



THE OBELISKS OF AUGUSTUS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A SYMBOLIC ELEMENT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL LANDSCAPE IN THE TRANSMISSION OF IDEOLOGY FROM EGYPT TO ROME*

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ABSTRACT

Following the conquest of Egypt, a pivotal point in his career, Augustus returned to Rome and, other than to avail himself of its economic benefits, historical reports imply that he had little further concern for the country itself and, in contrast to his adoptive father, Julius Caesar, and erstwhile rival for power, Marcus Antonius, was unconcerned with Egypt's customs or political ideology. Yet the reliability of historical reports seems questionable in the light of Augustus' use of a particularly symbolic element of Egyptian monumental architecture, the obelisk. Therefore, with emphasis on inferences which may be drawn from the use of obelisks in the ritual landscapes of both Egypt and Rome, together with their supporting texts and iconography, this paper will reconsider the likely extent to which Augustus may have been influenced by pharaonic ideology as, under his direction, the governance of Rome shifted from republic to autocracy.

INTRODUCTION

In 30 BC the forces of Octavian finally overcame those of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra bringing Egypt under the direct control of Rome, an event which may be seen as marking the end of pharaonic rule which had lasted for over three millennia – albeit under the Ptolemaic Dynasty of Greek origin for the preceding three centuries. Thereafter, the political influence of Octavian increased and, concomitantly, the style of governance in Rome shifted from republican to autocratic with Octavian, now known as Augustus, at its head.¹ The extent to which these events were directly related is arguable; therefore this paper will present some evidence which may have a bearing on such matters with focus on a particular architectural element of the ritual landscape, the obelisk; concluding that in the acquisition and use of obelisks Rome, or more specifically Augustus, demonstrated the influence of Egyptian kingship mythology in the establishment and legitimization of autocratic rule.

At first glance there appears to be little direct evidence in the extant historical record to suggest that Augustus had any overt interest in Egyptian cultural traditions or political ideology. In his own account of his achievements, as set out in his autobiographical *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* – the deeds of the divine Augustus – the only direct reference regarding the conquest of Egypt is the brief comment: “I handed over Egypt to

the rule of the Roman people.”² A simple statement of fact, with no indication that his exposure to Egyptian systems of government had been more or less influential than his contact with any other culture in a long career of political and military activity at the highest level. Yet, even with this apparent lack of sound written evidence, it may still be possible to draw sufficient inference from his actions, and from the actions of those under his control, that when such activities are considered within the temporal, geographical, and ideological contexts of the period in question it can be established with some degree of certainty that Augustus succumbed to the mores of pharaonic kingship to the extent that they informed the nature of his rule and, beyond that, shaped the governance of the Roman world for generations thereafter.

The success of the Egyptian campaign was marked with the issue of coins bearing an image of Augustus and, on the reverse, the legend “*Aegypto Capta*.”³ This act may be seen as little more than self-aggrandizing, presenting the military success of Augustus to the Roman audience and, as the passage from the *Res Gestae*, giving no indication that Augustus himself had any particular interest in the land of Egypt or its customs. Yet in Egypt itself it is apparent from a number of monumental inscriptions that here, at least, Augustus intended from this early point in his career to be portrayed as a ruler with divine attributes

in traditional pharaonic style.

Soon after the conquest Augustus appointed his friend, General Gaius Cornelius Gallus, to control Egypt with the rank of Prefect.⁴ Gallus conducted further military campaigns, swiftly securing the Thebaid in Upper Egypt and gaining control of the southern borders; whereupon he erected a stela at Philae to commemorate his victories.⁵ The stela, which combines Egyptian, Greek, and Latin scripts and iconographic styles, is particularly revealing in that the hieroglyphic text portrays Augustus in the manner of an Egyptian king. The main hieroglyphic passage begins: “regnal year 1, 4th month of winter, day 20 under the majesty of the Horus, the perfect youth, mighty of arm, ruler of rulers [. . .] chosen of Ptah, Caesar [Octavian] living forever.”⁶ The “Year 1” referred to, being in the prefecture of Gallus, can only be that of Octavian. The name, “Caesar,” appears in a cartouche – an iconographic device symbolic of kingship – and the reference to Horus, as will become apparent below, establishes Augustus as the embodiment of a deity; this some years before his divinity was formally recognized in Rome.

A second monument, a sandstone stela discovered in the Bucheum near Thebes, also attests to the early recognition of Augustus as ruler of Egypt.⁷ Dated one day later than the Gallus Stela, the text gives no royal epithets to Augustus nor does his name, “Caesar”, appear in a cartouche; a circumstance which has prompted the suggestion that Augustus was not recognized at that time as the legitimate Pharaoh.⁸ However, it is clear from the image of a king in the lunette of the Buchis stela that it is a royal monument and, although no name appears with this image, the use of the reign length of Caesar as a dating reference tends to confirm that the image represents Augustus, and that he had been recognized as Pharaoh regardless of the omission of a cartouche.⁹ Here it is worthy of note that at the time this stela was commissioned Thebes had only recently been subjugated by Rome, a circumstance perhaps indicative of some local reticence in placing the name of a foreign ruler in a cartouche.¹⁰ There is also some precedent for such an omission on Theban stelae – albeit from some 1500 years earlier – in the absence of cartouches surrounding the name of Apophis in the Kamose Stela.¹¹

Perhaps the remarkable point in relation to these stelae is that that at Philae was certainly inscribed under the commission of Gallus. Thus it is apparent that the senior Roman official in Egypt acknowledges Augustus as the Horus king, as sole ruler; and it seems that only Augustus could be represented in such monumental inscriptions with impunity. That Gallus chose to honor himself in similar fashion appears to have been one of the factors resulting in his subsequent recall to Rome, where his vanity and avarice brought him public disgrace which led to his suicide.¹² Suetonius hints at the causes of Gallus’ downfall as being “because of his ungrateful and envious spirit;”¹³ a fuller account is given by Dio Cassius who wrote:

Cornelius Gallus was encouraged to insolence by the honor shown him. . . . for he not only set up

images of himself practically everywhere in Egypt, but also inscribed upon the pyramids a list of his achievements. . . . The senate unanimously voted that he should be convicted in the courts, exiled and deprived of his estate. . . . Overwhelmed by his grief at this, Gallus committed suicide before the decrees took effect.¹⁴

After Gallus, Augustus appointed a succession of prefects to command Egypt in what appears to have been a policy designed to remove the possibility of any senator using the country as a powerbase – as had Marc Anthony.¹⁵ Augustus also introduced legislation to ensure that no senator or person of equestrian rank should enter Egypt without his express permission;¹⁶ circumstances effectively reducing Egypt to his personal estate.¹⁷ On this matter Dio Cassius wrote of Egypt:

For in view of the populousness of both the cities and the country, the facile, fickle character of the inhabitants, and the extent of the grain-supply and of the wealth, so far from daring to entrust the land to any senator, he [Augustus] would not even grant a senator permission to live in it, except as he personally made the concession to him by name.¹⁸

With Augustus as the new *de facto* ruler of Egypt, much of the earlier Ptolemaic administrative system was left intact¹⁹ which, in itself, is not overly significant. It is perhaps more remarkable, in the present discussion, that there was continued support for the building and operation of temples constructed and decorated in the pharaonic style and with Augustus himself portrayed on such monuments in a manner typical of many previous Egyptian rulers. The image of Augustus was inscribed in several temples in both Egypt and Lower Nubia; a small shrine was built in the precinct of the Isis temple at Philae, the site of Gallus’ stela, and, perhaps most remarkably, a birth house for the goddess, Isis, was constructed at Dendera. The latter was an addition to the main Hathor temple then recently completed under Cleopatra VII, replete with images of Cleopatra in the company of Ptolemy XV, Caesarion, her son by Julius Caesar – a circumstance perhaps indicative of some continuity of rule; Augustus, the adopted son of Caesar, replacing the natural heir.²⁰ The idea of dynastic continuity is further apparent at Alexandria where work on the Caesareum, begun under Cleopatra VII in honor of Julius Caesar, was completed under Augustus.²¹ The speed with which some of this work was undertaken is itself redolent of the long established tradition of intense building activity at the beginning of a king’s reign. For example, inscriptions of Ramesses II confirm that he began work on temples in Abydos, Abu Simbel, and Thebes in the first year of his reign,²² and the coronation text of Horemheb likewise demonstrates the perceived urgency in the establishment of legitimate identity by representation in monumental

architecture.²³ It therefore seems likely that quite soon after the conquest, and probably before leaving Egypt, Augustus had, similarly, been proclaimed as the legitimate pharaoh in the monumental record.²⁴ Nonetheless, it may be contested that such actions indicate nothing more than political acumen on behalf of Rome in its management of the conquered state.

It may be argued that the motivation in continuing pharaonic traditions in Egypt was little more than a ploy to induce the indigenous population, particularly its elite members, to more readily accept the new ruling order; thus ensuring a relatively trouble-free transition of power to Rome. This argument may conclude that Augustus was thus not overly concerned with the manner in which he was presented to the indigenous population; and, supported by his well noted antagonism towards the animal cults of Egypt, it seems reasonable to assume that Augustus had no personal interest whatsoever in Egyptian cultural tradition. It seems equally rational to infer that, as Augustus left Egypt soon after the conquest,²⁵ never to return, he had not been influenced in any significant way by his contacts with Egyptian political ideology. This view is commonly held in modern scholarship and gains further support from the ancient commentaries on the career of Augustus which appear to have some anti-Egyptian bias – particularly so in perhaps the most significant of those sources, Dio Cassius.²⁶ However, Dio himself was writing more than two centuries later than the events in question and likely subject to the cultural biases of his time, in addition to which he was reliant on earlier sources which must themselves have been influenced by the state propaganda to which they were exposed. Here it seems likely that an anti-Egyptian stance is one that Augustus was most content to establish for popular consumption in Rome and, therefore, the presentation of Augustus as an Egyptian king may be better considered in the context of the milieu of his own time and with appropriate attention to pertinent evidence from extant archaeological remains.

That Augustus should avoid overt presentation of his apparent Egyptian royal and divine status to a Roman audience is not surprising. The un-Roman ways of Anthony in his liaison with the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra VII, had been a significant factor in instigating the war against their regime.²⁷ Additionally, Augustus' presentation of his own public image was surely influenced by the fate of his adoptive father, Julius Caesar, following the latter's pretension to royal and divine status.²⁸ The fate of Gallus, as reported by Dio Cassius, gives a clear indication that self-aggrandizement could still have fatal consequences in the political climate of Rome at that time;²⁹ and that Augustus was well aware of the potential dangers of being seen to be too important is apparent in his refusal to accept grandiose titles. In 27 BC he accepted the epithet "Augustus" but when pressed to take that of dictator, in 22, he refused,³⁰ as he himself confirms in the *Res Gestae*.³¹ As recounted by Velleius, a contemporary who entered the senate in AD 7, "His rejection of the dictatorship was as obstinate as the people's determination to offer it to him."³² Augustus preferred to be known as *princeps*, the foremost

statesman, and maintained the outward appearance among the Roman elite as that of senator. Nonetheless, by accepting offices which had been well established in the republic, Augustus gradually accumulated the military and civil powers which made him the ruler of the Roman world in all but name.³³

The accumulation of power and wealth achieved by Augustus is reflected in the magnificence of his Roman building program; and he has long been accredited with the boast that he "found Rome brick and left it marble."³⁴ Suetonius wrote:

He built many public works, in particular the following: his forum with the temple of Mars the Avenger, the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, the fane of Jupiter on the Capitol.³⁵

In addition to the monuments mentioned by Suetonius, Augustus further demonstrated his influence in Rome with extensive development of the Campus Martius; to which he added his Mausoleum, the Ara Pacis Augustae, and, around 10 BC, the Horologium Augusti.³⁶ Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of these works in view of his apparent disinterest in Egypt, and purported abhorrence of some Egyptian customs, was the use of two Egyptian obelisks transported to Rome around 10/9 BC,³⁷ complete with their original hieroglyphic inscriptions. One obelisk was used as the focal point of the Horologium Augusti and the second was placed in the Circus Maximus; deeds introducing pharaonic symbolism into the new architectural landscape of Rome. Unfortunately, the motivation for Augustus' use of Egyptian obelisks is nowhere clearly stated and has, therefore, been a matter of some conjecture.

