Soon after the Roman conquest of Britannia, the colony of Camulodunum was founded and a magnificent temple in honor of the Emperor was built in the city.\(^1\) As a result of the inclusion of the island as a part of the Roman Empire, one of the most typical Roman religious practices started to take place, namely the imperial cult.\(^2\) This practice of emperor worship started in Rome after the divinization of Caesar, and must be included in the complex and long process of the accumulation of powers by the Emperors.\(^3\) As a matter of fact, after the reign of Augustus, the Emperors monopolized political appointments, together with the military force and, in general, all the powers which had

---


\(^3\) On the beginning of this practice in Rome see: S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (Oxford 1971), especially chapter 17.
been traditionally distributed among the highest magistrates of the Roman Republic.  

These reforms, which could be labeled as “political”, were accompanied by significant changes in traditional religion. Such changes were aimed at making room for the Emperor and its new government. The first Caesar was mainly responsible for the deep religious reform, usually called “Renaissance”, which really meant a deep restructuring of the previous tradition, in which the rulers had concentrated progressively the highest religious positions, especially the position of Pontifex Maximus.

As has already been said, the imperial cult is one of the most outstanding religious innovations of the Principate, of which the temple of Claudius at Camulodunum is just another example. Emperor worship strongly anchored in tradition became one of the ideological creations which promoted the social and political cohesion among the communities ruled by Rome. Furthermore, the rituals for the Caesars were the endorsement which the new figure of the absolute ruler needed. However, the imperial cult should not be seen as a monolithic and single entity, but as a complex phenomenon composed of a myriad of different cult practices. This diversity, among other reasons, is explained by the local association of the emperors with the main ancestral divinities of each community. While imperial cult was deeply rooted in local religion, at the same time it surpassed the local scale and served an imperial purpose as it “provided the context in which inhabitants of towns spread for hundreds of miles throughout the empire could celebrate their membership of a single political order and their own place within it”.

Imperial cult was, then, a complex religious manifestation of both local and global signification and function. In this article I would like to

---