

Herod the Great's City Foundations and the Making of Augustus:

Actia Nicopolis, Sebaste, and Caesarea Maritima

The Augustan era was defined by rapid and widespread cultural and artistic transformation in which individuals from all levels of society throughout the empire participated actively and collaboratively. Much of this activity concerned the production of Augustan ideology, defined here as the floating and fluctuating set of ideals that constructed the meaning of “Augustus” and his rule. Many scholars (notably Roller 1998, White 2005, and Galinsky 2009) have begun to explore how Herod the Great, king of Judaea and bulwark of the eastern edge of the *pax romana*, was an active and indeed central figure in this dynamic process. In this paper, I further this exploration by arguing that Herod became a vital co-creator of Augustan ideologies specifically through the medium of new city foundations. The foundation of new cities was particularly fertile ground for such creation, as the deliberate visual communication of ideologies could be built into the cities' layouts without the confines of existing infrastructure. An analysis of the design of three of Herod's planned city foundations (at Actia Nicopolis, Sebaste, and Caesarea Maritima) reveal Herod's creation and dissemination of the key Augustan ideological themes of Augustus as peacemaker through military victory and Augustus as divine. According to Josephus (*BJ* 1.425, *AJ* 16.147-8), Herod was responsible for the majority of the public buildings constructed at Actia Nicopolis. The topography of the city itself became a document proclaiming Augustus' victory at Actium, a crucial component to the narrative of Augustus' rule, and a message in whose dissemination Herod played a major role in Greece through the building of the monument-city. Furthermore, Herod likely inaugurated the cult of divine Augustus by constructing the probable original full temple complex to Augustus in a prominent location in Sebaste. At Caesarea Maritima, the temple of Augustus dominates the

city's vista, especially as approached from its renowned artificial harbor, metaphorically suggesting the extent of Augustus' dominion. Thus, in founding these two cities, which are both named for and which name the new era, Herod actively participates in the divinization of Augustus. In the foundation of all three cities, a reciprocity is evident between Herod and the Princeps: while Augustus directly defined the terms of Herod's rule of his kingdom, Herod also profoundly shaped the narrative of who Augustus was to the eastern empire.

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