Asiarchs, Archiereis, and the Archiereiai of Asia

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The epigraphical evidence for the archiereiai of Asia is rarely discussed as a whole except as it is thought to throw light on the relationship of the asiarch and the archiereus of Asia. Since many archiereiai were wives of one or the other of these male functionaries, it is generally assumed that the women bore their titles in an honorary capacity. In effect a distinction is made between the title of the male, which denoted the holding of the office concerned (along with its constituent powers and privileges), and the title of the female, the chief entitlement to which, it is implied, was her marriage to an asiarch or archiereus of Asia. This interpretation is an implicit element in the notion that the titles asiarch and archiereus of Asia were synonymous. Otherwise, the hypothesis that the archiereiai of Asia received their title by marriage to an asiarch would be untenable. The efforts of scholars to prove this very fact by drawing attention to the number of archiereiai of Asia who were wives of asiarchs as well as of archiereis of Asia reveal a circularity of argument.

Further, it has been established that the imperial cult in Asia, although centered on a Roman emperor, remained essentially Greek in character. But proponents of honorary archiereiai have not at-


2 See in particular Rossner 102. The discussions of Beurlier (125, 127, 152f), and Deininger (41, 154) are more equivocal; in both cases, however, the ultimate conclusions are that the high priestess was merely dependent on the high priest for her title, that she was most probably his wife, and that she probably had no independent function.

3 Rossner 106f; A. D. Macro, “A Confirmed Asiarch,” AJP 100 (1979) 94–98; cf. Beurlier and Deininger (n.12 infra). Magie (1300 n.61), alone among those who hold that the title of the archiereiai of Asia was honorary, does not make the further assumption that asiarchs and archiereis of Asia were identical. Others have suggested that some at least of the archiereiai of Asia earned their title independently: Brandis, RE 2 (1895) 483 s.v. “Archieres”; Chapot 470; West 57f.

4 Price 77, 88f, 227.
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tempted to justify the apparent incongruity of their theory with evidence for priestesses of other Greek cults,\(^5\) where their independence of a male consort has been freely acknowledged.\(^6\) That the object of the imperial cult was a male in the person of the emperor does not justify such an unusual interpretation: it is clear that the women of Asia, as in Greece, were not confined to serving goddesses;\(^7\) in addition, many other women are attested throughout the province as city archiereiai of the imperial cult.\(^8\) Epigraphical references to archiereiai of the city imperial cults differ from those of the province only in the absence of the phrase τῆς Ἄρτιας,\(^9\) and the independent position of the civic archiereis is assured by an inscription from Aphrodisias in which an archiereia specifically claims to have performed all the requisite sacrifices throughout her years in office.\(^10\) It is clear that she was not dependent in any way on a complementary archiereus during her term as archiereia; and this inscription shows that the attitude of the Greeks of Asia towards the imperial cult can have been no different from that towards the many other cults in which women played a full and independent rôle.\(^11\)

\(^5\) The primary evidence cited by Beurlier and Deininger derives from the imperial cult in the West, and no attempt is made to examine the inscriptions from Asia in detail. The weakness of such a comparison for understanding the imperial cult in Asia becomes clear once the fundamentally Greek character of the imperial cult there is appreciated (supra n.4). The rôle of women as priestesses among the Greeks was a more independent and vital one than in Roman religion.


\(^7\) Graham (supra n.6) 304. Two of the archiereiai of Asia were also priestesses of male deities: IGR IV 1571 = #5 in the table infra; I.Ephesos III 814 = #11. In addition, men and women sharing the priesthoods of a male deity are documented at Ephesus (I.Ephesos III 689) and Carian Stratonicea (Stratonikeia I 107ff).

\(^8\) The following may be cited from Ephesus alone: I.Ephesos II 424–424a; III 643c, 810, 933, 980; IV 1030, 1060.

