

Augustus (Imperator Caesar Augustus)

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Augustus (63 BCE–14 CE) was Rome's first emperor. He was the key figure in bringing permanent monarchy to Rome, and also an unprecedented peace across the Mediterranean, named after him "Augustan Peace." Centuries after his death, he was gratefully remembered, though his bloody and duplicitous rise to power was not forgotten either.

EARLY LIFE

Gaius Octavius – as Augustus was first called – was born on September 23, 63 BCE in Rome, but spent his childhood mostly in VELITRAE, a small town about twenty-five miles south of the city. His father's family was well established there; and, like other prosperous Italians of his generation, the senior Octavius was able to join the Roman Senate. Serving as praetor (61), he was sent to govern MACEDONIA, and died on the return trip to Rome (58). Crucial to his success was his marriage to Julius Caesar's niece ATIA, who gave Octavius entrée into Roman society. Atia bore the senior Octavius a daughter, Octavia, in addition to Augustus; after her husband's death, Atia married a prominent noble, Marcus Philippus, who helped to raise young Octavius.

JULIUS CAESAR (C. IULIUS CAESAR), fighting in Gaul, and then in the civil war that broke out in 49 had little opportunity to get to know his great-nephew, who in 52/51 gave the public funeral oration for his grandmother Julia (Caesar's sister), and in 48/47 put on the toga of manhood. Caesar did honor Octavius by co-opting him into the priestly college of the pontiffs and by letting him appear in the African triumph of 46, which coincided with Octavius' seventeenth birthday (the age of military service in Rome), but Caesar

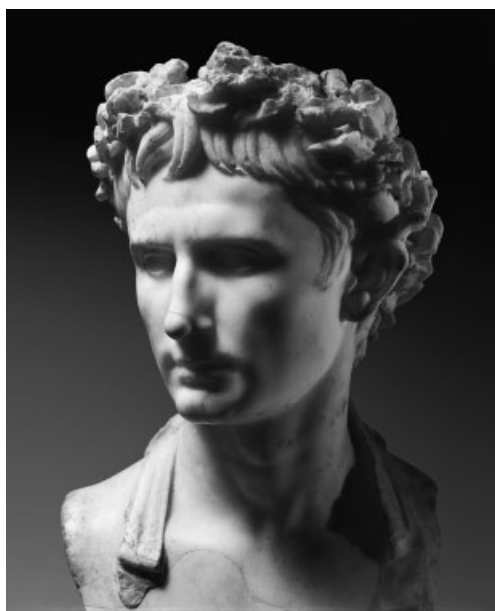


Figure 1 Bust of Augustus in the Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, Munich. © Photo Scala, Florence/BPK, Bildagentur für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Berlin.

perhaps was showing more interest in another relation, Sex. Iulius Caesar, news of whose death reached Rome later in 46. It may be no coincidence that around this time, though still recovering from illness, Octavius made a difficult journey to join Caesar in Spain, where he was fighting the sons of POMPEY (GNAEUS POMPEIUS MAGNUS). Caesar became impressed with the youth, who was attractive in appearance and obviously clever. In late 45, Caesar sent him to an army camp at Apollonia on the west coast of the Balkan peninsula, from where they would set out the following spring for a campaign against the Dacians. Octavius, it is alleged, was to be made Caesar's Master of Horse (i.e., second-in-command), but this might be a later invention. The chief authorities on whom modern scholars must depend for reconstructing Augustus' early life – the biographical writers SUETONIUS, PLUTARCH, and NICOLAUS OF DAMASCUS, and the historians VELLEIUS PATERCULUS, APPIAN OF ALEXANDRIA, and

CASSIUS DIO – for the most part wrote well after the period in question.

