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Addressing the Emperor as a Religious Strategy at the Edge and in the Center of the Empire

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Religion is a spatial practice (Knott 2005; 2008; Meyer 2014; Rüpke 2020).[1] Religious practices take place in physical space and they thereby create and sacralize religious places. Above all, however, religion is a practice that brings something into a specific place from beyond that place. This "transcendence" is achieved by addressing persons, powers, or objects that either have powers that extend far beyond the time and place in which they are addressed or that are present in the very place in a particularly thorough manner. The specific mode of transcendence depends on the character of the addressee, for instance, in the different cases of ancient Olympian deities or local *genii*. For Mediterranean religious practices of the imperial age, this space-referential capacity was of particular importance. This chapter will argue that directly addressing the emperor (or emperors) in religious communication or bringing him (or her or them) into such communication as additional beneficients *(pro salute)* distinct from the divine addressees was a religious strategy developed to exploit this capacity.

In scholarly discussions, talk about "imperial cult" focuses attention on the political benefits at the center and the diffusion of the practice from the center to a geographically defined periphery. Following the lead of Simon Price (1984), instead, I will take a bottom-up perspective, inquiring about the options offered by these religious practices to actors at the periphery. Even if the narrative starts at the center, Rome (1), it is a narrative in which the initiatives are taken at the fringes, it is a narrative about giving permanency and visibility to such addresses to the emperor in the form of ded-

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ications, monumentalized inscriptions, temples, or foundations for smaller or larger rituals (that is to say, festivals) on the edge of empire (2). This is not to claim that these practices were specific or even exclusive to social or geographical peripheries. Such a claim could be contradicted very easily by noting the participation of members of the imperial family at Rome or of provincial governors. However, such practices were *also* open to the peripheries and were particularly attractive there, as can be seen from the absolute and relative quantities of the surviving evidence when categorized by location (see e. g. Belayche 2001; Kaizer 2002; Spickermann 2003; 2008; Schäfer 2007; Steimle 2007; Tsochos 2012). It is the specific interaction, imagined as well as real, between the center(s) and peripheries that is of interest here. Thus, my analysis is also concerned with attempts at the center to control such practices (3). Throughout this discussion, I will try to reconstruct motives for engagement in such actions and in the trans-regional communications and institutionalizations that framed and informed these choices. Finally, I will return to specific spatial aspects of addressing the emperor and the locations of the agents involved (4).

1 Introducing new gods

It was a certain Gaius Amatius who provided the impetus for the posthumous worship of Caesar, assassinated on March 15, 44 BCE and then cremated in the Forum to the great tumult. Along with some followers, Amatius had an altar erected on the site of the funeral pyre. Amatius had form in this regard. He appears earlier in the historical record, claiming to be the grandson of the popular military commander and multiple consul C. Marius. Although he is said to have been, in fact, a horse- or eye-doctor called Herophilus (the textual tradition is not clear), he amassed many followers in his guise as a relative of C. Iulius Caesar. The latter had difficulty ridding himself of the pretender (Val. Max. 9.15.1. Livy, *per.* 116 speaks of a "son" sprung from the humblest of backgrounds). Even Cicero speaks of him as "Marius" (Cic. *Att.* 14.6–8; April 12–15, 44 BCE).

In his role as "relative", Amatius swore revenge against Caesar's assassins but was himself removed from the scene by Marcus Antonius before the altar he had set up could come into use. The people, having occupied the Forum after Amatius' murder, demanded that the altar be dedicated and that the first sacrifices be made to Caesar (App. *BC* 3.1.2–3). The desire to worship Caesar as a god was evidently widespread and not confined to Amatius and his coterie. Yet such a step involved a risk, as did any invocation of a god. The risk consisted in the possibility of the lack of any divine response, a fact that would have been judged inappropriate or threatening by bystanders. The religious action could also simply be challenged on the basis of the ontological status of the addressee, who might just be a powerless god, a foreign figure, a demon, or even just a dead human – more general atheism was rare in antiquity, even if not unknown to intellectual debate as well as being expressed on a number of tombstones (see in

general Rüpke 2015). For the episode under scrutiny, the move was challenged for a different reason. A rival entered the contest for power, calling Caesar to his side as a god: quite inopportunely – as yet – for Caesar's successors. The tradition tells us that the murder of Amatius had to be complemented by character assassination.

A good thirty years earlier, the sequence had been reversed. Marcus Marius (Gratidianus) had twice been city praetor and as a nephew of Gaius Marius had been revered in his lifetime by Roman citizens, who made offerings to him of candles and incense. To remember, Plautus, in his comedy *Asinaria*, has his characters argue about which traditional gods' name they should use to address their benefactor. They agree that offerings before a statue and an altar will constitute him a god (Plautus, *Asinaria* 711–18). In response to the addressing of Marcus Marius, Sulla had him seized by Catiline, his legs broken, his eyes put out, his tongue and arms severed while still alive, an incident that was still reported with abhorrence a hundred years later by Seneca in his essay *On anger* (Sen. *De ira* 3.18.1–2; see also Gradel 2002: 51). Here again, the involvement of a god in the everyday activities of Roman citizens constituted a risk and could be punished after a change of regime, something that could happen in the blink of an eye.

