



Res Gestae Divi Augusti, chapters 9 & 12

See Augustus, *Res Gestae divi Augusti* (General Background) for the historical context of the *Res Gestae*.

Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.): Eulogy / Panegyric / Elogium.

Original Location/Place: Rome, Ancyra, Antioch in Pisidia, Apollonia, Sardis.

Date: 14 CE

Language: Latin, Greek

Category: Roman

Commentary: Chapters 9 and 12 of the *Res Gestae* open and close a new section of the text that has moved away from the preceding chapters' discussion of the re-ordering of society and the restoration of moral probity. These chapters focus instead on the renewed prominence of religious honours, and the different ways that Augustus and his achievements were commemorated by the state in the form of religious celebration.

Chapter 9 begins with the assertion that the senate in Rome instituted regular 'vows' (*vota*) to protect Augustus's health and safety. Vows for the '*salus*' (health) were first made for Octavian in 30 BCE, which became celebrated annually on the 1st January by the consuls and presumably the major priesthoods (Fishwick, *Imperial Cult* I, p. 89. cf. Suetonius, *Augustus* 75.1). Other vows were instituted on a four yearly basis, and others too in times of emergency. These vows were made on the basis of the kinds of honours that would be dedicated once the vow – the safety and welfare of Augustus – had been observed; Dio Cassius records vows made in 16 BCE for Augustus's safe return from campaigns in Hispania and Gaul, which were fulfilled with the dedication of votive games (recorded on inscribed statue bases) in 13 BCE once he had returned to Rome. The vows were recorded also on coins, which attributed the 'peace' of the Roman state to his leadership (Cooley, *Res Gestae* p. 145. For an example of the coins see *British Museum Coins, Roman Empire*, 92). These particular vows were associated with the celebration of games, the first regular games held in Rome, given in turn by the consuls and the colleges of priests every four years (Cooley, *Res Gestae*, p. 145). As Zahra Newby has shown, the games that were given had distinct flavours of both Greece and Rome; they were held on a regular cycle like the famous Greek shows, and included events such as gymnastic competitions and horse racing, as well as the more obviously Roman gladiator fights (Newby, *Greek Athletics*, p. 27). In the Greek version of the text the phrase 'in my lifetime' (*vivo me*) has been left out; although the award of games during one's lifetime was an exceptional honour in Rome, it did not carry the same weight in Greece where it had been entirely normal for an *autokrator*, or leader, to hold games in his own name from the Hellenistic period onwards (Centanni, *Ideologia Imperiale*, p. 342). Both Robert Gurval and Stefan Weinstock have listed examples of Roman individuals who had received the same honours in the Greek east, but in Rome itself it represented an entirely new kind of tradition (Gurval, *Actium and Augustus*, p. 122; Weinstock, *Divus Julius*, p. 310-17; Scheid, *Res Gestae*, p. 42). The colleges that are referred to are the four major colleges of priests, the *pontifices*, the *augures*, the *quindecimviri* and the *septemviri* (Brunt and Moore, *Res Gestae*, p. 52. For these roles, see Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, I, p. 18-30). The lack of familiarity of those in the provinces with these very 'Roman' priesthoods is made clear in the Greek version of the text, which interprets the Latin as referring to a single college of four priests (?? ??? ?????????? ??? ?????????? ??????, *ek t?s sunarchias t?n tessar?n hierē?n*), having translated 'four' (*quattuor*) together with 'priest' (*sacerdotum*) instead of with 'eminent college' (*amplissima collegia*) (Cooley, *Res Gestae* p. 146).

The final part of chapter 9 makes further elaborates upon the extent of the honours awarded to Augustus, and particularly the prayers that were decreed to him by the Senate following his success at Actium. The Latin version of the text states that these prayers should be offered in a series of different spectra; privately (*privatim*), which most likely were connected with the offerings made within private households at their domestic shrines (*lararia*); in cities (*municipatim*), following a precedent set by the prayers decreed to Julius Caesar and Pompey throughout Italy in 50 BCE, and at all 'public feasts' (*apud omnia pulvinaria*). Public feasts given as part of religious celebrations – *pulvinaria* – were not a feature of Greek religious culture, and so this was omitted from



the Greek version of the text, but the fact that all people of the Roman world had been instructed to pray for Augustus's health and security, both within the private context of the home and as part of wider, community based celebration, was a unifying notion that helped to disguise the different cultural contexts of the Roman world's inhabitants.

