

SETTLEMENT OF 28-27 BC: MAIN SOURCES

1. *Res Gestae* 34-35:

(34) In my sixth and seventh consulships, after I had extinguished civil wars, and through universal agreement had gained complete power, I handed over the state from my power to the control of the Roman senate and people. For this service of mine I was named Augustus by decree of the senate, and the doorposts of my house were publicly adorned with bay leaves and a civic crown was fixed over my door and a golden shield was placed in the Curia Julia, which the Senate and People of Rome gave me, as is attested by the inscription on this shield, on account of my courage, clemency, justice and piety. After this time I excelled all in influence, although I had no greater power than the others who were my colleagues in each magistracy.

(per consensum universorum [potitus reru]m om[n]ium, rem publicam ex mea potestate in senat[us populique Rom]ani [a]rbitrium transtuli . . . post id tem[pus a]uctoritate [omnibus praestiti, potest]atis au[tem n]ihilo ampliu[s habu]i quam cet[eri qui m]ihi quoque in ma[gis]tra[t]u conlegae f[uerunt].)

(35, = last ch.) In my thirteenth consulship (2 BC) the senate, the equestrian order and the Roman people universally (*populusque Romanus universus*) called me Father of the Country (*pater patriae*) . . . When I wrote this I was in my seventy-sixth year (AD 13/14).

2. Cassius Dio, Roman History -Book 53 (excerpts about 'settlement' of 28-27 BC):

2a. 52.1.1 (29 BC):

These were the deeds and experiences of the Romans under the monarchy (*basileia*), the republic (*dēmokratia*) and the power of individuals (*dunasteiai*) over seven hundred and twenty-five years (i.e. since 754 BC foundation). After this they began once more to have rule by one man (*monarcheisthai*), to be accurate, although Caesar (i.e. Octavian) had planned to lay down arms and to transfer affairs to the senate and people.

(Octavian made his decision after consulting Agrippa and Maecenas, whose speeches against and for monarchy take up most of Bk.52 - cf. the Persian 'constitutional debate', set in 522 BC before the accession of Darius I, in Herodotus 3.80-83).

2b. 53.1.1 to 53.2.5 (28 BC):

(Octavian behaved as proper traditional consul: let colleague Agrippa have half the *fasces*; at end of year took oath of good conduct.

Took census as *princeps senatus*. <Wrong>

From own money carried out building projects, gave games, subsidised treasury, gave grain to people and money to some senators, intervened in duties of praetors, cancelled all pre-Actium debts to the treasury. <All probably legally done as consul with censorial power.>

By single <consular or 'triumviral'?> edict declared all 'illegal and unjust' triumviral rulings would be void after 31st December 28.)

2c. 53.2.6 to 53.19 (27 BC):

Octavian was keen on another display of magnanimity so that he would receive more honour from it, and have his sole rule (*monarchia*) confirmed by people apparently of their own free will rather than appearing to force them against their will. (At start of 7th consulship Octavian primed friends, and addressed senate.) [53.2.6-7]

(DIGRESSION: Speech: 'resigns' all power.) [53.3-10]

(Senators forced him to accept autocratic power (*autarchêsai*; cf. frequent references to *monarchia*); Octavian awarded double pay to his bodyguard.) [53.11]

In this way he had his leadership (*hêgemonia*) ratified by both senate and people, but because he wished his position at least to look partly democratic, while he accepted the whole care and supervision of public business (*phrontis te prostasia tôn koinôn pasa*) as requiring special attention, he said he would not govern all the provinces himself and that in the case of those he did, he would not govern them for ever. In fact he did give back to the the senate the weaker provinces as being peaceful and free from war, while he retained the more powerful ones

as being insecure and under threat from hostile neighbours or their own great potential for internal revolt. [53.12.1-2]

(Took ten year *imperium* over military provinces, to which he appointed senatorial *legati*; laid down regulations about governors.) [53.12.2-13.7]

(DIGRESSION: Roman officials in provinces.) [53.13.8-15]

(DIGR: Octavian's later powers.) [53.16.1-3]

(Octavian got honours, including title 'Augustus', with its religious, superhuman, connotations; he wanted to be called 'Romulus', but saw this made him suspected of seeking kingship (*basileia*.) [53.16.4-8]

In this way all the power of the people and the senate was transferred to Augustus, and from his time rule by one man (*monarchia*), to be accurate, was established . . . [53.17.1]