BID FOR POWER

Octavius was in Apollonia when news of Caesar's assassination reached him. Crossing back to southern Italy, he additionally learned that he had been named chief heir in Caesar's will. To accept the inheritance meant taking Caesar's name; against the advice of his mother and his stepfather, who warned of the risks involved, Octavius decided that he would accept, and wrote to Philippus that he intended to avenge his "father." At BRUNDISIUM, troops of Caesar welcomed Octavius, and Octavius annexed funds set aside for Caesar's eastern war. If not already, friends of Caesar, including Caesar's financiers, were also soon backing him. Octavius proceeded to Rome, where he clashed with the consul Mark Antony (see ANTONIUS, MARCUS (MARK ANTONY)), who had been hoping to take Caesar's inheritance himself. Now Antony's goal was to prevent Octavius from having posthumous adoption by Caesar ratified.

An extant letter of the senior statesman Cicero (*Att.* 14.12; see CICERO, MARCUS TULLIUS) reports Octavius' arrival at Philippus' villa at the Bay of Naples in late April. Octavius had already met with Caesar's associate Balbus, and soon met Cicero himself. Cicero was distrustful: "His people call him Caesar, but Philippus doesn't, so neither do I. I say that he cannot be a loyal citizen." Those around Octavius – including, perhaps, his youthful friends Agrippa and Maecenas (see VIPSANIUS AGRIPPA, MARCUS; MAECENAS, GAIUS) – were encouraging cancellation of the amnesty granted Caesar's assassins. Octavius returned to Rome, determined, despite Antony's opposition, to pay out Caesar's legacies to the city-dwellers. He also held, in late July, games for Caesar, during which a comet appeared – it was Caesar's soul ascending into heaven, Octavius claimed, strengthening his own position. Antony briefly reconciled with the new Caesar – or Octavian, as modern scholars call

him (his name, after adoption, technically becoming C. Iulius Caesar Octavianus). But distrust arose again, and Antony alleged that Octavian was trying to kill him and went off to Brundisium to greet legions of Caesar transferred back from Apollonia to serve under him.

Octavian, meanwhile, traveled to CAMPANIA, where he enlisted support among Caesar's veterans, who marched with him on Rome, effectively to stage a *coup* against Antony. The veterans refused, however, to take up arms, and Octavian retreated to Maecenas' hometown, ARRETIIUM. Antony then returned to Rome to outlaw Octavian, but was forced to leave when news reached him that one of the Apollonia legions had deserted for Octavian. Another legion followed. Antony reallocated forces, and was then compelled to proceed against Decimus Brutus, one of Caesar's assassins, who was refusing to give up to Antony his province of Cisalpine Gaul in northern Italy.

On December 20, 44, Cicero, in his *Third Philippic*, tried to rally the Senate behind Decimus and Octavian, who perhaps had reached an understanding. Octavian soon marched with his legions to relieve Decimus, and the Senate, led by Cicero, then legalized Octavian's position, giving him a command with the new consuls of 43, Hirtius and Pansa. The Senate's army met Antony's at two battles in the spring of 43 near Mutina; Antony was defeated, and Decimus relieved, but both consuls fell. In the aftermath, Antony marched to join an old Caesarian, Lepidus (see AEMILIUS LEPIDUS, MARCUS), in Gaul, while Octavian now turned his back on Decimus, Cicero, and the Senate in Rome.

Sending soldiers ahead to Rome, Octavian demanded a consulship; failing to obtain it, he marched a second time on the city, and procured election on August 19, 43. His adoption was ratified by popular assembly, and a law passed providing for the prosecution of Caesar's assassins. Octavian then left to join Antony, who had himself now gained

control of the main armies in the west. Joined by Lepidus, Octavian and Antony agreed to form the triumvirate, a board of three, with essentially absolute power (though other magistrates would still serve and the Senate meet). The arrangement was officially ratified in Rome on November 27. That night, a list of senators and equestrians was posted on whitened boards, with the heads of those on it worth a large cash reward. The most famous victim of these proscriptions was Cicero.

STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY

The proscriptions were designed not only to instill terror through Roman society, but also to liquidate the estates of wealthy citizens in order to fund the war of vengeance being planned against Caesar's assassins, Marcus Brutus (*see* BRUTUS, MARCUS IUNIUS) and Cassius, who had amassed forces in the east. Antony and Octavian crossed the Adriatic in 42 (Lepidus was left in Italy); ill, Octavian stayed in the port of Dyrrachium, while Antony marched east and encamped opposite Brutus and Cassius near PHILIPPI. Octavian subsequently joined Antony, but, still unwell, sat out the first battle, after which Cassius killed himself. A second battle, after which it was Brutus' turn to perish, sealed the triumvirs' victory. Basking in success, Antony was now to see to affairs in the east, while Octavian was given the hateful task of settling discharged veterans in colonies on lands confiscated from largely innocent Italian communities. In the face of terrible protests, he got the job done, and won the lasting gratitude of the colonists.

The dispossessed, meanwhile, found an unlikely champion in Antony's brother, Lucius, the consul of 41. Lucius raised legions and occupied Rome, but was, with Agrippa's help, driven out by Octavian; Lucius was then trapped in the Etruscan hill town of Perugia, and only surrendered after a long and grim siege. Octavian's relations with Mark Antony naturally came under strain, and were further complicated by another

warlord, Pompey's son Sextus (*see* POMPEIUS MAGNUS PIUS, SEXTUS), who had seized Sicily and Sardinia and was ravaging Italy's coasts and blockading Rome. Fearing an alliance between Sextus and Antony, Octavian married Scribonia, the sister of Sextus' father-in-law. Still confrontation looked likely between Antony and Octavian, until a reconciliation was made, brokered in part by Maecenas, the so-called Peace of Brundisium (September 40). By its terms, Antony was to rule east of Dalmatia, Octavian western Europe, and Lepidus Africa; to seal the relationship, Antony married Octavian's sister, Octavia. Outraged, Sextus Pompeius resumed his attacks, forcing Octavian and Antony to make terms with him (39). Distinguished enemies of the triumvirs were welcomed back in Rome, among them Claudius Nero, whose patrician wife LIVIA left him (in January 38) to marry Octavian, who had no son but one daughter, Julia, from Scribonia. From Livia, Octavian never had children, but the marriage lasted until his death; Livia was a shrewd advisor to Octavian, and helped bring the support of Rome's old nobility.

It is likely that already by 38 Octavian had set his mind on gaining sole control of the Roman world, but as with other goals he set himself, he worked patiently to achieve this. Relations with Antony came under strain once more, but were again patched up at a conference at Tarentum, in 37, at which the triumvirate was renewed. But a key turning point came in Octavian's defeat of Sextus Pompeius at Naulochos the following year, masterminded by Agrippa. The victory was celebrated in Rome, where a more normal daily life could resume. In the years following, Octavian campaigned against Illyrian tribes that threatened northern Italy, and also through his deputies restored order in Italy (runaway slaves had become a problem); Agrippa, meanwhile, improved Rome's water supply, opened the baths free, and gave lavish games. Other partisans, too, built on behalf of Octavian, who won more supporters in turn. Meanwhile, Antony's failed campaign against

the Parthians and growing intimacy with CLEOPATRA VII allowed Octavian to start belittling Antony – even though Antony had achieved much of value in his reorganization of the east.

At the start of 32, Octavian increased attacks on Antony, whose (still numerous) supporters in the Senate fled Rome. Octavian made much of Antony's subsequent divorce of Octavia, read out portions of Antony's will which mentioned Cleopatra, and then, through his agents, arranged for an oath of loyalty to be taken to him throughout Italy and the western provinces, which he represented as a mandate for war against Antony and Cleopatra. In 31, Octavian and Agrippa trapped the pair in the bay of ACTIUM, off the Ionian Sea; after a desultory battle, they escaped, though without most of their forces, and were defeated by Octavian the following year in Egypt, which Octavian immediately annexed. He then traveled through the eastern provinces, largely preserving Antony's arrangements – and consenting to his own worship, in conjunction with Rome's.

