

Chapter 10: Rome: From City-State to Empire: 10-4 Imperial Unification  
Book Title: World Civilizations  
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## 10-4 Imperial Unification

The successors of Augustus continued his work of bringing together the diverse peoples over whom they ruled. The Latin language gradually became the common denominator of higher culture in the western half of the empire, whereas Greek continued to serve that function in the East. The government used both languages equally in its dealings with its subjects.

The imperial government became increasingly centralized. Roman directives curtailed the freedoms of the cities of the ancient East, and governors were sent out from Italy or selected from the Romanized locals. In the western half of the empire, the Roman authorities founded many [municipia \(\(moo-nih-KIH-pee-yah\) The basic unit of Roman local government; similar to a present-day municipality.\)](#) (moo-nih-KIH-pee-ah). These were towns and their surrounding countryside that formed governmental units similar in size and function to our own counties. The municipal authorities were partly appointed by Rome and partly elected from and by leading local families. The provincial governor (usually an Italian given the job as political patronage) was responsible for their good behavior. A garrison commander, who had wide-ranging authority in matters both military and civil, supported him.

Everywhere, the government became open to non-Italians as soon as they had sufficiently Romanized themselves to become citizens. (Citizenship was eventually granted to all freemen by a popularity-seeking emperor in 212 C.E.) From the time of the emperor Hadrian (the 120s C.E.), half of the members of the Senate were of provincial origin. Men of talent could rise swiftly to the highest offices, regardless of their ethnic background. Religious differences were ignored, so long as one was willing to make the undemanding ceremonial tributes to the official Roman gods (Jupiter, Neptune, and the like). Most individuals had no difficulty combining this state cult with the more intimate religions they preferred.

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