

Venerated Rulers. The implication of Rome's subdits in the emperor worship in Hispania

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The imperial cult has been studied in depth for decades, to the point that we are nowadays able to recognise its main features and characteristics. There are many studies focusing on the rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices and more generally on the set of practices that constituted the worship of the imperial family during the Principate.¹ However, few of them concentrate on the individuals that took an active role in the worship of the emperor. As a consequence of the worshippers being left out of the analysis, the study of this phenomenon has traditionally prioritised a political interpretation. This argument becomes stronger when applied to the provinces, which are generally divided in two sets when analysing the worship of rulers. On one side there was the East, where people had previously worshipped their rulers as gods and were consequently more inclined towards extravagant flattery. On the other side, the Western part of the Empire was not prepared to consider the god-like qualities of the ruler and the imperial cult was basically founded and expanded by the Roman State as a means for the political promotion of the emperor's figure.

During the 70's, some historians challenged this traditional interpretation. Keith Hopkins, for instance, pointed out that the East-West

¹ One of the first studies of the Roman culture in which the imperial cult is discussed was written by E. Gibbons, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London 1776-89). However, Gibbons' postulates are quite Eurocentric and are generally dismissed nowadays, even though some of his interpretations may still remain in a subliminal way. Another traditional study about the imperial cult is that of A.D. Nock, 'Studies in the Graeco-Roman Beliefs of the Empire', *The Journal of Hellenistic Studies* 45 (1925) 84-101. For Spain, the impressive research undertaken by R. Étienne, *Le Culte impérial dans la péninsule ibérique d'Auguste à Dioclétien* (Paris 1958) must be taken into account for the huge amount of information provided. More recent is the study of J.A. Delgado, *Élites y organización de la religión en las provincias romanas de la Bética y las Mauritánias: sacerdotes y sacerdocios* (*Elites and organisation of the religion in the Roman provinces of Baetica and the Mauritánias: priests and priesthoods*) (Oxford 1998), although as its name shows it only focuses on the organisation of the priesthoods. More relevant for the present research are the titles that will be quoted in this introduction from now on.

dichotomy was not sufficient to explain the origin of the imperial cult.² It seems quite extreme to make such a clear division between the West and the East when, within each region, processes of conquest and Romanisation were so different and spread over time.³ A qualitative change came from Simon Price, who criticised the fact that among his contemporaries, the imperial cult was considered a fundamentally secular institution, more a matter of practical politics than of religion. Price found the explanation for this situation in our Christianising conception that politics and religion are separate areas.⁴

The mentioned criticisms did not settle the question. Duncan Fishwick was one of the most prominent historians in the Roman ruler cult and wrote a monumental study of the imperial cult in the Latin West, reason why we will refer back to him frequently in this article. He argued throughout his study that 'by and large provincial cult in the West appears as an instrument of imperial policy, a device that could be manipulated in whichever direction the purposes of the central authority might require.'⁵

There have recently been new approaches to the study of the imperial cult. An example of this is provided by Ittai Gradel. Gradel follows Price's criticism of the distinction between politics and religion, but takes its implications even further by suggesting that humans were different from gods in 'degree' but not in 'kind', which avoided the idea of transgression and propitiated the acceptance of the ruler cult.⁶

Despite the criticisms of the traditional interpretations and the new analyses with a major inclusion of anthropology, not enough studies have

² K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge 1978) 199, 209.

³ Note that the conquest of Spain began in 218 B.C., whereas the conquest of Britain began in A.D. 43. This results in many differences, starting from the political configuration of the Roman State at the moment of the conquest, followed by social and religious transformations. However, this does not prevent historians from labelling both regions under the category of the West, which enables them to clearly differentiate it from the East.

⁴ S. Price, *Rituals and Power. The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge 1984)

2. Hopkins, *Conquerors*, 200, 228 had already reflected on the fact that politics and religion are intertwined and blended into each other, but never established that this was a reflection of Christianising assumptions.

⁵ D. Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in the Latin West. Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire. Vol. III: Provincial Cult, Part 1: Institution and Evolution* (Leiden, Boston, MA and Köln 2002) 219.

⁶ I. Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford 2002) 26.

set the people who venerated the emperor in the foreground. This article pretends to do so by focusing on the epigraphic evidence of the first three centuries A.D. honouring the emperors and their families in the Spanish provinces (Hispania Citerior, Lusitania and Baetica). To discern the real purpose of such dedications, it will become essential to comment on historical developments in Hispania (e.g. processes of conquest, levels of Romanisation), but mostly on the worshippers' nature and actions. Were they Roman citizens or *peregrini*? Did they hold public offices? Did they pay for the dedications with their own money? When and where did they set up imperial honours? Only by answering these questions can we explore the social penetration of the imperial cult and reach new conclusions.

