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MASTER THESIS

The Goddess Fortuna on Augustus Coins: A Semiotic Study of
Visual Representation and Cultural Significance

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Abstract

This thesis explores the representation and significance of the goddess Fortuna on Augustus's coins, using a semiotic method to decode the visual and cultural implications of these ancient artifacts. The study begins with an examination of the cult and iconography of Fortuna and reveals the historical development and religious significance of her worship in Roman society. The study delves into the semiotics of numismatics and shows how coins became communication and propaganda. The analysis focuses on the reign of Augustus and explains the role of coinage in political strategy and ideology. A detailed analysis of the representation of Fortuna on Augustan coins is presented, considering factors such as color composition, artistic style and symbolic interaction. The research shows how Fortuna was integrated into Augustus' ideology, enhancing his image and authority through religious and cultural symbols. Additionally, by examining the acquisition and circulation of these coins, the thesis examines how different social classes perceived these coins and interacted with them. The circulation of Fortuna coinage has been discussed in the context of their contribution to Augustus' public image and its wider impact on society. Basically, this work provides a comprehensive appreciation of the semiotic and cultural aspects of Fortuna's visual representation on the Augustus's coinage and contributes to a broader discussion of ancient numismatics and Roman cultural history.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the hallowed chambers of numismatic history, where the tangible remnants of ancient civilizations whisper their secrets, the coins of Rome occupy a prominent pedestal. The small, unassuming disks of metal carry within them the stories of emperors and empires, the narratives of conquests and capitulations, and the symbolic weight of an entire culture. Among the numerous motifs on Roman coins, Fortuna is perhaps one of the most interesting and unique.

The thesis invites the reader on a fascinating journey in the realm of Fortuna as she appears on the coins minted during the reign of Augustus, when Rome was transitioning from a republic to an empire. The image of Fortuna on the coins holds messages whose reach goes beyond commercial trade; the coins are semiotic vehicles of cultural expression and political communication. The aim of this study is to decode the semiotic language of Fortuna's representation on these coins, unearthing layers of symbolism and cultural import hidden beneath their numismatic veneer.

Fortuna, the goddess of luck, fortune and fate, had a special place in the Roman pantheon. Her amazing nature made her a beloved, serene god and at the same time a force to be feared. She was not a distant, abstract idea; she was closely linked to the daily lives and desires of the Roman people.

This study connected with Fortuna on the coins of Augustus is based on the field of semiotics, which offers a theoretical background. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and their meaning which will act as our guide while we embark on our journey to decode this language of coins. The concept of semiotics is very relevant in numismatics since coins are absolutely unique media for communicating information. The coins are objects of both an applied and an artistic nature that are designed for circulation in an economic circle while simultaneously becoming vehicles for propaganda of political, religious, and cultural ideas. They are, in essence, tangible symbols with the power to communicate across time and space.

Central to our study is the figure of Augustus, who masterfully harnessed the visual language of coins to communicate his authority and shape the narrative of his reign. Augustus was not merely

a ruler; he was a propagandist par excellence. His coinage was a means of disseminating his messages and establishing his presence in the daily lives of his subjects.

Fortuna as a symbol had strong significance in this narrative. Her representation on coins was not just randomly chosen but highly purposive: a statement of the divine connection claimed by the emperor, a statement of the solidity and prosperity under his rule, and most importantly, a statement of continuity between the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire. The coins were not just currency; they were, among others, instruments for ideological discourse, tools for the reinforcement of Augustus' authority and legitimacy in the Roman Empire¹.

The Structure of the Thesis

In my thesis, the introduction provides background and context to the study. My topic is Roman ancient coinage, not as a medium of economic exchange per se, but as a significant means of communication as well as propaganda. This part introduces the goddess of fortune and luck, Fortuna, and formulates the main aim of the thesis that is going to analyze semiotics of Fortuna's image on Augustan coins and interpretation of these semiotic elements in cultural-policy context. The intro part holds a set of questions which are studied and the process that has been followed in this article.

The second chapter, entitled "Cults of Fortuna," goes more in detail on the background of the worship of Fortuna and the part that she played in cultural ancient Rome. This chapter will focus on the various facets and epithets of Fortuna, such as *Fortuna Primigenia*, *Fortuna Virilis*, and *Fortuna Redux*; how she was worshiped; and what the Roman people understood her to mean. This chapter, therefore, also discusses the historical evolution of the worship of Fortuna, where her cult adapted to the changing political and social Roman landscapes. This chapter focuses on the worship of Fortuna, creating a background context that would allow for a more in-depth discussion on Fortuna's representation as offered by numismatic art.

¹ notable example is the aureus coin minted in 19 BCE, where Fortuna is depicted with a cornucopia and a rudder, emphasizing Augustus' control over Rome's fate and the prosperity brought under his rule. The inscription "FORTVNA AVG" underscores the divine favor and stability Augustus claimed to provide, effectively linking his leadership with Fortuna's blessings and the continuity of Roman success (Sutherland, C.H.V. "The Roman Imperial Coinage, Volume I: From 31 BC to AD 69." Spink & Son Ltd, 1984, p. 54).

The contextual background on Fortuna is, therefore, followed by expanding into theory with semiotics and how that is applied in numismatics. Following Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, this chapter will outline basic principles of semiotic or sign theory. It explains how signs and symbols function in cultural and communicative systems and gives the equipment to analyze the complex imagery of the Roman coins. This section highlights semiotics as the most valuable tool for decoding the visual language that is used in numismatics and demonstrates the power of coins, which laid it in transferring these political and cultural powerful messages.

Based on this theoretical background, the thesis subsequently focuses on the image of Fortuna featured on coins emitted under Augustus. The middle chapter, in turn, offers detailed semiotics of Fortuna's iconography, working through her various attributes such as the cornucopia, rudder, and other motifs. It is a discussion of the ways in which these emblems were used to convey abundance, prosperity, and fate mastery in a way aligned with Augustus's overall propaganda. The design, inscriptions, and context of the coins are considered in this analysis of the subtle ways in which Augustus exploited the imagery associated with Fortuna to augment his political legitimacy and advance his vision of restored and resplendent Rome. A further comparison is also made between Fortuna on Augustan coins and similar depictions in both contemporary and earlier representations to identify changes or staggered advancements in symbolism and meaning.

In the concluding section, the thesis synthesizes the findings from the previous chapters, summarizing the key insights gained from the semiotic analysis of Augustan coinage. It reflects on the broader implications of these findings for our understanding of Roman visual culture, political propaganda, and the interplay between art and power in ancient Rome. This section discusses the limitations of the current study, acknowledging the constraints and challenges faced during the research process. It also suggests potential avenues for future research, highlighting areas where further exploration could yield additional insights into the semiotic significance of numismatic art and the cultural narratives embedded in ancient coinage.

Overall, the structure of this thesis is carefully crafted to guide the reader through a logical and coherent progression from context and theory to detailed analysis and synthesis. Each chapter builds upon the previous one, providing a comprehensive examination of Fortuna's depiction on Augustan coins and its broader cultural and political implications. The detailed exploration of semiotics, combined with a focused analysis of numismatic evidence, offers a rich and nuanced

understanding of how visual symbols were employed to convey powerful messages in ancient Rome.

The Significance of This Study

In an era marked by the relentless pursuit of modernity, the study of ancient coins may seem like an endeavor confined to the realms of academia and antiquarianism. However, as we embark on this exploration, it becomes apparent that the study of Fortuna on Augustus coins exceeds the limits of historical research. It serves as a bridge between epochs, providing us with insights into the timeless human preoccupation with fate, fortune, and the divine. Moreover, this study is not just an exercise in numismatics or semiotics; it is an exploration of the enduring power of symbols to shape and reflect the collective consciousness of a society. Symbols are not passive; they are active agents in the construction of meaning, influencing belief systems, behaviors, and perceptions. By decoding the visual language of Fortuna on Augustus coins, we gain access to the beliefs and values of a civilization that continues to resonate with us through the echoes of history.

This thesis contributes to the broader field of Roman studies, offering a new perspective on the reign of Augustus and the visual culture of ancient Rome and implies a new approach to the role of numismatics in our understanding of the past, using coins not merely as relics, but as lively windows on the complex tapestry of human existence.

Methodological Framework

The methodology of the present thesis is comprehensive and multidisciplinary, where the numismatic analysis will be used in conjunction with semiotic theory to reveal the cultural, political, and symbolic meaning behind the depiction of Fortuna on the coins from the reign of Augustus. This approach ensures a thorough examination of both the visual and contextual elements of these coins, enabling a deeper understanding of their role in Augustan propaganda and Roman society.

It will involve logging onto various numismatic databases, museum collections, and academic publications for images and details of the coins, starting with the collection of representative

samples of coins issued during the reign of Augustus and featuring the image of Fortuna. Each coin is cataloged with its issue date, mint location, denomination, and physical characteristics.

Following the visual analysis, a contextual analysis is focusing on the coins within the broader historical, cultural, and political context of Augustus's reign. This involves studying historical texts, contemporary records, and previous scholarly research to understand the socio-political landscape of the time. The contextual analysis examines how the imagery of Fortuna on coinage aligns with Augustan propaganda themes, such as the restoration of peace, prosperity, and divine favor.

The methodology also includes a comparative analysis of Fortuna's depictions on Augustan coins with other contemporary and earlier representations. This step aims to identify shifts in symbolism and meaning by comparing the iconography of Fortuna across different time periods and regions. Such comparisons help to highlight the unique aspects of Augustan coinage and the evolution of Fortuna's imagery in response to changing political and cultural dynamics.

Central to the methodology is the semiotic analysis of the coins. This involves applying the principles of semiotics, as established by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, to decode the symbols and motifs on the coins. Saussure's dyadic model, which distinguishes between the signifier (the form of the sign) and the signified (the concept it represents), is used to analyze the visual elements and their meanings². Peirce's triadic model, which includes the representamen (the form of the sign), the interpretant (the interpretation of the sign), and the object (the concept the sign refers to), provides a framework for understanding how different audiences might interpret the imagery of Fortuna³.

The semiotic analysis focuses on how Fortuna's attributes and symbols function as signs within the cultural and political system of ancient Rome. This involves exploring the relationship between the visual representations and the concepts they signify, such as abundance, prosperity, and control over fate⁴. The analysis also considers the interpretive role of the viewer, examining how the

² Saussure, 1959.

³ Peirce, 1931-1958.

⁴ Champeaux, 1982.

imagery of Fortuna might have been perceived by different segments of Roman society, from common citizens to the political elite ⁵.

At the end, the methodology includes a synthesis and interpretation of the findings from the previous analyses. This step involves integrating the insights gained from the visual, contextual, comparative, and semiotic analyses to interpret the broader implications of Fortuna's depiction on Augustan coinage. The synthesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these coins functioned as tools of propaganda, reflecting and reinforcing Augustan ideology and the cultural values of ancient Rome.

By mixing numismatic analysis with semiotic theory, this methodology allows for a multifaceted examination of Fortuna's depiction on Augustan coins. It highlights the intricate ways in which visual symbols were employed to convey powerful political and cultural messages, contributing to our understanding of Roman visual culture and the role of coinage in ancient propaganda.

Literature Review

The literature on Roman coins and deities provides a rich perspective on the political and cultural history of ancient Rome. The depiction of Fortuna on coins minted during Augustus' reign is very important themes of divine favor, political propaganda, and cultural symbolism. Fortuna, the goddess of luck and fortune, had an important place in Roman religion. Her images were deeply embedded in the daily lives and spiritual beliefs of Romans. Fortuna's cults, such as Fortuna Primigenia and Fortuna Virilis, highlighted her multifaceted nature and her role in various aspects of life, from personal fortunes to state prosperity.⁶

Scholars like Dumézil (1970)⁷ and Versnel (1992)⁸ have explored how Fortuna's worship incorporated elements from Greek deities, in particular Tyche, emphasizing the goddess's adaptability and relevance across different regions of the Roman Empire. Beard, North, and Price

⁵ Versnel, 1992.

⁶ Arya, 2002, 344.

⁷ Dumézil, G. 1970. *La religion romaine archaïque*. Paris, Payot.

⁸ Versnel, H.S. 1992. *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion, Volume 1: Ter Unus*. Leiden, Brill.

(1998)⁹ discuss the integration of Fortuna into both public and private worship, underscoring her importance in societal rituals and personal devotion.

Augustus's reign marked a period of great change, and Fortuna was used to show the stability and progress of his reign. Augustus used images of Fortuna Redux and Fortuna Augusta to emphasize his political legitimacy and divine support¹⁰. The use of Fortuna on coins during Augustus's reign is a prime example of numismatic propaganda. Coins served as a medium for disseminating messages about the emperor's divine favor and the prosperity of his rule¹¹.

The semiotic approach provides a framework for understanding the symbols and motifs associated with Fortuna on Augustan coinage. Scholars like Saussure (1959) and Peirce (1931-1958) offer theoretical foundations for interpreting these visual elements. Fortuna is often depicted with a cornucopia, rudder, or wheel, each symbolizing aspects of abundance, guidance, and the cyclical nature of fate. These attributes are analyzed for their political and cultural implications¹². Coins are examined as tools for ideological discourse, with the imagery of Fortuna reinforcing messages of stability, prosperity, and divine favor. This analysis highlights the role of coins in the everyday reinforcement of Augustan ideology¹³.

Comparative studies reveal how the depiction of Fortuna on Augustan coins evolved and differed from earlier and contemporary representations. This approach helps to identify shifts in symbolism and the broader impact of these numismatic practices on Roman visual culture. Scholars like Metcalf (2005)¹⁴ have compared Fortuna's imagery on coins across different periods and regions, providing insights into the changing political and cultural landscapes of Rome. The broader implications of Fortuna's depiction on coins are explored in terms of their contribution to our understanding of Roman visual culture and the interplay between art and power¹⁵.

As a result, references to Fortuna on August coins emphasize the important role of the goddess in Roman religion, culture and politics. Through semiotic analysis, historical context, and

⁹ Beard, M., North, J., and Price, S. 1998. *Religions of Rome: Volume 1, A History*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰ Zanker, 1988; Galinsky, 1996.

¹¹ Harl, 1996; Mattingly, 1923

¹² Champeaux, 1982; Zanker, 1988.

¹³ Buttrey, 1988.

¹⁴ Metcalf, W.E. 2005. *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

¹⁵ Zanker, 1988.

comparative research, scholars have shed light on how Fortuna images helped strengthen Augustus' propaganda and culture.

As we embark on this exploration of Fortuna on Augustus coins, we recognize that we are treading on ground that has witnessed the ebb and flow of empires, the rise and fall of ideologies, and the enduring human quest to decipher the symbols that surround us. The coins of Augustus, bearing the image of Fortuna, serve as time capsules that transport us back to an era where the material and the metaphysical converged in a delicate dance. we traverse the realms of numismatics, semiotics, art history, and cultural studies. We grapple with the interplay between the tangible and the symbolic, the temporal and the eternal, the finite and the infinite. Ultimately, our study offers not only a glimpse into the past but also a testament to the enduring power of symbols to shape human beliefs and aspirations. we decode the secrets concealed within the visage of the Goddess Fortuna on Augustus coins. In doing so, we hope to not only illuminate the past but also shed light on the timeless human fascination with fortune, fate, and the enigmatic forces that guide our journey through life.

Chapter2: Cults of Fortuna

2.1 Introduction to the Goddess Fortuna

In the rich tapestry of Roman mythology and religious beliefs, the goddess Fortuna stands as a multifaceted and enduring figure, embodying the intricate interplay of luck, fate, and fortune in the lives of the ancient Romans. Fortuna, often depicted with a cornucopia symbolizing abundance and a ship's rudder signifying control over one's destiny, held a pivotal place in the pantheon of Roman deities. Her significance extended far beyond mere superstition; rather, her cult was deeply interwoven with the fabric of Roman society and the daily lives of its people.

Tyche Was Fortuna's Ancient Greek counterpart, a goddess of Fate or Chance¹⁶. Much attention has already been concentrated on the effect of the cult of Tyche, Fortuna's Greek counterpart, on

¹⁶ buckley, 2012 ,5

the cult of Fortuna in Italy, during the Hellenistic period¹⁷. The identity and iconography of Tyche were further developed in the imperial period, as a result of the dynamic relationship of the Roman emperors with Tyche and the citizens and cities of the Greek East, in which the Greek East adopted Roman ideas and symbols¹⁸.

In the intricate tapestry of Roman religious evolution, the metamorphosis of Greek Tyche into Roman Fortuna is emblematic of a profound cultural syncretism, intricately weaving together the strands of divine personification and societal values. This transformation, far from being a mere transposition of deity from one pantheon to another, signifies a deep-seated integration of the Greek goddess's essence into the Roman spiritual and societal fabric, encapsulating the complex interplay of fate, fortune, and the divine within the Roman worldview. The term *Tyche-Fortuna*, employed to denote the assimilation of Tyche's attributes and cult into the Roman Fortuna, underscores the nuanced amalgamation of Greek and Roman religious traditions, highlighting the adaptive and integrative prowess of Roman religious practice.

The process through which Tyche, endowed with the sovereignty over chance and fortune, was enfolded into the Roman religious corpus as Fortuna, reflects not merely an adoption but a profound reinterpretation and recontextualization of her divine agency, illustrating the Romans' adeptness in redefining the divine to resonate with their own cultural and religious sensibilities. This amalgamation, as evidenced through the shared iconography and the overlapping realms of divine influence, attests to the dynamic dialogue between cultures, where the divine is reimagined and repurposed to align with the evolving fabric of societal values and beliefs.¹⁹

The etymology of the word Fortuna also suggests many different meanings, which also complicates the interpretation of Fortuna's beginnings. *Ferre*, "to bring," and *fors*, "chance," both of which may have come to mean luck, especially good luck, are considered the roots of the word "fortuna."²⁰ It is uncertain whether or not the attributes of fertility and agriculture, some of

¹⁷ Champeaux, 1982, 23

¹⁸ Arya, 2002, 9

¹⁹ Arya argues that Plutarch's Tyche and Pliny's Fortuna are one and the same goddess. Each author highlights different aspects of a single, multifaceted goddess according to his own personal agenda. Plutarch's treatise and Pliny's passage present a consistent view of the goddess in first-century CE Rome, whose polysemous personalities would have been easily recognized by many Greeks and Romans.

²⁰ Kajanto, I. and Haase, 1981, 533

Fortuna's earliest characteristics, and luck were contemporaneous but distinct developments in the earliest stages of Fortuna cult. The idea of chance appears in the cults of Fors Fortuna in Rome, and the oracles of Fortuna in Praeneste and Antium.²¹ In addition, Palmer has elucidated Fortuna's early role in commerce in the Forum Boarium .

Fortuna's role transcended the realm of mere superstition. She was perceived as a capricious yet omnipresent force, influencing not only individual destinies but also the fortunes of the Roman state itself. Her worship was a means by which Romans sought to navigate the unpredictable seas of life, appealing to her for guidance and protection. For example, sailors invoked her favor to ensure safe voyages, gamblers sought her blessings for luck, and politicians even used her image and symbolism in their campaigns to appeal to the masses.

Scholars have noted that the concept of Fortuna was deeply rooted in the Roman psyche, reflecting the duality of human existence. Romans believed that life's outcomes were shaped not only by one's own actions but also by forces beyond their control. Fortuna was both a comforting presence, offering the hope of favorable turns of fate, and a stern reminder of life's uncertainties. This dichotomy in her nature is exemplified by her dual attributes of Fortuna Bona (Good Fortune) and Fortuna Mala (Bad Fortune), embodying the ever-shifting tides of human existence. Individuals placated the good side of the goddess through Agathe Tyche and Bona Fortuna cults, but the fickle side of Fortuna was also recognized as an integral part of her persona, again reflecting the duality of her nature.²²

Understanding Fortuna's cult and significance is crucial in unraveling the broader cultural and religious context of ancient Rome. Her impact extended beyond the realm of abstract belief and superstition; it was deeply embedded in Roman rituals, festivals, and societal structures. The temples dedicated to Fortuna, found throughout the Roman world, served as hubs for religious and social activities, reflecting her role as a communal and personal deity.

The cult of Fortuna was not limited to any particular social class; it permeated all strata of Roman society. From the humblest citizen to the most powerful senator, everyone sought Fortuna's favor in various aspects of their lives. In times of abundance, people paid tribute to Fortuna as the

²¹ Champeaux, 1982,257

²² Champeaux, 1987,41

bestower of prosperity, and in times of adversity, they prayed for her protection from misfortune. Her dual nature, encompassing both good and bad fortune, highlighted the capriciousness of life and the need to navigate its challenges with resilience and hope.

Fortuna's importance is further underscored by the multitude of temples and shrines dedicated to her throughout the Roman world. These sacred spaces were centers of devotion, hosting ceremonies and rituals that brought together people from diverse backgrounds. Plutarch emphasized the venerable age of the shrines dedicated to Fortuna, contrasting it with the relatively late and less prevalent emergence of Virtus' cult. He depicted a Roman landscape abundant with sites of Fortuna worship, suggesting that most of these dedications dated back to the regal period. Archaeological evidence corroborates some of these ancient cult sites, like the Temple of Fortuna in the Forum Boarium.²³ The worship of Fortuna was not confined to a particular region, and her influence transcended the boundaries of Rome, extending to the far reaches of the empire. From the bustling streets of Rome to the remote provinces, Fortuna's presence was felt and revered.

The influence of Fortuna was not confined to the spiritual realm alone; it had tangible effects on various aspects of Roman life, her role, and associations, would be critical to the formulation of the new Fortuna cults, *Fortuna Redux* and *Fortuna Augusta*, during the reigns of Augustus and his successors. It's essential to recognize that the goddess Fortuna was not an isolated figure but part of a broader cosmic framework that the Romans believed governed their world. She embodied the intricate interplay between divine providence and human agency. Romans believed that acknowledging Fortuna's presence and appeasing her through rituals and offerings could tip the balance in one's favor, ensuring success in endeavors or protection against adversity.

Fortuna's ubiquity in Roman society is evident in the multitude of inscriptions, coins, and artworks that feature her image or pay homage to her. The goddess was invoked during both public and private events, reflecting her adaptability and relevance to various facets of life. Her presence was particularly pronounced in times of transition and uncertainty, such as births, weddings, and major life decisions, where individuals sought her guidance and favor. Fortuna's role extended to the political arena, where her symbolism was co-opted for propagandistic purposes by Roman leaders. Prominent figures like Augustus harnessed the symbolism of Fortuna to bolster their image and

²³ Arya,2002,241.

legitimacy. By associating themselves with the goddess of good fortune, they aimed to project an aura of divine favor and assure the people of their ability to steer the ship of state through the tumultuous seas of history.

The importance of Fortuna is not limited to the past. The enduring legacy of this goddess can be seen in the continued use of the concepts of luck, fate, and fortune in modern culture. The symbolic representations of Fortuna, such as the Wheel of Fortune, remain iconic and recognizable symbols in contemporary society, underscoring the enduring impact of Roman beliefs and mythology.

The worship of Fortuna was more than a mere act of devotion; it was a reflection of the Roman worldview, where the intersection of free will and destiny played a fundamental role. In the Roman mind, Fortuna was not just a capricious goddess; she was a mirror of life's uncertainties, presenting a dichotomy that resonated with every individual. Romans believed that while they could strive and make choices, the ultimate outcome of their efforts was often subject to Fortuna's whims.