Again the explanation could be straightforward: Augustus takes the obelisks because he can; it is a demonstration of power in the purely physical sense. In this respect there has been ample evidence in relatively recent times attesting to the difficulties entailed in such a feat of engineering as that involved in taking down, transporting overseas, and re-erecting an Egyptian obelisk in accounts relating to the acquisition of the obelisks of Thutmose III for New York and London.³⁸ There is some evidence that the enormity of such a task did not go unnoticed in the Roman world as Pliny (the Elder), writing in the mid first century AD, remarks:

Above all, there came also the difficult task of transporting obelisks to Rome by sea. The ships used attracted much attention from sightseers. . . . Then there is another problem, that of providing ships that can carry obelisks up the Tiber.³⁹

It is also clear from the writings of Pliny that there was awareness in Rome as to the origin and, to some degree, the function of obelisks in his remarks that:

Monoliths of this granite were made by the

kings, to some extent in rivalry with one another. They called them obelisks and dedicated them to the Sun-god. An obelisk is a symbolic representation of the sun's rays, and this is the meaning of the Egyptian word for it.⁴⁰

Pliny was thus clearly aware of the original solar associations of the obelisks and, when subsequently discussing their use by Augustus, he wrote:

The one in the Campus was put to use in a remarkable way by Augustus of Revered Memory so as to mark the sun's shadow and thereby the lengths of days and nights.⁴¹

That some knowledge of obelisks and their function was retained in the Roman world is apparent in the work of Ammianus Marcellinus who, writing some three centuries after Pliny, observed:

In this city [Thebes], amidst mighty shrines and colossal works of various kinds, which depict the likeness of the Egyptian deities, we have seen many obelisks, and others prostrate and broken, which kings of long ago, when they had subdued foreign nations in war or were proud of the prosperous conditions of their realms, hewed out of the veins of the mountains which they sought for even among the remotest dwellers on the globe, set up, and in their religious devotion dedicated to the gods of heaven. Now an obelisk is a very hard stone, rising gradually somewhat in the form of a turning post to a lofty height; little by little it grows slenderer to imitate a sunbeam; it is four-sided, tapers to a narrow point, and is polished by the workman's hand.⁴²

The commentaries of Pliny and Ammianus have clearly informed later scholars as to the original function of obelisks in ancient Egyptian culture. An early modern commentator, Gardner Wilkinson, cites Pliny in describing the practice of the Egyptians in dedicating obelisks to the sun and to "the glorious memory of their monarchs."⁴³ Merriam proposed that in his use of obelisks Augustus consecrated them to the sun, and was "thus continuing the use to which they had originally been put by the Egyptians;"⁴⁴ and similarly, Habachi writes that obelisks were "sacred to the sun god" and were erected by the ancient Egyptians in honor of the gods, to celebrate royal jubilees, and with some having inscriptions commemorating royal victories.⁴⁵ More recently, Roulet has drawn on the remarks of both Pliny and Ammianus in describing Egyptian obelisks as being "connected with both the sun and with the rulers power," concluding "that the erection of obelisks by Roman emperors was both a religious

and political act."⁴⁶ The validity of such claims appears evident from the Augustan inscriptions themselves.

The plinths supporting the obelisks set up by Augustus (Figure 1) each bear the same simple inscription which, at first sight, is largely a summary of Augustus' titles and achievements. The texts may be viewed as further examples of self-aggrandizement to reinforce his political status; Augustus' attempt to commemorate and immortalize himself in monumental architecture. The message *Aegypto in potestatum populi Romani redacta* predicts that later given in the passage in the *Res Gestae* confirming that Egypt had been passed to the control of the Roman people. Taken together, these remarks satisfy the commemorative and political functions attributed by Pliny and others to the obelisk and the final comment, *Soli Donum Dedit* – he gave this as a gift to Sol (the sun god)⁴⁷ – alludes to the religious aspect. However, in an assessment of Augustus' motivation for his use of Egyptian obelisks in the Roman landscape it seems pertinent to consider the extent to which the early commentators were accurate in their assessment of the functions of obelisks as, while the present understanding of obelisks – as commemorative objects, or objects primarily set up in honor of, or as gifts to, the gods – may originate from information passed down from Pliny, Ammianus, and their contemporaries, reliance on these ancient reports may be misleading.

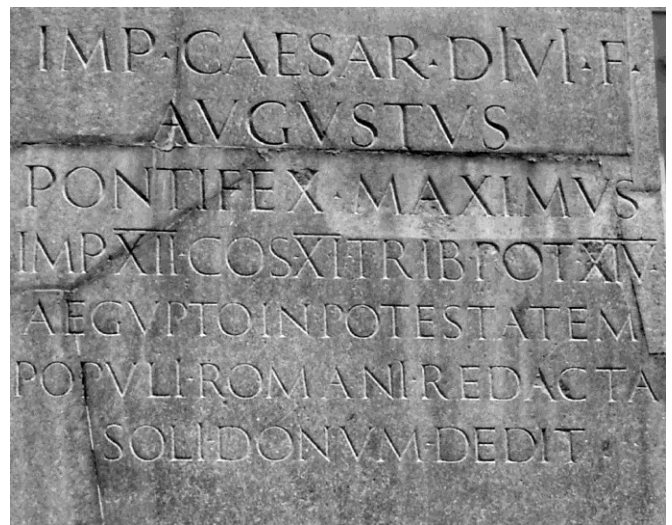


Figure 1: inscription on the base of the obelisk of Psamtek II erected by Augustus in the Campus Martius; now located in front of Palazzo Montecitorio, Rome.

The degree to which the authors in question were aware of the true nature of Egyptian obelisks, or of Augustus' motivations in using them, is questionable. This does not mean to say that those authors deliberately distorted or fabricated the information they presented, merely that they were either not privy to the complete story, disregarded elements of it in their accounts, or,

most likely, neglected to give appropriate emphasis to the more abstract qualities of the form. As already outlined, Augustus was unlikely to make it widely known that he was, in his use of obelisks, introducing elements symbolizing ancient Egyptian philosophy into the architectural landscape of Rome. Yet evidence that some deeper meaning inherent in the obelisk had survived into the Roman world is implicit in Pliny's remarks concerning the original hieroglyphic inscriptions on the examples acquired by Augustus: "Both have inscriptions comprising an account of natural science according to the theories of the Egyptian sages."⁴⁸ This aspect of the obelisk was also preserved in the later account of Ammianus who wrote: "Now the infinite carvings of characters called hieroglyphics, which we see cut into it on every side, have been made known by an ancient authority of primeval wisdom."⁴⁹

Some reference to natural science is implicit in Patterson's assessment of the obelisk used as the gnomon of a sundial at the Campus Martius Horologium which he found to be:

. . . striking both in terms of the topography of Rome and of the image of Augustus himself. . . [as] the sundial combines an overtly traditional concept – the dedication to the gods, in this case the sun, of an object captured from a foreign enemy – in a monumental complex which by implication puts Augustus at the very centre of the cosmos.⁵⁰

Sorek offers a further suggestion in relation to the Campus Martius monument reliant on the idea that the gnomon of the sun-dial was positioned so that it cast its shadow on the nearby Augustan monument, the Ara Pacis Augustae, on Augustus' birthday. This is perceived as indicative of a predestined reign of peace under Augustus which "sanctioned his divine right to rule" and "possibly his right to establish a dynasty."⁵¹

The remarks of Patterson and Sorek go beyond most modern interpretations as to the commemorative, political, and religious functions of the obelisk as an architectural form in which emphasis is placed on the physical expression of power and achievement in a manner also articulating honor and service to the gods. Rather there is some allusion to more abstract attributes of the form; those which might be thought of as being intrinsic to the "natural science" of ancient Egypt and more generally falling under the head of mythology or cosmology. It is therefore pertinent to consider the nature of such attributes from the perspective of the cultural traditions of Pharaonic Egypt itself where, in the context of the ritual landscape, the obelisk symbolized legitimate kingship founded on the association between the earthly ruler and the forces of universal creation – as may be deduced from the mythology relating to the origin of the form, the circumstances of its use, and related texts and iconography.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE OBELISK IN PHARAONIC EGYPT

The ideology of the pharaonic state was based on a mythology which revealed that a demiurge had realized the universe from the primordial fluid chaos of the *nun*, thus bringing into being the created world and all attendant phenomena; several aspects of which, particularly the more abstract, were classified under the general head of *netjeru* (*ntrw*), a term often translated as "gods."⁵² The *netjeru* were subsequently ascribed form and identity which could be expressed in both literary and iconographic repertoires used to decorate the monumental architecture which shaped the ritual landscape giving three-dimensional expression to the underlying mythological concepts; the obelisk being one of the architectural forms employed. While often used in a funerary setting, this paper focuses on the obelisk as used in temples, specifically Theban examples of the New Kingdom Period⁵³ during which the obelisk was given the designation, *tekhen* (*thn*) – the efficacy of which exists essentially in its formalization of the *ben-ben* (*bmbn*) stone.

In its original form the *ben-ben* was probably round topped,⁵⁴ as suggested in early hieroglyphic writings of the Pyramid Texts and in some later artistic depictions such as that in the New Kingdom tomb of Irynefer.⁵⁵ However, that the stone could be represented in pyramidal form is clear from an image in a vignette from the papyrus of Nakht (18th/19th Dynasty) portraying the *benu* bird – the phoenix – perched upon such a stone.⁵⁶ The more familiar pyramid-shaped object is likely an artistic derivation with "geometric purity" more suited to Egyptian aesthetics.⁵⁷ The obelisk, however, appears to be a different architectural form; and to have been recognized as such in the designation *tekhen*. Fortunately, the relationship between *ben-ben* and *tekhen* may be reconciled by textual references.

The obelisk now in London – one of a pair originally set up in Heliopolis by Thutmose III and subsequently transported to Alexandria under Augustus – bears an inscription which states that the king "set up two great obelisks [*thnw*] [with] pyramidions [*bmbnt*] of electrum."⁵⁸ Similarly, in an inscription on the base of her obelisk at Karnak, Hatshepsut states that her heart compelled her "to make for him [Amun] two obelisks [*thnw*] of electrum, their pyramidions [*bmbnt*] united with the sky."⁵⁹ Thus while the obelisks are *tekhen* the pyramidion at the summit evokes the *ben-ben*.⁶⁰

Pyramid text 600⁶¹ is particularly informative regarding the *ben-ben* stone in creation mythology describing how the demiurge, in the form of the sun god, Atum-Khepri, arose from the *nun* as the *ben-ben* stone in the mansion of the Phoenix at Heliopolis,⁶² an event marking the commencement of the daily cycle of the sun; the beginning of time itself, known as the First Time, *sep-tepi* (*sp-tpi*). The stone thus symbolizes the continuity of creation ensured by the daily rising of the sun;⁶³ an idea reinforced in verbal expression with the term *ben-ben* being redolent of *weben* (*wbn*), the verb "to rise, to shine."⁶⁴ The

perpetuation of the solar cycle was reliant upon the maintenance of the perfect balance of the universe at the moment of creation, a phenomenon conceptualized as *ma'at* (*m3ʿt*).

Initially the role of the *netjeru*, responsibility for the maintenance of *ma'at* was subsequently passed to the king who was himself the mortal embodiment of Horus, a regenerative aspect of the demiurge. As Horus, the king sustained *ma'at* by dispensing justice, defeating the enemies of Egypt, by ensuring the economic wealth of the country, and by building and equipping monuments for the *netjeru* and himself;⁶⁵ the latter obligation often confirmed in dedicatory inscriptions on the monuments themselves generally taking the form: “[this structure is a work/donation of] the king NN that he has made as a monument for his father, the god GN.”⁶⁶ Failure to uphold *ma'at* meant the inevitable return to the primordial state of chaos; an idea expressed in such writings as Coffin Text 1130,⁶⁷ and most explicitly in the “Book of the Dead” chapter 175 in which the demiurge, Atum, states: “Further, I shall destroy all that I have made, and this land will return into *nun*, into the floodwaters, as (in) its first state.”⁶⁸ This, perhaps inevitable, circumstance rendered the role of the king, as the maintainer of the created universe, indispensable. That the obelisk was symbolic of the described aspects of kingship may be observed from its setting within the ritual landscape and from the texts and iconography inscribed upon many of them; its efficacy as a symbol affirming the relationship between the king and the forces of creation is implicit in its longevity as an architectural element of the ritual landscape of Pharaonic Egypt.