In Rome itself, honors were showered upon him: the day of Egypt's fall was made a holiday, the day of Actium, Octavian's birthday too. His name was to be included in the prayers, vows, and hymns of priests. On January 11, 29, by Senate decree, the gates of Janus were shut, for only the third time in Rome's history, proclaiming peace across the empire. Octavian himself re-entered the city on August 13, the first of his splendid three-day triumph, commemorating victories in Illyricum, at Actium, and over Egypt; cash was lavished on the people of Rome and Octavian's soldiers. Three days afterward, he dedicated the new Julian Senate House (*see* CURIA) and, overlooking the old Republican Forum, a massive new temple in marble, dedicated to the Divine Julius, his father.

POLITICAL SETTLEMENT

According to his biographer, Suetonius, Octavian thought of restoring the republic after the overthrow of Antony, but ultimately

decided against it, reflecting on the dangers to himself and the state (*Aug.* 28.1). As Rome's empire had grown, the republican government had indeed come under severe strain: consensus collapsed in the Senate over the allocation of the empire's wealth; equestrians with business interests in the provinces clashed with senators; the city of Rome had become an unruly megalopolis, its rioting *plebs* a political force to contend with; Italians, who had contributed so much to Rome's success, were disgruntled with their incorporation into the Roman state; soldiers recruited from the Italian countryside proved loyal ultimately not to the *res publica* but to their generals; citizens abroad and provincial rulers, lacking direct political representation, also looked to strong patrons more than the old assemblies or Senate. From these problems arose Rome's civil wars, but the wars themselves accelerated change that was the answer to them: Senate and people, as Octavian concluded, could not easily rule so vast an empire; a military monarch was needed. Finding the best way to organize the monarchy, and healing the wounds of civil war – these were the challenges that Octavian, whose ambition could know no rest, now set himself.

Unfortunately for the modern historian, only one substantial chronological narrative of this period of Augustus' career survives, the third century CE *Histories* of Cassius Dio, a senator not without his own biases and sometimes prone to anachronism. Dio himself (53.19) draws attention, though, to an even greater problem, the constant impossibility he (and any researcher) faced in discovering the truth about important transactions that took place behind closed doors, without open public discussion. Contemporary documents do survive (Ehrenberg and Jones 1976; Braund 1985), but often in the form of inscriptions on stone, which tend to perpetuate the official version of events: the elaborate list of achievements Augustus personally composed to adorn his Mausoleum by the Tiber River in Rome is an obvious case in point (*see RES GESTAE OF AUGUSTUS*; Cooley 2009). Still, historians in

recent generations have found ways to use the remarkable volume of contemporary material – inscriptions, and also coins, statues, and buildings, as well as works of poetry – along with Cassius Dio to reconstruct how political culture developed under Augustus.

Since 32 BCE, Octavian had been holding a consulship annually, but his power was in fact much more extensive, even after the triumvirate was defunct. According to his own words (*RG* 34.1), in 28 and 27 he transferred the state back into the control of the Senate and people (while not, explicitly, “restoring the republic”). What happened was this: in 28, as a recently published coin declares, “laws and statutes were restored to the people”: that is, illegal triumviral rulings were abolished, assemblies and courts re-established (Rich and Williams 1999). Then, at the start of 27, Octavian in a consular speech handed administration of the empire back to the Senate and people. Senators – some surely coached ahead of time – protested, and finally agreed to entrust to Octavian for ten years a massive province, including Spain, Gaul, and Syria, which required pacification and was, therefore, where most troops were; these he would manage himself or through his own legates, even as he remained consul, which made his executive power (*IMPERIUM*) domestic as well. Fresh honors followed, including the novel name “Augustus” (meaning something like “Revered One,” it had religious overtones). And then Augustus promptly proceeded to his new province, first Gaul, and then Spain, where there was trouble in the north. He was joined by his nephew Marcellus (Octavia’s son from her first marriage; see MARCELLUS, MARCUS CLAUDIUS) and TIBERIUS, Livia’s son, but for part of the campaigning he lay ill in TARRACO (TARRAGONA), likely working on the autobiography (now mostly lost) that gave the definitive, though tendentious, version of his early life (see Smith and Powell 2009). Toward the end of 25, he struggled home.