The broad spectrum of Fortuna's symbolism encompassed both individual and collective experiences. While she was invoked to secure personal success, her role in the Roman pantheon also had implications for the well-being and prosperity of the state. Romans believed that their city's destiny was intertwined with the favor of Fortuna, making her cult a crucial element of public life and governance.

The goddess Fortuna was deeply integrated into Roman society. Her presence was felt in various aspects of daily life, and she was invoked during critical life transitions. Romans sought her blessings for everything from the birth of a child to the commencement of a new business venture. Her symbolism was omnipresent, serving as a source of inspiration and hope for individuals from all walks of life. It was not unusual for individuals to carry small tokens or charms adorned with her image as a form of personal protection.

In addition to her role in personal matters, Fortuna played a significant part in Roman politics. Rulers, like Augustus, who understood the power of her symbolism, associated themselves with the goddess to convey an image of divine favor and guidance. This political utilization of Fortuna's image highlights her role as a symbol of both individual destiny and the fortune of the state. The universality of Fortuna's appeal is a testament to her enduring significance. From the common people to the most powerful leaders, everyone sought her favor, as they believed that

acknowledging the goddess of fortune was essential for navigating the complex tapestry of Roman life.

2.2 Historical Evolution of Fortuna's Worship

The worship of Fortuna, the goddess of chance and fate in Roman pantheon, is an exciting viewpoint from which we can begin to understand the historical and cultural development of ancient Rome. Though originally a minor fertility god connections with agricultural, Fortuna came to be increasingly significant figure in Rome . her role evolute from a simple agricultural society to a complex urban empire. This discussion follows the dynamic development of the worship of Fortuna from local, rural cults to an intricate belief system finding its cradle at the very core of the emerging Roman state. To this end, it is intended here to show how changing roles attributed to Fortuna mirrored broader shifts under way within Roman society, its politics, and religion condensing into this goddess a symbol for divine favor and a capricious fate for humankind.

Early Worship and Attributes of Fortuna

The creation of Fortuna's worship in Rome is deeply rooted in the agricultural society of early Rome, reflecting the primitive Roman's relationship with their environment and the unpredictability of nature. Fortuna, originally a goddess of fertility, was dignified for her ability to influence the abundance of crops and the success of harvests, crucial for survival in agrarian societies.

Fortuna's worship is likely influenced by the fusion of local Italic traditions and the integration of Greek culture during the formative years of Roman religious identity. She shares attributes with Greek goddesses like Tyche, who represented the fortune and prosperity of a city²⁴. This syncretism highlights the adaptability of Roman religious practices, which often assimilated characteristics and cults from other cultures as Rome expanded its influence.

²⁴ Dumézil, 1970,274

Fortuna is also associated with the concept of 'fors', the Latin word for luck, from which its name is derived. This organization emphasizes the role of influencing daily life with luck and opportunities and supports the personal wealth and circumstances of each individual. Early cults of Fortuna included various rites and rituals aimed at pacifying her for good or preventing misfortune. These activities often include the offering of firstfruits, indicating that the family is dependent on her blessings for their crops. These gifts were a direct reflection of his visible efforts towards agricultural development and personal development.

Iconographically, Fortuna was often depicted carrying a cornucopia, the horn of plenty, which symbolized abundance and prosperity. She might also hold a rudder, representing her ability to steer the fate of those who sought her guidance, or a wheel, symbolizing the ever-changing nature of fortune²⁵. These symbols reflect the multifaceted aspects of her domain over fortune and highlight the omnipresence of chance in human affairs.

As Roman society evolved from its agricultural roots into a more complex urban entity, the worship of Fortuna similarly transitioned. The initial personal and local scope of her worship broadened to encompass more universal aspects of chance and fortune, aligning with the needs and anxieties of a growing urban populace engaging in trade, warfare, and political intrigue²⁶. This early phase of Fortuna's worship set the stage for her later evolution as Rome transformed from a republic to an empire, illustrating how religious figures were adapted to meet the changing needs and concerns of Roman society. Her attributes during this period laid the foundational understanding of her dual nature as both a nurturing provider and an unpredictable changer of fortunes.

Expansion Under the Republic

As Rome expanded its territories and influence during the Republican period, the role and worship of Fortuna similarly grew in scope and significance. This era marked a significant evolution in her cult, as she became increasingly viewed as a guardian not only of individuals but also of the state itself. The Republican period saw the construction of numerous temples dedicated to Fortuna, reflecting her elevated status within Roman society. One of the most notable was the temple of

²⁵ Hamilton, 1993,87

²⁶ Warrior, 2006,45

Fortuna Primigenia in Praeneste, which was renowned for its magnificent architecture and oracle (Cornell, 1995) . This temple served as a major religious center where people from across Rome would come to seek guidance from Fortuna's oracle, emphasizing her role in public and political life.

Another significant development was the establishment of the festival of Fors Fortuna, which occurred on June 24th each year. This festival was celebrated with games, races, and floating lanterns on the Tiber River, symbolizing Fortuna's flowing and unpredictable nature²⁷ . The public nature of these celebrations helped to integrate her worship into the communal and civic life of the Romans. The festival of Fors Fortuna, which I mentioned earlier, also had significant political overtones. Held annually, this festival was a time when the common people could engage in festivities that included games, theatrical performances, and banquets, all sponsored by political figures. These events were opportunities for politicians to display their generosity and connect with the populace, often as a means of gaining public favor or support. The alignment of such festivals with Fortuna's worship underlined the hoped-for positive outcomes and the goodwill of the state towards its citizens²⁸.

Political leaders often invoked Fortuna to legitimize their actions or claims to power. During the Republic, magistrates and generals would publicly honor Fortuna in hopes of gaining her favor for their military or political endeavors, reflecting the belief in her power to sway the outcome of significant events²⁹ .This practice illustrates how Fortuna was co-opted into the political machinery of the Republic, serving as a divine endorsement of political and military decisions. Fortuna was frequently referenced in political rhetoric to underscore the unpredictability of political life and the humility that leaders should maintain despite their power. Cicero, in his speeches, often alluded to Fortuna to remind his audience of the transient nature of political success and the omnipresent possibility of reversal, thereby appealing to the common belief in Fortuna's power to alter circumstances dramatically³⁰.

²⁷ Wiseman, 1984,119

²⁸ Scullard, 1981,113

²⁹ Flower, 1996 ,134

³⁰ Cicero frequently referenced Fortuna in his orations. For example, in his speech "Pro Plancio," he states: "O, how fleeting are the gifts of Fortuna! How they pass like shadows!" (Cicero, Pro Plancio, 54 BC, 26.64). This highlights his use of Fortuna to underscore the instability and unpredictability of political fortunes.

As Rome came into contact with various cultures through conquest and trade, Fortuna's cult absorbed elements from other deities, such as the Greek goddess Tyche, further enhancing her attributes and forms of worship . This syncretism was typical of Roman religious practice, reflecting a pragmatic approach to religion that sought to incorporate rather than exclude foreign elements, which facilitated the cultural integration of conquered peoples.

The Republican era was a pivotal period for the expansion of Fortuna's worship, as she transitioned from a primarily local agrarian deity to a prominent figure in the state religion. This transformation was facilitated by her association with political and military endeavors, the construction of significant temples, and the integration of foreign religious elements into her worship. These developments not only highlight her importance in Roman religion but also underscore the adaptive nature of Roman religious practices in response to societal changes and expansion.

Imperial Transformation of Fortuna's Worship

As Rome transitioned from a Republic to an Empire, the worship of Fortuna underwent significant transformations. Under the emperors, Fortuna was not only a personal and civic deity but also became a symbol of the imperial authority and the state's destiny. This period highlights how religious figures were adapted to serve the political and ideological needs of Rome's rulers.

The Imperial period marked a shift in how Fortuna was revered; emperors often used her image to consolidate their power and legitimize their rule. Augustus, the first Roman emperor, was particularly adept at using religious symbolism to enhance his authority, Notably, his use of Fortuna's depiction on coins began even before he was officially recognized as emperor. He associated himself with Fortuna Redux, a form of the goddess who ensured his safe return from campaigns, which was commemorated by a coin minted in her honor ³¹. This association underscored his role as the bringer of peace and stability, aligning his return with the fortune and fate of the Roman state itself.

³¹ Zanker, 1988,65



Fig 1: RRC 525/1, Head of Octavian, right, bearded and Fortuna standing left, holding rudder in right hand and cornucopiae in left hand, 40 BCE

The reign of Augustus represents a pivotal moment in the history of Rome, characterized by significant changes in politics, culture, and religion. The worship of Fortuna during this period is particularly illustrative of how Augustus skillfully utilized religious imagery and rituals to consolidate his authority and promote stability and prosperity under his rule.

Augustus understood the power of religious symbols in shaping public opinion and reinforcing his political agenda. He embarked on an extensive program of religious reform and revival, which included the restoration of ancient temples, the establishment of new festivals, and the promotion of traditional Roman virtues. In this religious revival, Fortuna occupied a special place as a deity who could embody the ideals of the new era prosperity, stability, and favor from the divine.

One of the most important factors in the worship of Fortuna was the stress Augustus laid on Fortuna Redux, that aspect of the goddess connected with his safe returns from expeditions and more widely with the success of his military campaigns and its overall success. The institution of the cult of Fortuna Redux is not some personal piety but a state-decreed validation of Augustus' role as bringer of peace and stability. The annual celebration of his return on December 15 became a public holiday, illustrating how deeply his personal history was woven into the fabric of state religion ³².

Augustus also utilized coinage as a medium for propaganda, depicting Fortuna on coins to disseminate his messages across the Empire. These coins typically featured Fortuna with symbols of prosperity, such as the cornucopia, or steering a ship's rudder, implying that under Augustus' rule, the Roman state was guided by fortune towards prosperity and success. This imagery served to reassure the populace of the stability and benevolence of his regime ³³. Literary works from the

³² Ibid

³³ Harl, 1996.80

Augustan period often reflect the themes of fate and fortune, mirroring the imperial propaganda that emphasized Augustus' favored status by the gods.

Poets like Horace and Virgil portrayed Fortuna as a capricious yet ultimately benevolent power, aligning with the Augustan vision of a restored Rome under divine favor. These works helped to cultivate an image of Augustus as a divinely sanctioned leader, destined to restore and lead Rome to greatness³⁴. During the Augustan period, the worship of Fortuna was strategically aligned with the emperor's vision of a restored Rome. By integrating Fortuna into his program of religious and cultural renewal, Augustus not only reinforced his own position but also provided the Romans with a divine narrative that justified and celebrated the new political and social order. This period marks a high point in the symbiosis of religion and imperial politics, showcasing how deities like Fortuna could be used to support and legitimize the emperor's authority and the ideological constructs of the Roman state.

Restorations of temples dedicated to Fortuna were also associated with imperial propaganda. The restoration of the Temple of Fortuna Primigenia in Praeneste by Emperor Claudius, for example, was a religious piety but also a way of displaying concern on the part of the emperor for his subjects' welfare and religious life. These architectural projects served multiple purposes: they were acts of devotion, displays of imperial benevolence, and tools for political messaging³⁵.

In literary and public discourses, Fortuna continued to be a prominent theme. Writers like Tacitus and Suetonius discussed her influence on the lives of the emperors and the empire, often in terms of the unpredictability and capriciousness of her favor.³⁶

These references reflected the understanding of power and success as being partly in the hands of divine forces like Fortuna, demonstrate the ongoing cultural significance of the goddess. Fortuna was not only a political tool; her worship permeated everyday life, influencing how people understood their place in the world. The belief in Fortuna's power over fortune could be both comforting and unsettling, encapsulating the hopes and fears of individuals facing the uncertainties of life under Roman rule .

³⁴ Syme, 1939,201

³⁵ Fishwick, 2002,47

³⁶ Suetonius. The Twelve Caesars. Augustus, 18.2

The imperial transformation of Fortuna's worship illustrates how the Roman state adapted religious practices to support its expanding political and ideological agendas. Under the emperors, Fortuna became a symbol not just of personal or communal destiny, but of the empire itself. Her elevation within the state religion reflects the intricate relationships between power, faith, and politics in ancient Rome, showing how deities like Fortuna could be used to reflect and reinforce the emperor's authority and the state's stability.

Cultural and Religious Syncretism of Fortuna's Worship

As Rome expanded its empire, encountering and incorporating diverse cultures, the worship of Fortuna exemplified a broader pattern of cultural and religious syncretism. This process involved the merging of different religious traditions and practices, which allowed Rome to integrate conquered peoples more effectively and solidify its rule. The cult of Fortuna, originally rooted in Roman and Italian traditions, absorbed influences from Greek, Etruscan, and other local deities, transforming her into a composite figure that could resonate across a diverse empire.

The most significant influence on the cult of Fortuna came from the Greek goddess Tyche. Tyche, who personified fortune and prosperity, was similar to Fortuna in her domain and attributes. As Rome absorbed Greek territories and culture, Fortuna began to be depicted similarly to Tyche, often carrying a cornucopia and a rudder symbols of abundance and control over destiny, respectively. This visual and conceptual alignment helped Roman citizens and subjects from Greek regions see Fortuna as a familiar and relevant deity.

In regions further from Rome, Fortuna was often merged with local deities that shared similar characteristics. This form of syncretism was not merely an imperial imposition but a grassroots phenomenon where local populations blended their native worship practices with Roman ones. For example, in North Africa, Fortuna was syncretized with African deities associated with fertility and luck, which helped embed Roman culture into local traditions³⁷.

The syncretism of Fortuna's cult had a profound impact on Roman religious identity, making it more inclusive and flexible. This adaptability was a key factor in the stability and longevity of

³⁷ Mattingly, 1997,267

Roman rule, as it allowed for a more harmonious integration of diverse cultures within the empire. The Romans did not require conquered peoples to abandon their gods but rather encouraged a merging of deities, which often resulted in a shared sense of religious and cultural identity ³⁸.

Public festivals and ceremonies also played a crucial role in the syncretic process. Celebrations such as the festival of Fors Fortuna became occasions where diverse cultural expressions and religious sentiments were publicly acknowledged and blended. These festivals not only reinforced the Roman identity but also allowed for the expression of local traditions and practices under the umbrella of Roman oversight, further facilitating cultural and religious cohesion ³⁹.

The cultural and religious syncretism found within worship of Fortuna serves as a prime example of just how the Romans utilized religious flexibility as a strategic tool that managed to keep at bay their vast empire. On this ground, by integrating and adapting the goddess Fortuna with multiple deities coming from the locals and culture, Rome had managed to be in control of diverse populations, created a common religion framework, and lessened any friction against Roman rule. Not only did this approach succeed in keeping Fortuna relevant throughout the empire, but it also provided for the long-term success of Roman cultural and religious customs.

Decline and Legacy of Fortuna's Worship

As the Roman Empire progressed into the late antique period, the worship of Fortuna, like many traditional Roman deities, began to decline. This decline was influenced by several factors, including the spread of Christianity, changes in imperial policies, and shifting cultural values. Despite this decline, the legacy of Fortuna continued to influence various aspects of European culture and philosophy. The most significant factor in the decline of Fortuna's worship was the rise of Christianity as the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. With the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, Christianity gained legal status, and subsequent emperors, particularly Constantine and later Theodosius, promoted Christianity over pagan religions.⁴⁰

³⁸ Beard, North, & Price, 1998,99

³⁹ Scullard, 1981,130

⁴⁰ Constantine, while promoting Christianity, still used traditional Roman imagery, including depictions of Fortuna on his coins. However, as Christianity's influence grew, such pagan symbols became less common, reflecting the

The Christian doctrine, which emphasized divine providence and the rejection of "pagan" randomness or fortune, was fundamentally at odds with the concept of a goddess of chance like Fortuna⁴¹ .

As the empire's official religion shifted towards Christianity, imperial policies began to reflect this change. Temples dedicated to Fortuna and other pagan gods were either repurposed or abandoned. Public and official support for these cults waned, and religious practices associated with them were increasingly marginalized. The shifting cultural values towards a monotheistic worldview further diminished the public role of Fortuna. Despite her decline in worship, Fortuna remained a significant figure in medieval and Renaissance literature and philosophy. Writers such as Dante, Boccaccio, and Machiavelli revisited the concept of Fortuna to explore themes of human fate and the capriciousness of life. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, for example, Fortuna is described as a minister of God's providence, directing the changes of worldly goods, which reflects a transformation of her ancient role into a more Christianized interpretation⁴².

The decline of Fortuna's worship was a gradual process influenced by the rise of Christianity and changes in cultural and imperial attitudes. However, her legacy persists, illustrating the enduring nature of her symbolism in expressing human concerns with fate and fortune. Fortuna's transformation from a pagan deity to a philosophical symbol in literature and art highlights the adaptability and persistent relevance of classical mythology in modern culture.

2.3 Significance of Fortuna in Roman Beliefs

In the pantheon of Roman deities, Fortuna holds a unique and pervasive influence as the goddess of luck and fortune. Unlike many of her divine counterparts, Fortuna's domain over chance and fate granted her a dual aspect in the eyes of her worshippers, embodying both the capricious nature of good luck and the sudden misfortune that could befall anyone regardless of status or virtue. Her significance in Roman culture is profound, stretching across various facets of daily life and public affairs. Fortuna was not merely a symbol of arbitrary chance; she represented a deeply ingrained

empire's shift towards monotheism. See: R. MacMullen, "Christianizing the Roman Empire A.D. 100-400," Yale University Press, 1984, p. 75

⁴¹ MacMullen, 1984,78

⁴² Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, Canto VII, lines 67-96

philosophical and theological concept that life's unpredictable nature could be mediated by divine intervention. This belief made her worship both popular and widespread throughout Rome and its vast territories. Temples dedicated to Fortuna were frequented by individuals from all walks of life, from the humble farmer seeking a good harvest to emperors desiring affirmation of their divine right to rule.

Broad Influence in Society

Fortuna's influence permeated every level of Roman society, manifesting as a ubiquitous presence whose favor was sought by individuals from all walks of life. Her appeal was rooted in the universal human desire for good fortune and fear of misfortune, making her one of the most relatable and revered deities across the Roman Empire.

The broad veneration of Fortuna can be attributed to her perceived ability to influence the outcome of both mundane daily activities and significant life events. Commoners frequented shrines dedicated to Fortuna before undertaking new ventures or making significant life decisions. For example, sailors about to embark on perilous voyages would seek blessings at temples of Fortuna Virilis, hoping for safe passage and profitable returns⁴³. This practice underscores the deeply entrenched belief in Fortuna's power to sway the unpredictable forces of life and nature in one's favor.

Moreover, during public festivals such as Fortunalia, celebrated on the 24th of June each year, Romans of all classes participated in games of chance and made offerings at her temples, symbolically placing their fortunes in her hands for the coming year⁴⁴. These festivals not only reaffirmed Fortuna's role in the public consciousness but also served as communal activities that reinforced social cohesion through shared religious practice.

In addition to her widespread worship among the lower and middle classes, Fortuna was also a significant figure for the Roman elite. Political leaders, particularly during turbulent times, would publicly invoke Fortuna to gain popular support and legitimize their authority. The erection of

⁴³ Beard and North, Vol 1, 303.

⁴⁴ Warrior, 2006, 86.

temples and public dedications to Fortuna by influential figures were common strategies used to associate their rule with divine favor and prosperity⁴⁵.

Religious Integration

The integration of Fortuna into Roman religious practices was both profound and complex, reflecting her versatility as a deity who could influence various aspects of life and fate. Temples dedicated to Fortuna were strategically placed throughout Rome and its colonies, signifying her importance in both urban and rural settings.

One of the most prominent examples of Fortuna's religious integration is the Temple of Fortuna Primigenia in Praeneste (modern Palestrina). This sanctuary, one of the most architecturally ambitious of its era, was not only a place of worship but also a site of oracular consultations. Pilgrims visited this temple to receive divinations based on the interpretation of lots (*sortes*) a practice that underscored Fortuna's role in revealing the divine will regarding an individual's future⁴⁶. Fortuna's integration into Roman religion can also be seen in the various aspects under which she was worshipped. For instance, Fortuna Muliebris was revered specifically by women, reflecting her role in women's personal and familial fortunes. This aspect highlights the adaptive nature of Roman religious worship, where deities could be personalized to the needs and identities of their worshippers.

The religious festivals dedicated to Fortuna, such as the *Fortunalia*, involved widespread communal participation and featured rituals that were deeply symbolic of her influence over the random and unpredictable elements of life. During these festivals, citizens would bring offerings to her temples, seeking to appease the goddess and gain her favor for the forthcoming year. These rituals often included the freeing of slaves, which was symbolic of the random chance of fortunes changing a slave one moment could be free the next, just as fortune could turn⁴⁷.

Furthermore, the theological narrative of Fortuna was intricately linked with other major deities, demonstrating her integration into the wider religious and mythological tapestry of Rome. Her

⁴⁵ Flower, 2010, 158

⁴⁶ Beard, North, and Price, Vol 1, 1998, 30

⁴⁷ Flower, 2010, 158.

relationship with Jupiter, the king of the gods, as Fortuna Redux brought her into the realm of high politics, celebrating the safe return of emperors from campaigns, indicating that her blessings were sought at both personal and state levels⁴⁸. Through these religious practices and cultural narratives, Fortuna was not merely a bystander in the spiritual lives of the Romans; she was a central figure who actively influenced their interpretation of the world around them and their place within it.

Political and Economic Aspects

Fortuna's role in Roman politics was multifaceted and profound. Her imagery and symbols were frequently appropriated by political figures seeking to enhance their authority and legitimacy. Emperors, in particular, often associated themselves with Fortuna to symbolize their hoped-for success and the divine favor of their rule. For instance, the Emperor Hadrian issued coins featuring Fortuna, linking his reign with the prosperity and stability she represented.⁴⁹ This strategic use of Fortuna's image served as a visual propaganda tool, communicating the emperor's ability to maintain the favor of the gods and, by extension, to govern effectively.

Fortuna was also central to public works and festivals, which were critical to maintaining the socio-political structure of the empire. Large-scale building projects, such as theaters and baths, were often dedicated to Fortuna, highlighting her role in ensuring the welfare and happiness of the populace. During public festivals dedicated to Fortuna, leaders would distribute gifts and conduct public games, reinforcing their role as benevolent custodians of their communities.⁵⁰ These acts not only appeased the goddess but also displayed the generosity and piety of the benefactors, strengthening their social and political standing.

Economically, Fortuna influenced a range of activities, from individual entrepreneurship to state-level financial decisions. Her temples often served as places where business deals were struck and oaths sworn, underlining her role in ensuring honest and profitable dealings⁵¹. The belief in Fortuna's power to sway economic fortune encouraged both caution and risk-taking. Businessmen and traders might seek her favor before embarking on ventures, while gamblers invoked her name

⁴⁸ Rüpke, 2007, 245

⁴⁹ Mattingly 1923, 165.

⁵⁰ Potter 2004, 102.

⁵¹ Harris 1979, 91.

in hopes of winning big a reflection of her role as a goddess who could alter fortunes swiftly and unpredictably.