The interpretation of the primary sources will focus on the corpus of dedicants and the nature of the dedications. For this purpose, I will follow the distinction between public and private that Gradel draws from Festus, a Roman grammarian from the second century A.D. who provides unique evidence for the culture of his time:⁷

Public rites are those which are performed at public expense on behalf of the [whole] people, and also those which are performed for the hills [*montes*], villages [*pagi*], 'clans' [*curiae*] and chapels [*sacella*], in contrast to private rites which are performed on behalf of individual persons, households, or family lineages.⁸

Therefore, public *sacra* are basically concerned with 'cults performed on behalf of the whole individual city — or 'city state' — and all its citizens (*populus*), by city magistrates, at public expense.'⁹ Magistrates would have belonged to the Senate in Rome and to the corresponding local council (*ordo decurionum*) outside of Rome, which is the case for the evidence used in this study. These cults are termed 'state cults'. With respect to the private cult, this is primarily related to individuals and families. It is important to note that this distinction between public and private does not correspond to our ideas of public versus private because 'private cults regularly took place in public, even at public temples, and could be under tight control and scrutiny

⁷ Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 9.

⁸ *Publica sacra quae publico sumptu pro populo fiunt, quaeque pro montibus, pagis, curis sacellis: at privata, quae pro singulis hominibus, familiis, gentibus fiunt* (Fest. p. 284L, translation by I. Gradel).

⁹ Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 9-10.

from the public authorities.¹⁰ This must be borne in mind because the inscriptions analysed would have been placed in public spaces, but this does not imply that they must be labelled as public. The distinction will be assessed, as in Gradel, with respect to how the dedication was financed.



Map 1. Territorial organisation of Hispania under the Roman Empire (Ancient World Mapping Center).

Veneration to the emperor and the imperial family in Hispania

The worship of the imperial family is the most enduring feature of what is nowadays known as the ‘imperial cult’. Emperors and their families were apotheosised at the moment of their death and received the title of *divus*.¹¹ The apotheosis was declared by the Roman Senate and took place at the imperial funerals, where a whole procedure was put in practice to ensure deification.¹² Deified emperors, called *divi*, became the main object of a

¹⁰ Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 13.

¹¹ For a full list of deified emperors and imperial family members, see D. Kienast, *Römische Kaisertabelle. Grundzüge einer römischen Kaiserchronologie* (Darmstadt 1996).

¹² S. Price, ‘From noble funerals to divine cult: the consecration of Roman Emperors’ in: D. Cannadine and S. Price ed, *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in*

whole system of rituals. Nonetheless, the living emperor was also venerated and worshipped throughout the Roman provinces. The traditional interpretation upholds that worship of living emperors did not take place in Rome, and by extension in Italy, where it was not fostered, nor even allowed. Recent studies have convincingly challenged this interpretation.¹³ This article, however, does not pretend to shed light on the situation in Italy, but rather on that in the Spanish provinces. The imperial cult in Hispania, both to the *divi* and to the living emperor, went through different phases. The present analysis will therefore be divided into subcategories based on these chronological developments, which allows interesting conclusions to be reached. Subsections will draw upon the chronological analysis provided by Fishwick regarding the institution and evolution of the cult in the Western provinces of the Empire.¹⁴

The initial phase (31 B.C. – A.D. 14)

Fishwick explains that the veneration of the living emperor was introduced in the Spanish North-West during Augustus' reign, with the consecration of the *Arae Sestianae* (probably in 19 B.C. after Agrippa's subjection of the region) by the Roman commander Lucius Sestius Quirinalis Albinianus.¹⁵ This isolated fact serves Fishwick's imposition theory, which sees the establishment of the imperial cult in Spain as a purely political tool used to further Roman central ideology. While this was certainly an act of central propaganda, I am more inclined to believe that the aim was merely to link the conquest with the emperor, as Fishwick himself accepts, and not to establish a cult that had been introduced too recently in other areas of the Empire for the centre to be aware of its supposed 'potential'.¹⁶ Moreover, Augustus might not have had anything to do with this decision. Even if the

Traditional Societies, (Cambridge 1987) 56-105, for the different elements found in the apotheosis ceremony (mainly a pyre, the release of an eagle and an eyewitness who could confirm that the dead emperor had ascended to heaven to join the gods), and for the significant changes in the ceremony over time.

¹³ Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 73-108, for instance, finds evidence throughout Italy for the municipal worship of the living emperor.