\(^9\) L. Robert, Les gladiateurs dans l'orient grec (Limoges 1940) 271; Magie 1297 n.59. The difference is not always easy to discern. According to the above definition, two archiereiai do not belong in the list infra (#13, 15); but the phrase "of the temples in Ephesus" attached to their title has led others to classify them as provincial archiereiai (Rossner 140, West 85). These could, nonetheless, have been omitted without materially affecting the interpretation advanced here.

\(^10\) MAMA VIII 492b. See also the discussion in Price 211.

\(^11\) Strangely, in view of the general interpretation of provincial priestesses, the rôle of women in the imperial cults of the cities appears never to have been challenged. See, for example, Price 211 and R. Mellor, Θεῖα Πόλις (Göttingen 1975) 181f. The frequent appearance of priestesses after the amalgamation of the cult of Roma with that of the
Given the usefulness of the archiereiai of Asia for supporting the hypothetical identity of the asiarch and archiereus of Asia, any reassessment of the archiereiai will have ramifications beyond the immediate problem of the rôle of the archiereiai of Asia themselves. Whether the titles archiereus of Asia and asiarch were two different designations for the same office has been debated for over a century and a half. The most recent extensive treatment of the subject is that of Deininger (36–50), who argues that although the two titles were used to refer to two separate offices during the late Republic and early imperial period, they had become synonymous at least by the beginning of the second century and probably before. He suggests that after the construction of the second and subsequent temples of the imperial cult of the province in cities such as Smyrna and Ephesus, it became practice to appoint several equal-ranking archiereis of Asia each year, instead of only one. Even then there was never more than one archiereus of Asia officiating in any city at one time. Deininger thus departs from earlier views that the provincial cult in Asia had either a sole high priest for the whole province at its head, or a supreme high priest assisted by deputies in the various cities of Asia where provincial temples of the imperial cult had been built. He nevertheless maintains the traditional view that the archierosyne was held by males only and that in any given city there was never more than one officiating high priest of the imperial cult of the province, namely an archiereus of Asia.

Emperor offers a striking contrast to the general lack of priestesses of Rome (cf. Mellor 181ff). In the author’s opinion it is one further indication of the genuine rôle played by women in the imperial cult: such a marked break with custom is much more likely to represent a genuine alteration in the structure and ritual of the cult, rather than merely a shift in social mores that henceforth included wives in the priestly honours of their husbands.


It has not yet been resolved whether the high priesthood of the imperial cult of Asia took the form of a hierarchy with a sole high priest for the entire province assisted by deputies in the various cities where there were temples of the provincial cult (Chapot 470), simply a sole high priest of the province (Magie 1297ff), or a board of several
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I propose to re-examine here a group of inscriptions with two purposes in mind: first, to establish whether the archiereiai of Asia constituted an exception to the normal Greek practice and were indeed dependent on a male consort for their title; and second, to apply the answer to the problem of the relationship of the asiarch to the archiereus of Asia. Our main body of evidence concerns the archiereiai of Asia from Ephesus. This group, the largest presently known from any single city, comprises fifteen archiereiai of Asia who are either documented at Ephesus itself, or can with a high degree of probability be associated with it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Husband's Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Flavia Ammion</td>
<td>Arch. of Asia</td>
<td>Late I/early II</td>
<td>IGR IV 1325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Phocaea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stratoneike</td>
<td>Arch. of Asia</td>
<td>Late I/early II</td>
<td>IGR IV 1571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vedia Marcia</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Late I/early II</td>
<td>I.Ephesos IV 1017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Claudia Ammion</td>
<td>Archiereus</td>
<td>Early II</td>
<td>I.Ephesos III 681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tryphaena</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Early II</td>
<td>IGR IV 1571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Claudia Tryphaena</td>
<td>Asiarch</td>
<td>130/1</td>
<td>I.Ephesos II 430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Scaptia Firmilla</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Hadrian</td>
<td>I.Ephesos V 1553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Anon. mother of the Vetulenia</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Flavia Papiane</td>
<td>Asiarch(?)</td>
<td>mid II</td>
<td>I.Ephesos III 729</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

equal-ranking high priests as Deininger proposes; but the available evidence from Ephesus is entirely consistent with the view that only a single person officiated in the city at any one time; see, for example, the dedicatory inscriptions I.Ephesos II 232–35, 237–41; V 1498. Brandis, Chapot, and West (supra n.3) have been prepared to accept that this official could on occasion be a woman. On the rare occasion when a man and woman did share the office, a specific terminology was employed (n.24 infra).