In ancient Rome, the role of the gods in military affairs was considered pivotal, and among these divine figures, Fortuna held a distinctive place. Generals and their troops commonly invoked Fortuna before engaging in battles, appealing for her favor to secure victory. This practice was rooted in the belief that Fortuna could decisively influence the outcome of military endeavors by tipping the balance in favor of those she favored. Such invocations were often performed during pre-battle rituals where soldiers and commanders would gather to offer prayers and sacrifices, seeking to gain the goddess's auspicious blessings .

Fortuna Redux, a specific aspect of Fortuna worshipped for granting safe returns, was particularly venerated during times of war. This worship reflects the precarious nature of military life and the uncertainty of returning home safely from campaigns. Temples dedicated to Fortuna Redux, such as the one erected by Augustus in 19 BC after his safe return from the East, became centers for these devotions. Soldiers would leave votive offerings, such as inscribed tablets, weapons, or portions of their military garb, as tokens of their prayers for survival and safe passage back to their families. The strategic importance of Fortuna's favor in military planning cannot be overstated. Roman military leaders, understanding the psychological and morale-boosting effects of divine favor, often used references to Fortuna to inspire troops and intimidate enemies. The belief in Fortuna's power provided a psychological edge, reinforcing the troops' morale and resolve under the harsh conditions of warfare ⁵² .

The integration of Fortuna into military culture also manifested in the commemoration of military victories and expansions. Triumphal arches and monuments celebrating successful generals often featured depictions of Fortuna, symbolizing her role in granting victory and prosperity to Rome. These monuments served both as public acknowledgments of the generals' gratitude towards Fortuna and as reminders to the populace of the gods' integral role in the success of Roman arms .

Thus, the political and economic dimensions of Fortuna's worship reveal a deity deeply embedded in the fabric of Roman life, embodying the hopes and fears of a society profoundly influenced by the notions of fate and fortune. Her role extended beyond the spiritual, entering the realms of

⁵² Le Bohec 2000, 54

governance, economy, and military endeavors, where her perceived influence could justify decisions, sway public opinion, and fortify the social order.

Philosophical Impact of Fortuna

Fortuna's role in Roman life extended beyond her immediate religious and political influence to deeply affect philosophical thinking about fate, fortune, and the nature of human existence. Roman philosophers, influenced by both indigenous beliefs and Hellenistic thought, often debated the extent of Fortuna's power and its implications for human agency and morality. Among the prominent schools of thought, Stoicism, which emphasized virtue and the acceptance of one's fate as part of the natural order, had a complex relationship with the concept of Fortuna.

Stoic philosophers like Seneca argued that while external fortunes could not be controlled, inner virtue could remain impervious to Fortuna's whims. Seneca's writings often reflect on the transient nature of fortune and the importance of maintaining ethical integrity despite her unpredictable influences⁵³. In contrast, Epicurean philosophy, which prioritized personal pleasure and tranquility, largely denied Fortuna's influence, asserting that the random events attributed to her were instead natural occurrences explainable by reason and science. Lucretius, a follower of Epicurus, argued in his poem *De Rerum Natura* that believing in Fortuna could lead to superstition and fear, detracting from the pursuit of a peaceful life⁵⁴.

Academic Skeptics further explored the concept of Fortuna, questioning the extent to which she truly influenced human affairs. Cicero, associated with this school, often discussed Fortuna in his works, suggesting that while fortune seemed to play a role in human success and failure, true happiness stemmed from wisdom and virtue, independent of external forces.⁵⁵

The later philosophical movement of Neoplatonism attempted to reconcile the role of Fortuna with the existence of a rational and ordered universe. Plotinus, a central figure in Neoplatonism, proposed that while Fortuna might appear to direct human affairs, everything was part of a divine

⁵³ Seneca, *Epistles*, 98.1-2

⁵⁴ Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book VI, lines 1-95

⁵⁵ Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, 2.24.79

and logical plan, with Fortuna herself being a subordinate player⁵⁶. The philosophical impact of Fortuna thus reveals a spectrum of attitudes towards fate and fortune in Roman culture. From acceptance and rejection to critical inquiry, Fortuna served as a catalyst for philosophical debate, pushing Roman thinkers to confront the tensions between fate, fortune, and free will. These discussions not only enriched Roman philosophical traditions but also mirrored the broader cultural and religious dimensions of Fortuna's worship.

Symbolic Representation of Fortuna

Fortuna was frequently portrayed in Roman art and sculpture, often depicted with a cornucopia, symbolizing abundance and prosperity, and a rudder, indicating her control over the changing fortunes of life. These images were not merely decorative; they served as profound symbols of the goddess's dual ability to bestow wealth and navigate fate. Statues of Fortuna were common in both public spaces and private homes, reflecting her omnipresence in daily Roman life and her role as a protector and benefactor⁵⁷.

The depiction of Fortuna on Roman coinage was both a political and a theological statement, designed to communicate specific messages about the emperor's rule and divine favor. Coins were an ideal medium for this purpose, as they circulated widely, reaching a broad audience across the empire. The images on these coins thus played a dual role: they were functional in terms of trade and commerce, and symbolic, carrying messages about the stability, prosperity, and legitimacy of the emperor's reign.

Fortuna was commonly depicted with a cornucopia, symbolizing abundance and prosperity, and a rudder, symbolizing her control over the fickle fate of the state. The rudder, in particular, positioned in her hand, suggested that she could steer the state's fortunes as one steers a ship a powerful metaphor in a culture that valued navigation and commerce. The cornucopia, overflowing with fruits or coins, promised wealth and abundance under the emperor's rule⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 3.2.17

⁵⁷ Beard, North, and Price, *Vol1*, 1998, 303.

⁵⁸ Kaniewski, 2015, 45

The choice of Fortuna's iconography on coins also reflected theological beliefs about the gods' direct involvement in the affairs of the empire. By aligning himself with Fortuna, an emperor could imply that his reign was favored by the gods, an important aspect of maintaining public morale and divine legitimacy⁵⁹. The public reception of these coins would have involved not just recognition of their monetary value but also an interpretation of their deeper meaning, reinforcing the bond between the ruler, the ruled, and the divine.

During the reign of Antoninus Pius, for instance, coins depicted Fortuna holding these attributes to reinforce the idea of a prosperous and stable empire guided by divine providence. Similarly, under Emperor Trajan, coins showed Fortuna seated with a cornucopia and a rudder or sometimes a wheel beside her, highlighting the themes of prosperity and the cyclical nature of luck and governance .⁶⁰



Fig 2: RIC III Antoninus Pius 286A (denarius), Head of Antoninus Pius, laureate, right and Fortuna, draped, standing left, holding in right hand patera above rudder on prow, left, and cornucopiae in left

Through the strategic deployment of Fortuna's imagery on coinage, Roman emperors leveraged a powerful tool of visual communication that conveyed messages of divine favor and political stability. These coins were a daily testament to the emperor's ability to secure prosperity for the empire, mediated by the benevolent influence of Fortuna. This practice illustrates the profound interconnections among Roman religious beliefs, political propaganda, and economic life.

⁵⁹ Buttrey, 1988, 56.

⁶⁰ Carson, 1990, 78

Fortuna's presence in Roman literature is marked by her depiction as a powerful and enigmatic force capable of altering human lives with her whims. This characterization is a common theme in Roman philosophical and poetic texts, where she often appears as a pivotal figure influencing the course of events.

A seminal literary portrayal of Fortuna is found in Boethius's "The Consolation of Philosophy." In this philosophical work, Fortuna is vividly personified and engages in a dialogue with the protagonist, Boethius, who has fallen from a position of power and influence to being imprisoned. Fortuna explains her nature as inherently changeable and indifferent to human suffering. She tells Boethius, "I turn my wheel that spins. My pleasure is to raise up the low, to bring down the high. Up and down is my course"⁶¹. This depiction not only highlights her capricious nature but also serves as a meditation on the fragility of human fortunes and the philosophical question of how one should live knowing that material wealth and social status are ultimately transient.

Fortuna's literary representations were more than narrative devices; they were deeply intertwined with Roman cultural and philosophical thought. By personifying Fortuna, writers could explore themes of human agency, fate, and the limits of human understanding. For instance, in Cicero's writings, Fortuna is often a figure that must be appeased and respected, reflecting the Roman belief in the necessity of maintaining a harmonious relationship with the divine to secure the stability of the state and personal well-being ⁶².

In poetry, Fortuna could be both a benevolent and a punishing force. Poets like Horace and Ovid often reflected on the role of Fortuna in their lives, using her as a metaphor to discuss themes of success, failure, and the unpredictability of life. For example, in Ovid's poems, Fortuna is invoked to explain sudden downfalls and unexpected successes, emphasizing her role as the master of human destinies who operates beyond the realm of human control⁶³. This duality in Fortuna's literary portrayals sometimes a nurturing mother, other times a ruthless tyrant mirrors the complex Roman relationship with luck and fortune. It encapsulates a broader existential and ethical inquiry prevalent in Roman society about the extent to which humans can control their fate and the role of the divine in human affairs.

⁶¹ Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Book II, Prose 3. Originally written ca. 524 AD.

⁶² Cicero. *De Divinatione*. Book I, Section 10. 44 BC

⁶³ Ovid. *Tristia*. Book I, Poem 3. 13 AD

Fortuna also featured prominently in theatrical performances and public ceremonies, where her character was enacted to dramatize the human struggle with fate and fortune. These performances were not only entertainment but also a means of public instruction on the moral and ethical lessons associated with her worship. Through these enactments, the abstract concept of fortune was made tangible and immediate, reinforcing communal values surrounding destiny and morality ⁶⁴ .

Through these symbolic representations, Fortuna was woven into the fabric of Roman culture, her image a constant presence reminding Romans of the ever-present nature of fortune in their lives. Whether through art, coinage, literature, or performance, the imagery of Fortuna shaped and reflected the Roman relationship with destiny, highlighting the cultural importance of fate and the divine in everyday life. In conclusion, Fortuna was more than a deity; she was a fundamental aspect of Roman identity, embodying the anxieties and aspirations of an empire continually striving to reconcile the caprices of fate with the human desire for control and stability. Her multifaceted influence not only shaped Roman thought and policy but also left a lasting imprint on Western cultural and philosophical traditions.

2.4 Cults and Temples Dedicated to Fortuna

In the tapestry of Roman religious life, Fortuna stands out as a particularly compelling figure. Revered across the vast expanse of the Roman Empire, she was the capricious goddess of fortune, chance, and fate, whose influence touched all corners of Roman society. From the bustling streets of Rome to the remote outposts of the empire, her worship was manifested through an array of cults and temples, each reflecting the local customs and universal aspirations of the Roman people. These institutions were not merely places of worship but were foundational to the social fabric and urban landscape of Roman communities. Many different epithets of the goddess ⁶⁵refer to the multiple dimensions she had for different social groups, implying her benevolent but also capricious nature (Fortuna Bona, Fortuna Mala, Fortuna Dubia, Fortuna Stabilis, Fortuna Obsequens, etc.)

⁶⁴ Potter, 2004, 102.

⁶⁵ Arya 2002, 59

Cult of Fortuna Primigenia

The Cult of Fortuna Primigenia was centered in the ancient city of Praeneste, modern Palestrina, near Rome. This cult was distinct for its oracle, making it one of the most significant prophetic centers in Italy, second only to the Delphic Oracle in Greece in terms of prestige. The deity Fortuna Primigenia, meaning Fortune the Firstborn, was revered as a powerful and enigmatic goddess capable of influencing the fates of individuals, cities, and nations .

The sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia was an architectural marvel, designed to amplify the mystical and divine nature of the oracular consultations offered there. Built on a series of terraces up the slopes of a hill, the complex was a massive construction that used innovative techniques like concrete vaulting. These terraces ascended progressively, adorned with porticoes, sculptures, and fountains, symbolizing a spiritual ascent from the earthly to the divine. The uppermost sanctuary, where the oracle was consulted, offered panoramic views, embodying a literal and metaphorical rise to divine enlightenment⁶⁶ .

Visitors to the temple underwent a series of ritual purifications before consulting the oracle. These rituals likely included offerings of incense, the pouring of libations, and animal sacrifices, which were common practices aimed at appeasing the deity to ensure a favorable response. The oracle itself involved sortition, where sortes (lots, often in the form of small wooden or metal tablets inscribed with possible answers) were drawn from a sacred receptacle, and their messages were interpreted by the temple's priests.

The cult played a significant role in Roman society by providing a space where individuals, regardless of social status, could seek guidance on personal and public matters. The ability to consult an oracle that was thought to communicate directly with Fortuna allowed Romans to feel a sense of control over their destiny, an essential aspect in a society that valued personal and collective fate highly. The popularity of the oracle made Praeneste a bustling pilgrimage site, attracting visitors from across the Roman Empire. This influx of pilgrims brought considerable economic benefits to the region and increased Praeneste's prestige. Moreover, the sanctuary served as a vital cultural hub, where artistic expression flourished, and religious and philosophical ideas were exchanged, reflecting the dynamic nature of Roman religious life. The Cult of Fortuna

⁶⁶ Coulston & Dodge, 2000,245

Primigenia exemplifies the complex relationship between religion, society, architecture, and personal belief in ancient Rome. It highlights how religious practice was intertwined with daily life, offering individuals not only spiritual support but also practical guidance. The sanctuary in Praeneste remains a testament to the enduring influence of Fortuna in Roman religion and her unique role in shaping the destinies of those who sought her favor.

Cult of Fortuna Virilis

The Cult of *Fortuna Virilis* ("Fortune of Men") offers a fascinating glimpse into the ways gender roles were both reinforced and expressed through religious practice in ancient Rome. This cult specifically focused on the fortunes of men, particularly in their public and professional lives. The deity Fortuna Virilis was invoked to ensure success in business, politics, and other public endeavors, emphasizing the societal expectations placed upon Roman men to excel and contribute to civic life. According to the poet Ovid, Fortuna Virilis had the power to conceal the physical imperfections of women from the eyes of men⁶⁷.

The Temple of Fortuna Virilis, located in Rome near the Tiber River, was an integral part of this cult. The temple, also known historically as the Temple of Portunus, stands as one of the best-preserved Roman temples and is notable for its classical Greek architecture, featuring Ionic columns and a high podium. The choice of location and architectural style reflects the importance of this cult in the civic and social life of Rome, positioned in a bustling area frequented by traders and businessmen.

The rituals performed at the Temple of Fortuna Virilis typically involved offerings and prayers specifically tailored to seek prosperity in commerce and protection in professional undertakings. During annual festivals, men would gather at the temple to perform collective rites, which often included sacrificing a ram and making libations. These rituals were not only acts of piety but also served as communal bonding experiences that reinforced social networks among the male populace.

⁶⁷ Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.145–150

In a society where public life and success were predominantly male arenas, the Cult of Fortuna Virilis played a crucial role in affirming and legitimizing the pursuit of professional excellence among Roman men. By participating in this cult, men could express their aspirations for success and invoke divine support in their endeavors, reflecting the deeply ingrained Roman belief in the power of fate and fortune. The presence of the Temple of Fortuna Virilis and its associated cult activities helped to cement the role of men in the Roman public sphere, providing a religious framework that supported the societal structure of the time. The temple served not only as a religious site but also as a venue for networking and making important business connections, thereby influencing economic and political interactions in the city.

The specific focus on male fortunes in this cult is particularly indicative of the gender dynamics within Roman religion and society. While there were deities and cults that addressed women's roles and needs, such as *Fortuna Muliebris* for women's fortunes and familial welfare, Fortuna Virilis specifically catered to the public and professional aspects of men's lives, illustrating the segmented roles and expectations based on gender. The Cult of Fortuna Virilis highlights the intersection of religion, gender, and public life in ancient Rome. Through its practices and temple, this cult provided a space where Roman men could seek divine support for their professional endeavors and reinforce their roles within the socio-economic hierarchies of Rome. This cult, therefore, not only served religious purposes but also played a significant role in shaping the public identity and social practices of Roman men.

Cult of Fortuna Muliebris

Fortuna Muliebris, translating to "Fortune of Women," was a deity revered for her influence over the domestic and personal aspects of women's lives⁶⁸. The cult was very deeply grounded in ideas of female virtue and being bound to family obligation, showing that societal Roman expectations toward the roles of a woman as wife and mother were highly placed upon women.

The cult originated from a significant historical event in 488 BC, when Roman women, led by the matron *Veturia*, successfully negotiated with the besieging forces of Coriolanus to spare the city⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ Fantham, 2011, 59.

⁶⁹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Roman Antiquities, 8.55.5

In their honor and as a memorial to the unified effort, a temple was erected to Fortuna Muliebris along *Via Latina*, outside Rome. In this act of establishing the temple lay recognition of women's contribution to saving Rome and consolidation of their power in the familial and civic realms.

The temple dedicated to Fortuna Muliebris became a center for women to engage in rites and rituals that sought blessings for personal and familial well-being. Women visited the temple to pray for successful marriages, fertility, and the health and prosperity of their families. The temple thus served not only as a religious site but also as a communal space where women could gather, share experiences, and support one another in their roles within the family structure⁷⁰. The first cult statue was dedicated by and funded by the Roman senate at the same time as the temple, while the second cult statue was sponsored by the women of Rome, using the funds they had initially raised to fund the temple itself⁷¹.

The only architectural remains of the temple are fragments of a marble slab, found at the fourth mile marker on the *Via Latina*. An inscription on the fragments references a restoration made to the temple by Livia, the wife of the first Roman emperor Augustus, during the early 1st century CE⁷².

The rituals performed at the temple often involved offerings of flowers, food, and small personal items, symbolizing the domestic life over which Fortuna Muliebris presided. Special occasions might include more elaborate sacrifices, particularly during annual festivals dedicated to celebrating women's roles in Roman society. These rituals reinforced social norms regarding women's duties and responsibilities, while also providing a form of agency within the religious sphere.

The Cult of Fortuna Muliebris highlighted the societal value placed on women's roles within the family and community. By participating in the cult, women could assert their identity and influence in a predominantly patriarchal society. The cult provided a structured way for women to seek divine intervention in their lives, particularly in areas traditionally associated with female virtue. This cult was instrumental in reinforcing traditional gender roles while also providing a space for women to express and manage their concerns relating to family life. It helped to foster a sense of

⁷⁰ Dyson, 2010, 102.

⁷¹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 8.56.2

⁷² Flory, 1984, 309

community and solidarity among women, giving them a collective voice and a degree of control over their personal and familial fortunes. This cult encapsulates the complex interplay between religion, gender, and societal roles in ancient Rome. Through its practices, this cult not only supported the traditional values associated with women's roles but also provided them with a communal and sacred space to influence their destinies within the constraints of Roman society. This cult demonstrates how religion could both reinforce societal norms and offer a framework for social cohesion and personal expression.

Cult of Fortuna redux

Fortuna Redux, which translates to "Fortune the Home-bringer," is a unique and significant aspect of Fortuna in Roman religious culture, particularly emphasizing the safety and success of those returning from journeys or military campaigns. This deity's veneration was especially prominent during the reign of Emperor Augustus, who aligned himself closely with Fortuna Redux to reinforce his political narrative and ensure public favor. Fortuna Redux was widely disseminated in the Western Empire as the tutelary of the emperor's safe return to the city when he traveled abroad, an event that reaffirmed Rome as the center of the Imperial world⁷³.

The significance of this deity grew under Augustus, who, upon his safe return from Asia Minor in 19 BC, dedicated a temple to Fortuna Redux along the Via Sacra in Rome. This dedication not only marked his gratitude but also served as a public demonstration of his divine favor and the stability of his rule.

The dedication of the temple to Fortuna Redux by Augustus was not just a personal act of thanksgiving but a strategic move that fit into a larger program of Augustan religious reform and propaganda. Augustus sought to revitalize Roman religion and instill a sense of civic duty and moral rejuvenation in the Roman populace. By associating his leadership with the divine protection and favor of Fortuna Redux, Augustus reinforced the narrative of his regime as one marked by peace, prosperity, and successful expansions.⁷⁴

⁷³ Noreña, 2011, 245

⁷⁴ Zanker, 1988, 87

The rituals associated with Fortuna Redux included sacrifices and offerings made by individuals before embarking on journeys and upon their safe return. These practices were believed to secure the goddess's favor and protection. Additionally, October 12, the anniversary of the temple's dedication, became a day of festival for Fortuna Redux, featuring public sacrifices and celebrations that emphasized communal well-being linked to personal successes in travel and military endeavors. The altar of Fortuna Redux was inaugurated on October 12, and dedicated on December 15⁷⁵. It was probably adjacent to the Temple of Honor and Virtue near the Porta Capena. The altar is pictured on several coins and appears to have been "relatively modest".⁷⁶

Domitian built a temple for the goddess, following a triumphal return from war in Germany in 93 AD. The temple most likely stood on the slope of the Capitoline Hill overlooking the Porta Triumphalis. It has been identified with a temple on a panel depicting an arrival ceremony (adventus) on the Arch of Marcus Aurelius. The pictured temple has symbols of Fortuna in the pediment, and a tetrastyle and prostyle design of the Corinthian order. There is some possibility that it is the tetrastyle temple on a fragment of the Severan Marble Plan.

Coins indicate that the cult statue was standing, and held the rudder and cornucopia that are her usual attributes.⁷⁷ In a society where travel was fraught with danger due to geographic, logistic, and military challenges, the worship of Fortuna Redux provided a spiritual assurance that was deeply valued. For Augustus and his administration, promoting this cult helped in consolidating a regime that was expanding Rome's borders through military campaigns and political alliances. Ensuring the safe return of soldiers and officials was not just a personal concern but a state priority that impacted the stability and expansion of the empire. She was the most common manifestation of Fortuna depicted on Imperial coins .

Fortuna Redux's cult was particularly significant during the reign of Augustus as it symbolized the providential nature of his rule and the protective mantle that his governance purportedly cast over all Roman endeavors, both domestic and abroad. This alignment with Fortuna Redux helped Augustus craft an image of a leader favored by the gods, under whose rule Rome enjoyed security and prosperity. Thus, the worship of Fortuna Redux was not only about seeking divine protection

⁷⁵ Scheid, 2009, 133.

⁷⁶ Lawrence Richardson , 1992, 160.

⁷⁷ Ibid

but also about reinforcing the social and political order under Augustus, making it a pivotal element of his reign and religious policy.

Cult of Fortuna Augusta

Fortuna Augusta, translating to "Fortune of the Emperor," represents the personification of luck and prosperity as directly linked to the Roman emperor's fate and, by extension, the fate of the Roman Empire. The establishment and promotion of this cult were most notably advanced during the reign of Emperor Augustus, who sought to solidify his rule through religious reform and the strategic use of divine imagery. The cult served as an essential vehicle for imperial propaganda. By elevating the emperor to a divine or semi-divine status through association with Fortuna, the state could effectively communicate the notion of a divinely ordained rule, crucial during periods of political uncertainty or succession. (Zanker ,1988) points out that the visual and architectural representations associated with this cult were strategically used to foster a connection between the emperor and the divine, enhancing his prestige and authority.

Augustus's rise to power marked a period of significant transformation within the Roman political landscape, transitioning from the tumultuous era of the Republic to the stability promised by his principate. The worship of Fortuna Augusta was a critical element in Augustus's broader initiative to associate his leadership with divine favor, thus legitimizing his authority and stabilizing his regime after decades of civil war .

temples dedicated to Fortuna Augusta were erected and so served visibly to express the emperor's divine favor and his benevolent rule. This is often the case in urban centers or newly established colonies, helping to underline Roman presence and the integration of the cult into everyday civic life.