¹⁴ Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem* 6-9.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 6-7.

altars were intended to spread the cult in Spain, it is hard to imagine how they can have influenced the more Romanised people from the East and South of the Iberian Peninsula. The North-West had just been conquered and the local indigenous people, with a strong Celtic background, were undoubtedly seen by the rest as 'barbarians'. Consequently, measures applied there were most probably not seen as something to emulate by the rest of the Spaniards. Therefore, the offering of these altars can hardly have set an example for the whole Spanish population to start honouring the living emperor.

The inscriptions, however, demonstrate that Spaniards did begin to honour the living emperor everywhere on the Iberian Peninsula during Augustus' reign, soon before any form of state or provincial cult, with a more official aura, was instituted for the emperor.¹⁷ Other examples of central promotion exist, but these are scarce and were set up in the newly-conquered and more unstable areas of the North-West.¹⁸ Due to their geographical location, all four inscriptions can, in my opinion, be explained with the same reasoning as the *Arae Sestianae*.

Apart from the four instances of central promotion, there are seven other inscriptions left that can be dated to Augustus' reign and are dedicated to the living emperor (i.e. Augustus). These dedications are scattered throughout the three Spanish provinces. What is most striking about this set of inscriptions is that many of them can be labelled as part of private cults. These are the cases of Caius Maecius Celer (27 B.C. – A.D. 14 in Ilici, *conventus* Carthaginensis),¹⁹ Vicanus (5-4 B.C. in Salacia, *conventus* Pacensis),²⁰ and Lucius Aemilius Nigellus (A.D. 11-12 in Urgavo, *conventus* Cordubensis).²¹ There are many factors that differentiate these three inscriptions. Two of the dedicants are Roman citizens (deduced from the use of the *tria nomina*, which is the system of names used by Roman citizens and composed of three parts: *praenomen*, *nomen* and *cognomen*), while Vicanus

¹⁷ Similar to the situation in Hispania, in Italy Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 77 finds inscriptions testifying the existence of temples, priests and sacrifices to the living emperor, evidence that is most abundant from the time of Augustus' reign.

¹⁸ CIL 2, 472 (by the general Agrippa in Emerita Augusta in 27-20 B.C.); CIL 2, 2581 (by the *legatus Caesaris* Paullus Fabius Maximus in Lucus Augusti in 27 B.C.); CIL 2, 2703 (by Cneus Calpurnius Piso in Gigia in A.D. 9-10).

¹⁹ CIL 2, 3555.

²⁰ CIL 2, 5182.

²¹ CIL 2, 2106 = CIL 2/7, 69 = CILA 3/2, 559 = ILER 1030.

must be a *peregrinus* (i.e. a non-Roman citizen). L. Aemilius Nigellus is the only one who mentions the offices held during his *cursus honorum* (he had been *aedile* and *duumvir* in Urgavo), but the inscription was set up by his own initiative.²² Lastly, the formulas used are also different. While Celer dedicates to *Augusto divi filio*, Vicanus and Nigellus use a more standard formula by adding Augustus' pontificate, consulship and *tribunicia potestate*. Significantly, these last two dedications include the word *sacrum*, Nigellus linking it to Augustus' *Victoria* and Vicanus apparently to Augustus himself, which highlights the cultic nature of both inscriptions.

The nature of two of the four remaining inscriptions cannot be fully confirmed. While they are dedicated by individuals, their fragmentary state does not allow us to attribute them to a private or public cult.²³ However, it is clear that the imperial titulature is not included in any of them. The last two inscriptions from Augustus' reign have a municipal character.²⁴ What must be noted in regards to this first stage of the imperial cult in Spain is the diversity of the dedicants, some of them individuals, and the diversified formulas used, both referring to the emperor and to the dedicants. We will see in the following subsections how this situation changed progressively as the cult developed.

The Julio-Claudian dynasty (A.D. 14 – 68)

Under Tiberius' reign, the next phase of the imperial cult in the Spanish provinces developed, marked by the institution of the provincial cult to the deified Augustus together with Roma in Hispania Citerior and Lusitania.²⁵ Fishwick provides a Flavian date for the establishment of the provincial cult in Baetica, where Tiberius did not grant permission for the building of a provincial temple in Corduba dedicated to him and his mother Livia.²⁶ In

²² The *cursus honorum* was the course of political offices that any wealthy Roman citizen could undertake. The *aedilitas* and duumvirate were the two major municipal offices, which provided social status and a position of power within the community.

²³ EE 9, 269 (date unknown in Aquae Flaviae, *conventus* Bracaraugustanus); CIL 2, 5852 (5-4 B.C. in Bilbilis, *conventus* Caesaraugustanus).

²⁴ CIL 2, 2107 = CIL 2/7, 70 = ILS 96 = CILA 3/2, 560 = ILER 1024; CIL 2, 3827 = CIL 2/14/1, 305.

²⁵ Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 43-52 (Hispania Citerior) and 53-59 (Lusitania).

