

Hemelrijk, E.A. (2007) "Local empresses: priestesses of the imperial cult in the cities of the Latin West", *Phoenix* 61.3-4, 318-49.

This paper takes a fresh look at female imperial priesthoods by re-examining the relationship between Rome and the cities of Italy and the western provinces. Instead of taking the *flaminica Dialis* as the paradigm for the priestess of the imperial cult, it is argued that the empress herself provided a model for her priestesses. The paper focusses on two points: the rituals that priestesses of the imperial cult performed and their visual representation. It is argued that, far from modelling themselves on the *flaminica Dialis* of Republican Rome – who was probably totally unknown to them –, priestesses of the imperial cult in the provinces imitated the empresses such as they knew them from coins, from the numerous portrait-statues in their towns and from the busts and painted portraits that were carried during imperial processions.