Religious communication with a new addressee was thus easy to set in motion. Just a few conventional signs or activities, either alone or in combination, were enough to make clear the religious dimension. Whether the communication would be judged to be appropriate by those attending or observing was far less easy to foresee. For the initiative did not have to lie with social or political elites. Quite the contrary: as the examples above show, such initiatives could, in various respects, interact with and alter existing power structures. The involvement of living or recently deceased individuals as new addressees in religious communication by their bereaved relatives, whether this was a divine Marius or a divine Iulius, was no less charged a project than the involvement of established deities perhaps belonging to opposing groups or ethnicities. Examples include Isis and Serapis, who were repeatedly established on and then thrown off the Capitoline hill during the years preceding (Varro, *ant. rer. div.* fr. 46 Cardauns). In those texts that serve us as sources, such moves and countermoves are narrated in terms not only of outcome – perhaps a new cult locale – but also of process. Like for my own argument, it is not in terms of the spread of some type of worship, of "ruler worship" or "imperial cult" (for these concepts, see Cancik and Hitzl 2003; Liertz 1998; Scheid 2004), that these events are important. Rather, they serve as representative instances of a religious strategy also available at the edges of the Empire, namely to involve in local religious communication new addressees from a distance and, above all, from the center. Simon Price's exemplary analysis of local elites in cities in Asia Minor has demonstrated how conventional and, at the same time, creative such an appropriation could be (Price 1984). However, neither Greek traditions nor the initiative of local notables were preconditions. Analyzing the introduction of new gods of this type in a wider framework of religious communication helps to show the potential of such religious practices, so widely attested throughout the *Imperium Romanum* (for this

perspective on religious communication see Tyrell, Krech and Knoblauch 1998; Rüpke 2001a; 2001b; Schörner and Šterbenc Erker 2008; Rosenberger 2013; Rüpke 2014).

The initial examples emphasize that religious communication was not restricted to a dialogue between a human actor and a divine addressee but functioned in a much wider social or spatial context. While the religious initiative might distinctly enhance the agency of those who put it into motion, it was essential to win allies for such ventures, perhaps even beyond the circle of already existing family, friends, or followers. Early examples of non-elite initiatives are attested in Italy. Before 15 BCE at Beneventum, the *arriviste* Publius Veidius Publii filius Pollio remembered in literature for his cruel practice of feeding slaves to moray eels, erected a "Caesareum" for Augustus and the colony (*CIL* 9.1556; on the individual see *Cass. Dio* 54.23.1–6). Sometime later, at Ferentinum, one Sextus Hortensius Clarus erected not only an "Augusteum" but also a forum and an ancillary building for the citizens. He marked the dedication of the building, erected at his own expense and on his land, with a great banquet (*CIL* 11.7431; further examples in Hänlein-Schäfer 1985: 89–93). It was social climbers in particular who gained a new quality of public presence by successfully establishing a cult locale or annual ritual (cf. the Japanese emperor cult: Yuge 1985; see also Ladage 1980). The social capital they could earn made them more ready to cover the costs arising from such projects and to commit their own time to performing associated functions. This is demonstrated by the many examples of Augustales *(seviri Augustales)* in Italy (Silvestrini 1992; Abramenko 1993; Pappalardo 1995; Gasparini 2014) and is underlined by the establishment of priesthoods (often called *flamines*) in the provinces (see e. g. Bassignano 1974; Alföldy 1973; Campanile 2004; Horster and Klöckner 2013). Many participants stood to gain from the extension of religious activity.

2 Religiously addressing rulers

Despite the potential gains, to begin something new in societies that acquired their perceived stability from what had "always been so", from traditions of action, thought, and speech was also always risky. To imitate the actions of the powerful and successful, of Roman, or, rather, Mediterranean merchants and administrators, was one possible approach for individuals on the periphery, whereby even resistance could occasionally become "cool". The appropriation of Roman religious practices led to the creation of enormous quantities of inscriptions and temples across the western Roman Empire. For religious communication whose purpose was to open up opportunities for agency and to secure central positions in existing local or provincial societies, it was important that the addressee, the designated "divine" counterpart, should be plausible to onlookers and capable of eliciting their consent.

To make this addressee the far-away ruler in Rome doubtless constantly evoked surprise among local audiences thinking in terms of traditional, that is to say local, gods.