According to the usual view of honorary titles for archiereiai of Asia, a husband is the only male consort that comes into consideration (supra n.2). Macro (supra n.3: 95) suggests that a father-in-law may have been involved in one instance, but considers this unlikely. It is quite possible, in any case, that the status and rank of a woman's father and her family were in general more influential than those of her husband in determining her own position in society; see, for example, I.Ephesos III 729; IV 1017; and IGR IV 1571, where stress is laid on the parents rather than the husband. So too MAMA VIII 517b, where Flavia Appia of Aphrodisias appears alone as archierea of Asia in a dedication honoring her father. In I.Ephesos III 714, CIG 2782 (Aphrodisias), and IGR IV 1233 (Thyateira) the relationship of the woman to senatorials is emphasized even at the expense of the husband's status, to whom that honour is not accorded. The greater importance of the father in the epithets of moral quality applied to a woman of Roman citizenship in both the republican and imperial periods has been pointed out by J. Le Gall, “Un critère de différenciation sociale,” in C. Nicolet, ed., Recherches sur les structures sociales dans l'antiquité classique (Paris 1970) 279–81.

Known from IGR IV 1323.

The husband of Claudia Tryphaena may be Claudius Italicus who is documented at Teos (IGR IV 1567; CIG 3093), at Ephesus (I.Ephesos II 266, 280; III 643c), and at Aspendus (IGR III 804). The only position he is known to have held in the imperial cult is archiereus of the city cult at Aspendus.
Of the fifteen provincial archiereiai, three (1, 2, 9) are married to an archiereus of Asia, while four (6, 13, 14, 15) are definitely, and one (8) possibly, married to an asiarch. One archiereia (4) is married only to an archiereus of the imperial cult of the polis; that is, to a man who did not, according to this inscription, hold the priesthood of the imperial cult of the province even though his wife had done so. For the remaining six archiereiai of Asia (3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12), there is either no evidence of a husband, or, if a husband is known, some doubt as to his title. Therefore, on the available evidence, at least eight of the archiereiai may have obtained their title from their husbands—provided, of course, that the archiereus of Asia and asiarch are identical. For the rest of the archiereiai the situation remains in doubt.

Closer inspection of those eight reveals some indications that the wife’s title was not solely dependent on that of her husband. Flavia Papiane (8), for example, is named as archiereia of Asia, but her husband, P. Vedius Antoninus, who is also mentioned in the inscription, bears no title at all (I.Ephesos III 729): Φλαονίαν Παπανὴν ἀρχιέρειαν τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ ἀρχιερέων θυγατέρα, γυναῖκα δὲ Πο. Ὄμηδίου Ἀντωνέινον. While Vedius has been accorded the asiarchy by some scholars on the basis of two other inscriptions,19 here, where

