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Political Propaganda on Imperial Coinage in the Age of Augustus

By

Juliana Maria Ketting

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
Honors in the Department of Classics

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ABSTRACT

KETTING, JULIANA MARIA Political Propaganda on Imperial Coinage in the
Age of Augustus

ADVISOR: Angela Commito

This thesis examines and analyzes political propaganda on Augustan-era Roman imperial coinage by comparing the imagery and text used on coins produced at seven mints located across the Mediterranean. These mints were located at Lugdunum, Augusta Emerita, Caesaraugusta, Colonia Patricia, Nemausus, Samos, and Rome. I focus on these mints due to the messages of Augustan propaganda that were found on their coinage, which were often combined with locally- or regionally specific provincial messages, that together promoted Augustus' administration. These coins share important images such as the Capricorn, gateways built as triumphal arches, laurel branches, eagles, Victory, crocodiles, bulls, altars, and Augustus' stepson and successor, Tiberius. These images sent messages to promote his agenda and highlight all that he had accomplished before and throughout his reign as emperor. The coinage produced at provincial mints was the most efficient and successful way for Augustus and provincial officials to promote a shared propaganda campaign that ensured the stability of the new form of government the first Roman emperor had created. The success of the political propaganda messages fashioned in the age of Augustus and represented on his coinage is evident in their long-lasting legacy, not only on coinage minted throughout the duration of Roman empire but also on currency used around the world today.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The age of Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire, was filled with military triumphs, expansion, peace, and prosperity. Some of these accomplishments were achieved by Augustus himself, while many more were the result of the efforts of countless individuals whose contributions have been lost to history. Augustus, however, was able to claim sole credit for all of them through a sophisticated propaganda campaign that functioned as a major part of his political agenda. Augustus used various forms of propaganda to promote his political agenda both in Rome and throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire. The forms of propaganda that remain most visible to us today are the physical monuments, statues, works of art, and other objects, including coinage, produced during and after his reign, and commissioned by himself, by members of his family, or by people who allied themselves with him for their own advantage. These physical media contained images that sent messages to promote his agenda and highlight all that he had accomplished before and throughout his reign as emperor. His statues and art depicted his connection to the gods, his military triumphs, his family succession, and much more. By using elements such as monuments, he was able to reach a large number of viewers, and therefore, was able to spread his propagandistic message more widely.

However, even these monuments could be viewed only by those who physically visited them. A much more successful means to spread propagandistic messages was coinage. Roman coinage, produced in varied denominations from very valuable to “pocket change,” was used by all categories of people both inside and outside the Roman Empire and was used daily in the monetized economy of goods and services. Coinage was the fastest way to spread a message across the empire, as demonstrated by “mint

moving” or mints that moved with the Roman army to spread messages of their achievements. Coinage was exceedingly mobile, given its small size and its widespread use. The use of coins as political propaganda allowed for imagery to become portable and linked to physical materials of economic value. Coinage itself had intrinsic value, since it was made of metals, which gave symbolic value to the messages it displayed.

Furthermore, new coins with updated imagery could be minted very quickly, since doing so required only the creation of a new die, and the striking technology was not very complex. The versatility of coinage benefited Augustus since new coins could be struck regularly to show a new message or image. In addition, specific visual elements could be combined in countless ways, and imperial imagery could be mixed with imagery of local or regional significance. Coinage also represented continuity with the past, since coinage had been used for centuries by the time Augustus rose to power, and therefore people were groomed to examine the coinage and understand its message. Finally, coinage helped amplify the propagandistic messages that Augustus made in other media, such as sculpture and architecture, which had far more limited viewership.

For all these reasons, coinage was the most efficient and successful way for Augustus and his supporters to promote his messages of propaganda while also allowing the mints in each provincial region to share their own messages of propaganda in return. This back-and-forth messaging between Rome and the provinces meant that coinage served as a form of communication between the power centralized in the form of the emperor, on the one hand, and the provincial representatives who were trying to understand how to function in the unprecedented form of government Augustus had created. Coinage was the key element in Augustus’ propaganda campaign and strategy

because of its portability, visual imagery, intrinsic value, versatility, and representation of continuity. The nested major messages embedded in Augustan coinage to be understood by the public were his military triumphs, his protection and recognition by the gods, the prosperity he created in establishing new provincial cities, and the peace he offered via continuation of rule through his succession. The use of coinage to send ideological messages via visual imagery led to the success of Augustus' political propaganda campaign and ultimately gave Augustus the recognition and praise he needed to legitimize the unprecedented form of governance he had created.

The study of political propaganda in the Augustan era is vital to the study of propaganda and self-representation in the field of Classics as it demonstrates the foundations of imperial messaging on coinage throughout the Roman Empire and thereby helps us understand how Augustus was able to create and maintain a new political system that contradicted five centuries of traditional Roman governance. Augustus was the first emperor of Rome and, therefore, had to prove to the people that he was worthy of such a title and what he had accomplished in their names. He chose to spread his messages through coinage because, in antiquity, it was a prominent form of mass media that would spread visual imagery and text across the empire and its provinces, giving all those who encountered it a chance to witness Augustan propaganda and interact with it in a very personal way. Augustus' propaganda was such a triumph that his successors would continue to promote their own forms of propaganda in this manner.

The types of evidence presented in this thesis are inscriptions, monuments, works of art, and coinage. The focus, however, is on a dataset of coins that provide broad geographical and chronological representation of Augustan coinage. The dataset is

focused on the coinage produced at the Lugdunum mint, which was a prominent mint and will be used as a main comparison to other mints mentioned in this thesis. The other mints, used in conjunction with the Lugdunum mint, are the Augusta Emerita mint, the Caesaraugusta mint, the Colonia Patricia mint, the Nemausus mint, the Samos mint, and the Roman mint. The mints span four different regions that all were controlled by the Roman Empire and under Augustus. Although many different coins were issued at these mints, this study will focus on a specific set of images that demonstrate the main messages that Augustus used to send to legitimize his rule and legacy. This imagery includes the Capricorn, triumphal arches, laurel branches, the eagle, Victory, the Egyptian crocodile, the bull, Roman altars, and the transition of power to Tiberius.

The types of inscriptions, monuments, and art pieces range from privately commissioned works to widely distributed propagandistic messages. Inscriptions such as the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* were used to promote the same message across the Roman Empire in order to encourage the same understanding by the people. However, sculptures or monuments that were placed in one specific location were only geared towards one subset of individuals and therefore had a much narrower impact. With coinage, these messages could be spread across the entire empire and still be individualized by provincial mints. In order to study Augustan propaganda, one must look at all forms of propaganda being advertised. Furthermore, in order to understand the most important messages being sent by these forms of propaganda, it is vital to compare them to each other to see what imagery and messages appear the most frequently and therefore were most essential to the success of Augustus' propaganda campaign.

Literature Review:

To understand the entirety of Augustan propaganda found in Roman coinage, one must first understand the use and types of imperial coinage. These vital details needed to understand Augustan imperial coinage are described thoroughly in *Roman Imperial Coinage. Volume X* (1994), written by J. P. C Kent and part of a series edited by R. A. G. Carson. The book's layout is based on the division between the eastern and western sections of the empire and the reigns of the successive emperors, starting with the reign of Augustus and continuing with his stepson and successor, Tiberius. Within these chapters are the detailed accounts of the imperial monetary system and provincial mints, and the coin-types and their legends. Within the introduction of the book, Kent reviews the imperial monetary system, the mints, types and legends found on coins, and the introduction of important reigns. It is within the general introduction that we review the basic principles of propaganda in coinage that are displayed and discussed.

It is in Clare Rowan's *From Caesar to Augustus (c. 49 BC-AD 14): Using Coins as Sources* (2018) that we delve deeper into the context of Roman history and the detailed historical themes found within Roman and provincial coinage from the late Republic and early Empire. The book highlights a range of different coins, magnified at double the size, to illustrate and describe in detail the technical Latin and numismatic terms found within the coinage and its legends. Rowan's work is important as it allows the reader to quickly identify material relevant to Julius Caesar, Augustus, and their relationship to Antony and Cleopatra. The diverse array of material is brought together in this book to challenge and enhance the understanding of the transition from a Roman republic to an empire, and therefore, show the adaptation to propaganda in coinage.

Within Chapter 5, *Representing the Augustan Principate (31 B.C. - A.D. 14)*, Rowan explains and emphasizes the important context and lens in which Augustan coinage must be viewed in. The sections of the chapter include, coinage before and after the Battle of Actium, Augustan acts that restored the Republic, senatorial honors and Augustus' titles, and the innovation and tradition in Rome. In this view, the reader understands vital events within Augustus' reign that made their way onto his coinage, and in turn, became a propagandistic message of Augustus' reign.

Arguably, the most important resource in this thesis in regard to understanding and interpreting the political messages on imperial coinage is the online database of *Online Coins of the Roman Empire* (<http://numismatics.org/ocre/>) It is on this online database that the majority of the coins used within this thesis were found. The dataset published on this website is designated by mint at which the coin was produced, denomination of coinage, the imagery displayed, and the inscription found on its legend. The database uses these differences to show the various messages being produced and spread across the empire to reinforce the use of media and propagandistic messages.

After understanding the importance of Roman coinage in the age of the empire, it is important to draw focus to the value of using coinage in the age of Augustus to display the messages and images of propaganda. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (1988) by Paul Zanker and translated by Alan Shapiro builds the significance of propaganda in coinage by using Augustan art as a visual language that furthered the transformation of Roman society during the rule of Augustus. The book illustrates how the establishment of monarchy and government under Augustus led to the creation of a new system of visual imagery that reflects the continuity between Republican Rome and

Imperial Rome. Zanker's *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* is one of the most cited works used in the study of Augustus' reign as well as his use of propaganda to promote his underlying messages of his military triumphs, divine connection to the gods, success in establishing new provincial regions, and the continuation of his succession and political agenda. In Chapter 4 of Zanker's work, "The Augustan Program of Cultural Renewal," the political style and agenda of Augustus is discussed in conjunction with his program to "heal" Roman society and establish a time of peace in the empire. Augustus focused on revitalizing the Roman empire by establishing a religious revival campaign and embarrassing the great emotional power that his imagery conjured amongst the people. Overall, Zanker's work gives a detailed chronological data set that examines the overall achievement of Augustus and his propagandistic campaign.

Finally, the work edited by George M. Paul and Michael Ierardi, *Roman Coins and Public Life Under the Empire: E. Togo Salmon Papers II* (1999), is essential, especially contributions on the coinage of the imperial government, found in Chapter 2, and the Roman portraiture that influenced images of power, found within Chapter 7. The work focuses on the everyday use of Roman coinage and the influence the propagandistic messages had on the people who used it daily. In Chapter 4, "The Monetization of the Roman Empire: Regional Variations in the Supply of Coin Types," written by R.P. Duncan-Jones, the difficulties in coinage and the Roman imperial economy are examined, as well as the importance of provincial mints that spanned across the empire. At these provincial mints, seven of which are discussed in this thesis, moneyers were put in charge of minting coinage and working on the imagery or inscriptions that are placed within a casted die. Provincial mints, as well as "moving mints" were a fundamental

element of producing imperial coinage and spreading Augustan messages of propaganda. It was at these mints that “news” or local officials were placed on the coinage rather than just messages promoting Augustus. However, the coins that were produced in the provincial regions still showed the portrait of Augustus on their obverse, while their reverses had more liberty in being unique. Sources like *Roman Coins and Public Life Under the Empire: E. Togo Salmon Papers II* are vital to the study of Augustan propaganda and the use of coins within the Roman Empire.

Scope of Research:

This thesis is focused on the coinage produced across the Mediterranean under the rule of Emperor Augustus, 31 B.C. - A.D. 14, and examines the messages of propaganda within their images and legends. In doing so, seven provincial mints were examined to view the evolution of imagery and messages throughout his rule in order to show that he utilized the mass-produced media of coinage to spread his political messages to reach a wider audience. Six of these mints are looked at less microscopically compared to the mint at Lugdunum, as it was the largest mint outside of Rome that produced imperial coinage.¹ The six mints that were examined in conjunction with the Lugdunum mint are: the Augusta Emerita mint, the Caesaraugusta mint, the Colonia Patricia mint, the Nemausus mint, the Samos mint, and then Roman mint. These mints were selected due to their messages of Augustan propaganda found on their coinage, their unique provincial messages, and their promotion of Augustus’ administration.

¹ Sydenham, *The Mint of Lugdunum*, 1917, pg. 54-56



Figure 1. Map of the Roman Empire in A.D. 14 marked to show important mints discussed. (Ian Mladjov's Resources, *Roman administrative divisions and centers, with later expansion: larger map* [digital image]. Retrieved March 2021)

The mints discussed and compared in this thesis are marked above in Figure 1 to show the span of the mints within the Mediterranean and the empire at the death of Augustus in A.D. 14. Figure 1 also illustrates the vastness of the empire and its provincial regions which, in turn, emphasizes the importance of using coinage as a way of spreading messages and media. The mints discussed in this thesis were chosen to show the diversity in regions and messages while also demonstrating the sameness of Augustan propaganda produced and spread.

Structure of the Thesis:

In my introduction, I have discussed the important uses and forms of propaganda in the Augustan period and its importance in the study of Classics. In chapter two, I will explain vital background information about the life and rise to power of Augustus, his rule, information about imperial denominations, and provincial mints. I will discuss in detail the unique and unprecedented nature of his rule, as it was a new form of government and power that had not been seen in hundreds of years of Rome's existence. This chapter will also focus on the production of coinage, the denominations of coinage during the Augustan era, and important mints that will be discussed. In the following chapter, I will focus on the use and forms of Augustan propaganda, the use and importance of textual and visual evidence, and the use of coinage as propaganda. Textual and visual monuments that are discussed include the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, *Prima Porta Augustus*, *Gemma Augustae*, *Via Labicana Augustus*, and the *Ara Pacis*. These forms of evidence support claims that Augustan propaganda was well situated throughout the empire and represented through coinage. Chapter four will give detailed accounts of the seven imperial mints used and compared in this thesis. These mints include the Lugdunum mint, the Augusta Emerita mint, the Caesaraugusta mint, the Colonia Patricia mint, the Nemausus mint, the Samos mint, and then Roman mint. In the subsequent chapter, I will present the comparative analysis of coins from these mints and explain their significance in conjunction to Augustan propaganda. These coins share important images such as the Capricorn, gateways built as triumphal arches, laurel branches, eagles, Victory, crocodiles, bulls, altars, and Augustus' stepson, and successor, Tiberius. The coinage produced at provincial mints were the most efficient and successful way for

Augustus and his supporters to promote their messages of propaganda while also allowing the Roman mint to respond back to the provincial mints. The back-and-forth messaging between Rome and the provinces allowed for coinage to serve as a form of communication between the power centralized within the emperor and the provincial representatives who were trying to understand the unprecedented and new form of government that Augustus had created. I will conclude by bringing together the textual and visual evidence and monetary evidence to show that Augustus utilized the mass media of coinage to promote his own political agenda and to spread his propagandistic messages across the empire. I am adding to the current research of imperial coinage by describing its use and importance under the Augustan administration. Furthermore, I suggest that Augustus utilized his resources to spread his agenda in a widespread manner that had not been done before and would be such a success that it would continue being used by subsequent emperors to promote their own political propaganda and agendas.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

Becoming Augustus

Caesar Augustus was born in 63 B.C. as Gaius Octavius to Gaius Octavius and Atia, the niece of Julius Caesar. He was born into a wealthy, prominent family that had strong connections with politics and Julius Caesar. Following the death of his father in 58 B.C., Octavian formed an impenetrable bond with his great uncle. He assisted his great uncle in a plethora of ways, such as delivering the funeral oration for Julius Caesar's sister, Julia, in 52 B.C. Their bond continued to develop further despite Atia's wishes, which led to Octavian's elevation to the patrician aristocracy in 45 B.C. In 44 B.C. following the death of Julius Caesar, it was revealed that Octavian had been named his son and heir. It was then that Octavian's name was modified to Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus.²

Following the assassination of Julius Caesar on March 15th of 44 B.C., Octavian formed an alliance with two other trusted allies, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus and Mark Antony. The Second Triumvirate was supported by the Roman government and was given special powers for five years to fulfil their task of "restoring the republic."³ The task of the Triumvirate was to create a list of those who had taken part in the conspiracy to kill Julius Caesar. Following their success in The Battle of Philippi in Macedonia, the Triumvirate then decided to split the territories ruled by Rome among them. Lepidus was to rule Africa, while the western part of the empire, including Italy, was given to

² Shotter, *Augustus Caesar*, 2005, 1-2. Shotter 2005, 1-2.

³ Shotter, *Augustus Caesar*, 2005, pg. 30

Octavian. The eastern part was given to Mark Antony to oversee and control, including Egypt.

In 38 B.C., Octavian's marriage to Livia Drusilla caused a series of scandals as Livia was already expecting Octavian's child and married to Tiberius Claudius Nero. Octavian not only gained the social and political prestige that came with marriage, but also gained two stepsons: Tiberius, the future emperor, and Nero Drusus. This series of events provided valuable material for Octavian's new political propaganda campaign.

Between 40 B.C. and 37 B.C., Octavian was building important alliances in Rome to consolidate his power, leaving Mark Antony a troublesome rival to Octavian. To the public, Mark Antony was clearly linked with Julius Caesar's triumph and was an important Roman military figure; however, Octavian allowed rumors to spread that Antony was becoming more Egyptian and less Roman. It was at this juncture that Octavian felt it necessary to eliminate his rival, thus leading to the Battle of Actium. In 32 B.C., the Roman Senate officially declared war on Cleopatra. As the war moved from Egypt to Greece, Octavian led his legions and fleet to the Ionian Sea, near Actium, Greece in 31 B.C.. His victory over Antony and the subsequent diplomatic achievements brought a period of freedom from internal and external threats to the Roman territories. The peace he achieved, a measure of *de facto* political stability, gave the government, consuls, senate, and people the ability to operate normally again.⁴

Octavian, who had begun his campaign of propaganda, encouraged Romans to view the Battle of Actium as the climax of his military crusade. Octavian believed that the Roman people should not dwell on their victory over the Egyptians, but continue to

⁴ Dio, *The Roman History: The Reign of Augustus*. 1987, pg. 3.

show their dominance as a growing empire.⁵ Octavian was wary of his public image and the perception of his power throughout this conquest; however, he had inherited the support of the plebeians, the poor of Rome, who had been consistent supporters of Julius Caesar, and of the Senate.⁶ Octavian was given the title “Augustus” by the Senate in 27 B.C. and subsequently became the first emperor of the Roman Empire. Augustus was praised for his military achievements and his new institutional framework that would ultimately serve the empire for the next 300 years. His autocratic regime was known as the “principate”, which is derived from the Latin word *princeps*, meaning, the “first citizen.”⁷

In 23 B.C., Octavian achieved what would be known as the “Second Settlement”, an agreement made between himself and the Senate that would give him the powers of a Tribune. This gave him the power to call the Senate at his will and the power to veto decisions made by the Senate. At this time, he was also granted the title of imperator of all Roman forces throughout the empire and was also given *imperium proconsulare maius* (effectively, “imperium over all the proconsuls”), which would allow him to act alone as he saw fit and overturn the decisions of any provincial governor. With all his newly given abilities and titles, he now effectively had dictatorial powers.⁸ In the context of the Roman Republic, a dictator was a magistrate with extraordinary temporary powers. The proposed dictator would be nominated by a consul on the recommendation of the Senate and then confirmed by the Comitia Curiata, the popular assembly. Traditionally,

⁵ Shotter, David. *Augustus Caesar*. 2005, pg. 27.

⁶ Corfield, Justin. *Augustus*. 2016.

⁷ Shotter, David. *Augustus Caesar*. 2005, pg. 28.

⁸ Corfield, Justin. *Augustus*. 2016.

the Republican government would only instill a dictator when they were in times of military or internal crisis and needed a leader to make a decision for the people. The term of a dictator was set to six months; however, it was customary for him to relinquish his powers after the crisis had been eliminated.⁹ It was six years later, in 13 B.C., that Augustus took the religious position of *pontifex maximus*, making him the highest priest of the Roman religion.¹⁰ Augustus was now effectively the sole ruler of the Roman political system and the vast territories under its power.

Augustus' Rule and the *Pax Romana*

The rule of Caesar Augustus was unique and revolutionary as he was the first emperor of the Roman Empire. Prior to Augustus and the Empire, the Roman Republic was in control and consisted of two consuls, the senate, and two popular assemblies: the centuriate assembly and the tribal assembly. The Roman Republic, which lasted from 509 B.C. to 27 B.C., was well established, centered on the city of Rome, and had replaced an historically attested monarchy with elected magistrates.¹¹ Augustus' rule was established under a new form of government and power which had not been seen since 509 B.C. It was precisely during a period of unrest and civil war in the 1st century B.C. Rome was transformed from a republic to an empire. The career and death of Julius Caesar gave way to Rome's first emperor, Augustus, whose reign would be distinguished by the stability and peace he established throughout the empire. Augustus established a new form of government, the principate, while also maintaining the Senate. The principate

⁹ Britannica, *Dictator*, 2019.

