

A black and white photograph of a marble relief sculpture depicting a woman, likely Livia, seated and holding a child. She is wearing a long, draped garment and a head covering. The child is reclining on her lap. To the right, another child is visible, holding an apple. The background shows architectural details like a column capital.

AUGUSTUS

AND THE FAMILY

at the Birth of the Roman Empire

BETH SEVERY

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AUGUSTUS AND THE FAMILY
AT THE BIRTH OF
THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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Beth Severy

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FOR MY FAMILY

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AE* *Année épigraphique. Revue des publications épigraphiques relatives à l'antiquité romaine.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1888–.
- BCH* *Bulletin de correspondance Hellénique.* Paris: de Boccard, 1877–.
- BMC* *British Museum Catalogue of Coins of the Roman Empire,* 1923–.
- CIL* *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum,* 1881–.
- DCIP* *Catalog in Dynastic Commemoration and Imperial Portraiture in the Julio-Claudian Period,* edited by Charles Brian Rose. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- DGCN* *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero,* edited by E. Mary Smallwood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- EJ* *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius,* edited by Victor Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.
- ET* *Études Thasiennes.* École Française d'Athènes. Paris: de Boccard, 1944.
- IG* *Inscriptiones Graecae,* 1873–.
- IGR* *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes,* edited by R. Cagnat *et al.* Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1964.
- II* *Inscriptiones Italiae. Fasti et Elogia.* Volume XIII, edited by Attilio Degrassi. Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1963.
- ILLRP* *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae,* vols. I–II, edited by Attilio Degrassi. Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1965, 1963.
- ILS* *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae,* edited by Hermann Dessau. Chicago: Ares, 1979.
- OGIS* *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae,* 1840–.
- ORF* *Oratorum romanorum fragmenta,* edited by E. Malcovati, 4th edn. Turin, 1976.
- RE* *Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft,* edited by Georg Wissowa, Wilhelm Kroll, and Karl Mittelhaus. Munich: Alfred Druckenmüller, 1893–.

ABBREVIATIONS

- RIC* *The Roman Imperial Coinage*. Vols I–IX, edited by Harold Mattingly *et al.* London: Spink and Son, 1923–67; vol. I, revised edn, ed. C. H. V. Sutherland and R. A. G. Carson, 1984.
- RPC* *Roman Provincial Coinage*, edited by Andrew M. Burnett, Michel Amandry, and Pere Pau Ripollès. London: British Museum Press, 1992.
- RRC* *Roman Republican Coinage*, edited by Michael Crawford. London: Strike and Son, 1974.
- SEG* *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, 1923–.
- SIG* *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecorum*, 3rd edn, edited by W. Dittenberger. Lipsiae: S. Hirzelium, 1915–24.

INTRODUCTION

The Roman republic and the Roman empire – this historical division separates volumes of textbooks, determines course offerings at universities, and is featured in most time lines of western and even world civilization. The facts of the change from one system to another appear simple. At the end of the first century B.C.E. the republic collapsed in a series of civil wars. Octavian, the adopted heir of Julius Caesar, emerged as final victor in 30 B.C.E., changed his name to Augustus, and became the first emperor. Augustus founded the imperial system, which passed successfully to his chosen heir upon his death in 14 C.E. But how did it really happen? How, in less than half a century, was a 500-year-old oligarchic system replaced by a new and stable imperial government, which itself lasted centuries? What is the nature of the change in the *res publica*, literally, “the public thing,” between the Roman republic and the empire?

Recently, scholars have tried to understand this transformation of Rome under Augustus by exploring the impact of contemporary art and ceremony,¹ the purposes of Augustan legislation,² and the nature of Augustus’ legal powers in the state.³ However, Augustus was not celebrated alone in official art and ceremony. As has been illuminated by important new studies,⁴ various men

1 Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988); Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

2 Pál Csillag, *The Augustan Laws on Family Relations*, trans. József Decsényi (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976); Elizabeth Rawson, “Discrimina Ordinum,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 55 (1987): 83–114; Catherine Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 34–62.