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18 Known from I.Ephesos III 616.
19 I.Ephesos VI 2065: here however the abbreviated form of the tria nomina could equally well apply to the father, grandfather, or son of Vedius. Indeed the inscription has been attributed to each of these at one time or another: H. Halfmann, Die Senator aus dem östlichen Teil des Imperium Romanum bis zum Ende des 2. Jahrhunderts (Göttingen 1979) 169 no. 84a (grandfather or father); J. Keil, RE VIIIa.1 (1955) 566 s.v. “Vedius (2)” (father); R. Heberdey, Forsch.Eph. II no. 65 (son). Certainly the content of the inscription itself is of no assistance in ascertaining which is correct. I.Ephesos III 728 (see the stemma, I.Ephesos VII.1 p.89) has been convincingly assigned to the father by M. Wörle, “Zur Datierung des Hadrianstempels an der 'Kuretenstrasse' in Ephesos,” AA 88 (1973) 470–77. Certainly, despite the wealth of epigraphical material documenting the activity of Vedius in Ephesus (a summary in the
one would expect to see his title if that of his wife were dependent upon it, his name is not qualified in any way. Similarly the wife of Rupillius Alexander (15) is described as twice archiereia of Asia, but there is no sign that her husband ever repeated his term of office. He bears only the simple title, asiarch (I.Ephesos III 714).

Conversely, in some inscriptions from Ephesus the husband bears a provincial title but his wife does not. Such is the case of Iulia Lydia Laterane, the wife of Tiberius Claudius Aristio. In two inscriptions where their names appear together, Aristio bears a provincial title, but Iulia is described only as archiereia. Likewise, in the two inscriptions recording the statues he and his family erected to the proconsul of Asia and his sister in 109/110, T. Flavius Pythio is designated asiarch, but Flavia Myrton, his wife, bears no title at all.

Such inscriptions, in which the differences in the titles of husband and wife suggest that the one was not derived from the other, are not confined to Ephesus. They are found, for example, in Thyateira, Aphrodisias, and elsewhere. Therefore the cases cited from Ephesus may not in any way be discounted as unusual or aberrant examples. In themselves, they strongly suggest that the wife’s title was not entirely dependent on her husband’s; but a far stronger indication of this independence of title is the case of Claudia Ammion (4), whose

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stemma mentioned above), none unequivocally designates him as asiarch, and from the evidence presently available this view seems most likely to be correct. On the other hand, both his father and grandfather are documented as asiarchs elsewhere (I.Ephesos II 429, VII.2 4110).

20 Iulia has been taken as archiereia of Asia on the basis of I.Ephesos II 424 by Rossner (131). But an inscription discovered subsequently (II 424a) proves beyond doubt that the correct reading of Iulia’s titles is “daughter of Asia, archiereia”; she is not so far known to have been an archiereia of Asia.

21 I.Ephesos VII.1 3033–34.

22 THYATEIRA: Flavia Priscilla is twice archiereia of Asia in IGR IV 1233, and her husband is simply asiarch. The next generation of the family is represented in the same inscription, where the situation is repeated. APHRODISIAS: in CIG 2782 Flavia Appia is archiereia of Asia, although her husband, Claudianus, in whose honor the inscription was decreed, is not an archiereus either of the province or of the city. Macro (supra n.3) unconvincingly restores the inscription with Claudianus as archiereus of Asia. His attempt to draw in as evidence coins from Attuda on which Claudianus appears as asiarch (cf. Halfmann [supra n.19] no. 144a for details) is useless because the coins cannot be dated relative to this inscription; moreover, his supposition that they are relevant assumes that the terms asiarch and archiereus were identical, a fact not proven. See further Macro, AJP 106 (1985) 118f, refuted by T. Drew-Bear, GRBM 10 (1984) 67–69. For a second example at Aphrodisias see CIG 2823. CYZICUS: the difference in rank between Vibia Polla and her husband, who was archiereus of Asia, has led to confusion. Vibia Polla herself was archiereia only of the city cult (IGR IV 155), but she is included as archiereia of Asia by E. de Ruggiero, DizEpig 1 (1895) 731; Chapot 489; Magie 1604; Rossner 138 (the latter two with incorrect references).
husband was quite definitely neither asiarch nor archierus of Asia: 23

Κλαυδίαν Ἀμμοῦ τῆς γυναῖκας τῆς Ποντίου Γαυνίου Κασπίωνος τοῦ ἀρχιερέως, γενομένην ἀρχιερεῖαν τῆς Ἀσίας. But another archiereia of Asia, this time from Aphrodisias, was also honoured as archiereia of Asia when her husband bore only the title of municipal archierus (CIG 2823). In this instance, in fact, it appears from the text that her husband was already dead. Therefore the possibility that her husband could have been a former archierus of Asia, as in the case of Claudia Ammion of Ephesus, is here precluded: it is reasonable to assume that the dead husband is described by the highest title he earned during his lifetime.

