

# Augustus and the Principate



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# Theater of Pompey, 61-55 BC



Image courtesy of the Theatrum Pompei Project. This image is in the public domain.  
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# Caesar Dictator

- 49: Dictator I (to oversee elections)
- 47: Consul II  
Dictator II for a year after Pharsalus
- 46: Consul III  
Dictator III annually renewed for 10 yrs.
- 45: Consul IV – sole consul – resigned in Fall  
Dictator IV
- 44: Consul V  
Dictator in perpetuity

## REGAL PERIOD

753 BC (April 21) - Foundation of Rome

509 BC – Birth of Republic

## REPUBLIC

27 BC - Augustus

## EMPIRE

AD 284 – Reforms of Diocletian



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## LATE EMPIRE

AD 476 – Deposition of Romulus Augustulus

# Evolution of Augustan Power

- 1) From the Ides to Actium, 44 – 27 BC
- 2) First 'constitutional settlement' – 27 BC
- 3) Second settlement – 23 BC
- 4) Grant of consular power – 19 BC

# 44 – 30 BC

## Dramatis Personae

Marcus Antonius

Brutus and Cassius

Marcus Aemilius Lepidus

Sextus Pompey

Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus





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- 42 BC – Battle of Philippi (Brutus & Cassius)
- 36 BC – Battle of Naulochus (Sextus Pompey; Lepidus)
- 31 BC – Battle of Actium (Marc Antony)



# *Res Gestae*, 25

“The whole of Italy voluntarily took oath of allegiance to me and demanded me as its leader in the war in which I was victorious at Actium. The provinces of the Spains, the Gauls, Africa, Sicily and Sardinia took the same oath of allegiance.”

From *Velleius Paterculus and Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, translated by Frederick W. Shipley. This material is in the public domain.

# Oath of Allegiance

“But if I should infringe this oath or not act in accordance with its terms, I invoke on myself and my body, spirit, life, children and my whole race and interest utter and total destruction down to the last of my line and all who descend from me.”