3 W. Eder, “Augustus and the Power of Tradition: The Augustan Principate as Binding Link between Republic and Empire,” in *Between Republic and Empire. Interpretations of Augustus and his Principate*, eds Kurt A. Raaflaub and Mark Toher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 71–122; C. Meier, “C. Caesar Divi filius and the Formation of the Alternative in Rome,” in *Between Republic and Empire*, 54–70; P. A. Brunt, “The Role of the Senate in the Augustan Regime,” *Classical Quarterly* 34 (1984): 423–44.

4 Charles Brian Rose, *Dynastic Commemoration and Imperial Portraiture in the Julio-Claudian Period*

and women of his family received unprecedented public commemoration, and he himself was often presented as the head of a family. Moreover, imperial power came to be inherited. Given these circumstances, we need to expand the scope of our investigation of this period to include not just the status and activities of Augustus, but the status and activities of his family as well.

Such a project is called for even more due to the recent explosion of research on the Roman family. In the last two decades, several important collections,⁵ articles,⁶ and monographs⁷ have made significant progress in outlining the composition and dynamics of the Roman family in the classical period. In the context of social history, however, evidence tends to be treated synchronically, and thus the Roman family is often studied as if unchanging over the period of our most abundant evidence, from 200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.⁸ Moreover, the well-known actions of members of the imperial family tend to be cited as evidence for typical Roman behavior.⁹ Should the family which became a state institution be taken as characteristic of Roman families? Did the unprecedented and elaborate public commemoration of the family of Augustus affect how other aristocrats conceived of and presented their family relationships? What

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ann Kuttner, *Dynasty and Empire in the Age of Augustus: The Case of the Boscoreale Cups* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Elizabeth Bartman, *Portraits of Livia. Imaging the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Susan E. Wood, *Imperial Women. A Study in Public Images, 40 B.C.–A.D. 68*. Mnemosyne Supplementum 194 (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Marleen Boudreau Flory, "Dynastic Ideology, the *Domus Augusta*, and Imperial Women: A Lost Statuary Group in the Circus Flaminius," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 126 (1996): 287–306.

5 Beryl Rawson, ed., *The Family in Ancient Rome. New Perspectives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Beryl Rawson, ed., *Marriage, Divorce and Children in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); David I. Kertzer and Richard P. Saller, eds, *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Beryl Rawson and Paul Weaver, eds, *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

6 E.g., Mireille Corbier, "Constructing Kinship in Rome: Marriage and Divorce, Filiation and Adoption," in *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, eds David I. Kertzer and Richard P. Saller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 127–44; Richard P. Saller, "Symbols of Gender and Status Hierarchies in the Roman Household," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture. Differential Equations*, eds Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (London: Routledge, 1998), 85–91; Annalisa Rei, "Villains, Wives, and Slaves in the Comedies of Plautus," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, 92–108.

7 Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Mother* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988) and *The Roman Family* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); John K. Evans, *War, Women, and Children in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 1991); K. R. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Richard P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Jane F. Gardner, *Family and Familia in Roman Law and Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

8 Notable exceptions include Corbier, "Constructing Kinship," Saller, *Patriarchy*, 74–101, and Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family*, 156–76.

9 E.g., Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family*, 37–8; Dixon, *Roman Mother*, 132.

INTRODUCTION

were the consequences of the developing imperial system for the Romans' understanding of "family" and "state," and what were the effects of the nature of the Roman family on that developing imperial system?

In this book, I aim to address the change from the republic to the empire as a change from an oligarchy to a monarchy, that is, from a sociopolitical system of competing aristocratic families to the constant supremacy of one family. The question of the nature of this critical change in the Roman government in this way becomes the question of how one family became a public institution. I thus trace the status of Augustus' family from his rise to sole power in 31 B.C.E. through the early years of his successor, Tiberius, almost fifty years later. Propaganda and legislation that politicized family roles, experiments in expressing Augustus' authority in the state as paternal, and the practical expansion of his household into administration, all conspired over time to make Augustus' family a state institution. Exploring these complex images and realities of what became the imperial family – in contemporary art, building programs, cult, ceremonies, literature, legislation, law cases, politics and official terminology – reveals how and why the family of Augustus became a part of the Roman state.