²⁶ Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 111-126 (Baetica).

contrast, Le Roux, an emeritus professor from the University of Paris 13 and specialist in the ancient history of the Iberian Peninsula, disagrees with this chronology and interprets the provincial initiative shown in the request of a provincial temple as a confirmation that there must have already been some sort of provincial cult.²⁷ As it is not my concern in this paper to secure a date for the starting point of the provincial cult in Baetica, I will not delve further into this argument. Due to a lack of sources confirming Le Roux's theory, I will follow the chronology established by Fishwick.

As a consequence of the establishment of the state cult at Augustus' death, dedications to *Divus Augustus* begin in this moment. More interesting is, however, the veneration of the living emperor (i.e. Tiberius, Augustus' adopted son) and the *domus Augusta* (i.e. the imperial family). It has been mentioned that Tiberius prohibited the construction of a temple dedicated to him in Baetica. This should have sent a message to the provincials not to venerate him, but they did anyway. The epigraphic evidence proves the existence of many private cults in Hispania at this stage, although no former official veneration is attested. This situation demonstrates a high level of initiative from the Spaniards, who were eager to venerate the living emperor. This evidence proves that the restrictions that were applied to the provincial cult did not necessarily stand for municipal and private cults.

Also under Tiberius' reign, many inscriptions were set up in honour of members of the *domus Augusta*. The nature of these epigraphic records shows a lot of variation, with both municipal and private cults attested. Drusus (Tiberius' son) was honoured several times, both by individuals and local senates, even though in many instances the evidence remains fragmentary.²⁸ Germanicus (Tiberius' adopted son) also received honours.²⁹ Significantly, three inscriptions were set up by two *pontifici Caesarum* of Anticaria (*conventus Astigitanus*). Marcus Cornelius Proculus honoured Livia (Tiberius' mother) and Germanicus in what seem to be part of the functions of his office as *pontifex Caesarum*.³⁰ However, Cornelius Bassus, who might have been Proculus' brother, honoured Drusus but did so with his own

²⁷ P. Le Roux, 'L'évolution du culte impérial dans les provinces occidentales d'Auguste à Domitien', *Pallas* 40 (1994) 397-411: 399.

²⁸ CIL 2, 5048 = CIL 2/5, 962 = CIL 2/4, 1121 (set up by an individual); CIL 2, 1553 = CIL 2/5, 440 (set up by the local senate).

²⁹ CIL 2, 1517, 2198 = CIL 2/5, 592 = *HEp* 3, 169.

³⁰ CIL 2, 2038 = CIL 2/5, 748 = ILLER 1258 (Livia); CIL 2, 2039 = CIL 2/5, 749 = ILLER 1054 (Germanicus).

money.³¹ This instance goes to exemplify the high level of variation during the Julio-Claudian era, where two *pontifici Caesarum* (an uncommon office since priests of the imperial cult were normally termed *flamen* or *sacerdos*) in the same place and within the same timeframe venerated the *domus Augusta* in completely different ways. Finally, I would like to emphasise the fact that *flamines* in charge of the cult of the living emperor and his family are also attested. We come across the names of Marcus Aurelius in Pax Iulia, a *flamen* of Tiberius,³² and Marcus Iulius Plotus, *flamen* of Germanicus and Iulia Augusta (Livia) in Olisipo.³³ These priesthoods were devoted to Tiberius and his family even though he had refused the institution of a provincial cult in his name; the high level of local initiative could not be clearer.³⁴

We have seen how under the first two Roman emperors municipal and private cults were abundant and took different forms. This suddenly stopped when Caligula succeeded Tiberius. Caligula was not a popular emperor and his reign was short-lived (A.D. 37-41), which is probably why he is not prominent in our source material. Nonetheless, two dedications to Caligula's mother, Agrippina, can be dated from his reign.³⁵ Agrippina's manners ensured her considerable popularity, both among the army and the people. Moreover, she was Germanicus' wife. This Roman general was very popular, which granted him veneration by the Spaniards. The same veneration was bestowed on Agrippina, even though she never visited Spain and consequently the Spanish population never had direct contact with her. It must be noted, however, that she did not receive honours during her lifetime. She had died in A.D. 33 and the inscriptions date from Caligula's reign. The explanation for this fact might lie in Tiberius' hatred towards her. Tiberius had her banished to Pandateria, where she died. Her ashes were

³¹ CIL 2, 2040 = CIL 2/5, 750 = ILER 1059.

³² CIL 2, 49 = *HEp* 14, 414.

³³ CIL 2, 194 = ILS 6896.

