Ancient History

General instruction

- Work in this book will not be marked.

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The *Gemma Augustea*

Source: Dioscurides c. 9 CE – 12 CE, *Gemma Augustea*.

Context statement

The *Gemma Augustea* is believed to have been created by the craftsman Dioscurides, or one of his followers, on commission by the imperial court (c. 9 CE – 12 CE). The cameo (engraved gem) is divided into two registers.

Upper register: The emperor Augustus is seated bare-chested on a throne. Beneath the throne is the eagle of Jupiter (king of the Roman gods) and a shield. Augustus is holding a *lituus* (a symbol of high military command) and a sceptre (a symbol of his right to rule the Roman Empire). Augustus is being crowned with a civic crown given to those who have saved Roman citizens from an enemy. Other notable figures in the upper register include, from left to right: Victoria, the winged goddess of victory, who drives a chariot; Roma, the patron goddess of Rome, who holds a spear and sword; and a goddess thought to be Tellus, personification of Earth, or Italia, personification of Italy, who holds a cornucopia (horn of plenty), while the child in front of her holds grain.

Lower register: On the left side of the register, Roman soldiers are erecting a military trophy over subjugated captives.[1] The figure with the helmet and cape is thought to be the god of war, Mars.

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1   non-Romans

Source 2

Excerpt from Ovid's *Fasti*

On the Ides,[2] in Jove's[3] temple, the … priest

Offers to the flames the entrails of a … ram

All the provinces were returned to our people,

And your grandfather was given the name Augustus.

Read the legends on wax images in noble halls,

Such titles were never bestowed on men before.

…

If Caesar [Augustus] was to take his titles from the defeated

He would need as many names as tribes on earth.

…

Augustus alone has a name that ranks with great Jove.

Sacred things are called *august* by the senators,

And so are temples duly dedicated by priestly hands.

Source: Ovid, *Fasti*, Book 1: January 13: Ides, translated by AS Kline, 2004.

Context statement

Ovid (43 BCE – 17 CE) was one of the leading poets in Rome during the time of Augustus. Ovid was a member of the Roman elite and was devoted to Roman society. In *Fasti* (written c. 8 BCE), Ovid explained festivals and sacred rites noted on the Roman calendar as well as Roman culture and religion. Book 1 of this poem is dedicated to Germanicus, who was the adopted son of Augustus's heir, Tiberius.

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2   a day in the Roman calendar that was roughly in the middle of each month

3   also known as Jupiter

Source 3

Excerpt from Seneca's *On Clemency*

The deified Augustus was a mild prince if one should undertake to judge him from the time of his principate; but when he shared the state with others, he wielded the sword. When he was at your present age, having just passed his eighteenth year, he had already buried his dagger in the [chest] of friends; he had already in stealth aimed a blow at the side of the consul, Mark Antony; he had already been a partner in proscription.[4]

But when he had passed his fortieth year … the information was brought to him that Lucius Cinna[5]… was concocting a plot against him … he is known to have talked more than two hours … At last he said: 'Cinna, a second time I grant you your life; the first time you were an open enemy, now, a plotter … From this day let there be a beginning of friendship between us' … He found Cinna most friendly and loyal, and even was named the heir to Cinna's property. No one plotted against him further.

Your great-great-grandfather spared the vanquished: for if he had not spared them, whom would he have had to rule? … This mercifulness led him on to safety and security, this made him popular and beloved … and today this preserves for him a reputation which is scarcely within the power of rulers while they live. A god we believe him to be … that Augustus was a good prince, that he well deserved the name of father, this we confess for no other reasons than he did not avenge with cruelty even the personal insults which usually sting a prince more than wrongs …

Such was Augustus when he was old ... In youth he was hot-headed, flared up with anger, and did many things which he looked back upon with regret.

Source: Mellor, R 2006, *Augustus and the Creation of the Roman Empire: A Brief History of Documents*.

Context statement

Seneca (c. 1 BCE – c. 65 CE) was a Roman philosopher who tutored the fifth Roman emperor Nero (c. 37 CE – c. 68 CE). He wrote many books on public speaking. In the essay *On Clemency*, written in 55 CE, Seneca encourages Nero to look to his great-great-grandfather Augustus, who died in 14 CE, as an example of clemency (mercy).

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4   state-approved murder of men who were declared enemies of the state

5   four-time consul in Rome

Excerpt from Eck's *The Age of Augustus*

[Every] conception of Roman society as it ought to be rested on the belief that the existence of Rome and its political and military success depended on the stability of the family and on a [future] generated by the institution of marriage … Leading families placed the highest priority on legitimate offspring in order to pass on their traditions and fortunes, and from the general populace came sorely needed military recruits to defend and increase the greatness of Rome. Cicero in his treatise *On the Laws* … proposed as an ideal duty of the censors[6] that they see to it that Romans did not remain unmarried …

[Laws on marriage] came into existence in three stages: first, a law of 18 [BCE]; then, in … [5 CE] modifications … and finally … in … [9 CE] …

[These laws] required all Roman citizens to marry … Prompt remarriage was prescribed not only after divorce, but also after the death of one's spouse … [Heavy] penalties could be imposed on all who did not comply with the new requirement to marry.