The earliest extant example of an obelisk used in the temple context is that erected for the Middle Kingdom ruler, Senusret I,⁶⁹ before the temple of the sun god, Atum, at Heliopolis; but their use as an architectural form can be traced as far back as the 6th Dynasty.⁷⁰ In 1972, near the base of the Senusret monument, Habachi found the upper part of an obelisk inscribed for the Old Kingdom ruler, Teti,⁷¹ while others from this period remain only in literary records. An inscription in the pyramid of Pepi I refers to “the obelisks of Re,” and in Aswan the local governor in the reign of Pepi II, Sabni, records that “he went south to northern Nubia to construct two large ships for the transport of obelisks to Heliopolis.”⁷² There is little of the original context remaining from which to assess these monuments other than to say that they were situated within the temple environment, not that of the tomb; and they were associated with the sun god.⁷³

The 18th Dynasty saw a proliferation of obelisks, mainly at Heliopolis and Thebes. The trend was begun in the reign of Thutmose I when two obelisks were raised in front of the Third Pylon of the Temple of Amun at Karnak, as recorded in the tomb inscription of Ineni.⁷⁴ Thutmose’s daughter, Hatshepsut, had a pair of obelisks, now destroyed, erected at the eastern end of the temple; these were mentioned in an inscription in the temple at Deir el-Bahri and the work was supervised by the steward, Senenmut, as recorded in his graffito at Aswan.⁷⁵ During

Hatshepsut’s reign a second pair of obelisks – likely those subject of an inscription at Aswan by the “chief of works,” Amenhotep, and again on a block from Hatshepsut’s Red Chapel at Karnak⁷⁶ – were sited to the west of the Fourth Pylon; one of which still stands, the upper section of its partner now lying nearby.

Hatshepsut’s successor, Thutmose III, had at least seven obelisks placed in Karnak.⁷⁷ One of these stood to the south of the Seventh Pylon and is now in Istanbul; a further two were raised in Heliopolis, those now standing in London and New York.⁷⁸ Fragmentary remains indicate that, in the reigns which followed, obelisks were erected at Aswan by Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV and the Aswan inscription of Humen, Overseer of the Works of Amun, describes six obelisks constructed for Amenhotep III. Humen’s title suggests that these were destined for Thebes, and such monuments are also discussed in texts of Amenhotep III on the Third Pylon of the Amun temple at Karnak and on the stela at Kom el-Heitan on the Theban West Bank; unfortunately, all that remains of these monuments are fragments and two pedestals in the north Karnak temple dedicated to Montu-Re.⁷⁹

The tradition of erecting obelisks was continued into the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. An obelisk of Sety I lies unfinished in a quarry on the West Bank at Aswan, the inscriptions suggesting that it was destined for Heliopolis, the original location of Sety’s obelisk which now stands in the Piazza del Popolo, Rome, presently known as the Flaminian Obelisk. The Flaminian obelisk bears an inscription describing Sety as one who “fills Heliopolis with obelisks of shining rays, with whose beauty the House of Re is pervaded.”⁸⁰ The focus on Heliopolis was continued by Ramesses II, three of whose obelisks from that location are now in Rome, a fourth in Florence. Remains of a further five pairs of obelisks of Ramesses II were recovered from Tanis, all likely originating elsewhere, most likely Piramesse; and Thebes was not completely forgotten with a pair erected before the First Pylon at Luxor Temple.⁸¹

The remaining fragments of an obelisk raised by Merenptah were found in a town in the southern Delta; an inscription describing the king as one who was “establishing Heliopolis anew for his creator” suggests its original location. Sety II had two small granite obelisks cut, one now sits on the quay at Karnak, the second is lost. The last obelisk known to be erected in the period was that of Ramesses IV, a fragment of which was found reused in a building in Cairo, and is now in the museum there.⁸² Ramesses IV also added inscriptions to the Thutmose I obelisk still standing at Karnak, and the significance of the form is evident to the end of the 20th Dynasty with a scene in the Temple of Khonsu at Karnak depicting an obelisk for Herihor.⁸³ Political fragmentation within Egypt and conquest by foreign rulers gave rise to circumstances in which use of the monumental form of the obelisk appears to have lapsed until their reintroduction in the Ptolemaic Period, as will be discussed further below. Nonetheless by the end of the New Kingdom Period obelisks were a prominent feature of the landscape in the principle cities

associated with the kings. Of the few remaining in Egypt most stand in their original settings in Thebes, the location of the most comprehensive extant architectural expression of ancient Egyptian ideology, therefore it seems appropriate that it is within this context that the symbolism of the obelisk is explored further.

The Theban temples can, broadly, be divided into two groups each of which fulfilled a separate function within the common ideology.⁸⁴ Here I am concerned with those on the East Bank which are generally known as cult temples: the Temple of Amun at Karnak, and its southern annex, Luxor Temple. Casual observation will serve to note that while these monuments are extensively decorated with texts and images relating to the *netjeru*, mainly the major state gods of Egypt, in almost every scene the principal agent is the king. Thus while it is clear that the temples served as a residence of the *netjeru* their prime function – as reflected in the layout of the various buildings, their decorative themes, and interconnecting processional routes – was that of the stage for the enactment of rituals related to *ma'at* and to the perpetuation of the office of kingship.⁸⁵ The foremost of such rituals was the Opet Festival during which the god, Amun, transformed each new king from a mortal into the human embodiment of the divine *ka* (*k3*), the spiritual essence carried by each successive royal ancestor since the beginning of time and which equates the living king to the god, Horus. The obelisk, as an architectural element within the evolving landscape of the East Bank temple complexes, provided a focal point which symbolized the legitimacy of an individual king as the manifestation of Horus and custodian of *ma'at*.

While any number of individual obelisks could be used to further the present discussion, those of Hatshepsut are perhaps the most effective in establishing the obelisk as being symbolic of legitimate kingship. Hatshepsut added four large obelisks to the Amun temple at Karnak, their significance being emphasized by the space devoted to a pictorial narrative recounting their construction which decorates Hatshepsut's West Bank temple,⁸⁶ and by further scenes depicting the dedication of a pair of obelisks to Amun-Re depicted in her barque shrine in the Amun temple itself.⁸⁷ It seems likely that Hatshepsut, being a female embodiment of the male Horus king, felt the need to be particularly expressive in matters of her legitimacy to rule.⁸⁸ The extant standing obelisk, including its base, is the most heavily inscribed example of the genre to survive; and much of the text serves to present Hatshepsut as the legitimate successor to her earthly father, Thutmose I, and heavenly father, Amun. There is also substantial detail in the narrative regarding both the manufacture of the obelisks themselves and the maintenance of order. Other kings rather emphasize the latter aspect of their rule with reference to victorious military campaigns. For example, in texts inscribed on the obelisk of Thutmose III, now standing in Istanbul, the king is variously described as "one who has taken all lands;" "binder of every land, who makes his boundary as far as the Horns of the Earth;" and one "who crossed the Great Bend of Naharin [in the kingdom of Mittani, in the modern region of

Syria] with might and with victory at the head of his army."⁸⁹ Much in such texts may be seen as self-aggrandizing and commemorative yet, in the context of their setting within the ritual landscape, they in fact express the king's fulfillment of elements of *ma'at*: building for the *netjeru*, overcoming the chaos represented by foreigners, and maintaining the order of the Two Lands of Egypt in return for which the demiurge prolongs the king's rule. An allusion to this contract between king and creator appears in Hatshepsut's obelisk inscription. Having discussed in detail her efforts in establishing the obelisks she concludes:

Amun . . . made me rule as reward. No one rebels against me in all lands. All foreign lands are my subjects . . . He gave it to him who came from him. Knowing I would rule it for him. . . . My reward from my father is life-stability-rule. On the Horus throne of all the living, eternally like Re.⁹⁰



Figure 2: Obelisk fragment of Thutmose III; Temple of Amun, Karnak.

Perhaps the most emphatic statement of legitimate kingship is included in the iconography of Hatshepsut's pyramidion. The pyramidion itself, as a representation of the *ben-ben*, expresses the continuity of creation as ensured by the king's maintenance of *ma'at*. Hatshepsut emphasized her rightful position as king with the addition of a motif in which, overtly, Amun presents her with

the crown,⁹¹ yet his arms form the shape reminiscent of the hieroglyphic sign representing the *ka*. The significance of this iconography is apparent from pyramid Text 600 which says of Atum-Khephri: in the moment of creation, having “spat out Shu, you expectorated Tefnet, and you set your arms about them as the arms of a *ka*-symbol, that your essence might be in them.”⁹² The *ka* motif was repeated on the obelisk of Hatshepsut’s successor, Thutmose III, (Figure 2) and it provides a visual expression of the Opet transition in which the divine essence of the creator passes into the mortal king. Therefore the obelisk was not so much an object erected in worship of the gods but was rather a visual confirmation that the king was the living embodiment of that divine essence; the earthly manifestation of Horus, and thus the legitimate ruler.

The efficacy of the obelisk as an architectural element expressing the association between heavenly and earthly power to the wider populace resulted from the natural phenomenon generated by its height and often augmented, in its original setting, by the reflective metal coatings applied to its pyramidion. The tops of the obelisks were the first parts of the ritual landscape to be lit by the sun’s rays at dawn and they were the last to fade to darkness as the sun-set; circumstances validating the textual inscription in which Hatshepsut stresses that her obelisk pyramidions were “united with the sky” by giving the illusion that the sun-god was rising from, and setting into, the temple. The seat of kingship was thus imbued with solar power. That such effects, visible far from the temple precincts, were intentional seems clear from Hatshepsut’s inscriptions in which, with reference to the obelisks being coated with electrum, she remarks: “Seen on both sides of the river, their rays flood the Two Lands when Aten [the solar disc] dawns between them as he rises in heaven’s lightland.”⁹³ For the rulers of Egypt the obelisk was, therefore, a highly visible symbol of the legitimacy of their rule and, for those with the wherewithal, a particularly desirable addition to their architectural landscape. It seems that the worth of the obelisk in this respect was evident to Augustus.

THE HORUS KING AUGUSTUS

It is widely accepted in recent discussions that architecture, particularly that of the ritual landscape, reflects ideology and is effective in the establishment of the ruling order; especially so at times of political transition.⁹⁴ It has already been established that, in Egypt, Augustus was presented as Horus king soon after the conquest and subsequently his image, in pharaonic regalia, was used in the decoration of pharaonic monuments; however, it is still possible to argue that Augustus merely allowed himself to be presented in this way to appease or pacify the Egyptian elite, or even that he was not greatly concerned in the manner of such presentation. It may be pertinent, therefore, to consider the extent to which the described activities can in fact be attributed to Augustus or whether the use of his name and image was a more local phenomenon instigated by those seeking to establish their

own personal authority in Egypt by reference to a distant and, largely, uninterested authority figure. In this respect it may be useful to give further consideration to the function of Egyptian temples and the principles of *ma’at*.

Egyptian temples were, as outlined above, the stage upon which rituals perpetuating the ideology of kingship were enacted; rituals which proclaimed the king to be the sole link between the cosmic creator and the ordered world. Such cultural traits may today be classified under the head of religion however, within the ancient Egyptian ideological system there was no division between religious concerns and what may now be considered to be the more secular functions of the state and, in the fulfillment of *ma’at*, the king’s authority as sanctioned by the gods was absolute in matters of justice, military and civil administration, and the economic wealth of the country. In return for these powers the king was required to build and equip monuments for the *netjeru* and himself. Therefore having ended the Ptolemaic line it seems a matter of expediency that Augustus would take the role of king himself and, recognizing that in order to maintain the efficacy of the Egyptian machinery of state it was essential to preserve the ideological structure upon which it was founded, authorize the program of temple building and approve the use of his imagery in the decorative repertoire.

For the indigenous population, long used to foreign kings in the forms of Greeks and Persians, little had changed; even the temple iconography remained the same, just a different name in the cartouche. Yet the benefits for Augustus were considerable in that his identity as Horus king was proclaimed throughout the land, effectively securing the economic wealth of Egypt with which he might further his own ambitions.⁹⁵ However, the system allowed for only one living king: the current embodiment of the Horus *ka* which had sustained the continuum of kingship since the beginning of time and whose name and image appeared on monuments as earthly representative of the gods. That Augustus was active in promoting himself in this role is implicit in the circumstances surrounding the fate of Gallus.

During the early years of Roman rule both Gallus and Augustus had been portrayed on Egyptian monuments, yet only Gallus was subject of censure in Rome. One inference being that while Rome itself was not overly concerned with such matters, Gallus’ actions, in the context of Egyptian kingship, may have been perceived as a threat to Augustus as they were a usurpation of his royal prerogative;⁹⁶ and such appears to be the case from the account of Dio Cassius. Dio compares the actions of Gallus with those of Agrippa, the latter having “consulted and cooperated with Augustus in the most humane, the most celebrated, and the most beneficial projects, and yet did not claim in the slightest degree a share in the glory of them” whereas Gallus, on the other hand, had been “guilty of many reprehensible actions,” the most prominent of which appears to have been the setting up of images of himself “practically everywhere in Egypt.” For this act Gallus was accused by his comrade, Valerius Largus, and “disenfranchised by Augustus;”⁹⁷ a

clear indication that Augustus was actively protecting his royal privilege in Egypt. It was only after this that Gallus' actions were censured by the senate.