¹⁰ Corfield, Justin. *Augustus*. 2016.

¹¹ Britannica, *Roman Republic*, 2020.

integrated elements from the Republic with traditional powers of a monarchy. It was because of Augustus' reign of peace and prosperity that the emperors of Rome would become looked up to and worshiped as gods, after their demise, by the people.¹² The Empire would remain intact until the fall of the Western Roman Empire in A.D. 476; meanwhile the Eastern Empire, known as the Byzantine Empire, would survive until A.D. 1453.

As Augustus came into power, he took it upon himself to restore the reputation and beauty of the city of Rome, the capital of an empire, through the physical enhancements of new marble temples, a mausoleum for the imperial family, and extensive public facilities. Above all, however, Augustus' main goal was to rehabilitate Rome's lasting image.¹³ In 7 B.C., the city of Rome was divided into 14 *regiones* (wards) and further into *vici* (precincts) in order to be overseen by officials who performed both administrative and religious functions.¹⁴ Augustus refined existing municipal offices to establish these positions and create a hierarchy of responsibility. For example, he was able to make appointments for substantial terms and a permanent office of bureaucrats. By doing so, he was able to include members of each class and ensure a lasting allegiance.¹⁵ Although a success, many of his administrative changes for urban care occurred towards the end of his reign after his position as emperor was secure and the majority of his projects were completed. Augustus did not establish a multi-year plan to revitalize the city, as he preferred to address problems in response to crises. He targeted,

¹² Britannica, *Roman Empire*, 2021.

¹³ Favro, *'Pater Urbis': Augustus as City Father of Rome*, 1992, pg. 61.

¹⁴ Ring, *Rome*, 2021

¹⁵ Favro, *'Pater Urbis': Augustus as City Father of Rome*, 1992, pg. 61.

and resolved, three main concerns addressed to him by municipal legislation: fire prevention, preservation of existing building fabric, and the promotion of restoration.¹⁶ In the wake of his overarching and lasting success, in the second century A.D., the historian Suetonius shared a written response, in *Lives of the Caesars*, to the revitalization that was carried out by Augustus. He writes,

Since the city was not adorned as the dignity of the empire demanded, and was exposed to flood and fire, he so beautified it that he could justly boast that he had found it built of brick and left it built in marble. He made it safe too for the future, so far as man's foresight could provide for this.¹⁷

The success of Augustus' municipal reforms left Romans proud of his efforts and furthered support for his reign. Contemporary texts and inscriptions further document the improvements and their importance within urban care under the reign of Augustus. Ancient literary texts describe the changes of the city as based in the legal and administrative changes seen within the physical form.¹⁸

Augustus founded and settled new provincial towns across the empire as a means of expansion and as a payment for veterans who fought alongside him or the Roman military. An example of this would be the Nemausus Mint in modern day Nîmes, France. These provincial cities were to be inhabited and re-populated in order to grow the Roman Empire and promote the propagandic message that Augustus had expanded the empire. Each provincial city was given a government for a provincial leader who would have a connection to the Roman Senate and would make decisions for the city. Many of these

¹⁶ Favro, *'Pater Urbis': Augustus as City Father of Rome*, 1992, pg. 62.

¹⁷ Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, 2004, pg. 62.

¹⁸ Favro, *'Pater Urbis': Augustus as City Father of Rome*, 1992, pg. 63.

cities had their own Imperial mints, that were used to promote Augustan propagandic messages as well as their own messages. These messages were a way that these cities could communicate with Augustus and his government in order to share their concerns or their achievements.¹⁹

The *Pax Romana*, meaning “Roman Peace,” was established in 31 B.C. under the rule of Augustus and continued until A.D. 180 with the death of Marcus Aurelius. This 200-year period, arguably caused by the leadership and improvements made under Augustus, saw unprecedented peace and economic prosperity throughout the empire, extending to North Africa and Persia. This expansion also gave way to the greatest population reached within the empire, encompassing a total of 70 million people. Under the *Pax Romana*, the Roman Empire reached its apex in terms of land mass and population.²⁰ The empire enforced taxation and military control while protecting and governing individual provinces. Although the provinces had to accept taxation and overarching control, each province was granted the ability to administer its own laws, giving the feel of originality and agency.²¹ Since the *Pax Romana* was established by Augustus with his victory at the Battle of Actium, its terminology is interchangeable with the *Pax Augusta*.²² Valerius Paterculus, an army officer and senator who served under both Augustus and Tiberius, explained the Roman World under their rule and the *Pax Augusta* as being “spread to the regions of the east and of the west and to the bounds of the north and the south, preserving every corner of the world safe from the ear of

¹⁹ Livius, *Nemausus (Nimes)*, 2005.

²⁰ Petit, Paul, *Pax Romana*, pg. 13.

²¹ Britannica, *Pax Romana*, 2019.

²² Head, *World History 101: From Ancient Mesopotamia and the Viking Conquests to NATO and WikiLeaks, an Essential Primer on World History*, 2017, pgs. 84-85.

brigandage.”²³ In the Roman context, peace was regarded as the rare occurrence when all enemies had been defeated or had lost the ability to resist defeat.²⁴ Augustus was tasked with convincing the Roman people that they could still achieve success and prosperity in the absence of warfare. His use of propaganda was as a tool to convince the people of the success and utility of peace through coinage and literature that emphasized the word PAX and all the benefits it brought. Subsequently, Augustus’ successors followed his lead and continued to exploit their resources to reach the people of the empire to show the benefits of the *Pax Romana*.²⁵

Augustus continued to promote himself and his political propaganda after his death in the form of a monumental inscription that he composed and revised prior to his death. The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, also known as “The Deeds of the Divine Augustus,” was the first-person account of Augustus’ life and accomplishments.²⁶ The *Res Gestae* is significant in the realm of propaganda because it gives an insight into the image Augustus offered to the Roman people. It is in this text that Augustus factually records what he has accomplished and what he had been thanked for by the people and the Senate.²⁷ The text consists of a short introduction, 35 body paragraphs, and a posthumous addendum. The paragraphs are grouped into four sections: political career, public benefactions, military accomplishments, and a political statement. The appendix is written in the third person and was not likely written by Augustus. It summarizes the entire text and lists various buildings that he renovated or constructed and states that Augustus spent 600 million of

²³ Goldsworthy, *Pax Romana: War, Peace and Conquest in the Roman World*, 2016, pg. 185.

²⁴ Momigliano, *The Peace of the Ara Pacis*, 1942, pgs. 228-231.

²⁵ Stern, *Women, Children, and Senators on the Ara Pacis Augustae: A Study of Augustus' Vision of a New World Order in 13 B.C.*, 2006, Pg.155.

²⁶ Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*, 2001, 132-133.

²⁷ Paul, *Roman Coins and Public Life Under the Empire*, 1999, Pg. 21

his own silver denarii during his reign on public projects.²⁸ The original *Res Gestae* was engraved upon a pair of bronze pillars and placed in front of Augustus' mausoleum. Many copies of the text were made and inscribed into stone monuments or temples throughout the Roman Empire for the rest of the empire to read and bask in.²⁹

Roman Coinage

Examining coinage in relation to the reign of Augustus is vital as coinage was the key element in his propaganda campaign due to its portability, alterable imagery, and representation of continuity. The use of coinage in this setting allowed for messages of political achievements, such as military success, or self-promotion to be shared in an expedient and versatile way. New types of imagery and messages could be cast as frequently as the die maker could produce the die. It was most likely a yearly transition between images and messages on coins from a particular mint, if the need for change was pertinent. However, if there was no need to change the message or the imagery, the coins could be produced and put into circulation for years at a time without alteration. Coinage was the fastest way to spread a message of political propaganda in the Roman Empire, and Augustus, and his successors, were aware of its power.

The most common denominations of imperial coinage in the age of Augustus were as follows: the denarius, the dupondius, the as, the sestertius, and the aureus. In order to understand and evaluate the coins of the Roman Empire it is vital to be able to distinguish them from one another and to know their names. Roman coins were first

²⁸ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 2009.

²⁹ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 2007, pg. 169.

produced in the late 4th century B.C. This kind of coinage represented a widely recognized value which, in turn, allowed an easy exchange of money, goods, and services. The development of a monetized economy drove both commerce and technological development and gave all levels of society the opportunity to work to own coins which could be spent on a variety of goods and services. Specifically, coinage could now be used to pay large or identical payments to make way for a new scale of commercial activity.

Prior to the Second Punic War, 218-201 B.C., the Roman economy was complex and unstable.³⁰ Rome had begun issuing silver coinage during the 3rd century B.C. and had standardized it as weighing 1/84th, and 1/72nd, of a Roman pound.³¹ By the end of the Republic, in 27 B.C., the Roman monetary system had gravitated towards a system of gold, silver, and copper-based alloys. Augustus reformed the denominations of smaller coins and his new system formed the basis of Roman coinage for the next three centuries. Augustus removed silver coins below the denarius and replaced them in 23 B.C. with the brass, copper, and zinc orichalcum sestertius and dupondius. Similarly, the As, was originally cast in bronze yet moved to a copper base with the reign of Augustus.³²

The standard Roman silver coin, the denarius, pl. denarii, was first introduced during the Second Punic War in 211 B.C. and was used until A.D. 238 during the reign of Gordian III, when it was replaced by the double denarius, also known as the Antonianianus. The word originated from the Latin “dēnī” meaning “containing ten”, as its original value was that of 10 assēs. At the time of Julius Caesar’s death in 44 B.C., the

³⁰ Rowan, *From Caesar to Augustus*, 2019, pg. 15.

³¹ American Numismatic Society, *Rome: A Thousand Years of Monetary History*, 2016.

³² Cartwright, *Roman Coinage*, 2018.

denarius had a weight of 3.9g and a purity between 95-98%.³³ The denarius had begun to undergo a slow debasement at the end of the Republican period and held the weight of 3.9g, a theoretical weight of 1/84 of a Roman pound, until the time of the Emperor Nero in A.D. 37.³⁴

The dupondius, Latin for “two-pounder,” was a brass coin that was commonly used during the Roman Republic and Roman Empire. The dupondius was minted during the imperial period until A.D. 249.³⁵ A dupondius was valued at 1/8 of a denarius at the time of Augustus. The initial dupondius coins featured the bust of Roma on the obverse and a six-spoked wheel on the reverse. During the coinage reform of Augustus in 23 B.C., the sestertius and dupondius were produced in a golden colored copper-alloy called orichalcum, while lower denominations were produced with reddish copper.³⁶ The dupondius was struck in brass; however, it was often difficult to distinguish from the as. One of the ways to know which was the dupondius was from its reddish-copper finish. It was also a common practice to strike the dupondius showing the head of the emperor while the as was inscribed with a bear or laureate head.³⁷

The as, plural assēs, also known as the assarius, plural *assarii*, was an originally bronze coin, later struck in copper, used during the Roman Republic and Roman Empire. Following the coinage reform of Augustus in 23 B.C., it was struck in a reddish pure copper, instead of bronze. The as was in production until the 3rd Century A.D. It was known as the lowest valued coin that was regularly issued during the Roman Empire, and

³³ Smith, *Buying Power of Ancient Coins*, 2000

³⁴ Sayles, *Ancient Coin Collecting III: The Roman World-Politics and Propaganda*, 1997

³⁵ Klawans & Bressett, *Handbook of Ancient Greek and Roman Coins*, 1995, pg. 182.

³⁶ Smith, *Describing Ancient Coins*, 2000.

³⁷ Klawans & Bressett, *Handbook of Ancient Greek and Roman Coins*, 1995, pg. 182.

then not at all after the reign of Marcus Aurelius, between A.D. 270 and 275.³⁸ The as, or the aes grave, *aes librale*, was the first Roman coin in the Roman Republican era. The value of the bronze in the coin was linked to the Roman unit of weight, having an initial weight to the Latin pound, *libra*, which was equal to 273 g, and then became the Roman pound, weighing 327g. The as was initially produced as cast coinage and then evolved into hammered coinage. It was during the monetary reform of Augustus that the weight of the as was further reduced to 1/30 of a pound, or 10.91g. It was also struck on pure red copper rather than on bronze. The coins introduced on the reverse the initials “S C,” meaning Senatus Consulto.³⁹ The *senatus consultum*, Latin for “decree of the Senate,” was the early phrasing of the *senatus consultum ultimum*. The phrase translates to the “final decree of the Senate.” Often abbreviated to “SCU,” the decree of the Roman Senate in the late Roman Republic was used in times of emergency.⁴⁰

The sestertius, plural sestertii, was worth two and a half asses. The sestertius is a contraction of the Latin “SEMIS TERTIVS” meaning 2 1/2. As a coin it has its origins in the great Republican coinage reform of 211 B.C. The silver sestertius was created to be 1/4 of the denarius, which meant it was worth 2 1/2 asses. The first sestertii carried the value marking “IIS” which meant two and a ‘semis’, half, asses. Production of silver sestertii ended by the middle of the 2nd century B.C. because the denarius’ worth fell to 3 1/2 scripuli (3.96g). Production of the silver sestertii was resumed in the early 1st century B.C. Mark Antony began to issue the sestertius as a bronze coin with dual value markings: a Greek “Delta” (4) to show it was worth 4 asses, and “IIS” with a line through

³⁸ Puech, P. *A Roman Coin and the Myth of Antony and Cleopatra*, 2001

³⁹ Smith, *Roman Imperial Coin Denominations*, 2001

⁴⁰ Lundgreen, *Roman Imperial Coin Denominations*, 2001

the middle which could become the accepted symbol for the sestertius. During the Roman Empire it was a large brass coin; however, following the monetary reform of Augustus it became an orichalcum coin.⁴¹

The aureus (pl. aurei), meaning “golden,” was a gold minted coin in the Imperial period. The aureus was regularly issued from the 1st century B.C. to the beginning of the 4th century A.D., when it was replaced by the solidus.⁴² The aureus was originally named *nummus aureus*, or “gold money,” or *denarius aureus*.⁴³ Although the aureus and the denarius were about the same size, the aureus was valued at 25 pure silver denarii, due to it being heavier and a higher density of gold, as opposed to the silver of the denarius.⁴⁴

There is little information about who was made responsible for the production of provincial coinages during the Roman Empire. It is thought that the proconsul--the Roman representative of a particular region--might have had an influence, which is supported by the appearance of their name on coins issued during times of intervention. However, the emperor would have final authority over coinage produced in the provinces in the Imperial Period. In the Republic, the decision to strike Roman coinage, and its quantities, was made by the Senate. The Senate oversaw the production of bronze coinage, marked with the legend S C for *Senatus Consulto*, whereas the emperor had the authority to strike gold and silver coinage.⁴⁵ Three officials, known as moneyers, were elected annually and were responsible for the production of coinage. Moneyers were also referred to as *tresviri auro argento aere flando feriundo*, meaning ‘the three men for

⁴¹ Forvm Ancient Coins, *Sestertius*.

⁴² Historia, *The Imperial Roman Economy, Hoarding, Gresham's Law and All That*.

⁴³ Britannica, *Aureus*, 1998.

⁴⁴ Klawans & Bressett, *Handbook of Ancient Greek and Roman Coins*, 1995, pg. 181.

⁴⁵ United Nations of Roma Victrix, *Roman Coin Mints*, 2020.

casting and striking gold, silver, and bronze.’ Julius Caesar increased the number from three to four; however, it was later lowered by Augustus back to three moneyers.

There is little known about the operations of the Roman mint, although it most likely the moneyers that worked with quaestors, officials connected to the treasury, to aid in converting bullion acquired by the Senate.⁴⁶ Under the Empire, emperors had direct control over coinage and would often include images of themselves to glorify their achievements, the state, and their reign.⁴⁷ Triumvirs retained control of the mints during the transition to the Roman Empire. Between 23 B.C. and 7 B.C., the triumvirs continued minting gold, silver, and bronze coins with their own names inscribed on the legends; however, by the end of Augustus’ reign, their names had disappeared from the bronze coinage at the Roman mint.⁴⁸

In producing Roman coinage, the coins were first taken as a blank piece of metal set on a die within an anvil or similar anchoring; this would form the obverse face of the coin. A second die found on the reverse of the punch, known as the reverse, was put on top of the blank and hit forcefully with a hammer. The coins were then distributed to the public and Roman military.⁴⁹ The relatively simple technology and rapidity of production meant that coins could be struck in all parts of the empire, including in mobile mints moving, for example, with the army, and that the images could be changed as soon as new dies were created.

⁴⁶ Rowan, *From Caesar to Augustus*, 2019, pg. 81.

⁴⁷ United Nations of Roma Victrix, *Roman Coin Mints*, 2020.

⁴⁸ Schewei, *Who Controls the Imperial Mint at Rome? An Epigraphic Perspective on Bureaucrats*, 2015.

⁴⁹ Rowan, *From Caesar to Augustus*, 2019, pg. 210.

Coins as Propaganda

Coins were not only used for commercial purposes but were also used to spread the imagery of the ruling class. Coinage in antiquity was a form of mass media, since it spread visual imagery and text across the entire empire, giving all who encountered it a chance to witness such propaganda. From 130 B.C., Roman coins were minted with annually changing imagery that would refer to the ancestral achievements of the moneyers in office. This was a common practice that can be connected to the Roman memorial culture that was, more broadly, referred to as ‘monomialization’ of Roman coinage.⁵⁰ A practice that began in the Roman Republic was inscribing the names of the responsible managers of the mint on the as (*aes*), since it was the coinage of the Roman Republic; however, this practice concluded around 4 B.C., making way for imagery of emperors and propaganda.⁵¹ The imagery on coins moved towards propaganda when Julius Caesar used his own profile on his coins, which was later used by his great nephew Augustus. This thesis focuses on Augustus’ application of propagandistic images and messages on coinage, which will be explored in detail in the chapters that follow.

During the Roman Civil Wars, generals would strike coinage as they moved along their campaign, which is now identified as “mint moving”. Decentralized minting continued under Augustus, with Roman mints in Spain (Caesaraugusta, Colonia Patricia, Emerita Augustusta), France (Nemausus, Lugdunum, and Treviri), Greece (Samos), Italy (including Rome), and many others. Smaller provincial cities were also capable of producing their own local coinage. These coins were cast in bronze and used as small

⁵⁰ Rowan, *From Caesar to Augustus*, 2019, pg. 210.

⁵¹ Sear, *Roman Coins and Their Values*, 2014.

change. Provincial coins often used themes of local interest, such as festivals, cults, mythologies, and historical events. This could also include local representations of Roman rule. At certain times, cities could adopt the imagery of Roman coinage for their own local coins. This suggests that the people were attentive to the design of the coinage and that coins were shared between provinces.⁵²

The dataset presented here is focused on the coinage produced by the Lugdunum mint, as it will create a comparison between itself and the other images and types of coinage being produced during the same years. The mints being compared to the Lugdunum mint, are the Augusta Emerita mint, the Caesaraugusta mint, the Colonia Patricia mints, the Nemausus mint, the Samos mint, and the Roman mint. The mints span four different regions that all were controlled by the Roman Empire and under Augustus.

⁵² Rowan, *From Caesar to Augustus*, 2019, pg. 51.

CHAPTER 3: AUGUSTAN PROPAGANDA

The use of propaganda in the age of Augustus was heavily focused on a set of nested messages of military triumphs, his divine connection to and recognition by the gods, the prosperity he created in part by establishing new provincial cities, and the continuity he offered via the peaceful succession of power. The use of Augustan propaganda allowed for Augustus to promote his own agenda while also sharing the benefits of what he had accomplished and achieved with the Roman people. Coinage, in particular, was a powerful propaganda tool, since it was the fastest way to spread important messages that promoted the emperor, such as military victories, diplomatic achievements, and the founding of new cities. Although this thesis focuses on the role that coinage played in sending these propagandistic messages, another form of messaging was the use of monuments, statues, and art.

This chapter presents some of the most important examples of Augustan propaganda in media other than coinage. The goal is to identify the major themes and messages that were amplified through their appearance on Augustan coinage, discussed at length in Chapter 5. The messages sent by images on monuments, statues, and art could be received by only a limited number of people, in contrast to the much broader audience for coinage, which was a portable form of propagandistic imagery. Monuments and luxurious objects were only available to those in the immediate region or those close to the emperor, whereas coinage was for all and could be literally held by anyone of any rank. Nevertheless, monuments, statues, and other forms of art were essential tools of propagandistic messaging, and their impact was amplified by use of coinage to send the same set of messages.

The monuments, statues, and art focused on within this chapter are the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, the *Prima Porta Augustus*, the *Gemma Augustae*, and the *Ara Pacis*. The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* and the *Ara Pacis* are two monuments that were erected in the name of Augustus. The *Res Gestae* is not a monument per se, but rather a text that was inscribed on monuments in many locations throughout the empire. The *Ara Pacis* is a physical monument located in the northern part of Rome. Both monuments promoted Augustan propaganda by emphasizing his achievements and the importance of his messages. The *Prima Porta Augustus* is an elaborate and complex statue that contains hidden propagandistic messages within the marble that would have expressed to the Roman people what kind of leader Augustus was or would have been. The *Prima Porta Augustus* was put in a house belonging to Augustus' wife, Livia, and so would have been seen only by the most prominent members of society, a very limited few. However, it likely reflects other statues with similar imagery that were placed in more public settings, where passersby could stop and reflect on the imagery found both on Augustus' breastplate and the similar images found inscribed in his coinage. The *Gemma Augustae*, although not shown publicly, shows similar messages of propaganda and shows the emperor surrounded by the gods, as if he had become one. The messages these works produced showed the viewer the influence and importance of Augustus while also promoting his widespread propagandistic messages.

