Inter flaminales viros: the honorary pedestals of the Provincia Hispania Citerior

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After many years of studying the supports of the provincial capital, Grétá Aðalbjörn left us with a definition of the evolution of the earliest conspicuous urban monuments in Flavian Spain (Aðalbjörn 2012). One of the most emblematic assemblages is, without doubt, that of the honorary public pedistals. Of particular note is the series dedicated to the outgoing provincial flamines erected by the Concilium Provinciae Hispaniae Citerioris (Concilium PHC) from the Flavian period to the end of the 2nd century AD (Fig. 1). These homages correspond very closely to the statueships laid down in the Lex de flaminio provinciae Narbonensis (CIL XII 6038, Fidwic 2002).

The tripartite pedestals

The supports are tripartite pedestals for a standing statue (there are also equitemen statues and one seated) made up of a central parallelepiped, a covo and a crest of separate blocks of the optimum-quality local limestone (“Santa Tecla” or “llisós” varieties) (Alvarez et al. 2009). The standard measurements of the pedestals are 90 x 60 x 55 cm, with a moulded epigraphic field with cyma and flat moulding (Fig. 1, sketch). In Tarracon alone there are some 180 documented pedestals, although not all were destined for public homages, as they were also made for private commissions. Some even remained in stock, uncursed, and were used for funerary monuments in subsequent periods. The standardisation of the support and the formalisation of the formula confirm a design that was dependent on the reform of the Concilium PHC representational spaces around the imperial cult temple (Fig. 2). The incorporation of the viri flamines statues into the architectural landscape determined the choice of an aesthetically homogeneous support. These remained almost unchanged from Vespasian to Commodus and were very prolific under the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius.

The viri flamines gallery in Tarracon

Formal and iconographic continuity in Flavian archaeological and urban environments is for the honories of the Concilium PHC. A point in favour of this hypothesis is the archaeological and urbanistic evidence of the reform of the town’s acropolis area, which must have included this gallery in its iconographic order. It confirms the monumental-type symbolism associated with the flamines PHC exhibition area. The mention of the viri, as well as the reiterated formula expressly recording the cursus honorum undertaken by the town of origin (abbreviated from the time of Hadrian to omit unnecessary in r p e publica sua functus, confirmed on that community a highly prestigious collective representation: election as a flamine was an irrefutable illustration of the ability of urban elites to promote themselves (Ortiz de Urbina 2006; Andeiru 2008). This was of huge importance to small or recently promoted municipalities, most of them very far from Tarracon. They saw their interests represented and sponsored in the capital, thanks to the personal, economic and institutional contacts established by their illustrious compatriots, who, without doubt, acted as ambassadors or patrons.

The dispersion of the model in the towns of the Provincia Hispania Citerior

The specialisation of the Tarraconese workshop led to the spread of an almost ubiquitous monumental to the rest of the public and private commissions, as well as supplying other towns that imported pieces from the officina Ispanica Tarraconensis. This happened not only in the most important towns of the conventus Tarraconensis, among which the colonia of Barcino stands out with its 70 pedestals, mainly commissioned by the association of seviri Augustales, but also, at the very least, in the neighbouring conventus Caesaraugustanus and Cartaginensis. The presence of Tarraconese pieces – either imported or exact copies – outside the immediate environment of the provincial capital allows a connection to be established between this specific type of monument and the towns that imported it when they were in the homelands of flamines (cf. Table and Fig. 3). Initiatives such as these could have been behind the perpetuation of a model for personal and collective memory strongly linked to the image of success represented by those personages, once they had completed their provincial priesthood (Gorostidi 2017). In the case of the seviri Augustales of Barcino, we can intuit an imitation on a local scale of the imposing gallery of priests dedicated to the imperial cult in the provincial capital.

The uniformity of the statues exhibited in the imperial cult area gallery would have projected a powerful image of cohesion and belonging to the representatives of the other towns in the province Hispania Citerior. For their fellow townspeople, the honour of an inter flaminales viros statue was the culmination of their integration into the official apparatus of Rome, as their calls for citizenship rights were finally answered with the concession of the s ius Latinius Privus III 3), the placing of these statues in the monumental and programmatic setting of the Tarracon acropolis, the seat of the Concilium PHC, elevated the status of those honored to the very symbol of the consolidation of the political order in Hispania initiated by Augustus and the provincial unification sanctioned by Vespasian.

References

Fidwic, D., The Imperial Cult in the Lusitania West III, Leiden 2012.

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