It seems likely that the Gallus incident instigated the policy described by both Dio Cassius and Tacitus, the latter explaining how Egypt had been kept in order from the time of Augustus "by Roman knights in place of their former kings" and how Augustus, "by prohibiting all senators or Roman knights of the higher rank from entering the country without permission, kept Egypt isolated;"⁹⁸ thus preventing further attempts to usurp his power. It is also of note that under Augustan rule a significant change was introduced in respect of the *strategos*, governors of the forty administrative districts into which Egypt was divided. The *strategos* were given greater powers to collect taxes and were required to report directly to the prefect, who was personally appointed by Augustus.⁹⁹ Thus the theoretical control of Egypt's economy gained from his position as pharaoh is apparent in real terms in the creation of a direct chain of command from Augustus in Rome to regional level in Egypt through only two levels of hierarchy. Further indication of his active interest in Egyptian kingship may be evident in Augustus' apparent fascination with Alexander.

Alexander had conquered Egypt in 332 BC and subsequently undertook the hazardous journey to Siwa, in the Libyan desert, to consult the oracle of Zeus Ammon where he was acknowledged as the god's son; a fact which Alexander made widely known and seemed himself to believe.¹⁰⁰ Following his death in 323, Alexander's body was eventually placed in the Sema, a mausoleum constructed in Alexandria by Ptolemy I.¹⁰¹ The Sema became the center of the cult upon which the legitimacy of the Ptolemaic Dynasty was founded;¹⁰² that legitimacy further expressed by the presentation of Alexander as the Horus king in traditional pharaonic style. The central barque shrine in Luxor Temple, a monument central to the Opet ritual, was rebuilt and decorated in Alexander's name, and the central barque shrine at the Amun temple in Karnak was reconstructed in the name of his immediate successor, Philip Arrhidaeus. Over the next three centuries, the kings of the Ptolemaic Dynasty became some of the most prolific builders of monumental architecture throughout Egypt thereby developing the stage upon which the rituals presenting themselves as legitimate Horus kings could be enacted.¹⁰³ Extant traces in the historical record tend to show that Augustus had a deep interest in Alexander; an interest which may have been a factor motivating his own ambitions and informing the development of the Augustan ritual landscape.

Suetonius recounts how, while in Egypt, Augustus had Alexander's sarcophagus brought from its shrine that he might view the body whereupon he showed his respect for Alexander "by placing upon it a golden crown and strewing it with flowers."¹⁰⁴ Dio Cassius recounts that one of the reasons given by Augustus in sparing the lives of the captured Alexandrians was his respect for the founder of their city; and further, having viewed the body, Augustus declined the offer to inspect the

remains of the Ptolemies, stating: "I wished to see a king, not corpses."¹⁰⁵ From this one may draw the inference that, in comparison with Alexander, Ptolemaic kings were of little worth to Augustus.¹⁰⁶ The significance of Alexander is also implicit in certain passages of the *Res Gestae* in that Augustus' claims to world conquest seem to mirror or exceed those of Alexander; he also observes the precedent set by Alexander, in returning to Greece the artifacts stolen during the Persian conquest by Xerxes, by returning the artworks stolen by Anthony to all the temples of Asia.¹⁰⁷ Further, Augustus commissioned paintings of Alexander for display in the Augustan forum in Rome; and Suetonius later remarks that Augustus sealed documents using "at first a sphinx, later an image of Alexander the Great, and finally his own [image], carved by the hand of Dioscurides"¹⁰⁸ – an observation linking the authority of Augustus with his own image, with that of Alexander, and with the sphinx; an element of the ancient Egyptian architectural landscape with royal symbolism. It is therefore unsurprising, in the light of his apparent interest in Alexander, that Augustus should follow his renowned predecessor in the presentation of his image in Egyptian monuments; most notably within the centre of Egyptian kingship, the Amun temple at Karnak, upon the walls of the Opet shrine itself.

The Opet shrine was one of the last structures to be developed by the Ptolemies at Karnak, its construction and interior decoration completed by Ptolemy VIII,¹⁰⁹ and was therefore an appropriate place for the decoration to continue under Augustus in that it expressed both the transition of power and the continuity of kingship. This motive pertains in respect of all such monumental decoration but particularly so, for Augustus and the development of his own persona, at Dendera where his portrayal as the successor of Cleopatra and Caesarion – last in the line of Ptolemaic rulers – provided more emphatic visual confirmation that Augustus was both the current embodiment of Horus and the direct descendant of Alexander's line. In this respect it is significant that one of the first of Augustus' building projects in Rome, begun probably no later than 28 BC, was the construction of his own mausoleum on the Campus Martius which was clearly influenced by Egyptian architectural techniques and forms; further reference to Egypt appearing in the form of two uninscribed obelisks, cut from red Aswan granite, which flanked the entrance.¹¹⁰ Reasons postulated by scholars for the building of the mausoleum so early in his career include references to Augustus' kingly aspirations, his fear of an early death, his desire to establish a dynasty, and the desire to emulate Alexander;¹¹¹ and I believe that it is in such contexts, with past reference to Alexander and to the future establishment of a dynasty founded on the legitimacy of his rule as a divine agent, that Augustus' use of visual media, in both iconographic motifs and architectural forms, should be understood.

Alexandria, the Ptolemaic capital city founded by Alexander on the Mediterranean coast, remained an important economic and cultural center under Roman rule,¹¹² and here the image of

Augustus was not merely insinuated into the indigenous pharaonic decorative repertoire, but upon an architectural landscape which, while rooted in Egyptian ideology, had been blended with more Graeco-Roman elements. Alexandria had been at the political center of the short-lived reign of Anthony and Cleopatra VII over Egypt and the eastern provinces of Rome where Cleopatra ruled as the embodiment of Isis and Selene, Anthony as the embodiment of Osiris and Dionysus. Here a temple begun under Cleopatra, perhaps initially dedicated to Julius Caesar and later for Anthony, was completed under Augustus as the *Caesareum* and, in the adjacent square, the *Forum Iulium*, an obelisk was erected by the prefect, Gallus;¹¹³ thus clearly before the suicide of the latter in 26 BC, and perhaps as early as 30 BC.¹¹⁴

The obelisk, now known as the Vatican Obelisk and situated in St. Peter's Square,¹¹⁵ has no hieroglyphic inscription therefore its origin is uncertain; as is its purpose. Nevertheless, that an obelisk should be given prominence in the early Augustan architectural landscape, in what became a center of the Roman imperial cult facing the harbor of Alexandria,¹¹⁶ implies that the monument was of some significance. It seems likely that the lack of hieroglyphic inscription attests to a reticence for overt expressions of monarchy, in any form, at this early stage in Augustus' rise to power; and in what had become a distinctly Roman setting. Nonetheless, as reported by Dio Cassius,¹¹⁷ the indigenous Egyptian and Alexandrian population had largely survived the conquest, and the significance of obelisks would be clear to the elite members of that group as such monuments had been used by the Ptolemies; and at least one obelisk had long stood in the city.

Ptolemy II, Philadelphos, had erected an obelisk at the temple for Arsinoe II, a short distance from the *Caesareum*, in the third century BC. At Philae, the site of Gallus' stela, Ptolemy VIII, Euergetes II, had erected a pair of obelisks before the first pylon of the Temple of Isis less than a century before Augustus' arrival in Egypt.¹¹⁸ Thus, while the symbolism of obelisks was certainly esoteric in the ancient world, the cosmological import largely restricted to the ruling elite, there seems no reason to believe that their ideological function was a long-lost secret by the time of the Roman conquest.

Around 12/13 BC, by which time Augustus, as *pontifex maximus*, had become the chief priest of the state cults in Rome, two additional obelisks were erected in the forum by the prefect, Barbarus, and architect, Pontius, as recorded in an inscription on the bronze crabs used to support them.¹¹⁹ These monuments were described by Pliny as the "two other obelisks at Alexandria in the precinct of the temple of Caesar near the harbour."¹²⁰ Unlike the Gallus monument, these obelisks – one of which now stands in London, the other in New York – had been inscribed with hieroglyphic texts which indicate that they had been transported from Heliopolis where they had originally been erected by the 18th Dynasty Pharaoh, Thutmose III, in the fifteenth century BC.

That inscribed obelisks were introduced into the sphere of Roman architecture under Augustus, in a highly visible location in Alexandria,¹²¹ gives some indication that by this time he felt secure in his association with symbolism expressing the ideology of the Egyptian Horus king; a circumstance evinced elsewhere in Egypt in decorative themes employed in monumental architecture, particularly those relating to Isis, the Egyptian goddess with strong ties to kingship in her role as the mother of Horus. Augustus' interest in Isis has already been indicated above in relation to the construction of a birth house for the goddess at the temple at Dendera in Upper Egypt; a birth house being a structure symbolizing the birth and raising of the child god, a deity equated with the ideal world ruler in the person of the living king.¹²² That interest is again apparent at the more remote site of Dendur in Lower Nubia, around 80 km south of Aswan where a small temple was dedicated to Isis of Philae with inscriptions showing Augustus as king.¹²³ The name of Augustus appears within the cartouche and, in inscriptions on the temple pylon, he is given the epithet, "beloved of Isis."¹²⁴

Under Augustus, a new temple was constructed on the site of a small Ptolemaic shrine at Kalabsha, ancient Talamis, some 60 km south of Aswan.¹²⁵ This temple was dedicated to the Lower Nubian solar deity, Mandulis, who was a regional manifestation of Horus,¹²⁶ and later inscriptions made by visitors to Kalabsha suggest that Mandulis was here equated to both Horus and Apollo; the latter being described as one called by many names and the ruler of every race.¹²⁷ With the identification of Horus as Apollo, the latter a Graeco-Roman solar deity,¹²⁸ the adaptation of ancient Egyptian kinship mythology into a form both comprehensible and acceptable in the Roman world of the period becomes apparent. Moreover, it is remarkable in the present discussion, particularly so in view of the large scale of the project, that the Kalabsha temple was in a Roman garrison town where the likely audience was not the indigenous population of Egypt but the Roman army and the nomadic population of the region under their control.¹²⁹ Thus the ideological and cosmological symbolism attached to monumental architecture in its Egyptian context was adapted for Roman consumption: for the Egyptians Augustus is Horus, but in the Roman understanding the association is with Apollo, the deity most closely associated with Augustus throughout his reign.¹³⁰

Suetonius records that on the occasion of a private dinner the guests dressed as gods, Augustus appearing in the guise of Apollo. The event gave some concern "because of dearth and famine in the land at the time, and on the following day there was an outcry that the gods had eaten all the grain and that Caesar [Augustus] was in truth Apollo."¹³¹ The timing of this event is uncertain but seems, from its place in the sequence of events described by Suetonius, to predate the Sicilian war of 36 BC. After the battle of Actium, Augustus dedicated a victory monument in the temple of Apollo at Nicopolis, close to the site of the battle, and a statue of Apollo was erected in Alexandria to commemorate the victory.¹³² In 28 BC coins were minted depicting Augustus

wreathed in laurel, the plant of Apollo, which may have been a calculated response to those minted by Anthony in 39 BC depicting himself wreathed in the ivy of Dionysus; the Augustan coin thereby symbolizing the triumph of Augustus/Apollo over Anthony/Dionysus.¹³³

A mythological aspect to the relationship between Augustus and Apollo is recorded by both Suetonius and Dio Cassius who recount the event which, according to the legend, influenced Julius Caesar in his decision to adopt Augustus as his son. The reports tell that Atia, Augustus' mother, fell asleep one night in the temple of Apollo whereupon Apollo, in the guise of a snake, impregnated Atia who subsequently gave birth to Augustus.¹³⁴ It seems therefore that not only was Augustus associated with Apollo, but thought to be the son of Apollo and, as a son of a solar deity, some similarity with the Egyptian pharaoh is again apparent. It is also pertinent that in this story of Augustus' divine birth the god takes the form of a snake as, in Roman artistic convention, a serpent was representative of the *genius*.¹³⁵ The *genius*, in Roman thought, was a part of the self, an inner double or an aspect of the self which might be equated to the *daimon* of Greek conception which Plato described as the transcendental part of the mind received from god,¹³⁶ a metaphysical aspect of the self which, in ancient Egyptian thought, may have been recognized as the *ka*. The tacit implication of the story of Augustus' birth therefore seems to be that the *genius* of Apollo impregnated Atia and was reborn as Augustus, a circumstance defining Augustus as the mortal embodiment of an aspect of the sun god; the pharaonic Horus king in all but name. The myth also echoes that relating to the birth of Alexander in that he had been conceived in the union of his mother, Olympias, and the god, Ammon, who had visited her in the guise of a serpent.¹³⁷