And yet, such a choice had much to be said in its favor when seen against the background of the risks involved in religious communication and the selection of its addressees in general. The Roman ruler's existence could scarcely be doubted. His power too was undeniable, even if the assertion of its relevance to any particular situation may not have been indubitably plausible in every case. It was presumably more readily disputed by the denizens of distant, wealthy provincial cities or remote rural districts than by Italics, men with Roman citizenship, or those newly subjected. To all, however, the *princeps* of the moment offered an unambiguous point of reference, a person whose face was here and there to be seen, his name to be read, the effects of his actions to be related (for a general treatment of the emperor's referentiality see Ando 2003).

How relevance was maintained in particular instances of communication (on the concept of relevance in communication theory, see Wilson and Sperber 1994; 2012), and the detail of how the specific male or female addressee was decided upon, depended on a number of factors, including the competence and knowledge evinced by the actors in question, as well as their originality and the local traditions of religious discourse. In what follows I will review some of the options that were available and realized in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE for identifying, addressing, and involving emperors or people close to the emperor in religious communication. These options show the many points of departure in (above all Latin) traditions that enabled, but also limited and shaped, the strategies, and defined and modified what was plausible to local observers, as much as to viewers from the center. As a consequence, the following examples do not aim at being a geographically representative. Instead, they serve a typological purpose, intending to categorize the conceptions of the addressee that was defined as divine in such acts of religious communication.

2.1 Manes

The first item on the list does not concern a living emperor, but a future one, already dead. To place dead ancestors in the same category as deities and to employ the same ritual practices in communicating with them was an old Italian tradition (also found in other cultures – see Rüpke 2018, passim). From the first century onwards, starting at the city of Rome, this approach was reflected in the epigraphically attested address of the dead as *di manes* (see Bettini 2009; cf. Raepsaet-Charlier 2002 on the diffusion and the problems of dating). Against this background, the detailed description of a ritual addressed to a dead emperor-to-be, as well as the wording used, is of considerable interest. These details show just how carefully ritual plausibility and wide social involvement were organized. After the death of Lucius Caesar (17 BCE–2 CE), Augustus' adoptive son, the town council of the colony of Pisa decided to erect an altar with an annual ceremony for Lucius' *manes*. Significantly, even the term *di manes*, increasingly frequent in contemporary inscriptions, was omitted from most passages of the

resolution at Pisa (*CIL* 11.1420 = *ILS* 139; see also the subsequent resolution after the death of Lucius' brother Gaius Caesar in 4 CE – *CIL* 11.1421 = *ILS* 140). The committee and the clerks involved – Quintus Petillius, Publius Rasinius Bassus, Marcus Puppius, Quintus Sertorius Pica, Gnaeus Octavius Rufus, and Aulus Albius Gutta, all individually named – took as much care in setting out the requirements for the actions to be performed as in designating the addressee:

> *utique apud eam aram quodannis a. d. X[III k. Sept. p]ublice Manibus eius per magistratus eosve, qui ibi iuri dicendo pr[ae]runt, togis pullis amictos, quibus eorum ius fasque erit eo die [eiu]s vestis habendae, inferiae mittantur, bosque et ovis atri infulis caerulis infulati diis Manibus eiu[s] mactentur eaeque hostiae eo loco adoleantur superque eas singulae urnae lactis mellis olei fundantur, ac tum demum facta[m] c[eteris p]otestatem, si qui privatim velint Manibus eius inferias mitter[e nive quis] amplius uno cereo unave face coronave mittat, dum ii qui im[molaver]int cincti Gabino ritu struem lignorum succendant adque [peri]nde habeant ...* (*ILS* 139.16–26).
>
> ... and that at the altar every year on the 16th of August underworld offerings should be sent to his *Manes* in a public ritual by the magistrates or those who are at the head of the jurisdiction, clothed in dark togas, to whom of them on that day full human and divine law will allow to use such a clothing. A black bull and sheep, adorned with dark blue bands shall be sacrificed to his *di Manes* and these animals should be burned in that place and onto them, one urn each of milk, honey, and oil should be poured. And after this finally permission is given to everybody else, if a private person wishes to send underworld offerings to his *Manes* as long as it does not exceed the throwing of one candle, one torch, or one crown and as long as those who consecrate the animals girded in Gabine style set alight the heap of wood and then have ... (my translation)

What does the text tell us? Those who performed prominent roles in the death ritual had to wear black togas. The ox and the sheep to be slaughtered were similarly to be adorned with black bands, blue-black being regarded as the color of deepest mourning in Rome (on this color system see Rüpke 1993). A pitcher full of milk, honey, and oil each was to be poured over the animals' cremated remains. Those who lacked the legitimacy of public office were allowed to participate, but they were restricted to a candle, a torch, or a wreath, which they might throw into the burning pyre. Further rules were directly taken from the relevant resolution of the Roman Senate (on the spectrum of relevant aristocratic traditions of ritual performance, see Scheid 1993; 2007; 2009). All, according to the epigraphic version of the resolution from Pisa, was to be recorded in an inscription directly adjacent to the altar. Religious communication with Lucius' *manes* was at its most impressive in the annual performance on August 20, but it remained visible beyond that occasion, even if only by the carefully positioned altar, in front of which the burnt offering was also made after the Greek model. Thus, beyond an ephemeral ritual enactment, a ritual tradition or "cult" was established, radically new but at the same time entirely within the established religious categories, as acceptable at Pisa as at Rome.