³⁴ Similarly, Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 85 finds evidence for the flaminiate of Tiberius in Paestum (Lucania), even though the emperor had refused offers of divine worship. Gradel takes this evidence to mean that 'the relationship between emperor and Senate in the capital was only of marginal relevance to them [the grandees of Paestum], and Tiberius' hesitations and refusals were presumably never meant to curtail his worship at this level'.

³⁵ CIL 2, 3379 = CIL 2/5, 4 = CILA 3/1, 279 = ILER 1260; CIL 2, 963 = CILA 1, 2 = EE 9, p. 56 = ERBC 157 = *HEp* 3, 197 = AE 1990, 483.

not returned to Rome until Caligula's ascension to power, when dedications to her appeared in Hispania.



Fig. 1. CIL 2, 1302, 'The dedication of Terpulia' (Source: Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum)

After Caligula's short reign, imperial dedications to the living emperor reappeared. Although in lower numbers than under Augustus and Tiberius, and no longer including the *domus Augusta*, both Claudius (the second emperor to be apotheosised by the Roman Senate) and Nero were honoured with dedications. The main characteristic of this worship is still the abundance of private cults, with a great variety of dedicants and very inconsistent and irregular in its form. Claudius received honorific inscriptions by several *peregrini*, most of them with a clear indigenous background. We see, for instance, the freedman Optatus and his two sons,

Optatus and Reburus³⁶; Vestinus and his son Rusticus³⁷; and Terpulia, who set up a dedication to Claudius following the testamentary will of her husband Albanus (fig.1).³⁸

A dedication set up by Lucius Cornelius, a citizen from Ipagrum, exemplifies the high level of irregularity in the imperial cult at this stage.³⁹ The text ends with the abbreviation *D.D.S.*, which was expanded by Hübner as *d(e) d(ecurionum) s(ententia)* (i.e. by the *decuriones*' ruling, being the *decuriones* the members of the local senate and, therefore, the deciding body of each Roman town). This is highly unusual and is not found on any other imperial dedication; honours decreed by local senates generally follow the formula *d(ecreto) d(ecurionum)* (i.e. by decree of the *decuriones*). The editors of CIL 2/5 prefer to expand it as *d(e) d(edit) s(uo)* (i.e. given by him). This formula is also very unusual because the common one reads *d(e) s(uo) d(edit)*, and allows for the identification of this dedication as part of a private cult. The use of such a non-standard formula is better understood within the context of private cults. Municipal cults were organised by the elites of the *ordo decurionum* (the local senate), who were probably more aware of formalities. Another inscription with unique wording was devoted by the *civitas Ammaiensis*, where it is made clear that an annual vow was offered by the town.⁴⁰

In most of the inscriptions devoted to Nero, which are less abundant than those to Claudius, dedicants cannot be discerned.⁴¹ There is only one exception, which was set up by an *Augustalis perpetuus*.⁴²

To sum up, we have seen that during the Julio-Claudian dynasty, Rome's subjects in Spain showed great initiative. Many private cults

³⁶ CIL 2, 1569 = CIL 2/5, 394.

³⁷ CIL 2, 1953 = ILS 5504.

³⁸ CIL 2, 1302 = CILA 2/3, 993 = ILER 1609. The editors of CILA explain that while Terpulia and Albanus are Roman names, the names of their respective father and mother (Saunus and Sunna) are clearly indigenous.

³⁹ CIL 2, 1519 = CIL 2/5, 583.

⁴⁰ AE 1950, 217 = AE 1969/70, 238. See M. Beard, J. North and S. Price, *Religions of Rome. A History, Vol. I* (Cambridge 1998) 320 n.17 for a brief note on this inscription.

⁴¹ CIL 2, 1392 = CILA 2/3, 818 = *HEp* 13, 596 = AE 2003, 917; CIL 2, 184; EE 8, 24; CIL 2, 1281 = CILA 2/3, 965 (Hübner reconstructed a mention of the *ordo* of Salpensa, but the editors of CILA are not convinced and prefer not to attempt a restoration).

⁴² CIL 2, 183 = ILS 5640 = *HEp* 4, 1074.

venerated Augustus during his lifetime, even though the state cult in Rome had not yet been established. Even when the provincial cult to the deified Augustus was instituted in Hispania (which, as we have seen was the result of the initiative of the provincials), private cults to the living emperor continued. Moreover, at this time the living emperor was Tiberius, who had rejected the establishment of a provincial cult in Baetica devoted to him and Livia. The explanation for this rejection might be found in the fact that the imperial state cult was devoted, at this stage, to *Divus Augustus* (the deified Augustus) and not to the living emperor. Tiberius was probably afraid that people in Rome would not accept this provincial adoration of the living emperor. On top of that, he was not as charismatic as his adoptive father, Augustus, and tried not to emulate him. However, even if a provincial cult to Tiberius might have not started at this point, private cults devoted to him surely existed, as the epigraphic evidence shows. We must therefore accept that Spaniards were eager to worship the living emperor.

