

# Caesar's Visions and Impact on the Roman Empire: Revisiting the Archaeological and Historical Record for the 40s BC

University of Flensburg, Tallinn Building (Room 007)  
30–31 May 2024

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View of the Forum Iulium towards the north-west (Photo: Rubina Raja).

#### Front cover

View of the Forum Iulium towards the south. The Capitoline Hill, or rather the area which was carved out of the hill, is visible to the right in the photo (Photo: Rubina Raja).

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## Outline

The life and career of Gaius Julius Caesar have been topics in research for centuries. His last years were the time in which he was the main driver of changes in the Roman world, changes which turned out to have immense impact on the centuries to come, including paving the way for imperial rule of the Roman Empire. This stage of his life has until today not been explored to its fullest extent.

This conference aims at bringing together scholars from a variety of disciplines, archaeology, history, philology and history of religion, in order to move towards a more multifaceted narrative about his dictatorship and the changes that he spurred, the changes that were stalled, the changes that were envisioned and the changes that were carried out – some, in the end, by others.

We are looking for papers on focused topics such as Caesar's impact on colonization of the Mediterranean world. Which colonies did he found, which ones did he plan and what did he leave to his successors complete? What role did the urban Roman population play, and what effects did the settlement of foreign populations have for the locals? Caesar's foreign policy plans also remained unfinished. Here the Parthian question was constantly in the air after the defeat at Carrhae and remained in the minds of the various politicians after Caesar's death.

Furthermore, the regulation of the necessary defence of Gaul against the constant Germanic invasions across the Rhine remained postponed. In many respects, Caesar's coinage was exemplary, and it was subsequently imitated in various respects in the triumvirate and in the imperial period, for example, in the minting of the ruler on the obverse. But here it would have to be examined why certain details were no longer found in the later imperial coinage, such as the embossing of priestly symbols. Similarly, Caesar's inscriptions are to be analysed for their exemplary function for the imperial period. Caesar's building programme in Rome and beyond was, on the one hand, indebted to the example of influential politicians of past times and, on the other hand – in its unprecedented monumentality, as with his forum – an intensification of previous practice that exerted a clear influence on the period that followed. Other possible aspects that require more intensive study are Caesar's influence on Roman historiography, the patronage system in Rome, the *cursus honorum* and the political system in general, as well as Caesar's religious programme and use of religion in and outside Rome. Through bringing new views into play across disciplines, we hope to bring new fruitful lines of investigation to the forefront of a central figure.



**Programme: Thursday 30 May**

8:30–8:45 **Welcome and Introduction**  
Krešimir Matijević (University of Flensburg), Rubina Raja (UrbNet, Aarhus University), and Jörg Rüpke (University of Erfurt)

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Session 1: Caesar's Impact on Roman Religion  
Moderator: Krešimir Matijević

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8:45–9:35 **Writing One's Own Wars: The Emperor Caesar as Author and the Question of Religion**  
Janico Albrecht (University of Bonn)

9:35–10:25 **Learning How to Become a Roman in Ancient Sicily: The Preservation of Religious Traditions through Glocal Reactions to Caesar's Policy**  
Sofia Bianchi Mancini (University of Erfurt)

10:25–11:15 **God and Foundational Figure: Veneration of Caesar as the First Roman Axial Age Religion**  
Jörg Rüpke (University of Erfurt)

11:15–12:30 Lunch

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Session 2: Caesar's Impact on Roman Literature and Reception History  
Moderator: Josephine Quinn

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12:30–13:20 **'Like Bellona Brandishing Her Blood-Stained Lash' (7.568): The Demonizing of Caesar in Lucan's *Bellum Civile***  
Nicola Hömke (Universität Rostock)

13:20–14:10 **Valerius Maximus on Julius Caesar**  
Henriette van der Blom (University of Birmingham)

14:10–15:00 **Caesar and Cleopatra**  
Trine Arlund Hass (University of Oxford)

15:00–15:15 Coffee

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Session 3: Caesar's Impact on Roman Politics and Administration  
Moderator: Christopher H. Hallett

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15:15–16:05 **Caesar's *Dictatura Perpetua* Revisited, in Light of the Newly Published Fragments of the *Privernum Fasti***  
Robert Morstein-Marx (UC Santa Barbara)

16:05–16:55 **The Horizon of a Roman Politician: Julius Caesar and the Future**  
Martin Jehne (Dresden University of Technology)

