Friend, Father, Emperor: The Use of Communication in the Manipulation of the Roman People by Julius Caesar and his Successors.

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Introduction

Despite what storybooks and movies from our childhood have led us to believe, the ancient world was not a collection of separated states and peoples who had no forms of communication to connect them. The Roman empire was an exceptionally interconnected society with systems of communication extending to the furthest reaches of the empire. Yet these systems were not an avenue for social mobility as they have become today, rather a tool of control and manipulation reserved almost exclusively for the ruling class. For the purposes of my study communication should be taken to mean any avenue through which the ruling class disseminated a specific message or propaganda to the Roman public. Communication could, and does include, forms of direct communication, such as oration, but it can also include indirect methods such as visual imagery or public events which contribute to the propagandistic message.

The focus of this study will be how these forms of communication, visual, literary, oratorical, were utilised by imperators Julius Caesar, Augustus, and Tiberius to communicate a specific message to the Roman public. I will follow a chronological framework, first examining Julius Caesar's relationship with the Roman people and how he employed communication systems to further his political career. In the following chapter I will address Augustus and the different ways he engaged with communication systems and the public following the advent of the principate. The final chapter will centre on Tiberius, who presents a very different case to his two Julio-Claudian predecessors. Originally, I had intended to investigate each form of communication individually in their own respective chapter, however, the evolutionary approach that a chronological framework provides is the most beneficial to understanding how these systems of communication were utilised and for what purposes. Viewing how communication is

[1] Unless cited otherwise, all ancient sources have been translated by me.

utilised at different moments throughout the period, within the context of the time, will demonstrate how they were utilised within the relationship between the imperial elite and the Roman public. This period in Roman history was one of rapid change, each ruler engaged with the public in a vastly different way to the others because the circumstances of their reigns are so varied.

Despite the differences, there was a trend across each reign, a reliance on the public to secure their goals. Without the security of the principate, Caesar aligned himself with the *via popularis* to maintain the support of the populace to situate himself a formidable opposition to the *optimates* and gradually gain more power. Augustus, at the outset of the principate, knew that his power was secure; he had ended years of civil war and restored the "pax romana". He didn't need the public to maintain his power, but his aim was more extensive than that. The support of the public was essential to establish an imperial legacy that lasted beyond his lifetime; he needed them to buy into the imperial institution so deeply that it was not dependent on him. Tiberius did not have the same concern for the imperial dynasty. The unquestioning authority Augustus possessed did not extend to Tiberius, and faced by intense scrutiny and disloyalty from the senate Tiberius desperately needed a support base of the people to oppose the senate.

In line with these goals Caesar and his successors capitalised on systems of communication and utilised them to spread specific messages to the public. As these systems were concentrated in the hands of the ruling elite, they had almost full power over what messages were put out. This meant not only controlling how messages were presented and perceived by the public, but also controlling the content that the public had access to, and subsequently, what they thought.

Chapter One: Julius Caesar

Caesar, the first Roman imperator in this study, experienced an immensely different political career to his successors, and is the only ruler in this study who never acquired the title of *princeps*. This placed him in a much different context than Augustus or Tiberius, with different motivations and aspirations. Caesar, unlike his successors, except for about a month at the end of his life when he was named *dictator perpetuo*, never experienced the permanent, unquestionable power that was associated with the position of emperor. He instead required perpetual support of the people of Rome in order to achieve consistent re-election, gain support for his legislative agenda, and acquire unheard of political power. As such, Caesar had to endear himself to the people; like other politicians he wanted their respect and their support, but Caesar took it a step further. He presented himself as their friend, their advocate, their champion.

Caesar launched himself on the Roman political scene in 77 BCE, just one year after the death of Sulla, the former dictator of Rome, in 78 BCE. During the civil war from 83-82 BCE, when Sulla, and his *optimates*, fought against Cinna, Marius, and the *populares*, Caesar aligned himself with the *populares*. He married Cinna's daughter, Cornelia, and was appointed as a *flamen Dialis* by Cinna (Suet, *Iul*, 1.1).[2] When Sulla emerged victorious Caesar maintained his allegiance, leaving Rome and not formally returning until the death of Sulla. For the next decade, until his first election to quaestor in 69 BCE, Caesar used public speeches in support or against judiciary work and legislative action to formally align himself with the *populares* and their new de-facto leader, Gnaeus Pompey. He continued this rise to power, gaining small magistracies until 63 BCE when he was elected praetor, after which he had his first major provincial appointment in Hispania Ulterior. Perhaps the moment that truly marked a shift in Caesar's

[2] For discussion of the death of Caesar's predecessor, Merula, see also: Velleius Paterculus, *Roman History*, 2.22

career occurred after his return from the province, his election to the consulship in 59 BCE. Through this Caesar was able to establish what we have come to know today as the First Triumvirate with Pompey and Crassus. This was the first strong opportunity Caesar had to launch a legislative agenda, one he used to firmly demonstrate his support of the people, and institute the *acta diurna*, a key system of communication for hundreds of years.

After Caesar's consulship he was sent to Gaul as a provincial governor. Throughout his consulship he had generated extensive debt; and a long-term governorship, with the opportunity for extensive military action, as in Gaul, eased this financial strain. Caesar spent the next ten years away from Rome accumulating military power, wealth and expanding Rome's territory. Caesar succeeded in bringing Gaul under Rome's rule, but lost the allegiance of Pompey. The subsequent conflict between Caesar and Pompey eventually led to an all-out civil war and the "point of no return" in Caesar's career upon his crossing of the Rubicon. During this conflict, for a period of eleven days Caesar had been named dictator of Rome (Plut, Caesar, 37.1; Cass Dio, 41.36) he was the first since Sulla to claim this title, he resigned after he had administered consular elections. The conflict between the two ended with Pompey's death in Alexandria, after which it took almost a year for Caesar to return to Rome in 47 BCE. Caesar returned to Italy secure in his power, and established the Second Triumvirate with Mark Antony and Lepidus. Over the course of the next three years Caesar travelled between Rome and numerous military posts, accumulating power, and buying the favour of the people until a month before his assassination when he was officially named *dictator perpetuo*, dictator for life. Finally, on March 15th a collection of approximately sixth senators, both historic supporters and opponents of Caesar stabbed him to death on the steps of the Roman Senate.

Throughout his political career Caesar was consistently reliant on the support of the public in order to achieve re-election, and when he reached the point where re-election was no longer a concern, he had created a large enough congregation of opponents, from the *optimates* to the supporters of Pompey, that the support base the populus offered was essential to maintaining his power. Through various modes of communication such as oration, the *acta diurna*, and the creation of public gatherings, Caesar opened the political world of Rome to the public by disseminating information directly to them. But the door was not being opened by the entire senatorial class, Caesar was able to open this line of information dissemination directly from himself to the people, giving them a clear view of him and only him. While many senators engaged in direct communication with the public through oration and public events, Caesar was set apart by the rhetoric he employed, coupled with his pro-plebeian legislative agenda and most importantly the advent of the *acta diurna*. In this study I will investigate how Caesar was able to manipulate this line of communication to gain the public support necessary to achieve the political and military career he aspired to.

Oratory and Public Speech

Caesar's use of oratory and public speech is parallel to his use of the *acta diurna*, he was directly communicating with the public, engaging them in politics, and playing the role of the popular advocate.

Post accusationem Dolabellae haud dubie principibus patronis adnumeratus est.	After his accusation of Dolabella he was undoubtedly reckoned among the most distinguished advocates.

Suetonius Julius 55.1

I opened the discussion of oration with this line of Suetonius because Caesar's prosecution of Dolabella in 77/76 BCE functioned as his introduction to political oration and public speech. Through this trial, despite not being successful in his prosecution, Caesar was able

to demonstrate his oratorical capabilities so clearly to the people that, Suetonius, writing over a century after the death of Caesar was still able to mark this as the identifying moment of his rhetorical skill. With oratory, unlike the *acta diurna*, Caesar was actively presenting himself to the public in the first hand, and he had full autonomy over what message was conveyed. We can gain an understanding of Caesar's rhetorical style from Cicero's letters and from Suetonius' brief discussion of his oratorical success. Caesar was said to have conducted his oratory in a similar manner to Caesar Strabo, who was known for his use of wit and humour (Cicero, *ad Brut*, 177). Not only did he try to utilise charm and humour in his speech, which would have made the content more engaging, but he employed specific cadence and body language to reach a broader audience. Suetonius tells us that he "announced in a high-pitched voice, with passionate movements and gestures, that were not without charm" (Suet, *Iul*, 55). This made his oratory not only more engaging through his animated conduct, but it also made it physically more accessible to the public. His use of a "high-pitched voice" would have made it easier for those in a large, bustling crowd, to hear what he said. As a result, he not only engaged those who could already hear him through his animated movements, but he drew in a larger crowd through his tone. This, depending on the success of his speech, would directly boost his support amongst the public.

Oratory was an even more direct appeal to the public than the *acta diurna*, it did not just cater to their opinions, but often orators voiced active pleas for support of the public in their speeches. The populus were not only the desired audience of much oratory, but also the frequent subject of it. Cicero, in his *In Verrem*, specifically draws attention to the power of public opinion and utilises it not only to win his trial but curry favour with the public themselves. Cicero had been asked by some of his clientele from Sicily to prosecute Gaius Verres, a former supporter of Sulla, for the crime of extortion committed against the people of Sicily while governor. Cicero

was successful in his prosecution, in large part because of how he appealed to the public and wielded that popular support against the judges. From the outset of his speech Cicero claims public support, even though he is still actively trying to gain it, in order to force the judge's hand. He situated public opinion against the wealth and power of Verres, and used Verres' wealth as his scapegoat in order to further drive away any chance he had of acquiring public favour.

Reus in iudicium adductus est C. Verres, homo vita atque factis omnium iam opinione damnatus pecuniae magnitudine sue spe ac praedicatione absolutus.	Gaius Verres is brought to trial as the accused, a man already condemned in the opinion of all by his life and actions, already acquitted by his vast wealth and absolute proclamations.

Cicero, *In Verrem*, 1.2

This wielding of oration, simultaneously the most direct form of contact between the Republic elite and the Roman people and a tool for gaining political capital, was something Caesar was well versed in. Whereas Henriette van der Bloom argues that "All sources agree that Caesar was an eloquent orator",[3] even more than that Caesar was a calculating orator. Caesar recognised the role that the public played in furthering his political career in Rome, not only with success in elections which was essential at the start of his career when he lacked the support of the military and his alliance with Pompey. Also, in the support of his prosecution of rivals and achievement of his legislative agenda. Particularly at the early stages of his career, Caesar had to connect with a public audience because he had neither the backing of an exceptionally wealthy family, nor much support from previously successful politicians. His primary political connection was his uncle-in-law Gaius Marius, infamously consul seven times and rival of Sulla, but he had been dead for over ten years when Caesar held his first titled military tribune in c. 72 CE. Caesar was slowly but surely gaining the support of other politicians, particularly Gnaeus

[3] Van Der Bloom. Henriette. 2016. *Oratory and Political Career in the Late Roman Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pg. 148.

Pompey, but a key aspect of achieving this support was aligning himself either with the nobility (the *optimates*) or the people (the *populares*). Caesar chose the people, and public speech was the most potentially successful mode of transport down the *via popularis*.