2.2 Divus

As just illustrated, reflection on what it meant to be human found expression in the emergence of the term *di manes*. An answer also emerged to the question as to whether and how rulers should be addressed in religious communication. Within the field of positions between human and divine, *divus* marked an understanding of the transition in terms of a sharply defined distinction. *Divus* was, formally speaking, a personal title, the word's use signifying an assertion of the identity of human being and god. In a similar fashion to the way senators during the Republic had discussed whether observed portents were to be considered as prodigies for the *res publica*, now they were to discuss whether the human being they had themselves observed could have become a god (Várhelyi 2010: 166). At the same time, the fact that the title also occurred in some older names of gods – Diva Palatua, Diva Angerona, Diva Rumina, Bona Diva[2] (also Bona Dea) – pointed towards the world of established deities. However, the terminology was far from standardized, even at the center, and could, indeed, even be ambivalent. Cicero himself appears to have used *divus* as a designation for ancient deities and *deus* for such new ones as had arisen from the deification of humans, although the textual tradition here is uncertain (Cic. *Leg.* 2.22 in the reconstruction of the text by Andrew Dyck). In short, when used in relation to a formerly living person, the term *divus* suggested a perceptible change of status.

In Rome, the senators or the heirs of an emperor provided the necessary basis for such a clear-cut switch from human to divine status by performing the consecration ritual (see Kierdorf 1986; Price 1987; Rosenbaum-Alföldi 2015). In figurative and partly also ritual terms, the metaphor of the ascent to heaven was central, whether in the form of a soaring eagle or of a journey on Sol's chariot (this is still valid in the early 4th century: Rosenbaum-Alföldi 2015). The ascent could be observed and, like the appearance of a new star, a comet in Caesar's case, or the empty tomb with the rock pushed aside in the case of Jesus, it was empirically comprehensible or could be authenticated by eyewitnesses. The established ritual referred back to ancient narratives, beginning with Romulus, and repeated them reliably and observably. It always took place on the Field of Mars (for the topographical context and development see Albers 2013: 206–211). The organizers always released an eagle, whose ascent everyone could observe. There was always a funeral pyre, even when the corpse had long been disposed of (thus Jaccottet 2013). This theology of ascent or "Ascension" was unsophisticated. However, as we shall soon see, it permitted oversight.

2 E. g. Varro, *Ling.* 7.45; *Fasti Praenestini, Inscr. It.* 13.2.139; Ov. *Am.* 3.637; *Fast.* 5.148; Plin. *HN* 3.65; Solinus 1.6; Aug. *civ.* 6.10 (Varro).

2.3 New gods are known gods

The alternatives to this sharply marked ascent from human being to god lacked a similar level of control and ritual standardization. The richest associations between (former) human and the divine derived from the conception that the other, and above all the ruler, might be the epiphany of a known god. To incorporate this assumption into one's own project of religious communication was not only to honor the individual thus identified (in case a malevolent observer wished to raise an accusation of *maiestas*). In addition, this type of address also opened up a rich spectrum of images and narratives of that god that could be called upon to enhance the plausibility of their project further. However, the opposite direction of transfer may have been more critical in everyday reality: the importance and contingent relevance of an address directed towards a known god might be enhanced by association with personal and political facets of the identified individual. An obvious choice was the figure of Hercules: energetic, a creator of order, and at the same time himself a human being promoted to divine status, Hercules thus stands as an exemplar of the matter at issue here (on Hercules/Herakles, see Jaczynowska 1981; Ritter 1995; Schultz 2000). But the spectrum was broader. It extended from Jupiter, the main political god of the city of Rome, and Zeus, who played a comparable role in many cities of the Eastern Mediterranean world, through the triumphant Dionysos (translated as Liber Pater), to Apollo and Romulus Quirinus. In many instances, the individual affected would suggest such identifications himself, by making a god a particularly important personal addressee, sponsoring temples or games to him or her, or dressing the part.