**Programme: Friday 31 May**

- 16:55–17:45 **Caesar's Impact on his Successors in the Triumviral Period**  
Krešimir Matijević (University of Flensburg)
- 17:45–18:35 **Caesar and the Municipia: The Making of the Idea of the 'Roman State'?**  
Valetina Arena (University College London)
- 18:45 Dinner  
La Tasca  
Große Str. 81  
24937 Flensburg

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Session 4: Caesar's Impact on the Roman Empire: The Archaeological Record as a Lens  
Moderator: Jörg Rüpke

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- 9:00–9:50 **Probing the Boundaries of the First Imperial Forum in Rome: Caesar and His Visions for the World Seen through the Forum Iulium**  
Christopher H. Hallett (UC Berkeley) and Rubina Raja (Aarhus University)
- 9:50–10:40 **Some Caesarian Precedents**  
Michael Koortbojian (Princeton University)
- 10:40–11:30 **Julius Caesar and the Coinage of Rome: Economy, Organisation, and Design**  
Bernhard E. Woytek (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften)
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- 11:30–12:00 **Final discussion**  
Moderator: Josephine Quinn

## Abstracts

### Writing One's Own Wars: The Emperor Caesar as Author and the Question of Religion

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Caesar's ten books on his wars greatly contribute to our understanding of his character and actions. In all questions of genre conventions and authorial intention, it must be taken into account that Caesar stood in a tradition of late Republican generals who had written about their own campaigns in different situations and literary forms. However, as the other works have only survived in fragments, Caesar's *Commentarii* effectively stand alone and have been interpreted with particular focus on their distinct literary characteristics.

In my contribution, I aim to redirect attention towards an examination of their wider contexts and circumstances of production: the late Republican tradition of imperial authors, their need for self-presentation and – particularly in the context of civil war – legitimization, their reintegration into the civil sphere, and the significance of such writings in the dynamic interaction between the emperor, their soldiers, their senatorial peers, and other audiences in Rome.

Considered from this perspective, a significant characteristic of Caesar's writings is the almost complete absence of the religious elements that usually framed and permeated Roman warfare. Scholars usually attributed this omission to Caesar's alleged disregard for religious matters, yet upon closer inspection it proves to be far less clear-cut than often assumed. Focusing on the mentioned aspects will allow an answer that takes into account the participatory significance of 'Roman army religion' and its literary interpretation. This in turn allows further assumptions to be made about the relationship between Caesar, his readership, and the other audiences of his works.



Silver denarius of Sex. Iulius Caesar, 129 bc (RRC 258). Obverse: Head of helmeted Roma. Reverse: Flying Cupid crowning Venus on a biga drawn by horses (© American Numismatic Society).

## **Learning How to Become a Roman in Ancient Sicily: The Preservation of Religious Traditions through Glocal Reactions to Caesar's Policy**

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Sicily was one of the first areas of the Hellenistic world to be integrated into the empire of the Roman Republic, with the island's cities gradually coming under the Latin sphere from 241 BC. A heterogeneous control was then established under an evolving Roman provincial policy. The cults of the Sicilian cities encountered Roman influences but maintained a formal religious continuity that changed radically with Caesar's political vision. In contrast to his colonial programme, Caesar's unprecedented concession of Latinity in Sicily (and its disputed continuation) was another attempt to integrate the island into the empire, leading to profound socio-political changes that would be further materialised under Augustan control from 30–20 BC. As the cities consequently manifested colonial or municipal status at different rates, how did such changes locally affect Sicilian religious expressions?

The material evidence points to a progressive alignment of Greek-Sicilian religious forms with the Roman world by various means and at a different pace depending on the city. Long-term changes can be seen in the modification of public religious epigraphy, funerary dedications, and slow architectural alterations, while short-term transformations are reflected in the development of politan coinages that preserve traditional Hellenistic Greek symbolism, offer double Greek-Roman readings, and introduce new Roman imperial associations. This paper therefore aims to analyse cases where the religious adaptation of local expressions to 'global' Roman models is visible, preserving features of the Greek religious system via local or individual strategies that were influenced by the policy initiated by Caesar.