That belief in Augustus' divine status was widely held in Rome is apparent in that at the first meeting of the senate after his death he was declared to be a god – implying that the senate had been aware of the fact somewhat earlier,¹³⁸ and it is equally apparent that Augustus himself fostered such beliefs during his lifetime. Perhaps the most material demonstration of the integration of Augustus and Apollo is the house on the Palatine. Dio Cassius describes how, following the victory over Sextus Pompey in 36 BC, a residence on the Palatine was gifted by the people to Augustus, a part of which, having been struck by lightning, he consecrated to Apollo; the temple being dedicated in 29 BC.¹³⁹ Ovid, one of the leading poets in Augustan Rome, wrote of the house:

Phoebus [radiant, an epithet of Apollo] owns part of the house; another part has been given up to Vesta; what remains is occupied by Caesar himself. Long live the laurels of the Palatine! Long live the house wreathed with the oaken boughs! A single house holds three eternal gods!¹⁴⁰

In 17 BC Augustus commissioned another leading lyric poet, Horace, to write a poem to Apollo and Diana to be performed at the temple during the Secular Games of that year. The poem, *Carmen Saeculare*, commemorates Augustus' achievements, presenting the Augustan Period as a "golden age,"¹⁴¹ and suggests that Apollo was both closely identified with Augustus and considered to be the principal divine agent in the "establishment of the new age."¹⁴² Later, Suetonius describes the house on the Palatine as the place where "when he was getting to be an old man he [Augustus] often held meetings of the senate;"¹⁴³ thus the house on the Palatine might be seen as symbolic of the unity of Apollo, Augustus, and the state.¹⁴⁴

While mythology presented Augustus as the son of the sun god, Augustus himself placed considerable emphasis upon his status as son of a more earthly god, Julius Caesar, whose divinity had been recognized by the senate in 42 BC. It may, in modern interpretation, be thought that the persistence of ideas suggesting both natural parentage, in the case of Augustus' relationship to Julius Caesar – albeit adoptive – and divine parentage, with reference to his father Apollo, presents something of a paradox; yet, in the ancient world, this difficulty is not apparent. Dual paternity was a widely expressed aspect of Egyptian kingship, as is evident from the previously cited text from the obelisk of Hatshepsut who was described as the daughter and legitimate successor to both her earthly father, Thutmose I, and heavenly father, Amun. For Augustus, however, the relationship with Julius Caesar did present something of a dilemma in that while it was desirable to inherit power, wealth, and associations with divinity other attributes of Julius, his dictatorship and pretensions to monarchy, may have been politically less desirable. The manner in which Augustus overcame such difficulties over time may give some insight regarding his skill in the presentation of his public image.

Following the death of Julius, Augustus took the name of his adoptive father to become *Gaius Iulius Caesar Divi filius Imperator*, however by 40 BC Augustus had shortened his formal name to *Imperator Caesar Divi filius*; the final element of *Augustus* was conferred by the senate in 27 BC.¹⁴⁵ Perhaps here are indications that by dropping the "Julius" element Augustus had begun a subtle process to distance himself from the mortal aspect of his predecessor, a process which may also be discerned in the imagery of Augustus' coinage.

Around 43 BC Augustus issued a coin depicting both himself and his father to commemorate his adoption and thereby reinforce his claim to ruling power in Rome. The imagery of this coin is informative in that while Julius is depicted laureate, with the legend describing him as dictator for life, Augustus appears on the coin bareheaded, his legend proclaiming his consulship.¹⁴⁶ This has been interpreted by Ramage as symbolically demonstrating the transition of power from father to son but with a clear contrast between the former, a tyrannical dictator, and the latter, an elected republican.¹⁴⁷ A coin issued in 38 BC depicts the two rulers face to face, Julius again laureate and

designated DIVOS IULIUS and Augustus, once more bareheaded, with the inscription DIVI F.¹⁴⁸ Again the imagery implied the junior status of Augustus who, nonetheless, expressed his link to divinity

After 31 BC Julius disappeared from the coinage apart from the notable exception of an issue in 17 BC in connection with the aforementioned secular games of that year.¹⁴⁹ The coin depicts Augustus wearing an oak wreath and, on the reverse, the *sidus iulius* – the star of Julius – with the legend, DIVVUS IVLIVS. The star symbolized the comet of 44 BC widely held to have been the soul of the late Julius travelling to the heavens.¹⁵⁰ Here, while the name of Julius appears there is no image, he has been depersonalized, reduced to the symbol of his divinity; and that situated in the remoteness of the heavens. In this way Julius Caesar represented a former age, the new age belonging to Augustus who, thereafter, made no further reference to Julius on coins but sustained ideas of his own divinity by the abbreviated legend, *Divi J.*¹⁵¹ However, the extent to which this interpretation of examples of Augustan coinage can establish Augustus' intent is somewhat restricted, firstly by the manner in which the message may be interpreted, and secondly by the question of agency: the extent to which one may assume that he was personally involved in the design, production, and circulation of coinage, or the authorization of those processes. With respect to the latter it may be pertinent to consider the nature of coinage, particularly within the context of pre-industrial civilizations.

Apart from being a means of exchange, the production and distribution of coins was one of the few available methods by which a message, in iconographic form, could be communicated to a wide audience; a method made more effective by the desire to possess them for their monetary value. While the message itself may not have been of prime concern to the recipient it would nonetheless be received, if only at a subliminal level. While the messages primarily related to the source of wealth and, in the control of wealth, political authority, additional information could be presented symbolically as desired by the issuing authority. In these circumstances it seems reasonable to assume that Augustus was both aware of, and sanctioned, the coins issued in his name; in fact it might be considered unlikely that he would permit iconographic messages presenting his self-image to be distributed to the furthest reaches of the Roman world, and beyond, without his prior approval.¹⁵²

With respect to the interpretation of Augustus' coins, and his changing nomenclature, it seems certain that factors other than his intentional disassociation with the autocratic character of Julius Caesar may have been involved; not least, the vicissitudes of the political environment. In 43 BC Augustus was only one of the ruling triumvirate and each of his political rivals, Anthony and Lepidus, also issued coins which associated them with Julius Caesar.¹⁵³ By 17 BC Augustus was well established as sole ruler and thus perhaps less reliant on his relationship with Julius Caesar to sustain his own political status, therefore the

visual link to the latter becomes less important. Consequently it is perhaps only with the benefit of historical analysis that the gradual disassociation with the politically undesirable aspects of Julius Caesar becomes apparent, yet even so remains worthy of some consideration. In the present discussion it is more significant that throughout the period in question Augustus retains the link to deity. Similarly, in Augustus' own account of his achievements, the *Res Gestae*, Julius Caesar is mentioned only twice by name and on both occasions not in reference to his person but to the building of "the temple of the deified Julius;"¹⁵⁴ allusions again tacitly reinforcing the status of Augustus as the son of a god and thereby bringing this cosmic aspect of his persona sharply into focus.

The idea of Augustus' deity was not universal. One contemporary, Philo, wrote: "The clearest proof that he [Augustus] was never elated or made vain by extravagant honors lies in his refusal ever to be addressed as a god [and] in his annoyance if anyone so addressed him."¹⁵⁵ There may be some truth in this statement in that it suggests that just as Augustus eschewed the title of dictator he may equally have refrained from overt expression of his own divinity, particularly in Rome. Nonetheless, in what was essentially a polemic against Gaius,¹⁵⁶ contrasting the abhorrent conduct of the latter with the beneficence of the rule of Augustus, to present Augustus as one having aspirations to divinity may well have undermined the argument. Nevertheless, regardless of the veracity of Philo's statement, it seems that Augustus had no need to openly declare himself to be a god, he merely engineered the circumstances whereby the Roman people declared his divinity, and graciously accepted their will.

Augustus was, during his lifetime, openly worshipped as a god in the wider Roman world;¹⁵⁷ and between 12 and 7 BC he donated statues of his *genius* to each of the chapels in the 265 wards of Rome that they may be venerated, and to ensure the prosperity of the Rome the people were encouraged to offer prayers to the gods, represented on earth by Augustus himself.¹⁵⁸ Eck suggests that in this way Augustus created a monarchy, based on a model instigated by Julius Caesar, in which "the very existence of the Roman polity was linked to his person."¹⁵⁹ The totality of Augustus' authority was considered by Philo, who remarked that Augustus "ended the rule of many by handing the ship of state over to a single helmsman, namely himself with his remarkable grasp of the science of government, to steer."¹⁶⁰ Tacitus later described how "Augustus, who, under the name of *princeps*, took the whole state, exhausted by civil discords, into his rule;"¹⁶¹ further explaining that after:

Pompey had been defeated in Sicily, Lepidus disposed of, and Anthony killed. . . . the Julian faction had only Caesar left to lead them. He laid aside the title of triumvir and presented himself as a consul, content to defend the people by virtue of the tribunician power. Thereafter, once he had

seduced the soldiery with gifts, the people with corn, and everyone with the delights of peace, he gradually increased his power, arrogating to himself the functions of the senate, the magistrates, and the law.¹⁶²

Thus, Augustus created the habitus in which, despite his constant rejection of the dictatorship, he was recognized as having the powers of a monarch; powers alluded to in the architectural landscape Augustus created.

The degree of monumental construction undertaken by Augustus in Rome was, as may be expected, somewhat modestly stated by Augustus himself in the *Res Gestae*,¹⁶³ but given rather more prominence in a summary by Eck who writes:

The princeps' presence pervaded the public space and life of Rome in a manner impossible to overlook. And the message conveyed by all the public buildings, inscriptions, and statues – which became clearer and clearer with the passage of time – was that Augustus was not only the princeps, the first man among many, but also a monarch, the sole ruler.¹⁶⁴

Included within this three dimensional expression of rule were the two pharaonic obelisks transported to Rome to augment the Circus Maximus and the Horologium Augusti in the Campus Martius. Again, the rather brief and abbreviated inscriptions added to their bases by Augustus appear somewhat understated, but nevertheless give a summary of his accumulated powers which is not dissimilar to that provided by Tacitus; powers which closely mirror those of an Egyptian king and were therefore entirely appropriate for an inscription on the base of an obelisk.

In the opening lines of the inscription Augustus uses terms implicit of his links to the supernatural powers of the cosmos: IMP. CAESAR DIVI F. AVGVSTVS *Imperator Caesar Divi filius Augustus*, a name suggesting Augustus to be something more than human; followed by PONTIFEX MAXIMVS *pontifex maximus*, chief priest of the state cults in Rome.¹⁶⁵ Augustus emphasizes in the *Res Gestae* how he had observed protocol in not taking the office of *pontifex maximus* from Lepidus, following the defeat of the latter in 36 BC, although it been offered to him in accordance with the decree of the senate, made in 44 BC, that any son of Julius Caesar, “should he beget or even adopt one,”¹⁶⁶ should inherit the post; only taking the role after the death of Lepidus in 12 BC.¹⁶⁷ Once in office, however, rather than take the official residence next to the temple of Vesta, Augustus donated part of his house on the Palatine to public property and therein set up an altar with a statue of Vesta; effectively making his own house the center of the state cult. The following lines of the obelisk base inscription attest to more earthly matters.

