

THE EMPIRE



In 753 B.C. Rome was founded. At the start it was just a village of farmers and breeders, and nobody could ever imagine that this small town would become the greatest empire in the world, changing the history forever.

In a first period Rome was a monarchy, after it became a republic and finally an empire.

Or it's better to say that Rome became THE EMPIRE.

The Roman Empire included the most part of the known world of that time and its very first leader or dictator was Julius Caesar.



JULIUS CAESAR

Julius Caesar was born in Rome on 12 or 13 July 100 B.C. into the prestigious Julian clan. When he was sixteen, he joined the army, proving himself as an effective soldier (and also an eloquent speaker!)

Caesar himself progressed within the Roman political system, becoming in succession quaestor, aedile and praetor. He served as a governor of the Roman province of Spain, and back in Rome, he made a pact with Pompey and Crassus (The First Triumvirate) who helped him to get elected as a consul in 59 B.C. Then he was appointed governor of Roman Gaul where he stayed for eight years. He defeated the tribes, adding Gaul to the Roman Empire, and making Rome safe from the possibility of Gallic invasions. He also made two expeditions to Britain.



Caesar then returned to Italy, but in Rome, the First Triumvirate had disintegrated.

Disregarding the authority of the Senate, Caesar crossed the Rubicon River with his legions and marched on the city in 49 B.C. This was considered as an act of war.

In the ensuing civil war Caesar defeated the Republican forces. Pompey, their leader, fled to Egypt where he was assassinated. Caesar followed him

and when he arrived in Egypt he claimed outrage over Pompey's death and took over the royal palace. Then he deposed the co-regent, Ptolemy XIII, and aligned himself with Cleopatra (the Egyptian queen), igniting war between his legions and the Egyptian army.

Caesar and Cleopatra held out for six months until reinforcements arrived and the Egyptian army was defeated. But Caesar also became romantically involved with the queen ...

Caesar and Cleopatra seemed to have become lovers shortly after their meeting, and he remained in Egypt with her for nine months. Then after defeating some tribes in Asia Minor, he returned to Rome triumphant.

Caesar was then the master of Rome and made himself Consul and Dictator. He used his power to carry out much-needed reforms, relieving debts, enlarging the Senate, building the Forum Iulium and revising the calendar. Dictatorship was always regarded as a temporary position but in 44 B.C., Caesar took it for life. His success and ambition alienated strongly Republican senators. A group of these, led by Cassius and Brutus, assassinated him on the Ides (15) of March in 44 B.C. Caesar had designated his great-nephew Octavian as his heir but...

OCTAVIAN AUGUSTUS



After Caesar's death the fight for the power between the general Mark Anthony and Caesar's true heir Octavian started dramatically. Octavian was only 19 years old at the start of his political career, but was also wise for his age and made the Senate and the Anti-Caesars support him against Anthony. How many people would be able of such a similar thing being only 19?

In 43 B.C. Octavian made an agreement with Mark Anthony and another general, Lepidus. This agreement is called the Second Triumvirate. The three of them together fought against all the enemies and Caesar's killers. After winning the battle of Philippi, Octavian was assigned the West, Anthony the East and Lepidus Africa.

Afterwards Lepidus was deprived of his powers, so the only obstacle for Octavian to have the power only in his hands was Mark Anthony. Meanwhile the latter had settled in Egypt where he had a love affair with the queen Cleopatra, and for her love he gave her some of the Roman territories.

So Octavian had a perfect reason to start a war against him, but he didn't want to start a civil war, so he declared war against Egypt and not against Anthony.

The decisive battle was the one of Actium. After their defeat Anthony and Cleopatra, aware of their imminent death committed suicide.

Octavian became eventually the first Emperor of Rome.

He started an age of peace and cultural development. It was him who commissioned Virgil to write Aeneid. That was even the age of other important poets such as Horace, Livius and Ovid. Octavian also revolutionized the administration of Rome and reformed the army.

He received many titles, the most important one was the title of Augustus, and the peace time was called in his honor Pax Augusta. There is also a month of the year dedicated to him and that still exists: August.

Octavian Augustus was an emperor loved by everyone also after his death which occurred on August 19, 14.

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