The architectural style of these temples typically mirrored traditional Roman designs but often incorporated elements that emphasized imperial motifs, such as laurels and images of the emperor. Rituals performed within these temples included sacrifices, votive offerings, and public

ceremonies, especially on dates significant to the emperor or the imperial family, such as anniversaries of ascension or military victories.⁷⁸

The Temple of Fortuna Augusta in Pompeii is an intriguing historical site that highlights the Roman devotion to the Imperial cult, which intertwined civic loyalty with divine worship. M. Tullius, a member of the Pompeian aristocracy, built a small temple for Fortuna Augusta on land he donated to the goddess⁷⁹. The cult of Fortuna Augusta at Pompeii can be associated with the second pattern for Augustan gods at Rome as well. From 3 CE onwards the temple served as the home to a board of annual *ministri Fortunae Augustae*, mostly slaves and freedmen, who made regular dedications of *signa* at the temple⁸⁰.

The Cult of Fortuna Augusta played a crucial role in fostering a sense of unity and shared identity among the Roman populace. By participating in the worship of Fortuna Augusta, citizens were not merely performing religious duties; they were actively affirming their loyalty to the emperor and acknowledging his role as a divinely sanctioned ruler whose fortunes were intertwined with those of the entire empire. This cult also facilitated the integration of diverse populations within the provinces. As the empire expanded, local elites and Roman settlers alike participated in the cult, which helped to assimilate various cultural groups into the imperial fold, promoting Roman customs and governance.

The Cult of Fortuna Augusta is a good example of how elaborate the relationship was in between religion, politics, and society in ancient Rome. It shows that the religious cults had been employed by the emperors such as Augustus for ends not only securing their political situation but also as a tool to pervade the public mind with something and to create a bond within the multiple territories of the empire. Worship of Fortuna Augusta formed one of the most prominent aspects of the Augustan religious policy, which stressed that the emperor wanted to relate his political success to divine will concerning continuity and prosperity of his regime.

⁷⁸ Zanker, 1988,88.

⁷⁹ Richardson, 1992, 160.

⁸⁰ Mouritsen, 1988, 45

Beyond the well-documented cults of Fortuna, there are several other aspects of this goddess that played significant roles throughout the Roman Empire, reflecting the diverse ways in which the Romans perceived and invoked the concept of fortune.

Fortuna Felix is another aspect of Fortuna. Her title means Happy or Blessed, Lucky, Favorable or Fruitful. She seems to have been one of the dual Fortunes worshipped in the city of Antium, where they had a famous oracle. Fortuna Felix may be associated with the Goddess Felicitas, the personification of happiness.

Fortuna Annonaria was revered for her role in ensuring the steady supply and storage of grain, particularly in Rome, where state-managed grain distributions were crucial for the stability of the city and the popularity of its rulers. Temples dedicated to her were often situated near granaries and markets, highlighting her importance in sustaining the populace and by extension, maintaining political stability.⁸¹

Fortuna *Huiusce Diei*, or "Fortune of This Day," was celebrated for her ability to affect the outcome of specific days or events. This deity was particularly important for those embarking on significant endeavors or facing pivotal moments, with rituals and offerings made to secure her favor for immediate and favorable results. This aspect underscores the Roman belief in the immediate influence of divine forces on daily activities, especially those related to military and political outcomes.

Another important aspect was Fortuna Publica, the protector of the commonwealth and the people. Her worship was integrated into the civic religion of Rome, with temples and altars in public spaces where her influence could oversee civic activities and state affairs. This facet of Fortuna encapsulates the communal hopes for continued prosperity and protection against adversity, representing the collective aspect of fortune that concerned the state and its citizens⁸².

Less commonly cited, but of equal poignancy, were the Fortuna Dubia and the Fortuna Brevis. Fortuna Dubia itself embodies uncertainty and ambiguity in fortune for people, usually prayed to by those who face uncertain situations. On the other hand, Fortuna Brevis personified how fleeting luck and success are, acknowledging basically that fortune is ephemeral and transient.

⁸¹ Beard, North, and Price, 1998, 59

⁸² Scheid, 2003, 67

These aspects highlight the Roman understanding of fortune as a capricious and changeable force, reflecting the philosophical and existential considerations that accompanied their religious practices. These nuanced and varied forms of Fortuna's worship demonstrate the extensive reach of this deity into all corners of Roman life, from the granaries that fed the populace to the battlefields that decided the empire's fate, encapsulating the pervasive and multifaceted nature of fortune in Roman thought and religion.

2.5 The Evolution of Fortuna's Iconography

The depiction of deities in ancient cultures often serves as a mirror, reflecting the prevailing religious sentiments, philosophical doctrines, and socio-political changes of the time. In Roman culture, few deities showcase the complexity of these reflections as vividly as Fortuna, the goddess of fortune and the personification of luck. Throughout Roman history, Fortuna's iconography evolved significantly, adapting to the cultural shifts, and expanding influences that shaped the Roman world. This section, "The Evolution of Fortuna's Iconography," explores how images of Fortuna transformed from the early Roman Republic through the Hellenistic period, into the era of the Roman Empire, and beyond. Each phase in her iconographic development not only marks a shift in artistic styles but also underscores changes in religious practices and the integration of philosophical concepts about fate and destiny.

Early Depictions and Hellenistic Influences on Fortuna's Iconography

Fortuna, traditionally depicted with a cornucopia, symbolized not merely prosperity but the broader bounty of life that the early Romans valued deeply. This attribute illustrated her role as a benevolent provider, ensuring the fertility and success of agricultural pursuits which were the backbone of the early Roman economy. The cornucopia's visual representation in art and sculpture served as a tangible reminder of the gods' integral role in the well-being of the community, rooting Fortuna's worship in the everyday lives of the Roman populace.⁸³

⁸³ Beard, North, and Price, Volume 1, 1998, 59.

The rudder, another salient attribute, emerged as a complement to the cornucopia. While the cornucopia spoke to the abundance that Fortuna could bestow, the rudder symbolized control over the uncertain and ever-changing fortunes of life. This symbol resonated with the Roman ethos of navigating one's destiny, blending divine influence with human agency. The presence of the rudder in Fortuna's iconography highlighted the belief that although individuals were subject to the whims of fate, they possessed the capacity to influence their outcomes through wisdom and prudence. This notion was particularly appealing in a society that valued the virtues of foresight and control over personal and collective destinies⁸⁴.

The convergence of Roman and Greek cultures during the Hellenistic period further enriched Fortuna's iconography. The introduction of Greek artistic and religious elements was particularly pronounced after the campaigns of Alexander the Great, which facilitated a cultural synthesis across the Hellenized world. Fortuna began to be identified with Tyche, the Greek goddess of fortune, leading to a blending of attributes and iconography. The Wheel of Fortune, a prominent symbol associated with Tyche, was adopted into Fortuna's repertoire, representing the fickle nature of life and the constant flux of human fortunes. Unlike the more stable and agrarian symbol of the cornucopia, the Wheel of Fortune emphasized the unpredictable and often capricious changes in a person's circumstances⁸⁵.

This period also saw philosophical engagement with the nature of fortune expand significantly. Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, grappling with questions of fate and free will, found in Fortuna a representation of their doctrines. The Stoics, accepting the turning wheel as a metaphor for the inevitability of changing fortunes, advocated for a detachment from material circumstances, focusing instead on moral integrity. Epicureans, meanwhile, sought to minimize the impact of Fortuna's whims through the pursuit of tranquility, underscoring a philosophical approach that aimed to shield the inner life from external fluctuations⁸⁶.

The evolution of Fortuna's iconography from early Roman depictions through the Hellenistic period encapsulates a shift from a local agrarian deity to a complex symbol interwoven with broader philosophical and cultural narratives. The addition of Hellenistic elements like the Wheel

⁸⁴ Warrior, 2006, 86

⁸⁵ Rüpke, 2007, 245.

⁸⁶ Ibid

of Fortune enriched the visual and symbolic language associated with Fortuna, illustrating the dynamic interplay between cultural exchange and religious expression in ancient Rome.

Fortuna's Iconography in the Roman Republic

During the Roman Republic, the iconography of Fortuna underwent significant transformations as her worship adapted to the complex sociopolitical landscape of an expanding Rome. This period marked a time of robust republican virtues, growing urbanization, and increasing interaction with foreign cultures, all of which influenced the depiction and veneration of Fortuna. In the Roman Republic, Fortuna's imagery began to reflect her growing importance in public and civic life. Her depictions became more diversified, embodying various aspects that appealed to the collective Roman identity and individual aspirations. The cornucopia remained a prevalent symbol, consistently representing abundance and prosperity. However, new symbols were incorporated to reflect her expanded role as a guardian of the state and its people. One such symbol was the ship's rudder, which gained prominence, emphasizing the idea of navigating the state through the tumultuous waters of politics and fate ⁸⁷.

Fortuna's iconography was prominently featured in public spaces, including temples and fora, symbolizing her role as a protector of the collective Roman fortune. This period saw the construction of various temples dedicated to different aspects of Fortuna, such as *Fortuna Publica*, who safeguarded the commonwealth's fortune, and *Fortuna Privata*, who protected individual wealth and well-being ⁸⁸. These temples were not only places of worship but also served as visual representations of her integral role in both public and private spheres.

Moreover, the depiction of Fortuna in literature during the Republic often served to communicate moral and ethical lessons. Writers and poets of the time, such as Cicero and Livy, referenced Fortuna to discuss themes of morality, fate, and the virtues required to steer one's course through the uncertainties of life. Cicero, in particular, used Fortuna to debate the nature of chance and its

⁸⁷ Beard, North, and Price, Volume 1, 1998, 60.

⁸⁸ Warrior, 2006, 87

impact on human affairs, suggesting that while one might not control fate, one could manage one's response to the fortunes bestowed by the goddess.⁸⁹

The influence of Hellenistic culture continued to permeate Roman religious practices during the Republic, leading to a deeper syncretism in the representation of Fortuna. The integration of philosophical concepts, particularly from Stoic and Epicurean schools, introduced a more nuanced interpretation of her powers. The Stoics emphasized acceptance of her will, suggesting that true happiness does not depend on the whims of fortune but on one's state of mind. Meanwhile, Epicureans challenged the randomness of her gifts, promoting a life of tranquility free from the fears of divine retribution or favor⁹⁰.

Artistically, Fortuna was increasingly depicted with elaborate attributes, such as the Wheel of Fortune and the globe, in sculptures and on coinage. These elements underscored her influence over the cycles of life and the expansive reach of her power across the Roman territories. Coins from this era frequently featured Fortuna, underscoring her role in ensuring the prosperity and stability of the Republic⁹¹. The evolution of Fortuna's iconography during the Roman Republic reflects a period of significant cultural and philosophical development. Her imagery, enriched by political symbolism and philosophical depth, illustrates the complex ways in which the Romans conceptualized fortune and fate. As Rome transitioned from a localized agrarian society to a vast republic, Fortuna's representations encapsulated the hopes and anxieties of a republic navigating its rise to power.

Later Transformations and Enduring Legacy

The Roman emperors quickly embraced the concept of Tyche as a kingmaker, blending it with the native Roman deity Fortuna, who had already been co-opted by late Republican generals for their own glorification. This fusion is most evident in the forms of Fortuna Redux and Fortuna Augusta, both of which emerged during the Augustan era.

⁸⁹ Cicero. *De Divinatione* I, 24, Line 79. 44 BC.

⁹⁰ Sedley, 1998, 102

⁹¹ Mattingly, Vol 2, 1923, 165.

In the later stages of the Roman Empire and through the subsequent rise of Christianity, the iconography of Fortuna underwent significant transformations, reflecting the broader shift from pagan traditions to a predominantly Christian society. As Christianity gained prominence, the representations and worship of Fortuna, like many other pagan deities, faced decline and reinterpretation within the new religious framework.

During Late Antiquity, the depiction of Fortuna evolved to accommodate the shifting cultural and religious paradigms. Initially celebrated for her control over fortune and fate, Fortuna's attributes such as the cornucopia and the Wheel of Fortune were increasingly seen through the lens of Christian morality. The cornucopia, which had symbolized material abundance, began to be interpreted as a representation of spiritual bounty under Christian influence, aligning with the Christian emphasis on divine providence rather than earthly wealth⁹².

The Wheel of Fortune retained its symbolism but was recontextualized in Christian art and literature. It came to represent the transient nature of worldly status and fortune, serving as a moral lesson about the precariousness of earthly life and the folly of relying on temporal power. This reinterpretation is evident in the works of early Christian writers who utilized the imagery of the wheel to convey the instability and unpredictability of life, urging a focus on eternal spiritual truths instead⁹³.

As the worship of Fortuna waned with the official endorsement of Christianity by the Roman state, her temples were either abandoned, repurposed into Christian churches, or fell into disrepair. This physical transformation mirrored the declining public and official support for pagan deities, marking a significant cultural shift in the Roman world⁹⁴.

The resurgence of interest in classical antiquities during the Renaissance revived Fortuna's iconography, particularly among humanists who sought to reconcile classical philosophy with Christian teachings. Renaissance artists and thinkers revisited Fortuna's symbolism, exploring themes of human agency and destiny. Fortuna was often depicted in Renaissance art, holding her traditional attributes, yet these were imbued with new layers of meaning that reflected Renaissance ideals of humanism and the recognition of human potential despite the unpredictable whims of

⁹² Brown, 1989, 115.

⁹³ Klein, 1994, 203.

⁹⁴ MacMullen, 1984, 78.

fate. This period saw a nuanced exploration of her influence on human affairs, with scholars like Petrarch and Machiavelli discussing Fortuna in terms of political and personal ambition, emphasizing the ability of man to navigate her challenges through virtue and reason⁹⁵ .

Moreover, during the Renaissance, Fortuna's Wheel became a popular motif in literature and art, symbolizing the cyclic nature of luck and fortune, but with a renewed emphasis on the potential for human control and the application of wisdom. This reinterpretation is notably reflected in the works of Shakespeare and Chaucer, where the Wheel serves to underscore moral and philosophical questions concerning human endeavor and divine providence⁹⁶ .

The enduring legacy of Fortuna's iconography continued into modern times, persisting as a cultural symbol in the arts and popular discourse. Her image and the concepts she embodies are still invoked in discussions of luck, fate, and fortune, highlighting the ongoing relevance of her figure in understanding and expressing the human condition⁹⁷ . As these transformations indicate, the evolution of Fortuna's iconography from a revered Roman deity to a philosophical symbol during the Renaissance, and her continued presence in modern culture, reflect the complex ways in which societies adapt and reinterpret traditional symbols to fit new ideological and theological contexts. This dynamic process reveals much about the changing values and beliefs of societies from ancient Rome to the modern era.

Chapter3: Semiotics in Numismatics

3.1 Semiotic Analysis in Art and Numismatics

Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, is important in revealing communication patterns in different media. This discipline is especially important in the fields of art and numismatics, where symbols serve not only as decorative elements but also as deep meanings. In the field of numismatics, each coin is a book of history and culture rich with its visuals. Often considered

⁹⁵ Baron, 1966, 255.

⁹⁶ Greenblatt, 2005, 319.

⁹⁷ Hamilton, 2003, 265.

small works of art, the coins are packed with many useful features that far exceed their monetary value. These metal statues bear the hallmark of their time, from images of gods and rulers to subtle political propaganda and cultural symbolism. By applying semiotic analysis to these numismatic pieces, we can better understand the societies that produced them and show how they communicated their values, achievements, and aspirations through the simple yet powerful language of coins.

Defining Semiotics

Semiotics, the systematic study of signs and symbols in social life, has deep roots in linguistic theory and cultural studies. The basic principles of semiotics were established by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, who developed their ideas in parallel at the beginning of the 20th century.

Saussure's theory of semiotics, often referred to as semiology, defines a 'sign' as consisting of two parts: the 'signifier', which is the form that the sign takes; and the 'signified', which is the concept it represents. This relationship is crucial for understanding how meanings are constructed in various forms of communication⁹⁸. Saussure's structuralist approach emphasizes that signs gain their meaning from their relationships within a system⁹⁹.

Peirce's contribution to semiotics proposed a triadic model, which is more expansive than Saussure's dyadic model. According to Peirce, a sign is something that stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It involves three components: the representamen (the form which the sign takes), the interpretant (the sense made of the sign), and the object (to which the sign refers). Peirce's framework is particularly useful in examining how symbols, including artifacts such as coins, can be interpreted in different contexts.

The use of semiotic analysis in the field of numismatics shows that coins are used not only as monetary instruments; They are the bearers of a rich culture, culture, politics, and society. The imagery and inscriptions on coins, such as those depicting Roman deities like Fortuna, can be analyzed to reveal insights into the cultural and political ethos of the periods in which they were

⁹⁸ Saussure, 1959, 65.

⁹⁹ Chandler, 2nd ed, 2007, 34

minted ¹⁰⁰. The representation of Fortuna on Roman coins from the reign of Augustus could be analyzed through both Saussurean and Peircean lenses. Fortuna's imagery as a signifier might include her attributes like the cornucopia (signifying abundance) or the wheel (symbolizing the unpredictable nature of fate), which correspond to signified concepts of prosperity and the emperor's favor with the divine, respectively.

Theoretical Foundations

The principles of semiotics are grounded in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, whose contributions had a great impact on the field. When using semiotic analysis, it is important to understand their patterns, especially in fields such as numismatics where symbols convey complex messages.

Ferdinand de Saussure's Contributions:

Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, laid the groundwork for semiotics with his theory of the linguistic sign, distinguishing between the signifier and the signified. Saussure posited that the signifier is the form that the sign takes such as a word, image, or sound while the signified is the concept that the signifier refers to¹⁰¹. His model is dyadic, focusing primarily on the relationship between these two elements without considering the effect of interpretation by the observer. This structuralist view, emphasizing the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign, suggests that meanings are defined through differences within a system, rather than by inherent qualities of the signs themselves ¹⁰².

Charles Sanders Peirce's Contributions:

Contrasting with Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce proposed a triadic model of the sign that includes an interpretant a critical addition that introduces the role of the interpreter in the process of understanding signs. In Peirce's model, the sign (or representamen) is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. The interpretant is the idea generated by

¹⁰⁰ Harland, 2003, 102.

¹⁰¹ Saussure 1983, 114

¹⁰² Culler, 1976, 102.

the sign in the mind of the observer, and the object is that to which the sign refers ¹⁰³. Peirce's semiotic theory extends beyond linguistic signs to include icons, indices, and symbols, each defined by their different types of relationships between the signifier and the signified¹⁰⁴.

These foundational theories, which are often used as a starting point for analyzing different forms of communication and cultural representation, provide the necessary foundation for a comprehensive framework. As for numismatics, a coinage is considered to be inscribed with messages and pictures that hold particular significance; this is where the significance of both the Saussure's and the Peirce's models is invaluable. Coins can be analyzed as signs where the images (signifiers) such as a depiction of Fortuna or an inscription about victory represent underlying concepts (signifieds) like prosperity, divine favor, or military success. Peirce's inclusion of the interpretant allows for an exploration of how different audiences might understand these symbols, offering insights into the cultural and political impact of these numismatic messages across different contexts and periods¹⁰⁵.

Through the use of structures, semiotics present a sophisticated image interpretation tool for the rich semantic content present in artworks. This kind of analysis permits a researcher to dissect thousands of levels of meaning as well as cultural stories that are intended through different signs and symbols. So, at the end, we get a better understanding of the piece's general context and the role it plays in the society.

Linking Art to Numismatics

Numismatic studies often refer to coins as "miniature canvases" because they, like paintings, are used by their creators to depict a variety of symbols chosen to represent significant narratives or ideals. For instance, Spier ¹⁰⁶notes that the imagery on coins ranging from depictions of rulers and mythological figures to symbolic motifs like laurel wreaths or eagles serves not only as a medium of economic transaction but also as a potent tool for propaganda and cultural expression. These

¹⁰³ Atkin, Peirce's Theory of Signs, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2005 Edition.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ Nöth, 1995, 172.

¹⁰⁶ Spier, 2010, 145.

images are meticulously crafted to communicate specific messages or to glorify the reigns of emperors and kings.

Just as artists use paint to create symbolic representations on canvas, minters of coins use metal to craft images and texts that carry meanings beyond their surface. According to Klawans¹⁰⁷, coins are designed to project power, authority, and cultural identity, effectively serving as government-sanctioned advertisements that reach a wide audience. For example, Roman coins often carried the image of the current emperor, symbolizing his divine right to rule and reinforcing his authority across the empire. Similarly, the frequent depiction of gods and goddesses on coins not only reflected religious practices but also bolstered the divine association of the ruler's image and legitimacy.

Coins as Semiotic Objects

Coins are important semiotic objects; Beyond their value, they serve as great sources of culture and cultural knowledge. Through semiotics (the study of signs and symbols), coins can be analyzed to reveal messages embedded in their designs, which often include numbers, inscriptions, and various forms of design. These elements not only serve graphic purposes, but also convey complex messages about power, authority, and culture.

Coins offer a unique perspective into the societies that produce them. As Burnett¹⁰⁸ notes, the designs on coins are not chosen at random but are carefully selected to communicate specific messages to the public. For example, the appearance of rulers on coins, a common practice since ancient times, serves to reinforce the ruler's authority and divine right to govern. The depiction of Alexander the Great with the ram's horns of Ammon on the coins minted during his reign exemplifies this, suggesting his divine descent and reinforcing his authority over his subjects¹⁰⁹. The figures depicted on coins often include rulers, deities, and mythological characters, each chosen for their symbolic significance. In ancient Rome, coins frequently featured the emperor's portrait, signifying the centralization of power and the personal nature of the emperor's rule. The

¹⁰⁷ Klawans, 1995, 78.

¹⁰⁸ Burnett, 1987, 55.

¹⁰⁹ Price, 1991, 91.

depiction of gods and goddesses, such as Fortuna or Jupiter, served to link the ruler's authority with divine favor, an endorsement meant to legitimize their rule and placate the populace¹¹⁰ .

Inscriptions on coins are also laden with meaning. They often include the name and titles of the ruler, significant dates, and slogans or mottos that reflect the political climate or aspirations of the era. For example, the Roman denarius often bore the phrase "SENATVS POPVLVSQVE ROMANVS" (The Senate and People of Rome), underscoring the authority of Rome and its governance structure¹¹¹. The iconography on coins can include a range of symbols such as animals, plants, or objects that carry specific meanings within a culture. The olive branch, for instance, often signifies peace, while an eagle might symbolize strength and imperial power. During the American Revolution, various colonial coins featured chains and liberty caps, symbols of resistance against oppression and the fight for freedom¹¹² .



Fig 3: RIC II, 672, Bust of Trajan, laureate, draped, right, Felicitas, draped, standing left, phrase
SENATVS POPVLVSQVE ROMANVS S C

Significance of Semiotics in Numismatic Studies

The importance of semiotics in numismatic research is significant because it provides a method for interpreting the complex messages written on coins. This method of analysis is especially important in understanding how historical figures such as Emperor Augustus used coins as a means of communication and political propaganda. Semiotic analysis helps scholars interpret the symbolic features on coins that rulers have historically used to convey messages about their lives,

¹¹⁰ Hollander, 2007, 45.

