

His Imperial Majesty

By Ruben Sanchez

For my senior seminar, the course covered the reign of Rome's first and most influential emperor, Caesar Augustus, but what stood out to me was not Augustus' acquisition of power nor the politics of the senate. What stood out to me was his manipulation of Rome's traditions, values and religion practices to cement himself and his ancestors not only into the state history but the states' religious identity. This religious pivot has been well documented and studied by many experts, yet their analyses have been limited to Italy or the origins of the religious doctrine, from eastern traditions. But in my research, I noticed that the certain provinces were under studied either because there is limited material or little to no interest among scholars. With this in mind, I decided to concentrate on the province of Gaul, which happened to be one of these under studied provinces. I sought out to see if models of ruler worship from neighboring Spain, which is well documented with primary and secondary sources, could provide a model for the province of Gaul, seeing that Germanic tribes settled in both regions. I hypothesized, if Augustus unabashedly altered the roman religion in the cultural center of roman identity, Roma, for his political gain, and is also documented to do same in other provinces, then Augustus most likely altered Gaelic traditions in some form in order to justify his rule. I chose Spain to be my model of imperial worship, namely for the western provinces of Rome, because of the abundance of primary and secondary sources as well as archeological evidence clearly supports traditional ruler worship. This tradition of venerating war chiefs prevalent among the Spanish, Gaelic, or Germanic tribes then is transferable to other western provinces, specifically Gaul.

Not only did I spend the majority of my time writing this research project in the library, but I utilized many of the library resources in writing this research paper; and these resources helped

me develop the ideas and arguments present in the paper. The library and especially the Interlibrary loan system was a critical resource for my research and without it, I would not have access to the information needed for my analysis. Two books critical to my research came via the interlibrary loan system, chiefly “The imperial cult in the Latin West: studies in the ruler cult of the western provinces of the Roman Empire/ vol 1 part 1” by Duncan Fishwick. I soon realized that Duncan Fishwick does not write for the general public nor for undergraduate researchers, leading to one book costing 382 dollars. However, his research was absolutely necessary for my own, as he is one of few leading authorities on the Imperial Cult. Thus, by the end of my study, I had checked out or bought five books written by Mr. Fishwick, three of which came via interlibrary loan system.

Throughout the different rounds of gathering information, I came across multiple different perspectives and theories regarding Germanic tribes’ tradition of ruler worship. I also came across arguments against distinguishing Gallo-Roman custom as such conclusions are entirely speculative and, they argue, unnecessary. Although true, such models would be entirely theoretical until more evidence is discovered, that alone does not disqualify the merits of investigating premodern cults of personality. However, as I continued my research, I soon hit a new roadblock because I could not find any new relevant sources. In order to overcome this, I expanded my search beyond English only texts, and by the end of the entire process I had collected sources in French, German, English, Spanish, and an unhealthy amount of Latin. I do not claim to be polyglot, but with the help of online translating tools I was able to translate multiple documents originally in a foreign language, many of which became the foundation for formulating my thesis.