The inscriptions concerning the three archiereiai of Asia who were definitely married to provincial archiereis (1, 2, 9) also suggest that two of these, at least, were regarded as playing an important rôle alongside their husbands. Amphilla (9) is specifically named as co-archiereia: the use of a term such as συναρχιερασίαι certainly denotes an equality of rank. 24 The inscription concerning Stratoneike (2), on the other hand, refers to her husband and herself in the plural as “archiereis of Asia.” This usage, also found in other cities of Asia, would surely be unnecessary if only the man actually held office. 25

The use of the plural for husband and wife as archiereis of Asia is also found in an inscription from Cibyra (IGR IV 908):

οἱ ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἑλλήνες ἑτερχῖσαν Τιβέριον Κλαυδίον Κλαυδίου Πολέμωνος νῦν Κυρείνα Κέλσον Ὀρεσταίαν, φιλόπατρον, κοσμόπολιν, καὶ Φλαουίαν Φλαουίου ἕρων θυγατέρα Λυκάν, θυγατέρα πόλεως, τῆς γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, ἀρχιερεῖασσάτας τῆς Ἀσίας τῶν ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ καὶ δῖς νεκροῖς Περγάμῳ ναῷ.

Here, significantly, we find the aorist participle, which in normal usage should indicate that the archierosyne of both husband and wife constituted a fixed term of office. It is especially noteworthy that this

23 I.Ephesos III 681. Claudia Ammion proves an exception to the belief of Rossner (102) that no archiereia of Asia is known who was not the wife of an archierus of Asia or an asiarch. Aelia Laevilla of Aphrodisias is a second exception (CIG 2823).

24 I.Ephesos III 721. This formula appears to be rare. It does, however, occur in at least two inscriptions (CIG 4385 from Isaura in Lycaonia and 4363 from Termessus in Pamphylia), although both these refer to the city imperial cult and not to the provincial. Priesthoods shared between men and women are also known in other cults (see supra n.7).

25 IGR IV 1571. This inscription has been restored at the crucial place, but the editor’s suggestion is justified by three inscriptions from Thyateira (IGR IV 1229, 1238; CIG 3495). See also I.Ephesos III 729, where the parents of Flavia Papiane, archiereia of Asia, are archiereis of the city cult.
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inscription was not engraved at the behest of a private individual, nor even by the city, but by the koinon of Asia itself; it therefore constitutes an official recognition of the woman's rôle by the body that controlled and administered cult at the provincial level.26

Yet another group of inscriptions from Ephesus suggests that the title archiereia of Asia was not a purely honorary one. Six archiereiai of Asia (3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12) were honoured without any reference to a husband, although some at least were, or had been, married. Claudia Tryphaena (5) and the anonymous archiereia (7) were both honoured alone by their sons; and as the reference to archiereia of Asia (10) occurs in a dedication to her daughter, she too was certainly married, although her husband is not mentioned. In the case of Vedia Marcia, archiereia (3), the inclusion of her patronymic in addition to the list of her offices suggests that she was not married.27 Mindia Hegumene (12) may have been unmarried also, for when she appears as archiereia of Asia in an inscription honoring her father, her name is specifically linked only to that of her sister.28 Thanks to the fragmentary state of the inscription no conclusions can be safely drawn about the remaining member of this group (11): as far as the text remains she appears alone. Thus of these six archiereiai of Asia, five were clearly honored alone when bearing the title, regardless of whether they were married or unmarried.