## **God and Foundational Figure: Veneration of Caesar as the First Roman Axial Age**

Religion Jörg Rüpke  
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In many respects Caesar has been treated as a transitory figure, preparing the way for the future Augustus or exploring paths that turned out to be dead-end streets. Apart from the question of divinization, Caesar has hardly been central to questions of the history of religion. Here, my paper will take a very different approach, building on earlier research within different frameworks. It is claiming that religious reconfigurations related to the figure of Caesar as a deity and object of veneration as much as a military leader and author of texts could be fruitfully re-interpreted within the framework of 'axialities' and 'axial age religion'. In such a perspective, the roles of priest and founder of a cult, author, reformer of the calendar, charismatic leader, and agent as much as patient of deification must have been more closely related in his own perspective as that of his followers and venerators than hitherto seen. Evidently, the talk needs to reflect its own approach and is inviting critique during the conference.

## 'Like Bellona Brandishing Her Blood-Stained Lash' (7.568): The Demonizing of Caesar in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*

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It is no coincidence that Lucan's *Bellum civile* is also referred to as the 'Caesar epic' in philo-logical research, as the figure of Caesar is indeed provided with the most space and the most multifaceted characterization of all the protagonists. That this is not a matter of biographical accuracy is hardly surprising given the poet's general approach to historical events and the available historiographical material: instead, Lucan's Caesar oscillates between visionary leadership and a furious incarnation of the very infernal forces that seem to inter-vene time and again in the civil war narrative. His success thus makes him the perfect embodiment of the new, per-verted epic world conception, and it is only logical that the epic narrator addresses his sardonic sphragis 'Venturi me teque legent; nostra Pharsalia vivet' (BC 9,985f.) precisely to him.

My understanding of the Caesar figure also affects possible answers to two open questions concerning the 10th book of the *Bellum civile*: Firstly, why Caesar seems to have suddenly forfeited his diabolical dynamism pursued over nine books during his luxurious stay as a guest in Cleopatra's palace; secondly, whether and how things would have continued after the abrupt breaking off in verse 546.

In his work, Lucan thus provides both a powerful and extraordinary interpretation of Caesar's Vision and Impact on the Roman Empire.

## Valerius Maximus on Julius Caesar

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One of the earliest, still extant, imperial-period historical-literary engagements with Julius Caesar is Valerius' Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia* (ca. 23–29 BCE). Although often dismissed as a miscellaneous work of limited literary value yet mined for its wide variety of information about the Roman republican period, recent scholarship argues that we need to consider this a work of literature, worthy of reading in full and consideration as a literary work with its own programme and projections of republican-period figures, including Julius Caesar in the 40s BCE.

Scholars have identified Julius Caesar as the exemplary figure in 9 out of Valerius' over 1000 exempla (Wardle 2021), as mentioned in 30 of these exempla (index Briscoe 2019), and as a privileged figure in Valerius' presentation – partly because of Caesar's position as adoptive grandfather of Valerius' own (and praised) emperor, Tiberius (Bloomer 1992). My own research shows that exempla of public speech in Valerius' work provides an even stronger basis for focusing on the presentation of Caesar in the 40s BCE as crucial for understanding Valerius' work as well as the early reception of Julius Caesar: Caesar figures in 6 out of the 10 exempla involving public speech in the 40s BCE.

This paper analyses these six exempla within the wider contexts of oratorical exempla and of Caesar's example in Valerius' work with a view to Caesar's significance in relation to public speech while exercising all-powerful magistracies and in relation to Valerius' overall programme, and what this tells us about the Tiberian-period reception of public speech and Julius Caesar.



## Caesar and Cleopatra

Trine Arlund Hass  
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It is well-documented and recognized that Caesar played a significant role in Cleopatra VII of Egypt's way to power, that the two were romantically involved, and that she claimed to have had a child by him. Cleopatra visited Caesar in Rome, and he planned to place a golden statue of her on the Forum Julium. The relationship, being a mix of romance and politics, has inspired an abundance of fiction, while at least modern scholarship tends to be rather cautious not to say too much. In my paper, I will examine the understanding of Cleopatra and Caesar's relationship with her in an understudied eighteenth-century biography of Cleopatra, published by the Dano-Norwegian scholar, poet, playwright and more, Ludvig Holberg (1684-1753). Holberg is known to have advocated gender equality, perhaps most famously in the defence of the female gender written (as was his habit) under a pen name, Zille Hansdatter and in 1745 published *Heltindehistorier*, a work in three books of comparative biographies of women inspired by Plutarch. This was preceded by a similar work on famous men (1739), with a biography of Caesar. My examinations will revolve around conceptions of masculine and feminine, of the balance in the conception of relationship as personal and political, of the role of foreignness/otherness in the understanding of Cleopatra and Egypt, as well as of leadership. I will compare to international and later representations of the relationship, such as presented by George Bernhard Shaw (1898), Thornton Wilder (1948), and Jada Pinkett Smith (2023).