Res Gestae Divi Augusti:



Figure 2. Excerpt of the *Res Gestae* (Loeb Classical Library, *Deeds of the Divine Augustus* [Digital image]. Retrieved March 2021)

The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, “The Deeds of the Divine Augustus,” preserved in immense inscriptions, was composed by Augustus, who gives a first-person record of his life and accomplishments. The *Res Gestae* is significant to the study of Augustan propaganda and Roman history as it gives insight into the image Augustus promoted and offered to the Roman people.⁵³ The monumental text was written during the life of the emperor and completed just before his death in A.D. 14. The text was initially engraved on two bronze pillars that were placed in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus and no

⁵³ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 2009.

longer survive. Numerous copies were made over the centuries following Augustus' death and were carved into various monuments and temples across the Roman Empire. Most notably, an almost full copy was found at the Temple of Augustus and Roma in Ankara, Turkey. The *Res Gestae* is one of the most significant pieces of written Roman history and heavily influenced society in the Roman provinces. The text is a prime example of Augustan propaganda for the Principate, which was a form of government installed under the reign of Augustus.⁵⁴

The structure of the *Res Gestae* is as follows: paragraphs 2-14, the first section, are concerned with Augustus' political career; paragraphs 15-24, the second section, list Augustus' donations of money, land, and grain to the citizens of the Roman provinces and his soldiers; paragraphs 25-33, the third section, describe his military deeds and how he established important alliances with other nations during his reign; and finally, paragraphs 34-35, the fourth section, consist of a statement of the Romans' approval for the reign and deeds of Augustus.⁵⁵ Overall, this text revealed the military and leadership accomplishments of Augustus and therefore allowed him to share his achievements with communities in the Roman provinces that might not otherwise have been fully aware of them. He wanted to be recognized for all that he had given the people living under Roman rule and the *Res Gestae* effectively achieved this goal.

The *Res Gestae* drew focus to the main attributes and achievements of Augustus while also using the messages of his underlying propagandistic agenda. These messages

⁵⁴ Step, 'Res Gestae DIVI Augusti' ('The Deeds of the Divine Augustus'), 2021.

⁵⁵ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 2009, pg. 17.2.

include military triumphs, a connection to divine beings, the establishment of new cities, and the continuation of his family line and succession. In paragraph 25, Augustus writes,

*Mare pacavi a praedonibus. Eo bello servorum qui fugerant a dominis suis et arma contra rem publicam ceperant triginta fere millia capta dominis ad supplicium sumendum tradidi. Iuravit in mea verba tota Italia sponte sua, et me belli quo vici ad Actium ducem depoposcit; iuraverunt in eadem verba provinciae Galliae, Hispaniae, Africa, Sicilia, Sardinia. Qui sub signis meis tum militaverint fuerunt senatores plures quam DCC, in iis qui vel antea vel postea consules facti sunt ad eum diem quo scripta sunt haec LXXXIII, sacerdotes circiter CLXX.*⁵⁶

I restored peace to the sea from pirates. In that slave war I handed over to their masters for the infliction of punishment about 30,000 captured, who had fled their masters and taken up arms against the state. All Italy swore allegiance to me voluntarily and demanded me as leader of the war which I won at Actium; the provinces of Gaul, Spain, Africa, Sicily, and Sardinia swore the same allegiance. And those who then fought under my standard were more than 700 senators, among whom 83 were made consuls either before or after, up to the day this was written, and about 170 were made priests.⁵⁷

Paragraph 25 draws focus to the military conquests and triumphs of Augustus throughout his reign. He starts the paragraph by highlighting his dominance on the sea by listing his conquests in eradicating pirates and capturing slaves that had fled their masters. As the paragraph continues, he begins to draw on his accomplishments in the Battle of Actium where he defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra. Earlier in the text, Augustus emphasizes the start of his military triumphs by stating, “Qui parentem meum trucidaverunt, eos in exilium expuli iudiciis legitimis ultus eorum facinus, et postea bellum inferentis rei publicae vici bis acie.”⁵⁸ His statement translates to: “I drove the men who slaughtered

⁵⁶ Augustus, Emperor of Rome, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 63 B.C.-14 A.D., 25.

⁵⁷ Augustus, *The Deeds of the Divine Augustus by Augustus* (T. Bushnell, Trans.), 1998.

⁵⁸ Augustus, Emperor of Rome, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 63 B.C.-14 A.D., pg. 2.

my father into exile with a legal order, punishing their crimes, and afterwards, when they waged war on the state, I conquered them in two battles.”⁵⁹ By emphasizing that he eradicated the men who killed Julius Caesar, he is promoting his own political agenda while also showing his nationalism. Augustus uses these two paragraphs to show the Roman people that he was capable of military triumphs and defending the empire from all enemies, both traitors and enemies alike.

Another element of Augustan propaganda that is prevalent throughout the *Res Gestae* is the message that Augustus had a divine connection to the Roman gods and religion. He would often bask in his relationship to them by illustrating them in monuments and artwork. An example of this found in the *Res Gestae* is paragraph 21 where he states,

*In privato solo Martis Ultoris templum forumque Augustum ex manibiis feci. Theatrum ad aedem Apollinis in solo magna ex parte a privatis empto feci, quod sub nomine M. Marcelli generi mei esset. Dona ex manibiis in Capitolio et in aede divi Iuli et in aede Apollinis et in aede Vestae et in templo Martis Ultoris consecravi, quae mihi constiterunt HS circiter milliens. Auri coronari pondo triginta et quinque millia municipiis et colonis Italiae conferentibus ad triumphos meos quintum consul remisi, et postea, quotienscumque imperator appellatus sum, aurum coronarium non accepi decernentibus municipiis et colonis aequae benigne adque antea decreverant.*⁶⁰

I built the temple of Mars Ultor on private ground and the forum of Augustus from war-spoils. I built the theater at the temple of Apollo on ground largely bought from private owners, under the name of Marcus Marcellus, my son-in-law. I consecrated gifts from war-spoils in the Capitol and in the temple of divine Julius, in the temple of Apollo, in the temple of Vesta, and in the temple of Mars Ultor, which cost me about HS 100,000,000. I sent back gold crowns 35,000 in weight to the towns and colonies of Italy which were contributed to my triumphs in my fifth

⁵⁹ Augustus, *The Deeds of the Divine Augustus by Augustus* (T. Bushnell, Trans.), 1998.

⁶⁰ Augustus, Emperor of Rome, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 63 B.C.-14 A.D., 2.

consulship (29 B.C.), and after, however many times the title of emperor was given to me, I did not accept gold crowns decreed from towns and colonies equally and kindly and before they had decreed them.⁶¹

Augustus praises himself in this excerpt for his devotion to the gods and the gifts he presented to them in order to receive protection and maintain their connection. He believed that following his death he would be deified like his great uncle, Caesar, had been, and in order to maintain this prediction he needed to be in the good graces of both the gods and the people. In this paragraph, Augustus is specifically talking about his connection to Mars Ultor (Mars “the Avenger,” in reference to his avenging of Caesar’s murder) and Apollo. Although his connection with Mars Ultor is not predominantly emphasized in visual imagery, Apollo appears on several Augustan monuments. Along with his connection to the gods, he also maintained a strong desire to establish new provincial cities. Throughout his reign, Augustus was able to establish and support imperial provincial cities and, in turn, provide military veterans new land to repopulate and cultivate as a means of payment.

In his 26th paragraph, Augustus reinforces his loyalty to Rome and its provinces by stating,

Omnium provinciarum populi Romani quibus finitimae fuerunt gentes quae non parerent imperio nostro fines auxi. Gallias et Hispanias provincias, item Germaniam, qua includit Oceanus a Gadibus ad ostium Albis fluminis pacavi. Alpes a regione ea quae proxima est Hadriano mari ad Tuscum pacificavi nulli genti bello per iniuriam inlato. Classis mea per Oceanum ab ostio Rheni ad solis orientis regionem usque ad fines Cimbrorum navigavit, quo neque terra neque mari quisquam Romanus ante id tempus adit. Cimbrique et Charydes et Semnones et eiusdem tractus alii Germanorum populi per legatos amicitiam meam et populi

⁶¹ Augustus, *The Deeds of the Divine Augustus by Augustus* (T. Bushnell, Trans.), 1998.

*Romani petierunt. Meo iussu et auspicio ducti sunt duo exercitus eodem fere tempore in Aethiopiam et in Arabiam quae appellatur Eudaemon, magnaue hostium gentis utriusque copiae caesae sunt in acie et complura oppida capta. In Aethiopiam usque ad oppidum Nabata perventum est, cui proxima est Meroe; in Arabiam usque in fines Sabaeorum processit exercitus ad oppidum Mariba.*⁶²

I extended the borders of all the provinces of the Roman people which were neighboring nations not subject to our rule. I restored peace to the provinces of Gaul and Spain, likewise Germany, which includes the ocean from Cadiz to the mouth of the river Elbe. I brought peace to the Alps from the region, which is near the Adriatic Sea to the Tuscan, with no unjust war waged against any nation. I sailed my ships on the ocean from the mouth of the Rhine to the east region up to the borders of the Cimbri, where no Roman had gone before that time by land or sea, and the Cimbri and the Charydes and the Semnones and the other Germans of the same territory sought by envoys the friendship of me and of the Roman people. By my order and auspices two armies were led at about the same time into Ethiopia and into that part of Arabia which is called Happy, and the troops of each nation of enemies were slaughtered in battle and many towns captured. They penetrated into Ethiopia all the way to the town Nabata, which is near to Meroe; and into Arabia all the way to the border of the Sabaei, advancing to the town Mariba.⁶³

Augustus believed that he had done what no Roman had done or gone before and proclaimed it so that the people of Rome could bask in their leader's accomplishments. He claims to have restored peace to the empire, which he achieved in the *Pax Romana*, and would furthermore maintain for the subsequent centuries. It is because of the acts of Augustus that the empire was as fruitful and as peaceful as it was and was therefore represented and reflected in the *Res Gestae*.

The final achievement found both more prominently in his coinage and propaganda is that of a family legacy, both in heirs and providing the next emperor, who would continue his legacy. He emphasized his legacy within the *Res Gestae* by

⁶² Augustus, Emperor of Rome, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 63 B.C.-14 A.D., 2.

⁶³ Augustus, *The Deeds of the Divine Augustus by Augustus* (T. Bushnell, Trans.), 1998.

promoting the accomplishments of his grandsons Gaius Caesar and Lucius Caesar, whom he had adopted as his sons in order to secure a line of succession. Even though they died young, and his stepson Tiberius became emperor instead, Augustus includes a description of their excellence in order to suggest that anyone in his family will be a worthy successor. He writes,

*Filios meos, quos iuvenes mihi eripuit fortuna, Gaium et Lucium Caesares honoris mei caussa senatus populusque Romanus annum quintum et decimum agentis consules designavit, ut eum magistratum inirent post quinquennium, et ex eo die quo deducti sunt in forum ut interessent consiliis publicis decrevit senatus. Equites autem Romani universi principem iuventutis utrumque eorum parmis et hastis argenteis donatum appellaverunt.*⁶⁴

When my sons Gaius and Lucius Caesar, whom fortune stole from me as youths, were fourteen, the senate and Roman people made them consuls-designate on behalf of my honor, so that they would enter that magistracy after five years, and the senate decreed that on that day when they were led into the forum they would be included in public councils. Moreover, the Roman knights together named each of them first of the youth and gave them shields and spears.⁶⁵

The *Res Gestae* emphasizes not only Augustus' victories but the victories of his bloodline to show that they are a superior lineage that will continue to dominate the Roman Empire. The propagandistic messages of the *Res Gestae* were shared spanning the entirety of the empire to advertise to the people the accomplishments they may not have known Augustus had achieved. Propagandistic messages were seen throughout the reign of Augustus on monuments, statues, art, and most importantly coinage to share the current events in Roman government and the achievements of the emperor.

⁶⁴ Augustus, Emperor of Rome, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 63 B.C.-14 A.D., 2.

⁶⁵ Augustus, *The Deeds of the Divine Augustus by Augustus* (T. Bushnell, Trans.), 1998.

Prima Porta Augustus:



Figure 3. Statue of *Prima Porta Augustus* (Steven Zucker, *Augustus of Prima Porta*, 1st century C.E. [Digital image] Retrieved March 2021)

The “Prima Porta Augustus” is one of the most iconic and well-known free-standing Roman imperial portraits from the Roman imperial period. Made of white marble and Parisian marble, the statue was excavated amid ruins of Augustus’ wife Livia’s private imperial villa north of Rome in 1863. Made sometime in the 1st century A.D., the statue is probably a marble copy of a bronze original, which was likely made around 20 B.C. and set up in a public space to commemorate Augustus’ victory over the Parthians. The statue shows the *princeps*, the “first-citizen,” in dynamic dress in order to invite viewers to see its subject as both a toned Greek nude and a bestowed Roman general. It is this technique that allows ambivalence or “code-switching” within the

understanding of the statue, thus propelling the mechanics of Augustan propagandistic imagery. The frame of the body shows Augustus between different representations: one memetic replication and the other an extra figurative model of allegory and metaphor. Therefore, the sculptor has created a dynamic between nude versus clothed, Greek versus Roman, literal versus symbolic, each grounded within the political paradoxes of Augustan *principate*.⁶⁶ The messages of Augustan propaganda are centralized in this statue and around decoding the explicit and implicit political messages behind the statue itself, as well as its pose, the breastplate, and its overall significance.

The Statue:

The statue simply appears to resemble a portrait of Emperor Augustus as an orator and general; however, the depiction also illustrates Augustus' power and ideology. The portrait depicts Augustus as a military victor and avid supporter of Roman religion and practices. Furthermore, it represents the 200-year period of peace that Augustus orchestrated through the *Pax Romana*.⁶⁷ The 200 years of *Pax Romana*, meaning "Roman Peace," began in 31 B.C. under the rule of Augustus and continued until A.D. 180 with the death of Marcus Aurelius. This was one of the greatest accomplishments made under Augustus and one that was endorsed through coinage and his propaganda efforts.⁶⁸ The statue is comprehended not just to generate a specific image of the emperor, but also to establish a "decisive turning point [...] for the entire system of visual communication"⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Squire, Michael, *Embodied Ambiguities on the Prima Porta Augustus*, 2013, pgs. 243-245.

⁶⁷ Julia Fischer, *Augustus of Prima Porta*, 2020.

⁶⁸ Petit, Paul, *Pax Romana*, pg. 13.

⁶⁹ Zanker, P., & Shapiro, A., *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 1995, pg. 335.

that Augustus had implemented through his monuments, political agenda, and coinage. According to Paul Zanker, “new forms of artistic and visual expression had arisen in the wake of fundamental political change,”⁷⁰ so a statue like the *Prima Porta Augustus* could encapsulate a message about Augustus and the political agenda that he represented.

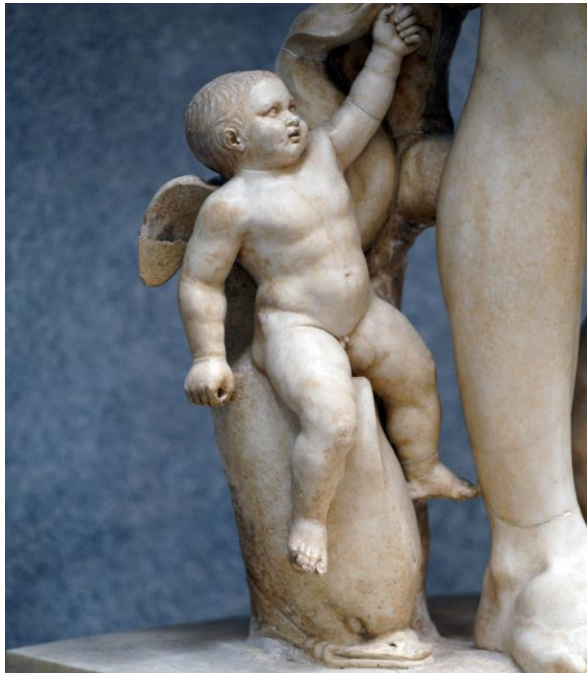


Figure 4. Cupid riding on a dolphin figure, *Augustus of Prima Porta*, (photo: Steven Zucker, Cupid on a dolphin, [Digital image] Taken December 2019, Retrieved March 2021)

At the base of Augustus’ right leg stands a depiction of a Cupid figure riding a dolphin that represents two nested major political messages of Augustus: his military triumphs and his divine protection. One explanation of the dolphin figure is that the dolphin became a symbol of Augustus’ naval victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium in 31 B.C.⁷¹ This was an important military feat for Augustus as it

⁷⁰ Zanker, P., & Shapiro, A., *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 1995, pg. 335.

⁷¹ Julia Fischer, *Augustus of Prima Porta*, 2020.

erected Augustus as the sole ruler of the empire. However, the dolphin could also represent the birth of Venus, the goddess of love, who emerged from the sea. Cupid, as seen atop the dolphin in Figure 2, is the son of Venus, and therefore, refers to the message that Augustus descended from the gods. Julius Caesar also claimed the idea that he descended from Venus, and therefore, Augustus would have also shared this lineage to the gods.⁷² Beyond the representations of the dolphin and Cupid, are the elements of Augustus's bust: the cuirass, or breastplate, that promotes the messages of propaganda. Although scholars continue to debate the identification of each character within the breastplate, the key message is still abundantly clear: Augustus was favored by the gods, and in turn brought their favor to the people of the Roman Empire.

Pose of the Prima Porta Augustus:

The sculpture shows Augustus in a contrapposto pose, or “counterpoise” position, that refers to a human figure standing with most of its weight on one foot, so that the shoulders and arms twist off-axis from the hips and legs in the axial plane.⁷³ He is wearing Roman military regalia and his right arm is in an outstretched position, showing that the emperor is addressing his army. With this pose, the artist is utilizing elements of Augustan propaganda by depicting Augustus as a military conqueror. It has been debated that the *Prima Porta Augustus* shares a similar form and presence as Polykleitos' Doryphoros, a Classical Greek sculpture from the fifth century B.C. The argument is based on the similarities of stance and idealization; furthermore, both Augustus and the

⁷² Zanker, P., & Shapiro, A., *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 1995, pg. 195.

⁷³ Janson, H.W., *History of Art*, 1995, p. 139.

Spear-Bearer are portrayed as youthful and flawless individuals: in other words, perfect.

The Romans would often model their art off of Greek predecessors. It is significant that the statue is modeled in this way because Augustus is essentially depicting himself with the perfect body of a Greek athlete. He is shown being youthful and masculine, despite being either elderly or deceased at the time of the sculpture's commissioning.

Furthermore, by exploiting techniques used in iconic Greek sculpture, it forms a relationship between Augustus and the Golden age of Greek civilization.⁷⁴ Augustus used the laurel in a similar way in coinage to make a connection to an idealized Greek past.

Dissimilar to Polykleitos' statues, Augustus' portrait features an idealized face that is textured and shows details to indicate the individual features of the emperor. His hair is composed of divided, thick strands of hair, with a strand featured directly in the middle of his forehead and is framed by other strands surrounding it. The manner of his hairstyle compares to his likeness found on his coinage.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Julia Fischer, *Augustus of Prima Porta*, 2020.

⁷⁵ Stokstad, Marilyn, *Art History*, 2017, pg. 175.

