

## You Can Call Me *Augusti*: Private Epithet for *Lares Augusti*

I argue that the epithet *Augusti* was a privately motivated response to the emperor's reforms of the *vici* of Rome. Rather than reading the epithet as an eponymous, public gift from the emperor (as Koortbojian 2013, Flower 2017, and Lott 2014), it is a grass-roots, bottom-up response to the emperor and his reforms (cf. Wallace-Hadrill, 2003). The *vicomagistri* (four freedmen elected within a *vicus*) and the people of the *vicus* utilize the epithet to make the emperor present within the community: the local *vici* understood and shaped their *Lares* and 'their' Augustus to meet their own local needs.

Following Van Andringa 2012, we should view the interweaving of *Lares* and the epithet *Augusti* on a local level (i.e., from perspective of a local ritual participant), and not assume homogeneity across private and public spheres. Arguments for a public attribution of the epithet do not account for the limited number of official *Augusti* gods (five, all linked to the emperor's qualities), in contrast to the prevalence of private *Augusti* gods throughout Rome and the empire. Public attribution also cannot account for the absence of the epithet from later sources (cf. Suetonius, *Aug.* 31.5, Pliny, *NH* 3.66). Moreover, a private attribution links the private behaviors of Roman and provincial cults: the local population employs private monuments to make the absent emperor present and to display their cognizance of public, imperial themes through iconography (Price 1984; Ando 2000; Lott 2014).

An example for the *Lares Augusti* making the emperor present is the *Fasti Magistrorum Vici (FMV)*:

imp(erator) Caesar **August[us]** pontif(ex) maxim(us)] co(n)s(ul) XI  
tribun(icia) potes[t(ate) X]VII

Lares **Aug(ustos)** mag(istris) vici dedit. (text from Lott 2004).

The repetition of Augustus and *Augusti* in the first and last lines places visual brackets around the introduction to the *FMV*; Augustus the man and *Augusti* the epithet are both in attendance. The dialogue between the man and epithet links Augustus and the *Lares* every street corner (McIntyre 2016).

What Augustus “gave” to the *vici* named in the *FMV* was not the epithet, but his reforms of the *vici*. None of the surviving inscriptions (five securely dated with eight likely fragments, cf. Lott 2004) list the emperor’s name and the epithet in the same way as the *FMV*, but instead invoke the emperor’s presence with iconography. *Coronae civicae* and laurels appear on the five securely dated altars; the senate gave these two symbols to Augustus at the same time as his cognomen, making them as Augustan as his name (cf. *RGDA* 34; Zanker 1988). Additionally, all five altars make use of Carrara marble. Carrara is the same marble used for public Augustan monuments like the Temple of Mars Ultor, as well as the official Augustan goddess at the *Ara Pacis Augustae*. The material displays their public cognizance through their private emulation of iconography (Pensabene 2012).

The private attribution of the epithet *Augusti* makes Augustus a resident of every *vici*; Augustus and the *Lares* protect and are protected by the residents (now including Augustus) of the *vicus*. To paraphrase Simon (1986): Augustus is their bodyguard as well as their long-lost pal. In calling these *Lares* ‘*Augusti*,’ private individuals within the *vicus* engage in a citizen-generated response to Augustus’ public, imperial programme, making the emperor present to meet their local needs.

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