



[Honorific statue for a priest of Hadrian \(CIL II, 4230\)](#) [1]

Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.): Honorific

Original Location/Place: Colonia Tarraconensis, Tarragona, Cataluña, Spain.

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): Now lost. Known only from manuscript source.

Date: 138 CE

Physical Characteristics: Unknown, now lost.

Material: Unknown

Measurements: Unknown

Language: Latin

Category: Roman

Publications:

CIL II, 4230

Commentary: This inscription, which is now lost and known only from manuscript editions, was set up in the city of Tarraco, in the province of Hispania Citerior (Tarragona, modern Spain), in order to celebrate the election of a member of the local elite to the role of *flamen* (priest) in the imperial cult. It records a specific function of his role, and reveals the continued importance of the imperial cult in the region, as well as the town's particular connection with the emperor Hadrian.

The inscription was set up by the "province of Hispania Citerior" in celebration of one of its citizens, Caius Numisius Modestus, who had just been elected to the role of *flamen* by the council of the province (*electo a / concilio provinciae...flamini*). This was a prestigious appointment and one that came at the end of an already illustrious career; the inscription states that Modestus had already fulfilled all of the municipal magistracies of the city (*omnibus / honoribus in re publica sua / functo*), and was thus rewarded with the election to the flamine as a final acknowledgement of his prominence and esteem. The inscription also records the specific function that he was expected to perform as *flamen*: the "gilding of statues of the deified Hadrian" (*ad statuas aurandas / divi Hadriani*). The fact that Hadrian has been divinised indicates that the inscription should be dated to after his death; although it is not possible to specify exactly how long afterwards, such careful attention to a statue of an emperor, rather than to a series of earlier emperors, perhaps suggests that Modestus' election to the flamine and responsibility for gilding the statues occurred relatively soon after Hadrian's death. What is not clear is whether or not the statues themselves were of a *divus Hadrianus* or whether they had initially been erected by the province when Hadrian was still alive; if the latter is true, then Duncan Fishwick has suggested that gilding them "would have special significance in the worship of the living ruler and would therefore be important evidence for the cult of the reigning emperor" ("Flamen Augustorum," p. 309). Anthony Birley, however, preferred a more practical interpretation, suggesting that the reason for gilding the statues was that having been erected out of bronze during the emperor's lifetime, they were not now? beginning to turn green (*Hadrian. The Restless Emperor*, p. 148). It is also possible that honorific statues of the living emperor were ordered to be gilded following his deification, which would suggest a date close to 138 CE for Modestus's election and the setting up of the inscription (Clauss, *Kaiser und Gott*, p. 294).

What is clear, however, is the significance of the imperial cult at Tarraco, and the particular association of the city with the emperor Hadrian. Tarraco was the first place in Hispania Citerior in which the imperial cult was granted; Tiberius had agreed to their request to establish a temple to Augustus in 15 CE, and the cult of the *Augusti* had continued to flourish there as the "nodal point for the new provincial worship" (Fishwick, "Flamen Augustorum," p. 307. For the Temple of Augustus at Tarraco, see Deininger, *Provinziallandtage*, p. 121-130). Under the Flavian emperors it reached particular prominence, with worship of *dea Roma* grafted on to the cult of the *Augusti*, with the number of priesthoods attested epigraphically an indication of the popularity and prestige that it enjoyed (Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, III.1 p. 99-102; 158-163). The *Historia Augusta* related that in 122/123 CE, Hadrian himself had visited the city and had restored the temple dedicated to Augustus (*Hadrian*, 12.3; Alföldy, "Tarraco", p. 43-62); although the details for this restoration are not clear from the literary or archaeological records, and the *Historia Augusta* is not particularly reliable, Hadrian's interest in the sanctuary indicated his position as the "prototypical *princeps*," who took his place as the head of state religion (Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire*, p. 137). As the province's oldest Roman foundation, and the location for the first temple to the imperial cult, Tarraco occupied a special place in the imperial conscience, and it is no coincidence that its



inhabitants continued to promote the cult and its worship; whether the “gilding” of the statues represented elevated honours for the deified emperor or was motivated rather by practical maintenance, Caius Numisius Modestus’s election to this responsibility was indicative of the city’s – and by extension, the province’s - enduring loyalty to the emperor and imperial religious policy.

Keywords in the original language:

- [honor](#) [2]
- [res publica](#) [3]
- [electus](#) [4]
- [concilium](#) [5]
- [provincia](#) [6]
- [statua](#) [7]
- [aurandus](#) [8]
- [Hadrianus](#) [9]
- [divus](#) [10]
- [flamen](#) [11]

Thematic keywords:

- [Hadrian](#) [12]
- [imperial cult](#) [13]
- [Tarraco](#) [14]
- [Hispania Citerior](#) [15]
- [province](#) [16]
- [priesthood](#) [17]
- [statue](#) [18]
- [gold](#) [19]
- [provincial loyalty](#) [20]

Bibliographical references: Alföldy, Géza, [Tarraco](#) [21], *Forum Forum* (1991) : 43-61

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Boatwright, Mary T., [Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire](#) [23] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)

Clauss, Manfred, [Kaiser und Gott: Herrscherkult im römischen Reich](#) [24] (Stuttgart : Teubner, 1999)

Deininger, Jürgen, [Die Provinziallandtage der römischen Kaiserzeit](#) [25] (*Vestigia VI* ; Munich: C.H. Beck, 1965)

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Fishwick, Duncan, [The Imperial Cult in the Latin West. volume I](#) [27] (Leiden: Brill, 1987)

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Inscription

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Architecture



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