Severely ill again in 23, Augustus did not expect to survive: to his fellow consul he handed over state papers, to Agrippa his signet

ring. But how easily could Agrippa have succeeded to Augustus’ position? Rumors circulated that Augustus in fact intended Marcellus, still a teenager, though now married to Julia, to succeed. Fears of a replay of 44 must have been all too real. Upon a lucky recovery, it became clear that Augustus needed to conceive his powers anew. Agrippa was to be given his own command, for five years, and was sent to the east; Augustus himself, on July 1, laid down his consulship and made clear that he would not regularly hold the office again. His power (*imperium*) overseas, however, was made to be greater (*maius*) than that of all others. Furthermore, Augustus was henceforward to hold continuous tribunician power, the power of a tribune, which would allow him to pass laws and convene the Senate – and which could be conferred on partners (see TRIBUNI PLEBIS). Most likely, Augustus hoped to live to see Marcellus reach a stature that would allow him to carry on Augustus’ work; but should Augustus die soon, Agrippa could now more easily step in. But any such thinking was in vain, for by the end of 23 Marcellus was dead.

Rome was suffering plague and food shortages, and the people begged that Augustus assume more powers – a dictatorship, for instance. He refused. And in September 22 he left Rome, for the east, for three years. On his return, which was celebrated by the Senate’s voting of an Altar to Fortuna Redux (“The Fortune that Brings Back”), Augustus did accept the right to consular insignia in Rome, though probably not full *imperium* in the city itself (this is debated: see Ferrary 2009). This was the last significant change to his own position, constitutionally; though talk of moral reform was in the air, he refused, for instance, an “overseership of morality” offered to him. Henceforward, attention would shift to articulating powers for partners and potential successors. Thus, in 18 BCE, Augustus’ own command was renewed for five years, as was Agrippa’s, and Agrippa was granted tribunician power for five years. Agrippa was now married to Julia and had with her one son,

and another was on the way – hopes for the future, with Augustus' blood, and Agrippa's.

REGENERATION OF ROMAN SOCIETY

The 20s were years of anxiety. Not only was Augustus ill; there is, despite the bias of our sources, evidence of opposition to him. His first PREFECT OF EGYPT, CORNELIUS GALLUS, for reasons now unclear, fell from favor and was driven to suicide (26); in 22, the ex-governor of Macedonia was put on trial, and gave testimony embarrassing to Augustus. His advocate, Varro Murena, along with Fannius Caepio, later that year were convicted of plotting against Augustus and executed. Again, well could Romans imagine that civil war might resume. If a political settlement was essential for preventing that, some also believed that renewed piety was needed – to restore the favor of Rome's gods.

Already in the 30s, Augustus was busy reviving religious rites and ceremonies, and he continued that work in the next decade (and beyond). In 28, he claims to have restored no fewer than eighty-two temples (RG 20.4); that year also saw the dedication of the great marble temple of APOLLO on the Palatine Hill, which adjoined his house (see PALATINE). Other temples followed. Augustus came to hold a membership in all of Rome's major priestly colleges, and in 12, on Lepidus' death, also became *pontifex maximus*. At this time, a new shrine for Vesta was created adjacent to Augustus' house, its flame apparently tended by Livia along with the Vestal Virgins (see VESTA AND VESTALS). It was important for Augustus not only to promote piety, but to concentrate religious authority, traditionally spread out among the nobility, into his own hands.