¹¹¹ Howgego, 2005, 114.

¹¹² Breen, 1988, 12.

accomplishments, and interactions with God. For example, the first Roman emperor Augustus made extensive use of coins to express his public image and assert his authority.

By featuring symbolic representations and carefully chosen inscriptions, Augustus communicated his successes, divine support, and the continuity of his lineage. Harl¹¹³ notes that Augustus's coinage often featured images that promoted peace and prosperity under his rule, reinforcing his image as a benevolent leader.

In later sections of the thesis, semiotic analysis will be applied specifically to study the depiction of Fortuna, the goddess of fortune and luck, on the coins of Augustus. This analysis will explore how the imagery of Fortuna was used to not only evoke her association with prosperity and stability but also subtly link these attributes to Augustus's reign. According to Zanker¹¹⁴, the portrayal of divine figures like Fortuna on Roman coins was a strategic move by Augustus to align himself with divine favor and underscore his capacity to bring fortune to Rome.

The iconography of Fortuna on these coins often depicted with symbols such as the cornucopia (symbol of abundance) and the rudder (symbol of control over destiny) serves as a rich field for semiotic analysis. These symbols were carefully selected to reinforce the message of Augustus's divine right to govern and his role as the bringer of peace and prosperity. The semiotic approach in this thesis will delve into how these symbols functioned within the cultural and political context of Augustus's Rome, conveying layered messages to the Roman populace.

3.2 The Role of Coinage as Visual Communication

Historically, coins have served two important functions, they have served as the primary form of economic transactions and as a powerful tool for visual communication. This chapter focuses on this second role and describes the use of coinage by sovereign nations and their rulers. Because of the efficient processing of images, symbols, and text, coins are an important channel for the dissemination of government messages. This message not only strengthens the authority and rights of those in power but also stimulates political ideas and changes public opinion. The following

¹¹³ Harl, 1996, 145.

¹¹⁴ Zanker, 1995, 87.

discussion will reveal how these seemingly ordinary items, coins, were carefully crafted to serve as useful government instruments and to have a public impact.

Coins as Communication Tools

Coins serve not only as mediums of economic transaction but also as significant instruments for the communication of political, social, and cultural values. Historically, states and rulers have exploited this dual utility of coins to disseminate ideological messages and reinforce their sovereignty and legitimacy among the populace. Coins were never minted, used, deposited, retrieved, or studied in isolation. Each stage in the life cycle of a coin takes place within a specific context, including production, circulation, deposition, and recovery. Understanding these contexts can reveal how coins functioned within societies and how they were used to express identity and ideology¹¹⁵.

The design elements of coins, such as images, symbols, and inscriptions, are strategically selected to communicate specific messages to a wide audience. The imagery used on coins often includes portraits of rulers, national emblems, or other symbols that resonate with the state's identity and power. The presence of these symbols on coins is not merely decorative; they play a crucial role in reinforcing the authority and legitimacy of the ruling power through a form of visual communication that is regularly and widely disseminated across different strata of society.

The portrayal of rulers on coins is a practice that dates back to ancient times and serves as a direct representation of the state. For example, Roman emperors used their coin portraits as tools for public relations, to establish their images as powerful and God-like figures throughout the empire¹¹⁶. These images helped to create a personal connection between the ruler and the subjects, thereby enhancing the ruler's charisma and perceived authority. In addition to imagery, the inscriptions on coins are meticulously crafted. These often include mottos, slogans, or even significant dates that relate directly to the state's current political agenda or historical narrative. Harl¹¹⁷ explains that such inscriptions are not just informational but are aimed at embedding

¹¹⁵ Kemmers, and Myrberg. 2011, 87-108.

¹¹⁶ Rowan, 2012, 103

¹¹⁷ Harl, 1996, 146

certain values or messages within the minds of the coin's users, thus serving as a continuous reminder of the regime's ideological stance.

Coins also play a pivotal role in shaping collective memory and national identity. coins circulate within and beyond the borders of states, carrying with them the cultural and political narratives that can influence how a civilization perceives itself and is perceived by others. This dissemination of cultural symbols through coinage can unify diverse populations under a common identity or narrative, thereby strengthening the internal cohesion of the state.

Visual Elements of Coinage

The features on the coins, including images, symbols and text, are deliberately designed to convey a specific political message. These items were chosen for their deep cultural and symbolic meaning, with the aim of changing the perception and behavior of users who encounter these coins every day. Images on coins are an important aspect of numismatics and directly reflect the priorities of the ruler and broad currents of contemporary thought. This practice is based on the tradition of communicating authority and power through visual symbols that are immediately recognized and understood by citizens.

Coin imagery often includes portraits of rulers, which act as powerful symbols of sovereignty and leadership. These portraits are not mere representations; they are imbued with significant symbolic weight. As Klawans¹¹⁸ discusses, such images are carefully chosen to reflect the ideological stance of the ruler. For example, the frequent use of the eagle on Roman denarii is particularly emblematic. The eagle, a symbol of strength and imperial majesty, not only underscores the authority of the Roman state but also aligns the leader with the divine attributes of Jupiter, enhancing the ruler's image as both supreme and sacrosanct.

¹¹⁸ Klawans, 1976, 79.



Fig 4: RIC I (second edition), 64, Head of Augustus, bare, left and Jupiter, standing left, in hexastyle temple, holding thunderbolt in right hand

The inclusion of a ruler's portrait on coins serves several strategic functions. It creates a personal connection between the ruler and the subjects, serving as a constant reminder of the ruler's presence and power. Hollander¹¹⁹ explains that Roman emperors like Augustus exploited this aspect to great effect. By depicting themselves as both military conquerors and pious leaders, they were able to cultivate an image of benevolence and divinity. This dual portrayal helped to foster a sense of familiarity and reverence among Roman citizens, reinforcing the emperor's position as a paternal figure and guardian of the state.

The symbolism extends beyond portraits and includes various other figures, animals, and mythological or religious icons that carry additional meanings. The imagery used can also be context specific. For instance, the use of particular animals like lions might symbolize courage and prowess in battle, while mythological figures could be employed to assert the ruler's God-like status or divine favor, as seen in the coinage of Alexander the Great, where he is often portrayed with the ram's horns of Ammon, suggesting his descent from the gods¹²⁰.

The practice of using these symbols helps to not only legitimize the ruler's authority but also to communicate specific messages about their reign and policies. The icons chosen are steeped in cultural and historical significance, resonating deeply with the citizens' shared identity and values¹²¹.

Beyond portraiture, coins often feature symbolic motifs such as laurel wreaths, cornucopias, or scepters, each loaded with connotations of victory, abundance, or royal authority. Alram¹²² points

¹¹⁹ Hollander, 2007, 46.

¹²⁰ Stewart, 1993, 91

¹²¹ Meadows, 2001, 27-49

¹²² Alram, 1990, 30

out that these motifs are not mere artistic embellishments but are strategically employed to project messages about the state's stability, prosperity, or rightful governance.

The interplay of these visual elements on coins creates a complex language that conveys much about a nation's identity, values, and history. Studying these elements offers insights not only into the artistic tendencies of a period but also into the political ambitions, religious inclinations, and societal structures of the time.

Symbolic Imagery

Symbolic images on coins are a powerful way to convey rich meaning and reinforce the ideas and values of the organization it presents. The symbols chosen for coins are not random; They are filled with special meanings intended to convey messages about power, divine punishment, moral values and political ambitions. This use of symbolic patterns can greatly influence public perception and serve as an important area of research in numismatics. The use of symbolic imagery in coinage dates back to ancient civilizations and continues to be a crucial aspect of statecraft. Symbols such as animals, mythological figures, and objects are carefully chosen for their deep cultural resonance and the meanings they convey. For instance, the owl on Athenian tetradrachms not only represented Athena but also signified wisdom and vigilance, reinforcing Athens' identity as a city of wisdom and its patron goddess's protection¹²³.

Different symbols serve various purposes depending on their historical and cultural context. The laurel wreath, often found on Roman coinage, symbolizes victory and is commonly associated with the military triumphs of the emperor. This imagery projects the emperor as a victorious leader, deserving of loyalty and reverence. Similarly, the fasces, another Roman symbol featuring a bundle of rods with an axe, conveyed notions of power and justice, reflecting the legal and punitive authority of the state¹²⁴.

¹²³ Kraay, Colin M. *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976, 74

¹²⁴ Metcalf, 2012, 45



Fig 5 : RIC I (second edition) Augustus 529, Head of Augustus, laureate, right and Legend in linear circle in laurel wreath

The cornucopia, frequently depicted on various coins throughout history, represents abundance and prosperity. Its presence on coins during the Roman Empire, for example, was meant to suggest the emperor's ability to provide wealth and stability for the empire. Such symbols serve not only as decorative motifs but also as tools for rulers to communicate their achievements and divine favor. The strategic deployment of symbolic imagery on coins plays a significant role in shaping the collective memory and identity of a civilization. Coins circulate widely, ensuring that the symbolic messages reach a broad audience, thereby reinforcing the narratives the ruling elite wish to promote. The repeated exposure to these symbols helps embed these narratives within the public consciousness, influencing perceptions of legitimacy and authority ¹²⁵.

Function of Inscriptions on Coins

Inscriptions transform coins from mere currency into messaging tools, articulating specific statements that the ruling power wishes to disseminate among the populace. For instance, Roman coins frequently bore inscriptions like "SPQR" (Senatus Populusque Romanus the Senate and the People of Rome), not just marking the coin as Roman but also emphasizing the Roman commitment to republican ideals, even under imperial rule ¹²⁶.

¹²⁵ Clain-Stefanelli, 1984, 22

¹²⁶ Harl, 1996, 147



Fig 6: RIC I (second edition) Augustus 44, CAESAR AVGVSTVS: Head of Augustus, bare, left and in the right S P Q R: Legend in two lines above and below shield

Inscriptions often include the names and titles of rulers, which help legitimize their reign by publicly declaring their right to rule. For example, medieval European coins typically featured the name of the monarch, sometimes accompanied by their lineage and titles, thereby reinforcing their authority and divine right to govern¹²⁷. In more modern contexts, inscriptions can also commemorate important national events, achievements, or anniversaries, serving both to educate and foster a sense of national pride and unity.

Many coins also carry inscriptions with religious significance, invoking the protection of deities or blessing the ruler's governance with divine favor. This use of religious text on coins can also have a propagandistic function, as it associates the ruler's power with divine will, making dissent not just a political issue but a religious transgression. The Byzantine solidi, for example, frequently featured religious inscriptions that positioned the emperor as God's representative on Earth¹²⁸.

Inscriptions also serve educational roles, informing the public about the legal tender status of the coin, its denomination, or origin. This aspect is particularly significant in large and diverse states, where coinage may circulate across vast and culturally varied areas. The British florin, introduced in the 1840s, is an example where the coin featured inscriptions that explained its value as one-tenth of a pound, helping to standardize currency understanding at a time when decimalization was being considered¹²⁹.

¹²⁷ Grierson, 1975, 102.

¹²⁸ Grierson, 1982, 86

¹²⁹ Craig, John. *The Mint: A History of the London Mint from A.D. 287 to 1948*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953, 212.

3.3 Methodological Approaches to Semiotic Analysis

As we delve into the complex world of numismatics, it becomes necessary to develop a methodological approach that allows for in-depth analysis of symbols and inscriptions on coins. Semiotic analysis of coins sheds light on the socio-political and cultural contexts that shaped ancient society, particularly the Augustan reign. This chapter presents and analyzes various methods of semiotic analysis, each of which offers insight into how visual objects and coin images function as tools of communication and influence. Given the complexity and richness of numismatic symbols, especially in the context of Augustus's reign and the depiction of Fortuna, a multifaceted methodological approach is necessary. This section aims to equip the research with the necessary analytical tools to decode the layered messages encoded within these miniature canvases of metal. By employing a combination of structural, Peircean, contextual, comparative, and quantitative semiotic analyses, we can uncover not only the direct meanings of these symbols but also their broader implications and the reactions they intended to evoke among the populace.

Foundations of the Integrative Semiotic Framework

At its core, this framework integrates the structuralist semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure, who focused on the dyadic relationship between the signifier (the form of the sign) and the signified (the concept it represents), and the triadic model of Charles Sanders Peirce, which includes the interpretant, the mediator that interprets the relationship between the signifier and the signified¹³⁰. This combination allows for a more nuanced analysis that considers both the structural composition of signs and the interpretive actions of viewers within specific historical and cultural contexts.

In the context of numismatics, the integrative framework proves particularly useful for examining how coinage under rulers like Augustus was employed to convey messages about authority, divine right, and societal values. For example, the depiction of Fortuna on Augustan coins can be analyzed structurally to understand the literal symbols (cornucopia, wheel, etc.) and what they denote, while

¹³⁰ Chandler, 2007, 34

also incorporating a Peircean perspective to interpret how contemporary Roman citizens might have understood these symbols, potentially viewing them as indicators of divine favor or imperial benevolence ¹³¹.

Structural and Interpretative Analysis:

Structural Analysis: This part of the framework will include a detailed examination of the coins' physical characteristics and meanings. For example, the format, materials and images used all have their own meanings in the cultural language of the Romans.

Interpretive analysis: Interpretive analysis, facilitated by Peircean semiotics, goes beyond mere signs and looks at the consequences these signs produce. It looks at the historical context in which these coins came into circulation and how meanings may differ between different groups in society.

The integrative approach is supported by numerous scholarly works that emphasize the importance of viewing signs as part of a larger cultural and historical narrative. Works by authors like Winfried Nöth in "Handbook of Semiotics" ¹³² provide foundational insights into how signs function within societal contexts and how their meanings can be fluid and subject to various interpretations. Using an integrative semiotic framework in numismatic studies allows for a comprehensive analysis that not only decodes the symbolic content of coins but also contextualizes these findings within the broader societal and cultural dynamics. This approach underscores the multifaceted nature of semiotics in understanding historical artifacts like coins, revealing the depth and complexity of the messages encoded within simple metallic forms.

Contextual Semiotic Analysis in Numismatic Studies

The importance of a contextual approach in numismatics cannot be overstated. By examining coins within their production, usage, and deposition contexts, we gain a deeper understanding of their roles and meanings in ancient societies. This approach allows us to see coins as part of a larger material culture, contributing to both economic transactions and symbolic communication .

¹³¹ Eco 1976, 218

¹³² Nöth 1995, 172

In the realm of numismatic studies, contextual semiotic analysis provides a crucial methodological approach for understanding how coins not only represent but actively communicate within their historical and cultural settings. This approach emphasizes the importance of the social, political, and economic contexts in which numismatic signs are created and interpreted. Contextual analysis in numismatics is crucial for understanding the multifaceted roles that coins played in ancient societies. By examining the context of production, circulation, deposition, and recovery, we can uncover the socio-political and economic environments in which these coins operated. This approach highlights how coins were not merely economic tools but also artifacts that carried significant cultural and symbolic meanings¹³³ .

Contextual semiotic analysis extends beyond the mere identification of symbolic meanings (signifiers) and their associated concepts (signifieds). It integrates the broader contexts historical, cultural, and social that influence both the production of the signs and their reception by the audience. This method is rooted in the work of scholars like Stuart Hall, who argued that the process of understanding signs is always situated within specific frameworks of knowledge and relations of production ¹³⁴. In the context of numismatics, this approach allows researchers to explore not just what the symbols on coins might mean in isolation, but how these meanings are shaped by the circumstances of their time.

Applying contextual semiotic analysis to the study of Roman coinage, particularly the coins depicting Fortuna during Augustus's reign, involves examining how the imagery and inscriptions might have resonated with contemporary Roman society. The symbols of Fortuna, such as the wheel and the cornucopia, are not just abstract representations of fate and abundance but are deeply embedded in Roman religious and cultural narratives. Analyzing these symbols within the context of Augustus's political agendas such as his efforts to portray himself as a divinely supported ruler reveals how these coins were likely perceived as affirmations of his legitimacy and the prosperity he brought to Rome .

A contextual analysis also considers how the meanings of symbols can change over time. The signification of Fortuna's symbols on Roman coins, for instance, must be understood in terms of the specific historical moment of Augustus's rule, a time characterized by significant political

¹³³ Motta 2010, 94

¹³⁴ Hall 1997, 15

changes and the consolidation of imperial power. The interpretation of these symbols likely evolved as Augustus's political and cultural programs developed, reflecting shifts in public perception and imperial propaganda¹³⁵.

Furthermore, contextual semiotic analysis often involves comparative studies, where coins from different periods or cultural contexts are analyzed to understand shifts in symbolic meanings. By comparing the imagery used on coins before and after Augustus's reign, scholars can trace how shifts in political power influenced numismatic symbolism, offering insights into broader societal changes¹³⁶. Contextual semiotic analysis is indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of ancient coins as cultural texts. By situating numismatic symbols within their broader historical and cultural contexts, this approach provides deeper insights into how these symbols functioned within society, what they meant to the people who used and saw them daily, and how they supported or challenged contemporary social and political structures.

Comparative Semiotic Study

A Comparative Semiotic Study represents a vital methodological approach in disciplines such as numismatics, where it is employed to analyze and interpret the varied meanings and significances attached to symbols across different contexts or time periods. This method involves a systematic comparison of similar symbols used in diverse cultural, historical, or material contexts.

Through such comparative analysis, researchers can explore how symbols evolve over time, how their meanings shift in different social and political environments, and how they influence and reflect the societies in which they appear. Coins are unique in their ability to reflect both the issuer's authority and the user's identity. Comparative studies of coins from different regions and periods reveal how symbols on coins can adapt to different political and cultural contexts. For instance, the representation of rulers and deities on coins can be analyzed to understand shifts in political power and cultural values.

Comparative studies of coins from different regions and time periods reveal how symbols and inscriptions were adapted to reflect local identities and political realities. For instance, the

¹³⁵ Galinsky 1996, 104

¹³⁶ Howgego 1995, 80

transition of Dora's coin imagery from Phoenician to Hellenistic and then to Roman styles illustrates the city's shifting cultural affiliations and political allegiances. This comparative approach allows for a deeper understanding of the regional variations and commonalities in numismatic iconography ¹³⁷.

In numismatics, the comparative semiotic approach is especially beneficial because coins as artifacts bear symbols that are not only artistic but also deeply imbued with socio-political meanings. Coins circulate widely and frequently across different strata of society, making them ideal vehicles for the dissemination of the symbolic messages they carry. By comparing these symbols across coins from different epochs or regions, numismatists can uncover how the portrayal and significance of these symbols change in response to shifting cultural narratives or political agendas.

For example, the image of Fortuna on Roman coins might appear across several centuries, but the context in which this symbol is used be it during the Republic, the transition to Imperial rule, or during the height of the Empire can alter its implied meanings. Under the Republic, Fortuna might symbolize the hope and uncertainty of Rome's fortunes, while during the reign of Augustus, the same symbol could be adapted to emphasize the divine favor and assured prosperity under his rule.

This approach not only allows for an understanding of the 'what' and 'how', what symbols were used and how they were depicted but also delves deeper into the 'why', why these symbols were important at that time, and what they were intended to communicate. This can lead to insights into the rulers' intentions behind the choice of symbols and the public reception of these images. Comparative studies thus provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of historical contexts, reflecting shifts in power dynamics, religious beliefs, and economic conditions that could influence symbolic representation.

The findings from comparative semiotic studies contribute significantly to broader academic discussions about cultural identity, ideological power, and the mechanisms of social control. By showing how symbols serve as tools for communication within a society and how they are manipulated or sustained to support the ruling class or cultural continuity, scholars can better understand the dynamics of historical change and cultural transmission.

¹³⁷ Motta 2010, 94

This method therefore provides a complete tool for researchers who want to understand the deep and often complex relationship between society and symbols, especially in the context of historical artefacts such as coins that illustrate both economic and communicative functions. In numismatics, comparative semiotics research involves analyzing coins from different eras, regions, or political regimes to understand how symbols and images were used and what they meant in these particular contexts. This method is especially useful when examining coins because they often contain symbolic images that reflect prevailing cultural and political sentiments.

For instance, the depiction of Fortuna, the Roman goddess of fortune, can be examined across various periods of Roman history. By comparing the imagery and associated inscriptions on coins from the Republican period with those from the Imperial era under Augustus, scholars can explore how the symbol of Fortuna was adapted to serve different political or propagandistic needs. During the Republic, Fortuna may have been depicted to emphasize the unpredictability of political life and the importance of favoring the gods. In contrast, under Augustus, her depiction might have been adapted to suggest a divinely sanctioned stability and prosperity brought about by his rule¹³⁸.

Comparative research helps identify changes in cultural values and attitudes as evidenced by empirical evidence. They show how the same symbols are interpreted in different contexts to serve new political or social goals.

This approach also aids in understanding the resonance of certain symbols within a population. By examining the frequency and context of specific imagery on coins, researchers can infer the level of importance or reverence that such imagery held in society .

Further, a comparative analysis can trace the evolution of specific symbols over time, providing insights into how and why certain aspects of a symbol's meaning were emphasized or diminished according to the needs of the society or ruling elites . Comparative semiotic studies offer a dynamic and insightful way to approach the study of coins, providing a deeper understanding of the socio-political and cultural narratives that shape and are shaped by numismatic art. This methodology not only deepens our comprehension of historical symbolism but also enhances our understanding of the broader social functions of these symbols.

¹³⁸ Kreuzer 2002, 110

Quantitative Semiotic Analysis

Quantitative semiotic analysis in numismatics is a complex method that includes statistical methods to evaluate and interpret the frequency and distribution of symbols on coins. This method is particularly useful in numismatics due to the regular structure and distribution of coins, making them a suitable subject for statistical analysis. By comparing semiotic components, researchers can discover patterns that may not be immediately apparent through analysis alone, providing a strong basis for semiotic interpretation. The process begins with careful data collection, including detailed images and grading of coins. These statistics include variables such as symbol type (god, gender, sanity), text, and temporal distribution. Each element on the coin is recorded in a built-in database that allows advanced statistical analysis such as frequency distribution, correlation testing, and exponential analysis.

Quantitative semiotic analysis involves using statistical methods to evaluate the frequency and distribution of symbols on coins. This approach helps identify patterns in the use of symbols and inscriptions, providing a robust basis for interpreting their meanings. By combining quantitative data with qualitative analysis, researchers can uncover the multifaceted roles that coins played in ancient societies .

For example, in a study examining the evolution of imperial imagery on Roman coins, a researcher might utilize quantitative methods to track the prevalence of emperor portraits and associated regalia across different imperial periods. This data can be statistically analyzed to identify periods of increased centralization of power, as indicated by the standardization of imperial symbols . Moreover, such an analysis can also detect shifts towards diverse symbol sets during times of political flux, suggesting a decentralization or contested power structure ¹³⁹.

The quantitative approach not only lends empirical weight to semiotic analyses but also enhances the scalability of research, accommodating large datasets that span extensive temporal and spatial ranges. This is particularly useful in numismatics where researchers may be dealing with thousands of coin types across several centuries. despite its strengths, quantitative semiotic analysis must be carefully balanced with qualitative interpretations. The complexity and multiplicity of meanings

¹³⁹ Howgego 1995, 105.

that symbols can carry are sometimes reduced in quantitative analyses, which can overlook the nuanced interpretations that are visible in more detailed qualitative studies.