By "state" I do not mean the modern concept of the industrialized nation-state, but the Roman concept of the civic institutions which formed the sometimes amorphous *res publica*, the "public thing." The notions of public and private, civic community and family, like any ideological boundaries, were under constant negotiation and redefinition in the Roman world. In the period of intense change during which the imperial structure was born, however, special attention should be paid to changes in the ideas and institutions which defined the new system. The development of an imperial family, as well as related changes in social constructions such as family and state, male and female, public and private, must be among these.

In addition, the actions of individuals, such as Augustus' wife Livia, stepson Tiberius, and daughter Julia, also deserve special attention within this larger picture. Each of these players acted as members of a particular – and an increasingly ideologically charged – family, and as individuals with goals for themselves, their friends and relatives. Each acted in the context of familial expectations and obligations, personal ambitions, and a changing sociopolitical context, which they themselves were each helping to shape. My goal is thus to weave together political and military history, women's history, and the history of religion and art, with an understanding of the cultural shape of the Roman family, of gender roles, of how authority and power were claimed and exercised in Roman society, and how all of these may have changed over time. Only by examining all these threads in relation to each other can we perceive the pattern of the developing imperial state.

In order to meet these goals, the structure of the book is roughly chronological. We move from a starting point in the late republic, through the triumviral wars and Augustus' first fifteen years of sole rule, to focus on the

period from c. 13 to 2 B.C.E., before concluding with an analysis of Tiberius' successful inheritance of an imperial system. As such, no individual chapter addresses the role of Livia or Augustus or Julia in society, since their public images, goals and opportunities changed over time. This method presents some difficulties, particularly in the form of repetition, as different threads are picked up in different periods. However, in presenting a coherent story and argument, some repetition is unavoidable when the main aim is to historicize a period of significant change in many levels of Roman society and culture.

We begin by assessing the nature of the *res publica* and the aristocratic family in the late republic. The republic was an oligarchy and, as is the case with most oligarchies, the Roman system involved a complex relationship between the families of the governing class and public life. A man's wife, slaves and freedmen supported him economically and politically, but stayed hidden from official state celebration and were excluded from most civic spaces. Thus, for example, although an aristocratic man's living relatives worked hard in the interest of his career, when he commemorated his family on coins he did so by depicting famous male ancestors for their public deeds. By examining contemporary art, houses and ceremonies, we can sketch the late republican elite's conceptions of the lines between public and private.

Significantly, we will see in the literature, legislation and ceremonies of the early Augustan period that the collapse of the state into civil war came to be seen by elite Romans as caused by illicit crossings of just these social boundaries – public and private, male and female, *res publica* and family. This explanation for civic crisis was quite in keeping with traditional Roman moralist readings of history, but it also importantly shaped and was shaped by Augustus' self-presentation as a savior and restorer of the state in the first decade after his victory at Actium. Indeed, his first major set of reforms and the first refashioning of his public image involved a restoration of law and order in the form of a restoration of the idealized *res publica*. Augustus presented himself as the one who restored not only traditional political forms, but also respect for religion, the sanctity of the Roman family, and thus the health of Rome itself. In terms of his own family, this meant that his female relatives withdrew from public life, in contrast to the advertised behavior of women during the triumviral crises; thus, the first years of Augustus' rule saw no development of a public role for his own family. However, his legislation to restore the Roman family – legislation that required marriage and child-rearing for participation in public life and criminalized adultery – made matters once conceptually restricted to the private sphere part of public discourse. Although we therefore cannot find evidence for an imperial family in the well-documented Saecular Games of 17 B.C.E., foundations for important changes had been laid.