2.4 Augustus and Augusta

Proximity and genealogical reference, epiphany or internal presence of the divine: the possibilities for conceptualizing the relationship with a god were many and varied, while the demand for precision was, on the whole, rare. Here too, individuals resorted to older reflections about the relationships of gods to one another, which had found expression in the copious juxtapositions and subordinations of gods' names. Ennius mentions Nerio or Nerie Mavortis as well as a Hora Quirini in his epic *Annales*, written at the beginning of the 2nd century BCE, and Gellius in the 2nd century CE sets out what alternative understandings lay behind these names. The power of Mars? The Nerio in the sphere of Mars? Nerio, wife of Mars? Peaceful Mars?[3] Thus, Augustus' wife Livia was addressed after her death (in the dative, denoting her as the recipient)

3 Enn. *ann.* 99–100 Skutsch; for the interpretation Gell. *NA* 13.23.7, 15 and 19.

as *Livia Augusti dea, Iuno Livia* (*Liviae?*) *Augusti*, and *Ceres Iulia* (*Iuliae?*) *Augusta/ae*.[4] These were not slips of the tongue but rituals so important to their principals that they were also expressed in epigraphic form. What remained ambiguous in linguistic terms could be clarified figuratively, if, for example, the instigator of the religious communication placed two statues next to one another. (Dea) Roma and Augustus were a favored pairing, while Venus and Caesar were a controversial match. Choice of material might provide nuance that united or polarized observers. The clearly established autonomy of human personality itself provoked questions about its ontological status, its place in an order in which angels, demons, and gods, while frequently invoked and thus known, were enigmatic as far as details were concerned. The utmost variety of local conceptions could lie concealed behind a concept such as "angel". In a given specific situation, their identification could well prove controversial (for *angelos* Cline 2011: 75; see also Fauth 2014; Muehlberger 2013).

2.5 Numen and genius

Of the possible positioning in the field of the divine, two were frequently chosen and rapidly institutionalized. One of these was the *Numen Augusti*, a "power of assent" attaching to the Augustus. According to Varro, qualities such as this were assigned above all to Jupiter (Varro, *ling.* 7.85; cf. Livy 7.6.8–11). It now provided a possible formulation for an addressee located beyond a spatio-temporal situation and yet ascribed effective power within it. In its precise imprecision – quite clearly divine yet in an unclear relation to the person of the Augustus, which is to say making no assertion as to his status – this concept was propagated by provincial administrations and elites in the context of prominent religious activity, as, for example, in founding and operating central cult locations (see Fishwick 2002: 234). Theological systematization followed only later, when the concept of *numen* had already been widely disseminated in connection with Augusti (see e.g. Serv. *Aen.* 1.8; 5.241, *Georg.* 1.21; cf. Pötscher 1978; Fishwick 1991; Fenechiu 2008, the latter with painstaking analysis of pre-imperial sources).

In a similar fashion, many actors rapidly appropriated and thus shaped (for the concept of "appropriation" see Certeau 1984) the concept of *genius* on their own account. It was occasionally used in domestic religious practice in order to capture the notion of a family centered on the father. However, this usage did not become popular until the *Genius Augusti* became a topos (for the latter Hänlein-Schäfer 1996; Rosso 2014), at which point it was used to capture the binding power of human groups as addressees of religious communication, the common element in all the uses of *genii*. *Genii* of cohorts

4 *ILS* 119–121. In Juno and Ceres, two goddesses associated with maternal roles are invoked here; imperial-age theorizing over the "Juno" of every woman (Sen. *epist.* 110.1; Plin. *HN* 2.16) is extraneous here.

and legions, and even of detachments *(vexillum)*, were present in military dedications (for an overview Stoll 2001). No such far-reaching power of innovation was assigned to the *numen* (an exception perhaps in *CIL* 10.3920 = *ILS* 6307: *numen Capuae*). *Genius* and *numen* as concepts also remained confined to the Latin language with no trace of any comparable notion appearing in Greek or any other Mediterranean language.

2.6 *Pro salute* and further strategies of addressing

The desire to encourage reflection on the person of the Augustus or his family was, at most, of secondary concern in the choice of such addressees in religious communication. The central strategy underlying the choice lay in the enormous boost to the relevance of communication that brought an empire-wide actor into the local context. Onlookers might well have regarded such a step as "unnecessary", but such an attitude would not alter the fact that the principal had thereby enhanced the status of his or her petition. In consequence, of course, they would also have to respond to the challenge of giving a suitably lavish form to the act of communication in question. Opting for the emperor raised the threshold of adequacy for such s ritual action.

This also applied to cases in which the Augustus or Augusti were not directly addressed by the principals but were included, perhaps along with their family, as the beneficiary of communication with divine addressees: *pro salute Augusti* ... ("for the emperor's wellbeing") was a formula frequently used across all religious orientations (Reynolds 1962; this also applies to writers in a Christian context, such as Tertullian (*apol.* 29–30) and Lactantius (e.g. *mort. pers.* 34.5), see Kahlos 2011: 261–266). It rendered any more precise description of the projected "wellbeing" unnecessary while permitting extensions such as "unharmed", "departure and return", and the like.[5] Strikingly, the formula was almost never abbreviated, this occurring only when the principal's own welfare *(salute sua)* was indicated. The formula provided an easily recognizable form that was required in view of the complex relationship between actor and beneficiary. The choice unmistakably implied a claim to a relationship with the ruler as a person; its extension to the entire imperial family, the "house of the *divus*" *(domus divina)*, was accordingly unproblematic (on the emergence of this concept, see Wardle 2009: 480–483; on the formula *in honorum domus divinae* see Cesarano 2015; generally on the family as *domus* Saller 1984; Hölkeskamp 2014).