Military power is expressed by IMP. XII which informs that, by 10 BC, Augustus had been hailed as *imperator*, victorious general, on twelve occasions by his troops.¹⁶⁸ Augustus was effectively in command of the legions following the Egyptian conquest; around half of which were disbanded, resettled, and well rewarded from the wealth Augustus had acquired from Egypt. With the senate awarding him control of Egypt, and subsequently also Spain, Gaul, and Syria, Augustus had effective control over most of the Roman military power.¹⁶⁹ Augustus had included the title of *imperator* in his name from as early as 40 BC, this ratified by the senate in 29 BC, and he later legislated that victorious commanders were no longer allowed to celebrate their triumphs in Rome; victory was the prerogative of the *princeps* alone. Consequently only Augustus was credited with the ability to quell both foreign and domestic unrest by military force, thereby considerably enhancing his status.¹⁷⁰

Augustus' control within the civil administration is expressed in the statement COS. XI TRIB. POT. XIV; consul eleven times, *tribunicia potestas* fourteen times. During the Late Republic two consuls were elected each year as heads of state, a position Augustus had held eleven times by the time the obelisks were inscribed; thus maintaining at least the illusion that he was an elected agent of the state. Yet perhaps a greater source of administrative power relates to the title of *tribunicia potestas* which Augustus claims, in the inscription, to have held fourteen times but which, in 23 BC, had been granted to him for life. Whereas a patrician could never, under Roman law, hold the office of peoples tribune this office made it possible for Augustus to convene the senate, veto any law or other decision, to exercise capital punishment against anyone who obstructed the performance of his duties while himself immune from prosecution or harm; a power which established the legality by which the *princeps* began to act for, and eventually replace, the Senate.¹⁷¹

The next section of the inscription, AEGYPTO IN POTESTATEM POPVLI ROMANI REDACTA, as discussed earlier, contains the simple message confirming that Egypt had been passed to the control of the Roman people. However, the use of obelisks as the medium for the expression of such a message seems somewhat disingenuous in that, in its original conception, the obelisk was symbolic of the legitimate rule of a mortal who embodied divine power; a power enshrined in mythology linking the mortal ruler to manifestations of supernatural forces, principally those with solar connotation. If a manifestation of such divine power existed in Rome Augustus, and not the people, had come to embody it; and it was surely Augustus, not the people of Rome nor the senate, who controlled Egypt.

That Augustus was aware of the efficacy of the obelisk as an illustration of his supremacy is suggested in the final phrase of his obelisk inscriptions, SOLI DONVM DEDIT. Here one is again reminded of pharaonic ideology in that, in return for their sanction of earthly rule, the gods were rewarded with monuments. The obelisk inscriptions also imply that Augustus

had fulfilled other requirements of Egyptian kingship. In his roles as general, consul, and tribune for life, Augustus had defeated the enemies of Rome both at home and abroad, dispensed justice, and ensured the economic wealth of the country. In short, he had maintained the order of the Roman universe and prevented a return to chaos thereby fulfilling the principal function of an Egyptian king: the maintenance of *ma'at*. That such order was both desired by the people of Rome and attributed to Augustus is indicated by a contemporary writer, Velleius, who, despite a good deal of bombast, propaganda, and rhetoric, nonetheless gives an account which likely reveals the popular perceptions. Referring to the period following the defeat of Anthony and Lepidus, Velleius wrote:

There was nothing, thereafter, which men could hope for from the gods, nor the gods provide to men, no blessings which in their wildest imaginings men could pray for nor good fortune bring to pass, which Augustus on his return to Rome did not restore to the republic, the Roman people, and the world at large. Twenty years of civil strife were ended, foreign wars laid to rest, peace restored, and a man's crazed lust for warfare everywhere dead and buried. . . . Fields were cultivated once again, religious rites observed; men felt safe at last, with their property rites secured. Existing laws were revised and improved; new ones passed to the general advantage.¹⁷²

In a similar vein, albeit not without a hint of dramatic hyperbole, Philo later wrote:

Large parts of the world were battling for the mastery of the empire, Asia against Europe, and Europe against Asia; European and Asian nations from the ends of the earth had risen up and were engaged in grim warfare, fighting with armies and fleets on every land and sea, so that almost the whole human race would have been destroyed in internecine conflicts and disappeared completely, had it not been for one man, one *princeps*, Augustus, who deserves the title of "Averter of Evil."¹⁷³

That Augustus maintained his interest in obelisks until late in his reign is clear from Pliny who describes how, during the prefecture of Maximus around AD 12-15, the Arsinoe obelisk in Alexandria was moved the short distance from her temple to the forum; assumed to be the Julian Forum which was likely that later renamed as the Forum of Augustus.¹⁷⁴ At this time there could have been little to be gained by such an act if done merely to appease or pacify the Egyptian elite, nor to impress the wider Roman audience. Equally it seems illogical, at that time, to suggest that Augustus needed to go to such lengths as a mere

demonstration of his power; and there was surely no need to acquire yet another souvenir. I suggest that the more likely reason was that Augustus continued to enhance his own architectural landscapes with monuments symbolizing his authority to rule as legitimized by his association with the sun god. The efficacy in this method of self-representation is evinced to some degree by the actions of Augustus' successors.

On two sides of the base of the obelisk erected in the forum at Alexandria by Gallus inscriptions were later added marking the succession from Augustus to Tiberius; and the monument itself was transported to Rome by Gaius who placed it in the gardens he had inherited from his mother, the *horti Agrippinae*.¹⁷⁵ Gaius also built a temple to Isis on the Campus Martius which, after the fire of AD 80, was rebuilt by Domitian, an emperor who, unlike Augustus, preferred to be regarded openly as a god.¹⁷⁶ The obelisk which now stands in the Piazza Navona in Rome was commissioned by Domitian, who had it inscribed with pharaonic hieroglyphs and, most likely, erected in the Campus Martius – the monument later being moved to a new site by Maxentius around AD 309.¹⁷⁷ On the obelisk Domitian appears in the guise of an Egyptian king and its inscription reveals that he set up the obelisk for his father, a manifestation of the Egyptian solar deity, Re-Horakhty. The text includes a summary of the circumstances of his succession in that he had inherited the kingdom of his father, Vespasian, in place of his brother, Titus, after his soul had flown up to heaven and, most significantly, the names of all three emperors appear in cartouches.¹⁷⁸

In commissioning the Navona obelisk Domitian exemplifies the degree to which the emperor cult had assimilated aspects of pharaonic ideology, its hieroglyphic texts associating the emperor with Egyptian deities and proclaiming his divine right to rule; texts and imagery openly presenting the Roman Ruler in the style of an Egyptian Pharaoh. It seems that Domitian could only have done this within the cultural milieu of Rome brought about by the reign of Augustus. Domitian had two further obelisks cut and sited at Benevento,¹⁷⁹ and he built extensively throughout Egypt; most notably at Karnak where he added to the structures surrounding the single obelisk originally commissioned by Thutmose III, completed by Thutmose IV, and now standing in Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano in Rome. This obelisk was the focal point of an area of Karnak specifically designated the House of the *ben-ben* and inscribed with themes reflecting universal creation and the rising of the sun from the primeval chaos of the *nun*.¹⁸⁰ Among the inscriptions subsequently added for Domitian is a scene in which the emperor is depicted praising the god, Amun, the accompanying text describing Domitian as "the good god, who praises his father," and which concludes with his claim to be "the King of Upper and Lower Egypt upon the throne of Horus, foremost of the Kas [of the living]."¹⁸¹ These texts are again purely Egyptian in their conception, and that Domitian should focus upon what was to become the Lateran obelisk is itself informative with regard to both his own motivations and those of Augustus.

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The Lateran obelisk was brought to Rome by the emperors Constantine and Constantius II. The former had the monument transported from Thebes to Alexandria, where a ship requiring 300 rowers was built for its transport overseas. Following the death of Constantine, Constantius had the obelisk erected in the Circus Maximus; and the enormity of the task is clear from the report of Ammianus Marcellinus who comments that after the monument arrived in the Circus:

There remained only the raising, which it was thought could be accomplished only with great difficulty, perhaps not at all. But it was done in the following manner: to tall beams which were brought and raised on end (so that you would see a very grove of derricks) were fastened long and heavy ropes in the likeness of a manifold web hiding the sky with their excessive numbers. To these was attached that veritable mountain engraved over with written characters, and it was gradually drawn up on high through the empty air, and after hanging for a long time, while many thousand men turned wheels resembling millstones, it was finally placed in the middle of the circus.¹⁸²

But of importance in the context of the present discussion is that Ammianus was aware that there had, in the time of Augustus, been an ideological aspect to the obelisk which was not widely known, writing that while it was thought that Augustus

neither ventured to meddle with it or move it, overawed by the difficulties caused by its size – let me inform those who do not know it that the early emperor, after bringing over several obelisks, passed this one and left it untouched because it was consecrated as a special gift to the Sun God, and because being placed in the sacred part of his sumptuous temple, which might not be profaned, there it towered aloft like the peak of the world. But Constantine, making little account of that, tore the huge mass from its foundations . . . since he rightly thought he was committing no sacrilege if he took this marvel from one temple and consecrated it at Rome, that is to say, in the temple of the whole world.¹⁸³

These remarks not only suggest that Augustus had been actively involved in the authorization of matters relating to the Egyptian monuments but also give clear indication that the ideological aspect of the obelisk was not unknown to the emperors. Both Augustus and Domitian had treated the Lateran obelisk with particular reverence; and Constantine's decision to move it was not indicative of any lack of respect, rather that he felt it appropriate that the monument should be shifted from

Egypt to Rome in the manner of more than forty other Egyptian obelisks which had been taken since the reign of Augustus.¹⁸⁴ I believe that the adornment of the Roman architectural landscape with such monuments, clearly perceived as being of significance to both the emperor and the Sun God, was a significant factor in establishing the habitus in which it became generally accepted that the emperor ruled by divine right and with the authority implicit in a royal line extending back to the beginning of time itself.

As argued by Davies, under Augustus “the notion of cosmic kingship took hold.”¹⁸⁵ This notion incorporated a belief which served to create the illusion of dynastic continuity: that the death of an emperor signified not merely the end of life, but the transfer of power to the next generation. This idea was symbolized by Augustus' funerary monuments, the complex including the Ara Pacis Augustae, Mausoleum, and the Horologium Augusti where the shadow of the

giant gnomon spun slowly and incessantly around, unending . . . [and] seen through Roman eyes was not merely a gauge of time passing but also a reassuring confirmation of *eternal* time, reflected in the ordered movements of the cosmos. As commissioner of the instrument, Augustus in a sense regulated time himself. Thus his subtle assimilation to Apollo the sun-god, regulator of daily time, was complete, . . . [furthermore] The complex assures peace and order in Rome under Julian rule, and perhaps, by the implication of opposites, offers a cautionary reminder that without the sun's regulating hand, order – cosmos – returns to chaos.¹⁸⁶

Within this metaphorical landscape, Davies views the juxtaposition of the small obelisks at the Mausoleum with that of the Horologium obelisk as prompting the idea that the death of the emperor was balanced by notions of “regeneration and fecundity,” however, the worth of the Horologium obelisk as the gnomon of the sundial was reliant upon its solar connotations, as described in the aforementioned passage from Ammianus Marcellinus, in that the obelisk resembled a sunbeam.¹⁸⁷ Davies raises the question: “Is there any reason, besides his admiration for Alexander, that he [Augustus] turned to Egypt for inspiration?” suggesting, as a possible answer, that Augustus used Egyptian architectural styles, and those of other places, along with his “expropriated Egyptian triumphal symbols in his display of obelisks . . . as a visual *res gestae*, an image of things achieved.”¹⁸⁸ However, while this may be part of the explanation, I would offer the further suggestion that it was the symbolism of the obelisk itself that justified its prominence in the Augustan architectural landscape as the notions of dynastic continuity and cosmic order posited for the Campus Martius complex were

tenets which had long been attributes of the obelisk as an architectural icon.

In summary, it may be said that in the establishment of Roman imperial ideology the role of Augustus was largely fortuitous in that he inherited wealth and status at a time when circumstances permitted that he could take advantage of opportunities to develop a new system of government, with himself at its head, which was perceived to fulfill the needs of Rome; and that, by learning from the mistakes of his predecessors, Pompey, Julius Caesar, Anthony, and others, he patiently, yet constantly, engineered the circumstances by which political change came about.¹⁸⁹ In the creation of this new order, however, the influence of Egyptian ideology should not be ignored. The similarities between the pharaonic culture and that of imperial Rome discussed above cannot be coincidental, but rather demonstrate a manifestation of the influences to which both Augustus and his immediate predecessors had been subjected; influences which prompted acceptance of the fundamental aspect of the earlier system, that of government by a semi-divine ruler exercising authority legitimized by supernatural powers as symbolized most prominently in the Egyptian ritual landscape by the obelisk.