Prima Porta Augustus Breastplate:

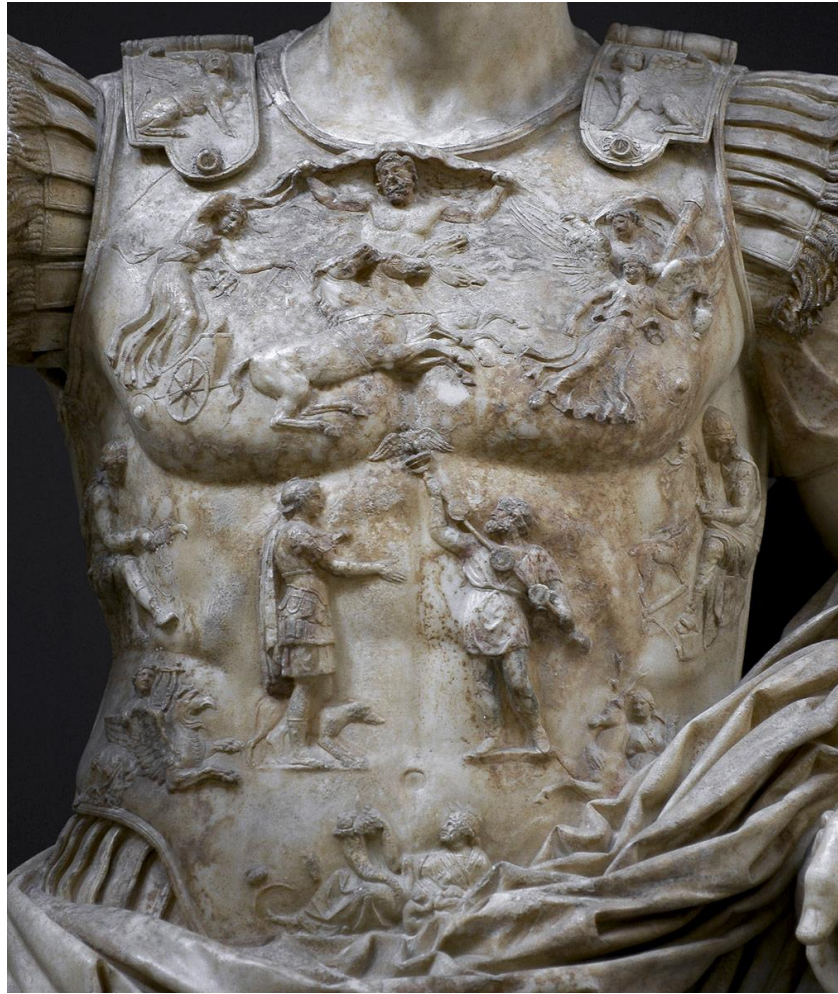


Figure 5. Prima Porta Augustus breastplate. (Sergey Sosnovskiy, *Museum Inscription to the Sculpture* [Digital Image] Taken 2008, Retrieved March 2021)

The breastplate of the statue is carved in relief with numerous small figures depicting the peace of Rome, diplomacy of Augustus, and symbols of the Roman Empire. The figures in the center are the most common to be interpreted. The subjects of the relief are of a Parthian King, presumably Phraates IV of Parthia, returning Crassus' Roman standard to an armored Roman, most likely Tiberius, or symbolically Mars Ultor. This image was a popular subject seen in Augustan propaganda as it had been one of his

greatest successes, and was strongly emphasized since Augustus reclaimed the standards in 20 B.C. that the Roman Empire had lost when Crassus' Roman army was defeated by the Parthians at the Battle of Carrhae in 53 B.C.⁷⁶ Below the image of the Parthian king lay a dog, or more likely, a wolf, that is symbolic of the she-wolf nurse of Romulus and Remus.⁷⁷ The Roman standard, or *Aquila*, had a quasi-religious importance to the Roman military, as it went beyond a mere symbol of legion or piece of Rome. Losing a standard was considered extremely grave and the Roman military was known to go great lengths to protect and recover the standard if it was lost.

Above the Parthian King and the Roman military figure is the inscription S P Q R, referring to the Roman Government, Senātus Populusque Rōmānus, translating to “The Roman Senate and People.” It was popularly used on Roman currency, at the end of documents that were made public, and in dedications of monuments and public works, such as the *Prima Porta Augustus*. The term S P Q R spans the years from Rome's foundation, in the 8th century B.C., to A.D. 212 when Emperor Caracalla granted full citizenship to those living in the empire. It was during this period that Rome evolved from clashing provinces to a major world power through colonization and international military efforts.⁷⁸ The inscription of S P Q R on the breastplate, and above the Parthian King and the Roman general, is interpreted as the representation of international diplomatic victory and the return of the missing Roman military standard in 20 B.C.

⁷⁶ Yates, James, "Signa Militaria", 1875, pp. 1044-1046.

⁷⁷ Kleiner, Diana, *Roman Sculpture*, 1992, pg. 67.

⁷⁸ Worth, Books. *Summary and Analysis of SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome: Based on the Book by Mary Beard*, 2017, pg. 8.

At the very top of the cuirass, on both epaulets on either side of Augustus' neck, lie two sphinxes. The sphinxes represent the militaristic victory over Cleopatra and Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. The sphinxes have their heads turned out to face the viewer, while their bodies are twisted inwards to lie on the front frame of Augustus' breastplate. The sphinxes have both a symbolic use and an ornamental use. They allude to the idea that the Battle of Actium was another reason why Augustus is the rightful and successful ruler of the Empire.⁷⁹ The artist and Augustus use these images to invoke a sense of gratitude while also emphasizing the major messages are propaganda that were understood in this context by the public as his military triumphs, prosperity in establishing new provincial cities, and the continuation of his succession in the aftermath of the Pax Romana. It is because of Augustus' military successes and political triumphs that the Roman Empire was established so successfully. The use of the Prima Porta was not only to promote Augustus' messages of political propaganda but to remind the people what Augustus had accomplished during his time in government.

⁷⁹ Squire, Michael, *Embodied Ambiguities on the Prima Porta Augustus*, 2013, pg. 253-262.



Figure 6. Lower section of the *Prima Porta Augustus*. (Steven Zucker, *Detail of Tellus on the breastplate, Augustus of Prima Porta* [Digital image] Retrieved March 2021)

Seen in Figure 4 and Figure 5, at the base of the breastplate, lies the depiction of Tellus, also known as Terra Mater. Tellus was the ancient Roman goddess of earth and was concerned with the productivity of the earth, which was later bestowed on Roman versions of the Anatolian mother-goddess, Cybele. She was honored in the Fordicidia and Sementivae festivals which were centralized around fertility and good crops.⁸⁰ Tellus is depicted on the breastplate to symbolize the Pax Romana as she was a symbol of fertility and therefore an influential goddess in the success of the empire.⁸¹ Tellus is shown holding two babies, a connection to being the goddess of fertility, and a cornucopia, to symbolize her wealth in crop production. With the healthy reproduction of offspring and

⁸⁰ Britannica, *Tellus*, 2018.

⁸¹ Julia Fischer, *Augustus of Prima Porta*, 2020.

plentiful crop seasons being depicted, this would have been an homage for her protection and divine intervention. Tellus is also depicted on Augustan propagandistic monuments, such as on a panel of the Ara Pacis.

Found on either side of the Prima Porta breastplate is the female personification of the Pax Romana. As stated previously in the chapter, the Pax Romana, Latin for “Roman Peace”, was the state of tranquility throughout the Mediterranean world from the reign of Augustus, 27 B.C., to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, A.D. 180. At this time, the empire protected and governed individual provinces and administered its own laws while accepting Roman taxation and military control.⁸² It was in this period of time that imperial imagery on provincial mints became more distinctive. The names of moneyers would soon appear on the coinage alongside the bust of Augustus. The female personification of the Pax Romana on the Prima Porta Augustus was to remind onlookers that it was Augustus that brought peace to the Roman Empire. The female personifications can also be used to depict Rome’s allies and provinces of which Augustus oversaw and gave citizenship to.

Beneath these female personifications are the deities Apollo and Diana, two major gods in the Roman pantheon. Augustus is known to be favored by these important deities and their appearance on his breastplate demonstrates that he was supported not only by the gods but by the traditional Roman religion.⁸³ Augustus gave the Roman gods, Diana

⁸² Petit, Paul, *Pax Romana*, pg. 13.

⁸³ Ling, Roger. “A New Roman Sculpture - D.E. E. KLEINER, ROMAN SCULPTURE, 1994, pp. 345–349.

and Apollo, equal rank on his breastplate. Apollo is shown on the left riding a griffin while Diana is shown on the right riding a stag. Apollo is one of the Olympian deities in classical Greek and Roman religion as well as Greek and Roman mythology. Apollo has been recognized as the god of archery, music, and dance, truth and prosperity, healing and diseases, the sun and light, poetry, and more.⁸⁴ Before the age of Augustus, Apollo was not taken seriously as a Roman god. Apollo became significant to the Roman provinces and city when Augustus adopted him. Augustus adopted the holy twins, Diana and Apollo, to visually represent his own family in an attempt to solidify his position as *princeps* following the assassination of his great uncle, Julius Caesar. Augustus resembled the characteristics of Apollo while his sister Octavia took on attributes of Diana. This adaptation allowed Augustus to claim relations to these deities and also associated him with the mythical brother and sister, Apollo and Diana.⁸⁵

Diana is shown on the right bottom portion of the breastplate riding a stag. As opposed to her twin brother, Diana was already an important figure embodying political and military authority in the Roman Empire. In the Roman religion, Diana was the goddess of wild animals and the hunt. Her name is affiliated with the Latin words *dium* (“sky”) and *dus* (“daylight”), which shows similarities to her twin brother and his association with the sun and light.⁸⁶ Diana served as a vehicle to transition Apollo into his responsibility as representation of Augustus, and also aided Augustus’ transition to

⁸⁴ Krauskopf, I, *The Grave and Beyond*, 2006, p. 73-75.

⁸⁵ C.M.C. Green, *Roman Religion and the Cult of Diana at Aricia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 84.

⁸⁶ Britannica, *Diana*, 2020.

emperor; therefore, Diana was a vital element in the Roman states transition from Republic to Empire.⁸⁷



Figure 7. Upper section of the *Prima Porta Augustus*. (Steven Zucker, *Detail of Sol and Caelus on the breastplate, Augustus of Prima Porta* [Digital image] Retrieved March 2021)

Located at the top left and center of the breastplate, seen in Figure 5, reside Sol and Caelus, the sun and Sky gods respectively. The message that Sol provides is that he will project the sun and will shine it on all regions and provinces under the Roman Empire, bringing with it years of peace and prosperity to all citizens. Caelus is seen spreading the heavens and holding up the folds of the Sky to symbolize fertility and good fortune to the Roman Empire.⁸⁸ By adding the gods such as Sol and Caelus, alongside Apollo, Diana, and Tellus, Augustus and the artist are projecting the same nested major messages that Augustus had embedded into his coinage. He is emphasizing his divine

⁸⁷ Diana, R, *Sister of Apollo*, 2015.

⁸⁸ Diana, R, *Sister of Apollo*, 2015.

protection and association with the Roman gods and the messages of their trust in him to return the Empire to its former glory.

Augustus used images of Roman deities, not just on the Prima Porta but also on his coinage as well, to link himself with the gods. His great uncle, Julius Caesar, was deified following his murder in 44 B.C., and Augustus sought out the same deification for himself. by using images of Roman gods, it not only linked him to the gods, but showed that he has received divine protection and recognition, and therefore is a legitimate and worthy sole ruler who can bring peace and prosperity to the residents of his empire.

Gemma Augustae:



Figure 8. Image of the *Gemma Augustae*. (Dioskourides, *Gemma Augustae*, 9 – 12 C.E., 19 x 23 cm, double-layered sardonyx with gold, gold-plated silver [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Public works of art often functioned as political propaganda and advertised to Romans the accomplishment of the emperor. Within public art, Augustus wanted to promote that he was a military victor, brought peace to the Roman Empire, he had a connection to the gods, and that there would be a continuation of his succession. Beyond the public works of art, the emperor also commissioned small private works of art such as gems and cameos. Unlike in the public sphere, private art would have seen a smaller audience. A select number of people close to the emperor would have been able to see his private art collection at dinner parties or at celebrations. One example of private art, commissioned by an unknown person for an unknown audience, was the *Gemma Augustae*, meaning “Gem of Augustus.” The work is a low relief cameo engraved gem that was cut from a double layered Arabian onyx stone. The top layer is white while the under layer is a blueish brown in order to create a sharp contrast between the images and the background. It is commonly agreed upon by art historians that the gem cutter who created the *Gemma Augustae* was either Dioskourides or one of his disciples. Dioskourides is thought to be the artist as he was Augustus’ favorite gem cutter. The work is believed to have been created between A.D. 10 and 20; however, some scholars believe it could have been created decades later due to the interpretation of the scenes.⁸⁹ Even if it was not Augustus himself who commissioned this gemstone, it is nevertheless an essential piece of evidence for the imagery and messages used in Augustan propaganda. The work was divided into two registers that are filled with figures and important iconography detailing the successes of Augustus and his successor, Tiberius. The upper and lower scenes take place at different times and are thought to be an

⁸⁹ Clayton, *Treasures of Ancient Rome*, 1995, pp. 163–165.

example of cause and effect. The upper scene shows a fusion of Rome, Olympus, and the world of cities, while the lower scene takes place at the northern frontiers just after a battle won by the Romans.⁹⁰

Upper Section of the Gemma Augustae:



Figure 9. Upper Section of the *Gemma Augustae*. (Dioskourides, *Roma and Augustus (detail)* [Digital image] Retrieved March 2021)

The upper section of the *Gemma Augustae* shows a scene showing the Roman world colliding with the world of the gods, Olympus. The low relief set gem in this tier is meant to promote the political propagandistic message of Augustus emphasizing his relation and divine connection to the gods. The enthroned figure, draped and sitting, is perceived to be Augustus, as he was the emperor of the time and claimed to have a direct connection to the gods of Olympus. Augustus' image illustrates his chiseled, defined face

⁹⁰ Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction*, 1996, pp. 120-121.

and his muscled body naked from the waist up, he holds in his right hand a *lituus*, a crooked wand used by augurs for divination purposes. Roma, the goddess of Rome, sits at the center of her throne next to Augustus in a relaxed pose where her eyes meet his. The goddess is helmeted and holds a spear in her right arm while her left arm touches the grip of her sword, most likely alluding that Rome is always prepared for battle. Her feet are resting on the perceived armor of the conquered enemy and looks as though she is admiring Augustus, perhaps to show her support for his military conquests. Although most agree that the image is that of Roma, it is often agreed upon that the image of Roma strongly resembles Livia, Augustus' wife. She is not only the wife of Augustus but the mother of Tiberius, the future emperor of the Roman Empire.⁹¹

The figure behind Augustus has been identified as Oikoumene, the female personification of the inhabited world.⁹² The inhabited or civilized world refers to either that of the early Roman Empire, or more likely, the Mediterranean world that was conquered by Alexander the Great. She is wearing a mural crown (that is, in the form of a city wall) and veil on her head and is looking up, perhaps to the gods or the image of the Capricorn. She is crowning Augustus with the *corona civica* made up of oak leaves. The *corona civica* was given to someone commended for saving the life of another Roman citizen; however, the wreath in this context is most likely being given to Augustus for saving a plethora of Roman citizens' lives.⁹³ The remaining two portraiture on the right are of Oceanus, god of the sea, above, and Tellus Italiae, a goddess who personifies Italy in all its abundance, who is holding a cornucopia. They are used as onlookers of Olympus

⁹¹ Dobrzynski, *Masterpiece: A Man Among Gods: The Gemma Augustae, the Finest and Almost the Largest Cameo that Survives From Antiquity, Celebrates Augustus and Roman Triumph*. 2018.

⁹² Zanker, P., & Shapiro, A, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 1995, pg. 230-231.

⁹³ Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction*, 1996. pp. 120-121.

who have come to view Augustus being praised for his accomplishments. Tellus is also seen on the *Prima Porta Augustus* and has made an appearance on the *Gemma Augustae* to emphasize her connection to Augustus. Augustus has been depicted previously as Oceanus in another set gem from the Early Imperial Period, 31- 27 B.C., to show his dominance over the sea and land of his empire, as well as his defeat of the Egyptians in the sea battle of Actium.⁹⁴

The left half of the upper sections shares a different but equally important message to that of the right. At the edge of the work is Tiberius, the stepson and heir of Augustus. He is holding a staff in both hands and has arrived in a chariot led by the winged Victoria.⁹⁵ Victoria in this setting is the deliverer of the victorious, not simply for celebrations but waiting for Tiberius' next campaign. In associating Victoria with the chariot, it is vital to analyze the historical importance of the chariot and its horses. The two foreshorten horses in front of the chariot are members of the chariot team; however, the horse beside it cannot be, and therefore, might belong to the next man in front of it. To the right of Tiberius and in front of the single horse is Germanicus, the nephew of Augustus that Tiberius adopted as his heir at the request of Augustus. He is dressed in military dress and it is prominently displayed, emphasizing his importance in the continuation of Augustus' succession. By including Tiberius and Germanicus, whoever commissioned this object is embedding messages of Augustus' propaganda into the

⁹⁴ Museum of Fine Arts Boston, *Oval gem with Augustus as NEPTUNE, mounting A SEA-CHARIOT*, 2002.

⁹⁵ Dobrzynski, *Masterpiece: A Man Among Gods: The Gemma Augustae, the Finest and Almost the Largest Cameo that Survives From Antiquity, Celebrates Augustus and Roman Triumph*. 2018.

Gemma Augustae to show that the first emperor's beliefs and reign will not end with him but will continue with his successors and so forth.⁹⁶

Above Augustus and Roma lies the image of Augustus' favorite sign, the Capricorn. Although he might have been conceived during December, he claims that the Capricorn is the astrological sign he was born under in 63 B.C. The image of the sun or moon is seen behind the Capricorn since they were necessary to show the full power of the constellation.⁹⁷ Located at the foot of Augustus is the eagle of Jupiter.⁹⁸ The image is at the forefront of the setting on the work to show the presence of Jupiter and that alongside Oceanus, Tellus Italiae, and Victoria, the gods are on the side of Augustus. The message of divine relation and connection is prevalent in the upper tier of the *Gemma Augustae* and is projected not just through works of art but also through Augustan coinage.

⁹⁶ Dobrzynski, *Masterpiece: A Man Among Gods: The Gemma Augustae, the Finest and Almost the Largest Cameo that Survives From Antiquity, Celebrates Augustus and Roman Triumph*. 2018.

⁹⁷ Wray, D. (2002). Astrology in Ancient Rome: Poetry, prophecy and power. Retrieved February 12, 2021, from <http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/777777122543/>

⁹⁸ Dobrzynski, *Masterpiece: A Man Among Gods: The Gemma Augustae, the Finest and Almost the Largest Cameo that Survives From Antiquity, Celebrates Augustus and Roman Triumph*. 2018.

Lower Section of the *Gemma Augustae*:



Figure 10. Lower section of the *Gemma Augustae* (Dioskourides, *Lower register (detail)*, *Gemma Augustae* [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

The lower panel, although being significantly smaller than the upper panel, displays a scene of triumphalism whose meaning may be vital to date the making of the *Gemma Augustae* in A.D. 9-12. In A.D. 9, the Roman army defeated the Pannonians with Tiberius as general. While the upper portion focuses on peace and unity with divine beings, the lower portion represents the wars that established and maintained peace, in other words, the *Pax Romana*, throughout the Roman Empire.⁹⁹ The figure on the far left depicts a Roman soldier raising a victory monument or *trophæion* (trophy) over their defeated enemies, who are clearly stripped of their armor and held with their hands tied behind their backs. Similarly, on the right, it shows the enemy, most likely Celts or Germans, being taken into captivity, one having their hair pulled, by a pair of individuals that most likely represent Mercury, right, and Diana, left. The scene of Mercury and

⁹⁹ Julia Fischer, *Gemma Augustae*, 2015.

Diana are coincidentally taking place at the feet of Augustus and Roma- a sign that the gods have sided with the Romans and their emperor. The propagandistic message is rooted in the favor Augustus received from the gods and then military successes that followed suit.¹⁰⁰

Diana in this scene, left of the Celtic/German Prisoners, is identified by the moon, although many argue that she could also be a mere auxiliary troop. Diana is depicted holding a spear in her left hand, while her right seems to be resting on the head of a prisoner who is kneeling. An identifying feature of the character is that she shares the same bountiful hair as Diana, and similarly, it is bound up for hunting and supported by her hunting clothes. If one were to believe that the figure was Diana, it would be supported by a clear and direct connection to both Augustus and his mode of propaganda. Diana is seen, above, in the *Prima Porta Augustus* breastplate, where she shares importance with her twin brother, Apollo.¹⁰¹

To her right, stands the figure of Mercury who is easily identified by his brimmed hat. In the Roman religion, Mercury was the god of shopkeepers, merchants, travelers and transporters of goods, and thieves and tricksters, messages, and communication, which is perhaps why he is shown dragging the Celt or German soldier by the hair to share the message sent from the emperor.¹⁰² Mercury was one of the 12 *Dii Consentes* within the ancient Roman pantheon and therefore well known to all Roman people and dignitaries.¹⁰³ The middle figure and the figure adjacent to the trophy are often identified

¹⁰⁰ Dobrzynski, *Masterpiece: A Man Among Gods: The Gemma Augustae, the Finest and Almost the Largest Cameo that Survives From Antiquity, Celebrates Augustus and Roman Triumph*. 2018.

¹⁰¹ Clayton, Peter, *Treasures of Ancient Rome*, New Jersey, 1995, pp. 163–165.

¹⁰² Britannica, *Mercury*, 2020.