It is likely that Caesar chose to align himself as such because he could sense the changes that were emerging in the wake of Sulla's death, such as the rising popularity of Pompey, the dwindling power of the *optimates*, and growing demand for a reinstitution of the power of the tribunate. In 70 BC, when, as joint consuls, Pompey and Crassus brought back the power and position of the tribune, Caesar publicly and vocally aligned himself with both Pompey and Crassus, and the people of Rome. At this time Caesar gave his first *contio* speech (a speech delivered to the public assembly) outlining his support of the bestowing of citizenship upon those who had rebelled alongside Lepidus. The suppression of said rebellion by the senate had furthered the divide between the senate and the people. In this speech Caesar aligned himself outright with the needs and wants of the people rather than the senate. Only a small fragment remains to us through Gnaeus Gellius:

Repperi tamen in oratione C. Caesaris, qua Plautiam rogationem suasit, 'necessitatm' dictam pro 'necessitudine', id est iure adfinitatis. Verba haec sunt: "Equidem mihi uideor pro nostra necessitate non labore, non opera, non industria defuisse'.	However, in a speech of Gaius Caesar in support of the proposed Plautian Law, I found "necessitas" referred to as "necessitudo", that is by the right of relationship. These were his words: "Indeed it seems to me that as our relationship required, I have not failed in labour, in service, nor in industry".

Gnaeus Gellius, 13.3.5

The legislation passed and citizenship rights were extended, framing Caesar not only as a friend and advocate for the people, but a successful one at that. Even the language Caesar uses gives the implication of a close relationship between himself and the people, using *necessitate* to refer to the bond or duty, of a relationship, inherently giving the relationship added weight and

significance. As such, it is not surprising that, with the support of Pompey and the people, Caesar's first election to high office as quaestor occurred later that year.

It is clear from Caesar's speech in support of *lex Plautia* that he effectively used oration and populist themes as a means of garnering public favour. Pompey and Crassus' support of the bill was likely helpful, but that would not have influenced public favour in the same way this public speech would have. Still, Caesar utilised oration for political advancement in a much less discreet way than this. Less than a full year after his success with the *lex Plautia* legislation, Caesar suffered the tragic loss of both his aunt Julia and his wife Cornelia. Caesar capitalised on the public platform this afforded him and delivered what is perhaps one of his most remarked speeches in honour of Julia. Suetonius tells us that Caesar stated:

"Amitae meae Iuliae maternum genus ab regibus ortum, paternum cum diis inmortalibus coniunctum est. Nam ab Anco Marcio sunt Marcii Reges, quo nomine fuit mater; a Venere Iulii, cuius gentis familia est nostra. Est ergo in genere et sanctitas regum, qui plurimum inter homines pollent, et caerimonia deorum, quorum ipsi in potestate sunt reges."

"My aunt Julia derived her descent, by her mother, from the Kings, and from her father a connection to the immortal gods. For the Marcii Reges, her mothers family name, are from Ancus Marcius; and the Julii, the family of which is our origin, from Venus. Our branch has therefore the sanctity of kings, whose power is the best among men, and the sanctity of the gods, who have power over the kings themselves."

Suetonius, *Divus Iulius*, 6.1

This statement of ancestry became the basis of a claim to power by Caesar and all of his imperial descendants. Caesar had claimed lineage not just from the mythical founding kings of Rome but most importantly from the divine. He created a history for himself out of almost nothing, which tied him into every stage of Roman history, from its historic foundation through every moment after, by claiming connection to the descendants of Ancus Marcius and Venus' divine omnipresence. This was a crucial shift in his self-presentation, expanding beyond a rather

average Patrician family to the legacy of the divine founders of Rome. Even more crucial is that he is declaring this change in front of the Roman public.

It was not typical for funerary speeches and eulogies for women to occur on a public stage, as it was for men, with only one recorded instance prior to this in 102 BCE by Q. Catulus for his deceased mother Popilia. Caesar draws attention to his speech through the surprising publicity of a funerary speech and capitalises on that to centre himself and generate a new narrative of his origin. He was not simply using his platform to endear himself to the people through the advancement of their agenda, instead he is engaging in grand self-promotion. This was crucial as it demonstrates a shift by Caesar from trying to make himself fit into the mission of the public by acting on their behalf, to positioning himself separate to their agenda. He was testing the waters of his alliance with the people, seeing how far he can stray from the typical content of his oration in the past as he starts to strive for higher and higher offices. The style of his oration is much the same as in the past, but a shift to obvious self-promotion is the marker of change. It likely appeared necessary to Caesar to capitalise on the public focus on his family and centre that in the speech. Even though he had just achieved his highest office yet, there were nineteen other quaestors that year, each of whom possessed the similar aspirations as Caesar. This break of tradition in the public funerals for Julia and Cornelia, as well as Caesar's shift to self-interested rhetoric, and of course his identification with Venus and Ancus Marcius, staunchly set him apart from the other quaestors and marked him as an innovator. There would have certainly been a very public audience at the funeral speeches, particularly because of the nontraditional nature of a public funeral for women. The whole crowd would have bore witness to Caesar’s break in the norm, and his announcement of ancestry. Caesar was very clearly using the public to achieve this, capitalising on a moment of sympathy and attention, and catering it

specifically to the public by opening up the funerals to the entire population. He takes advantage of their sympathy, so that even though he was further entrenching himself as a patrician, as separate from them, he was endearing himself to them as the model of a kind patrician, particularly one with divine favour. He was inviting them into space which they were usually excluded from, presenting himself as their grieving friend, and using that to pass off his grasp at royal heritage as an act of family remembrance not political manoeuvring.

Upon Caesar's election to his first consulship in 59 BCE, he began to employ oration to fulfil a much more legislative based agenda, almost exclusively addressing the senate or the public in *contiones*. This, much like his funerary speech for his aunt Julia, was rather non-traditional. It was common to address the *contio* but to bring legislation to the *contio* without senatorial approval was rare, a tactic previously only employed by a tribune. An example of this can be seen in Caesar's effort to pass the *lex agraria*, a land reform bill that allotted land to 20,000 veterans and members of the lower class.[4] Caesar faced opposition in the senate primarily from Cato the Younger, who had long been an enemy of Caesar's, who blocked the vote on the grounds that changes were not necessary.[5] Caesar, unlike Pompey who had tried in the past to push this bill, did not wilt at senatorial opposition and in a rare move brought the bill to the *contio*.[6] The bill passed in the popular assembly, a clear demonstration of the power of the people to enact reform in spite of senatorial push back.[7] In this vein Caesar was not simply presenting himself as a friend of the plebs, he was conducting himself as if he were one of them;

[4] Robert Morstein-Marx, *Julius Caesar and the Roman People*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108943260. Page 125-132.
[5] Erich S. Gruen, 'Caesar as a Politician', in *A Companion to Julius Caesar*, by Miriam Griffin (Newark, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2009), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/vcl/detail.action?docID=4040883. Page 54.
[6] *Ibid*
[7] For further discussion of Caesar's *lex agraria*, see: Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 38.6.1; Suetonius, *Divi Julius*, 20.1.

by appropriating a tactic previously reserved for the tribune of the plebs. This was a step beyond what we have seen before, but it was a clear foundational step to Augustus' assumption of the powers of *tribunicia potestas* in 23 BCE. Through oratorial and legislative means, Caesar is using his association with the people, and their seemingly unwavering support of him, to expand his powers. His legislative and oratorical success in the *contio* limits overt opposition to the inappropriate use of power in bypassing the senate's legislative approval. His constant appeal to the public in this vein gave him an unchallengeable support base in the form of the Roman public. Even if he did not have their unwavering love and support, he certainly had the appearance of it in comparison to some of his colleagues of the *optimate* side, and the support of the people in the *contio* only reinforced this. Caesar was effectively telling the Senate: If the people are in support of Caesar's legislative agenda, then it must be theirs too? It would be unwise of a senator to situate himself against both the will of the people and the will of the consul. In this way Caesar can extend his power and take legislation to a *contio* without the support of the Senate, without fear of immediate retribution.

The *Acta Diurna*

In 58 BCE Caesar officially assumed the title of consul, he was now in the highest position of power in Rome and no longer needed to focus on self-promotion, instead seeking to achieve his legislative agenda. As previously discussed, he attempted to do this by circumventing the senate and bringing his legislative policies directly to the people. One method of direct inclusion of the public was directly disseminating news of everyday political information through the *acta diurna*. Suetonius tells us that:

Inito honore primus omnium instituit, ut tam senatus quam populi diurna acta confierent et publicarentur.	Upon entering office his first act was that the daily acts of the senate and the people should be collected and published.

Suetonius, *Divus Iulius*, 20

Suetonius is saying that not only was Caesar inviting the public into political discourse by disseminating this information, but he was actively including them in the content alongside the actions of the ruling class. It was both the "daily acts of the senate and the people" that were publicly published. It is not entirely clear where they would be published. This had been done in a way before with the *annales*, but these were not published daily which obviously impacted the detail of the content. This was the first time that information was publicly accessible immediately after events occurred. The *acta* would have been published daily in the Forum on wax or stone tablets, but likely also circulated on papyrus, or wax tablets, across the empire. Allowing the public to mobilise and engage in political action as it happened.

By extending access to political information and acts of the senate to the public, Caesar "created an image of himself as a friend of the people".[8] Giving the people access to a controlled stream of information gives the impression of both openness and intimacy between ruler and ruled, without them actually knowing the whole truth. This false transparency was present throughout all later imperial interactions with the *acta diurna*. It is not entirely discernable what Caesar's real intentions were in his interactions with the populus, whether he was solely attempting to bolster his own career by following the *via popularis*, or if he truly sought to better the lives of the lower classes. Through the support of the general populace Caesar was able to attain an unprecedented level of political power when in 44 BCE he was named *dictator perpetuo*. Even if Caesar did not fully possess *tribunicia potestas*, but simply *'what amounted to*

[8] Zvi Yavetz, *Plebs and Princeps*, (London: Oxford U.P. 1969) page 53

tribunicia potestas', as Z. Yavetz illuminates, this power coupled with the other honours bestowed upon him set him apart from any previous Roman politician. If Caesar's intention with opening up political discourse and information to the public was not the betterment of his own career, then it was certainly one of the ancillary benefits.

Throughout Cicero's letters, as seen below, there are repeated references to the "city news", *actis*, or "gazette of transactions in the city", *urbanarum acta*, or even specifically the *acta*. He frequently made the assumption that his friends and correspondents have received copies or reports of the contents, even those abroad. While he was abroad in provincial positions and in exile the reports from the *acta diurna* are not sufficient, which led him to arrange for Caelius to send him frequent reports of the political happenings in Rome. I have translated three examples below:

Scelus adfinis tui Lepidi summamque levitatem et inconstantiam ex actis, quae ad te mitti certo scio, cognosse te arbitror.

I believe you have known of the wickedness of your relative Lepidus, his extreme disloyalty and fickleness, from the daily acts, which I am sure is sent to you.

Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares*, 12.8

Rerum urbanarum acta tibi mitti certo scio. quod ni ita putarem, ipse perscriberem in primisque Caesaris Octaviani conatum.

I am sure that the register of events in the city is sent to you. If I had not suspected, I would have written them out in detail, first of all of the attempt by Octavius Caesar.

Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares*, 12.23

In re publica quid agatur credo a te ex eorum litteris cognoscere, qui ad te acta debent perscribere.

I expect you are acquainted with what is going on in the state from the letters of those who should be sending you the daily acts.

Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares*, 12.28

Cicero's letters not only demonstrate the expansive publication of the *acta diurna*, as well as a reliance on them not just by the lower class, the implied audience, but also the patricians; the letters are informative of the potential content of the *acta diurna* under Caesar, which in turn can

be indicative of the intended message and the lower classes response to it. Cicero's first letter, to Cassius, indicates the *acta diurna* would contain information of court proceedings and criminal activity, specifically citing the actions of Cassius. In his second letter Cicero states that he would have discussed the "transactions of the city" if he did not think the "gazette" had reached them. Most importantly, he argues, the alleged attempt by Octavius on Antony's life. The mention of Octavius' threat on Antony's life within the *acta diurna* is curious because of the interpersonal nature of the allegation, but it does reflect the uncertainty of the times and the unchecked narratives in communication mediums such as the *acta diurna*. This is in contrast to its evolution under Augustus and the principate in which it was centred around the social life of Rome and its imperial family. This letter was sent mere months after Caesar's assassination; it is unlikely that the structure and typical content of the *acta diurna* would have been altered significantly in that time, especially given the power vacuum left in his wake and lack of assertive control. The third letter of Cicero's I selected for this study is perhaps the most confusing, not as a result of content but translation. D. R. Shackleton Bailey translates *acta* to "public proceedings", this takes on a different meaning than other translations of *acta* which is often to "gazette", "record", or "news".[9] It even takes on a different meaning to Evelyn Shuckburgh's translation of *acta* to "acta".[10] Shuckburgh translation as such offers little insight into the function of the *acta diurna* through modern vocabulary, but perhaps that in itself can inform our understanding. Rather than being something that needed to be translated perhaps it was meant to be something that held meaning its own right.