It appears likely that, during his brief stay in Egypt, Augustus tempered his skills in political manipulation through self-presentation in ritual and art;¹⁹⁰ establishing himself first as Horus king in texts and monuments adorning monumental architecture and thereby demonstrating the continuing reality of the link between cosmic and earthly power in Roman Egypt before introducing such symbolism to the three-dimensional ritual landscape of Augustan Rome.¹⁹¹ As this became manifest the transportation of obelisks from Egypt to Rome was not a task undertaken lightly, to satisfy bravado, or a whim; it was rather a demonstration of determination, of a firmness of purpose in both the physical and metaphysical sense, for Augustus acquired not only the material form but also its inherent symbolism. In erecting obelisks in the Roman ritual landscape Augustus proclaimed his authority as the legitimate mortal embodiment of divine solar power. Thus pharaonic ideology informed the principles of governance of imperial Rome where the Horus Augustus, now as Apollo, united with the cycle of the sun and with time itself, ensured the continuity of the ordered universe. This tacit promise of order, political stability sanctioned by the gods in Augustan Rome, was surely a powerful political message when viewed in the light of the prolonged civil wars of Rome's recent past.

Notes

* Developed from research first presented in the paper, "Roman Egypt or Egyptian Rome: the significance of Egyptian obelisks in the diffusion of ideology," presented at the conference, *Current Research in Egyptology XII* at The University of Durham, 22nd-26th March 2011.

¹ Goodman 1997, 38.

² Augustus 2009, 27.

³ A number of such gold and silver coins bearing images of animals associated with the Nile, such as the hippopotamus and crocodile, were minted in 28-27 BC as listed in, for example, Cooley 2009, 229. See also Grueber 1910, 106 types 650-5; Sutherland 1984, 61, 275, and 86 types 544-5; and Robertson 1962, 53 and 58, types 271 and 299.

⁴ Suetonius 1914, *Augustus* 66.1.

⁵ The Theban uprising, being supported by the Kushite kingdom to the south, constituted the only major threat to Roman supremacy in Egypt following the conquest of 30 BC, as briefly described in Ritner 1998, 11. See also Welsby 1996, 67-70.

⁶ The hieroglyphic inscriptions of the stela are reproduced in Hoffmann et al. 2009, 47.

⁷ The relevant inscriptions are discussed in Mond and Myers 1934, 11-13 and 32, with a reproduction of the hieroglyphic text and an image of the stela at pl. XLIII.

⁸ Mond and Myers 1934, 32.

⁹ See, for example, Wilcken 1937, 143. In a discussion of the texts of Buchis stelae Wilcken maintains that, in adopting the dating system used by the Ptolemies and earlier

indigenous kings of Egypt, Augustus was plainly seeking to establish his monarchy in Egypt.

¹⁰ Wilcken 1937, 141. Here it is worthy of note that some reluctance to accept foreign rule had been demonstrated earlier in the Theban region where there had been serious revolts against Ptolemaic hegemony in 246-1 BC, in 207-6 BC, and during both the 160's and 130's as mentioned in, for example, Bowman 1986, 30-1. For Kushite involvement in support of such revolts see Welsby 1996, 67.

¹¹ For the text of this stela see Habachi 1972, 39. Here, while it is clear that the Theban king, Kamose, recognises Apophis as a ruler, he does not place his name within a cartouche; reserving that prerogative for himself.

¹² Ammianus Marcellinus 1950, 17.4.5.

¹³ Suetonius 1914, *Augustus* 66.2.

¹⁴ Dio Cassius 1917, 53.23.5-7.

¹⁵ Goodman 1997, 265-6.

¹⁶ Cooley 2009, 229; Ritner 1998, 1.

¹⁷ Cooley 2009, 229; Bellen 1997, 74-5; Davies 1996, 175-6; Ritner 1998, 1.

¹⁸ Dio Cassius 1917, 51.17.1.

¹⁹ Bowman 1986, 65; Goodman 1997, 266.

²⁰ Ritner 1998, 12; Arnold 1999, 230; Wilkinson 2000, 150 and 215; Dundas 2002, 447.

²¹ The Dendera temple was complete in the first year of Augustus' reign (Arnold 1999, 230). See also Sorek 2010, 36.

²² Redford 1971, 118.

- ²³ The case of Horemheb seems particularly relevant in that, as with Alexander and Augustus, it is evidence from a period of political transition. Horemheb came to power at the end of the 18th Dynasty, *c* 1316 BC, in the aftermath of the Amarna interlude during which Egypt had undergone considerable ideological reform under Akhenaten. Following the death of Akhenaten's successor, Tutankhamun, Horemheb was keen to demonstrate a return to the old order in his Coronation Stela; the full text of which is reproduced in translation in Gardiner 1953, 14-16.
- ²⁴ Wilcken 1937, 143; Sorek 2010, 36.
- ²⁵ Augustus had returned to Rome by 29 BC when he celebrated a triple triumph for his victories at Actium and Illyricum, and the annexation of Egypt (Davies 2000, 13).
- ²⁶ Dundas (2002, 433-38) refers to the generally held perception that Augustus was unconcerned with the manner of his representation in Egypt and, from the image of Augustus presented by Dio, one may conclude that Augustus was strongly antagonistic towards the Egyptian people in general, and particularly towards their gods. Worthy of note in the context of the aforementioned Buchis stelae is Dio's reference to Augustus' refusal to visit the Apis Bull, a Memphite counterpart of the Theban Buchis Bull, Augustus declaring that "he was accustomed to worship gods, not cattle" (Dio Cassius 1917, 51.16.5).
- ²⁷ A summary of elements of the relationship between Anthony and Cleopatra giving cause for resentment against them in Rome is given by Hölbl 2001, 239-46. See also Bowman 1986, 34-6; Dundas 2002, 433; and Eck 2003, 28-30.
- ²⁸ See, for example, Davies 2000, 50 and 87-8; and Eck 2003, 42, regarding Caesar's attempts to form a monarchy providing the motive for his murder.
- ²⁹ Davies (2000, 92) also draws attention to the need for caution in the expression of "attitudes imported from the East" following the conquest of Anthony.
- ³⁰ Goodman 1997, 39.
- ³¹ Augustus 2009, 5.
- ³² Velleius Paterculus 2003, 2.89.5.
- ³³ Goodman 1997, 38-46 and 123-8.
- ³⁴ Scarre 1995, 22.
- ³⁵ Suetonius 1914, *Augustus* 29.1.
- ³⁶ Patterson 1992, 198.
- ³⁷ These dates are agreed by both Laistner (1921, 265-6), Davies (2000, 76) and Cooley (2009, 229); however, Sorek (2010, 45), suggests 13-10 BC for this event.
- ³⁸ For a description of the difficulties encountered in transporting the obelisks of Thutmose III to their present locations in London and New York see Habachi 1977, 165-92.
- ³⁹ Pliny 1971, 36.68-71.
- ⁴⁰ Pliny 1971, 36.63-66.
- ⁴¹ Pliny 1971, 36.71-73.
- ⁴² Ammianus Marcellinus 1950, 17.4.6.
- ⁴³ Wilkinson 1994, 311-12, originally published in 1854.
- ⁴⁴ Merriam 1883, 31-2.
- ⁴⁵ Habachi 1977, 4-12.
- ⁴⁶ Rouillet 1972, 13-14 and 43.
- ⁴⁷ Merriam 1883, 48; Sorek 2010, 47.
- ⁴⁸ Pliny 1971, 36.71-73.
- ⁴⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus 1950, 17.4.8.
- ⁵⁰ Patterson 1992, 199.
- ⁵¹ Sorek 2010, 44-9.
- ⁵² Gregory (forthcoming).
- ⁵³ A period generally accepted as *c* 1548-1086 BC.
- ⁵⁴ Kemp 1989, 85.
- ⁵⁵ Here the deceased, Irinefer, and a *benu* bird, or phoenix, are depicted in the boat of the sun disk together with a round topped stone. The scene is reproduced in Quirke 2001, 29; also in Wilkinson 1992, 90-1, with discussion of the phoenix as a symbol of the sun god.
- ⁵⁶ The scene is reproduced, with some discussion of the iconography, in Wilkinson 1992, 90-1.
- ⁵⁷ Kemp 1989, 85; Arnold 2003, 165.
- ⁵⁸ Sethe 1905-9, 590.
- ⁵⁹ The hieroglyphic text of the passage in question is reproduced in Sethe 1905-9, 365; see also 642, a text of Thutmose III from Karnak which says of the king: "he set up very great obelisks [*thnw*] anew [with] pyramidion [*bnbnt*] in fine gold;" and 738, again from Karnak, a text saying of Thutmose III: "his majesty made for him [Amun] great obelisks [*thnw*] their pyramidion [*bnbnt*] of electrum."
- ⁶⁰ For the translation of *bnbnt* see Faulkner 1962, 82; also Gardiner 1927, 564.
- ⁶¹ Reproduced in translation in Faulkner 1969, 246.
- ⁶² Kemp 1989, 88.
- ⁶³ Arnold 2003, 165.
- ⁶⁴ Kemp 1989, 88.
- ⁶⁵ For the roles of the king in relation to *ma'at* see Lloyd 2000, 376; and also Richards 2010, 56-9. For further discussion regarding the development of such concepts and their relationship with the iconography and symbolism forming the "civilizational template" of ancient Egypt, see Wegner 2010, 119.
- ⁶⁶ Grallert 2007, 38.
- ⁶⁷ For a translation and discussion of this text see Parkinson 1991, 31-33; see also Faulkner 2004, 167-9.
- ⁶⁸ Pritchard 1969, 9. For further translations of this text see Allen 1974, 184; and Assmann 2005, 136.
- ⁶⁹ *c* 1971-1926 BC.
- ⁷⁰ *c* 2350-2200 BC.
- ⁷¹ Habachi 1977, 42.
- ⁷² *ibid.* 41.
- ⁷³ Quirke 2001, 73.
- ⁷⁴ Habachi 1977, 57. One of these obelisks still stands adjacent to the main east-west axis of the temple.
- ⁷⁵ *ibid.* 67.
- ⁷⁶ *ibid.* 70.
- ⁷⁷ Some reference to these monuments appears in inscriptions in the Theban Tomb of Puyemre and in rock inscriptions of the King's Herald, Yamunedjeh, on the island of Seheil near Aswan (Habachi 1997, 9 and 72-3).
- ⁷⁸ Habachi 1997, 72-3.
- ⁷⁹ *ibid.* 77-8.
- ⁸⁰ Brand 1997, 101, n. 6.