This method of including the Augusti in local religious communication was plausible because the rulers were already present in many ways, extending from rare direct communications via letters to town councils or officials to the more common figura-

5 See e.g. the comprehensive list of beneficiaries and principals in *CIL* 6.225 = *ILS* 2186: *pro salute, itu, reditu et victoria imp(eratorum)* ...

as *Livia Augusti dea, Iuno Livia (Liviae?) Augusti,* and *Ceres Iulia (Iuliae?) Augusta/ae.*[4] These were not slips of the tongue but rituals so important to their principals that they were also expressed in epigraphic form. What remained ambiguous in linguistic terms could be clarified figuratively, if, for example, the instigator of the religious communication placed two statues next to one another. (Dea) Roma and Augustus were a favored pairing, while Venus and Caesar were a controversial match. Choice of material might provide nuance that united or polarized observers. The clearly established autonomy of human personality itself provoked questions about its ontological status, its place in an order in which angels, demons, and gods, while frequently invoked and thus known, were enigmatic as far as details were concerned. The utmost variety of local conceptions could lie concealed behind a concept such as "angel". In a given specific situation, their identification could well prove controversial (for *angelos* Cline 2011: 75; see also Fauth 2014; Muehlberger 2013).

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4 *ILS* 119–121. In Juno and Ceres, two goddesses associated with maternal roles are invoked here; imperial-age theorizing over the "Juno" of every woman (Sen. *epist.* 110.1; Plin. *HN* 2.16) is extraneous here.

Senate on September 19, 44 BCE (the so-called *Second Philippic*), Cicero, the speaker, takes Marcus Antonius, appointed *flamen* in Caesar's very last days, sternly to the task. He accuses Antonius of behaving now like the *flamen* of the god Julius *(divo Iulio)*, setting himself up as the equal of the *flamines* of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus. Cicero's polemic goes on to ask why Antonius has not yet been inaugurated, ritually introduced into the priestly office and calls for a mechanism of control for the new type of priesthood (Cic. *Phil.* 2.110; on Antonius' appointment in Caesar's lifetime CD 44.6.4). The ritual was not in fact brought into being, and the role thus institutionalized, until 40 BCE (Plut. *Ant.* 33.1), whereas the *luperci Iulii* had already been established by Caesar himself: they were evidently regarded as his priestly "bodyguard". Their dissolution as early as 43 BCE also saw the end of Antonius' leading role as their *magister* (see Rüpke 2008: no. 669 with further sources). As we have seen before, religiously addressing the ruler was something of a risk.

The "son of the god", *Divi (Iuli) filius*, soon to be called Augustus, regarded the position of the *flamen* to be so much in need of control that, after Antonius' death, and probably as early as 29 BCE, he transferred it to his (still young) nephew Sextus Appuleius (*CIL* 8.24583 = *ILS* 8963 with Rüpke 2008: no. 687 on the identification), son of a consul of that year. We may assume that it was at this same time[6] that the *de facto* sole ruler established alternative forms for the religious veneration of rulers. The Arval brethren preserved the memory of Romulus and memorialized important moments from the life of the family and the rulership of the Augustus in their rituals (Scheid 1990). The future Augustus oriented the *sodales Titii*, who had already existed in the Republican age and probably embodied a reference to the ancient *tribus Titiensis*,[7] to an annual cult at the supposed tomb of the mythical Sabine king and five-year colleague of Romulus, Titus Tatius. About twenty years later, Dionysius of Halicarnassus as a newcomer to Rome accepted this public cult as an established fact (Dion. Hal. *ant. Rom.* 2.52.5; there too the information about the five years in a shared office). Several decades of dominance assured even risky enterprises.

Terms such as *fratres*, "brethren", or *sodales*, "companions", unlike *flamen*, left the status of the revered person uncertain. When Augustus died in 14 CE after an unexpectedly long life, recourse was had to the model of the *sodales Titii*, although with qualifications imposed by Tiberius. Thus the *sodales Augustales* would follow the pattern set by Titus Tatius, who had enjoined his "companions" to perpetuate Sabine cults: Tacitus' account in his *Annales* leaves the actors of 14 CE and their particular positions entirely unclear. The lottery for the twenty-one places included the entire elite and was

6 Augustus' membership and, presumably, thus also his initiative is attested only in August. *Gest.* 7, see Rüpke 2008: no. 1012.