Society was to be regenerated by moral reform too. The old social hierarchy had come under pressure in the triumviral years; now it would be affirmed and strengthened. An historic series of laws was passed, formally establishing a senatorial order, for

instance, with an elevated property requirement of one million sesterces, and stipulating that only men of senatorial order could present themselves as candidates for office. Membership was hereditary, or granted by Augustus. In 18, adultery was made a public crime, to be tried in a new criminal court, and a law was passed to increase the birthrate, providing bonuses for those with children and penalties for those without. (Unpopular among the upper orders of society, at which it was aimed, this last was modified in 9 CE.)

By 17, enough had been achieved that Augustus was ready to celebrate a dawning era of peace, prosperity, and piety. Beginning on May 31, for three nights and three days, a Centennial Festival (*ludi saeculares*) was held, looking forward to the new age. Augustus and Agrippa presided over the many sacrifices, games were held, and the poet HORACE composed an extant song (the *Carmen Saeculare*) for a choir of boys and girls to perform on the Capitol and then the Palatine, before the new temple of Apollo. For some years now, Maecenas had been cultivating on Augustus' behalf poets such as Horace (VERGIL was another), recognizing that they could burnish Augustus' image for contemporaries and posterity alike. As with his buildings in Rome, or the many portraits that proliferated of him and his relatives through the empire, Augustus hoped to use poetry to mark a new era centered on him and his family.

STABILIZING THE EMPIRE

Underlying the promise of a new era was Augustus' claim to have brought peace to the empire. But for Augustus that was not enough: it was his desire to guarantee peace for the future, which required further pacifying parts of the empire, exploring the empire's borderlands, and staffing a permanent army that would protect Roman territory near them – and not renew civil war. After Actium, the number of men under arms was drastically

reduced – veterans were established on colonies throughout the empire – and settled at twenty-eight legions (roughly 150,000 men), to be supplemented with auxiliaries drawn from provincial populations. But land grants, which continued through 14 BCE, were hugely expensive; after that time, discharges were accompanied by large cash payments, designed to encourage loyalty to Augustus. These, too, proved expensive, and finally had to be funded by the creation of special taxes on citizens. Minimum terms of service were set, and were raised over time as Augustus' ambitions grew, and as resources were strained. (Soldiers' annual pay was primarily funded through regular payments of tribute by the provinces, which, though collected under Augustus with greater efficiency, was hard to increase significantly.)

Militarily, the war in Spain occupied Augustus throughout the 20s. It was through prudent diplomacy, rather than war, that Augustus, accompanied by Tiberius, recovered in 20 the legionary standards lost by Crassus to the Parthians in 53 (see *CRASSUS, MARCUS LICINIUS*), which he brought back to Rome with great fanfare. Henceforward, the Euphrates would delimit Rome's sphere of control (see *EUPHRATES FRONTIER (ROMAN); PARTHIA*). Of far more interest to Augustus was an emerging – and ultimately quite ambitious – plan for imperial expansion in northern Europe, to be carried out by Tiberius and Tiberius' brother Drusus. The first task, successfully accomplished, was the brothers' subjugation of Raetian and Vindelician Switzerland (see *RAETIA*), accompanied by the mostly bloodless incorporation of *Noricum* (roughly modern Austria): the Upper Danube was thus secured. Horace (*Odes* 4.4 and 4.14) celebrated the brothers' exploits, and Augustus' too, on their return to Rome in 13 (Augustus' powers needed renewal, as did those of Agrippa, whose *imperium* was now made *maius* – a short-lived innovation, for Agrippa died in 12).

Tiberius and Drusus again went north, to Illyricum and Germany respectively, to subdue restive tribes and further extend the empire's boundaries. Both again were

successful. Tiberius brought in *Pannonia*, lengthening the Danube frontier; Drusus carried arms to the river *Elbe* in 9, but then died after an accident. Tiberius was then transferred to Germany, where pacification continued. The river *Elbe* frontier would eventually be abandoned, but still much was achieved by Augustus' campaigns: the geography of Europe was better understood, Italy's northern borders secured, and a land route won from there all the way to the east, through the Balkans (see *FRONTIERS, ROMAN*). To Augustus goes credit too for improved communications throughout the empire, including a new courier system.