[9] Marcus Tullius. Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, trans. David Roy Shackleton Bailey, The Loeb Classical Library ; 7-8, 97, 491 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).
[10] Cicero. The Letters of Cicero; the whole extant correspondence in chronological order, in four volumes, trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh. London. George Bell and Sons. 1908-1909.

The different translations of the *acta* give an indication of potentially different content, "public proceedings" gives the impression of official business conducted in regard to the public, whereas "acts of the senate" centres it primarily around the political action of the senate, and "city register" takes on a much broader tone encompassing all events in the city. However, the different translations only alter the content that was recorded, not the function of the *acta diurna* in its daily dissemination of information. Regardless of whether the information shared was exclusively political, or more general about proceedings in Rome, these letters solidified the *acta diurna* as a central means of disseminating information to the public.

As previously discussed, Caesar had spent the past twelve years of his career devotedly aligning himself with the *populares* and their most prominent leader, Gnaeus Pompeius. He championed many issues, advocated for the expansion of citizenship, and the return of the powers of the *tribunate*. He, himself, had engaged the Roman people in political discourse for years through public speech, using them as a point of leverage to accumulate power. In order to maintain popular support, he had to be able to regularly and easily disseminate information to his main base, the Roman public. During his consulship Caesar was likely able to assume full control over the information and circulation, especially as his co-consul Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus isolated himself in his home for much of their shared tenure, as such he could maintain the narrative being presented to the public without the risk of someone else circulating the information in a way contrary to his agenda. Creating this direct, written, mode of communication between the ruling class and the public was a massive change to the landscape of Roman politics. It seems so monumental that the lack of discussion of it in the sources, and surviving copies of it, is incredibly striking. Despite the clear engagement with it by the Republican elite, as displayed in Cicero's letters, it is possible that further down the line, in the

Imperial period, they disposed of the records because of how it evolved. However, it is also likely the simple explanation, that over time the materials used to transcribe the *acta diurna* were repurposed and that which remained deteriorated over time. The ancient historians likely didn't write about it for the same reason as Tacitus later says, because "it has been found appropriate with the dignity of the Roman people to consign great events to the histories and details such as these to the city's daily acts" (Tac, *Annals* 13.31). The *acta diurna* was below their typical content, it needn't even be mentioned.

The election of Caesar to consul, coupled with the formation of the first triumvirate permanently altered his political standing so while he still depended upon the support of the people to maintain his power, he no longer needed to persuade the people of his capability and allegiance. The *acta diurna* can be seen as a response to this shift. Through this Caesar could directly report information to the public of the actions of the senate. As I will discuss further, it is unclear who had control over what content specifically was published, but as its inventor it is likely that Caesar would have possessed a level of authority over the content, particularly as consul, allowing him a greater ability to dictate what was published. Spreading information through the *acta diurna* would have been a much less personal appeal than oration, it could be more broadly disseminated, providing Caesar another vehicle to influence public thought and discourse. Of course, Caesar did not cease his public speeches, as we have seen he utilised his platform, particularly in the *contio* to present several pieces of legislation to the people during his tenure. As there are no records of the content of the speeches, just passing mentions that they were made, it seems that none were published and circulated, a change from his earlier career. This could potentially be one of the side effects of the *acta diurna*, the speeches in the assemblies were already being published so there was no need for Caesar to produce his own.

This can all be seen as part of the shift that occurred as Caesar accumulated more power. There was now less need for personal pleas to the entire public, but their knowledge of his legislative actions was essential in furthering his aims without senatorial support. Keeping them regularly informed was a key method of achieving this.

Public Events

Caesar engaged in communication with the lower classes in one further way, neither orally or through the written word, but through actions and events specifically directed from him to the lower classes. While the *acta diurna* and public speech come into play most strongly at specific points in Caesar's career, the presentation of public events was utilised throughout his career from his first magistracy as *aedile* to his assumption of full control as dictator. It is through this communication that we can most clearly see the public's response to the message Caesar was sending. There are records of audience reactions at public speeches, and of the Republican elite's engagement with the *acta diurna*, and it is possible to estimate some public response from the results of elections. However, the clearest avenue for garnering an understanding of public reactions and engagement is through testimonies of events and innovations created by Caesar for the people of Rome. In his effort to frame himself as a "friend" of the people Caesar had to engage with them beyond political discourse. He was able to achieve this through the elaborate gladiatorial games he put on during his tenure as *aedile*, games so elaborate that he was "thirteen hundred talents in debt" (Plut, *Caes*, 5.3) before entering office. Politicians had put on gladiatorial games for years trying to win over public allegiance, but what makes Caesar so unique, as Robert Morstein-Marx notes, is the extravagance with which they were put on which "cast all his predecessors in office into shadow".[11] Caesar was going above

[11] Robert Morstein-Marx, *Julius Caesar and the Roman People*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108943260. Page 50.

and beyond what was expected or enumerated for his position; the largest games he put on were the gladiatorial *munera*, funerary games held in honour of his father, which were not a part of the responsibilities of an *aedile*. It set a new precedent for extravagance, one so great that the Senate imposed limitations on the number of fighters one could utilise.[12] This appears to be a direct response from the senate to curb the lengths Caesar would go to win the favour of the public.

The information being disseminated from Caesar to the people through these lavish games and festivities was not outrightly political, instead Caesar was situating himself as a social fixture in the lives of the lower class. He was acting in a political capacity, fulfilling his governmental function, but at the same time he was intertwining himself with the social lives and activity of the Roman public. This situates him as both their political leader and advocate, and social enabler, subsequently centring him in almost every aspect of the lives of the people.

His appointment to the position of aedile even demonstrates his focus on aligning himself with the via popularis. The position until c. 367 BCE had been exclusively reserved for members of the plebeian class, and the job was viewed as a subordinate of the tribunes of the plebs. This change had been in effect for three-hundred years at this point, but it would make sense that Caesar had pursued a role which was historically associated with the plebs.

> He furnished three hundred and twenty pairs of gladiators, and by lavish provision besides for theatrical performances, processions, and public banquets, he washed away all memory of the ambitious efforts of his predecessors in the office. By these means he put the people in such a humour that every man of them was seeking out new offices and new honours with which to requite him.
>
> Plutarch, *Vitae Parallelae Caesar*, 5.9 [13]

In this section of Plutarch, he clearly establishes the success of Caesar's utilisation of public events. Plutarch draws focus specifically to Caesar pulling attention away from his ambition,

[12] *Ibid*. Page 51.
[13] Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library, (London: W. Heinemann, 1914).

instead making the public notice his generous opulence. The mention of getting the public into the right "humour" is indicative of this repeated effort by Caesar to shift public attitude to one of camaraderie and intimacy, the kind of supportive pro-Caesar attitude which would lead the public to bestow "new offices and new honours" upon him. While Plutarch is not necessarily the most reliable of sources for gauging public response, particularly as he frequently embellishes to make his stories more enthralling and claims that "every man" was experiencing this response, this enthusiastic public response is testified to in other sources, including Suetonius and Cassius Dio (37.8). It would be strange for Plutarch to lie about this. Suetonius tells us, after discussing Caesar's public events, that he had "won over the favour of the people" (*Iul* 11). Cassius Dio states that part of the reason Caesar "receive[d] praise during his aedileship" was that he "arranged gladiatorial contests" (Cass Dio 37.8). The success of these games in promoting Caesar's political station shouldn't be overstated, but it is clear here that the outcome was, nonetheless, an increase in popular support which benefited the bolstering of his career.

In conclusion, the study of Caesar's unique political development sheds light on his strategic communication with the Roman people, setting him apart from his successors in how he conducted this communication. By positioning himself as a friend and advocate of the plebs, Caesar leveraged oration, public gatherings, and the innovative *acta diurna* to cultivate unwavering support and advance his legislative agenda. His ability to connect directly with the public, bypassing traditional channels of communication through the use of the *curio* and the creation of the *acta diurna*, marked a significant shift in Roman politics and paved the way for the coming imperial government to engage with the populace in new ways. Through his calculated and friendly approach to communication, Caesar was able to achieve his ultimate goal

of unparalleled and unwavering power through his five-time election to consul, and the eventual bestowing of the title *dictator perpetuo*.

Chapter Two: Augustus

Augustus, like Caesar, possessed similar aspirations of permanent concentrated power. However, facing the aftermath of what was almost fully isolated political control under Caesar, and eventually the expectation of a lasting imperial institution, his intentions when engaging with the avenues of communication with the public were naturally different from Caesar's. When Augustus entered into the political scene in 44 BCE after the death of Caesar, he did so as the heir to both Caesar's estate, and his political and military capital. He had an inherent political and militaristic power through his inheritance that Caesar did not possess during his early career, this can be very easily seen with his election to the consulship in 43 BCE. Unlike Caesar, Augustus utilised communication systems to separate the public from political activity, or even social, that did not relate directly to the principate. After 27 BCE, when he was named *princeps*, he had very little need for public support in furthering his political power and enacting a legislative agenda. However, their support and interest in the imperial institution was essential to cultivating a permanent system of concentrated control. Augustus desired to establish a lasting imperial dynasty; to do this the imperial family had to exist in the forefront of the minds of the general populus. Yet, he also had to simultaneously convince the public that the republic remained in some capacity. In this vein, using the dissemination of information to control public thought, Augustus sought to remove political discourse from the people's minds in totality, so that the gradual dissolution of the republic was imperceptible. Yavetz implies he was successful; by the time Tiberius came to power "the people who for many years had had no experience of free elections remained completely passive" in political discourse and action.[14] Augustus instead worked to fixate the principate as the sole focus of all other aspects of life, social, religious,

[14] Zvi Yavetz, *Plebs and Princeps*, (London: Oxford U.P. 1969) page 104.

economic, etc. In this chapter I will investigate the tools of communication that Augustus' utilised in order to achieve this and firmly impress his dynastic message upon the public consciousness.

Before Augustus' assumption of the title of *princeps*, he had spent seventeen years engaged in consistent conflicts and eventually civil war as the politicians sought to fill the leadership void left by Caesar's death. Yet, he was consistently in power throughout this entire period. Two months after his election to the consulship in 43 BCE, Augustus, Antony, and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus formed the second triumvirate. This, unlike Caesar's unofficial triumvirate, was codified into law and gave them official powers within the state, though their main function was in the persecution of Caesar's assassins. The triumvirate stayed in place for about seven years, but the failure of Antony's campaign in Parthia, his rejection of Augustus' sister Octavia, and affair with Cleopatra, the queen of Egypt, drove a wedge between Antony and Augustus until an official civil war began in 32 BCE. While Antony had been on campaign in Parthia and replenishing his forces in Egypt, Augustus had been in Rome, slowly manipulating perception against Antony. The civil war only officially lasted two years, with Antony, Cleopatra and her two eldest sons by Caesar and Antony dying in the aftermath. This was the third major civil war Rome had experienced in this century alone, the Roman people had experienced near constant power struggles. Recognising this, Augustus decided it would be "hazardous to trust control of the state to more than one" (Suet, *Aug*, 26). Following the war, Augustus was perfectly set up to seize power, but instead did so slowly, gradually acquiring more and more powers.