Source: Eck, W 2007, *The Age of Augustus*.

Context statement

Werner Eck is a Professor of Ancient History who specialises in the history and epigraphy (study of inscriptions) of imperial Rome.

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6   magistrates who administered the census and supervised public morals

Source 5

Excerpt from Augustus's *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*

As consul for the fifth time, by order of the people and the Senate, I increased the number of the patricians.

Three times I revised the roll of the Senate. In my sixth consulship … I made a census of the people. I performed the *lustrum*[7] after an interval of forty-one years. In this lustration [ritual], 4 063 000 Roman citizens were entered on the census roll. A second time, in the consulship of Gaius Censorinus and Gaius Asinius, I again performed the lustrum alone, with … consular imperium. In this lustrum, 4 233 000 Roman citizens were entered on the census roll. A third time, with … consular imperium, and with my son Tiberius Caesar as my colleague, I performed the lustrum in the consulship of Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Apuleius. In this lustrum, 4 937 000 Roman citizens were entered on the census roll.

By the passage of new laws I restored many traditions of our ancestors which were falling into disuse, and I myself set precedents in many things for [future generations] to imitate.

Source: Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti (The Achievements of the Deified Augustus)*, translated by FW Shipley, 1924.

Context statement

The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* is Augustus's account of his career and achievements. He left instructions for this text to be inscribed on bronze pillars at the entrance to his mausoleum (large tomb). Copies were also found throughout the Roman Empire. In this excerpt, Augustus lists his achievements as consul (highest elected political office) and his achievements during the consulships of other Roman magistrates, when he still held consular imperium (the power to command an army).

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7   a purification sacrifice made after a census, every five years

Source 6

Excerpt from Dio's *Roman History*

[Augustus] laid heavier assessments upon the unmarried men and upon the women without husbands, and on the other hand offered prizes for marriage and [having] children. And since among the nobility there were far more males than females, he allowed all who wished, except the senators, to marry freedwomen,[8] and ordered that their offspring should be held legitimate.

…

[When the knights sought] the repeal of the law regarding the unmarried and the childless, he assembled in one part of the Forum the unmarried men of their number, and in another those who were married, including those who also had children.

…

[Augustus said:] 'A strange experience has been mine, O — what shall I call you? Men? But you are not performing any of the offices of men. Citizens? But for all that you are doing, the city is perishing. Romans? … I am always doing everything to promote an increase of population among you … For you [the unmarried] … are bent upon annihilating our entire race and making it in truth mortal, are bent upon destroying and bringing to an end the entire Roman nation …'

Source: Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, translated by E Cary, 1917.

Context statement

Cassius Dio (c. 164 CE – after 229 CE) was a Roman senator, consul and proconsul who wrote an 80-book history of Rome documenting the founding of Rome, formation of the Republic and creation of the Empire.

Source 7

Excerpt from Goldsworthy's *Augustus: From Revolutionary to Emperor*

The wider future of the Roman race, and especially the elite, also became a great concern of his [Augustus's] at this time. Civil wars and proscriptions had wrought havoc among senatorial and many equestrian[9] families. Some lines died out altogether, and others had one or more generations cut down before or during the prime years of a political career. Raising children was expensive, especially if they chose to seek office, and there was a widespread belief that more and more men were choosing either to remain bachelors or marry but not have children.

… His concern was moral only in the sense that he wanted Rome's elite to do their duty and keep on providing young men to follow a public career.

Source: Goldsworthy, A 2015, *Augustus: From Revolutionary to Emperor.*

Context statement

Adrian Goldsworthy is a historian who wrote a biography of Augustus.

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8   female slaves who had been freed

9   knights; members of the wealthy elite who had not been elected to public office

References

Source 1

Raddato C (Photographer) 2015, *Gemma Augustea*, 9–12 AD, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gemma_Augustea,_a_two-layered_sardonyx_depicting_the_Emperor_Augustus_surrounded_by_goddesses_and_allegories,_9-12_AD,_Kunsthistorisches_Museum,_Vienna_(21036461833).jpg. CC BY-SA 2.0.

Source 2

Ovid, *Fasti, Book 1: January 13: Ides*, translated by AS Kline, 2004, www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/OvidFastiBkOne.php#BkIJan13. Used under terms of Poetry in Translation copyright notice.

Source 3

SENECA: VOLUME I, translated by John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library Volume 214, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928. Loeb Classical Library ® is a registered trademark of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Source 4

Eck, W 2007, *The Age of Augustus*, 2nd ed., Blackwell Publishing, Melbourne, pp. 101–104.

Source 5

Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (*The Acts of Augustus*), translated by FW Shipley, 1924, www.livius.org/sources/content/augustus-res-gestae.

Source 6

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, translated by E Cary, 1917, as printed in Dio's Roman History (Loeb Classical Library), https://lexundria.com/dio/54.16/cy.

Source 7

Goldsworthy, A 2015, *Augustus: From Revolutionary to Emperor,* Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, pp. 324–325.