ROME: CITY OF MARBLE

Administrative reform occupied Augustus in the vast city of Rome also, for which he became responsible. Crime, fires, floods, and food shortages were routine threats. During the food riots in the late 20s, Augustus accepted oversight of the grain supply, and after more trouble in 6 CE created a new position of prefect to organize the essential cereal imports. Augustus experimented with using slave gangs to put out fires, but in 6 CE established a full service of seven cohorts, each responsible for protecting two of the city's fourteen districts that Augustus had mapped out. There were also new officials to oversee the water supply, to maintain public buildings, to manage the banks of the *Tiber*, and to oversee a new police force in Rome, the urban cohorts (see *COHORTES URBANAE*).

Rome offered Augustus a venue in which to stage his exemplary concern for the Roman people, and the people's supremacy over the rest of the world. Special food and cash distributions and lavish spectacles were of fundamental importance, and so too grandiose building projects, catalogued in the *Res gestae* adorning his massive Mausoleum. Most impressive was Augustus' new Forum (see *FORUM AUGUSTUM*), dedicated in 2 BCE. Constructed in variegated marbles, from quarries in northern Italy and across the empire, it was dominated by the

great temple of Mars the Avenger, in which the Parthian standards rested; down its two porticoes stood statues of Augustus' family, Rome's mythical ancestors, and its great military victors. Future victors, Augustus announced, would join their ranks, meaning, above all, his family. For by 2 BCE, it was clear that all independent commands would be reserved for them.

PERPETUATING POWER: THE PRINCES

Already in the 20s, Augustus worried about what would happen if he died. Julia's marriage to Agrippa, and the birth of their two sons, Gaius and Lucius, seemed to offer the perfect solution: once the boys grew up, and achieved appropriate distinction, one or the other could succeed to Augustus' position; and should Augustus die, Agrippa would look after them. In 17, Augustus adopted the boys, but he never explicitly voiced a principle of hereditary succession – such a monarchy too explicitly clashed with the Roman Republican tradition. All the same, promoting the youths suggested that power would be perpetuated, and was therefore secure. But Augustus promoted, and relied on, other members of his extended family too – quite a few can be identified on the reliefs of the marble Altar of Augustan Peace (*see* ARA PACIS AUGUSTAE), for instance, voted to Augustus on his return to Rome in 13. He obsessively regulated their behavior, even in private life, believing (not unjustly) that it reflected on him.

After Agrippa's death (12), Tiberius was compelled to divorce his own, much-loved, wife and marry Julia. In essence, he was to be the new Agrippa, shouldering Augustus' military load (all the more so after his brother's death), while Gaius and Lucius advanced. It was, evidently, a role Tiberius disliked, and despite being granted a triumph over Germany, and tribunician power with renewed *imperium* in 6 BCE, he withdrew to the island of Rhodes. Meanwhile, Gaius and Lucius debuted in 5 and 2 BCE respectively and joined the Senate, were named "Leaders of the Youth,"

and were to hold consulships at the age of 20. With Augustus, they presided over the dedication of the August Forum.

FINAL YEARS AND ASSESSMENT

Early in that same year (2 BCE), Augustus was hailed by the Senate, people, and equestrian order as "Father of the Fatherland." It may seem surprising that only months later Augustus banished his daughter Julia, for violation of his law against adultery; her alleged paramours were also banished, save one, Antony's son Iullus, who was executed. Some have suspected a thwarted conspiracy against Augustus' life. But it may be that Augustus, believing he had given so much for Rome, was enraged with a younger generation's defiance of his rather unrealistic expectations, and was showing all his ruthlessness again. Augustus was to be disappointed by his adopted sons too: Lucius fell ill and died in 2 CE, while Gaius, sent east in 1 BCE with *imperium* to meet with the Parthians and install a new ruler on the Armenian throne, was stabbed, fell ill, and wrote to Augustus announcing his retirement. He died soon afterward (4 CE).