Moreover, the cultural and historical contexts that heavily influence symbol meanings need careful consideration, which often requires a qualitative or mixed methods approach to fully understand . While quantitative semiotic analysis provides valuable information about emerging trends in statistical research, it is most effective when used in conjunction with qualitative methods that reveal the deep cultural and historical value of the evidence studied. This integrated approach allows people to better understand the semiotic nature of ancient and modern coinage, revealing the powerful ways societies use symbols to communicate and confirm their identity and value over time.

The application of semiotic analysis to numismatics reveals the profound cultural, cultural, political and social implications embedded in symbols and coins. By examining these small artifacts through a different semiotic lens, we can decipher the complex messages they carry and understand how ancient societies used coins as a powerful means of communication. This method contributes to our knowledge of history and provides information about the values, beliefs and energies of the past. After all, coins are not only economic tools, but also a source of cultural and historical information.

Chapter4: Augustus and the Coinage of His Era

Augustus' reign marked a turning point in Roman history; It marked the beginning of the Roman Empire and laid the foundation for centuries of peace and tranquility. This chapter focuses on the important role Augustus played in reforming Roman society and government, with particular emphasis on the use of the new coinage as a tool for political propaganda. When we examine the reign of Augustus until, the coins and the rich language of the patterns used on these coins, we can better understand what kind of social image Augustus created and how he reinforced his authority in many countries of the Roman Empire. Augustus' use of coinage was more than an economic exercise; It was a complex process through which he achieved achievements, values and divine

connotations. The coins became widely circulated billboards, constantly reminding the Roman people of the virtues of their king. This chapter discusses various coins of Augustus, showing their importance during his reign and their influence on the political and cultural life of the Romans.

4.1 The Reign of Augustus

Gaius Octavius Thurinus, later known as Augustus, was born on September 23, 63 BCE, in Rome, into a wealthy and influential equestrian family. His father, Gaius Octavius, was the governor of Macedonia, and his mother, Atia, was the niece of Julius Caesar ¹⁴⁰. Octavian's early life was marked by a solid education and exposure to Roman politics, setting the stage for his future ambitions.

Raised primarily by his mother and stepfather, Lucius Marcius Philippus, Octavian was introduced to political and military affairs at a young age. His relationship with Julius Caesar was pivotal; Caesar recognized Octavian's potential and took an interest in his upbringing. This connection was solidified when Caesar named Octavian as his primary heir in his will, a decision that would significantly alter Octavian's destiny¹⁴¹.

Octavian was studying and undergoing military training in Apollonia, Illyria, when Julius Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March (15 March) 44 BC ¹⁴², and swiftly returned to Italy to assert his rights as Caesar's heir. His initial challenges included securing the loyalty of Caesar's veterans and gaining political legitimacy. Octavian's early political acumen was demonstrated in his handling of the power vacuum left by Caesar's death. In October 43 BC, Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus formed the Second Triumvirate ¹⁴³, a strategic alliance that allowed them to defeat the forces of Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius, at the Battle of Philippi in 42 BCE.

After Philippi, a new territorial arrangement was made among the members of the Second Triumvirate. Gaul and the province of Hispania were placed in the hands of Octavian. Antony traveled east to Egypt where he allied himself with Queen Cleopatra, the former lover of Julius

¹⁴⁰ Scullard 1982, 45.

¹⁴¹ Grant 1978, 124.

¹⁴² Eck & Takács 2003, 9.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 16.

Caesar and mother of Caesar's son Caesarion. Lepidus was left with the province of Africa, stymied by Antony, who conceded Hispania to Octavian instead¹⁴⁴.

After Actium and the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra, Octavian was in a position to rule the entire republic under an unofficial principat¹⁴⁵. Augustus' ideological campaign proved to be successful. He was granted the titles of Princeps, "first citizen," and Augustus, "revered," by the Roman Senate¹⁴⁶. These titles, which had never been used for a Roman political leader, were symbolic way to legitimize his unprecedented rule. This became the name by which he was known in later times. As Augustus, he retained the trappings of a restored Republican leader, but historians generally view his consolidation of power and the adoption of these honorifics as the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire.¹⁴⁷

In 23 B.C., Octavian achieved what would be known as the "Second Settlement", an agreement made between himself and the Senate that would give him the powers of a Tribune.¹⁴⁸ This gave him the power to call the Senate at his will and the power to veto decisions made by the Senate. At this time, he was also granted the title of imperator of all Roman forces throughout the empire and was also given imperium proconsulare maius (effectively, "imperium over all the proconsuls"), which would allow him to act alone as he saw fit and overturn the decisions of any provincial governor. With all his newly given abilities and titles, he now effectively had dictatorial powers.

A key element of Augustus's reforms was the reorganization of the Senate. Accordingly, one of the imperative objectives was to cut down the corporate body to its former size, which Augustus achieved by holding a lectio senatus in 28 and 18 BCE. He did this with censorial power.

A careful balance of deference and control characterized Augustus's relationship with the Senate. By restoring traditional senatorial privileges and involving the Senate in governance, he maintained the facade of Republican continuity. However, key decisions and the ultimate authority rested with him, as he wielded significant influence over senatorial elections and appointments. With the Roman people, Augustus cultivated a paternalistic image, portraying himself as the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid,18.

¹⁴⁵ Gruen 2005,34–35.

¹⁴⁶ Davis 1999, 63.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Ketting 2021, 14.

Princeps (first citizen) rather than a monarch. He used propaganda effectively, commissioning works of art, literature, and monumental architecture that celebrated his achievements and the peace and prosperity he brought to Rome. The *Ara Pacis Augustae* (Altar of Augustan Peace) and the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (The Deeds of the Divine Augustus) are notable examples of how Augustus communicated his vision of a restored and revitalized Rome¹⁴⁹ .

The Augustan Empire was characterized by great military successes and territorial expansion, which played an important role in establishing and preserving the Roman Empire. His military strategies and campaigns not only expanded the empire's borders but also stabilized its security system, allowing him to lay the foundations of the Pax Romana, a period of peace and prosperity.

Augustus inherited a republic plagued by civil wars and internal strife, but through strategic military campaigns, he transformed it into a vast and stable empire.

Following Actium, Augustus turned his attention to securing and expanding the empire's borders. He initiated a series of military campaigns in Spain, where Roman control had been tenuous. The Cantabrian Wars (29-19 BCE) , also referred to as Cantabrian and Asturian Wars, were the final battles of a two-century long Roman conquest of Hispania . Emperor Augustus oversaw Rome's conflict with the Cantabri and the Astures, who were the last independent Celtic nations of Hispania.¹⁵⁰

In the north, Augustus sought to secure the empire's frontiers along the Danube and the Rhine rivers. The campaigns in the Alpine region (16-15 BCE) extended Roman control over the tribes in Raetia and Noricum. Additionally, Tiberius, one of Augustus's key generals and his eventual successor, led successful campaigns in Pannonia and Illyricum (12-9 BCE), further consolidating Roman power in these regions .

In the east, Augustus focused on stabilizing the frontier with the Parthian Empire. Augustus reclaimed the standards in 20 B.C. that the Roman Empire had lost when Crassus' Roman army was defeated by the Parthians at the Battle of Carrhae in 53 B¹⁵¹ .

¹⁴⁹ Zanker 1988, 119.

¹⁵⁰ Ketting 2021,83.

¹⁵¹ Yates, 1875, 1044.

In the north, the conquest of the Alpine regions and the Danubian provinces extended Rome's frontier, creating a buffer zone against potential invasions from Germanic tribes. Augustus's establishment of the provinces of Germania Inferior and Germania Superior further extended Roman influence into what is now modern-day Germany, although these gains were later challenged by the disastrous defeat at the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE, where three Roman legions were annihilated by Germanic tribes .

In the west, the successful subjugation of the Iberian Peninsula and the establishment of Roman authority over the Cantabrian and Asturian tribes consolidated Roman control over Spain, making it one of the most Romanized provinces in the empire . Augustus's military reforms and strategic deployments were crucial in establishing and securing the empire's frontiers. He reorganized the Roman legions, creating a standing army with soldiers stationed in permanent fortresses along the borders. This professional army was funded by the imperial treasury, ensuring loyalty to the emperor rather than to individual generals.

In addition to military fortifications, Augustus employed a strategy of diplomacy and alliances with neighboring tribes and kingdoms. By creating client states and fostering relationships with local leaders, he established buffer zones that protected the core regions of the empire from direct attacks (Eck, 2003). Augustus's military achievements and territorial expansion not only extended the Roman Empire's borders but also ensured its security and stability. His strategic vision and reforms laid the groundwork for a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity, solidifying his legacy as one of Rome's greatest leaders.

As Augustus came into power, he took it upon himself to restore the reputation and beauty of the city of Rome, the capital of an empire, through the physical enhancements of new marble temples, a mausoleum for the imperial family, and extensive public facilities. Above all, however, Augustus' main goal was to rehabilitate Rome's lasting image¹⁵². His efforts were aimed at not only improving the living conditions of the Roman populace but also at demonstrating the power, stability, and glory of his reign. Augustus himself famously boasted, "I found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble" ¹⁵³ .

¹⁵² Favro , 1992, 61.

¹⁵³Suetonius. The Twelve Caesars. Augustus, 18.2.

One of the most significant projects was the construction of the Forum of Augustus, which included the Temple of *Mars Ultor*. This forum served as a new civic center and a space for legal proceedings, military ceremonies, and public gatherings. Augustus created the cult of "Mars the Avenger" to mark two occasions: his defeat of the assassins of Caesar at Philippi in 42 BCE, and the negotiated return of the Roman battle standards that had been lost to the Parthians at the Battle of Carrhae in 53 BCE.¹⁵⁴

The *Ara Pacis Augustae*, Altar of Augustan Peace, is a substantial Luna marble monument that the Imperial Senate had built in honor of the Roman goddess of peace, Pax, after Augustus returned from his successes in Hispania and Gaul in 13 B.C and that was consecrated in 9 B.C¹⁵⁵.

The altar was meant to celebrate what the Romans believed would be the endless time of peace in the Roman world, in other words, the Pax Romana. Senators, priests, and the imperial family took part in the consecration of the altar and are seen on the procession of the outer walls of the monument. The friezes were not meant to represent Augustus' return to Rome or the day of the consecration but were meant to represent the state of peace in Rome .

Augustus also renovated and constructed numerous other temples, including the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill and the Temple of *Jupiter Tonans* on the Capitoline Hill. Additionally, he oversaw the repair and embellishment of existing structures, such as the Theatre of Marcellus and the Basilica Julia .

¹⁵⁴ Kleiner 2021, 89.

¹⁵⁵ Crow, 2006,56.



Fig 7 :Image of the Ara Pacis. (Ara Pacis [Digital image]. Taken 2020, Retrieved March 23, 2021

The infrastructural and urban development of Rome radically changed under Augustus's reign. He embarked on construction of an effective road system that rejoined Rome to the other provinces of the empire; these roads helped in transport of goods, conveying of messages and provision of transport for the military. Building of ground *Via Flaminia*, *Via Egnatia*, and other roads made the previous connected and easily accessible to large Roman territories.

Augustus's building projects introduced new styles and techniques that had a lasting impact on Roman architecture. The extensive use of marble and the incorporation of classical Greek elements, such as columns and friezes, became defining features of Augustan architecture. These innovations not only beautified the city but also reinforced Augustus's vision of Rome as the cultural and political heart of the empire ¹⁵⁶.

The public works and building projects initiated by Augustus were laden with symbolism and political significance. Each project was carefully designed to convey specific messages about his regime and its values.

The Forum of Augustus and the Temple of *Mars Ultor*, for example, symbolized Augustus's role as the avenger of Caesar and the restorer of Roman order. The Temple of *Mars Ultor* served as a

¹⁵⁶ Zanker 1988, 97.

reminder of Augustus's military victories and his divine favor, reinforcing his legitimacy and authority.

Augustus's public works and building projects were integral to his strategy of creating a lasting and stable empire. They improved the city's infrastructure, enhanced its architectural beauty, and conveyed powerful messages about his reign, solidifying his legacy as Rome's first emperor.

Augustus's reign had profound and lasting effects on the Roman Empire, shaping its political, social, and economic structures for centuries. His policies and reforms established the framework for the Roman Principate, which would endure until the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century CE. Augustus's establishment of the Principate created a system where the emperor held supreme authority while maintaining the facade of republican governance. This balance allowed for stability and continuity, reducing the chaos and power struggles that had characterized the late Republic. His reforms in the Senate, including reducing its size and increasing its efficiency, helped restore some of its prestige and functionality, even though real power remained with the emperor .

Economically, Augustus's reign brought about significant improvements. His taxation reforms and establishment of a more efficient administration helped stabilize the economy. The creation of a professional standing army, funded by the imperial treasury, reduced the reliance on private armies and ensured loyalty to the emperor. These economic policies contributed to a period of prosperity and growth known as the Pax Romana ¹⁵⁷.

He played a crucial role in shaping the Roman Empire, establishing principles and practices that would define the imperial system. His approach to governance, which combined autocratic power with republican forms, created a model that allowed for effective control while maintaining the appearance of traditional Roman values and institutions.

Augustus's military reforms, including the establishment of a standing army and the creation of the Praetorian Guard, were instrumental in maintaining internal security and defending the empire's borders. His strategic deployment of legions along the frontiers and his establishment of client states created a buffer zone that protected the core territories of the empire.

¹⁵⁷ Garnsey, 1987, 103.

his diplomatic efforts, such as his treaties with Parthia and his incorporation of new provinces, expanded the empire's influence and integrated diverse cultures into the Roman fold. His policies laid the groundwork for the cultural and administrative cohesion that characterized the Roman Empire at its height. Augustus's reign left an indelible legacy on the Roman Empire. His policies and reforms brought stability, prosperity, and cultural flourishing, setting the stage for the Pax Romana. His model of governance, military organization, and cultural patronage influenced not only his immediate successors but also the broader trajectory of Roman history.

4.2 Coinage reform of Augustus

Augustus implemented significant coinage reforms as a cornerstone of his broader strategy to stabilize and consolidate the Roman state. These reforms were crucial in establishing a standardized monetary system across the extensive Roman Empire, thereby facilitating trade and ensuring economic stability.

One of the primary measures undertaken by Augustus was the centralization of coin production. Prior to these reforms, various local authorities and regions had the autonomy to mint their own coins, resulting in inconsistencies in coinage throughout the empire. By bringing most of the coin production under state control, Augustus ensured uniformity in the coinage, which was essential for maintaining a stable economic system and curbing inflation.

In addition to centralizing minting, Augustus introduced new denominations and standardized the weight and purity of coins. The principal coins in this new system included the *aureus* (gold), *denarius* (silver), *sestertius*, and *as* (bronze and copper).

The aureus, meaning golden, was a gold minted coin in the Imperial period. The aureus was regularly issued from the 1st century B.C. to the beginning of the 4th century A.D., when it was replaced by the solidus. The aureus was originally named nummus aureus, or "gold money," or denarius aureus¹⁵⁸. Although the aureus and the denarius were about the same size, the aureus was

¹⁵⁸ Britannica, 1998.

valued at 25 pure silver denarii, due to it being heavier and a higher density of gold, as opposed to the silver of the denarius¹⁵⁹.

Augustus reformed the denominations of smaller coins and his new system formed the basis of Roman coinage for the next three centuries. Augustus removed silver coins below the denarius and replaced them in 23 B.C. with the brass, copper, and zinc orichalcum sestertius and dupondius. Similarly, the As, was originally cast in bronze yet moved to a copper base with the reign of Augustus .

During the coinage reform , the sestertius and dupondius were produced in a golden colored copper-alloy called orichalcum, while lower denominations were produced with reddish copper . The dupondius was struck in brass; however, it was often difficult to distinguish from the as. One of the ways to know which was the dupondius was from its reddish-copper finish. It was also a common practice to strike the dupondius showing the head of the emperor while the as was inscribed with a bear or laureate head.¹⁶⁰

The as, plural assēs, also known as the assarius, plural assarii, was an originally bronze coin, later struck in copper, used during the Roman Republic and Roman Empire. Following the coinage reform of Augustus in 23 B.C., it was struck in a reddish pure copper, instead of bronze. The as was in production until the 3rd Century A.D. It was known as the lowest valued coin that was regularly issued during the Roman Empire, and then not at all after the reign of Marcus Aurelius, between A.D. 270 and 275¹⁶¹. It was during the monetary reform of Augustus that the weight of the as was further reduced to 1/30 of a pound, or 10.91g. It was also struck on pure red copper rather than on bronze.¹⁶²

The introduction of standardized coinage facilitated easier trade and commerce throughout the Roman Empire. With consistent weights and values, merchants and traders could conduct business more efficiently and with greater confidence. This standardization was particularly critical as the empire expanded, incorporating diverse regions and economies under a single monetary system .

¹⁵⁹ Klawans & Bressett, 1995,181.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Puech 2001, 58.

¹⁶² Ketting, 2021,23.

Augustus utilized coinage as a medium for propaganda. Coins were not only used for commercial purposes but were also used to spread the imagery of the ruling class. Coinage in antiquity was a form of mass media, since it spread visual imagery and text across the entire empire, giving all who encountered it a chance to witness such propaganda.

From 130 B.C, Roman coins were minted with annually changing imagery that would refer to the ancestral achievements of the moneyers in office.¹⁶³ This was a common practice that can be connected to the Roman memorial culture that was, more broadly, referred to as ‘monomialization’ of Roman Coinage¹⁶⁴.

The imagery and inscriptions on coins were carefully selected to disseminate his image and messages across the empire. Coins often featured Augustus' portrait and symbols of his achievements and divine favor, such as the image of Caesar's comet or depictions of Augustus as a restorer of peace and prosperity . This use of coinage helped to reinforce his authority and promote the ideological goals of his regime.

To ensure the success of these reforms, Augustus enacted legislation to enforce the new standards and combat counterfeiting. Laws were introduced to withdraw older, worn coins from circulation, further ensuring the integrity and reliability of the monetary system . These measures helped to maintain public trust in the currency and supported the overall economic stability of the empire.

The monetary reforms by Augustus were one of the most significant elements, aimed at the strengthening of autocracy power and stabilization of the Roman state. He created a standardized and reliable monetary system that facilitated commerce, economic stability, and shore up his political power. These reforms, therefore, remains to have been effective in the Roman economy and greatly aided the cohesion and integration of the vast Roman Empire.

4.3 The Role of Coinage in Augustan Propaganda

Propaganda, the deliberate spreading of information to influence public perception, was a critical tool for Augustus, the first Roman emperor, to establish and consolidate his power. In an era

¹⁶³ Ibid,26.

¹⁶⁴ Rowan,2019, 210.

lacking mass media, Augustus ingeniously used coinage to disseminate his political messages, reaching every corner of the vast Roman Empire. By imprinting coins with carefully selected imagery and inscriptions, Augustus was able to communicate his ideals, achievements, and divine favor to the populace. These coins served not only as currency but also as portable pieces of propaganda that reinforced his authority and legitimacy as emperor. This section explores how coinage played a pivotal role in Augustan propaganda, reinforcing his image as a divine and benevolent ruler, and examines the specific themes and symbols that were prominently featured on these coins. Through this analysis, we will understand the strategic use of coinage in crafting and perpetuating the Augustan narrative across the empire.

With the political landscape deeply fragmented and society yearning for stability, Augustus faced the formidable challenge of legitimizing his authority and unifying the state. Recognizing the power of visual and symbolic communication, he adeptly turned to propaganda to consolidate his rule. Among the various tools at his disposal, coinage stood out for its widespread circulation and daily use, making it an ideal medium for disseminating his political messages. Coins served as miniature vehicles of propaganda, allowing Augustus to project his desired image, highlight his achievements, and communicate his ideals to the broader population. This ensured that his influence reached even the most remote corners of the Roman Empire.

Scholars have noted the strategic importance of coinage in Augustan propaganda. The imagery and inscriptions on coins were carefully chosen to convey messages of stability, divine favor, and continuity ¹⁶⁵. By using coins to promote his image as a benevolent and divine ruler, Augustus was able to firmly establish his legitimacy and foster unity across the empire. The pervasive nature of coins meant that these messages were encountered frequently by Roman citizens, reinforcing Augustus's political narrative in their everyday lives.

Probably coins were one of the most ubiquitous artefacts within the Roman world, they circulated widely and were used daily by all members of society. This thus made them an ideal medium for Augustus to broadly and effectively disseminate his political messages.

Unlike stationary statues or monumental inscriptions confined to specific locations, coins could travel across the empire, ensuring that Augustus's imagery and slogans were encountered regularly

¹⁶⁵ Zanker 1990, 101.

by Roman citizens. Roman coinage, produced in varied denominations from very valuable to pocket change, was used by all categories of people both inside and outside the Roman Empire and was used daily in the monetized economy of goods and services. Coinage was the fastest way to spread a message across the empire, as demonstrated by “mint moving” or mints that moved with the Roman army to spread messages of their achievements. Coinage was exceedingly mobile, given its small size and its widespread use. The use of coins as political propaganda allowed for imagery to become portable and linked to physical materials of economic value. Coinage itself had intrinsic value, since it was made of metals, which gave symbolic value to the messages it displayed.¹⁶⁶

One of the primary themes of Augustan coinage was the celebration of his military victories. Coins frequently depicted Augustus in military attire or featured symbols of victory, such as laurel wreaths, trophies, and the goddess Victory herself. These images were designed to remind the populace of Augustus’s prowess as a military leader and the peace he had brought to the Roman state. For example, coins minted after the Battle of Actium depicted Augustus crowned with a laurel wreath, symbolizing his triumph over Mark Antony and Cleopatra and the subsequent establishment of peace.

Laurel wreaths and trophies were prominent symbols on Augustan coins, celebrating specific military victories. The laurel wreath, traditionally associated with victory and honor in Roman culture, was often depicted crowning Augustus, symbolizing his personal triumphs and military prowess. Trophies, which typically featured captured arms and armor, were used to represent the spoils of war and the defeat of enemies. These symbols conveyed messages of Augustus’s successes on the battlefield and his ability to bring glory to Rome through his military leadership. For example, after the victory at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, coins were minted showing Augustus with a laurel wreath, emphasizing his decisive victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra and the subsequent establishment of peace¹⁶⁷.

Coins frequently depicted scenes of triumphal processions, where Augustus was shown riding in a chariot or being crowned by Victory. These scenes were symbolic representations of his numerous military successes and the honors he received from the Senate and the people of Rome.

¹⁶⁶ Ketting, 2021, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Galinsky, 1996, 99-100.

Such imagery not only celebrated individual battles and campaigns but also reinforced the broader narrative of Augustus as an invincible and divinely favored leader. The Roman goddess Victoria is depicted in the imperial coinage in order to invoke a sense of pride and praise in the military and political achievements of Augustus.¹⁶⁸ The presence of Victory on these coins further emphasized the divine approval of Augustus's military endeavors, suggesting that his successes were preordained and blessed by the gods¹⁶⁹.

