

The reign of Caesar Augustus is often the point at which historians consider that the Roman Empire began, and the Roman Republic ended. The reign of Augustus, from 27BCE-14CE allowed for some of the greatest cultural developments in the western world, and helped bring an already powerful nation to another level of dominance in the world. As such, he is remembered to this day as a giant in the history of the west. This coin from the St. Olaf Collection demonstrates how he was portrayed to the Romans soon after his death, during the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, from 14-37 CE.

This coin features, on the obverse, the head of Augustus, facing left, with the words "*Divus Augustus Pater.*" *Divus Augustus* was a title that was granted to him after his death, meaning divine Augustus. *Pater*, in Latin, means father, and is part of a title which was granted to Augustus. This title, *Pater Patriae*, meaning father of the fatherland, was a major title that was granted to people who did a great service to Rome. On this same side, there is also a star and a thunderbolt. The star, placed between the first "U" and "S" in Augustus, is a reference to one of the stars in the constellation Aquila. It was probably present between 4 and 2 BCE, during the reign of Augustus, and was put on the coins as a reference to his greatness, as such a celestial event must give legitimacy and divine providence to a leader.<sup>1</sup> The Thunderbolt is a reference to Jupiter, king of the gods, and one of the patrons of Rome.

The reverse features Livia, wife of Augustus, seated on a throne, holding a scepter<sup>2</sup>, along with the letters SC, which stand for *senatus consulto*, which means "by

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<sup>1</sup> McIvor, R.S, "The Star on Roman Coins," *Journal of the National Astronomical Society of Canada*, 87-89.

<sup>2</sup> McIvor, 89.

Decree of the Senate,<sup>3</sup> and simply signifies that the senate ordered these coins to be made.

Tiberius minted these coins for the commemoration of Augustus, and of his divine status. These coins were meant to work not only as currency, but as propaganda showing the greatness of the empire.

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Sutton's Roman Coin Legend Translation, on [cointranslator.com](http://cointranslator.com).