The Flavian reformation (A.D. 69-96)

Fishwick has argued that the existing provincial cult devoted to the *divi* and Roma was reformed by the Flavians (i.e. the new ruling dynasty) to include the living emperor in both Hispania Citerior and Lusitania. In Baetica, as has already been mentioned, the provincial cult, also to the living emperor and the *divi*, was first established in this period.⁴³ This reformation and expansion of provincial cults can be explained by pointing out the desire of the new emperor, Vespasian, to promote loyalty to his new dynasty, whose legitimacy and authority was still uncertain.⁴⁴ What matters to the present study is whether these changes at the provincial level affected the patterns in dedicatory inscriptions that we have seen until now. Is there a shift in the status of the dedicants? Are dedications more standardised? The following

⁴³ For a full account of the development of the provincial cult in Spain under the Flavians, see: Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 111-127 (Baetica), 156-165 (Hispania Citerior), 166-169 (Lusitania).

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 96; Beard, North and Price, *Religions*, 356. While both studies accept Vespasian's intention of promoting loyalty to his newly installed regime, they disagree on the origins of such a reformation. Fishwick claims a central orchestration, while Beard, North and Price defend that, in some instances, the initiative came from the provincials.

analysis will show that these changes indeed occurred. However, they seem to have been progressive and did not become the standard until the second century A.D. Individual initiatives can still be appreciated under the Flavians, even though municipal cults, with a more official tone, grew in importance.

Private cults are bestowed upon the Flavians as living emperors during their respective reigns, and to Vespasian also as a *divus* after his state apotheosis. A statue base refers to the dedication by Lucius Porcius Sabellus, *duumvir* of Nescania (i.e. the highest local magistracy), who offered it to the living emperor with his own money.⁴⁵ Another private initiative was clearly a ritual dedication, but was linked to the fact that the dedicants had obtained Roman citizenship under Vespasian's reign (*per honorem civitatem Romanam consecutus*).⁴⁶ A similar private dedication was offered to Domitian by two *duoviri* from Iluro, who state that they achieved Roman citizenship through their exercise of the duumvirate (*civitatem Romanam per honorem Iviratus consecuti*).⁴⁷

One inscription is difficult to define; it was dedicated to Vespasian by the *pagani pagi Carbulensis*.⁴⁸ Curchin defines the *pagi* in Spain as small administrative *institutes* governed by magistrates and located in the *territorium* of Roman colonies in the most Romanised regions (mainly Baetica).⁴⁹ Curchin thinks that the *Pagus Carbulensis* must be understood 'as the rural territory surrounding the town of Carbula' and not as a dependency of Corduba.⁵⁰ In spite of not specifically mentioning how the dedication was financed, in light of the nature of a *pagus* this epigraphic record is best analysed as a public cult rather than as a private one. However, it sheds light on the extent that emperor worship reached in Spain, since small institutions with a rural base such as the *pagi* were fervently involved in the cult.

Although private cults remained abundant, as anticipated above public cults undertaken by local senates became more important. Consequently, the three Flavians received municipal cults.⁵¹ The formulas in

⁴⁵ CIL 2, 2041 = CIL 2/5, 845.

⁴⁶ CIL 2, 1570 = CIL 2/5, 401 = *HEp* 10, 162 = AE 2000, 729.

⁴⁷ CIL 2, 1945 = ILS 1982.

⁴⁸ CIL 2, 2322 = CIL 2/7, 728 = ILER 1080.

⁴⁹ L. Curchin, 'Vici and Pagi in Roman Spain', *REA* 87 (1985) 327-343: 338, 343.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 339.

⁵¹ CIL 2, 1049 = CILA 2/4, 1064 = ILS 256 = AE 1972, 256 (*divus* Vespasian); CIL 2, 3250 = CILA 3/1, 46 = ILER 1081 (Titus); CIL 2, 1050 = EE 9, p. 73 = CILA

these inscriptions are more standard than before; they usually include the official titulature of the emperor, the decree of the local senate that offers the inscription (*decreto decurionum*) and the local magistrate who carries out the command. However, some irregularities are still found. An inscription devoted to Titus whose dedicant is not mentioned, inverts the order of the *praenomen Imp.* and the *nomen Caes.* and includes the title *conservator pacis Aug(ustae)* (i.e. the Augustan peace keeper), which is not found anywhere else.⁵²

In conclusion, we see a change in the trend of imperial dedications in Hispania after the Flavian reformation. While private cults were still bestowed on both the *divi* and the living emperor, municipal cults that were using more standardised formulas multiplied. There seems to be a progressive shift in the types of dedicants, and the local senates appear to accumulate more prerogatives for the veneration of the emperor than before.