## Caesar's Dictatura Perpetua Revisited, in Light of the Newly Published Fragments of the Privernum Fasti

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The new fragments of the consular fasti from Privernum published by Zevi and Cassola (ZPE 197 [2016] 287ff) offer precious new evidence for interpretation of the notorious dictatura perpetua conferred upon Caesar in the last months of his life, in the context of his other complicated arrangements to maintain control in Rome during his expected long absence for the planned Parthian campaign. J.-L. Ferrary, CRAI 161 (2017), 1561ff and O. Licandro, BIDR 10 (2020), 331ff opened a conversation about this exciting new find which merits further debate and some new suggestions.

## The Horizon of a Roman Politician: Julius Caesar and the Future

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Politically, the Roman Republic was an annual event. Every year, there was heavy electioneering in the city for months or at least some weeks because nearly all the positions of magistrates had to be filled anew. Staying in office for another year or instant reapplications were not allowed. So the Roman political cosmos was completely re-staffed every year. Now senators had their seat in the curia for a lifetime, but there it was always difficult to win a majority. And when a former magistrate was sent into a province, he would stay there often for several years, yet, this position was not popular anymore in the last years of the republic for good reasons. Altogether, the basic rules of republican politics were not favorable for long-term planning of individuals, who wanted to change the world.

How did Caesar manage his career? According to the title of the conference, Caesar had visions and an impact on the Roman Empire. I would buy the second, but not the first assumption. Caesar was extraordinarily intelligent and gifted with many talents, no doubt. But visions are long-term ideas, they are not focused on something which will be accomplished next year, but have an outreach often of several decades. I think, Caesar was still a man of his time and thought in short-time calculations. And concerning the future he seems to have relied more on his luck than on visions.

## Caesar's Impact on his Successors in the Triumviral Period

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When Caesar died, he left behind an official heir who was not initially perceived as competition by the powerful supporters of the dead dictator, such as Antonius and Lepidus. However, Caesar's clientele in Rome and Cicero very quickly turned Octavian into an opponent to be taken seriously. In the political and military conflict of the triumvirate period, however, it was not only Caesar's urban Roman clientele that played a role – his other former supporters, e.g. the soldiers, but also the elites in the provinces, who had profited from Caesar, were on the lookout for a person they could profitably follow. In addition, the dictator left behind not only his means of power, but also plans and strategies that were firmly linked to the his memory and consequently demanded implementation.

My paper will examine which parts of Caesar's legacy were taken up and represented by the individual triumvirs, what advantages they hoped to gain from this, and how uniformly they dealt with the dictator's legacy. It will also examine whether the treatment of Caesar and his supporters or plans changed over the course of the triumvirate period and, if so, what circumstances were behind the respective change in political strategy.

## Caesar and the Municipia: The Making of the Idea of the 'Roman State'?

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This paper will focus on Caesar's municipal constitutions and shall aim at investigating the transformation of the idea of the 'public' in Roman political and legal thinking. It will take into account the role played by Caesar in the municipalization of Italy and its constitutional settlement by analysing the various moments when Caesar implemented important institutional innovations in this field: first, *Lex Mamilia Roscia Peducaea Alliena Fabia* (revisiting also its chronological issues), second, the *Fragmentum Atestinum* and the extension of Roman citizenship and the grant of local jurisdiction to Cisalpine Gaul, third, the *lex Iulia municipalis* that, although attested in a single inscription from Patavium (CIL V 2864 = ILS 5406) and possibly a piece of legislation dealing specifically with the city, may still mark a moment of general regulations for municipal institutions in Italy, and finally the *Tabula Heracleensis* (CIL I2 593; Crawford, *Roman Statutes*, n. 24) with which in the past the latter has often been conflated. Amongst the provisions of the *Tabula Heracleensis*, the paper will focus specifically on the making of declarations (*professiones*) before Roman authorities (lines 1–20); on the maintenance and use of roads and other public places in Rome (lines 20–82); on the regulations of municipal government (lines 83–141); on taking local censuses (lines 142–158); and on amendment of statutes affecting *municipia fundana*, whose nature will be discussed. Caesar's institutional innovation will be set in the context of Roman constitutional revolution of the second half of first century BCE, which included further institutional experimentations, such as the legal establishment of the *triumvirate* as well as the writing of the *antiquarians*, who ordered and constructed the Roman political system.

