

Natalia Kazakidi

HEAD INV. NO. 328 IN THE NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM IN
ATHENS
AND THE CROWNING OF STATUES

The head bearing inventory number 328 in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, which came from Smyrna, has had a place in the literature since the end of the 19th century. It was described by L. Curtius as a portrait of Claudius, an identification which was adopted by other scholars, and was classified by K. Fittschen as a copy of the third official portrait type. It has also been thought to be a private portrait of the same period, while P. Zanker implies that it belongs to the Hellenistic age. The head, which is a little larger than life-size and an excellent piece of work, must be ascribed definitively to the Claudian era. Its typological and stylistic features recall a group of portrait statues from Delos and other Eastern Aegean cities dating from the second half of the 2nd or early 1st century BC, and indeed in some cases the similarities are such as to suggest a common workshop.

There is a depression, in the form of a horizontal groove, in the hair just where the loose curls begin near the nape of the neck. Although there has been no commentary on this technical detail, it is something that requires interpretation. One possibility is that it was intended to hold a floral wreath in position. This would point to the function of the statue to which the head belonged. Using this head as a starting-point we discuss the ceremonial practice of crowning statues in the context of annual festivals, which we know of from the written sources.