- ⁸¹ Habachi 1977, 90-8. One of these monuments remains before the pylon, the second now stands in the Place de la Concorde, Paris.
- ⁸² Habachi 1977, 98-101.
- ⁸³ Epigraphic Survey 1979, 15 and pl. 29.
- ⁸⁴ Gregory (forthcoming).
- ⁸⁵ O'Connor 1995, 276-9; Assmann 2001, 194.
- ⁸⁶ These scenes decorate the southern section of the Lower Colonnade of the temple, as described in Porter and Moss 1972, 342.
- ⁸⁷ Burgos and Grimal 2006, 77.
- ⁸⁸ The reality of the difficulties facing Hatshepsut in her self-presentation as the Horus king are apparent in the surviving monuments as discussed in, for example, O'Connor 1983, 218-19; Grimal 1992, 207-13; Silverman 1995, 70-1; Wilfong 2010, 165; and Robins 1999, 110-11, who concludes that "as with all kings, the validation and display of Hatshepsut's legitimacy as ruler were primarily functions of her texts and images."
- ⁸⁹ Breasted 1906, 253.
- ⁹⁰ Lichtheim 1976, 28-9.
- ⁹¹ The presentation of a crown is often the only expressed purpose of such scenes in modern interpretations, such as that, for example, in Wilkinson 2003, 67.
- ⁹² Faulkner 1969, 246. See also a discussion of this text, and of the manner in which ancient Egyptian cosmogonies were continuously reformed in support of the concept of divine kingship, in Lesko 1991, 90-2.
- ⁹³ Lichtheim 1976, 27.
- ⁹⁴ Architectural expression of ideology in an ancient Egyptian context, particularly in the New Kingdom Period, is discussed in Kemp 1989, 185-90; and, more generally for Egypt, see Richards 2010, 56. With specific reference to Augustus' use of visual media in general in the establishment of his political ideology see Cooley 2009, 2. For more generalised comment on the psychology of architectural discourse see Parker Pearson and Richards 1994, 2-5.
- ⁹⁵ That the Egyptian model of sovereignty, giving the king ownership of all lands, extended into the Ptolemaic Period is discussed by Hölbl 2001, 61-2. In addition the king controlled the wealth of temple estates, which were themselves extensive as evinced by both the archaeological remains – attesting to the presence of ancillary workshops, storehouses, treasuries, and granaries – and by surviving texts which demonstrate the economic functions of these institutions, for example: the Nauri Decree of Seti I, 19th Dynasty (Griffith 1227, 193-208); the Nitocris Adoption Stele of Psamtek I, 26th Dynasty (Caminos 1964, 71-101); and, closer to the Roman Period, there are allusions to manufacture and trade in the text of the Rosetta Stone of the reign of Ptolemy IV, 196 BC (Simpson 1999, 198-200). For the Ptolemaic Period see also Hölbl 2001, 89-90.
- ⁹⁶ No evidence survives to demonstrate with certainty that Gallus portrayed himself as a king however, on the Philae stela recounting his campaigns in Upper Egypt, the scene in the lunette depicts a figure on horseback flanked by texts containing speeches of the gods. The section of text identifying the figure includes the cartouche of Augustus preceded by an area from which the text has been erased, and it seems likely that this area originally contained the name of Gallus. If such was the case, Gallus was presenting himself, iconographically, in a position reserved for the king. The relevant texts and a reconstruction of the stela showing the position of the mounted figure can be found in Hoffmann et al. 2009, 47, abb. 4.
- ⁹⁷ Dio Cassius 1917, 53.23.4-7.
- ⁹⁸ Tacitus 1925, 1.11; 2003 2.59. See also Dio Cassius 1917, 51.17.1.
- ⁹⁹ Goodman 1997, 266; Cooley 2009, 229.
- ¹⁰⁰ Fredricksmeyer 1991, 199-200.
- ¹⁰¹ Billows 1994, 37; Hölbl 2001, 13-15.
- ¹⁰² Billows 1994, 37; Hölbl 2001, 13-15; Erskine 2002, 164.
- ¹⁰³ For the major Ptolemaic contributions to the architectural landscape see Hölbl 2001, 257-79; also Arnold 1999, 144-224.
- ¹⁰⁴ Suetonius 1914, *Augustus* 18.1.
- ¹⁰⁵ Dio Cassius 1917, 51.16.5.
- ¹⁰⁶ Erskine 2002, 163.
- ¹⁰⁷ Augustus 2009, 26-33; Cooley 2009, 36 and 211-50.
- ¹⁰⁸ Suetonius 1914, *Augustus* 50.1. For commentary on this text in relation to the introduction of Egyptian motifs in Roman art and architecture see Davies 2000, 60.
- ¹⁰⁹ Arnold 1999, 197; 2003, 166.
- ¹¹⁰ Davies 2000, 13-17 and 53-5. The obelisks are those now standing in the Piazza dell'Esquino and the Piazza del Quirinale, Rome.
- ¹¹¹ Davies 2000, 49-67.
- ¹¹² Goodman 1997, 267-8.
- ¹¹³ Iverson 1965, 149; Hölbl 2001, 292; and Sorek 2010, 36.
- ¹¹⁴ See Rehak and Younger 2009, 88. Here the early date is suggested seemingly on the grounds that the Caesareum, with obelisks, was complete when Antyllus, son of Anthony, took refuge there as Augustus entered Alexandria during the conquest. The source of this information is given as Dio Cassius, however Dio (1917, 51.15.5) merely states that Antyllus, having taken refuge in his father's shrine which Cleopatra had built, was slain immediately. There is nothing in this passage which confirms that the obelisk had been added to the site by that time, and it seems more likely that Gallus erected the obelisk at some time after this event when Alexandria was completely under Roman control.
- ¹¹⁵ Iverson 1965, 149.
- ¹¹⁶ McKenzie 2007, 177; Rehak and Younger 2009, 88.
- ¹¹⁷ Dio Cassius 1917, 51.16.3.
- ¹¹⁸ Arnold 1999, 202. One of these obelisks was transported to England by W. J. Bankes and now stands in the grounds of Kingston Lacy House (Sorek 2010, 123).
- ¹¹⁹ Vogel, 1974, 27; McKenzie 2007, 177; Rehak and Younger 2009, 88; Sorek 2010, 116.
- ¹²⁰ Pliny 1971, 36.69.
- ¹²¹ Philo 1970, 22.151.
- ¹²² The apparent increase in importance placed on the birth house, or Mammisi, as an architectural expression of divine kingship during the late Ptolemaic Period is discussed by Hölbl 2001, 263-7. For a general description of the structure and its function see Arnold 2003, 33.
- ¹²³ Wilkinson 2000, 218-19; Arnold 2003, 70.
- ¹²⁴ Blackman 1911, 5-17 and pl. XI and XXII.

- ¹²⁵ Wilkinson 2000, 217-18; 2003, 114.
- ¹²⁶ Wilkinson 2000, 114.
- ¹²⁷ Nock 1934, 60-1 and 102.
- ¹²⁸ Merriam 1883, 26-7; Sorek 2010, 43.
- ¹²⁹ The political motivation for the construction of this temple as a space linking the ideology of the Roman overlords with that of their Nubian vassals is discussed in Mairs 2011, 281-2. That Kalabsha appeared to have no Egyptian settlement in the Roman Period is mentioned in Nock 1923, 53-54.
- ¹³⁰ Galinski 1996, 188-9; Davies 2000, 86-9.
- ¹³¹ Suetonius 1914, *Augustus* 70.1-2.
- ¹³² Bowman 1986, 37; Cooley 2009, 184.
- ¹³³ Cooley 2009, 109-11, with images of the coins at fig. 9 and fig. 10 respectively. See also, for the coin of Augustus, Sutherland 1984, 79, type 476 and, for the coin of Anthony, Grueber 1910, 502, types 133-4.
- ¹³⁴ Suetonius 1914, *Augustus* 94.4; Dio Cassius 1917, 45.1.2. It is worthy of note, in the context of the present discussion, that Suetonius cited the source of his account of Augustus' birth as being Asclepiades of Mendes in Egypt; see also Merriam 1883, 27. Little is known of Asclepiades – as discussed in Gurval 1995, 100 – nonetheless, it does seem that some Egyptian influence is indicated in the origins of mythology relating to the divine nature of Augustus.
- ¹³⁵ Scheid 1996, 630.
- ¹³⁶ Versnel 1996, 426; Goodman 1997, 129.
- ¹³⁷ Plutarch 1919, 1.3.1-3.
- ¹³⁸ Goodman 1997, 123-33; Cooley 2009, 41.
- ¹³⁹ Augustus 2009, 19; Dio Cassius 1917, 49.15.5; Goodman 1997, 185; Cooley 2009, 183-5.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ovid 1931, 4.949-54.
- ¹⁴¹ The nature of the games and their efficacy in reinforcing the regime of Augustus is outlined further in Cooley 2009, 205-7.
- ¹⁴² Mierse 1990, 281; Syndikus 1996, 725-6; Eck 2003, 63.
- ¹⁴³ Suetonius 1914, *Augustus* 29.3.
- ¹⁴⁴ For further discussion of the relevance of the Palatine house in the Augustan architectural landscape see Davies 2000, 88-9.
- ¹⁴⁵ Augustus 2009, 34; Scarre 1995, 17.
- ¹⁴⁶ The coin is depicted in Crawford 1974, type 490/2.
- ¹⁴⁷ The symbolism of this coin as a reflection of the ambivalent political association between Augustus and Julius is discussed by Ramage (1985, 224) who describes the headdress of Julius depicted on the coin as “a gold crown.” For further discussion regarding the relationship between Augustus and the deified Julius, particularly from the perspective of the poets of the Augustan Period, see White 1988, 334-356.
- ¹⁴⁸ Coin depicted in Crawford 1974, type 534/2. This coin, and a second of the same year depicting Augustus, bareheaded, on the obverse and a laureate Julius on the reverse, is discussed by Ramage (1985, 236) who describes the headdress of Julius as “the gold crown of royalty.”
- ¹⁴⁹ Coin depicted in Robertson 1962, type 139.
- ¹⁵⁰ Scott 1941, 257.
- ¹⁵¹ Augustus refers to Julius on six other occasions in the *Res Gestae* but only as “my parent” or “my father,” and on each occasion notably in relation to some action taken by Augustus himself, as outlined in detail in Ramage 1985, 238.
- ¹⁵² For further remarks regarding the wide circulation of coins throughout the empire, regardless of the location of the originating mint, and their function as a medium for the transmission of political information see Sutherland 1951 31-2. Sutherland (1951: 1) was also of the opinion that Augustus, as his successors, “maintained an absolute control over virtually every element of coinage in the Mediterranean world.”
- ¹⁵³ Crawford 1974, 739-40. For further discussion regarding Augustus' use of coins to stress his links with divinity see Davies 2000, 73-4.
- ¹⁵⁴ Augustus 2009, 19-21; Ramage 1985, 230.
- ¹⁵⁵ Philo 1970, 23.154.
- ¹⁵⁶ Gaius (Caligula) demonstrated a deep interest in Egyptian cults, building a temple to Isis in the Campus Martius early in his reign and decorating his house on the Palatine, the *aula isiaca*, with much pharaonic iconography, as discussed further in Heyob 1975, 24.
- ¹⁵⁷ Goodman 1997, 129-31 and 299-301; see also Gradel, 2002, 111, who cites the fourth century historian, Aurelius Victor, who wrote of Augustus, in *Caesares* 1.6, “temples, priests and corporations were consecrated to him, as to a god, in Rome and throughout the largest cities of all the provinces, both while he was alive and posthumously.”
- ¹⁵⁸ Eck 2003, 43 and 111.
- ¹⁵⁹ Eck 2003, 42-3 and 112.
- ¹⁶⁰ Philo 1970, 22.149.
- ¹⁶¹ Tacitus 2003, 1.1.
- ¹⁶² Tacitus 2003, 2.1.
- ¹⁶³ Augustus 2009, 19-21.
- ¹⁶⁴ Eck 2003, 112. For a comprehensive list of Augustus' monuments see Cooley 2009, 182-200.
- ¹⁶⁵ Goodman 1997, 91; Cooley 2009, 148.
- ¹⁶⁶ Dio Cassius 1917, 44.5.3.
- ¹⁶⁷ Augustus 2009, 10; Cooley 2009, 148.
- ¹⁶⁸ Cooley 2009, 121-3.
- ¹⁶⁹ Goodman 1997, 39.
- ¹⁷⁰ Goodman 1997, 39; Eck 2003, 62; Cooley 2009, 121-3.
- ¹⁷¹ Goodman 1997, 40; Eck 2003, 28; Cooley 2009, 126.
- ¹⁷² Velleius Paterculus 2003, 2.89.2-4.
- ¹⁷³ Philo 1970, 21.144.
- ¹⁷⁴ Pliny 1971, 36.67-69. The event is further discussed in McKenzie 2007, 177; and Rehak and Younger 2009, 88.
- ¹⁷⁵ Pliny 1971, 36.70; see also Iverson 1965, 149-51; and Sorek 2010, 63-4.
- ¹⁷⁶ For references to Domitian's desire to be addressed as a god see Dio Cassius 1917, 67.4.7; Suetonius 1914, *Domitian* 13.2; and for further commentary see Goodman 1997, 64 and Davies 2000, 92. The rebuilding of the Isis temple is mentioned in Heyob 1975, 28, who also makes reference to further Egyptian traits including a statue within the temple depicting Domitian in pharaonic dress.
- ¹⁷⁷ Klotz 2008, 63; Sorek 2010, 79-81.
- ¹⁷⁸ Sorek 2010, 79.
- ¹⁷⁹ Klotz 2008, 63.
- ¹⁸⁰ The area in question, originally constructed by Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, took the form of a contra-temple located against the rear, eastern, wall of the main Amun temple, as discussed in Klotz 2008, 65 and 72-7. See also Porter and

- Moss 1972, 215-9 and plan XVII, 6. For further discussion of the Lateran obelisk as the central feature of this building see Nims 1971, 107-111.
- ¹⁸¹ Klotz 2008, 68 and 71.
- ¹⁸² Ammianus Marcellinus 1950, 17.4.15.
- ¹⁸³ Ammianus Marcellinus 1950, 17.4.12.
- ¹⁸⁴ Iverson 1961, 53; Arnold 1999, 312.
- ¹⁸⁵ Davies 2000, 87.
- ¹⁸⁶ Davies 2000, 93-5. For further remarks regarding the Mausoleum complex as a “powerful dynastic statement” see Cooley 2009, 4.

- ¹⁸⁷ Davies 2000, 77 and 94.
- ¹⁸⁸ Davies 2000, 61-3.
- ¹⁸⁹ Cowell 1948, 294.
- ¹⁹⁰ Goodman 1997, 133-4; Dundas 2002, 435; Sorek 2010, 36.
- ¹⁹¹ For further discussion of the efficacy of carefully structured ritual and symbolism denoting the relationship between the emperor and the gods as part of the web of power creating the structure of society in the Roman empire see Price 1984, 247-8.

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