7 The only Republican source is Varro, *ling.* 5.85, where the more precise description until the beginning of the exposition *[... augures ab avibus] quas in auguriis certis observare solent* is omitted from the tradition of the *Codex unicus*. Scheid 1990: 252 establishes the connection with the *curia*.

only subsequently complemented by the appointment of Tiberius, Drusus, Germanicus, and Claudius, constituting the dynastic core of the Claudians (Tac. *Ann.* 1.54.1). The family had a sanctuary in Bovillae in Latium, which was now monumentalized. Whether there the *sodales Augustales* exercised any ritual function prior to the completion of construction work is unknown to us. With the lavish equipment of the new locale, including epigraphic membership lists (see Rüpke 2005: 24), the actors involved intentionally blended the gentilician, and thus non-public, character of the *sacrarium* of the *gens Iulia* with the cult of *divus Augustus*, whose statue was erected there (see Tac. *ann.* 2.41.1; similarly Wissowa 1912: 565). Attempts at control, such as the *consecratio* with its clear-cut change of status were frustrated by such deliberate blending.

Maintenance of the cult of the *gens Claudia Domitiaque* at Antium was subsequently transferred to the same group (thus with Wissowa from Tac. *ann.* 15.23.2). Accordingly, the name was extended to become *sodales Augustales Claudiales*. These meticulous incremental adjustments carried out by Tiberius did not prevent the *sodales* from being perceived as a "proper" priesthood. As early as 22 CE Tiberius had to allow the *Augustales*, as the priesthood of the *domus Augusta*, the family of Augustus, to host games pledged by the Senate, in common with other highly-regarded priesthoods (Tac. *Ann.* 3.64, esp. 4). The possibilities for both Augusti and senators to assert their positions for the long term were evidently limited. Those limits were to be found both in the perceptions of third parties and in the internal dynamics of the new institutions, even in the readiness (or lack thereof) of individual members of the priesthoods or their dependents and clients to reproduce the detail of titulatures. So the following two centuries saw the parallel emergence of *sodales Augustales Claudiales*, *sodales Flaviales Titiales*, *sodales Hadrianales*, and *sodales Antoniniani* (for all deified emperors from Antoninus Pius to the Severans). Isolated attempts in the second half of the 2nd century to reduce or centralize this apparatus by establishing a union of personnel between sodalities or a new group of *sacerdotes domus Augustae*, perhaps a kind of court priesthood, show no signs of long-term success (Rüpke 2005: 1587–1600).

The flaminate, that priestly role that, in Rome, appeared largely bereft of an autonomous initiative by virtue of its embedding in the pontifical college (Rüpke 2002), was exceedingly successful in the provinces. In many places in the Roman Empire, the role of *flamen* (and, for deified female members of the ruling house, the *flaminica*) became an important opportunity to practice and configure the ruler cult. From Britannia to Africa, Hispania to Syria, members of local elites and those seeking advancement used the chance afforded by religious communication with the *divi Augusti* (and *Augustae*) to enhance their own agency and religious experience. Extensive expectations, of course, applied to the office, normally held for a year. It nevertheless provided scope for personal initiatives affecting the spatial and architectural, as well as the ritual, face of these new gods, extending into the realm of "mysteries" (Pleket 1965; Gagé 1981; 1986; Clauss 1999: 339–41; the phenomenon does not feature in the study by Engster 2002, otherwise rich in material). The figure of the *flamen*, and even

the lifelong office of *flamen perpetuus*, became a hallmark of Rome-oriented towns well into Late Antiquity, the office even being held by individuals who saw themselves as Christians (Jarrett 1971; Alföldy 1973; Fishwick 1981; Christians: *CIL* 8.450; Marcillet-Jaubert 1987; see in general Boin 2015). As in Rome, its presence could be augmented by groups whose members were seen as priests or magistrates by virtue of their cult role. These *Augustales*, already mentioned above, were recruited partly from the ranks of *arrivistes*, freedmen, and partly from existing local economic or political elites. To some extent, they constituted a distinct social class (Di Vita-Évrard 1997; Cébeillac-Gervasoni 2000; Gasparini 2014: 267–272). Again, the evidence from the center should not fool us with regard to the tension mentioned at the beginning of this subchapter. The spatial limits of effective control created a huge discrepancy between the interest in and the success of control. Thus, we need to be very careful in supposing a far-reaching isomorphy of offices, even if the terms (such as *flamen*) are identical.

4 Conclusion

The reference to the ruling Augustus was rich in possibilities. The ruler might appear as a military victor and protector, as the quintessence of piety (when posing as sacrificer), as a generous patron, as a savior during natural catastrophes, as a source of wellbeing. This diversity was reflected far from Rome in individual interventions and donations recorded on building inscriptions, in the Augustus' presence on military standards or in the form of statues, and images and legends on coins. In these respects, the invocation of an emperor became plausible as it was related to a person perhaps never seen except on coins, yet unambiguously existent. The invocation was also rendered plausible in its special "divine" quality by the minor rituals and major festivals celebrated by Roman administrators and soldiers, as for instance documented in the *ferialia* of units of the Roman army (Fink, Hoey and Snyder 1940, Fishwick 1988, Reeves 2004; Rüpke 1990: 174–176), or as enacted in a provincial governor's house (see Haensch 1997; 2006). In this way, it offered every subject of the emperor a reference point that was at the same time individual and socially plausible (further developed by Ando 2001; 2003; 2013; demonstrated for instance for Paul by Maier 2013).