Chapters 10 and 11 continue with the theme of religious honours accorded to Augustus, with the introduction of his name into the Salian hymn (10.1), the role of *pontifex maximus* (10.2), the dedication of the altar to *Fortuna Redux* (11) and the celebration of the *Augustalia* as a major new religious festival (11). The final chapter of this list of honours, chapter 12 is perhaps one of the most famous chapters of the *Res Gestae*, and deals with the dedication of the Altar of Augustan Peace (*Ara Pacis*) in Rome (see *Ara Pacis* (13-9 BCE)_Architecture and *Ara Pacis* (13-9 BCE)_Reliefs). Augustus was returning from campaigns in the East when the praetors – probably ten in total, second in importance in the senate to the consuls – and some of the tribunes of the people were sent to meet him in Campania (Cooley, *Res Gestae*, p. 153). However, there has been some discussion as to why the consuls are named here, with most scholarship considering it an attempt by Augustus to disguise the circumstances surrounding the appointment of Quintus Lucretius Vespillo. There had been some serious unrest in the city of Rome during Augustus's absence in 22-19 BCE; Caius Sentius Saturninus had been elected one of the consuls in 19 BCE. Augustus had been named the other, but had refused the position whilst on campaign in Syria (Scheid, *Res Gestae*, p. 47). Egnatius Rufus, a senator, had illegally stood for election to the absent consulship, having won much popularity in the city for using his own slaves as a fire fighting force when he held the consulship in 22 BCE (Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 53.24.4-6, with the incorrect date of 26 BCE). Rufus's supporters rioted when his candidacy was opposed by Saturninus, which resulted in his arrest for treason, and eventual death sentence (Cooley, *Res Gestae*, p. 153). The senate promptly approached Augustus for help resolving the disorder, and he named Quintus Lucretius Vespillo as the second consul, who was immediately elected in fulfilment of Augustus's wishes (see Syme, *Roman Revolution*, p. 371). Dio states that the altar was dedicated *following* this restoration of order (and for his achievements in the east), but Augustus has reversed the order of events here; by naming Vespillo as the consul who led the delegation to him in Campania, Augustus could have been trying to avoid discussion of the problems in Rome, and his own appointment of the consul, rather than his independent election (Cooley, *Res Gestae*, p. 153). Jean Gag  attributed this arrangement to the awkward phrasing of 'some of the praetors and the tribunes of the people, with the consul Quintus Lucretius Vespillo...' (*pars praetorum et tribunorum plebis cum consule*) which appears to place him second in importance to the praetors and the tribunes (Gag , *Res Gestae* p. 93). The translator of the Greek version of the text clearly noticed this odd order of precedence, and changed it to reflect the usual ranking by including the words 'highest magistrates' (????????? ?????? – *megistas arkhas*). Ronald Ridley's analysis of the text also makes note of the fact that by placing the delegation as an event that occurred *after* the senate's decree of the altar to '*Fortuna Redux*', the character of the altar becomes honorific only in the context of Augustus's achievements in Syria (Ridley, *Emperor's Retrospect* p. 180-2). The unrest at Rome is therefore characterised as a separate event for which separate honours were accrued.

The main focus of chapter 12 is found in the second part, which describes the dedication of the Altar of Augustan Peace. Augustus had been away again on campaign in Hispania and Gaul from 16-13 BCE, reorganising the Spanish provinces following the end of the Cantabrian Wars in 19 BCE, and dealing with the aftermath of invasions to Roman territory by the Sugambri, Usipetes and Tencteri tribes (Dio, *Roman History*, 54.20.4-5; Suetonius, *Augustus* 23; Tacitus, *Annals*, 10.1). The senate vowed the altar to him upon his return to Rome on 4th July 13 BCE, and it was dedicated on Livia's birthday on the 30 January, 9 BCE. The propagandistic nature of the altar is well documented, with its combination of mythical and historical iconography linking Augustus and the Julio-Claudians irreversibly with the legendary foundation of Rome and the divinely ordained nature of their roles in Roman government. The dedication of the altar, and that of the one previously dedicated to *Fortuna Redux*, was in place of triumphs that Augustus had refused on both occasions. However, the dedication of the Altar of Augustan Peace was far more significant than the celebrations associated with triumphs; it formally introduced the cult of 'Augustan Peace' (*pax Augusta*) to Rome. This was the first time that a title or magistracy had been associated with an 'august(an)' deity, which served to formalise the idea that the people of Rome enjoyed a special relationship with the gods directly through, and because of, the figure of Augustus (Cooley, *Res Gestae*, p. 156). It was also a useful unification tool, bringing all the different areas and communities of the Roman world together under one, associative protection, the cult of which could be disseminated through all kinds of cultural groups (see Cooley, *Beyond Rome and Latium*, p. 246-52).

