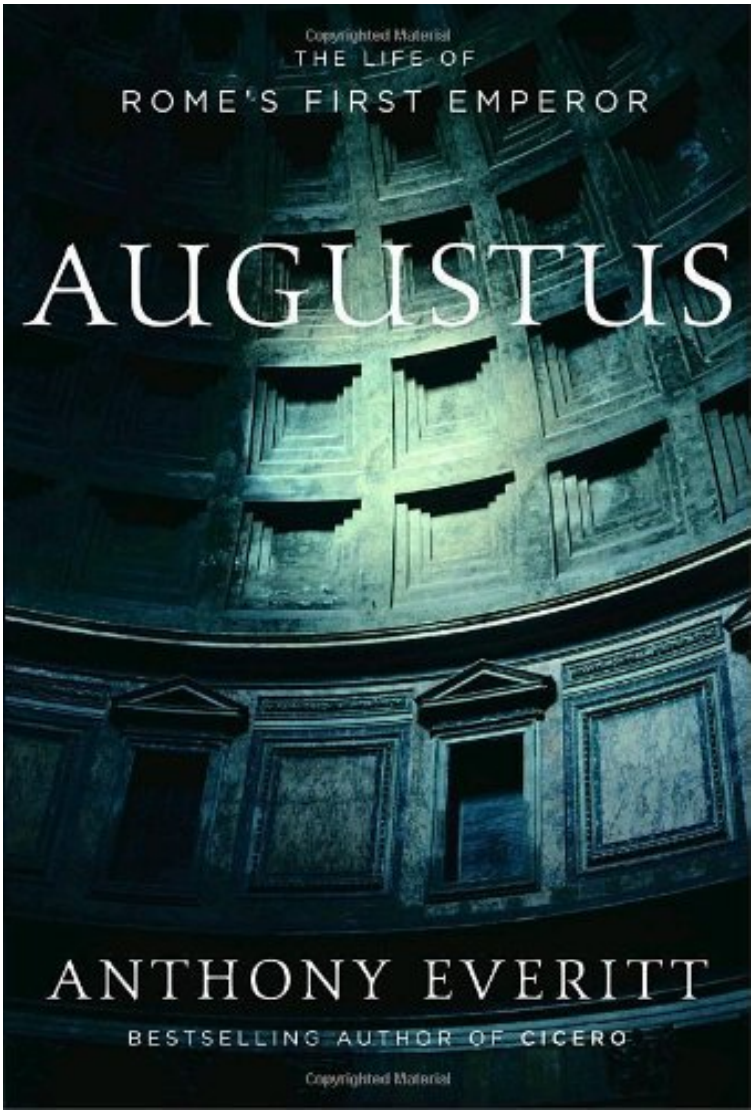
Augustus: The Life of Rome's First Emperor



Par Anthony Everitt
*ebooks | Download PDF | *ePub | DOC | audiobook*

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #336017 dans eBooksPubli le: 2006-10-17Sorti le: 2006-10-17Format: Ebook Kindle

[Free pdf] Augustus: The Life of Rome's First Emperor

Par Anthony Everitt : Augustus: The Life of Rome's First Emperor before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Augustus: The Life of Rome's First Emperor:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurHe found Rome made of clay and left it made of marble. As Romes first emperor, Augustus transformed the unruly Republic into the greatest empire the world had ever seen. His consolidation and expansion of Roman power two thousand years ago laid the foundations, for all of Western history to follow. Yet, despite Augustuss accomplishments, very few biographers have concentrated on the man himself, instead choosing to chronicle the age in which he lived. Here, Anthony Everitt, the bestselling author of Cicero, gives a spellbinding and intimate account of his illustrious subject. Augustus began his career as an inexperienced teenager plucked from his studies to take center stage in the drama of Roman politics, assisted by two school friends, Agrippa and Maecenas. Augustuss rise to power began with the assassination of his great-uncle and adoptive father, Julius Caesar, and culminated in the titanic duel with