In 27 BCE Augustus was officially named Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus by the senate and assumed the title of *princeps senatus*, which initially meant the highest rank in the senate but eventually became the title of emperor. Yet it wasn't until 23 BCE that Augustus formally

acquired control over the entire empire with the position of *imperium proconsulare maius*, a pronconsular imperium across the empire that was above (*maius*) any other politician. He was also granted an *imperium* within the city of Rome, a power never seen before since those with proconsular authority were expected to relinquish their imperium when they arrived in Rome. It was also at this time that the Senate bestowed upon Augustus the title and powers of *tribunicia postestas*, the power of the tribune, for life. This was the pivotal moment in Augustus' assumption of power. He had already gone beyond the typical bounds of a Roman politician's power, yet this was the most radical. The position of the tribune was a single year assignment, exclusive to the plebian class, Augustus broke these two main tenants at this moment and gained powers never before seen in the Republic. Throughout the next thirty years of his rule Augustus gradually accumulated more and more power and titles, including *pater patriae*, "father of the country" in 2 BCE.

Much of Augustus' rise to power was dependent on the will of both the senate and the people, though his exceptional military support, inheritance and wealth were seemingly more causal. Where the power of the people was most valuable was in the maintaining of Augustus' power and the securing of a lasting imperial system. In order to achieve this, as I said previously, Augustus needed to fixate the principate at the centre of life of Rome, so much so that the public could not imagine a stable, peaceful life without the oversight of the emperor. The *acta diurna* and *cursus publicus* were just two facets of this. His economic control through supervision of the grain supply, personal handouts to certain plebeians, and settlement of retired soldier: religious positions as the '*pontifex maximus*, augur, one of the Fifteen for conducting sacred rites, one of the Seven in charge of feasts, Arval brother, member of the fraternity of Titus, and fetial priest' (Aug, *Res Gestae*, 7); social role through his administration of games, feasts, and creation of new

spaces of congregation, such as the Julian Forum; these were all contributing factors to his overall aim centering himself and the principate not just within the Roman state, but in the daily lives/thoughts of the Roman people. From Tacitus we can get an impression that he was remarkably successful;

ubi militem donis, populum annona, cunctos dulcedine otii pellexit, insurgere paulatim, munia senatus, magistratuum, legum in se trahere, nullo adversante

He won over the soldiers with gifts, the populace with corn, all men with sweet peace, rising up little by little, squandering the functions of the senate, the magistrates, and the legislature through himself. There was no opposition.

Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.2

omnes, exuta aequalitate, iussa principis aspectare, nulla in praesens formidine, dum Augustus aetate validus seque et domum et pacem sustentavit.

Stripped of equality, all looked to the commands of the emperor, with no present fears,as long as Augustus in the full health of life sustained himself, his house, and peace.

Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.4

In these sections Tacitus firmly states that the Augustan agenda of total power consolidation was complete. He won the favour of the people with gifts and softened them so that they paid little attention to Augustus' political manoeuvring allowing him to aggregate governmental authority for himself. As a result, not only was the populace losing touch with political activity, but they slowly became functionally powerless against Augustus' political and militaristic supremacy. As Tacitus states, there was no opposition, and Augustus' ability to maintain this lack of opposition required the public to be so disengaged from politics that a potential opponent could not rouse a significant enough backing to their cause. The potential threat of Augustus' extensive military power was also a large deterrent. The second passage of Tacitus only reinforces this. It does also display a flaw in Augustusan propaganda. Tacitus displays the laissez-faire attitude towards politics ascribed to the Roman public as contingent upon Augustus' health and survival. It does not extend beyond him. While Augustus could secure for himself life-long power and control, it

was not yet promised for his heirs. Augustus maintained full control over the legislative, administrative and judicial aspects of governance because the public seemingly surrendered full control to him. While Tacitus frequently takes a pessimistic stance against the emperors, the main issue is the little agency and intelligence afforded to the Roman public. As I will explore throughout this chapter there are many signs that the population simultaneously bought into the Augustan propaganda machine and baulked at it.

The *Acta Diurna*

After emerging from an era of repetitive civil war, Suetonius tells us Augustus believed that a government under one rule was essential to the stability of Rome (Suet, *Aug*, 26). Augustus could capitalise on the societal trauma of years of conflict and present an image of dependable governance with the empire. He could even use this fear of renewed fighting to make the public believe it was their idea, their want that made the imperial institution a permanent facet of Rome. This was necessary as Augustus never formally accepted *imperium* for life, it was conditional upon the assembly electing it to be re-upped every five to ten years. The public had to be consistently under the spell of Augustan propaganda, or at least comfortable existing within the established system that enabled Augustus to achieve new powers with the seeming support of both the senate and the people.

When Augustus assumed the title of *princeps* in 29 BCE he inherited the responsibility of "publishing the acts of the senate" (Suet, *Iul*, 20), instituted by Caesar thirty years earlier upon first entering office. Augustus did not maintain this responsibility for long, decreeing not soon after his assumption of power that the "proceedings of the senate should not be published" (Suet, *Aug*, 36). It is clear, however, that by this point the *acta diurna* had become something much more expansive and societal than simply a record of the Senate proceedings. In his *Life of*

Tiberius Suetonius relays that upon his birth in 42 BCE an announcement was made in the "public gazette" (Suet, *Tib*, 5) celebrating Tiberius' birth. At this point in time Tiberius would not yet have been a member of Augustus' family, as his mother Livia would not go on to marry Augustus for four more years. Similarly, Augustus was not *princeps* yet, nor in significant power. Tiberius was the son of a senator, but it would still seem surprising that his birth would be recorded in the *acta diurna* if it had not yet taken on a more societal focus reporting on the lives and events involving the upper class.

Subsequently, Augustus' decision to stop publishing the acts of the senate, *ne acta senatus publicarentur*, would most likely suggest a ceasing of the senatorial aspect of the *acta diurna* rather than the entire body. The publication of the acts of the senate in the *acta diurna* would, as Caesar had intended, invite the public into political discourse and centre the senate in said discourse. This would have prevented Augustus from distancing the public from political action in his gradual absorption of governmental power. If the public was updated daily on the actions of the senate and the political actions of Augustus, they may have more easily recognised the slow dissolution of the republic and opposed Augustus' increasing powers. Suetonius is not clear when Augustus ceased the publication, but he discusses it alongside the legislative changes he enacted as emperor, as such it likely occurred after 27 BCE. In his translation of this section, Evelyn Schuckburgh argued that this indicated the ceasing of the publishing of the *acta diurna*, and the transition of it into the private sphere, isolating news to just the Emperor.[15] Citing a later section of Suetonius, which refers to Augustus' keeping of a "household diary", *diurnos*

[15] Marcus Tullius. Cicero, *The Letters of Cicero; the Whole Extant Correspondence in Chronological Order, in Four Volumes*, trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (London: George Bell and Sons, 1909).

commentarios referrentur (Suet, *Aug*, 64), Schuckburgh argues that this is indicative of Augustus co-opting the *acta diurna* for private use.

Nepotes ex Agrippa et Iulia tres habuit C. et L. et Agrippam, neptes duas Iuliam et Agrippinam. Iuliam L. Paulo censoris filio, Agrippinam Germanico sororis suae nepoti collocavit. Gaium et L. adoptavit domi per assem et libram emptos a patre Agrippa tenerosque adhuc ad curam rei p. admovit et consules designatos circum provincias exercitusque dimisit. Filiam et neptes ita instituit, ut etiam lanificio assuefaceret vetaretque loqui aut agere quicquam nisi propalam et quod in diurnos commentarios referretur; extraneorum quidem coetu adeo prohibuit, ut L. Vinicio, claro decoroque iuveni, scripserit quondam parum modeste fecisse eum, quod filiam suam Baias salutatum venisset.

From Agrippa and Julia he had three grandsons, Gaius, Lucius and Agrippa, and two granddaughters Julia and Agrippina. Julia, he married to Lucius Paulus, the censor's son, and Agrippina to Germanicus, his sister's grandson. Gaius and Lucius he adopted at home, buying them from their father Agrippa by an as and a libra, and brought them into administrative life when they were still young, and sent them to visit the provinces and armies when they were consuls-elect. In bringing up his daughters and granddaughters, he accustomed them to spinning and weaving, and forbade them to speak or do anything except publicly and in that it may be recorded in the daily diary.

Suetonius, *Divi Augusti*, 64

What Schuckburgh and Suetonius are referring to here is not the *acta diurna* as we have come to understand it but a reappropriation of it in accordance with Augustus' dynastic agenda. This "household diary" is not simply the *acta diurna* altered, but rather an entirely separate entity. Given its function, and Augustus' ceasing of the publishing of the acts of the Senate, Augustus likely took inspiration from the *acta diurna* in its creation, but they are not the same thing. Firstly, the *acta diurna* functioned as a public resource, regardless of the content being included the intention of it was to spread information to the wider public. Despite Augustus' fears over what may be included in this "household diary" there is no indication that it was published. It appears more that Augustus was so concerned with presenting the right image of the imperial family that even the recording of actions that violated his moral legislation threatened to disrupt

the establishment of an imperial dynasty. In 18 BCE Augustus enacted two pieces of moral legislation, the *lex Julia de adulteriis coercendis* and the *lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus*, which targeted womens adultery and childless couples (Suet, *Aug*, 70). It was essential to present himself and his family as in compliance with this legislation in order to legitimise it. We can assume as such that the events Suetonius is discussing, and the creation of the household diary occurred after the enactment of this legislation.

Furthermore, the records of this "daily diary", or "household diary" as Schuckburgh translates, could have acted as a basis for the content that was included in the Augustan version of the *acta diurna*. It could have functioned as a record of all the actions of the immediate imperial family from which the information disseminated in the *acta diurna* could be drawn. The *acta diurna* was an essential form of communication to the Roman public, it is impossible to quantify the impact it had on public understanding of the political landscape of Rome without direct testimony from a member of the general public, but that does not mean its importance should be understated. Centering the imperial family in the *acta diurna*, which originally had a political intention, would have aided in shifting the public conception of the political system from one that was expansive containing many actors, to one centred solely around the imperial family. This centering of the imperial family can be seen especially in the *ara pacis*, the altar of peace, erected by Augustus in 9 BCE. As I will discuss in greater detail later on, Augustus not only included political actors who helped achieve the *pax romana*, but also the entire extended imperial family. He is essentially attributing the peace in Rome to the existence of the imperial family, whilst asserting that the future of this peace hinged on the future of the imperial institution through his inclusion of the future imperial leaders, his children, and grandchildren. As such, Augustus not only centred the imperial family in political matters, but with the focus of

the *acta diurna* on the everyday actions of the family he strived to centre them in every aspect of Roman daily life.

The *Cursus Publicus*

Augustus developed another strategy for communication which further centralised control over the dissemination of information. This system was the *cursus publicus*, an empire wide network of roads, and messengers that allowed for empire-wide transport and communication. One of the biggest challenges the emperors faced with enforcing imperial supremacy, not only Augustus but all those who came after him, was the "vastness of the empire and the slowness of the communication" as Cristina Rosillo-López tells us.[16] The *cursus publicus* was the imperial answer to the privatised messengers that worked throughout the Republic, but the additional infrastructure that was developed with the *cursus publicus* had an impact beyond just sending messages. Rose Mary Sheldon argues that Augustus' establishment of the *cursus publicus* created the "backbone" and beginning of what would eventually become the "imperial security system".[17] As such the *cursus publicus* is essential in discussing the utilisation of communication. The *cursus publicus* was designed particularly for the transportation of messages and information so that Augustus could better unify the entire empire under one rule. An empire wide system of infrastructure, with improved roads and stations along the way, would allow for more efficient movement of people and goods. It would bolster the military, expanding their access to the furthest corners of the empire, and, simultaneously, the economy through streamlined trade routes and the migration of people throughout the empire. These militaristic and economic outcomes are an obvious achievement for Augustus, but the

[16] Cristina Rosillo-López, *Political Communication in the Roman World* (Boston, United States: Brill, 2017), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/vcl/detail.action?docID=4933683. Page 167.
[17] Rose Mary Sheldon, *Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome : Trust in the Gods but Verify* (London, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/vcl/detail.action?docID=201243. Page 143.

improvements to Augustus's ability to keep the empire under one thumb by more effectively disseminating his message while monitoring the events in the provinces are essential to his ability to unite the entire empire under his rule.