¹⁰³ Boyle, *Glossary to Ovid's Fasti*, Penguin Edition, 2004, pg. 343.

as the personifications of the constellation Gemini. Gemini is the more difficult constellation to pick out and could also be depicted in the top section and can be a double for the Germanicus figure. The figure between the two Gemini figures is identified as a personification of the Roman god Mars. He is easily identified because of his amor and the flowing cape that lays behind him.¹⁰⁴

The images depicted in the *Gemma Augustae* are used to show the various gods who supported Augustus and the military triumphs that led to Augustus' success as a leader. Augustus and those who supported him nested major messages of propaganda in his coinage, art, and monuments to show its audience that Augustus was considered divine and surrounded by the gods, that he was guaranteed to have military triumphs, and most importantly, that he was a capable leader who led the Roman Empire to the *Pax Romana*. Augustus wanted the people of Rome to know his accomplishments and understand him as a ruler. The *Gemma Augustae* promoted his message of divine recognition, military triumphs, and the continuation of his bloodline. Using divine beings in the work, not just within the top tier, allowed for the belief that Augustus was capable of sitting in Olympus. Similarly, by using images of his successors like Tiberius and Germanicus, Augustus was able to promote his family and the continuation of his succession and propaganda after his death in A.D. 14..

¹⁰⁴ Dobrzynski, *Masterpiece: A Man Among Gods: The Gemma Augustae, the Finest and Almost the Largest Cameo that Survives From Antiquity, Celebrates Augustus and Roman Triumph*. 2018.

Via Labicana Augustus:



Figure 11. Augustus as *Via Labicana Augustus* (Bradley Webber. *Augustus as Pontifex Maximus or Via Labicana Augustus* [Digital Image] Taken 2012, Retrieved March 2021)

The *Via Labicana Augustus* is a sculpture of the emperor Augustus as the *Pontifex Maximus*. The statue is dated as having been made after 12 B.C. and was found on the Oppian Hill by the Via Labicana in 1910. Augustus ascended to the position of *Pontifex Maximus* when Lepidus, his predecessor, had died. The head of Augustus is veiled for a religious sacrifice and projects that Augustus was not only the political head of the Roman Empire, but that he was also the religious head. The statue adds religious

authority as a major aspect of Augustus' self-representation and alludes to his messages of political propaganda in which he claims relation to the Roman gods and the ability to safeguard his people and the empire. The religious style of the portraiture emphasizes that Augustus was appointed both his positions as *Pontifex Maximus* and as *Princeps*. The statue is similar to the relief depiction of Augustus, also dressed in a religious toga, on the exterior of the *Ara Pacis Augustae*.¹⁰⁵ The representations of Augustus in his statued form are highly controlled by the three or four different subgroups based on features, such as the detail in hairstyle, such as the classified "Prima Porta type" or positioning. As with all statues of Augustus, he is depicted in the idealizing Greek style and is shown as much younger than the actual age he was at the time of creation, most likely between his 50's to 70's, as opposed to the traditional Republican Roman portraiture which is realistic in its portrayal.¹⁰⁶ This kind of idealism and youthfulness, in combination with the religious iconography of the veil, is intended to suggest that Augustus will continue to bring safety and prosperity to the empire through his successful performance of religious ritual and his special relationship with the gods.

¹⁰⁵ *Via Labicana Augustus (Augustus as Pontifex Maximus). The City of Rome.*, 2020

¹⁰⁶ Radice, *De Romanis Book 2: homines*. 2020, p. 157.

Ara Pacis:



Figure 12. Image of the Ara Pacis. (*Ara Pacis* [Digital image]. Taken 2020, Retrieved March 23, 2021)

The *Ara Pacis Augustae*, “Altar of Augustan Peace,” is a substantial Luna marble monument that the Imperial Senate had built in honor of the Roman goddess of peace, Pax, after Augustus returned from his successes in Hispania and Gaul in 13 B.C. and that was consecrated in 9 B.C.¹⁰⁷ The original location of the altar was on the northern outskirts of Rome, a Roman mile from the boundary of the *pomerium* on the west side of the *Via Flaminia*. The *Ara Pacis Augustae* stood here on the northeastern corner of the

¹⁰⁷ Crow, *The Ara Pacis*. 2006, pg. 56.

Campus Martius, the former location of the floodplain of the Tiber River, which eventually buried the Altar under 13 feet of silt deposits.¹⁰⁸ The footprint of the building was a 10 by 11-meter rectangle with 4.5-meter walls to protect the inner altar. The altar was meant to celebrate what the Romans believed would be the endless time of peace in the Roman world, in other words, the *Pax Romana*. Senators, priests, and the imperial family took part in the consecration of the altar and are seen on the procession of the outer walls of the monument. The friezes were not meant to represent Augustus' return to Rome or the day of the consecration but were meant to represent the state of peace in Rome.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Torelli, *Typology and Structure of Roman Historical Reliefs*, 1982, pg. 27.

¹⁰⁹ Michelle, *The Ara Pacis: Roma Sub Specie Aeternitatis*. 2016.

Fertility and Abundance Panels:



Figure 13. Fertility Panel on the Ara Pacis (Steven Zucker, *Tellus (or Pax) Panel, Ara Pacis Augustae* (Altar of Augustan Peace) 9 B.C.E. (Ara Pacis Museum, Rome) [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

One of the better-preserved panels is located on the east wall of the *Ara Pacis Augustae*. The relief depicts a seated female figure, center, who is interpreted as Tellus, the Roman goddess of the Earth. The panel shows a scene of human fertility and natural abundance, as Tellus is surrounded by an abundance of vegetation. Two infants sit on the lap of the female figure and are tugging at her drapery. The bull and sheep under Tellus were important domesticated animals suggesting both pastoral abundance and religious sacrifice. Surrounding the central female are the personifications of the land and sea breezes and reinforce the ideology that the seated figure is Tellus/Terra, or mother

earth.¹¹⁰ The figures all sit above their respective icons and are showing that Rome has continued dominance over them. The personification of the sea sits above a sea serpent, which is the representative of the element of water, whereas the personification of the land sits above the image of a bird figure, which represents the land and air.¹¹¹ The theme of the relief is the harmony and abundance of Rome and its provinces, which is a theme central to the Augustan propaganda message of restored peace and abundance for the state of Rome and its people. The relief is promoting the *Pax Romana* that Augustus provided and gave to Rome for the next two centuries. This frieze reminds viewers of Augustus' propagandistic message of being related to the gods and having their support during his reign.

¹¹⁰ Becker, *Ara Pacis/ Early Empire*.

¹¹¹ MIT, *The Eastern Wall of the Ara Pacis*.

Vegetal Frieze:



Figure 14. Vegetal Frieze on the Ara Pacis (Ilya Shurygin, *Vegetal Friezes of the Altar* [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

The vegetal frieze runs parallel to the processional and deity friezes along the lower register on the outer wall of the *Ara Pacis Augustae*. The frieze is interpreted as a representation of a real plant that had been grafted and placed alongside the monument.¹¹² The images of vines and leaves are an emphasis to the fertility of abundance of the lands, a promotion of the benefits of living in the time of *Pax Romana*.¹¹³ The themes and composition of the vegetal friezes show that the gods, and Augustus, collectively, have

¹¹² Cofer, *The Ara Pacis Augustae and the Ancient Understanding of Grafting*, 2015.

¹¹³ Becker, *Ara Pacis/ Early Empire*.

created an abundant landscape for the Roman people and therefore, deserve praise and thanks.

Familial Continuation Panel:



Figure 15. Familial Procession on the Ara Pacis (Sailko, *Ara Pacis*, west side 1 in Rome, Italy [Digital Image] Taken 2005, Retrieved March 2021)

The upper register of the south wall portrays a scene of the emperor, his family, and members of his administration in the act of procession to or performing a sacrifice. Unlike the north wall, where most of the heads are new, meaning not authentic but modern creations, the heads of the figures of the South wall are mostly original elements. Half a dozen figures are recognizable from looking at other surviving statues of members of the imperial family, however, there is still some debate over many of these figures,

including Augustus, Agrippa, Tiberius, Julia/Livia, and Antonia.¹¹⁴ Depicted in this relief are members of the imperial family and their servants. The children in the frieze, from left to right, are believed to be Gaius Caesar, Germanicus, Gn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, and Domitia. Gaius Caesar and Germanicus are the grandchildren of Augustus and are included in the relief as they are important figures in the continuation of the familial line that Augustus promoted through his politics. Gn. Domitius Ahenobarbus is included as he was married to Augustus' sister, Octavia Minor, and was the adoptive father of Emperor Nero.¹¹⁵ Domitia is Gn. Domitius Ahenobarbus' older sister and is depicted looking a few years older than him.

The figure next to the right of Gaius Caesar, who is cut off in the image, is thought to be Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. Agrippa was a Roman general and statesman that was a close friend, son-in-law, and lieutenant to Augustus and was praised for his important military victories, most notably, the Battle of Actium.¹¹⁶ The adult figure to the opposite side of the young Gaius Caesar is thought to be Julia or Livia. Both Livia and Julia would have substantial reasoning to be displayed on the relief with the imperial family. Livia was the long-time wife of Augustus and would be depicted next to the children in the relief as she would have been associated with caring for them. Historians also argue that the female image could be of Julia as she was the wife of Tiberius and, previously, Agrippa.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Loewy, *Bemerkungen zur Ara Pacis*, 1926, pgs. 53–61.

¹¹⁵ Smith, William, *Ahenobarbus*, 1867, p. 86.

¹¹⁶ Plate, William, *Agrippa, Marcus Vipsanius*, 1867, pp. 77–80.

¹¹⁷ Messalla, *Rome: Ara Pacis Augustae*, 2019.

The man to the right of the female figure is believed to be Tiberius, the stepson and heir of Augustus. Tiberius was the son of Tiberius Claudius Nero and Livia Drusilla, the wife of Augustus. He was the brother of Nero Claudius Drusus who is also depicted in the frieze. Tiberius became the emperor of Rome in A.D. 14 following the death of his adoptive father, Augustus. Antonia Minor is beside Tiberius and was the younger of two surviving daughters of Mark Antony and Octavia Minor, the sister of Augustus. She was the niece of Augustus and the sister-in-law of Tiberius. She was the mother of the Emperor Claudius and the great-grandmother of the Emperor Nero, which emphasized the nature of this familial line. She was married to Drusus, seen in this relief, and outlived him, her oldest son, her daughter and several of her grandchildren.¹¹⁸ To the right of Antonia Minor is her husband, Nero Claudius Drusus, with their son Germanicus, discussed above, between them. Behind Drusus is a woman identified as Antonia the Elder, the other daughter of Antony and Octavia. She was married to Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus (49 B.C.-A.D. 25), who is beside her to the right with his hand extended outward.¹¹⁹

Although Augustus is not pictured in this panel it is important that his family is united on the frieze to emphasize his political message of a family lineage, the continuation of his family line, and his political message. The family portrayed in this section is one that is going to worship together and therefore promotes the family's devotion to the Roman religion. This could be connected to Augustus' divine nature and his ascension to Olympus following his death in A.D. 14. This Familial Continuation

¹¹⁸ Kokkinos, *Antonia Augusta: Portrait of a Great Roman Lady*, 1992, p. 11.

¹¹⁹ Messalla, *Rome: Ara Pacis Augustae*, 2019.

Panel is used to show the Romans the players within the imperial family and those who are closest to Augustus. He is showing the Roman people that he is a man united with his family, the fertility of his family, and the continuation of his family line.

The *Ara Pacis Augustae* is an important monument that projects propagandistic messages of the fertility and abundance of Rome under the reign of Augustus and the era of *Pax Romana* that he provided, as well as the message of familial continuation. Having panels of divine beings in conjunction with members of the Julio-Claudian family promotes messages of divine recognition and protection as well as a connection to the gods. The *Ara Pacis Augustae* was prominently placed so that the people of Rome could make sacrifices at the inner altar and witness the accomplishments of Augustus alongside the outer reliefs of the monument. Although these messages and images could only be seen by those in close proximity to the Campus Martius, similar images were projected in the coinage of Augustus and therefore seen and promoted by the Roman provinces.

Conclusion:

The use of propaganda in the age of Augustus was heavily geared towards promoting messages of military triumphs, his divine connection to and recognition by the gods, the prosperity he created in part by establishing new provincial cities, and the continuity he established via the peaceful succession of power. By using monuments, inscriptions, and statues, Augustus was capable of promoting his own agenda while also sharing the benefits of what he had accomplished and achieved with the Roman people. In this chapter, important examples of Augustan propaganda were shared, explained, and

evaluated, to show that they were influential on the people of the empire and the images, and inscriptions, found on Augustan coinage. The messages sent by these images and inscriptions on monuments, statues, and acts were all seen by a limited number of people, whereas coinage was seen, and held, by a much broader audience, which achieved a portable form of media and propaganda.

Monuments, statues, and art that were discussed in this chapter, including: The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, the *Prima Porta Augustus*, the *Gemma Augustae*, and the *Ara Pacis*, are all fundamental elements of Augustan propaganda and led to the imagery and inscriptions written within coinage, so that all citizens of Rome could bear witness to its messages. Overall, the effect coinage had on the Roman empire was far vaster than that of monuments, statues, and art, however, the two categories work together to create a prominent form of propaganda that was blossoming in the age of Augustus and would continue to be used by emperors in subsequent centuries. It is because of the monuments, statues, and art that imperial coinage, and its images, that messages of Augustan propaganda were so widespread and seen by all.

Chapter 4: Lugdunum and Other Imperial Mints

The imperial mints examined and discussed in this thesis are as follows:

Lugdunum, Caesaraugusta, Colonia Patricia, Nemausus, Samos, and Rome. This chapter provides the historical context necessary to understand the imagery used as propaganda on coins produced by each mint during the Augustan period. These mints and coinage were selected for two reasons: one, they provide broad geographical representation, since they are located all across the Roman empire, and two, the mint at Lugdunum provides broad chronological representation, since coinage from different moments in the life of Augustus is explored. The forms of political propaganda found on the coins from these mints are unique yet vastly similar. The purpose of this examination is to emphasize that coinage was used as the key element in Augustus' propaganda campaign because of its portability, unique imagery, value, and versatility.

Lugdunum:

The mint that this paper will draw frequent comparison to is the Lugdunum mint in common day Lyon, France. The city is located in the southeast of France and was founded in 43 B.C. by Julius Caesar's legate, Lucius Munatius Plancus. In 42 B.C. the mint was established under the control of the governors of Gallia Lugdunensis and was to issue gold and silver when required by the Republic. The earliest coins that can be linked to this imperial mint are silver *quinarii*, a small silver Roman coin valued at a half of a denarius, struck by M. Antony, between 42-41 B.C., shortly after he had been appointed as governor of Gaul. During the period of the Triumvirate, mints were rapidly established in various Roman provinces; however, Lugdunum continued to show its value and

importance under the governorship of M. Antony and, subsequently, Octavius. It was in 40 B.C. when the mint evolved into a provincial or “autonomous” mint for bronze coinage until 36 B.C., when production of gold and silver coins began to be struck under the rule of Octavius. Production continued steadily until 15 B.C., when the imperial mint for gold and silver was established permanently at the Lugdunum mint. Later, in 10 B.C., and subsequently 2 B.C., copper coinage, as well as brass coinage, began to be issued by the imperial mint. The splendor of the mint continued until the end of the 2nd century A.D., when Lugdunum aligned itself with the new faction of Clodius Albinus.

The importance of Lugdunum was rooted in the active measures for the Romanization of Gaul which originated from Lugdunum.¹²⁰ Although the mint was a newly founded colony in 43 B.C., its growth, both in population and importance, was exponential and led to it not only becoming the chief city of the Tres Galliae, but also to it serving as the Roman headquarters for the administration of the Gallic provinces. Due to a lack in evidence to show prior political importance, it is clear that there was a lack of production between the date of the issue of M. Antony’s *quinarii* in 41 B.C., and the establishment of the imperial mint in 15 B.C.

The mannerism of the coinage is associated with the tendency to flatness in the execution of the portrait and a decidedly linear technique.¹²¹ These traits are first observed in the *denarii* of Octavius as Triumvir, then on its bronze issue in 38 B.C., seen again on the *Altar of Lugdunum* series, and finally on the bronze of Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. It is at the Lugdunum mint that Augustus experimented with the monetary

¹²⁰ Sydenham, *The Mint of Lugdunum*, 1917, pg. 54-56

¹²¹ Sydenham, *The Mint of Lugdunum*, 1917, pg. 56

system of the Empire. This would later be regarded as one of the most remarkable and important experiments as it established a new institution of creating and distributing imperial brass and copper coinage. This experiment would ultimately be assumed by the senatorial coinage of Rome. The distinctive features of the coinage, namely the imperial portrait as the obverse combined with symbolic or commemorative devices on the reverse, became the typical senatorial bronze coin used throughout the empire.¹²² In regard to this thesis, the Lugdunum mint was chosen to be compared to as it shows consistency in the kind of imagery and type of coinage being produced, and how the imagery and inscriptions altered over time. The other mints explored and discussed in this thesis are being used to show the variety of Augustan political propaganda through various mints in comparison to Lugdunum.

Augusta Emerita:

Augusta Emerita, also known as Emerita Augusta, was a Roman Colonia that was founded in 25 B.C. in present day Mérida, Spain. The city was founded by Augustus, who was trying to resettle Emeriti soldiers from the veteran legions of the Cantabrian Wars. The city was the capital of the Roman province of Lusitania and was one of the largest in Hispania with an area of over 20,000 square kilometers.¹²³ Coinage produced in Augusta Emerita promoted messages of militaristic victory in honor of the Cantabrian Wars, as well as praise for their provincial government and Augustus. The coins were spread throughout Hispania and promoted the successes of its people and the

¹²² Sydenham, *The Mint of Lugdunum*, 1917, pg. 75-76.

¹²³ Livius, *Augusta Emerita*, 2020.

accomplishments of Augustus in honor of the establishment of a new Roman province.

The mint at Augusta Emerita was smaller than most of those that would have been known regionally, although its coins would not have spanned an area as vast as the mints mentioned earlier in this thesis.

Caesaraugusta:

Caesaraugusta, located in modern day Zaragoza, Spain, was founded as a Roman tribute-exempt colony. The town was established by veterans of legiones IV Macedonia, VI Victrix, and X Gemina, who were discharged after the wars against Cantabri, in 24 B.C., as shown in iconography found on coinage. The colony was founded as a bridgehead at the crossroads of Ebro (Hiberus), Gállego (Gallicus), Huerva (Orbia), and Saló (Jalón). It also acted as a riverport, as it was located near the confluence of the Huerva and the Ebro. The foundation of the city leads back to between 25 and 15 B.C.¹²⁴

The imperial mint at Caesaraugusta was established in 14 B.C. Here, Iberian bronze coins, patterned on Roman coins, were minted and given its name to a cavalry unit that served under Cn. Pompeius Strabo, son of Sextus and father of the triumvir. These soldiers were later given Roman citizenship in 89 B.C. during the siege of Ascoli.¹²⁵ The imperial mint issued on a major scale gold denarius, dupondius, asses, semises, and quadrants. A characteristic that sets the Caesaraugusta Imperial mint apart from other mints is its chronology. The coinage was not regularly seen by the emperors who were represented on the coinage, but rather by the magistrates who were in charge of

¹²⁴ Beletrán, A. (1976). *CAESAR AUGUSTA or Salduba (Zaragoza) Spain*, 1976.

¹²⁵ Stillwell, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites*, 1976.

minting. Specific iconography of the coinage minted at Caesaraugusta includes the inscribed letters “C • C • A”, referring to “Colonia Caesaraugusta”. Apart from the legends in which the titles of the emperors appear, the most significant legends are those of magistrates, such as the following: Q • LVTATIO M • FABIO IIVIR, C • ALSANO T • CERVIO IIVIR, L CASSIO C • VALER FENE IIVER.¹²⁶

Colonia Patricia:

South west of the Caesaraugusta imperial mint lay another prominent imperial mint, at Colonia Patricia. Colonia Patricia, modern day Córdoba, Spain, was founded by Claudius Marcellus in 152 B.C. and thrived until its destruction under Julius Caesar during the Roman Civil Wars (c. 49 B.C. - 45 B.C.). Augustus re-founded the city and named it Colonia Patricia Corduba. In 27 B.C., it became the capital of the Hispania Baetica province, which was one of the wealthiest and most Romanized provinces under the Empire. At the time, the city was already the habitual residence of the province’s ruling proconsul and those responsible for its administration.¹²⁷

There is speculation about the start of minting in Patricia; however, historians are clear that it occurred between 15 B.C. and 12 B.C. These dates are supported because in 12 B.C., Octavian Augustus received the title of *pontifex maximus*, which later surfaced in coinage with priestly symbols to commemorate the event. Colonia Patricia Corduba, after receiving a new denomination and becoming the capital of Baetica, began to mint in a new way, in contrast to the previous period. This led to new metrologies, number of

¹²⁶ Ripollès, *The Roman provincial mints of Hispania*, 2010, pg. 45-48.

¹²⁷ Museo Arqueológico de Córdoba, *Colonia Patricia Corduba*, pgs. 1-2.

values, typology, and legends. The coins minted at the Colonia Patricia Corduba colony constitute a separate type from all those minted in the previous ancient Corduba.