(DIGR: Imperial titles and powers.) [53.17-18]

So the constitution was then reformed (*hê politeia metekosmêthê*) and made better and more secure, for it would certainly have been quite impossible for Rome to have survived as a democracy . . . (But from then on, since matters were not reported to the senate and people, but decisions were taken in secret, historians can never find out the truth about events.) [53.19]

cf. 2d. Strabo, Geography 17.3.25 (concluding chapter, written under Tiberius):

When the fatherland entrusted to Caesar Augustus the supervision of the empire (*hê prostasia tês hêgemonias*) and he became master for life of war and peace . . . (he assigned warlike provinces, also allied kings, to himself and peaceful ones to the people) . . . and to the provinces of Caesar he sends governors and managers . . . (other officials; list of provinces of the people).

3. Suetonius, Augustus (on 28-27 BC):

3a. 28.1-2: He twice considered restoring the Republic (*de reddenda re p. bis cogitavit*): first immediately after crushing Antonius, in view of Antonius' not infrequent accusations that it was he who was the obstacle to its restoration, and again (23 BC) when, exhausted by a chronic illness, he summoned the magistrates and senate to his house and gave them a summary of the state of the empire. But on reflecting that private life would not be without risks, and that it would be rash to entrust the state to the control of a group of people, he continued to hold onto it, arguably with better results than intentions.

He made these intentions of his known on many occasions, and even put them on record in an edict in the following words: 'So my wish is to establish the state on a safe and sound basis and to gather the fruit which I seek from this action, namely that I shall be called the author of the best constitution (*status*) and that in death I shall take with me the hope that the foundations of the state which I have laid will remain in place.' And he answered his prayer himself by making every effort that the new form of government (*novus status*) should not offend anyone.

3b. 7.2: Later he took the cognomen of Gaius <Julius> Caesar and then that of 'Augustus', the former by his great-uncle's will, the latter through the proposal of Munatius Plancus who, when some <senators> said in their view he ought to be called Romulus as a second founder of the city, won the argument that he should rather be called Augustus, on the ground that this was not only a new but a more honourable cognomen, because sacred places and those in which anything is consecrated by augural rites are called 'august', as is shown in Ennius' words: 'After by august augury (*augusto augurio*) famous Rome was founded'.

4. Velleius Paterculus (on 28-27 BC):

4a. 2.89.3-5: (The benefits conferred on Rome and the world by Augustus on his return:) Civil wars were ended after twenty years, foreign wars suppressed, peace restored, the frenzy of arms everywhere lulled to rest; validity was restored to the laws, authority to the courts, and dignity to the senate; magisterial power was reduced to its former limits, except only that two were added to the eight existing praetors; the old traditional form of the *res publica* was restored (. . . *restituta vis legibus, iudicii auctoritas, senatui maiestas, imperium magistratum ad pristinum redactum modum, tantummodo octo praetoribus adlecti duo. prisca illa et antiqua rei publicae forma revocata*). Agriculture returned to the fields, respect to religion, stability to mankind and assured possession for each man of his individual property; old laws were usefully emended and salubrious new laws passed; the senate was revised without harshness though not without sternness; the leading men (*principes viri*) of the state who had won triumphs and held

high office were induced by the urging of the *princeps* to adorn the city. Only in the case of the consulship, although he often strove to oppose it, was Caesar unable to secure that he should not hold it for a total of eleven times in succession, for the dictatorship which the people (*populus*) persistently offered him, he just as constantly refused.

4b. 2.91.1 (19 BC Parthians return standards to 'Augustus'):

This cognomen had rightly been conferred on him on Plancus' proposal by the universal agreement of the senate and Roman people (*consensus universi senatus populique Romani*).

cf. 4c. Laudatio Turiae, ii.35 (Ehr&J 357):

. . . *pacato orbe terrarum, res[titut]a re publica . . .*

5. Tacitus, Annals 3.28 (review of lawmaking at Rome):

Then Gnaeus Pompey, in his third consulship (52 BC), was appointed to reform public life (*mores*), but his remedies made him more oppressive than the abuses - as maker and breaker of his own laws he lost by force what he was protecting by force. The next twenty years (48-29 BC) saw continuous strife without propriety (*mos*) or legality (*ius*). Then Caesar Augustus, in his sixth consulship (28 BC), his power assured, cancelled his edicts as triumvir and laid down the terms for us to have peace and principate (*deditque iura quis pace et principe uteremur*). From that moment the chains became tighter: guardians were established and encouraged with rewards by the lex Papia Poppaea (AD 9) so that the ownerless property of those who failed to obtain the privileges of parents was taken by the people (i.e. state) as the parent of all.