The representation of captured standards and eagles on coins was particularly significant following the Parthian campaigns. In 20 BCE, Augustus successfully negotiated the return of the legionary standards lost by Crassus at the Battle of Carrhae in 53 BCE, a humiliating defeat for Rome. The recovery of these standards was a major propaganda victory, symbolizing the restoration of Roman honor and military dominance. Coins minted to commemorate this event often depicted an eagle clutching a standard, or a Parthian kneeling and offering the standards back to Augustus. These images reinforced the idea of Augustus as a restorer of Roman dignity and power, portraying him as a leader who could avenge past defeats and secure Rome's prestige on the international stage¹⁷⁰. The use of the eagle was symbolic not only of the success of the military but also of Augustus' control over the empire.

The god Mars, representing war and military strength, was another frequent motif on Augustan coins. Mars was often depicted in full armor, holding a spear or sword, symbolizing the martial prowess and readiness of Rome under Augustus's leadership. Additionally, coins featuring military equipment such as helmets, shields, and swords served to underline the preparedness and effectiveness of Augustus's forces. These images collectively reinforced the notion of Augustus as a martial leader who maintained the security and stability of the Roman state through his strategic and tactical expertise¹⁷¹.

The promotion of dynastic continuity was another crucial aspect of Augustan coinage. The final achievement found both more prominently in his coinage and propaganda is that of a family legacy, both in heirs and providing the next emperor, who would continue his legacy.¹⁷² This was

¹⁶⁸ Ketting 2021,98.

¹⁶⁹ Galinsky, 1996, pp. 102-103.

¹⁷⁰ Sutherland, 1987, 81.

¹⁷¹ Zanker, 1988, 214.

¹⁷² ketting,2011,35.

particularly important in the context of establishing a new imperial dynasty, as it reassured the populace of a stable succession and the enduring nature of Augustus's reforms. Coins depicting Gaius and Lucius as youthful heirs, with the legend *Principes Iuventutis* (Leaders of the Youth), highlighted their role as future leaders and the continuity of Augustan ideals .



Fig 8: RIC I (second edition) Augustus 405, Head of Augustus, bare, right, in oak-wreath and Julia, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, heads right, wreath central above

A prevalent theme on Augustan coins was the association with divine favor. By depicting deities such as Apollo and Venus, Augustus linked his reign to the divine, suggesting that his rule was sanctioned by the gods. Augustus is known to be favored by these important deities and their appearance on his breastplate demonstrates that he was supported not only by the gods but by the traditional Roman religion. Apollo, for instance, was often depicted on coins to emphasize Augustus's special connection with this deity, Apollo has been recognized as the god of archery, music, and dance, truth and prosperity, healing and diseases, the sun and light, poetry, and more¹⁷³.

Before the age of Augustus, Apollo was not taken seriously as a Roman god. Apollo became significant to the Roman provinces and city when Augustus adopted him. Augustus adopted the holy twins, Diana and Apollo, to visually represent his own family in an attempt to solidify his position as princeps following the assassination of his great uncle, Julius Caesar. Augustus resembled the characteristics of Apollo while his sister Octavia took on attributes of Diana. This adaptation allowed Augustus to claim relations to these deities and also associated him with the mythical brother and sister, Apollo and Diana¹⁷⁴ .

¹⁷³ Krauskopf, 2006,73-75.

¹⁷⁴ C.M.C. Green, 2007, 84.

Venus, another deity frequently featured on Augustan coinage, further reinforced this divine connection. Julius Caesar claimed the favours of Venus Victrix in his military success and Venus Genetrix as a personal, divine ancestress, apparently a long-standing family tradition among the Julii. When Caesar was assassinated, his heir, Augustus, adopted both claims as evidence of his inherent fitness for office, and divine approval of his rule. Augustus' new temple to Mars Ultor, divine father of Rome's legendary founder Romulus, would have underlined the point, with the image of avenging Mars "almost certainly" accompanied by that of his divine consort Venus, and possibly a statue of the deceased and deified Caesar. This not only solidified his legitimacy but also connected his reign with the divine lineage and continuity of Roman tradition.¹⁷⁵

The depiction of the goddess *Pax* (Peace) on coins further underscored the theme of stability and peace. These symbols celebrated his triumphs and the establishment of the Pax Romana, meaning "Roman Peace," was established in 31 B.C. under the rule of Augustus and continued until A.D. 180 with the death of Marcus Aurelius. This 200-year period, arguably caused by the leadership and improvements made under Augustus, saw unprecedented peace and economic prosperity throughout the empire, extending to North Africa and Persia¹⁷⁶. Coins bearing the image of Pax often showed her holding an olive branch or a cornucopia, symbols of peace and abundance, respectively.

On the imperial coinage, the Roman goddess Victoria is used to foster pride, praise, and accolades in military and political successes that would be associated with Augustus. The presence of Victory on these coins further emphasized the divine approval of Augustus's military endeavors, suggesting that his successes were preordained and blessed by the gods.¹⁷⁷

Another significant symbol in Augustan coinage was Fortuna, the goddess of fortune and luck. Fortuna was a powerful symbol of prosperity and the favorable fate Augustus wished to associate with his rule. the popularity of Fortuna in Rome is greatest in the imperial period. Under Augustus, Fortuna and Pax (best represented by the iconography of Venus on the Ara Pacis Tellus

¹⁷⁵ Beard, M and Price, S, 1998. Vol. 1,199-200.

¹⁷⁶ Ketting 2021, 18.

¹⁷⁷ Galinsky, 1996,102-103.

panel¹⁷⁸ become symbols of fertility and abundance, as part of the Augustan rhetoric that ushered in the new golden age,

in part through the creation of the related altars of Fortuna Redux and Pax Augusta. Fortuna was an appropriate deity for such imagery, given her background in childbearing and agriculture and the cosmic implications of her cults in Rome. By depicting Fortuna on his coins, Augustus aimed to convey that his reign was blessed with good fortune and that he was the bringer of prosperity to Rome. She was known as the goddess of change and often associated with prosperity and increase. She is often represented by the cornucopia since she is the giver of abundance, a rudder as she was the controller of destinies, and a ball or globe to indicate the uncertainty of fortune and the future.
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The olive branch, an ancient symbol of peace, was frequently depicted on Augustan coins to signify the end of conflict and the restoration of order. This symbol was deeply rooted in Roman and Greek traditions, often associated with victory and peace treaties. By incorporating the olive branch into his coinage, Augustus underscored his role as a peacemaker who had brought an end to the civil wars that had plagued Rome for decades. The cornucopia, or horn of plenty, symbolized abundance, fertility, and prosperity. It was commonly depicted overflowing with fruits and grains, representing the wealth and resources available under Augustus's reign. The dual imagery of olive branches and cornucopias on coins conveyed a powerful message: Augustus's leadership was not only marked by peace but also by economic prosperity and plenty¹⁸⁰.

These coins conveyed the message that under Augustus's leadership, Rome had entered a new golden age of peace and prosperity. Coins also showcased significant buildings and monuments that Augustus had constructed, reinforcing his achievements and contributions to Roman infrastructure. One of the most prominent examples is the Temple of Mars Ultor, which was vowed by Augustus before the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC and completed in 2 BCE. This temple was dedicated to Mars, the god of war, and served as a powerful symbol of Augustus's military victories and his role as a bringer of justice¹⁸¹. Coins featuring the Temple of Mars Ultor often depicted its

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 141-155.

¹⁷⁹ Britannica, 2019.

¹⁸⁰ Galinsky, 1996, pp. 141-142.

¹⁸¹ Sutherland, 1987, 43.

grand façade, emphasizing Augustus's dedication to the gods and his role in restoring justice and avenging his adoptive father. This imagery not only celebrated a specific architectural achievement but also highlighted Augustus's commitment to piety and his divine mission of retribution ¹⁸².

Another significant aspect of Augustan coinage was the evolution of his portrait. Early coins often depicted Augustus as a youthful and vigorous leader, reflecting his initial rise to power and the promise of a new era. As his reign progressed, his image on coins transformed to depict a more mature and dignified emperor. This shift in imagery was deliberate, reinforcing the stability and longevity of his rule. The portraits on these coins were not mere likenesses but carefully crafted images designed to convey messages about Augustus's enduring authority and the stability of his reign. The mature portrait of Augustus, with its serene and authoritative demeanor, underscored his position as a wise and experienced leader.

Augustus's innovative use of coinage set a significant precedent for subsequent Roman rulers, marking a transformative approach in the utilization of numismatic imagery for propaganda. While earlier leaders had employed coins to disseminate political messages to some extent, Augustus's method was notably systematic and comprehensive. His successors adopted and expanded upon these practices, but Augustus's reign is particularly distinguished for the sophistication and effectiveness of his numismatic propaganda.

Previous Roman leaders, including Julius Caesar, had seized on coinage as a means of getting their message across. Coins from Caesar's era sported his portrait and lauded his accomplishments—all to further his power and prestige. But Augustus took special use of coinage to a new level of strategic value. He used coins in a consistent manner to deliver several levels of propaganda: divine favor, success in war, and dynasty. By adopting this multi-faceted approach, he made certain a constituency that was politically enthralled.

The strategic deployment of these themes ensured that Augustus's propaganda reached a wide audience across the empire, embedding key aspects of his rule into the everyday lives of Roman citizens. This omnipresence of his imagery through coinage helped to normalize and reinforce his authority, creating a pervasive narrative of his reign that was both powerful and enduring.. Augustus's innovative use of coinage exemplified how effective propaganda could be in unifying

¹⁸² Zanker, 1988, 199-200.

and stabilizing an empire. It allowed him to communicate his ideals and accomplishments broadly and effectively, ensuring his place in history as one of Rome's most influential and successful leaders. The iconographic language of Augustus' coinage was a powerful tool for his propaganda arsenal. By carefully choosing divine, military, familial, and architectural imagery, Augustus conveyed his message of divine favor, military success, peace, prosperity, and the power of the empire. These images not only strengthened his power and authority, but also played an important role in changing public opinion and maintaining stability and unity during his reign.

Chapter 5: Visual Representation of Fortuna on Augustus Coins

5.1 Fortuna on Augustus Coins

The coins of the first Roman emperor Augustus are remarkable not only for their artistic quality but also their strategic use in propaganda. This choice of Augustus depicting Fortuna, the goddess of luck and fortune, in his coins had a strategic purpose in the transmission of a specific message to the Roman public with resounding power, which would tout his political agenda. This chapter attempts an analysis of why Augustus chose Fortuna, and what messages are being conveyed through these variously inscribed coins. Additionally, strategic use of coins in propaganda, iconography and inscriptions related to Fortuna, and the evolution of coins with the course of time will also be examined.

The importance of Fortuna was centralized in Roman religion and exemplified the nature of luck or divine favor. Augustus used her image because he was trying to show that his leadership was approved by God. In a society where divine favor was pertinent to political legitimacy, by associating his reign with Fortuna, indeed God chose Augustus to be at the head of Rome. This approval from God was important in strengthening His authority, especially after the tumultuous period of civil wars. Coins depicting Fortuna, often with inscriptions highlighting divine favor, reinforced this message. As scholar Andrew Wallace-Hadrill notes, Augustus' regime was

characterized by the "constant emphasis on the restoration of traditional religious practices" which included the veneration of deities like Fortuna to legitimize his power¹⁸³.

Imagery such as the cornucopia (horn of plenty) and the rudder are directly related to Fortuna, who personified abundance and control respectively. The cornucopia was the wealth and plenty with which Augustus promised to bring to Rome, and the rudder symbolized his ability to guide the state toward stability and order. This was a critical message for a populace weary of the instability of civil war. By portraying Fortuna with these attributes, Augustus communicated that his reign would be marked by economic prosperity and political stability. the use of such imagery was part of Augustus' broader strategy to portray his rule as a new golden age for Rome .

This use of numismatic imagery to convey political messages is well-documented by historian Paul Zanker, who explains that Augustus' coinage was designed to communicate his successes and the benefits of his rule to a wide audience ¹⁸⁴.

while Fortuna appears on pre-Augustus Roman coins, her official and political image during the reign of Augustus was unprecedented. Previous depictions of Fortuna were more sporadic and lacked the cohesive propaganda strategy seen under Augustus.



Fig 9: RRC 494/32, Head of M. Antonius, right, Fortuna standing left, holding Victory in right hand and cornucopiae in left hand

In harmonizing his rule with Fortuna, Augustus tapped into existing cultural and religious beliefs about the divine power of fortuna, thus aligning his rule with the traditional Roman religious context. This integration was crucial for gaining acceptance among the populace, who were

¹⁸³ Wallace-Hadrill, 1993, 84.

¹⁸⁴ Zanker, 1988,115.

accustomed to interpreting divine symbols and omens as indicators of a ruler's legitimacy. Scholar Erich S. Gruen emphasizes that Augustus' use of traditional religious symbols, including Fortuna, helped to solidify his image as a restorer of Roman values and stability¹⁸⁵.

Before Augustus, Fortuna was represented in Roman coinage mainly as an abstract allegory of general good fortune and prosperity without a particular coherent or programmatic meaning. For instance, during the Republic, she was occasionally portrayed on coins as a personification of the fortunate hope of good luck or divine favor in military or political efforts. These often depicted Fortuna with her typical attributes such as the cornucopia or the rudder although the image had no unified political message at their disposal. One of these examples is coins with Fortuna depiction from Sulla, a noticeable figure from the late Republic, who used Fortuna to represent his return to Rome with success. However, this use was relatively isolated and lacked the comprehensive, empire-wide propaganda strategy later seen under Augustus¹⁸⁶.

The political meanings imbued in Fortuna's depiction under Augustus were explicit and multifaceted. Fortuna was not just a symbol of good luck; she was a testament to Augustus' divine favor, his ability to bring prosperity, and his control over Rome's destiny. The inscriptions accompanying Fortuna's image, such as *FORTUNA REDUX* (Fortune Returned), underscored the narrative of Augustus restoring peace and prosperity to Rome

5.2 Iconography and Symbolism of Fortuna

Fortuna's three major symbolic tools in Roman representations are the cornucopia, the rudder, and less prominently, the wheel. The first two make a lot of practical sense. Fortuna distributes gifts from the horn of plenty, playing her role as a fertility goddess. She steers with the rudder, in her later role as a protector of people on sea voyages and metaphorically, to conduct people through the journey of life.

The wheel, though, does not appear to have such a straightforward purpose or practical source. What did people originally imagine Fortuna doing with it? In early representations it is even difficult to tell whether it is supposed to be a wheel, a circle or a ball. Patch briefly addresses but

¹⁸⁵ Gruen, 2005, 212.

¹⁸⁶ Holliday, 2002, 141.

mostly avoids the question of “whether this ball was originally the sun or the moon”¹⁸⁷. Both celestial bodies would intuitively fit Fortuna’s profile as a goddess of fertility in both humans and plants, both of which involved natural cycles that could be predicted using the sun and moon. There is little direct evidence for this origin story, but it is worth noting that the connection between changeable Fortune and the phases of the moon persisted in literature well into the early modern period.¹⁸⁸ it can represent “travel, guidance, the endless round of monotonous existence, changeableness, the sun, the earth, God, and eternity.”

The earliest known representation that could rightfully be called a ‘wheel of fortune’ (actually, two wheels) is a mosaic found in the ancient Greek city of Olynthos from the late 5th or early 4th century B.C. This mosaic includes inscriptions and visual elements that support the idea that the wheel did not originate with Fortuna but was instead imported via a blend between Fortuna and Tyche¹⁸⁹.



Fig 10: Olynthos, Pebble-Mosaic with Dionysias scenes; c. 400 B.C.E

A significant change in the meaning of the wheel occurred only after the institution of the cult of Fortuna Redux, which was created by the Senate in 19 BCE, in thanks to the Fortuna who brought the emperor back safely from his travels in the East. The wheel then came to symbolically represent the travels and the physical return of the emperor; indeed, the wheel was used in the imperial period to represent important roads.

¹⁸⁷ Patch ,1927,148.

¹⁸⁸ Byrne,2011,23.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

Fortuna was often depicted with the cornucopia, a symbol of abundance and plenty. The cornucopia of Fortuna, closely affiliated with the grain supply of Rome (and eventually also guaranteed by Augustus) and her venerable role in fertility and procreation in Praeneste, Antium, and Rome, made Fortuna a veritable soteriological symbol for Augustus. The attribute of a cornucopia became a regular attribute in Fortuna's iconography from the 2nd century BC,¹⁹⁰ although it was already a standard symbol of different Greek (for example, Tyche) and Italian deities, but also of Isis, the Egyptian goddess.

Scholars generally associate the horn of plenty with a beneficial distribution of goods.¹⁹¹ The cornucopia may have positive connotations because it represents the gifts that the goddess bestows on individuals and cities. Indeed, in artistic depictions, the cornucopia is usually associated with Bona Fortuna (the positive aspects of the goddess of Chance).¹⁹²

This imagery conveyed the message that Augustus' reign would bring prosperity and economic stability to Rome. The cornucopia, overflowing with fruits and goods, symbolized the wealth and resources that would be available under his rule. Plutarch uses the cornucopia to show the goddess of Chance's consistently benevolent attitude toward Rome.

Another common attribute of Fortuna on Augustan coinage is the rudder, often shown resting on a globe. The rudder underlined the goddesses' role in maritime activities.¹⁹³ This symbolized that Augustus had Rome's destiny in his hands and that under him the whole state was stable and secure. A rudder, naturally, represents guidance and direction, enjoining upon everyone that Augustus was steering the state towards a much safer future. The rudder and the globe together told of his lordship over the world and his direction of the empire's fate. This imagery was a powerful statement of Augustus' capacity to govern effectively and maintain order.

¹⁹⁰ Patch, 1927, 150.

¹⁹¹ Dio Chrysostom, Oration, 63.7.

¹⁹² Arya, 2002, 75.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 178

On each coin the fortuna are differentiated by dress and hairstyle. One, which Sutherland describes as *fortuna uictrix*, wears a rounded helmet and a chiton that leaves one breast exposed, and holds either a patera or the handle of a sword. The other, identified as *fortuna felix*, wears a diadem, and has her hair knotted and braided.



Fig 11: RIC I (second edition) Augustus 321, Confronting busts of Fortuna Victrix, with round helmet, and Fortuna Felix, with diadem and Victory tilted left, placing on cippus a shield inscribed S C

The inscriptions on the coins often included phrases like *FORTUNA REDUX*, which translates to "Fortune Returned." This celebrated the return of peace and stability after the chaos of civil war. Augustus used this inscription to highlight his role in bringing about a new era of peace, known as the Pax Romana. By emphasizing the restoration of fortune, these coins reminded the populace that Augustus had ended the strife and brought back a time of peace and prosperity. As Wallace-Hadrill¹⁹⁴ points out, such messages were crucial in reinforcing Augustus' image as the restorer of Rome's fortunes .

Fortuna's imagery also suggested continuity with Rome's past while promising renewal and a bright future. By associating his rule with traditional symbols of Roman religion and prosperity, Augustus aligned himself as the replenisher of Rome's values and a guarantor of its future success. This dual message of continuity and renewal was essential for gaining the support of both the conservative elite and the general populace. Augustus' use of traditional imagery, such as Fortuna, was part of his broader strategy to present himself as both a traditionalist and an innovator .

Augustus' coinage is popular, not only because it was well strategized for purposes of propaganda in his reign, but also due to its high artistic and technical level. The depiction of Fortuna on the

¹⁹⁴ Wallace-Hadrill, 1993, 92.

coinage signifies the sprawled technique of manufacture and the high-fashioned artistic language executed during his reign. Several features demonstrate the quality of the coinage among the examples showing the Fortuna. The Fortuna coins of Augustus is characterized by the high-precision and accurate engravings. The work of art in these coins can be seen in the images of Fortuna that have been developed with an extremely high potential, showing characteristics of cornucopia and the rudder in great detail. The precision of these engravings speaks to the skill of the Roman mint workers and the high standards set by Augustus for his coinage. As historian Paul Zanker notes, the detailed imagery on Augustan coins reflects the broader cultural renaissance of the time, emphasizing a return to classical ideals and artistic excellence.¹⁹⁵

The coinage of Augustus, including those depicting Fortuna, exhibited a remarkable level of standardization and consistency. This uniformity was crucial for ensuring that the political messages conveyed through the coins were clear and recognizable across the vast Roman Empire. The consistent depiction of Fortuna, with her associated symbols, helped to create a unified visual language that reinforced the themes of Augustus' propaganda.

The iconography of Fortuna on Augustan coins is notable for its sophistication and symbolic depth. Each element in Fortuna's depiction was carefully chosen to convey specific messages. The cornucopia symbolized abundance and prosperity, the rudder represented control and guidance, and inscriptions like *FORTUNA REDUX* emphasized the return of peace and stability. This iconographic complexity required a high level of artistic skill and an understanding of the cultural and political context, which the craftsmen of the time successfully achieved.



Fig12: RIC I (second edition) Augustus 54A, Head of Augustus, laureate, right and Legend in three lines inscribed on rectangular altar (FORT RED CAES AVG S P Q R)

¹⁹⁵ Zanker, 1988, 115.

The inscriptions on Augustan coins were crafted with attention to detail and typographical precision. These inscriptions played a critical role in communicating the intended messages, complementing the visual elements. The clarity and legibility of the text ensured that the political and religious messages were easily understood by the populace. The careful balance between the imagery and the inscriptions highlights the meticulous planning that went into the design of these coins.

The coins of Fortuna during the Augustan rule are indicative of a high order of artistry and minting technology in the Roman economy. This refined hand engraving, superior quality of materials, consistent iconography, and exact nature of inscriptions bear witness to all that was required in the advanced craftsmanship of the age of Augustus. All of these qualities not only made the coins very attractive but also maintained the power to communicate the political messages of Augustus' regime. Augustus was able to use coinage as powerful propaganda that sustained his portrayal as the ruler divinely chosen and supported to bring forth prosperity and stability to Rome.

Evolution of Fortuna's Representation on Augustan Coinage

Augustus' elaborate use of Fortuna on his coinage was one aspect of his larger propaganda campaign. Fortuna, representing luck, prosperity, and divine favor, was a critically important figure for communicating the stability and prosperity of his reign. However, both the application and the emphasis on Fortuna on Augustus' coinage altered over his reign.

Fortuna was the more common God on the coinage of Augustus during his early and middle regnal periods. This was an important period for Augustus, in which he tried to consolidate his power and legitimize his rule after the turmoil of the civil wars. The frequent appearance of Fortuna on coins during this time served to reinforce the messages of divine favor, prosperity, and stability. the early use of Fortuna on Augustus' coins was part of his broader strategy to emphasize his role as the bringer of a new era of peace and prosperity ¹⁹⁶.

the wheel, a symbol often associated with the capricious nature of fortune, was not common in early depictions on coins. This absence suggests that early representations of Fortuna were focused

¹⁹⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, 1993, 85.

more on conveying stability and positive outcomes rather than emphasizing the unpredictable nature of luck. The rudder and cornucopia, instead, symbolized guidance and abundance, which were more fitting to Augustus' need to present his rule as the beginning of a prosperous and stable era.

From the reign of Nerva onward, a significant shift occurred in the representation of Fortuna. The depiction of Fortuna seated on a throne became increasingly prevalent. This marked a notable departure from earlier periods, including the Roman Republic and the early Roman Empire, where such imagery was uncommon. In these earlier times, Fortuna was typically depicted standing, which symbolized her active involvement in the prosperity and guidance of the state. The transition to portraying Fortuna seated on a throne reflected a more stable and established regime. This iconographic change to a majestic and serene seated figure was aligned with the mature and stable state of the later Roman Empire. The throne, a symbol of authority and stability, conveyed the consolidation of power and the enduring stability of the empire. This shift suggested that the Roman state had moved beyond the turbulence of its formative years into an era characterized by lasting peace and prosperity.