The typologies of the coinage minted at Colonia Patricia were those of bronze coins, whose values were the sesterce, dupondius, as, semis, and quadrant. The obverse of the coin showed the effigy of the emperor looking to either side and an idealized design by the engraver. One of its most common legends is that of “PERMISV CAESARIS AVGVSTI” which contained the imperial authorization, which was presented externally and, in other cases, abbreviated according to the size of the denomination. The reversals of the coins show a variety in their insignia according to the value of the currency. A dupondius, for example, could show a legionary insignia, an eagle looking to the left between banners, with its internal legend “Colonia Patricia,” whereas, the as could have a reverse with a laureate crown and inside the legend “Colonia Patricia.” The legend could be abbreviated to “Colo Patr.”¹²⁸ Coins in this thesis that were minted at the Colonia Patricia mint depict the Capricorn, double laurel branches, Victory, and Tiberius.

Nemausus Mint:

The Nemausus mint, located within the celebrated town of Gallia Narbonensis, was named after the ancient Gallic god, Nemausus, and was honored in sacred well in the northwestern part of the city. Today, it has been transformed into Nîmes, Languedoc, France. The city was founded in 27 B.C. by the many veterans from various Legions that helped defeat Mark Antony. The veterans were sent to defend different colonies, some in

¹²⁸ Ripollès, *The Roman provincial mints of Hispania*, 2010, pg. 45, 48.

Italy and others in the provinces, and those sent to Nemausus remained after the Alexandrian war. It was in 16 B.C. that Augustus established a surrounding city wall, monuments, and the mint. The city may have had as many as 50,000-60,000 inhabitants in its peak during the imperial period.¹²⁹

The mint itself produced a large number of its coins in gold, silver, and brass. They are inscribed NEM. COL., *Nemausus Colonia*, within a crown of laurel. The imperial coins struck at Nemausus are of brass, and present on their obverse the heads of Augustus and Agrippa facing back-to-back, with the inscription IMP DIVI F, *Imperator Divi Filius*. On the reverse appears a crocodile that is attached by a chain to a palm tree, with the purpose of representing the defeat over the Egyptians, and Egypt's annexation into the empire as a province.¹³⁰

Samos Mint:

Samos, an ancient city with a long history of occupation before Roman rule, was located on the island of the same name in the eastern Aegean Sea, in the region of Ionia, in what is now western Turkey. It is a notable fact that the Greeks honored the permanence of coin types with the constituted bond between a Greek mother city and its colony. Samian silver coins that were found and assigned to this. Fall into two classes. Coins at the Samos bore the same types of Alexander the Great and a similar weight of Attic tetradrachms with the mintmark of Samos. It is unknown whether or not the Pergamene kings ever used Samos as one of the mints of their regal money, however, it is

¹²⁹ Livius, *Nemausus (Nimes)*, 2005.

¹³⁰ Forvm Ancient Coins, *Nemausus*.

doubtful. It was later on in the period that coins of a different standard and inferior style had been cast. The coins depicted the head of the lion being of a door knocker character. The metal had also been debased which gave historians an understanding of the time period from which it came.¹³¹

Rome:

Roman coinage was first produced in the late 4th century BCE in Italy and continued to be minted for another eight centuries, until A.D. 476, in Italy and across the empire. The coinage, as in other societies, represented a widely recognized monetary value that would permit the easy exchange of goods and aid in technological developments. Denominations and values showed variation between years, but certain types of coins would persist and ultimately become known throughout history. The imagery on coins in Rome took a turn towards propaganda when Julius Caesar used his portrait on his coins, an opportunity not missed by Brutus who similarly used his own image alongside two daggers symbolizing his role in the assassination of Caesar. Following suit, Augustus embedded his own profile on the coinage and reformed the denominations of smaller coins to establish a new system. Rome remained a major mint for imperial coinage, and the selection of imagery was overseen by Moneyers.¹³²

As depicted in this chapter, the imperial mints examined and discussed in this chapter, Lugdunum, Caesaraugusta, Colonia Patricia, Nemausus, Samos, and Rome,

¹³¹ Gardner, *Samos and Samian Coins*, 1882, pg. 66-68.

¹³² UNVR, *The Minting of Coins in Ancient Rome*. 2021.

provide vital historical context that is necessary for understanding the imagery used at messages of Augustan propaganda on his coinages that were produced in each of these mints. These mints and coinages were chosen because they provide a broad geographical representation of the Mediterranean and the Lugdunum mint provides a chronological representation of coinage produced throughout this Augustan era in comparison to coins produced in other mints. This form of political propaganda found on Augustan coinage, created in these mints, are unique yet similar as they are all used to promote the message of Augustus and his various achievements while emperor. The coinage also provided a key element in the Augustan propaganda campaign because of their portability, unique imagery, value, and versatility. These coins were used to spread the political messages of Augustus and the provincial towns in which they have been minted.

CHAPTER 5: COINAGE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The coins presented in this chapter will illustrate the varying imagery and messages used by Augustus to promote his political propaganda initiative. The imperial mints used in this thesis are the Lugdunum, Augusta Emerita, Caesaraugusta, Colonia Patricia, Nemausus, Samos, and Rome mints. The imagery produced at these mints under the reign of Augustus was rich with symbolism and propagandistic messaging. Although many different coins were issued at these mints, this study focuses on a specific set of images that demonstrate the main messages that Augustus wished to send to help legitimize his rule. This imagery includes the Capricorn, triumphal arches, laurel branches, the eagle, Victory, the Egyptian crocodile, the bull, Roman altars, and the transition of power to Tiberius.

Augustus used these images to send a series of propagandistic messages. The Capricorn, bull, laurel branches, and altars were all images of religious symbolism intended to suggest that his rule was ordained and protected by the gods. The triumphal arches, eagle, Victory, and Egyptian crocodile highlight his military triumphs. The images of Tiberius were intended to reassure those in the empire that his death would result not in conflict and chaos but in the peaceful transition of power to his chosen successor. The overall message sent by all of these images was that Augustus alone could guarantee continuous peace and prosperity across an ever-expanding empire. By using coinage as a means of projecting divine protection, military success, prosperity, and peaceful succession, Augustus laid out the parameters of a propaganda campaign that became a new template for political leaders -- in particular, the emperors -- of the Roman Empire. Following Augustus' success, Tiberius and subsequent emperors carried out the

same acts of propaganda, using coinage as a main medium. Augustus' legacy was ensured not simply through the succession of emperors, but also through the use of propaganda in coinage.

Capricorn Coinage:

Figures 16 and 17 are examples of how the symbol of Augustus, the Capricorn, became widespread throughout the Roman Empire. As on most coins of the time, Augustus' profile portrait is embedded into the obverse to show leadership, power, and success. The face of a young Augustus showed the people of the empire who was in command and who had given them the peace and prosperity of the *Pax Romana*. On the reverse of the coin is the Capricorn, an important symbol for Augustus, as it was the astrological sign he was born under in 63 B.C. In 44 B.C. Augustus was studying in Apollonia, in Illyria, Greece, when he received word that his uncle, Julius Caesar, had died and named him as his heir.¹³³ According to the Roman historian Suetonius, Augustus and Agrippa visited the astrologer Theogenies, following the news of his impending ascension. Suetonius recounts the visit, and its outcome as follows:

Theogenies started up from his seat and paid [Augustus] adoration. Not long afterwards, Augustus was so confident of the greatness of his destiny that he published his horoscope and struck a silver coin bearing the image of Capricorn, the sign under which he was born.¹³⁴

¹³³ Wray, D. (2002). Astrology in Ancient Rome: Poetry, prophecy and power. Retrieved February 12, 2021, from <http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/777777122543/>

¹³⁴ Thomson, Alexander. The Lives of the Twelve Caesars. United Kingdom, G. Bell and sons, 1901.

He designed the coin with this symbol because it put forward an undeniable bid for autocracy and leadership. The symbolism on this coin, among others like it, was used to promote legitimacy for an unprecedented form of political leadership. It is also probable that the Capricorn was used as the sign of Augustus because it is the sign in which the sun passes through the winter solstice. This could, in a sense, refer to the rebirth of the Roman republic in Augustus' reign and in his propaganda.¹³⁵

Augustus' ideological campaign proved to be successful. He was granted the titles of *Princeps*, "first citizen," and *Augustus*, "revered," by the Roman Senate.¹³⁶ These titles, which had never been used for a Roman political leader, were symbolic way to legitimize his unprecedented rule. The ideological campaign -- including both visual symbolism in the form of images on coins, and new symbolic titles -- served to justify the insertion of a monarchical structure into the pre-existing political structure of the Roman Republic. The depiction of the Capricorn on both coins also includes similar imagery of a globe and rudder, found beneath or to the right of the Capricorn image. These images reflect the Roman goddess Fortuna. She was known as the goddess of change and often associated with prosperity and increase. She is often represented by the cornucopia since she is the giver of abundance, a rudder as she was the controller of destinies, and a ball or globe to indicate the uncertainty of fortune and the future.¹³⁷ The use of the globe often refers to the idea of global conquest. The use of the globe by Augustus suggests that he will continue to expand the already vast Roman empire. The representation of Fortuna is used by Augustus to claim and show that he is favored by her, and in turn, will bring

¹³⁵ <http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/777777122543/>

¹³⁶ Davis, Paul K. (1999). *100 Decisive Battles: From Ancient Times to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 63

¹³⁷ Britannica, "Fortuna", 2019.

fortune to all of the Roman empire and his supporters. Augustus is still proving his legitimacy and the coin, politically, shows the past, current, and future success of his career. By the public obtaining this particular coin design, knowledge of his conquests, destiny, and fortune was relayed to them.



Figure 16. Imperial Denarius Coin with the face of Augustus and Capricorn (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 174; 12 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 174 was a Denarius minted in 12 B.C. at the Lugdunum mint, in modern day Lyon, France. The coin's obverse depicts the head of Augustus facing right with the inscription, "AVGVSTVS DIVI F," or "Augustus, son of the divine." The "F" in the Latin inscription refers to "filius," meaning "son." The obverse refers to Augustus as the "son of the divine" due to his connection with Julius Caesar, who was his adoptive father. Following Caesar's death, he was deified by the Roman Senate and people. Augustus therefore used his connection to Julius Caesar to highlight his own importance and to foreshadow his own deification. When Augustus died in 14 A.D., he too was deified; however, the process of his deification started well before his demise through the construction of temples and offerings made in his name, and through the minting of coins such as this one. The reverse of the coin depicts a Capricorn facing right and displays the inscription "IMP XI" meaning "Imperator for the eleventh time." At the time in which the coin was minted, the Roman Empire was beginning its conquest in the Germanic

Wars. Augustus responded to early attacks with developing military infrastructure across the Gaul region. This particular coin could have been used to symbolize the quick thinking of Augustus in the Germanic wars, his connection to the divine, and Fortuna's ideology of prosperity.¹³⁸



Figure 17. Imperial Denarius with the face of Augustus and Capricorn (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I* (Second edition); Augustus 126; 18 B.C. - 17 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 126 was a Denarius minted between 18-17 B.C. at the Colonia Patricia mint, in modern day Córdoba, Spain. The coin's obverse depicts the head of Augustus facing right. The reverse of the coin depicts a Capricorn facing right, holding a globe with an attached rudder, over the inscription "AVGVSTVS," meaning Augustus. The coin could also refer to the Cantabrian Wars that took place between 29 B.C. and 19 B.C. and had subsided a year prior to the coin's minting. The Cantabrian wars, also referred to as Cantabrian and Asturian Wars, were the final battles of a two-century long Roman conquest of Hispania. Emperor Augustus oversaw Rome's conflict with the Cantabri and the Astures, who were the last independent Celtic nations of Hispania. This coin may have been used to illustrate the victory over Hispania and the leadership Augustus demonstrated while achieving this victory.¹³⁹ The coin was therefore used not only to

¹³⁸ Wells, Peter S. *The Battle That Stopped Rome*, 2003.

¹³⁹ Rabanal Alonso, *La Historia de León, Vol. I: Prehistoria y Edad Antigua* (in Spanish). Universidad de León, 2009, p. 133.

symbolize victory over Hispania, but also to give homage to Augustus and the expansion of the empire under his leadership.



objects: 2; hoard: 1

Figure 18. Imperial Denarius with Augustus facing left and Capricorn (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I* (Second edition); Augustus 547B; 27 B.C. - 14 A.D. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 547B was a Denarius minted at some point between 27 B.C. and 14 A.D., although the minting location is unknown. The coin's obverse depicts the head of Augustus facing left, which is a rarity in Roman coins as they usually face right. The reverse displays the inscription of "AVGVSTVS" referring to Augustus. The reverse of the coin depicts a Capricorn facing right and holding a globe with a rudder. Although the exact date of its production is unknown, this coin was likely struck earlier in the imperial career of Augustus, since it uses his youthful portrait type. Even though the creator of this coin did something unconventional in making the portrait face left, the imagery on the reverse is similar to the other Capricorn coins, demonstrating how tweaks could be made but the overall message remained the same.

Augustus used the image of the Capricorn as a way to demonstrate the allegiance and protection he had with Roman deities. It was common for horoscopes to be published for the public; however, it was rare that a political leader, such as Augustus, would take

his astrological sign so personally and create a new image around it. The image of the Capricorn can be seen in other monuments and art made in honor of Augustus, such as the Gemma Augustae, cementing his legacy with the image of the Capricorn. The following coins were used to promote another side of Augustus' reign: his success in conquering territories and establishing new provinces and cities across the empire. The cities he took over or founded in the provinces created out of the regions into which he expanded were given to inhabitants or to military veterans following triumph. The following city was seemingly both. The image of the triumphal arch is one that is still seen today and yet does not make the same impression that it once made. The lasting success of Augustus is seen through the architecture established from his reign and conquests.

City Wall with Gateway as Triumphal Arch Coinage:

Figure 19 and Figure 20 are examples of infrastructure installations overseen by the expanding Roman Empire and its Emperor, Caesar Augustus. The cities in which both coins were minted, modern day Merida and Zaragoza, Spain, were established in 30 B.C. and were located over 400 miles apart. The coins themselves are dated between 25 B.C. and 23 B.C. and share a similar obverse and reverse. The obverse of the coins depicts a young Caesar Augustus at the start of his reign. The face of the emperor symbolizes the power and control Augustus had over his empire and the accomplishments he had made. Politically, the face is to remind the people who their leader is and who they should be praising for military success and for the foundation of new cities. The reverse depicts a gateway modeled on the form of a free-standing

structure modeled after a triumphal arch, embedded in a city wall, with “EMERITA” inscribed above the gateway. Triumphal arches were free-standing Roman architectural monuments, originally built only in Rome but then constructed throughout the empire to commemorate military triumphs and significant events, such as the accession of a new emperor. Augustus famously erected the Triumphal Arch of Augustus in 20 B.C. The triumphal arch, located in the Roman Forum, was erected following the recovery of the lost Roman standards from the Parthians in 20 B.C.¹⁴⁰ Free-standing arches were used throughout the empire to mark the triumphal route that military leaders used when returning from battle to be awarded and thanked by the Roman people.¹⁴¹ The basic form of a multiple-arched gateway was used to mark the most important entry-points into a city when a fortification wall was constructed. These gateways, though different in function from a triumphal arch, had the similar symbolic meaning. The image of the gateway in the form of a triumphal arch depicted on the coins is used to show the new foundations of the cities and was intended to imitate the image of Augustus’ own triumphal arch to remind the public of his military triumphs.

Both Figure 19 and Figure 20 share similar reverse inscriptions, which praise Publius Carisius for being the praetor in Emerita. The name of Publius Carisius was imprinted on the coin for his military success against the Asturians during the Cantabrian and Asturian Wars fought between 29 B.C. and 19 B.C.¹⁴² The wars were fought in northern Spain, then Hispania, and therefore would have been projected onto the coinage of multiple Spanish cities, such as Augusta Emerita and Caesaraugusta. This would have

¹⁴⁰ Holland, “The Triple Arch of Augustus.”, 1946, pp. 53.

¹⁴¹ Holland, “The Triple Arch of Augustus.”, 1946, pp. 53.

been done to promote the military success of the Roman Empire, of Augustus, and subsequently, of Publius Carisius himself. Although Carisius was actively trying to promote himself, he was doing it in the name of Augustus.



Figure 22. Imperial Denarius with Augustus facing right with double Laurel branches on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; *Augustus 51*; 20 B.C. - 19 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 10 is a Denarius minted at the Augusta Emerita mint, in modern day Merida, Spain. The coin's obverse depicts the bare head of Augustus, facing right. The inscription reads, "IMP CAESAR AVGVSTV," translating to "Imperator Caesar Augustus." The term *imperator* was used for "commander" or "general" of a particular province, city, or region within the Roman Empire. Beginning with Julius Caesar, *imperator* was no longer a title used for specific military victory, but to show his absolute power as the sole leader of the Roman army. During the Civil Wars, following Caesar's death, Octavian started to call himself "Imperator Julius Caesar," elevating the title of *imperator* to a new position of power in 31 B.C. Octavian changed his title to Imperator Caesar Augustus, instilling that all three names could be used as a synonym for the ultimate title of "emperor." Octavian changed his name to Augustus following his victory in Actium and later used *imperator* to set himself apart from other politicians and

citizens.¹⁴³ The inscription reads, “P CARISIVS LEG PRO PR EMERITA” meaning “Publius Carisius, legate for the praetor in Emerita.”



Figure 20. Imperial As with Augustus facing right with a city wall on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 11A; 25 B.C. - 23 B.C.. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 11A is an As minted at the Caesaraugusta mint, in modern day Zaragoza, Spain. The coin’s obverse depicts the bare head of Augustus, facing right. The inscription reads “AVGVST TRIB POTES,” translating to “Augustus, holder of tribunician power.” This refers to the rights of *tribunica potestas* given to Augustus in 23 B.C.¹⁴⁴ These rights were given to Augustus for life and were previously granted only to Rome’s *tribuni plebis*. The inscription on the coin is important because it depicts Augustus being granted all the traditional republican powers of all the traditional republican offices. By gaining all of these rights, he effectively becomes emperor of the Roman Empire. His reign as emperor had just begun and by showing the rights he was being given by the Roman Senate, it showed the people of the empire the importance and will of their leader and helped to legitimize his unprecedented rule. The reverse inscription reads “P CARISIVS LEG AVGVSTI EMERITA,” meaning “Publius

¹⁴³ Haverfield, F. (1915). The Name Avgvstvs. *Journal of Roman Studies*, 5, 249-2502

¹⁴⁴ University of Washington, *Summary of Augustus's Powers*.

Carisius, legate for Augustus in Emerita.” The coin is being used, again, to represent the praetor of Emerita, Publius Carisius. He would have been the overseer of Emerita and could have had another connection to Zaragoza, Spain.

The use of the gateways in the form of triumphal arches in these coins not only demonstrated the new foundations of the growing Roman provinces, but also showed the military success of Augustus and his imperial appointees. As seen above, members of the Roman government, such as Publius Carisius, were honored as being legate for Augustus. Augustus used his coins not only to promote himself but also the success of those he had appointed and was therefore able to claim their successes as his own. Both coins are inscribed with the titles given to Augustus and Caesar, *imperator* and *tribune*. The following set of figures depicts the image of the laurel branches, a sacred symbol of honor presented during republican and imperial times. It is important to note that Augustus is using the image of laurel branches to promote his success and achievements. He is once again basking in his attainment of a novel form of government, with himself as sole ruler.

Double Laurel Branch Coinage:

The coins found in Figure 21, Figure 22, and Figure 23 show the bust of Augustus facing right on the obverse while images of two laurel branches are on the reverse. Laurel branches fashioned into a crown, the *corona civica*, and the *clipeus virtutis* were all simple honors related to military victory presented in ancient Roman tradition. The *corona civica* was a wreath made out of oak leaves that were tied together with a fillet, or

ribbon. Augustus received the honors of the *corona civica* in 27 B.C., when he was recognized as Caesar Augustus, the princeps and emperor of Rome. The crown was traditionally given to a Roman soldier who had saved the life of another in battle.

Augustus wore the *corona civica* in recognition of all those he saved from the civil war that ended at the battle of Actium against Antony and Cleopatra in 31 B.C.¹⁴⁵ Another physical object used to honor someone was the *clipeus virtutis*, or “shield of bravery.” This shield was awarded to Augustus for his courage and justice by the Roman senate.¹⁴⁶

Historically, the laurel leaf is a symbol of the Greek god Apollo. Laurels fashioned into victory wreaths were awarded to winners of the games held at the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi in Greece. Delphi held important significance throughout the Roman Empire. The honors of the laurel wreath were given to Augustus in 27 B.C. where they became the image of monarchical rule.¹⁴⁷ Augustus claimed Apollo, the patron deity of Delphi, as his own patron deity to show that he was favored by a god with such immense power.¹⁴⁸ Augustus used the image of victory, not just to symbolize a military victory, but that of athletic and musical victories that took place at Delphi. He did this to show he was actively carrying the torch of Greek culture and learning. Augustus used the image of laurel leaves to send a message about his political campaign, underscoring its legitimacy, and to show he was going to rule the Mediterranean with the tradition of the Greek enlightenment in mind. He ultimately was trying to show he was worthy of the praise due to a victor and worthy of the gods’ favor. The image of the

¹⁴⁵ University of Chicago, *Corona Civica*.

¹⁴⁶ Davis and McCormick, *The long Morning of Medieval Europe: New Directions in Early Medieval Studies*, pg. 34.