Thwarted, Augustus now rehabilitated Tiberius, who was back in Rome: Tiberius received tribunician power for ten years, and was given command in Germany. And Augustus adopted him, along with Agrippa Postumus, Julia's final son, who had been born after Agrippa's death and was now fourteen years old. But this Agrippa soon fell foul of Augustus, was disinherited, and banished. Agrippa's sister Julia was also banished, in 8 CE, like her mother on grounds of adultery. Again, conspiracy has been alleged as the real crime (her husband certainly was executed, on grounds of conspiring), but again the offense may have been as stated. Yet, as with Agrippa's disgrace, Julia's removal did work to Tiberius' advantage, and it is possible that he, and perhaps Livia too, somehow lay behind it.

Dynastic infighting was a likely outcome of Augustus' refusal to create an explicit law of succession for his monarchy, and it would

plague Augustus' successors. Augustus' final years foreshadowed other limitations. The destruction of three legions in Germany under P. Quinctilius Varus (*see* VARUS, PUBLIUS QUINCTILIUS) in 9 CE ultimately led to the abandonment of the Elbe frontier for the Rhine, and checked the impulse for further conquest. The burning of seditious literature and the punishment of authors, including the poet OVID (PUBLIUS OVIDIUS NASO), who was banished in 8 CE, dampened freedom of expression, and paved the way for an ever-more subservient Senate, willing to condemn its own members for treason.

In 13 CE, Augustus' and Tiberius' powers were renewed, with Tiberius' made equal to those of Augustus. Tiberius had sufficient official power, as well as unofficial clout, to succeed to Augustus' position without major difficulty the following year. On August 19, 14 CE Augustus died on an old family property in Campania; his corpse was accompanied by local town councilors, and then members of the equestrian order, to Rome, where a splendid funeral was held. His remains were placed in his Mausoleum, but a Senator swore that he saw Augustus ascend into heaven, and the Senate recognized Augustus' divinity. Meanwhile, as provincial communities learned the news, they sent envoys to Rome to pay their respects to Tiberius and Livia.

Augustus' importance lay not only in the unique supremacy he enjoyed and the reforms he enacted (especially military and financial), but also the overall pattern of rule he provided for his successors. His preferred title for himself was *princeps* ("leading man"), which cloaked his power in familiar republican terminology, and was never to become official. Still, what Augustus achieved himself was, albeit imperfectly, turned into a *de facto* office, called the principate. Later holders of it defined their power as Augustus had, tried to construct their own dynasties similarly, and also emphasized internal peace and Rome's conquest of the world as reasons for accepting their rule. Constituents across the empire were unified in their loyalty to the emperor and the imperial

house, and memory of Augustus informed that loyalty. The lack of explicitness about the principate at times provided welcome flexibility, though the absence of a firm law of succession was a continuing problem.

And so, despite many setbacks, Augustus ultimately fulfilled his ambition – to give the state new and lasting foundations, as he put it once in an edict (quoted by Suet. *Aug.* 28.2). His achievement, and the important contributions made by close partisans, as well as nameless artists and architects, leaders of provincial communities, and his soldiers – to name just a few groups – have become more thoroughly understood through modern historical research. Augustus' biography, though, remains elusive. Iron determination and great intelligence he surely, and not surprisingly, had – and also a superstitious streak, which led him to believe in his own star. Not of noble background, he brought something of an outsider's perspective on Rome's problems. His meager skills as a general also proved a blessing: he had to seek lasting glory elsewhere. Ambition so ruled him, that he always persisted, and was able to change his image as needed throughout his life; administratively, too, he continued innovating virtually to the end.

SEE ALSO: Marriage legislation of Augustus; Rome, city of: 3. Augustan.

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