The term *cursus publicus* is etymologically interesting, *cursus* meaning a 'path' or 'journey' makes a lot of sense, while *publicus* can on one hand mean 'belonging to the people', or 'of the people', but it can also mean 'done for the sake or at the expense of the state'. It is unclear what it would have meant to people at the time, but the varying definitions are suggestive of Augustus' practice of presenting something as beneficial for the people, even if it in reality was predominantly benefiting and functioning for the imperial government. As Procopius tells us "there was the further advantage that the State business has been accomplished. The system was simultaneously presented as for the people and for the state itself.

Anne Kolb identifies the messengers that are utilised in the *cursus publicus* as the *tabellarii Augusti*, imperial letter carriers, and argues that they are employed by the provincial governors but operated under the empire wide system instituted by Augustus.[18] The reliance on provincial governors to oversee the *tabellarii Augusti* meant that there was potential for abuse of power or interference in the messaging system. Additionally, there was a risk that messages could be delayed or intercepted by unscrupulous governors who sought to control the flow of information to further their own agendas. However, it was not the provincial governors who structured it, who dictated the rules, or controlled public access, it was Augustus. The emperor was not relinquishing his control in this, the provincial governors were instead an extension of his power, authorised to enact Augustus' intention. It also seems like a pragmatic move considering how challenging it would be for the imperial government to manage the dispersal of

[18] Anne Kolb, 'Transport and Communication in the Roman State: The Cursus Publicus', in *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 2001), 95–105. Page 99.

messengers across the entire empire from Rome. The *tabellarii* were a practical solution to the logistical issues of communication in a vast and diverse empire like Rome. It allowed for a balance between centralised control and local oversight, ensuring that messages could be delivered efficiently while also maintaining a level of supervision from the provincial level. In provinces with higher populations, such as Ephesus and Carthage, which were separated from Rome due to their geographical position, this system of messengers would be difficult to control without the oversight of the provincial governor. It was a trade-off between image and effectiveness that Augustus had no choice but to make.

However, despite Augustus' minute relinquishment of power to provincial governors the *cursus publicus* was a valuable aspect of his communication with the public through which he was able to impress the benefits of imperial control unto their minds. The utilisation of the *cursus publicus* in communicating a message of imperial dominance is, however, conducted differently to the *acta diurna*. The *acta diurna* literally communicated this message through the imperial family centric content included in it, whereas the *cursus publicus* communicated this through its function. The system of infrastructure established for better communication was so heavily restricted that it only communicated something to the public through its restriction from the public.

The creation of the cursus publicus marked a pivotal moment in Roman history, it not only revolutionised communication and transportation within the empire, but also laid the groundwork for future generations to utilise infrastructure for control and security purposes. Furthermore, the manipulation of communication through the cursus publicus highlights the evolving nature of power and authority in the ancient world. By controlling the flow of information and utilising the infrastructure for surveillance and monitoring, Augustus set a

precedent for future rulers to manipulate communication networks for political gain and maintaining order. The establishment of the cursus publicus can thus be seen, as Mary Rose Sheldon argued, as the groundwork for the emergence of imperial security systems that would be utilised by subsequent rulers to consolidate power and exert control over their subjects.

Suetonius gives the impression of the *cursus publicus* as an entity which existed in some, perhaps disjointed, form prior to Augustus. Augustus altered the system into the form it existed in under the empire. He expanded imperial control and supervision, creating a sect of messengers that operated across the empire under the thumb of the emperor.

Et quo celerius ac sub manum adnuntiari cognoscique posset, quid in provincia quaque gereretur, iuvenes primo modicis intervallis per militaris vias, dehinc vehicula disposuit. Commodius id visum est, ut qui a loco idem perferunt litteras, interrogari quoque, si quid res exigant, possint.	And, so that they may be able to more quickly report and know what was occurring in the provinces, he first positioned young men at short intervals along military roads, and after vehicles. This appeared to him the most convenient, so that those who bear the dispatches from the same place, may be questioned if necessary.

Suetonius, *Divi Augusti*, 49.3

Before the change Suetonius illustrates messengers did not follow a message across its whole journey, often only going from point to point, and were dispatched not by an imperial command but by provincial governors and independent parties. This means that the messengers had no knowledge of the contents of the message, they wouldn't understand the importance of the message, nor be able to answer questions on the message, its origin, or its sender. Augustus' adjustment of the *cursus publicus*, similar to the changes he enacted over the *acta diurna*, can be seen as an entrenchment of imperial control through the assumption of public systems into the imperial sphere.

The *cursus publicus* was not just a means of communication for Augustus, but also a tool of control and propaganda. By limiting access to the imperial roads and posts, Augustus was able

to maintain a sense of isolated imperial control over the provinces. The exclusivity of the *cursus publicus* served as a physical symbol of the emperor's power and authority, reinforcing his dominance in the minds of his subjects. Furthermore, the *cursus publicus* also allowed Augustus to exert his influence and control over the provinces, as governors and officials were reliant on this system for communication and travel.[19] By controlling access to the cursus publicus, Augustus was able to monitor and manipulate information flowing in and out of the provinces, further solidifying his hold on power. Suetonius tells us that through the *cursus publicus* Augustus sought to "know what was occurring in the provinces", *quid in provincia quaque gereretur*, but does not explicitly say why Augustus' desired to know so. Procopius ascribes similar motives to Augustus, that he "by way of making provisions that everything should be reported to them speedily and be subject to no delay, –such as the damage inflicted by the enemy upon each several country, whatever befell the cities in the course of civil conflict or of some unforeseen calamity, the acts of the magistrates and of all others in every part of the Roman Empire" (Proc, *Anec*, 30).[20] This suggests that the earliest emperors sought to be informed of the actions of regular members of the public. In addition, Procopius lends the impression that the system was successful, explicitly stating that the system "accomplished all those things which have just been mentioned" (Proc, *Anec*, 30), including keeping the emperor constantly informed of the actions of the public throughout the empire. It is possible that Procopius, who was writing hundreds of years after, was getting much of his information from Suetonius and simply reiterating his argument. However, Procopius would have likely had access to public records, as well as the writings of other historians whose works didn't survive to the modern age.

[19] Anne Kolb, 'Transport and Communication in the Roman State: The Cursus Publicus', in *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 2001), 95–105. Page 97.
[20] Procopius, *The Anecdota or Secret History*, trans. H. B. Dewing, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

While the *cursus publicus* may have seemed like a simple system of transportation and communication, it was a powerful tool in Augustus' arsenal of control and manipulation. By restricting access to this system, Augustus was able to assert his dominance and influence over the provinces, showcasing his ability to effectively communicate his message of imperial control to the masses. The cursus publicus was not just a means of physical transportation, but a tool of psychological manipulation and propaganda that played a crucial role in Augustus' establishment of long-term imperial control. It is impossible to gauge the extent to which the public were aware of the whole of the *cursus publicus*, but the expansion of infrastructure would have been so extensive that the public would have had no choice but to pick up on it. Additionally, the consistent use of it by the imperial government would not have gone unnoticed by the public, especially as many members of the lower classes would have likely been the ones involved in the physical construction of the new roadways and vehicles used. The labour force utilised in its construction would likely be made up of either members of the military, or enslaved people throughout the empire. Once they picked up on it it would be impossible not to notice that they had no access to this elaborate empire-wide system. Subsequently, Augustus could convey both an image of imperial domination, through which he was able to disengage the public from politics further entrenching his control.

Augustan Visual Propaganda

Augustus was able to communicate with the public not just orally or literally, but also visually through the use of propaganda imagery. This was part of his tactical approach to subtly impress his dynastic message upon the population. With literacy rates in Rome averaging 15%,[21] images of Augustus' dynastic legacy and stable imperial control were essential to subconsciously

[21] Janet Sharpe, 'The Archaeology of Roman Literacy' (The Berkshire Archaeological Society, 2018), https://www.berksarch.co.uk/index.php/the-archaeology-of-roman-literature/.

impress his message upon the illiterate populations of Rome, as well as potentially the most effective way to do so. Nowhere is there a clearer example than the *ara pacis*, the Augustan altar of peace, a sacrificial altar commissioned by the Senate in 13 BCE and completed in 9 BCE. Not only was the monument a symbol of the peace Augustus claimed to have restored, but it was an example of the idealised family that he strived to present and encourage the Roman public to imitate. It is difficult to understand the entire narrative imagery of the *ara pacis* without seeing it fully, but I will be specifically addressing the top panel of the South processional frieze along the *saeptum* wall (Figure 1) which depict the imperial family and convey Augustus' dynastic narrative. Augustus is very easily recognisable along the south frieze (fig. 1), the laurel reef adorning his head clearly identifies him as the emperor.

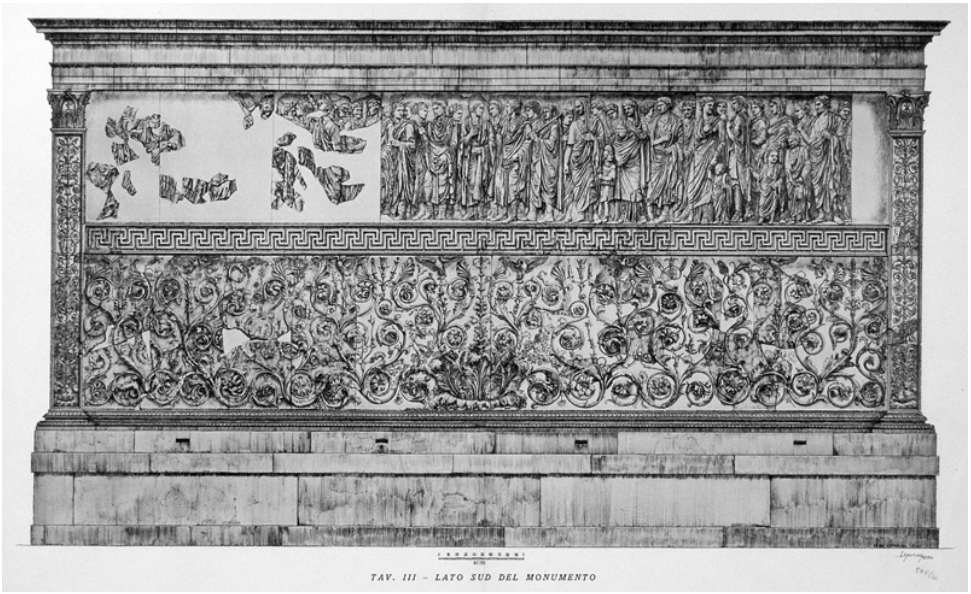

Figure 1. The *Ara Pacis* South Frieze (MIT)

Figure 2. The *Ara Pacis* South Frieze

Augustus is depicted at the centre of the south frieze, though much of his presentation has been damaged, the laurel wreath, coupled with the traditional depictions of his hair and face made him easily identifiable during the 1903 excavation. Surrounding Augustus on the south frieze are depictions of members of the immediate imperial family, Agrippa, Tiberius, Antonia, Germanicus, Drusus, and potentially Julia and Livia. The parallel north frieze similarly depicts members of the imperial family, as well as several magistrates and religious officials, further entrenching Augustus' message. Augustus was inserting even the youngest of his clan into this extensive mythological narrative, automatically lending them some of the authority he claims through Aeneas and Venus. This was all in effort to reinforce the idea of an imperial dynasty. There is a visual line of succession in this frieze through the procession from Augustus to Tiberius, to Drusus, a lasting imperial legacy. As a religious space the altar would have been regularly seen by the public, the dynastic imagery would be firmly imposed on the collective consciousness of the public.