¹⁴⁷ Zanker, Paul. “The Great Turning Point: Intimations of a New Imperial Style.” *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. 1988, pp 93.

¹⁴⁸ Hoffmann, “Helios”, in *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 2, 1963, pp. 117–23.

laurels and their connection with victory in competition, from athletic to military, became so deeply associated with Augustus that they gradually became visual synonyms for the emperor and lost their original meaning and value.¹⁴⁹

The use of laurel wreaths, as depicted in Figure 21 and Figure 22, as well as the branches seen in all three Figures, represent victory and were given to victors as a tribute from the goddess Victory.¹⁵⁰ The coins themselves symbolize the accomplishments of Augustus and promote his political endeavors with ending the Cantabrian Wars, in 19 B.C., and leading the empire to victory.



Figure 21. Imperial Denarius with Augustus facing right with double Laurel branches on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 36A; 19 B.C. - 18 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 36A is a Denarius minted between 19 B.C. and 18 B.C. at the Caesaraugusta mint, located in modern day Zaragoza, Spain. The coin's obverse depicts a young Augustus facing right with a laurel crown on his head. The laurel crown represents the victories he has achieved while commanding the military of the Roman Empire. The reverse has the inscription "CAESAR AVGVSTVS," meaning Caesar Augustus. The

¹⁴⁹ Zanker, Paul. "The Great Turning Point: Intimations of a New Imperial Style." *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. 1988, pp 94.

¹⁵⁰ Zanker, Paul. "The Great Turning Point: Intimations of a New Imperial Style." *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. 1988, pp 92.

image on the coin depicts the inscription “CL V,” referring to the *clipeus votivus* or the votive shield.¹⁵¹ Shields were traditionally given as votive offerings at a sanctuary to thank a god or goddess for military victory. On each corner of the *clipeus votivus* is the emblematic abbreviation S P Q R, representing the empire’s government, Senātus Populusque Rōmānus. The two laurel branches are found on either side of the votive shield representing victory.



Figure 22. Imperial Denarius with Augustus facing right with double Laurel branches on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 51; 20 B.C. - 19 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 51 is a Denarius minted between 20 B.C. and 19 B.C. at the Colonia Patricia mint, located in modern day Córdoba, Spain. The coin’s obverse, similar to the previous figure, shows a young Augustus wearing a laurel leaf crown. The reverse has the inscription “CAESAR AVGVSTVS,” which, in conjunction with the two laurel branches, manifests the image of victory.

¹⁵¹ Forvum Ancient Coins, *CL V*.



Figure 23. Imperial Aureus with Augustus facing right with double Laurel branches around a door on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 419; 12 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 419 is an Aureus minted in 12 B.C. at the Roman mint, located in modern day Rome. The obverse shows Augustus facing right with the inscription “AVGVSTVS DIVI F.” The writing translates to “Augustus son of the divine,” which refers to his adoptive father, Caesar, who has been deified. On the reverse of the coin the inscription reads “L CANINIVS GALLVS OB C S” or “Lucius Caninius Gallus Ob Cives Servatos” in its full writing. The writing translated to “Lucius Caninius Gallus, savior of the citizens.” Lucius Caninius Gallus was a *consul suffectus* in 2 B.C. and *magister fratrurn Arvalium* in 36 A.D.¹⁵² The image on the coin represents Augustus’ home with laurel trees standing on either side. The position of the two trees has a special association with the viewer, most likely the wealthy. It was common of the time for a pair of laurel trees to have been placed as such in front of the headquarters of the oldest priesthods, at the Regia, the Temple of Vesta, and the seat of the *flamines* and *pontifices*. Therefore, the image of the pair of laurel trees signified that the entryway to

¹⁵² Box, Herbert. “Roman Citizenship in Laconia: Part II.” 1932, pp. 168. *JSTOR*.

Augustus' home had a sacred aura and invoked a sense of power in primordial religion.¹⁵³ By inscribing Augustus' home on the coin's reverse, it is suggesting that Augustus' home is home to all citizens, and that Augustus himself serves as *pontifex maximus*. Prior to his death in 14 A.D. Augustus had begun the deification process through temples being built in his honor and sacrifices being made to him. Following his death, like his predecessor, Caesar, he was deified by the Roman Senate and people. The image of the *corona civica* above the door frame continues to symbolize his victories he will have in the Germanic Wars, which began in 12 B.C., and the victories he has already achieved.

The laurel branches invoke a sense of pride and thankfulness towards such a powerful leader. Since Augustus was the first emperor, the traditions of the past were encouraged to show a peaceful transition between old and new. He used images that were well known and circulated so that members of the Roman imperial provinces could look upon them and understand the message he was trying to promote. Although the images were egotistical at times, they were still able to promote his overall success. The connection to Greco-Roman deities and Greek traditions in laurel branches ran deep and lent to the overall perception of the image. All of the major nested images that Augustus was trying to promote were found within this simple design. Figure 24 and Figure 25 are examples of using well known imperial symbols in coinage to promote an agenda or triumph. In this instance, Augustus used the image of the eagle, or *Aquila*, to remind the Roman people of his military success in 20 B.C., when the Roman standards were returned. The nested propagandistic message of military triumph was used not only

¹⁵³ Zanker, Paul. "The Great Turning Point: Intimations of a New Imperial Style." *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. 1988, pp 92-93.

as self-promotion, but also as a way to spread the news of the reclamation of these powerful symbols of Roman rule. Coinage was used in this way as a form of media to share important information across the provinces.

Eagle Coinage:

Figures 24 and Figure 25 were used to promote the general military success of Emperor Augustus and both coins' obverses depict the bust of Augustus during his time as emperor. The reverses of the coins show the image of an eagle with its wings spread. The image of the eagle, or *Aquila*, was a noble symbol of the Roman Empire and was placed on top of a Roman standard, a physical object that would have been brought into battle as a symbol of Rome and its people. In 53 B.C. the Roman Empire lost the eagle standard when Marcus Licinius Crassus was defeated by the Parthians at the Battle of Carrhae.¹⁵⁴ It was not until 20 B.C. that Augustus negotiated with Phraates IV of Parthia for the return of the lost eagle battle standard. This was arguably the greatest diplomatic success of Augustus at the time and ultimately represented a symbolic victory for Rome.¹⁵⁵ Augustus used the return of the standard as political propaganda to show the Roman people that Parthia was submitting to the Roman Empire when all they were doing was negotiating new terms. Augustus led the people to believe he was capable of great military success without combat or bloodshed.

The eagle standard was later engraved on the breastplate of the statue of Augustus from Prima Porta. On the Prima Porta breastplate, you can see a Roman general receiving

¹⁵⁴ Yates, James, "Signa Militaria", 1875, pp. 1044-1046.

¹⁵⁵ Eck, Werner, *The Age of Augustus*. (2003)

the standard from the Parthian general. The *Prima Porta Augustus* was finished in 20 B.C. and therefore the coins are symbolic of that imagery since many were unable to view the statue for themselves. The images on the breastplate share an important message in visual language, illustrating the political prowess of Augustus. By putting the image of the eagle on the coin it allows the public or at least those who had access to the coins to know of Augustus' military success in returning the standard to its rightful state.



Figure 24. Imperial Quadrans with Augustus facing right with an eagle on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I* (Second edition); Augustus 227; 15 B.C. - 10 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 227 is a Quadrans minted between 15 B.C and 10 B.C. at the Lugdunum mint, in modern day Lyon, France. The coin's obverse depicts the head of Augustus facing right with the inscription "IMP CAESAR," meaning Imperator Caesar, referring to Augustus. Augustus' head is donned by a laurel wreath that symbolizes eternal glory, achievement, success, and triumph. In this setting, the laurels most likely represent the achievements of Augustus in reclaiming the lost eagle battle standards in 20 B.C., which coincides with the reverse image of the eagle. The reverse of the coin depicts an eagle standing front, head left, with wings spread and displays the description of "AVGVSTVS," meaning Augustus. The coin is used to show the great success of

Augustus and the elements of political propaganda that he initiated when first reclaiming the standards from Parthia.



Figure 25. Imperial Quadrans with Augustus facing left with an eagle on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I* (Second edition); Tiberius 82; 34 A.D. - 37 A.D. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Tiberius 82 is a Quadrans minted between 34 A.D. and 37 A.D. at the mint in Rome, in contemporary Rome, Italy. The coin's obverse depicts the head of Augustus facing left with the inscription "DIVVS AVGVSTVS PATER," meaning "Divine Father Augustus." At this juncture, Augustus has died, and has become deified by the Roman Senate, and Tiberius has succeeded his stepfather as emperor of the Roman Empire. The reverse of the coin depicts an eagle standing front, head right, with wings spread and displays the description "S C," meaning *Senatus Consulto*, meaning that its value and imagery has been approved by the Senate. The eagle is standing on top of a globe. The globe is featured on many coins and statues throughout the Roman Empire, such as the Capricorn coins discussed above. The globe, in this scenario, represents imperial dominion over all the territories conquered by the Romans. Tiberius is using the same images as Augustus because the kind of visual propaganda he used was so successful. By continuing the same type of propaganda as his predecessor, Tiberius is showing a peaceful transition, continuity, and impending success.

The use of the eagle was symbolic not only of the success of the military but also of Augustus' control over the empire. As mentioned above, the Roman standards were lost in 53 B.C. and were returned in 20 B.C. This was a monumental feat as it emphasized the *Pax Romana* that Augustus had established in 27 B.C. with the beginning of his reign. Figure 25, seen above, has the obverse inscription "DIVVS AVGVSTVS PATER," which reiterates the protection and wealth he was thought to have received from the Roman deities, which indicates that this rule had been considered beneficial and prosperous by the people of the empire in general. This set of imperial coinage emphasizes the underlying political messages Augustus was trying to send, that of military triumph, divine recognition, and the installation of his legacy as emperor. In the following Figures, 26 and 27, the message of militaristic and political victories as well as divine recognition continues as the image of Victoria, or victory, is imprinted on Augustus' coinage. The Roman goddess Victoria is depicted in the imperial coinage in order to invoke a sense of pride and praise in the military and political achievements of Augustus. By using the image of a universal Roman image, like Victoria and similarly the eagle as depicted above, the understanding of the coin's message is more likely to be received by all. The images of the eagle and Victoria are not addressing one singular victory but all of his victories so far, as well as those he will continue to have in the future as emperor of the Roman Empire.

Victory Coin:

Figures 26 and Figures 27 are coins that depict the militaristic and political victories achieved in the Roman Empire under Emperor Augustus' reign. Both coins were minted in 19 B.C., which was the year that the Cantabrian Wars concluded. The Cantabrian wars took place between 29 B.C. and 19 B.C. in the northern region of Spain known as Hispania. Both of the cities in which Figures 26 and Figures 27 were minted are located in Spain and therefore are vital in promoting the military success of Augustus and his military. The image of victory flying over an inscribed shield and the abbreviation S P Q R appear in the reverse of both coins. The image of victory is a depiction of the Roman goddess Victoria. Victoria is a winged figure whose gifts are victory, success, and excellence. In Roman culture, the symbol of Victoria personified victory. She was often depicted on Roman coinage, jewelry, and temples to show the political and military successes of the Empire. In Figures 26 and 27, Victoria is flying over a shield with the inscription "CL V," referring to *clipeus votivus* or the votive shield.¹⁵⁶ The coins' reverse also shows the S P Q R inscription which is an abbreviation for *Senātus Populusque Rōmānus*. This was an emblematic abbreviation phrase referring to the government of the ancient Roman Republic, which continued to be used into the imperial period. S P Q R appears on Roman currency, at the end of documents made public, on stone or metal, and in dedications of monuments and public works.

¹⁵⁶ Forvm Ancient Coins, *CL V*



Figure 26. Imperial Aureus with Augustus facing right with Victory on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I* (Second edition); Augustus 31; 19 B.C. - 18 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 31 is an Aureus minted between 19 B.C. - 18 B.C. at the Caesaraugusta mint, located in modern day Zaragoza, Spain. The coin's obverse depicts the head of Augustus facing right with the inscription "AVGVSTVS," translating to Augustus. The reverse of the coin depicts Victory flying right with a wreath above a shield inscribed "CL V," referring to the *clipeus votivus*, and with a column in the background. In antiquity there were four main types of columns used: Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Tuscan. On this coin's reverse, the column depicted is of the Doric order. In a Roman imperial context, the Doric order appeared most frequently in civil porticoes of subordinate importance. However, in a domestic context, the Doric order was used as a way to save money, since its weight was significantly less than the Corinthian and Ionic orders. In addition, Doric order columns were used in connection with female deities, such as Victory.¹⁵⁷ The abbreviation S P Q R appears in the center, split by the column. The Victory referred to on these two coins may refer to the achievements of Augustus. The symbol of Victoria on this Figure refers to either the Cantabrian Wars, or to show

¹⁵⁷ Wilson Jones, Mark. Principles of Roman Architecture. 2003, Page 110.

that in 20 B.C. Augustus recovered the standard of the legions lost by Crassus from the Parthians. This image can also be seen on the breastplate of the statue of Augustus from Prima Porta.



Figure 27. Imperial Aureus with Augustus facing right with Victory on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 90; 19 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 90 is an Aureus minted in 19 B.C. at the Colonia Patricia mint, located in modern day Córdoba, Spain. The obverse of the coin depicts the head of Augustus facing right with the inscription “CAESAR AVGVSTVS,” or Caesar Augustus. The portrait of Augustus on this coin heavily illustrates his hair and his bust is better preserved than in the previous coin. The coin’s obverse is showing the face of the empire while the reverse is showing all that he has accomplished since becoming the first emperor in 27 B.C. The reverse of the coin depicts Victory flying right with the wreath above the shield inscribed with S P Q R and “CL V,” with a column in the background. A symbol of the Roman goddess, Victoria, are the laurel wreaths which are seen in her hands above the *clipeus votivus*.

The underlying political message of militaristic triumph made its way into a plethora of Augustan coin types. This was in order to spread messages of Roman triumph

across the provinces and share news of success. On the coins in Figures 26 and 27, the image of victory, or Victoria, is used to represent the victory, success, and excellence of the Roman Empire, and most importantly its triumphant leader, Augustus. The inscriptions of S P Q R and the *clipeus votivus*, the votive shield, are also seen on the coinage to reinforce the political power of Rome and to praise gods such as Victoria. Votive offerings would be made with the intention of recovery of use, in a sacred place for religious purposes. The votive shield is used to allude to votive offerings; furthermore, such items used in said offerings were made in order to gain favor with supernatural forces.¹⁵⁸ By illustrating the symbol into the coinage, it shows that the gods showed favor to Augustus and he reciprocated his thanks by praising them publicly. Whereas the coins represented the message of divine recognition and military success, the next set of coins represents the establishment of new provincial cities as a way to thank veterans for their role in militaristic successes under Augustus' leadership. The city of Nemausus was settled by the veterans of the Alexandrian War in order to farm and populate the city. The message of political and militaristic domination is seen on these coins through the image of the crocodile chained to a palm tree. This was done to symbolize the defeat over Mark Antony and Cleopatra in 31 B.C. and remind the provinces that they operated under the control of Augustus.

Crocodile Coin:

Figures 28 and 29 are examples of coins struck following the battle of Actium. Both figures were most likely minted at the Nemausus mint, in modern day Nîmes,

¹⁵⁸ Mattingly, D, *Being Roman: Expressing Identity in a Provincial Setting*, 2004, pgs. 5-25.

France. These coins first entered production around 27 B.C. and continued to be issued at different times for more than three decades. It is most likely that the town of Nemausus was founded for veterans who had served in Egypt. The soldiers who fought in Egypt were given plots of land in Nemausus to farm and quickly began to populate the city. The minting of these coins was used to memorialize the significance and meaning of their new city and home, to highlight and commemorate their connection to Augustus and his victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra.¹⁵⁹ The bronze coinage that was struck at Nemausus shows both “imperial” and “provincial” characteristics, meaning the coins show an allegiance to the empire while also showing their regionality. The imagery and legend of the coin legend to its provincial character; however, the quality of the type of coin struck demonstrates that the issue was made for imperial use. These coins have been found throughout the former region of Gaul and along the Rhine frontier in known Roman military camps, indicating that they had a wide regional circulation and were given to soldiers.¹⁶⁰ The crocodile represents Egypt or, more specifically, Cleopatra, tied to the palm, powerless by defeat and Roman victory.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Homren, *The Crocodile Coinage of Nemausus*

¹⁶⁰ Rowan, *From Caesar to Augustus (c. 49 BC- AD 14): Using Coins as Sources*, 2019, Pg. 151-2.

¹⁶¹ Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth. United Kingdom, British Museum Press, 2001.



Figure 28. Imperial As with Augustus facing right and Agrippa facing left with a crocodile on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 160; 10 A.D. - 14 A.D. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 160 is an As that was minted at the Nemausus mint, where these coins and images were known to be produced. The obverse of the coin shows the bust of Augustus, right, and his friend, and chief Lieutenant, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, left.¹⁶² Agrippa is adorned with a combined rostral crown and laurel wreath while Augustus is crowned with a laurel wreath. Agrippa is depicted on this coin alongside Augustus due to his military success and victory in leading the defeat over Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. Throughout Augustus's reign, Agrippa was known to suppress rebellions and founded colonies in the name of Augustus.¹⁶³ The inscription reads “IMP DIVI F P P,” meaning “Imperator Divi Filius Pater Patriae,” and translates to “Imperator Son of the Divine, Father of the Country.” The inscription is giving praise to Augustus for all that he has accomplished and given to the Roman people. It is also giving praise for the defeat of Mark Antony and Cleopatra in 31 B.C. The reverse of the coin shows a crocodile chained to a palm tree, accompanied by the inscription “COL NEM,” translating to “Colonia Nemausus.” The crocodile refers to the capture of Egypt while the palm has a plethora of meanings. The palm had previously decorated other currency in

¹⁶² Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth. United Kingdom, British Museum Press, 2001.

¹⁶³ Bowersock, G.W. "Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa".

the area; however, the addition of the crocodile changes the image from one recalling the past and Augustus's achievements to the achievements of the veterans who settled in the colony. The reverse design simultaneously holds an imperial and local significance, one in the name of Augustus and one in the name of the veterans.¹⁶⁴ The palm could also refer to the Volcae tribe who inhabited and dominated the area of Nemausus since the 3rd century B.C. Since the tribe predates Augustine coinage, the palm imagery could thus symbolize the relationship between the current inhabitants and the previous ones.¹⁶⁵ The coin is ultimately a tool of political propaganda as it shows the ultimate rule and control Augustus had over the empire. The reach of the coin was vast and therefore gave soldiers and those who laid eyes upon it the idea that it was because of Augustus, and his support in his military leaders, like Agrippa, that the empire now included Egypt and that veterans who had served Augustus would be rewarded for their loyalty.



Figure 29. Imperial As with Augustus facing right with a crocodile on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I* (Second edition); Augustus 545; 28 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 545 is an As and was minted in 28 B.C. at an uncertain mint. However, it is most likely from the Nemausus mint or a Roman mint that produced similar coinage

¹⁶⁴ Rowan, *From Caesar to Augustus* (c. 49 BC- AD 14): *Using Coins as Sources* 2019) Pg. 151-2.

¹⁶⁵ Homren, *The Crocodile Coinage of Nemausus*

of the time. The obverse of the coin depicts the head of Augustus facing right. Under his neck is a small Capricorn, the image of Augustus symbolizing the rebirth of the Roman Republic and his propaganda.¹⁶⁶ The inscription of the obverse reads “CAESAR DIVI F COS VI,” meaning “Caesar Divi Filius Consul VI translating to “Caesar, son of the divine, consul for the sixth time the inscription is referring to Augustus as the adoptive son of Caesar before his death in 44 B.C. Following the death of Caesar, Augustus began his ideological campaign to stake his claim in leadership of the Roman Empire. Caesar was deified upon his death, and therefore Augustus is known as the son of the divine. The reverse depicts the image of a crocodile facing right. Following the defeat of Cleopatra VII and the Roman annexation of Egypt in 30 B.C., Augustus issued a series of coins commemorating his victory and success which is ultimately the context in which most of these crocodile coins were created. The reverse has the inscription “AEGVPTO CAPTA” meaning “Egypt Captured.” The inscription shows that Egypt has been added to the eastern territories that are under the control of Rome. It shows that Egypt had been captured, not just recovered. The purpose of the coins with this inscription was not only to inform people that Egypt had been conquered and annexed, but also to show that the Roman military and economic gain had spread throughout the Mediterranean. These crocodile coins celebrated the political and militaristic dominance of the Roman Empire and its defeat of the Egyptians. Augustus produced a plethora of these coins to show the people of the empire who were to thank for the humiliation of Cleopatra VII and her people.

¹⁶⁶ Wray, David, *Astrology in Ancient Rome: Poetry, Prophecy and Power*, 2002.