## Probing the Boundaries of the First Imperial Forum in Rome: Caesar and His Visions for the World Seen through the Forum Iulium

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Caesar's Forum – inaugurated by C. Julius Caesar in 46 BC as dictator, and completed nearly 20 years later by his great nephew and adopted son and heir, Emperor Caesar Divi Filius in 29 BC – was the very first of the Imperial Fora of ancient Rome. It was largely excavated under Mussolini's reign in the 1930s and much of its extent is visible to visitors to Rome today. Yet it remains arguably the least studied and least understood of the great public spaces of the imperial capital. One of the most important reasons for this is that the main entrance or entrances into this forum remain unknown, and it is unclear how the open plaza and its associated buildings communicated with the other great public spaces all around it.

This paper examines the archaeological and literary evidence for the (eventual) monumental boundaries of Caesar's Forum; and it reviews the most important hypotheses that have been advanced about where the entrances to the forum may have been, and what connections the enclosed area may have had with the old Roman Forum and the Forum of Augustus. Finally we ask two questions. 'What is at stake in attempting to decide between these conjectural proposals? And, 'How do these different solutions – with regard to the permeability of the Forum's boundaries – affect the (perceived) symbolic character of the first Imperial Forum?'

## Some Caesarian Precedents

Michael Koortbojian  
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The talk will discuss a number of aspects of imperial practice, as well as several institutions commonly identified as Augustan innovations, that had earlier manifestations in the Caesarian era. Among these are several that had to do with Caesar's portrait (the wide dissemination of the leader's portrait before the standardization of typological replication, its appearance on coins, and its diminished pathos in comparison to the appearance of other dominant figures of the first century [e.g., Sulla, Pompeius]); others with the comportment of the de facto sole ruler (in life, as in his relations with the senatorial order – notably the episode of Caesar seated on the rostra) or in imagery (e.g., the allegorical monument on the Capitol); and some other aspects that took effect post-mortem, such as those that manifest divinization (the lex Rufrena and sacrifice).

## Julius Caesar and the Coinage of Rome: Economy, Organisation, and Design

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Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in January 49 BC changed the Roman world beyond recognition. During the years of his dictatorship, the coinage of Caesar's empire underwent profound changes, too, on various levels. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of Caesar's various monetary reforms, in the context of his economic policies. Furthermore, it explores the modifications to the production structures of coins that Caesar implemented, as well as the revolution in coin design that took place at the end of his reign: his portrait was the first of a living Roman ever to appear on issues struck at the urban mint. All of these changes had a profound impact on the monetary economy of subsequent centuries, and Julius Caesar may be termed the 'father of Roman imperial coinage'.



## Venues

### Conference venue

University of Flensburg  
Auf dem Campus 1  
24943 Flensburg

Tallinn Building (Room 007)

### Interactive campus map

<https://www.uni-flensburg.de/en/about-euf/contact-and-opening-hours/campus-map>

### Hotel

Hotel am Fjord  
Wilhelmstraße 1  
24937 Flensburg

### Restaurant

La Tasca  
Große Str. 81  
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## Organisers



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## Conference webpage

<https://urbnet.au.dk/news/events/2024/caesar>



**Book of abstracts** Caesar's Visions and Impact on the Roman Empire: Revisiting the Archaeological and Historical Record for the 40s BC 30–31 May 2024

**Organisers:** Krešimir Matijević (University of Flensburg), Rubina Raja (UrbNet, Aarhus University), and Jörg Rüpke (Max-Weber-Kolleg, University of Erfurt)

**Editors:** Christina A. Levisen, Krešimir Matijević, Rubina Raja, and Jörg Rüpke

**Back cover:** Anonymous artist, Bronze Bust representing Caesar. Roman Coins with Portrait of Caesar. After antique sculptures and antique coins (Courtesy of Thorvaldsens Museum, Inventory number: E1452).