

Chapter 10: Rome: From City-State to Empire: 10-3a Augustus's Reforms

Book Title: World Civilizations

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Octavian's response was to *retain the form while changing the substance*. Mindful of the Romans' respect for tradition, Octavian pretended to be simply another elected consul—another *Pontifex Maximus* (high priest of the state religion) and general of the Roman legions. In reality he became consul for life, his priestly duties were crowned with semidivine status, and his military resources overshadowed all possible rivals. He enlarged the Senate, packing it with loyal supporters. He made a great show of working with the Senate, while giving it enough busywork to keep it out of mischief. Meanwhile, he made all real policy decisions. He cut the army's size by half, retaining all key military posts under his direct control.

Early in his reign, Octavian accepted the title *Augustus* (aw-GUS-tus; “revered one”) from a grateful Senate, and it is as “Augustus Caesar” that he is best known. He preferred to be called *Princeps* (“first citizen”), and his rule is often called the [Principate \(The reign of Augustus Caesar from 27 B.C.E. to 14 C.E.\)](#) (PRIN-sih-payt). It lasted from 27 B.C.E., when he was elected consul for life, until his natural death in 14 C.E. In those forty years Augustus placed his mark on every aspect of public affairs. He was so successful overall that his system lasted for the next two and a half centuries without fundamental change. Augustus created a type of constitutional monarchy that was suited to contemporary Roman realities. To many people it long remained the model of what effective and just imperial government should be.

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