Rings on her Fingers: Women's Public Donations of Jewelry in Roman Iberia

Excellent studies, most notably Riet van Bremen's *The Limits of Participation* (1996) and Emily Hemelrijk's *Hidden Lives, Public Personae* (2015), have established the importance of female civic munificence in the Greek East and Latin West, laying the way for even more detailed investigation into this social and economic aspect of Roman history. This paper examines the noteworthy phenomenon of the commemoration of jewelry donations within the Iberian Peninsula. Inscriptions from Hispania Tarraconensis, Baetica, and Lusitania, the majority set up by women, record striking particulars about jewelry on statues. Fabia Fabiana's dedication of a statue of Isis, for example, included earrings decorated with two emeralds and two pearls, a necklace of four strings of 36 pearls, a crown with a large pearl and six smaller pearls, and many more decorations (detailed in 11 of the text's 16 lines: *CIL* 2, 3386 = *ILS* 4422, *CILA* 4, 122 = *ILPG* 63, from Acci, Hisp. Cit.). Mapping the locations and exploring the contents of such inscriptions, this paper contributes to our understanding of women's civic benefactions and public personae, even as it adds sparkle to the history of women in these wealthy provinces.

These inscriptions, the majority of which are from the province of Baetica or along the Mediterranean coast in Hispania Tarraconensis, commemorate the donation of decorated statues, most of which honor deities (female deities such as Diana and Isis being particularly popular), but which sometimes represent the women themselves. Postumia Aciliana, for example, financed a posthumous statue of herself to be set up publicly and decorated with pearls and other gemstones amounting to 8,000 sesterces (*CIL* 2,5,713 = *CILA* 4, 113 = *ILS* 5496 = *ILPG* 88). While smaller donations of jewels and personal ornaments were likely offered as votives in these cities, the donations that have been commemorated with public inscriptions are more often associated with women. Even in cases where the ornamentation was not donated by the woman

herself, she is generally still either the subject of the statue or the executor of the will (*CIL* 2, 2526 = *CIL* 2,1,165).

Roman women's *de iure* and *de facto* control of their own property during the empire is generally recognized, but just as well-known are the many ideological constraints on their financial independence. Literary sources reveal men's ambivalence about women's jewelry and ornamentation, simultaneously a source of status and a symbol of corrupting decadence (e.g., Hübner 1866; Berg 2002; Kunst 2005; cf. Livy 34.3-4). The inscriptions from Hispania, however, suggest that civic donations of jewelry allowed women to claim the prestige and status of wealth without risking charges of immorality and profligacy. Although some have argued that women and money are rarely associated in Spain (Navarro Caballero 2003), inscriptions there are often either emphatic about the source of the money (*sua omni impensa* (*CIL* 2, 3240 = *CILA* 3, 1, 245 = *ILS* 5764); *pecunia impensaque sua omni* (*CIL* 2, 5, 30 = *CILA* 3, 1, 45 = *ILS* 5688) or the specific worth of their public donations (Curchin 1983). In addition to enumerating jewelry, gems, and precious stones, inscriptions in Hispania frequently record the massive sums that women donated to public works and civic entertainment, part of a broader trend of specific financial disclosure in the epigraphic record. We cannot know whether the jewels adorning a statue of Isis in Acci were once on the person of the donor, so that their precise enumeration served to commemorate the benefactress's own splendor as well as her piety towards the goddess and love of her community. In any case, the analysis of such inscriptions brilliantly illuminates women's wealth and standing in Roman Spain.

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