijk, p.139, 2005.

[12] A. Lunard , Personal wealth in Roman Spain, Historia, 32.2, p. 233 1983.

[13] E.M. William, Temples and Town in Roman Iberia :The Social and Architectural Dynamics of Sanctuary Designs from the Third Century B.C. to the Third Century A.D.: University of California Press ,USA, p. 286,.1999.**;** CIL. 2.2778.

[23] E. A . Hemelrijk, p .138,2005.

[15] E.A. Hemelirjk , p. 328, 2007.

[16] C.H Williamson, p.183, 1987.

[17] E.A Hemelrijk, p. 96, 2006.

[18] D. Fishwick, p. 532, 1999.

[29] S.Keay,The Roman Spain," Exploring the Roman [World" London, pp,168-71,1988.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of an Imperial cult was one of the results of the changes in Roman religion from the Republic to the early Empire. The establishment of the Imperial cult, then, crossed a line between the traditional religious rituals and the new experience of autocratic rule**.** The flamens in ancient Hispania were the chief priests of the imperial cult, they were devoted to the service of both living and dead emperors, while the flaminica who usually (not often) was his wife was concerned with the service of the impresses. The three Hispania provinces yielded huge numbers of Latin inscriptions dated from the first century to the third century A.D which offered a lot of information about the flamen and flaminica, their titles, duties, classes, and levels.

Both inscriptions and literary evidence confirm that the flamen and flaminica were chosen from the elite class, always from the equestrian and rarely from the senatorial one. They were always wealthy men or women and were always interested in presenting benefits for their communities. After their retirement the city council was accustomed to making honors and decrees to erect statues in recognition of their services. And it allowed for them to inscribing their names and names of their fathers, and being members of the city council, and attending the public show at the first row, wearing the special dress for them they accustomed, when they were flamens. Some *flamines* and *flaminicae* were even granted the privilege of having a public funeral which always remained a preserve of the most distinguished members of the local elite.The assembly also assured the honors of the new flamen, that he become member of the counsel city, have a lector, and to watch the public show among the senators.

In Hispania there were three levels of the flaminate, the more prestigious and the most distinguished was the provinical flamen, then the conventus and at last the municipal flamen. The same duties were assigned to the different flamens but on different scales. The inscriptions assured that the flamen was the chair of the city or the town council, and that he presided over the ceremonies of the Emperor's cult, and the flaminica presided over the ceremonies related to the impresses'. The provincial flaminica was the wife of the same provincial flamen, but the office was elective on the municipality level.
The inscriptions further confirm that the duration of the office was a year and that the city or the town council was charged with the election procedures.

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