Fig 13: RIC II Nerva 17 (denarius), Head of Nerva, laureate, right and Fortuna, draped, seated left, holding corn-ears and scepter

As Augustus' reign progressed and his position became more secure, there was a noticeable shift in the iconography of his coinage. While Fortuna continued to appear, her presence was not nearly as overwhelming as in the earlier periods. Instead, Augustus began to stress other themes and deities that played into his role as stabilizer and God-like figure. For example, the imagery of Mars, the god of war, and Venus, the goddess of love and fertility (and the mythological ancestor of the Julian family), began to be featured prominently.

The focus on other deities and symbols reflected Augustus' shifting priorities and the changing political landscape. The consolidation of his power allowed him to diversify the messages conveyed through his coinage. This evolution in the use of coin imagery is noted by Paul Zanker, who discusses how Augustus' later coinage aimed to portray the emperor himself as a divine or semi-divine figure, embodying the virtues and stability of the state .¹⁹⁷

Although Fortuna featured less prominently in the later coinage of Augustus, she was by no means absent from it. The goddess remained an embodiment of chance and fortune, though her representation was embedded within a larger and more intricate iconographic scheme. Augustus' later coins presented a far wider spectrum of symbols and deities, each individual selection used to convey certain features of his rule and the gifts his rule bestowed upon Rome.

The continued, though less central, use of Fortuna indicated that Augustus still valued the positive associations she brought but was confident enough in his established rule to diversify his propaganda efforts. By the latter years of his reign, Augustus' coinage had developed into an expression of a mature, stable regime where the emphasis was on the enduring peace (Pax Romana) and the divine qualities of the emperor himself.

While Fortuna was an important feature for Augustus's coinage in the early and middle part of his reign, during the later years, it became less central. The frequent use in the beginning served important purpose to show establishing his rule and sending propaganda messages of divine favor and prosperity. As reign and position further consolidated, Augustus diversified the imagery of his coins to various ranges of gods and symbols, which reflected his matured rule and the stable state of the roman world. Fortuna still remained a crucial, but not central, symbol throughout, continuously reinforcing the themes of luck and prosperity.

5.3 Artistic and Semiotic Elements

Artistic Styles and Techniques

Some of the artistic methodologies employed in the coinage during the reign of Augustus speak to high-level workmanship of that period and the aesthetic quality cherished by the Roman world.

¹⁹⁷ Zanker, 1988, 237

This money was not just currency but a vehicle to spread imperial propaganda in an advanced form of realistic, idealistic, and detailed relief.

This is characterized by the blend in which most Augustan coinages fused realism in idealism, a characteristic of the Roman art during this period. The goddess Fortuna, featured on these coins, is a good example of the stylistic blend. These stylistic blends feature an individual that has been given ideal beauty characteristics. Her facial features and expression are very serene, typical of Roman ideal beauty, characterized by perfect proportions. There are also realistic elements, such as the detailed rendering of facial features and naturalistic drapery of her garments, which ground these idealized depictions in a relatable and believable form. This combination reflects the Augustan artistic agenda, which sought to glorify the emperor and his divine associations while maintaining a connection to the real world .

High Detail and Precision The precision in the engravings of Augustan coins is quite remarkable. This precision, in turn, reflected the advanced techniques employed by Roman engravers. More often, the coins found in this period were characterized by highly detailed representations, like the patterns on the garments, finely etched symbols, and expressive facial features. Very fine detail was used for aesthetic reasons; it showed technique in the engraving artistry itself and in the portrayal of imagery promoting the legitimacy and divinity of Augustus's rule. The precise detailing can be observed in the delicate folds of Fortuna's robes and the intricate designs of the cornucopia and rudder, which are rendered with exceptional clarity and finesse .

The reliefs applied to the coins of the Augustan age manifest high levels of skill in the creation of a spatial perspective and the three-dimensionality which is typical of Roman numismatic art. The classic use of high and low relief techniques creates dynamic visual effects, making the figures and symbols appear more lifelike and engaging. Not only does this enhance the visual appeal of the coins, but it also brings focus to how skillfully they were crafted. The Augustan coins are particularly famous for the reliefs of their works giving out the texture and volumes with a dexterity only typical of Roman coin works, like the smoothness of the skin upon which Fortuna lies in contrast to the very textured attributes of her garments. This meticulous approach to relief adds a tactile dimension to the coins, inviting closer inspection and appreciation of their artistry .¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Mattingly, 1923.

The stylistic artistic displays and techniques by the Augustan coinage demonstrate the superior sophisticated state of the Roman craftsmanship and hold important cultural and artistic values for these numismatic artifacts. Through this harmonious blend of realism and idealism, detailed precision, masterful relief work, the coins of the period not only served practical functions of an economic character but also played a major role in the visual and ideological communication of Augustus's reign.

5.4 Cultural and Political Significance

The portrayal of Fortuna on Augustan coinage is not merely an exercise in aesthetics and semiotics, it is something that reflects and influences the ethos and the ethos of the early Roman Empire. In thinking through the cultural and political resonances, it is possible to develop a better insight on how Augustus used numismatic iconography to permeate his ideology and exercise power.

As a goddess of fortune and luck, Fortuna was very prominent in Roman religion and society. This idea of good fortune and fate was something every Roman was well attuned to, as Fortuna's favor could mean success or failure, not only at an individual level but also at a collective level within society. In placing an image of Fortuna so boldly onto his coins, Augustus literally played into these notions. This provided divine testament to his reign, supposedly guaranteeing the continuance of divine favor.

The importance of Fortuna in Roman religion was well reflected. She was revered in many forms, like Fortuna Primigenia and Fortuna Redux, representing different aspects of fortune and luck. Her temples, like that built by Augustus to honor her, in 19 BCE after his safe return from Syria, showed the importance that Fortuna had in Roman society for public worship. Fortuna's role as a protector and bestower of good fortune made her an ideal deity to associate with the emperor's image, as it suggested that Augustus's reign was under her divine protection.

Augustus's use of Fortuna on his coinage was a strategic move to tap into the existing cultural and religious sentiments of the Roman people. The cornucopia, rudder, and wheel associated with Fortuna symbolized abundance, guidance, and the unpredictability of fortune, respectively. These

symbols would have been instantly recognizable to Roman citizens, reinforcing the idea that Augustus's rule brought prosperity and stability ¹⁹⁹.

By associating his image with that of Fortuna, Augustus could show that his status as a leader was fully sanctioned by the gods, and, therefore pre-determined to succeed. In this respect, divine association played a particularly important part in legitimizing leadership, taking into account the instability caused by civil wars. The visual representation of Fortuna on coins served as a constant reminder of the emperor's divine favor and the prosperity his reign promised .

Augustus's innovative use of iconography combined traditional Roman religious symbols with new elements that reflected his regime's values. This blend created a powerful narrative of continuity and renewal. Fortuna's symbols, when paired with the image of Augustus, suggested a seamless transition from Rome's storied past to a prosperous future under his rule. This narrative was crucial for Augustus, who sought to present his reign as a new golden age, rooted in traditional Roman virtues but ushering in a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity .

The cultural resonance of Fortuna on Augustan coins was further heightened by the careful selection of symbols that spoke to both the elite and the general populace. For the elite, the sophisticated use of religious iconography would have reinforced their understanding of Augustus's legitimacy. For the general populace, the clear symbols of prosperity and divine favor would have provided reassurance of the stability and success of Augustus's leadership that would continue into the future.

In other words, the representation of Fortuna on Augustus's coinage was an open use of cultural and religious symbolism to strengthen his political narratives. By drawing upon the far-reaching beliefs of Roman society, Augustus was able to brand his rule as favored by the divine and bound for success. Traditional symbols combined with innovative iconography to produce a powerful narrative of continuity and renewal, linking the new era of the Augustan regime with Rome's great past and future prosperity.

The political role of Fortuna on Augustan coinage is deep-seated, playing a critical function in the embattled emperor's program for stabilization and legitimization after years of civil war. The regime of Augustus employed, to a large extent, the use of propaganda to express messages of

¹⁹⁹ Zanker ,1988, 214.

being secure, thriving, and receiving the imprimatur of the divine. This helpmate image of Fortuna was at the heart of those various political purposes.

Through his association with Fortuna, Augustus established that his rule was divinely ordained. Such an association served effectively to build on the idea that his reign was one that was guided by fate and righteously decided on by the gods. The presence and suggestion of divine grace through Fortuna on the coinage served to give Augustus the legitimacy of the throne, hence positioning him in the light of the ruler that he was supposed to be by divine powers in a society that believed divinity approved of and allowed for proper rule. By embedding this idea in everyday objects like coins, Augustus could continuously reinforce his divine right to rule across all strata of Roman society ²⁰⁰.

For the general populace, the daily use of these coins meant constant exposure to the imagery of Fortuna. The widespread circulation of these coins ensured that these messages reached all corners of the empire, from urban centers to rural areas, creating a unified perception of Augustus as a benevolent and divinely favored ruler. The imagery of Fortuna likely resonated deeply with the general populace, who relied on divine favor and good fortune in their daily lives.

For the elite and educated classes, the depiction of Fortuna on coins held additional layers of meaning. These individuals, with their deeper understanding of Roman religious and cultural traditions, would have appreciated the sophisticated use of symbolism and the blending of traditional and innovative iconography. The nuanced messages embedded in Fortuna's imagery would resonate with their knowledge of Roman mythology and iconography, reinforcing their perception of Augustus's rule as divinely sanctioned and culturally significant ²⁰¹.

The imagery of Fortuna on Augustan coinage established a precedent for future emperors in combining symbols of divine benefaction and political stability. The degree to which this iconography inspired the messages of Augustus in his vision of prosperity, stability, and divine endorsement is apparent. Consequently, future emperors adopted similar symbols for their coinage messages of their own sense of legitimacy and divine favor. The persistent use of Fortuna's symbols underscores the lasting influence of Augustus's numismatic propaganda.

²⁰⁰ Galinsky, 1996, 99-103

²⁰¹ Pollini 1990, 166.

The impact of Augustan numismatic practices is evident in the way subsequent emperors adapted and expanded these techniques. The inclusion of various deities, allegorical figures, and symbolic motifs on coins continued to serve as a visual representation of the emperor's qualities and achievements. The use of such imagery helped to maintain the emperor's presence in the public consciousness and to promote the values and ideals associated with their reign²⁰².

Overall, the long term influence of the imagery of Fortuna on Augustan coinage is evidenced in the post-reign emulation of comparable images through succeeding emperors and the long staying quality of numismatic propaganda in the Roman Empire. The creativity that Augustus displayed in the combination of his cultural and political allusions on coins set a precedent that was followed for generations to come in imperial propaganda. The way coinage imagery was rightly used as a political language tool, the messages of stability, prosperity, and divine favour remained central to the Roman political administrations: connecting public perception and consensus to imperial authority across the Empire.

The cultural and political significance of Fortuna on Augustus coins as a simple case in point exemplifies the strategic use of imagery for communicating ideology and legitimation of authority. Augustus made savvy use of cultural beliefs and highly manipulated iconography in a bid to cement his rule, further the Pax Romana, and secure his legacy. This continued exemplification points to the visual propaganda that played a major role in the aspects of imperial authority and messaging within which coinage has demonstrated its unlimited power.

5.5 Reception and Impact

The iconography of Fortuna was shown on Augustus's coins is very important to understand how his coin messages affected the wider Roman world. This part looks at how different groups in Roman society saw these images and how they influenced Roman culture, politics, and later emperors' images.

The widespread dissemination of Augustus's coins meant the visual representation of Fortuna could reach both the upper classes and, symbolically, the general public. This huge audience was

²⁰² Mattingly 1923, Vol. 1,102.

crucial for determining the public reception of Augustus's regime and sharing the message he wanted to the people.

It was a display of reminders by the emperor of his promises and the good virtues of his rule, for that was what the common man of Rome lived through every single day. Particularly compelling were the symbols of the goddess Fortuna, which promised prosperity, stability, an even balance, and the divine blessing of Augustus's kingship over Rome and its community members. This was particularly important in a framework where the gods' favour was needed to legitimize a political order and to hold a scenario of stability.

The elite and educated classes, with their deeper understanding of Roman religion and iconography, likely had a more nuanced appreciation of the imagery on Augustus's coins. These individuals would recognize the sophisticated use of symbolism and the strategic blending of traditional religious elements with Augustus's personal iconography. This recognition would interpret the coinage as a sign of cultural continuity and renewal, aligning with Augustus's broader agenda of restoring Roman values while ushering in a new era of prosperity and stability.

The elite's understanding of the religious and cultural significance of Fortuna would further solidify their support for Augustus. They would see his use of traditional symbols alongside innovative representations as a respect for Roman traditions coupled with a vision for the empire's future. This duality was crucial in gaining and maintaining the support of the influential upper classes, who played a key role in the political and social structures of Rome ²⁰³.

The nuanced messages embedded in the coins would resonate with the elite's knowledge of Roman mythology and iconography, reinforcing their perception of Augustus's reign as divinely sanctioned and culturally significant. The sophisticated iconography would appeal to their aesthetic sensibilities and intellectual appreciation, enhancing their loyalty to Augustus as a leader who embodied both traditional Roman virtues and innovative governance.

the imagery of Fortuna on Augustus's coins was a powerful tool for shaping public perception across all levels of Roman society. For the general populace, the symbols of prosperity, stability, and divine favor fostered a sense of loyalty and trust in Augustus's leadership. For the elite and educated classes, the sophisticated use of traditional and innovative iconography reinforced their

²⁰³ Pollini, 1990, 167.

support and appreciation of Augustus's cultural and political vision. The pervasive presence of these coins ensured that Augustus's ideological messages were effectively communicated and reinforced, contributing to the stability and legitimacy of his rule.

Political Impact

The political effect of Fortuna's representation on Augustus coins had a great impact on contemporary governance and future imperial practices. The imagery on the coins of Augustus was crucial in stabilizing rule and set a precedent for using coinage as a tool of political communication by his successors.

Iconography of Fortuna on Augustus's coins helped much to stabilize his power. Augustus could secure his power by associating his leadership with divine favor and prosperity. Fortuna symbolized good fortune and destiny; therefore, the use of this figure projected the belief that gods had sanctioned Augustus's reign his rule was not only inevitable, but it was also to the advantage of Rome. This divine endorsement was crucial in quelling potential dissent and unifying the populace under his rule ²⁰⁴.

The persistent reinforcement of these themes through the widespread circulation of coinage helped establish a narrative of a stable and prosperous reign. The daily interaction with these coins meant that the population was constantly reminded of the blessings associated with Augustus's leadership. This visual propaganda worked to instill a sense of trust and loyalty among the people, fostering a collective belief in the stability and prosperity promised by Augustus's reign.

Augustus's innovation in the use of coinage as a medium for political propaganda set a precedent that was emulated by his successors. Subsequent emperors adopted similar iconographic strategies to convey their own messages of legitimacy, divine favor, and stability. The effectiveness of Augustus's numismatic propaganda demonstrated the power of visual imagery in shaping public perception and reinforcing imperial authority.

Emperors such as Tiberius, Nero, and Trajan continued to use coinage to project their own images and messages. They incorporated symbols of various deities, including Fortuna, to align

²⁰⁴ Galinsky, 1996,105.

themselves with divine favor and to communicate the continuity of Augustus's ideals. The success of Augustus's approach provided a template for future rulers, who recognized the value of coins as a means of disseminating political messages across the empire ²⁰⁵.

At that time, Vespasian noticeably utilized the image of Fortuna Redux to establish his own presence in Rome; under his rule, the coinage (and probably cult images) of Fortuna received the globe under Fortuna's rudder. In addition, Vespasian and Domitian continued the imperial adoration of the oracle of Fortuna at Praeneste, following the precedents of Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius, and Gaius and Nero's devotion to the Fortunae at Antium ²⁰⁶.

Vespasian, who took a particular interest in the cult of Fortuna Redux, rebuilt the Temples of Virtus and Honos, possibly damaged or destroyed after the Neronian fire, entrusting its decoration to the greatest artists of the day. By the Vespasianic period, a globe appeared under the rudder. In Trajanic times, and thereafter a wheel appears, sometimes with, and sometimes without, a globe.²⁰⁷



Fig 14: RIC II Trajan 628 (sestertius) : sestertius, Bust of Trajan, laureate, draped on left shoulder on right, Fortuna seated left, holding rudder and cornucopiae

The use of coinage as a tool of political communication allowed emperors to reach a wide audience, ensuring that their messages were seen and acknowledged by people of all social classes. The strategic imagery on these coins helped to reinforce the legitimacy of the emperor's rule, promote the benefits of their leadership, and maintain public order. This practice became a standard aspect of Roman imperial governance, highlighting the enduring influence of Augustus's numismatic innovations²⁰⁸.the political impact of Fortuna's depiction on Augustus coins was

²⁰⁵ Harl, 1996, 87-89.

²⁰⁶ Arya, 2002, 135.

²⁰⁷ Arya, 2002, 328.

²⁰⁸ Mattingly, 1923, 165.

profound, significantly contributing to the stabilization of his rule and setting a lasting precedent for the use of coinage as a tool of political communication. By associating his leadership with divine favor and prosperity, Augustus effectively legitimized his authority and quelled potential dissent. His successors adopted and adapted these strategies, demonstrating the enduring power of visual imagery in shaping public perception and reinforcing imperial authority in the Roman Empire.

The successful use of Fortuna's imagery on Augustan coins underscores the importance of visual propaganda in ancient Rome. It highlights how imagery can be used to communicate complex political and cultural messages effectively, shaping the course of history through the power of visual symbols. The strategic use of Fortuna's imagery on coinage provided Augustus with a powerful tool to reinforce his ideological narratives and legitimize his authority.

The historical significance is related to the fact that through this practice, it indicates a way in which visual propaganda works within an ancient political system. The wide communication of the ideas and values of the emperor was assured by representing the political message upon the coinage.. This practice not only reinforced Augustus's rule but also set a precedent for the use of visual imagery in shaping public perception and political legitimacy²⁰⁹.

The lasting influence of how Fortuna was portrayed on Augustan coinage emphasizes the importance of visual symbols in building and keeping a political authority. The legacy of these numismatic practices continues to be a subject of study for historians and scholars, providing valuable insights into the intersection of art, culture, and politics in ancient Rome. Much more significant, therefore, is the representation of Fortuna on Augustan coinage for the cultural and historical legacy of the time.

The iconographic strategies established by Augustus left an indelible influence on the operation of subsequent emperors and profoundly determined the visual language of power for many centuries. The importance of the practices from a historical perspective underlines the role that visual propaganda played in ancient Rome and how it could convey complex political and cultural messages in an effective way to determine the course of history.

²⁰⁹ Pollini,1990, 87.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The current thesis has undertaken a multivariate analysis of representation and significance of the goddess Fortuna on the coinage of Augustus. This work has unraveled the rich interweaving of religion, politics, and social life in ancient Rome. By using semiotic analysis of Augustan coinages in extreme detail, this research work has shown how the image of Fortuna has been deconstructed and then reconstructed as a strategic tool for reinforcing the authority of Augustus while proposing an ideology of prosperity and divine favor.

The investigation into the cult and iconography of Fortuna has provided essential context for understanding her role in Roman society. Fortuna, a goddess associated with fortune, chance, and fate, held a prominent place in the Roman pantheon, influencing both personal and public spheres of life. Her depiction on Augustan coins was a deliberate choice, reflecting Augustus's efforts to align his reign with the divine and portray himself as a ruler blessed by the gods.

By associating himself with Fortuna, Augustus sought to communicate messages of stability, abundance, and continuity. The various attributes of Fortuna depicted on the coins, such as the cornucopia symbolizing abundance and the rudder representing control over fate, were carefully selected to convey these themes. Coinage was part of a much larger propaganda campaign to legitimize Augustus' rule and give the perception of unity with prosperity to his subjects.

The semiotic analysis has demonstrated how these visual symbols on coinage served as powerful tools for political communication. Coins, as a widely circulated medium, were uniquely positioned to reach all levels of Roman society, from the elite to the common citizen. The image of Fortuna on coins thus played a crucial role in disseminating Augustan ideology, reinforcing social hierarchies, and shaping public perception.

In addition to their political and economic functions, coins also served as vehicles for the transmission of cultural and religious values. The integration of Fortuna into Augustan coinage was a multifaceted endeavor that went beyond mere representation. It was an act of ideological engineering that sought to weave the emperor's image into the very fabric of Roman society,

ensuring his presence in the daily lives of his subjects. This integration highlights the dual role of coins as both utilitarian objects and instruments of ideological discourse.

The broader implications of this study for our understanding of Roman visual culture and political propaganda are significant. The research underscores the importance of visual semiotics in decoding ancient political strategies and provides insights into how rulers harnessed religious symbols to legitimize their power. The findings also contribute to a richer appreciation of the cultural and religious dimensions of numismatic art, demonstrating the enduring power of symbols in shaping historical narratives.

Furthermore, the thesis has explored the socio-political context of the time, examining how the circulation and perception of Fortuna coinage varied across different social classes. This analysis has shed light on the ways in which different segments of Roman society interacted with these coins and the ideological messages they conveyed. By considering the broader socio-political landscape, the study has provided a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Fortuna coinage on Roman culture and society. The research also opens avenues for further exploration into the semiotic significance of numismatic art. Future studies could investigate other deities depicted on Roman coinage and their roles in reinforcing imperial ideologies. Comparative analyses with coinage from other ancient cultures could also provide valuable insights into the universal and unique aspects of using visual symbols for political propaganda.

In synthesizing the findings, it is evident that the representation of Fortuna on Augustan coinage was a complex and deliberate strategy that played a crucial role in the emperor's broader political and cultural agenda. The detailed exploration of the semiotics of Fortuna's image has enriched our understanding of how visual symbols were employed to convey powerful messages and reinforce Augustus's authority. This study contributes to a deeper appreciation of the cultural and ideological significance of numismatic art in ancient Rome, highlighting the enduring impact of visual semiotics on the construction and communication of political ideologies.

Ultimately, this thesis makes a major contribution because it expands the scholarly understanding of ancient numismatics and Roman cultural history. Decoding the semiotic language in the image of Fortuna on Augustan coins allows this study to articulate the mobilization of visual art and religious imagery to construct and preserve the narrative of imperial Rome. In so doing, it shows

that material culture and ideological expression are intimately connected and that symbols have enduring power to generate the narrative of the historical and cultural past.

In other words, how Fortuna shows up on Augustus' coinage is testimony to the thoroughly interlinked nature of power structure, religion, and visual culture in ancient Rome. What the current thesis does is attempt to show by careful iconography how Augustus could push an image of himself as a ruler favored by gods to claim legitimate authority throughout the empire. The results of this paper will define the role that semiotics can play in an attempt to recover ancient political policies, while at the same time contributing to the current interest in the cultural and ideological background of numismatic art. Finally, this work hopes to add to the ongoing project of a semiotic and cultural analysis in visual representation by giving a contextual analysis of Fortuna's image, which will also underline a better understanding of ancient Roman history and how it shapes the visual symbols of today's world.

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