The crocodile coins minted in Nemausus are clear examples of the association Augustus wished to make between his military triumphs and the prosperity of his veterans in new cities founded throughout the ever-expanding empire. News of his success at the battle of Actium and the absorption of Egypt as a Roman territory was spread across the empire through coinage. The inscription on the coinage refers to Octavian/Augustus as the divine son of Caesar, alluding to the belief that Caesar had been deified upon his death and that Augustus would have the same fate. The protection and recognition of the gods in conjunction with Augustus radiated through the inscription on the coinage, not just of this region but all provincial regions. The establishment of Nemausus was seen as a success, as it was given to veterans who had aided in Augustus's defeat of Mark Antony and Cleopatra. By giving them this new land, he was able to populate a new provincial city and gain more supporters. Augustus was concerned with shaping his reputation and did not want to share the same fate as his great uncle, Julius Caesar. The following coins are quite different, since they were used for ritualistic purposes, but they were intended to send some of the same messages discussed for other coin types. Offerings such as these coins were made to the gods as a sign of respect and a mutualistic relationship, sacrificing in order to be rewarded or watched over. This use for coinage spread across the empire and its provinces, ensuring that both the bull and the image of Augustus were associated with ritual practices. By becoming an important figure in everyday life, Augustus was able to ensure that the people understood that he was protected by the gods and would one day ascend to be one.

Divine Bull Coinage:

Figure 30, Figure 31, and Figure 32 are examples of coins that were popularly used for ritualistic purposes. The religious activity of mutilating a coin as an offering to a deity was frequent in eastern Gaul and Germany. Cutting the coin in this way ensured that it could no longer be used for everyday use after being offered to a deity. This spread of coinage across the Mediterranean brought a shift in ritual practices: instead of offering a living bull, the coin with the image of a bull would take its place. The use of bull quadrants was most frequent as they were the smallest denomination available. The act of mutilating the coinage was symbolic rather than a “standard” exchange of value. The portrait of Augustus on the obverse indicates that, intentionally or unintentionally, the image of the emperor had become an important image or backdrop to daily life, but also connected to religious ritual. It is also probable that many offerings being made with Augustan coinage were done so in the name of the emperor.¹⁶⁷



Figure 30. Imperial Aureus with Augustus facing right with a divine bull on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 166A; 15 B.C. - 13 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 166A is an Aureus minted between 15 B.C. and 13 B.C. at the Lugdunum mint, in modern day Lyon, France. The coin’s obverse depicts the head of

¹⁶⁷ Rowan, *From Caesar to Augustus (c. 49 BC- AD 14): Using Coins as Sources* 2019 Pg. 179.

Augustus facing right with the inscription “AVGVSTVS DIVI F,” translating to “Augustus son of the divine.” The obverse refers to Augustus as the son of the divine because of his connection with Julius Caesar, who, at this time, had been deified after his death. This was the same praise that Augustus wanted to achieve following his own death. The reverse of the coin depicts a bull facing right that is ready to charge and displays the description of “IMP X” meaning “Imperator for the tenth time.” The image of the butting bull could be used to depict the fierce nature of Augustus and his brute strength of power in battle. It is showing Augustus at the start of his reign as a force to be reckoned with.



Figure 31. Imperial Aureus with Augustus facing right with a divine bull on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 435; 21 B.C. - 20 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 435 is an Aureus minted between 21 B.C. and 20 B.C. at the Samos mint, located in modern day Samos, Greece. The coin’s obverse depicts the head of a young Augustus facing right with the inscription “CAESAR,” referring to one of the titles Augustus took from Julius Caesar. The reverse of the coin depicts a bull facing right and displays the description of “AVGVSTVS” meaning Augustus. Collectively, the two sides of the coin represent Augustus’ name and what he represents. During the Roman Empire, the divine bull was a symbol of fertility, the moon, the gods, and above all, a symbol of

rebirth and salvation. Augustus was the face of a new form of government, as the Roman republican system had just withstood decades of brutal civil war, and the center of power eventually transitioned from Julius Caesar, who had been dictator, to Augustus, who became the first emperor. The bull here is representing the start of Augustus' reign as emperor and the rebirth he has brought to the empire.



Figure 32. Imperial Aureus with Augustus facing right with a divine bull and figure jumping on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 319; 19 B.C. - 4 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 319 is a denarius minted between 19 B.C and 4 B.C. at the Rome mint, located in modern day Rome, Italy. The coin's obverse depicts the head of Augustus facing right with the inscription "CAESAR AVGVSTVS," meaning Caesar Augustus. The reverse of the coin depicts a bull that is manfaced, walking right, crowned by Victory from above. The inscription of "M DVRMIVS IIIIVIR," or "Marcus Durmius Triumvir," translates to "Marcus Durmius, moneyer (Triumvir Monetalis)."¹⁶⁸ The Triumvir Monetalis was one of three moneyers appointed in Rome to oversee the minting of coins. This coin was most likely promoting the moneyer Marcus Durmius, specifically by alluding to Augustus.

¹⁶⁸ Numista, *Augustus, Roman Empire*. 2007.

Figure 30, Figure 31, and Figure 32, all demonstrate the use of divine imagery and political success. The depiction of the divine bull, a symbol of rebirth and salvation, was used in this context to promote the propaganda of Augustus and all that he had created thus far. Augustus used images such as the bull to spread messages that were universally known between provinces of his empire. The recognition of the divine and the gods is not only seeing through the inscriptions on the coins, referring to Augustus as the divine son, but also to show that the gods show favor to him. It was not until later in Augustus's reign, that moneyers, such as the *Triumvir Monetalis*, would be inscribed on coinage. Up until this point Augustus was the only member of government being praised for his work and accomplishments. This change was seen gradually throughout the Roman provinces and eventually became usual. Figures 33 and Figures 334 continued the use of divine imagery on coinage. Like the image of the bull, the altar's image was used to promote political propaganda in the form of divine memoranda. In this context, the altar on display is that of the altar to Rome and Augustus, that had been built in the sanctuary of the Three Gauls. This altar was constructed not only to promote Augustus as divine but show the continuation of his succession.

Altar Coinage:

Figures 33 and 34 demonstrate how the power and popularity of Augustus was promoted through traditional rituals of Roman religion, particularly in the use of altars and sacrifice as part of the imperial cult. Both coins were minted at the Lugdunum mint, in modern day Lyon, France. Augustus established the imperial mint of Lugdunum in 15

B.C. The image refers to the altar dedicated to Rome and Augustus that had been built in the sanctuary of the Three Gauls within the city, which was one of the earliest places to be granted an imperial cult. Although Augustus himself refused to be worshipped like a god, he did allow the altars and other structures of the imperial cult to be created in his honor by others. The altar at Lugdunum was established by Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus and functioned as both a monument of Roman victory as well as a reference to the divine Augustus and his family.¹⁶⁹ Drusus, the younger brother of Tiberius, both stepsons of Augustus, was the commander of the Roman forces that occupied the German territory between the Rhine and Elbe rivers from 12 to 9 B.C. Drusus was made governor of the three Gauls in 13 B.C. It was in this office that he carried out an important census and erected the altar at Lugdunum.¹⁷⁰ The *Ara trium Galliarum*, or “Altar of the three Gallic Provinces,” was consecrated to the goddess Roma and to Augustus. At Lugdunum, there are only remains of the altar preserved, but the images on the coins show a broad, oblong altar flanked by winged Victories on the top of columns. Strabo, the Greek geographer, philosopher, and historian, added to the description that a set of 60 Gallic tribes was inscribed on the walls and coordinated with the statues of each tribe that stood nearby.¹⁷¹ The coins issued at Lugdunum, similarly to those minted at Nemausus, were simultaneously used to display “imperial” and “local” significance. The coin did not carry the name of the city, but was illustrated with an image of regional significance, which ultimately allowed nearby regions to know where the coins were minted.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Rowan, *From Caesar to Augustus (c. 49 BC- AD 14): Using Coins as Sources* 2019) Pg. 152

¹⁷⁰ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. "Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus", 2018

¹⁷¹ Fishwick, D. (n.d.). The Dedication of the "Ara Trium Galliarum", 1996, pgs. 93-94.

¹⁷² Rowan, *From Caesar to Augustus (c. 49 BC- AD 14): Using Coins as Sources* 2019) Pg. 153



Figure 33. Imperial Dupondius with Augustus facing right with an altar on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I* (Second edition); Augustus 232; 9 A.D. - 14 A.D. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 232 is a Dupondius that was minted between A.D. 9 and A.D. 14. The obverse of the coin depicts the laureate head of Augustus facing right. The inscription reads “CAESAR AVGVSTVS DIVI F PATER PATRIAE,” translating to “Caesar Augustus divine son, father of the Country.” The obverse of the coin is being used to depict emperor Augustus and give him praise for his political conquests. The reverse of the coin illustrates an altar that is highly decorated with *corona civica*, laurel, and nude male figures with Victories flanking on either side. The structure is the Altar of the three Gallic Provinces. “ROM ET AVG,” meaning “Romae et Augusto,” or “To Rome and Augustus,” appears directly below the altar. The inscription is referring to the altar being dedicated to both the goddess Roma and Augustus. When the altar was being built, Augustus was still alive and not yet deified like his adoptive uncle, Caesar. The coin is being used politically to show the divine nature of Augustus and the thanks the Roman people were bestowing upon him, in particular via his stepson, Drusus.



Figure 34. Imperial As with Augustus facing right with an altar on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I (Second edition)*; Augustus 245; 12 A.D. - 14 A.D. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 245 is an As that was minted between A.D. 12 and A.D. 14. The image on the obverse of the coin is the head of Tiberius, stepson of Augustus, who is crowned laureate and facing right. The inscription reads, “TI CAESAR AVGVST F IMPERAT VII,” meaning “Tiberius Caesar, son of Augustus, Imperator for the seventh time.” At this time, Tiberius was being groomed to become the next emperor of the Roman Empire. Following the death of Augustus in A.D. 14, Tiberius was left the title of emperor of the Roman Empire. Figure 34 is an example of a coin that was minted right before (or possibly after) the death of the first emperor of Rome. The transition from Augustus’ image on the obverse to that of Tiberius is a symbolic one that shows continuation and legacy. The political propaganda behind these altar coins is to demonstrate the divine protection of Augustus’ line and the continuation of his success and political agenda. The alteration of a die, seen in the figures above, occurred frequently around A.D. 14, as this was the year that Augustus died, and Tiberius ascended to emperor. The die was changed in order to show a peaceful transition of power between father and son.

As imperial minting continued to dominate at the Lugdunum mint, many familiar images of propaganda were being produced at a time of transition of power and legacy.

Images seen on Figure 33 and Figure 34, for example, were used to show the peaceful transition of power. Figure 33 depicts Augustus on the obverse and praises him for his successes and victories; however, Figure 34 depicts the transition and continuation of Augustus' succession to his stepson Tiberius. Many of the same inscriptions were used for both Augustus and Tiberius to demonstrate that the gods favored their lineage and their political messages.

Transition of Power Coinage:

Figures 35 and Figures 36 are two unique coins that depict that alteration of a die over a period of time. The obverses of the coins share no similarities other than depicting the victories being achieved by the Roman Empire throughout time. On many coins from the start of Augustus' reign, coins displayed his bust on the obverse. They did this to remind the Roman people who their leader was who they owe their freedom to. However, as depicted in Figure 35, the coins' obverse depicts a unique design. All of its symbols collectively represent the success of Augustus. The reverse of both figures shows a quadriga, a heavily ornamented car pulled by four horses facing right and looking back. The use of a quadriga in this setting is to illustrate the image of a Roman triumph, or *triumphus*. This was a civil ceremony which included religious rites in ancient Rome. The Roman triumph was held to publicly celebrate and consecrate the success of a military commander who had led the Roman military to victory, traditionally, in foreign war.¹⁷³ While both coins are making political statements in regard to Augustus, it is the first that shows Augustus leading the charge while the second is showing his stepson,

¹⁷³ Versnel, *An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph*. 1970, Pages 56-93.

Tiberius, who is next in line for succession. Figure 35 is showing Augustus' sole power and control of the Roman Empire while Figure 36 is showing a peaceful transition of power.



Figure 35. Imperial Denarius with an aquila, toga picta, and wreath on the obverse with a quadriga on the reverse (Forum Ancient Coins, *RIC I (Second edition)*; 99; 18 B.C. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

RIC I is a Denarius minted between 18 B.C. at the Colonia Patricia mint, located in modern day Córdoba, Spain. The coin's obverse depicts the *aquila*, *toga picta* over *tunica palmata*, and wreath. The *aquila* refers to an eagle on top of a sceptre, the *toga picta* represents the purple tunic that was a part of the triumphal dress, and the wreath symbolizes victory. The obverse has the inscription of S.P.Q.R. PARENT, above the image, and CONS SVO below the image. The inscription translates to *Senatus Populusque Romanus Parenti Conservatori Suo*. After translation, the inscription reads "The senate and the roman people to its protective parent." This engraving is only found on the denarius of Augustus and symbolizes a memorial that the Senate and Roman people presented to him, consisting of a scepter with an eagle, the *toga picta*, and a laurel crown or wreath, in thanks to him as their parent preserver.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Forum Ancient Coins, *S P Q R P A R E N T C O N S S V O*.

The reverse shows a quadriga surmounted by four miniature horses facing right. The inscription reads “CAESARI AVGVSTO.” The inscription translates to “Caesar Augustus” in the dative form, meaning “To Caesar Augustus.” This coin was minted during the start of Augustus’ reign and therefore did not show a transition of power or successor on the coin unlike the following example. Instead, the coin symbolizes that the Roman people and the Senate are giving adoration to the emperor for all he has given them. It is represented in the images of honors bestowed upon the emperor, such as the scepter and *toga picta*. The coin pictured below used a similar image of the triumph to show the succession of power in 13 to 14 A.D.



Figure 36. Imperial Aureus with Augustus facing right on the obverse and a quadriga on the reverse (Online Coins of the Roman Empire, *RIC I* (Second edition); Augustus 223; 13 A.D. - 14 A.D. [Digital Image] Retrieved March 2021)

Augustus 223 is an Aureus minted between 13 A.D. and 14 A.D. at the Lugdunum mint, in modern day Lyon, France. The coin’s obverse depicts the head of Augustus facing right with the inscription “CAESAR AVGVSTVS DIVI F PATER PATRIAE,” meaning “Caesar Augustus, son of the divine, father of the nation.” The inscription is referring to Augustus being the adopted son of the dictator Julius Caesar. Augustus became Caesar’s successor in 27 B.C. The portrait of Augustus is the same as others at the time. This would suggest that Augustus approved a singular portrait of himself for the use of coinage and all mints created their own die of the image. The image

of the obverse shows the image of Augustus to remind those with the coin that he is of divine lineage and to be respected.

On the reverse stands Tiberius, Augustus' successor. The inscription reads "TI CAESAR AVG F TR POT XV," meaning "Tiberius Caesar, son of Augustus, holder of tribunician power for the 15th time." The coin was being used to make a political statement suggesting that Tiberius was being groomed to take over after his stepfather's death. Tiberius is riding the quadriga to show that he is being given triumphal recognition. By receiving triumphal recognition, it is actively showing that he is a deserving leader and is capable of leading the empire to a new era. These coins demonstrate how similar imagery was used to show continuity and stability through the peaceful transition of power between Augustus and Tiberius.

Conclusion:

The coins depicted and analyzed within this chapter illustrate the varying images and inscriptions used under Augustus to promote his political propaganda initiative through the embedding of messages relating to his military triumphs, his divine protection/recognition, prosperity in establishing new provincial cities, and peaceful succession. The imperial mints at which these coins are minted, the Lugdunum, Caesaraugusta, Colonia Patricia, Nemausus, Samos, and Roman mints, were scattered across the Roman Empire and had little to no connection to one another. However, the messages and images embedded in the coinage remain the same. The political propaganda machine of Augustus' political career was well conditioned and vastly spread through moneyers, governors, and other political dignitaries located within these

provinces. The imagery of the Capricorn, triumphal arches, laurel branches, the eagle, Victory, the Egyptian crocodile, the bull, Roman altars, and the transition of power to Tiberius are all examples within this thesis that reinforce the initiative described above and were found throughout the imperial provinces.

Without the use of coinage, the overall success of Augustan political propaganda would not have been so widespread or impactful. It is because Augustus used the media of coinage that it became normalized following his reign and would be continued for centuries. Augustan coinage, although new for its time, was so successful and powerful that it became well known not only in the context of the Roman Empire but throughout other regions and history.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

After analyzing the various forms of Augustan propaganda, seen through coinage, monuments, sculptures, art, and inscriptions, I would conclude that Augustan coinage was the most prominent and useful form of Augustan propaganda. The use of monuments, sculptures, art, and inscriptions propelled messages from Augustus and his propagandistic machine forward in a limited environment only, while his images and inscriptions on coinage would become widespread and understood by the people of the empire. These messages vary from military triumphs and expansion, to peace and prosperity. Some of the accomplishments that he promoted were achieved by Augustus himself, while many more were the result of the efforts of others whose contributions have been lost to history. It is important to study Augustan propaganda as it was the foundation of imperial messaging on coinage throughout the Roman Empire and thereby helps us understand how Augustus was able to create and maintain a new political system that contradicted five centuries of traditional Roman Republican governance. Augustus was the first emperor of Rome and, therefore, had to prove to the people that he was worthy of such a title and what he had accomplished in their names. It was important to send his messages through coinage because, in antiquity, it was a prominent form of mass media that spread visual imagery and text across the empire, to all its provinces and even beyond. By doing so, coinage gave all who encountered it a chance to witness Augustan propaganda. Augustus' propaganda was such a triumph that his successors would continue to promote their own forms of propaganda in this same manner.

The types of evidence that were presented in this thesis were inscriptions, monuments, works of art, and coinage. The dataset of coinage provided a broad

geographical and chronological representation of coins minted in the Augustan period and showed what regions encountered Augustan propaganda. The dataset is focused on the coinage produced at the Lugdunum mint in conjunction with the Augusta Emerita mint, the Caesaraugusta mint, the Colonia Patricia mint, the Nemausus mint, the Samos mint, and the Roman mint. These mints and coinages were selected and compared because altogether they provide a broad geographical representation of the Mediterranean, while the Lugdunum mint alone provides a broad chronological representation of coinage produced through the Augustan era. Today, the locations of these mints have become prominent European cities that share a rich history with the rest of the Mediterranean; they have witnessed centuries of leadership, propaganda, and legacy; however, what they all have in common is their role as recipients and enactors of imperial propaganda started by Augustus.

The study of numismatics in conjunction with Augustan propaganda has allowed classicists the ability to understand the kinds of interactions the imperial government was having with the people of the empire, the types of messages being displayed, both in inscriptions on monuments and on coinage, and the overall effect the propaganda had on the lives of those living within the empire. This thesis has argued that the nested major messages embedded in Augustan coinage that were to be understood by the public were his military triumphs, his protection and recognition by the gods, the prosperity he created through the foundation of provincial cities, and the peace he offered via continuation of rule through his succession. The use of coinage to send ideological messages via visual imagery led not only to the success of Augustan political propaganda but also to the continuation of these methods by subsequent Roman emperors and

provincial officials. The use of coinage ultimately gave Augustus the recognition and praise that he needed in order to legitimize his unprecedented form of governance that he had established and, therefore, led to the success and legacy of the Roman Empire. For all the reasons, coinage was the most efficient and successful way for Augustus and his supporters to promote their messages of propaganda while also allowing the individual mints in each provincial region to share their own messages of propaganda in return. The back-and-forth messaging between Rome and the provinces allowed for coinage to serve as a form of communication between the power centralized within the emperor and the provincial representatives who were trying to understand the unprecedented and new form of government that Augustus had created. The use of coinage as political propaganda not only supported the political claims and messages of Augustus, but also allowed provincial officials and authorities in charge of mints located across the empire to create a form of communication with Rome. Provincial mints like Lugdunum, which was the largest coin producers outside of Rome,¹⁷⁵ allowed for control outside of Rome by creating multiple major mints within the empire, one of which was controlled by lower-level officials, rather than the emperor.

This thesis has emphasized the importance of imperial coinage in the age of Augustus by using coinage, inscriptions, monuments, and art pieces that range from privately commissioned works to widely distributed propagandistic messages. The escalation of propaganda found in this era laid the foundation for centuries of similar promotion while also praising the new form of government that Augustus had established in 27 B.C. By interpreting coinage such as that found in this thesis, we are able to

¹⁷⁵ Sydenham, *The Mint of Lugdunum*, 1917, pg. 54-56

understand the change in government in Rome in 27 B.C., the transition of power, and, most importantly, the kind of political propaganda that was being created and distributed in order to legitimize these sweeping political and social transformations and ensure their success. The success of Augustus' propaganda machine heavily depended on coinage because of its portability, visual imagery, intrinsic value, versatility, and representation of continuity. It was coinage, and coinage alone, that offered these advantages as a form of messaging. Furthermore, in using coinage, Augustus was able to amplify the nested major messages of his political campaign and communicate with the provincial officials across an ever-expanding empire whose loyalty he needed to guarantee his own success. The success of the political propaganda messages fashioned in the age of Augustus and shared on coinage is evident in their long legacy. A legacy that continues today as seen in messages and propaganda in the form of busts, symbols, and inscriptions on currency globally.

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