6. Res Gestae 8.2:

Fasti Venus. for 28BC (Ehr&J p.35): } had censorial power, reviewed

Dio 52.42 <wrongly under 29 BC>: } senate and took census.)

} (When Cos.VI with Agrippa (28 BC)

7. Aureus (gold coin) of Octavian (28 BC): (only known example is in the BM)

Obverse: bust of Octavian wearing wreath. IMP. CAESAR DIVI F. COS. VI

Reverse: Octavian, togate, seated on curule chair (as consul), holds up papyrus scroll (law) from box of scrolls by his feet. LEGES ET IVRA P. R. RESTITVIT

J.W. Rich & J.H.C. Williams, '*Leges et ivra p. R. restitvit: a new aureus of Octavian and the settlement of 28-27 BC*', *Numismatic Chronicle* 159 (1999) 169-213.

8a. Fasti Praenestini (Ehr&J p.45) 13 January (27 BC):

[Decree of the senate that] an oak wreath should be placed [over the door of the house of imperator Caesar] Augustus [because] he restored [the state] to the Roman people.

(. . . [quod rem publicam] p. R. rest[i]tui[t].)

8b. Ovid, Fasti 1.589-90 (re-13th Jan.):

The/its(?) whole *provincia* was restored to our people, and your (sc. Germanicus') grandfather was given the name of Augustus.

8c. Fasti Cum. & Praen. (Ehr&J p.45) 16 January (27 BC):

C: On this da[y Caesar] was called [Augustu]s. *Supplicatio* for Augustus.

P: Imperator Caesar was called [Augustus] (year).

9. Ehr&J 364: Lex de imperio Vespasiani, §6:

And that he (sc. Vespasian) shall have the right and power to do and perform whatever he shall judge to be in the interest of the state or the majesty of matters divine and human, public and private, as was had by the divine Augustus and Tiberius and Claudius.

(*utique quaecunque ex usu reipublicae maiestate divinarum huma<na>rum publicarum privatarumque rerum esse{e} censebit, ei agere facere ius potestasque sit . . .*)

10. Tacitus, Annals 13.4 (Nero's accession speech to senate, AD 54):

Then he set out the principles which would shape the coming principate . . . The senate would retain its ancient functions, Italy and the public provinces would approach the tribunals of

the consuls, who would arrange access to the senate, while he would look after the armies assigned to him.

cf. Suet. Nero 10.1: He declared he would rule according to the principles of Augustus.

THE SO-CALLED SETTLEMENTS OF 27, 23, AND 19 BC: A BRIEF SUMMARY

28-27 BC – Octavian abolishes all his illegal acts during the triumviral period

(Cassius Dio Roman History 53.1.1 and 53.2.5)

Tacitus *Annales* 3.28.1-2: *sexto demum consulatu Caesar Augustus, potentiae securus, quae triumviratu issuerat*

abolevit deditque iura quis pace et principe uteremur.

[At last, in his sixth consulate, secure of his power, Caesar Augustus annulled the decrees which he issued in his triumvirate and laid down laws for us to have pax and princeps.]

Octavian transferred the *res publica* (commonwealth of Rome) to the Senate and the people of Rome

(Augustus, *Res Gestae* 34.1)

In consulatu sexto et septimo, postquam bella civilia extinxeram, per consensum universorum potens rerum omnium, rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populique Romani arbitrium transtuli.

[In my sixth and seventh consulships, after I had extinguished the civil wars and by universal consent had

power over everything, I handed over the state to the judgment of the Senate and people of Rome.]

The reorganization of the provinces (Augustus was proconsul outside of Rome -

imperium proconsulare – and his provinces included Hispania Tarrconensis,

Hispania Baetica, Tres Galliae, Gallia Narbonensis, Syria, Cyprus, and Cilicia

Campestris) meant that he had military control comparable to the extraordinary

commands of the Late Republic and he was to retain his office as consul in Rome

each year. However, he did not hold any sort of new position in 27 BC.

23 BC – Augustus resigned the consulship and received *maius imperium*

proconsulare for life and *tribunicia potestas* for life

19 BC – Augustus was granted the consular power for life (without actually holding the office of consul)