The Antonine era. Cult extension to the detriment of private dedicants (A.D. 96-193)

Imperial dedications to the living emperor, the *divi*, and the *domus Augusta* under the Antonines increased dramatically (N = 74) compared to the previous stages (N = 48 under the Julio-Claudians and N = 16 under the Flavians). This is not an odd development, since the second century A.D. saw an era of internal 'peace' and prosperity in which the Roman borders were expanded and the imperial cult was introduced in the provinces of the Danube region. Moreover, some of the Antonines were of Spanish origin. This is the case for the emperor Trajan, born in Italica (Baetica), and his adoptive son and successor Hadrian, who might have also been born in the same town. In addition, Hadrian took an active role in the promotion of the imperial cult in Hispania. He undertook major building works, such as the repair of the provincial 'Temple of Augustus' in Tarraco and the construction of the *Traianeum* (i.e. imperial temple bestowed to his predecessor Trajan) in Italica.⁵³

2/4, 1065 = AE 1972, 258 (*divus* Titus); CIL 2, 1051 = CILA 2/4, 1066 = *HEp* 15, 331 = AE 1972, 259 = AE 2006, 639 = ILER 6051 (Domitian).

⁵² CIL 2, 3732 = CIL 2/14/1, 13 = IRVT 1, 14 = IRVT 2, 15 = ILS 259.

⁵³ Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 186-188.

Despite this clear expansion in emperor worship, private cults (N = 4) seem to diminish during the second century A.D. and fade away entirely in the third century A.D. There are only two dedications that can be clearly labelled as part of private cults offered by individuals.⁵⁴ Other initiatives are more obscure and therefore remain uncertain.⁵⁵ The only innovations witnessed within private cults from the Antonine period are two dedications offered in A.D. 146 to the emperor Antoninus Pius and his adopted son, the *Caesar* Marcus Aurelius, by a private association, the *scaphari*.⁵⁶ The editors of CILA explain that the *scaphari* were river boatmen (the name derives from the type of boat they used: *scaphae*) in charge of transporting the products for the *annona* (i.e. the grain supply of Rome) along the river Baetis to the ports on the coast. The expression *qui Romulae negotiantur* on the inscriptions indicates that they were not from Hispalis, but resided in the city, where they formed a *collegium*. They were attracted to the potential profits that could be obtained by being at the service of the *praefectus annonae* (i.e. the magistrate in charge of the grain supply of Rome).

As anticipated, the immense majority of dedications under the Antonines were set up by the local senates or by the towns (either with or without privileged status, though privileged centres already abound in Hispania in this period). In most instances, these dedications took the form of bases that supported statues of the members of the *domus Augusta*. The phrasing is generally very standard, with the main elements already commented above (official titulature, name of the town, the formula *decreto decurionum*, and in some cases the names of the local magistrates that executed the command of the *ordo decurionum*).

Apart from this municipal veneration, an even more official type of worship, which had been in place at the very first moments of the imperial cult in Hispania, reappears now: dedications set up by army officers. There is the striking case of five dedications found in the Castrum S. Christophori

⁵⁴ CIL 2, 2014 = CIL 2/5, 775 = *HEp* 2, 458 = ILER 1105; CIL 2, 956 = ILS 276 = CILA 1, 29.

⁵⁵ EE 8, 301 = AE 1898, 1 (with no mention of funds, R. Étienne, *Le Culte imperial*, 493 labels it as dedicated by the *civitas*/people); CILA 2/2, 369 = EE 8, 305 = ILS 3563 = AE 1915, 9 (ex voto offered by Autarces, Sabina's freedman, *pro salute Hadriani Augusti et Sabinae Augusta nostrorum* – it is not a direct dedication).

⁵⁶ CIL 2, 1168 = CILA 2/1, 8 = ILS 7270 = ILER 1119 (Antoninus Pius); CIL 2, 1169 = CILA 2/1, 9 = ILS 355 (Marcus Aurelius). The formula *d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia)* appears in both inscriptions.

(*conventus* Lucensis) honouring Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the *Augusti* (i.e. the emperors) Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Verus, by various army officers and one procurator, who is always an imperial freedman, from around A.D. 163-184.⁵⁷ The dedicants change in each of the five inscriptions, but the content remains the same; the trigger for this set of inscriptions seems to have been the anniversaries (*ob natalem*) of the creation of different cohorts within the *Legio VII Gemina*.