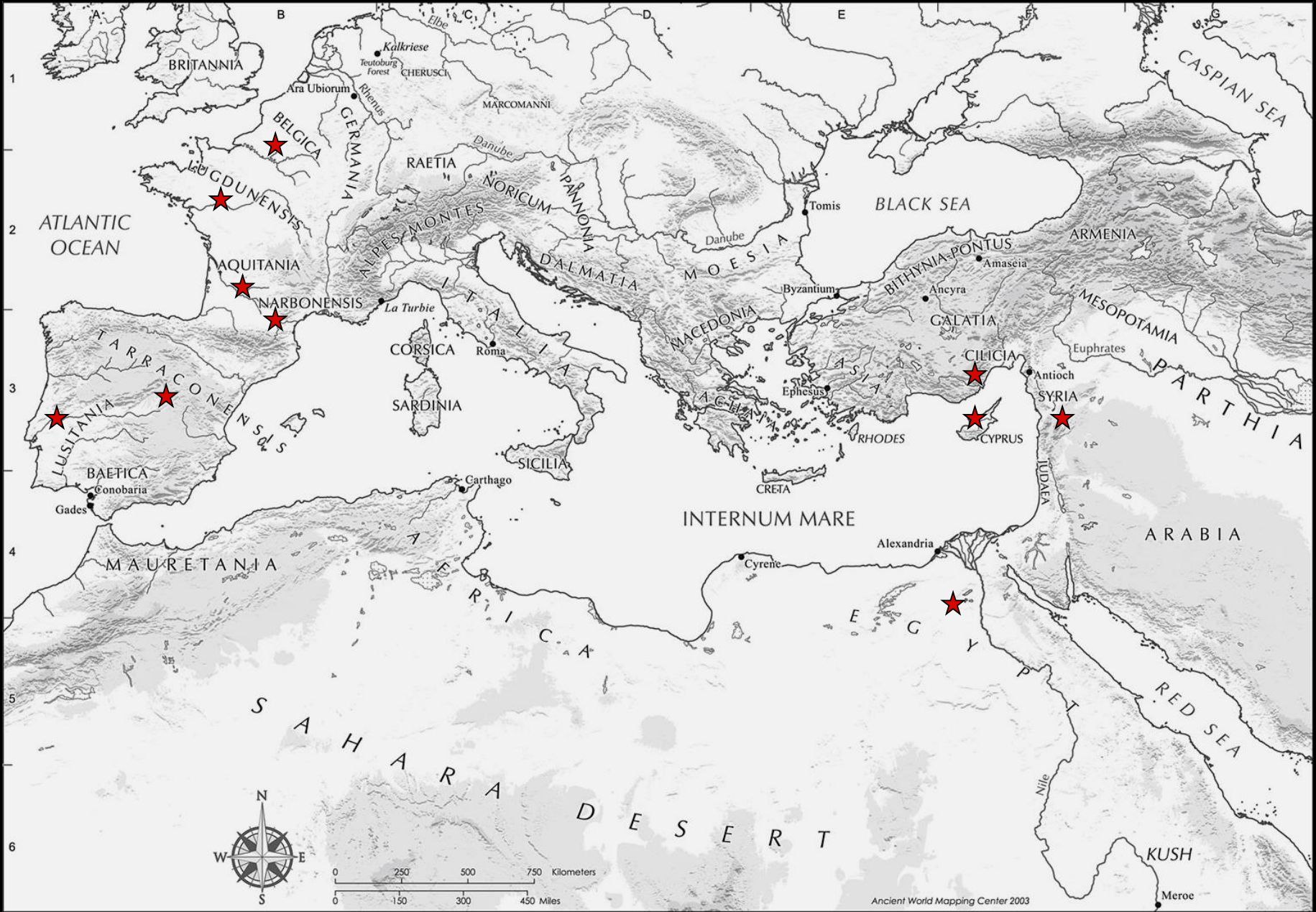
*From an oath of 3 BC*

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# *Res Gestae*, 34

“In my sixth and seventh consulships (in 28 and 27 BC), when I had extinguished the flames of civil war, after receiving by universal consent the absolute control of affairs, I transferred the republic from my own control to the will of the senate and the Roman people.”

From *Velleius Paterculus and Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, translated by Frederick W. Shipley. This material is in the public domain.



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# Suetonius, *Augustus* 47

“The stronger provinces, which could neither easily nor safely be governed by annual meetings, he (Augustus) took to himself; the others he assigned to proconsular governors selected by lot.”

From *Suetonius: The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. Translated by J.C. Rolfe. This material is in the public domain.

# Cassius Dio 53.12

“His [Octavian’s] professed motive in this was that the senate might fearlessly enjoy the finest portion of the empire, while he himself had the hardships and the dangers; but his real purpose was that by this arrangement the senators will be unarmed and unprepared for battle, while he alone had arms and maintained soldiers.”

From *Cassius Dio: Roman History*. Translated by Earnest Cary. This material is in the public domain.

# Augustus' Honors in 27 BC

*The corona civica*



Image courtesy of Giovanni Dall'Orto.  
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

# Augustus' Honors in 27 BC

The *clipeus virtutis*



Image courtesy of Marajaara.  
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# The Augustan Principate

## 'CONSTITUTIONAL' POWERS:

- Proconsular *imperium* (from 27)
  - For life and *maius* than that of governors (from 23)
- *Tribunicia potestas* – powers of a tribune for life (from 23)
- Powers of a consul for life (from 19)



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# SHA, *Hadrian* 15

“And once Favorinus, when he yielded to Hadrian’s criticism of a word which he had used, raised a merry laugh among his friends. For when they reproached him for having done wrong in yielding to Hadrian in the matter of a word used by reputable authors, he replied: ‘You are urging a wrong course, my friends, when you do not suffer me to regard as the most learned of men the one who has thirty legions.’”

From *Historia Augusta: The Life of Hadrian Part 2*. Translated by David Magie. This material is in the public domain.

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## MILITARY POWER:

- 24 Legions spread around the empire
- Praetorian Guard at Rome – 9,000 men

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