



REFORMS OF AUGUSTUS CAESAR

The coins minted under Augustus proclaimed him to be a leader in the Republican mold. The obverse inscription proclaims his tribunician power; on the reverse side, the letters “SC” declare that this coin was minted only by decree of the Senate.

Learning from Julius Caesar, who had himself declared dictator for life and was assassinated for it, Augustus (until 27 BC, called Octavian) had to convince the Roman world that he had restored the traditional republican government to the Roman people and the Senate—all the while, making sure that no other warlord could arise and challenge him.

Constitutional basis of Augustus’ power

Augustus had himself appointed to two traditional Roman offices (proconsul and tribune), but never had this power been vested in one person. As tribune, he could veto the actions of any other officials, and introduce legislation. As having more proconsul power than anyone else, he would appoint governors to the provinces.

Settlement with legions

Having incorporated Antony’s legions after Actium in 31 BC, he demobilized half of this enlarged army, settling them in colonies around the Mediterranean. He set up a professional army, that would serve for 20 years, with a guaranteed retirement settlement, to be funded by a special treasury set up by money he himself provided, and maintained by a tax on the manumission of slaves.

Arrangement with Senate

The Senate was allowed to appoint governors to what are called “senatorial provinces,” where there was little fighting, and fewer soldiers. Augustus himself appointed the governors of “imperial provinces,” where there were more legions. This brought about that the imperial provinces would be governed by commanders who were loyal to Augustus, and competent in the field of battle, as well.

Control over generals

The commanders of most of the legions were appointed by Augustus, so there was little chance of a rebellious general acquiring a lot of soldiers under his command, or even, a lot of military experience whereby he might sway the army to fight under him.

Succession

Established the practice of adopting a chosen successor as his son (if in fact a natural son was not in line), and then crowning that successor as co-emperor, before his own death.