In conclusion, we observe a standardisation of the imperial cult in Hispania at this time. The cult becomes more official and is carried out by municipal councils rather than by individuals, accelerating the changes already introduced in the Flavian era. This development points in the direction of a 'politicisation' of the imperial cult and can be linked to certain changes undertaken in Rome. Price observes, for instance, that in the first century A.D. the heavenly honours were bestowed on the emperors at their funerals, after a particular set of procedures had been followed. This all changed in the second century A.D. when sometimes the passing of the decree by the senate bestowing heavenly honours on the emperor preceded, rather than followed, the funeral.⁵⁸ This change is interpreted by Price to mean that the 'religious tradition ceased to be relevant and the decision became more of a political formality'.⁵⁹ This change is paralleled in the Spanish provinces, where the religious traditions followed by individuals almost cease completely and the dedications by local councils appear as political formalities.

⁵⁷ CIL 2, 2552 = ILS 9125 = ILER 24 (A.D. 163); CIL 2, 2555 = ILS 9128 = ILER 38 (A.D. 163); CIL 2, 2553 = ILS 9127 = AE 1910, 4 = ILER 25 (A.D. 167); CIL 2, 2556 = ILS 9129 = AE 1910, 6 = ILER 27 (A.D. 167); CIL 2, 2554 = ILS 9126 = AE 1910, 5 = ILER 26 (A.D. 184; curiously, this dedication has the exact same content as the previous four, but it was set up at a time when both emperors had died). All these inscriptions include the formula *pro salute*, used to ask the gods for the protection of the emperors.

⁵⁸ Price, 'From noble funerals', 91.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 92.

The third century A.D. Decline and end of imperial dedications (A.D. 193-284)

Imperial dedications decrease and finally disappear during the third century A.D. (N = 27 for the Severans and N = 23 between A.D. 235 and 284). The content of the cult at the provincial level did not change in this period, but as Fishwick appreciates, expressions of loyal support for the regime reflect political nervousness.⁶⁰ Septimius Severus and Caracalla are the emperors who receive the majority of dedications (N = 10 each). During the third-century crisis, emperors and their family members receive either one or two dedications, likely due to the short length of their reigns. There is only the exception of Claudius II Gothicus, who received six dedications. This is somewhat striking, since Claudius II held the title of emperor for only two years (A.D. 268-270). However, some features of his reign may help explain the numerous imperial dedications bestowed on him. First of all, he was a popular emperor, since he was chosen by the army and ratified by the Senate.⁶¹ His popularity is proven by the fact that he was not removed from power by his enemies (a common occurrence throughout the third-century crisis), but died of the plague that broke out in A.D. 270. Finally, Hispania might have separated itself from the Gallic Empire in A.D. 269. If this is true, Spaniards must have been willing to show their renewed loyalty to the Roman emperor after nine years under the authority of the Gallic emperor Postumus. This would also help to explain the large amount of dedications devoted to Claudius II. Most of the honours bestowed on the third-century emperors were offered by local senates and imperial officers, thus continuing the pattern initiated during the previous century.

Conclusions

As stated in the introduction, this analysis aimed to identify the extent to which private worshippers participated in the imperial cult in Hispania. There are many historical analyses about the imperial cult in general, however little focus on the individuals who took part in it. Theoretical studies concentrating on the theology of complicated concepts miss one

⁶⁰ Fishwick, *Imperial Cult*, 197.

⁶¹ P. Southern, *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine* (London and New York, NY 2001) 108-109.

essential element: the religious feelings of the worshippers. Moreover, if only the most characteristic features of the imperial cult, such as the imperial temples and priests, are studied, the whole picture remains fragmentary and conclusions might not be accurate. The research undertaken in this article has attempted to fill this gap for three Roman provinces on the basis of the epigraphic material of imperial dedications.

This study has demonstrated that private cults were very abundant in Hispania, mostly in the first stages of the imperial cult. The initiative of individuals is proven by the numerous dedications they set up. These dedications were highly irregular at the beginning, which goes to support the idea that individuals were very enthusiastic in their desire to venerate the emperor, even before any form of official cult and guidelines had been established in Rome and in the provinces. On some occasions, even when guidelines were provided by the emperor, individuals chose not to follow these and kept on venerating the living emperor, despite him having explicitly refused worship.

The reasons behind the quick adoption of the imperial cult by the Spanish population are more difficult to discern, since dedicants do not mention why they set up inscriptions. Gradel's theory upholding that the difference between humans and gods was in 'degree' but not in 'kind' is certainly appealing, because it explains why the imperial cult did not suppose a transgression and became widespread so quickly. However, this is an area that we have not ventured into in this analysis and remains open to future studies.

From the patterns observed in the epigraphic sources, we can be certain that individuals were not mere spectators, easily manipulated according to political needs. While the central government could attempt to provide direction, individuals always maintained high levels of autonomy. Consequently, the imperial cult in Hispania was a shared construction between all the contributors that were involved in it.