The bulk of this work then focuses on the succeeding fifteen years of Augustus' sole rule (17–2 B.C.E.). In terms of marriage patterns and adoptions (Chapter 3), the relationship of Augustus to the military (Chapter 4), his and

his relatives' roles in newly developing cult forms (Chapter 5), and their increasing involvement in all levels of civic administration (Chapter 6), Augustus and his family transformed themselves into something totally new to the Roman experience during this period. The members of his immediate family developed public roles as models of proper aristocratic behavior and took over responsibility for the military. Meanwhile, experiments in expressing Augustus' unprecedented relationship to the state proceeded beyond the legal and magisterial vocabulary of the restored *res publica*. In particular, Augustus and his contemporaries began to understand his authority and caretakership of the state as that of a Roman father to his family. Important stages in this redefinition of public and private in the context of the imperial family include: the dedication of the Altar of Peace in 9 B.C.E., on which images of peace and security come in the individually depicted forms of Augustus and his relatives; the institution of a series of state, neighborhood and private cults honoring Augustus and his relatives on the model of private family cult; and the dedication of a shrine to the goddess of political and familial accord by Augustus' wife Livia in 7 B.C.E. Moreover, in a practical sense, Augustus came to manage the city and the empire as republican men managed their households: Augustus' slaves and freedmen managed state finances, his wife hosted foreign ambassadors, his sons and stepsons commanded the Roman armies, and he raised the children of allied kings in his own home.

Chapter 7 focuses on 2 B.C.E., when the mixing of familial and state forms culminated in Augustus' acceptance of the new title *Pater Patriae*, "Father of the Fatherland." Not only was the appropriate name for the leader of the imperial slave administration "father," but its development had consequences for the status of his heirs, because in practice his son would inherit parts of the imperial state. Not coincidentally, 2 was the year Augustus' younger son came of age and his older son assumed his first military command. The art and ceremonies of the new August Forum, dedicated this same year, reiterated the growing conception of the state as part of Augustus' family. Finally, the scandal of Augustus' daughter nearer the end of the year reveals the conceptual integration of Augustus' family into the community. Her alleged adultery – sexual disloyalty to Augustus' house – was treated as treason.

Chapter 8 analyzes the successful inheritance of the position of *princeps* by Augustus' chosen heir, which underscored the role of his family in the state. After outliving many potential heirs, Augustus finally chose his stepson Tiberius to succeed him in 4 C.E. Tiberius was marked out to be a successor in both the magisterial and the familial modes of expressing authority which Augustus had developed. Tiberius was granted the magisterial powers which Augustus held, and essentially served as Augustus' administrative colleague for the last ten years of the first emperor's life. Just as importantly, however, Augustus adopted his stepson and named him his legal heir. On Augustus' death, Tiberius became the head of an imperial family, and thus the head of the imperial state.

INTRODUCTION

We conclude with a review of early Tiberian monuments, ceremonies and state documents confirming the institutionalization of an imperial family as part of the Roman state (Chapter 9). Portrait groups of the entire family, including its women, were erected in Rome and all over Italy and the empire. Coins were issued showing Tiberius' mother, Augustus' widow Livia, in the guise of goddesses like Salus, "health" or "safety," and Pax, "peace." In this period, we can see an official terminology developing to discuss the family of the emperor as a public institution. The new name *domus Augusta*, August/ Augustan house, was applied to the imperial household, and *pietas*, a term for familial and religious devotion, came to be used to describe loyalty to it. In turn, under Tiberius we can also perceive the effects of these developments on the public and the self-presentation of other aristocrats now that family relationships had become part of the commemoration of the most powerful: that is, of members of the imperial family.

When Octavian looked out over the ashes of his final victory at Actium in 31 B.C.E., he did not have a blueprint of the developed imperial government in his head. The next fifty years witnessed a series of experiments by Octavian himself, his relatives, and other contemporaries, as they tried to negotiate the consequences of this victory. Historicizing the years of this transition from the republic to the empire, as well as analyzing changes in social categories and constructions such as male and female, public and private, family and state, provides new insight into the social and political processes which created the Roman empire.