

# Mos maiorum, Emotion and Resonance

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## Mos maiorum, Emotion and Resonance

Mos maiorum can be defined as concept that, in Ancient Rome, encompassed the core values, traditions and rituals that had been a part of Roman culture for several generations, thereby making it a concept that many Ancient Romans associated with their sense of identity. This project argues that the Emperor Augustus could potentially have manipulated this emotional connection to, and ability to resonate with Mos Maiorum by heightening its importance within Rome and his own association with the concept, to distract from his own dubious claim to a position of power in Rome.



Ara Pacis, Rome. Aeneas.

## Research questions

- How did Augustus want to be perceived by the public?
- What means did he employ when influencing public perception of him?
- Was there a relationship between the public and the ancient traditions, rituals and values encompassed within the concept of Mos maiorum?
- If so, did Augustus potentially manipulate this relationship, then, how did he manage this?

## Aim

The three overall aims of this project are:

- To analyse a variety of primary sources relating to Augustus' connection with *Mos maiorum* and better understand the motivations behind this connection.
- To assess the possible existence of an ability within the Roman population, to resonate with the traditions and values encompassed within *Mos Maiorum*.
- To understand how this possible emotional connection affected the peoples' perceptions of Augustus, and how such perceptions could have been

## Methods and Material

The main method employed in the writing of this project will be a detailed analysis of:

- Primary written sources that are both contemporary to the period of the time in question and those that came directly after. These, so far, have included Suetonius, Cassius Dio, Cicero, Ovid, Livy and Virgil.
- Structures renovated and built during the Augustan period, more specifically temples and public spaces. Structures studied so far have included the Temple of Jupiter Feretrius and the Temple of Apollo.
- Images and sculptures, which are possibly the most obvious way in which Augustus presented a connection between himself and *Mos maiorum*. In future research, I hope to explore the images on the *Ara Pacis* (shown centre left and centre right) and sculptures such as that depicting Augustus as Pontifex Maximus (top right).
- Other material including coins and inscriptions that directly depict, or reference Augustus.



Ara Pacis, Rome. South panel with procession.

## Next steps

- Form a definition for *Mos Maiorum* and emotion based off my own understanding of the terms.
- Analyse further written primary sources and get an idea of common perceptions of Augustus among his peers and by the public.
- Gather further examples of temples, specifically those that Augustus helped renovate.
- Analyse sources for ideas on public attachment to various traditions and rituals.

## Sources

Ara Pacis (Aeneas): Obtained from: [www.civilization.org.uk](http://www.civilization.org.uk)

Ara Pacis (South Panel): Obtained from: [http://www.arapacis.it/it/percorsi/esterno2/lato\\_sud](http://www.arapacis.it/it/percorsi/esterno2/lato_sud)

Augustus Pontifex Maximus: Raddato 2013, obtained from:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/caroleimage/8532714337>

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