In summation, Augustus utilised and manipulated forms of communication in a way unique from his predecessor and successor with the clear intention of formalising a lasting imperial institution. In contrast to Julius Caesar's reliance on public support, Augustus strived to distance the public from all political action while simultaneously emphasising the importance of

the imperial family and the *principate* in every aspect of Roman daily life. Without direct testimonies from members of the lower classes it isn't possible to fully extrapolate how the Augustan use of communication systems impacted the entire public. However, by examining how the public was specifically targeted to achieve Augustus' imperial agenda and the success of said agenda, coupled with the implied power of the public that aids in his success, we can begin to understand how these systems impacted the Roman public. The propaganda machine put out by Augustus, whether it was to the extent he desired, was successful. He created a lasting imperial dynasty that outlived him by hundreds of years, and from his presentation of it in the *Res Gestae*, it seems that this was in large part due to the will of the people.

Through functional, literal, and visual avenues of communication such as the *cursus publicus*, the *acta diurna*, and images of propaganda, as well as his central role in religious, economic and legislative affairs, Augustus strategically positioned himself at the centre of governance and everyday life within the minds of the Roman public. Through this Augustus strived to subdue any opposition and engender a sense of passivity among the general populace. Despite a few instances of failed conspiracies, without attestation from an average Roman, Augustus appears generally successful within his lifetime. However, his propaganda machine seems to reach its limitation in uncertainty in the line of succession, as there was no clear heir. Despite his efforts to present a government so stable they never even had to think about politics, a dream clearly palpable amongst the Roman public after years of civil war during the end of the Republic, the impermanence of his control beyond his own lifetime undercuts his dynastic legacy even if it was a permanent fixture of Rome for years after him. In the end Augustus' capability as a manipulator of the public through these strategic communication tactics not only secured his own authority but it laid the groundwork for the transformation of Roman into an imperial-

centric society, and the development of an extensive system of systematic policing through the infrastructure required for empire wide communication. Augustus utilised communication in order to create a Roman empire where the imperial family and the *principate* reigned supreme in the collection consciousness of the Roman people.

Chapter Three: Tiberius

Much like Augustus, Tiberius held different motivations and ambitions than his predecessor. Tiberius existed as emperor in a very different context to either Augustus orJulius Caesar. Unlike Augustus, Tiberius entered the *principate* over forty years after its establishment and with his succession the legacy Augustus had strived to cultivate of a lasting imperial dynasty had become real. Tiberius entered into the *principate* with the authority granted to the heir of Augustus, as such he did not have to work to institute himself on the political landscape. It also doesn't seem like Tiberius would care to work to do so, given his resistance to the titles being bestowed upon him. In addition, because so much of his authority was derived from his connection to Augustus and Caesar, he, instead of promoting himself as an individual, promoted his connection to his predecessors. This was seen in his reluctance to reveal his true thoughts to the public, instead limiting discussion of himself and his beliefs so that more could be successfully achieved (Cass Dio, 57.1). His efforts to intensify a connection to his predecessors can be found in his utilisation of systems developed by Caesar and Augustus, including the *acta diurna* and the *cursus publicus*.

As Augustus' heir, though the apparent last choice after Augustus' grandsons Gaius and Lucius Caesar, Tiberius was already accumulating the powers of the *princeps* before his official ascension in 14 CE. He had been granted the powers of *tribunicia potestas* in 4 CE when he was officially adopted by Augustus, which had been renewed just before Augustus' death. He had also been granted equal powers to Augustus in 13 CE to ensure a smooth transition from one *princeps* to the next in the event of Augustus death (Suet, *Tib*, 21). Upon Augutus' death in 14 CE Tiberius went before the Senate to have the full powers of the *principate* conferred on him, including the titles *Pater Patriae and Augustus*. Tiberius was apparently resistant to the

bestowing of powers which worsened relationships with the senators who were trying to give him said powers.[22] Additionally, his rhetoric when speaking to the Senate was "always indirect and vague" (Tac, *Ann*, 1.11) which led to conflict and debate regarding what he meant and confused the senators of his intention.

Over the next twelve years Tiberius faced exceptional losses in the deaths of his two sons Germanicus and Drusus. He had begun to set them both up as his heir, and after their deaths he seems to have made very little effort to find a suitable replacement. Without an obvious heir and having retired to Capri in 26 BCE three years after the death of Drusus, Tiberius left Rome open to power grabs and dissent. This culminated in a coup attempt by Lucius Sejanus, the praetorian prefect for almost the entirety of Tiberius' reign after being appointed in 15 CE. When Tiberius retired to Capri, Sejanus and his praetorian guard were left essentially in charge of Rome. Through this Sejanus was able to enact a series of proscriptions against the senatorial class, including the granddaughter of Augustus, Agrippina the Younger and her two sons. Sejanus continued to grasp at power until Tiberius finally intervened in 31 CE and had him tried and executed, though Tiberius was still in Capri when this happened. After the conspiracy of Sejanus and the resulting treason trials and executions Tiberius never returned to Rome until his death in 37 CE.

In the face of an exceptional lack of senatorial support and allegiance Tiberius was desperate to portray himself and his government as capable in order to have the Roman people put their faith in the *principate* rather than the senate. His reign, unlike Julius Caesar's, was not dependent upon continued re-election by the people, yet he still depended on their support almost as much as Caesar so that he still had a basis of support from which to draw his authority.

[22] See: Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.12-13. And Suetonius, *Tib*, 24.

Without the backing of the Senate, and the seemingly known distaste Augustus had for him as an heir, having that support base of the people was essential to the continuation of his reign. Yet, he approached the acquisition of their support rather differently to Caesar. As we saw Caesar garnered an intimate, almost friendly, relationship through the public, firstly, by inviting them into political discourse, and secondly, by appealing to a public desire for entertainment, Tiberius took a much less theatrical route, instead opting to propagate an image of efficient governance and a detachment from senatorial dramas. He sought to convey to the public that he was not like the senators who had crumbled to corruption. There was no need to make them love him, as Caesar had tried, or view him as family, like Augustus, so long as they put their faith in his leadership rather than the senate's.

Tiberius' failure with the public was his inability to propagate his message and recognise the importance of presenting himself in a certain way, he was fulfilling his responsibility but doing so in a way that earned him little notoriety or appreciation. Yavetz put it simply, "Tiberius' propaganda machine was not functioning as it should have",[23] the message he was putting out to the public was not sufficiently appealing to earn their love. Even by the end of his life he had not succeeded in earning even a glimmer of the respect they had held for his predecessors, with crowds of people flooding the streets chanting "To the Tiber with Tiberius" (Suet, *Tib*, 75).

The *Acta Diurna*

Tiberius was the first emperor or ruler of Rome to be born after the institution of the *acta diurna*, he was the first emperor whose birth was placed the public record, *sic enim in fastos actaqua in publica relatum est* (Suet, *Tib*, 5), and like most of his actions during his tenure he strived to return the *acta diurna* to as close to its original function as possible to bolster his

[23] Zvi Yavetz, *Plebs and Princeps* (London: Oxford U.P. 1969). Page 107.

image of effective and modest governance. He was essentially ancient Rome's version of the modern child who knows nothing of life before the internet. Despite this, and unlike today's youth, he did not understand how to manipulate his connections to the public to gain their favour and support.[24] There is little information about the content of the *acta diurna* during Tiberius' reign. One potential instance in Cassius Dio's *Roman History*, states that the status and actions of Tiberius' mother, Livia, were regularly entered into the "public records" (Cass Dio, 57.12). This text was originally written in Greek, as such it is unclear to me what the original meaning of "public records" was, but is likely the *acta diurna* as that the foremost name it is referred to as in modern scholarship. On one hand this could be interpreted as Tiberius' continuation of the practice under Augustus which reduced the *acta diurna* to an imperial family gossip rag, in which Tiberius relayed information and events regarding his family to the public to maintain the intimacy built by Augustus. Dio reported that Tiberius did this "partly that she [Livia] might imitate him and partly to prevent her from becoming over-proud", not over-powerful but proud. He was attempting to steer the imperial family away from a reputation of extravagant governance. Livia was popular at the time of Tiberius' ascension, with her even earning the title *Augusta* in 14 CE, and the senate debating if Tiberius should be named "son of Julia" (Cass Dio, 57.12), by incorporating her into the *acta diurna* it could help endear Tiberius to the public through the positive association between mother and son. There is no evidence of how information regarding Livia was reported in the *acta diurna*, but it would be unlikely, given her popularity, the content would be negative.

When discussing Tiberius' attempt to appeal to the public and present a narrative of effective governance to the people, it is important to look at the attitudes of the ruling class and

[24] Zvi Yavetz, *Plebs and Princeps* (London: Oxford U.P. 1969). Page 107.

the intelligentsia towards the *acta diurna*, which are displayed very clearly in Tacitus' coverage of the period. These attitudes can give an indication of how Tiberius situated himself against the *optimates*, attempting to separate himself from the governance of the aristocrats. It is possible to gain glimmers of these attitudes from the mentions of the *acta diurna* in the ancient sources, and because there are no accounts of the populus' attitudes towards it I must work backwards from the upper-class attitudes to find what Tiberius was positioning himself against. This, coupled with the message of efficient governance, that we know he was attempting to propagate amongst the public can offer an indication of what the public's thoughts on the matter were. However, there is not an abundance of mentions of the *acta diurna* within Tiberius' reign so I will extend the discussion of this to provide a wider view of the opinions of the intelligentsia. As he is the final subject in this study, I will examine the impact Tiberius' manipulation of communication structures had after his death; it is possible through that to identify the legacy that Tiberius left that allowed for the actions that occurred later on. For instance, in Petronius' *Satyricon*, written soon after the end of Tiberius' reign, there is a moment during *Trimalchio's Dinner* which specifically identifies the *acta diurna* as something the upper class would laugh about.

While Trimalchio's accountant reads out his books Trimalchio remarks that he is boring him just as the reading of the "gazette" would. Even though much of the humour of *Trimalchio's Dinner* is the excessive grandeur and his attempt to fit in the highest echelons of Roman society, the jokes he makes (whether in support of this strife or not) are potentially indicative of an attitude from the ruling class. As such, it is possible to extract a level of disdain from Trimalchio and his peers towards the *acta diurna*. He finds its contents boring, is it possible from this to ascertain that the Roman elite - at least those surrounding him - look down on it also. What was the driving force of this disdain? Was it simply that the contents were uninteresting? Or did they

look down on it because it was so specifically targeted towards the wider populus, with the mission of conveying a message from the imperial government to the people? This disdain doesn't seem to be as prominent when the *acta diurna* functioned under the control of Caesar and included the acts of the senate. I will discuss this more in depth later, but there are signs of clear engagement and use of the *acta diurna* by the ruling class.

A similar attitude is present in Tacitus' *Annals*. It is noticeable at each mention of the *acta diurna*, but most obviously when he details the events of the year 57 CE, either the year of or year after his birth.

Nerone iterum L. Pisone consulibus pauca memoria digna evenere, nisi cui libeat laudandis fundamentis et trabibus, quis molem amphitheatri apud campum Martis Caesar extruxerat, volumina implere, cum ex dignitate populi Romani repertum sit res inlustres annalibus, talia diurnis urbis actis mandare.

During Nero's second consulship, with Lucius Piso, little occurred that deserves remembrance, unless one finds it pleasing to fill volumes with praise of the foundations and beams on which Caesar built up his vast amphitheatre on the Campus Martius. Yet, it has been found appropriate with the dignity of the Roman people to consign great events to the histories and details such as these to the city's daily acts.

Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.31

In this section the mention of the *acta diurna*, here referred to as the *'diurnis urbis actis'*, offers insight into the existence it took on, further illustrating the message the *principate* was attempting to send to the public. *Diurnis urbis actis* can be translated many ways, Michael Grant calls it the "official gazette", Alfred John Church the "city's daily register", and John Jackson the "urban gazette", the variation of the translations demonstrates the lack of clarity surrounding the form it took on. [25]Micheal Grant's translation "official gazette" gives the impression of a

[25] Cornelius Tacitus, The Annals of Imperial Rome, trans. Michael Grant (Middlesex, England: Penguin Classics, 1977). Cornelius Tacitus, The Annals of Imperial Rome, trans. Alfred John Church (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1942). Cornelius Tacitus, Annals, trans. John Jackson, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937).

government sanctioned news source that relays information on its behalf. Conversely John Jackson's translation to "urban gazette" shifts the focus to the people and the events in the city rather than the government, suggesting that it may not function for government information, but rather for popular news. This could be intentional on Jacksons part, as it is possible that this translation is reflective of Tacitus' original intention. Tacitus was arguing that trivial events belong in the pages of some kind of daily news source, by translating *urbis* to urban it reinforces the idea of it as a less politically oriented creation, rather something centering city events and social news. This translation would support the idea that the *acta diurna* had remained in the less political form that Augustus instituted. Yet, the translation by Alfred John Church seems the most convincing, and in line with the translation I conducted. Rather than translating it as an adjective like official or urban, Church translates it as the noun "city". Both John Jackson and Michael Grant's translations of "official" and "urban" hold unnecessary connotations that shift the reader's perspective, while Church's translation to "city" is the most reflective of the meaning of *urbs*. It is possible that Grant translates *urbis* as "official" to make it more palatable to the wider and more varied audience of Penguin Classics, whereas John Jackson's translation to "urban" may be less accessible as it doesn't clearly identify who would administer these daily acts, unlike "official" which overtly links the government to this role.

In this passage Tacitus informs us that in this year "little occurred that deserves remembrance", immediately giving an implicit level of importance to whatever events he deems worthy of mention. The majority of the coverage was dedicated to court proceedings, and general political and economic developments, but there is a simultaneously limited and beneficial mention of the *acta diurna*. It tells us very little about the actual practicalities of the *acta diurna*, but it can lend an impression of what events and news were being reported, as well as the

attitudes of the intelligentsia towards it. During this passage, Tactius alludes to the creation of Nero's amphitheatre on the Campus Martius, and states that unimportant events like that should only be spoken about in the "daily city acts" or *diurnis urbis actis*, subsequently offering a small insight into the practicality and existence of the *acta diurna*. This subtle gibe at the daily acts, could also be taken as a reference to the extensive description of Nero's amphitheatre in Pliny the elder's *Natural History*. Regardless of the intention it offers us an insight into perceptions of the *acta diurna*, which in turn aids in understanding its role. Tacitus has a clear and palpable disregard of the *acta diurna*, which is further indicative of the attitude illustrated in *Trimalchio's Dinner*.

Both of these sources were written during the reign of Nero - they are likely to have been influenced by the general disdain towards him. Yet, their language is indicative of a disdainful attitude towards the acta diurna and general communication with the general populus, which Tiberius would situate himself against to support his opposition to the elites. Though the sources do differ in Tacitus' exceptional hatred for Petronius' indulgences (Tac, *Ann*, 16.8), they present a similar upper class perspective. Tacitus was writing from the perspective of a member of the Roman senatorial class, having held many positions in power in Rome and in the provinces, he can offer the thoughts of the ruling class on Tiberius and his governance. Similarly, Petronius was also of the senatorial class and could offer the perspective of the lavish elites about whom he wrote.

Tiberius' approach to the *acta diurna*, as the first emperor born after its creation, are suggestive of his effort to maintain a connection to the public in the face of dwindling senatorial support. Despite his attempts to use the *acta diurna* to convey a narrative of effective governance and a strong association with Augustus, Tiberius still faced challenges in garnering widespread

support and respect, suggesting his propaganda machine was not as successful as his predecessors. The disdainful attitudes towards the *acta diurna* among the ruling class, seen by Tacitus and Petronius, highlight a disconnect between the upper class of Rome and the content of the public record. Furthering the senatorial dislike of the emperor and worsening their divide. The utilisation of the *acta diurna* was essential in Tiberius' control over his narrative; and although it clearly furthered the divide between Tiberius and the Roman elite who demonstrated a disdain for it, it was just one aspect of his propaganda campaign, a campaign targeted at the public not specifically the upper class.

The *Cursus Publicus*

As we saw under Augustus, the *cursus publicus* underwent extensive changes after its creation in connection to Augustus' development of the related infrastructure, which are specifically attributed to Augustus by Suetonius. Under Tiberius, however, further changes were implemented which focused not only on the expansion of it, but on the further restriction of access to it. This simultaneous physical expansion of the system, and practical restriction of its access is symbolic of the experience of the lower class during this period. Existing during a period of expansion and development, but gaining little practical benefit.

In the edict below Strabo describes strict regulations, not just on the access to the *cursus publicus* but also regarding its usage. The restrictions are the most direct instance of the restriction of this system.

Est quidem omnium iniquissimum me edicto meo adstringere id quod | Augusti alter deorum alter principum | Maximus diligentissime caverunt, ne quis gratuitis vehiculis uta-\"tur, sed quoniam licentia quorundam | praesentem vindictam	It is indeed the most unjust of all things to bind me by my edict to that which, Augustus, the other of the gods, the other of the princes, took precaution to take the greatest care, that no man should make gratuitous use of vehicles, but

desiderat, formulam eorum quae praestari | iudico oportere in singulis civitatibus | et vicis proposui servaturus eam aut sit neglecta erit vindicatu-\"rus non mea tantum potestate sed | Principis optimi a quo .D…VMEN mandatis accepi maiestate. [...] *Neque | tarnen omnibu-\"s huius rei ius erit, sed procuratori principis optimi filioque | eius, usu da[to as]que ad carra decem aut | pro singulis carris mulo rum trium aut pro singulis mulis asinorum | binorum quibus eodem te-\"mpore utentur soluturi pretium a me constitutum; praeterea militan-\"tibus, et iis qui diplomum hab\"ebunt, et iis qui ex alis prouincis militantes commeabunt ita ut | senatori populi Romani non plus quam | decem carra aut pro singulis carris muli terni aut pro singulis | mulis asini bini praestentur soluturis id quod | praescripsi ; equiti Romano cuius officio princeps optimus utitur.*

because of the licences of certain people he desires immediate redress, the formula of that which is preferable I judge to be necessary in every state and the change I have proposed will protect it or if it is neglected it will be avenged not only by my power but by the *princeps*, from whom I receive orders from his divine majesty. [...] However, not everyone will have the right to this, but the overseer of the *priceps* and his son, the use of up to ten wagons shall be given or three horses in place of one wagon or a pair of donkeys in place of one mule at the same instance in time, they will fulfil the price established by me; In addition it is given to members of the military, and to those who have a licence, and to Roman cavalrymen who travel from other provinces on the behalf of Senators of the Roman people.

SEG XXII - Edict of Sextus Sotidius Strabo, the *legatus Augusti pro praetore Galatiae*

This edict was issued by Sextus Sotidius Strabo, a legate of the imperial army. The edict is a central focus of Lukas Lemcke and Altay Coskun's article *Users and Issuers of Permits of the Imperial Information and Transportation System in the 1st Century AD*, who had translated seven lines of it, prompting me to translate the rest. Lemcke and Coskun identify two main qualifiers for who could access the *cursus publicus*: governmental function, and social class. These two are not mutually exclusive and it is clear that the diploma, *diplomum*, was granted on a case-by-case basis using the framework laid out by Augustus, and reiterated here by Strabo. There was a base level of access granted to soldiers, *militantibus*, but it could also be given temporarily to freedmen, *libertis*, or enslaved men, *servis*, who were acting on behalf of a Senator. Yet, I would argue that even access to the system was restricted to those who are

seemingly authorised to use it. The edict states that alongside the emperor, his son, those granted a diploma, and those acting on behalf of senators, members of the military were granted access. However, the Roman cavalryman, *equiti Romano*, must be acting on behalf of a member of the senate. This gives the impression that those members of the military with access are exclusively the highest-ranking officials, which again emphasises the rank system of access. It was not unusual for a system in Rome to have rank access, but what is so unique about the employment of it in this case is the function of the *cursus publicus* in spreading information. A system set up to disseminate news more efficiently across the empire was also restricting said information.

It is also important to note the public nature of this edict, it was inscribed on a tablet lending it a distinct level of permanence as well as recognition as this would have signified its official nature upon its public display. They could have easily not published it, instead circulated it to those who were granted access, as such the publishing of the edict seems to be intentional signifying an intended impact. The *cursus publicus* was not a secret from the public, they would have been aware of its existence and their lack of access to it, and this edict would only reaffirm that knowledge. This widespread and developed system of communication and opportunity was dangled in front of the public, affirming the dominance of the *principate* through its ability to maintain the system. While simultaneously reminding the public of their economic and social position in Roman society through the public codification of the system of tiered access.

The *cursus publicus* under Tiberius experienced even further restrictions than it did under Augustus, moving the system away from public access. Strabo's edict, with its strict regulations on access and usage, exemplifies the tightening of control over this mode of communication. The intentional public display of the edict underscores the dominance of the *principate* and enforces the economic and social standing of the public in Roman society. The evolution of the *cursus*

publicus from Augustus to Tiberius is not only demonstrative of an evolution of communication practices in Rome, but how the motivations of the emperors influenced their administration of these forms of communication.

Spies and the Roman Informing Culture

Spies - or informers - took on a more weaponised existence under Tiberius than messengers in the early empire, because of the role of spies in actively surveying the public, not just relaying information from one person to another. Through his cultivation of the culture of informing, Tiberius was able to conduct constant and thorough surveillance without appearing to have direct personal involvement. He was able to shift the responsibility of this informing culture onto the general public, whereas it was obviously encouraged by him through the unquestioning swift punishment of anyone accused. Seneca states that "every opportunity for ferocious punishment was seized" and the outcome was always the same when someone was accused of slander or dissenting speech.

Seneca makes this culture seem specific to the reign of Tiberius, so it is important to ask why Tiberius would encourage this practice. That is not to say that an informing culture had not already been present in Rome, but under Tiberius it had developed beyond what had existed before into not just a culture but a "frenzy" (Sen, *De Bene*, 3.26). It would be contrary to Tiberius' aims to be obviously surveilling the public, it would make his government seem fearful, preoccupied, and ineffective, and it would make him as an individual ruler appear unstable. Tiberius likely would have wanted to seem detached from the everyday debacles and betrayals of the people, he would want to appear above it, non-fussed by the opinions of the people. This would be additionally helpful in his time at Capri when he was not physically close enough to actively surveil the public. As can be seen in his harsh immediate punishment of those

accused, for instance as I will shortly discuss, the Praetorian guard Paulus. The punishment of those accused was different than conducting surveillance, it was the job of the emperor to carry out swift and just punishment, Tiberius would simply be fulfilling his duty. He could enact punishment and simply be carrying out his imperial responsibility, but engaging in the practice of informing, publicly, beyond that would too greatly undermine the image of efficient, unbothered governance he was attempting to cultivate. As such, the subconscious encouragement of the practice through immediate prosecution and punishment was Tiberius' way of feeding this practice. He seems to have been rather effective in this. In this passage of Seneca, he gives the impression of a professionalisation of informing.

Nostri saeculi exempla non praeteribo. Sub Tib. Caesare fuit accusandi frequens et paene publica rabies, quae omni civili bello gravius togatam civitatem confecit ; excipiebatur ebriorum sermo, simplicitas iocantium ; nihil erat tutum ; omnis saeviendi placebat occasio, nec iam reorum expectabantur eventus, cum esset unus. Cenabat Paulus praetorius in convivio quodam imaginem Tib. Caesaris habens ectypa et eminente gemma. Rem ineptissimam fecero, si nunc verba quaesiero, quemadmodum dicam illum matellam sumpsisse ; quod factum simul et Maro ex notis illius temporis vestigatoribus notavit et servus eius, quoi nectebantur insidiae, ei ebrio anulum extraxit. Et cum Maro convivas testaretur admotam esse imaginem obscenis et iam subscriptionem componeret, ostendit in manu sua servus anulum. Si quis hunc servum vocat, et illum convivam vocabit.