There is one final and conclusive proof that women could and did serve as archiereiai of Asia in their own right. The evidence comes not from Ephesus, but from Magnesia on the Maeander (I. Magn. 158), in a decree of the mid-first century honoring a certain Iuliane. As in other inscriptions, both husband and wife are named archiereus and archiereia of Asia respectively; but on this occasion there can be no doubt that they actually held office on separate occasions: the lapse of time between their terms of office is specified in lines 4–6. Moreover, that of Iuliane is indicated as having occurred before that of her husband:29

26 This appears to contradict the belief of Deininger (41) and Rossner (102) that archiereiai of Asia are never found as actual functionaries of the koinon.
27 An unmarried status would not have prevented Vedia from being prytanis. I. Ephesos IV 1066 is a dedication by a former prytanis who was clearly unmarried: cf. R. Merkelbach, “Der Kult der Hestia im Prytaneion der griechischen Städte,” ZPE 37 (1980) 85.
28 The inscription is broken at the bottom, however, and the partially preserved name of a grandson of Mindia’s father (lines 15f) leaves open the possibility that she was in fact married.
29 This is the only case known to the author where the terms of office of husband and wife as archiereis of Asia are explicitly separated. That this is the correct interpretation of the text is supported by a comparison with I. Ephesos II 435. In this text two
This inscription confirms the indications from the evidence cited above: archiereiai of Asia were not dependent on their husbands for their title, because they could and did serve as archiereiai of Asia quite separately from their husband. The Ephesian archiereiai alone range in date from the late first century until the mid-third century, at which point epigraphical attestation of the imperial cult in Asia comes to a virtual end. This conclusion may therefore be applied as a general principle for most of the imperial period in Asia.

While the evidence for an independent archiereia of Asia has intrinsic importance for the light it throws on the activity of prominent and wealthy women in the religious life of the province, its bearing on the relationship of the asiarch and archiereus of Asia is of even more far-reaching consequence. Evidence that the two titles were attached to different people in exactly the same year, even if they were man and woman, must mean that the asiarchy was not identical with provincial archierosyne. A functional archiereia of Asia excludes the possibility that an asiarch occupied the position of archiereus of Asia simultaneously. Thus, given that there was only one high priest of Asia in any single city at one time, inscriptions such as that from Ephesus in which C. Claudius Verulanus Marcellus is asiarch in 130/1 and his wife is archiereia of Asia in the same year must mean that...
the titles were not synonymous: Γάιος Κλαύδιος Βερούλανος Μάρκελος ἀσιάρχης μετὰ Σκαπτίας Φυρμίλης τῆς γυναικὸς ἀρχιερείας τῆς Ἀσίας, ἐπὶ ἀνθυπάτου Αφραῖνου Φλαμανοῦ. 33

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reason has been advanced for the relative frequency with which husband and wives appear simultaneously in important positions such as these, namely the habit of intermarriage among those wealthy and distinguished families that dominated office-holding in the cities and provinces (J. Wiseman, "A Distinguished Macedonian Family of the Roman Imperial Period," AJA 88 [1984] 572). On the other hand, in light of this evidence for a distinction between the titles asiarch and archiereus of Asia, the existence of L. Rupilius Alexander, asiarch in Ephesus (J.Ephesus III 698) and Domitius Rufus, asiarch in Sardis (TAM V.1 230, and J. Nollé, Nundinas instituere et habere. Epigraphische Zeugnisse zur Einrichtung und Gestaltung von ländlichen Märkten in Afrika und in der Provinz Asia [Hildesheim 1982] 60–86) in the same year, 253/4, assumes new importance. This information may now indicate, as Magie suggested over thirty years ago (449f), that the asiarchs were primarily concerned with the individual cities rather than of the province as a whole. I intend to return to this question later.

33 I wish to acknowledge with gratitude suggestions made by Professors G. H. R. Horsley, E. A. Judge, C. E. V. Nixon, and M. J. Osborne during the preparation of this paper. Nevertheless, the views expressed and the remaining shortcomings are entirely my own.