

"A Case Study in Inscriptional Evidence: *Sacerdotes extra Romam*"

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Abstract: The position of priestess provided a rare culturally acceptable public role for respectable *matronae*. The Vestals and the *flaminicae*, initially appointed from the patrician class, were the earliest female religious in Rome. As new cults arose for deities such as Ceres, Venus, Diana, Isis, Magna Mater, and the Imperial *Augustae*, less class-restrictive offices for priestesses were created. Monuments found outside of Rome give evidence of not only the number, identity and status of local women elected as priestesses, but also the contributions they made and the high esteem in which they were held by their communities. They also give valuable insight into the lives and socio-economic status of wealthy women outside of Rome during the Empire. Since honorary and funerary inscriptions are our only source of information about these priestly women, my PowerPoint presentation demonstrates, with texts readily accessible for classroom use in the *Online Companion to the Worlds of Roman Women*, how we can learn from them and what model existed for the provincial role of priestess and civic benefactor. The texts selected testify to the prestige and euergetism of local *sacerdotes publicae* and *flaminicae* from the Augustan period to the 3rd century CE, women such as *Eumachia* of Pompeii, *Metilia Acte* and *Egnatia Aescennia Procula* of Ostia, *Vibia Modesta* of Italica, Spain, and *Junia Rustica* of Cartima, Spain.

Notes

1. See "Priests, Greek and Roman" in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 3rd edition, 1996: "In Rome . . . priests are (with the exception of the Vestal Virgins) males," 1245.
2. Hemelrijk, 2007, p. 318.
3. Hemelrijk, 2004, pp. 226-7.
4. Donahue, p. 876.
5. Until 84 CE a legionary soldier's annual pay was 900 sesterces (see M. Alexander Speidel, "Roman Army Pay Scales," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992): 87-106). Thus Saturninus' contribution to Cartima was equivalent to approximately 22 years pay for a Roman soldier.

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