I will not pass over examples from our own age. Under Tiberius Caesar there was a common and almost universal frenzy for informing, which caused more trouble for the Roman citizens than the whole of the civil war; it extracted the talk of drunkards, the frankness of jesters; nothing was sade; every opportunity for violence was welcomed, there was no need to await the outcome of the accuses, as there was only one. Paulus, a Praetorian guard, while he was dining at a feast, was wearing an image of Tiberius Caesar in relief on a prominent gem. It would be silly of me to try to find some polite way of saying he took up a chamber pot, an action that was at the same time noticed by Maro, one of the most notorious informers of that time, and a slave of the man who was about to be bound in a trap, who had pulled the ring off his finger. And when Maro called the guests to witness that the emperor's portrait had touched something filthy and was drawing up an accusation, the slave

> revealed the ring on his own hand. If such a man is called a slave, he will also be called a guest.
>
> Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, 3.26

Maro was characterised as "one of the most notorious informers of that time", this gives the obvious implication of a professionalisation of this, through the verb *vestigatoribus*, as well as a potentially large swath of people engaging with this job. It would be unnecessary of Seneca to identify him as "one of" the most well-known ones if there was not an abundance of people acting as informers. Even this professionalisation would be effective in aiding Tiberius in creating this culture without seeming responsible for it. A whole new classification was created out of it which shifts the responsibility on those identified as "informers". The story Seneca tells raises several questions, perhaps most surprising to me was who was most frequently harmed by this practice? My assumption would be the lower class, the uncared-for collateral damage in the endless cycle of Roman political conflict. Yet, Paulus could not be classified this way. He has two features which would typically identify him as upper class: a ring with an engraving of Tiberius on a gem, and his ownership of an enslaved man. However, I would also not classify him as a member of the upper echelons of Rome, especially the governing class. While the Praetorian guard was a prestigious rank within the Roman military, they were still in service of the Emperor and the Senate, and were often reduced to bodyguards, they were not of the same economic or social standing in Roman society. Paulus was not one of the ruling elites, neither was he a member of the lower class; he was somewhere in the middle. The targets of informers were not exclusively the upper class, as such the importance would not have been specifically related to furthering or ending political conflict between members of the elite.

Furthermore, it is unclear if the informers were acting independently or were acting on the behest of the state or its actors. It is very clearly stated by Cassius Dio that the state

financially sponsored informers, saying that they received money from both the accounts of the accused and the public treasury (Cass Dio, 58.4), this was not specifically in the form of a salary but more like a bonus on the basis of success. Regardless, this passage makes it clear that the government was in support of this practice, and not only tried to make it easy for people to inform on others but even encouraged it through the inevitable punishment the accused received. As is clear by Maro's drawing up an official "accusation" against Paulus indicating an official state process of informing. It is important to note that Paulus' crime was not touching the chamber pot with such a beautiful ring, but specifically one bearing the image of the emperor. All crimes would face harsh punishment in Rome, but crimes which relate to the imperial family are so explosive that Maro knows it would not be hard to succeed in accusing Paulus.

Nowhere is the extent of this state-encouraged informing culture more prominent than during the conspiracy of Sejanus from 29-31 CE. During Sejanus' period of control in Rome he tried and executed many members of the senatorial class on the basis of weak, possibly false charges. In one such case, Gaius Fufius Geminus who was accused of treason, *maiestas*, against Tiberius and was so sure of his punishment regardless of his guilt that he committed suicide (Cass Dio, 58.4.5-6). Sejanus also brought false allegations against Drusus of crimes he had learned of while engaged in an affair with Drusus, a form of information gathering Dio says he employed often (Cass Dio, 58.3.8).

Not only were spies more inaccessible to the public than messengers were, simply through their ability to directly bring accusations to the government, but they were also exercised by the imperial government under the military taking on a more literal weaponisation. Much of the discussion of spying in modern scholarship focuses on its place in political action, between

the elites of imperial Rome.[26] While this is incredibly beneficial in establishing the extent that spies engaged with the upper class, it limits the focus to just the upper class without addressing how the whole of the Roman public was impacted by the utilisation of spies. The passage of Epictetus' *Discourses*, translated below, details two phenomena of this expanded scope. Epictetus is offering his perspective on the willingness of people to speak unencumbered with an assumption of fidelity to the other person, which so often resulted in being executed without any form of due process. He focuses on the social expectation of reciprocating the sharing of secrets, and how this is weaponised by an undercover soldier. In this passage, he describes how a soldier in "civilian dress" attempts to bait someone into slandering the emperor, providing a clear illustration of government surveillance on the public with specific attention to public perceptions of the imperial family.

When someone gives us the impression of having talked to us frankly about his personal affairs, somehow or other we are likewise led to tell him our own secrets, and to think that is frankness! The first reason for this is because it seems unfair for a man to have heard his neighbour's affairs, and yet not to let him too have, in his turn, a share in ours. Another reason, after that, is because we feel that we shall not give the impression to these men of being frank, if we keep our own private affairs concealed. Indeed, men are frequently in the habit of saying, " I have told you everything about myself, aren't you willing to tell me anything about yourself? Where do people act like that?" Furthermore, there is also the thought that we can safely trust the man who has already entrusted knowledge of his own affairs; for the idea occurs to us that this man would never spread abroad knowledge of our affairs, because he would be careful to guard against our too spreading abroad knowledge of his affairs. In this fashion the rash are ensnared by the soldiers in Rome. A soldier, dressed like a civilian, sits down by your side, and begins to speak ill of Caesar, and then you too, just as though you had received from him some guarantee of good faith in the fact that he began the abuse, tell likewise everything you think, and the next thing is—you are led off to prison in chains.

[26] For further discussion see: Ray Laurence, 'Rumour and Communication in Roman Politics', *Greece & Rome* 41, no. 1 (1994): 62–74. And Rose Mary Sheldon, *Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome : Trust in the Gods but Verify* (London, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/vcl/detail.action?docID=201243.

We experience something of the same sort also in the general course of our life. For even though this particular man has safely entrusted knowledge of his own affairs to me, I do not myself in like manner tell my affairs to any chance comer; no, I listen and keep still, if, to be sure, I happen to be that kind of a person, but he goes out and tells everybody. And then, when I find out what has happened, if I myself resemble the other person, because I want to get even with him I tell about his affairs, and confound him and am myself confounded. If, however, I remember that one person does not harm another, but that it is a man's own actions which both harm and help him, this much I achieve, namely, that I do not act like the other person, but despite that I get into the state in which I am because of my own foolish talking.

Epictetus, *Discourses*, 4.13 [27]

The entrapment attempt by the soldier is not just demonstrative of a practice of spying in Rome, but a concerted effort to get members of the populus to express their discontent so that they may be punished. It is seemingly specific to their thoughts on the imperial family and government. Some might argue that this was an attempt by the government to detect potential political conflict, but the inherent result of this practice would not be the weeding out of rebellious politicians, but rather the death or harm of innocent members of the public. It is clear from this passage that this practice of gossipy seduction was the "case with [Rome] in general", but the specific instance of a soldier in "civilian dress" which Mary Rose Sheldon classifies as *vigiles*, once the firemen of Rome now turned quasi secret police, is particularly pertinent. The existence of an organised military subsection specifically intended to surveil the public is clearly indicative of a goal of the government to prevent any anti-imperial action.

The role of spies and messengers in the dissemination of information in the Roman empire was one of both restriction and invasion. Much like we see today, and in recent history, there was a concerted effort to share specific information en-mass whilst allowing any secret shared to earn the status of truth without a system of fact checking. Unlike other forms of

[27] Epictetus, *Discourses* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998).

communication that I will discuss, spies and messengers worked both ways, simultaneously gathering and spreading information. This afforded them, and their employers, control over not just the dissemination of said information but the truth of it. They controlled what was known, and public knowledge of something, the circulation of it, gives it an undeniable authority as truth. A handle on what was truth and what was known extends the power of the governing elite until their control was deeply embedded in the minds of the public. They reigned not just over what the public knows, but what they think as well.

To conclude, in accordance with my intention to elucidate the intricate relationship between communication and control in the early Roman Empire, Tiberius' use of the acta diurna, the *cursus publicus* and most especially a system of spies and informers was a clear demonstration of this intersection that allows for methods of communication to so easily be utilised by the imperial government against the public. Tiberius throughout his reign faced the challenge of maintaining his authority, particularly after the deaths of his sons and Sejanus' grasp at power, but also even earlier due to the strenuous relationship between Tiberius and the Senate from the outset of his reign. It was imperative to his rule that he not only had the support of the people, but control of them. Yet, he simultaneously strived to present himself to them as an efficient governor, abstaining from the corruption of the senate. The proliferation of informers and spies created a climate of distrust, where individuals were constantly watching their words and actions for fear of being reported to the authorities. Through his informal system of spies and the subsequent creation of an overarching culture of informing, Tiberius was able to routinely collect information from the public, while shifting the blame so that he was not perceived to be causing disarray within the population. This not only undermined individual freedoms but also eroded the sense of community and trust among the Roman people. By controlling the narrative

presented in the information the public had access to, Tiberius was able to assert his dominance and quash dissent, even as he presents himself as just and efficient leader. Information was power, Tiberius' unchecked surveillance and censorship allowed him to isolate power away from the Senate and the people, without fear that the threat of retribution would hold true.

Conclusion

There are two main takeaways we can obtain from this study: communication systems were isolated into the hands of the upper class, and each emperor centred in this study had clear self-interested motives that required the support of the public. Communication with the public was only one way they acquired their allegiance, but communication, as we have seen, could be conducted through several different avenues. Through an analysis of the available literary and visual evidence, it has become evident that these leaders utilised forms of communication to shape public opinion, suppress dissent, and consolidate their authority.

The chronological framework employed in this study has displayed the evolutionary use of communication systems by the early Julio-Claudian emperors. While there are no direct accounts of the lower class engaging with these avenues of communication, what is necessary instead, is to backtrace their role and power in Roman society and politics by examining how the ruling class manipulated them to achieve a specific aim within the context in which they ruled. By investigating how systems of communication were utilised within a specific political context it was possible to elucidate the role the public played in resolving or worsening ancient political situations.

The charismatic oratorical skills of Julius Caesar coupled with his strategic inclusion of the public in political discourse and action, allowed him to sway the masses, achieve and maintain a strong grip on power. Augustus, working not simply to bolster his own power like Caesar, but to cultivate an image of stability and prosperity through a lasting dynasty, employed a different appeal to the public through a combination of public monuments, and an isolation of political information away from the public. He centred the information disseminated around the imperial family, fixating them at the centre of both political and social life in Rome. To maintain

a tenuous hold on power, Tiberius took communication manipulation to a new level with the development of a more formal surveillance structure, and the cultivation of an informing culture. During his reign he faced extension opposition from the senate, so by controlling the narrative shared with the public and censoring public discourse so heavily through surveillance, Tiberius effectively ensured his power whilst eroding trust and community in the process. The role of communication in shaping political narratives, influencing public perception, and consolidating authority in ancient Rome cannot be overstated. By examining the intricate interplay between the leaders and public, the spreading of information, and changing public opinion, we can gain an understanding of how power was acquired and the role of the public in political action in Rome.

Conversations of communication have, in the past, been almost exclusively centred around communication between members of the Roman elite, with little attention paid to how information was disseminated to the entire populace. I hope that, knowing what we know now from this study, that these discussions can bring greater focus on the presence of the general populus and the lower class in the dissemination of information. In that vein, these future discussions could even allow for study of how information was shared and utilised between members of the lower class, particularly regarding how information was obtained from the *acta diurna*.

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