However, the increasing sacralization of the Augusti through the images they disseminated and the etiquette by which they formalized access to their persons also increasingly restricted the scope and flexibility of such references (Hekster 2011). The possibility of treating the particular quality of the ruler in reflection and conversation – especially after his death – was to this extent reduced. It was the senators and intellectuals of the Principate who were able to discuss the boundaries of human potential using the emperor as an example, without awaiting the passage of a great interval of

time[8] – a discourse frequently originating in the capital but which could (often successfully) spread to readers throughout the empire.

As early as the twenties of the 1st century BCE, the Apulian poet Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Horace), a protégé of Augustus' Etruscan confidant Maecenas, wondered whether it was a god in human form that had been sent to Rome's aid. Not until the last lines of his poem does he propose a solution to the puzzle by identifying this savior as the young Caesar (Hor. *carm.* 1.2). The same poet went further a decade later. In the fourth book of his *carmina*, which may have been published sometime around 13 BCE, he addresses Caesar as a son of the gods, comparing his presence in the city with the light and the spring, and saying that he makes the day fairer and the sun brighter (Hor. *carm.* 4.5.1–8). However, it is above all military successes that are mentioned again and again. Against this background, so the songs relate, Caesar is invoked in prayer with libations of wine and his divine power *(numen)* revered along with the Lares. To him are compared Castor and Hercules, adoptees of the gods (Hor. *carm.* 4.5.33–6). A bare half-century later, it was self-evident to the historian Valerius Maximus, coming from a social stratum comparable to that of Horace, that a review of world history had to begin with an invocation of the ruling Caesar, the name having long since become generic for the imperial ruler. The foreword to Valerius' collection of *Exempla* ends aphoristically with the assertion: "We received the other gods; the Caesars we gave" (Val. Max. 1, *pr.*, see Rüpke 2016; on the limits to the ecumenical view see Nguyen 2008: 72–76).

Images of the emperors increasingly characterized the cityscape. Independently of all other considerations, the material used, say, for statues themselves informs us of the agenda: a statue made of gold and ivory had to represent a god. Nobody after C. Iulius Caesar drew on such materials for himself during his own lifetime (Lapatin 2010: 150; see also Pollini 2012). The prominence of religious practices related to the Augusti and their families (on the beginning of dynastic strategies see Hurlet 2009) is unmistakable and can be seen most clearly in the array of great festivals held under the aegis of the public priesthoods. It was the production of calendars in the Roman mode of *fasti* that permitted this year-round presence to be conveyed to places outside Rome as well, to towns that did not themselves organize all these rituals: the brief entries in small letters to be found in calendars such as that at Amiternum referred to the biographies and successes of the Augusti. Here too, the physical material played a role: the use of marble in particular underlined the significance of these "narratives". And it was the resistance of the material to the rapid additions and corrections made to these festivals and narratives due to conspiracies, victories, births, and deaths, that turned local patrons against the medium as early as the mid-1st century CE (Rüpke 2011: 140–145). Even the dissemination of epigraphic copies of Augustus' *Res gestae*, the introductions

8 See e. g. Seneca, *On clemency* 1.10.3: no belief in divinity on command. On changes in genres and themes, see also Haake 2011.

of which presented local Roman elements to everybody as part of the imperial Roman culture (Cooley 2014), was not repeated. The dates of the Roman festivals were, in any case, rarely adopted into everyday local affairs, even in the religious sphere,[9] except where legal provisions imposed restrictions, for instance, on the conduct of legal cases.

For all the possibilities offered by the new god or gods, in everyday life outside the capital, the emperor was still very far away. Experiences of the emperors were diverse and changing: optimism and disappointment, concrete benefactions or absence in daily life were all part of the local reality. Reference to these new gods was a risky business and always subject to question, whether at the edges of the Empire or in its center. This very specific character of these gods' "transcendence" was my starting point. The political plausibility of the figure of the ruler could easily be exploited religiously. However, as the religious "transcendence" was also a form of political presence, this resource was competed for and controlled by very different agents, such as social climbers, local notables, or stake-holders at Rome. Once introduced, it needed to be adequate to those towering figures and constant effort was required in order to render the relationship plausible. In many towns, people made such efforts, while in others they did not. The geographical distance was not the criterion. Religiously addressing the *imperatores* created a spatial network that had its knots at the centers and on the edge of the *Imperium Romanum* – and even beyond (on the latter see Metzler 1989). This type of religious practices allowed the edges to come as close to the central resource of imperial power as people in Italy or Rome could.

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9 An exception was widespread acceptance of "1 August", which was centrally decreed in the cult of the *lares* in the *vici*; see e. g. *AE* 1980: 57.

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