The final lines of chapter 12 return to the theme of religious celebration that introduced this section in chapter 9. An annual sacrifice at the altar was decreed by the senate (*senatus...anniversarium sacrificium facere iussit*), just as at the altar of *Fortuna Redux* (chapter 11), but here with the addition of the magistrates (*magistratus*) also taking part in the sacrifice. They accompanied the priests (*sacerdotes*) and, in a sign of the importance of this new cult of



pax Augusta, the Vestal Virgins, who were involved in only the most important religious celebrations (Cooley, *Res Gestae* p. 152). The theme of the peace brought by Augustus to the Roman world continues into the next chapter (13) in which the closure of the Gates of Janus is commemorated; it appears as the final, demonstrative conclusion to the various works described in the *Res Gestae* thus far. Augustus has reorganised the administrative and governmental business of the Roman world, he has settled unrest both at home and abroad, and these good works have been recognised through the giving of religious honours, the peak of which is represented by the establishment of a new cult of 'peace', that is linked intrinsically to his achievements by the epithet of 'Augustus'.

Keywords in the original language:

- votum
- sacerdos
- senatus
- collegium
- ara
- municipium
- pulvinar
- valetudo
- praetor
- tribunus plebis
- auctoritas
- princeps
- Campania
- Hispania
- Gallia
- provincia
- Roma
- Tiberius
- Vestalis
- sacrificium

Thematic keywords:

- Augustus
- religious ceremony
- games
- military campaign
- Roman peace
- Pax Romana
- conquest
- altar
- sacrifice

Bibliographical references: Augustus, Brunt, Peter A., Moore, John M., *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: the achievements of the divine Augustus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967)

Scheid, John, , *Res Gestae divi Augusti. Hauts faits du divin Auguste* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres , 2007)

Beard, Mary, North, John, Price, Simon, *Religions of Rome, Volume I: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Centanni, Monica, Ideologia Imperiale 'a fronte' nel testo Greco/Latino delle *Res Gestae*: appunti sulla doppia versione del manifesto politico di Augusto', *Hesperia* 30 (2013) : 333-355

Cooley, Alison E., *Res gestae divi Augusti: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Cooley, Alison, Beyond Rome and Latium: Roman religion in the age of Augustus, in *Religion in Republican Italy* (ed. C. E. Schulz, P.B. Harvey Jnr; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 228-252

Fishwick, Duncan, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, volume I (Leiden: Brill, 1987)

Mommsen, Theodor, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti ex Monumentis Ancyranis et Apolloniensibus* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1865)



Guval, Robert A., *Actium and Augustus: The Politics and Emotions of Civil War* (Ann Arbor (Mich.): University of Michigan Press, 1995)

Newby, Zahra, *Greek Athletics in the Roman World. Victory and Virtue* (Oxford Studies in Ancient Culture and Representation; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

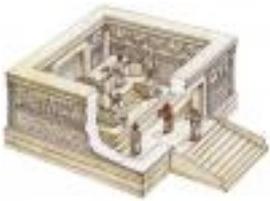
Ridley, Ronald, *The Emperor's Retrospect. Augustus' Res Gestae in Epigraphy, Historiography and Commentary* (Leuven and Dudley, Mass.: Peeters, 2003)

Weinstock, Stefan, *Divus Julius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971)

Other sources connected with this document: Architecture

Ara Pacis (13-9 BCE)_Architecture

Reconstruction of the Ara Pacis



[Ara Pacis: frontal view \[1\]](#)



[Ara Pacis: side view \[2\]](#)



[Ara Pacis: side view \[3\]](#)



- [Read more about Ara Pacis \(13-9 BCE\) Architecture \[4\]](#)



Relief / Sculpture

[Ara Pacis \(13-9 BCE\) Reliefs](#) [5]

- [Read more about Ara Pacis \(13-9 BCE\) Reliefs](#) [5]

Inscription

[Dedication of the Temple of Fortuna Augusta \(CIL X, 820\)](#) [6]

The dedication of the Temple of Augustan Fortune in the Forum of Pompeii.

- [Read more about Dedication of the Temple of Fortuna Augusta \(CIL X, 820\)](#) [6]

Realized by:

[Caroline Barron](#) [7]



Source URL: <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/res-gestae-divi-augusti-chapters-9-12>

Links

[1] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/file/ara-pacis-frontal-view>

[2] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/file/ara-pacis-side-view>

[3] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/file/ara-pacis-side-view-0>

[4] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/ara-pacis-13-9-bcearchitecture>

[5] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/ara-pacis-13-9-bcereliefs>

[6] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/dedication-temple-fortuna-augusta-cil-x-820>

[7] <https://www.judaism-and-rome.org/erc-team/caroline-barron>