Mark Antony and Cleopatra.The world that made Augustusand that he himself later remadewas driven by intrigue, sex, ceremony, violence, scandal, and naked ambition. Everitt has taken some of the household names of historyCaesar, Brutus, Cassius, Antony, Cleopatrawhom few know the full truth about, and turned them into flesh-and-blood human beings.At a time when many consider America an empire, this stunning portrait of the greatest emperor who ever lived makes for enlightening and engrossing reading. Everitt brings to life the world of a giant, rendered faithfully and sympathetically in human scale. A study of power and political genius, Augustus is a vivid, compelling biography of one of the most important rulers in history.From the Hardcover edition.ExtraitChapter 1SCENES FROM A PROVINCIAL CHILDHOOD6348 b.c.Velletri is a compact hill town about twenty-five miles southeast of Rome. It lies at the southern edge of the Alban Hills, overlooking a wide plain and distant mountains. The walk from the railway station to the center is a steep, hot climb.Little remains of ancient Velitrae, but signs of the Renaissance are to be found everywhere. In the main square stands an old fountain with battered lions spouting water. The streets leading off the piazza are roughly parallel and are gridded, echoing the original pattern of the old Roman vici. At the towns highest point, where the citadel must have been, a sixteenth-century palazzo communale, which combines the functions of town hall and museum, was built on the foundations of a Roman building.Here, on a stone platform, the modern life-size statue in bronze of a man in his late teens gazes blankly from empty eye sockets into the far distance, contemplating the life that has yet to unfold. This is Gaius Octavius, Romes future ruler Augustus: for Velitrae was his hometown and Velletri is proud to celebrate his memory.Gaius would recognize the lay of the land, the rise and fall of streets and alleys, perhaps the layout, certainly the views. Now as then, this is a provincial place, which seems farther from the capital city than it really is. Change has always come slowly. The community leaves a powerful impression of being self-contained and a little isolated. Even today, elderly locals squint blackly at strangers.A certain dour feeling for tradition, a suspicion of newfangled ways, a belief in propriety, have always been typical of provincial life in towns such as Velitrae, and it would be hard to imagine a more conventional family than that into which Gaius Octavius was born in 63 b.c.Every Roman boy received a praenomen, or forename, such as Marcus, Lucius, Sextusor Gaius. Then came his clan name, or nomen, such as Octavius. Some but not all Romans also had a cognomen, which signified a family subset of a clan. Successful generals were sometimes awarded a hereditary agnomen; for example, Publius Cornelius Scipio added Africanus to his existing names, in honor of his victory over Hannibal in north Africa. By contrast, girls were only known, inconveniently, by the feminine version of their nomen; so Gaius two sisters were both known as Octavia.An important feature of the infant Gaius inheritance was that, although like most Italians the Octavii held Roman citizenship, they were not of Roman stock. Velitrae was an outpost on the borders of Latium, home of the Latin tribes that, centuries before, had been among the first conquests of the aggressive little settlement beside a ford on the river Tiber.Two hundred years before Gaius birth, Rome finally united the tribes and communities of central and southern Italy through a network of imposed treaties. The men of these lands provided the backbone of the legions and were eventually, as late as the eighties b.c., incorporated into the Republic as full citizens. The little boy grew up with a clear impression of the contribution that Romes onetime opponents were making to its imperial greatness, a contribution not always fully recognized by the chauvinists in the capital. In a real sense, the Roman empire would be better called the Italian empire.The Octavii were a well-respected local family of considerable means. A Vicus Octavius, or Octavius Street, ran through Velitraes center (just as a Via Ottavia does today), past an altar consecrated by a long-ago ancestor.The family seems to have been in trade, a sure sign that it was not of aristocratic status. Gaius paternal great-grandfather fought in Sicily as a military tribune (a senior officer in a legion, or regiment) during the second war against the great merchant state of Carthage in northern Africa (218 to 201 b.c.). Carthages comprehensive defeat was the first indication to the Mediterranean world that a new military power had arrived on the scene. Gaius grandfather, who lived to an advanced age, was well-off, but had no ambitions for a career in national politics, being apparently content to hold local political office.Later hostile gossip claimed that the great-grandfather was an ex-slave who, having won his freedom, made a living as a rope maker in the neighborhood of Thurii, a town in Italys deep south. It was also rumored that the grandfather was a money changer, with coin-stained hands. Friendly propagandists took a different tack and invented a fictitious link with a blue-blooded Roman clan of the same name.When he came to write his memoirs many years afterward, Gaius merely noted that he came from a rich old equestrian family. The equites, or knights, were the affluent middle class, occupying a political level below that of the nobility and members of the ruling Senate, but often overlapping with them socially. To qualify for equestrian status, they needed to own

property worth more than 400,000 sesterces, and were not actively engaged in government. They were usually wealthy businessmen or landed gentry who preferred to avoid the expense and dangers of a political career. Many were contracted by the state to collect taxes on its behalf from the provinces. By the time of the boys father, also named Gaius Octavius, the family had become seriously rich, and probably far exceeded the equestrian minimum.The father Octavius, an ambitious man, decided to pursue a career in politics at Rome with a view to making his way, if he could, to the top. This was an extremely difficult project. The Roman constitution was a complicated contraption of checks and balances, and the odds were stacked against an outsidera novus homo, or new manfrom winning a position of authority.Rome became a republic in 509 b.c., after driving out its king and abolishing the monarchy. The next two centuries saw a long struggle for power between a group of noble families, patricians, and ordinary citizens, plebeians, who were excluded from public office.The outcome was an apparent victory for the people, but the old aristocracy, supplemented by rich plebeian nobles, still controlled the state. What looked in many ways like a democracy was, in fact, an oligarchy modified by elections.The Roman constitution was the fruit of many compromises and developed into a complicated mix of laws and unwritten understandings. Power was widely distributed and there were multiple sources of decision-making.Roman citizens (only men, for women did not have the vote) attended public meetings called assemblies, where they passed laws and elected politicians to govern the Republic. These leaders doubled as generals in time of war. Although in theory any citizen could stand for public office, candidates usually came from a small group of very rich, noble families.If successful, politicians passed through a set sequence of different jobs, a process called the cursus honorum or honors race. The first step on the ladder, taken at the age of thirty or above (in practice, younger men were often elected), was to become one of a number of quaestors; this post entailed supervising the collection of taxes and making payments, either for the consuls in Rome or for provincial governors. Then, if he wished, a man could be elected one of four aediles, who were responsible for the administration of the city of Rome. During festivals they staged public entertainments at their own expense, so deep pockets were needed. The next position, that of praetor, was compulsory. Praetors were senior officers of state, responsible for presiding as judges in the law courts and, when required, to lead an army in the field.At the top of the pyramid were two consuls, who were heads of government with supreme authority; they were primarily army commanders and conveners of the Senate and assemblies.Consuls and praetors held imperium, officially sanctioned absolute power, although they were constrained in three important ways. First, they held office only for one year. Second, there were always two or more officeholders at the same level. Those of equal rank were allowed to veto anything that their colleagues or junior officeholders decided. Finally, if they broke the law, officeholders could face criminal charges once they were out of office.On top of that, ten tribunes of the people were elected, whose task was to make sure that officeholders did nothing to harm ordinary Romans (patricians were not allowed to be tribunes). They could propose laws to the Senate and the people and were empowered to convene citizens assemblies. The tribunes held power only within the city limits, where they could veto any officeholders decisions, including another tribunes.The power of the assemblies was limited. They approved lawsbut only those that were laid before them. Speakers supported or opposed a proposed measure, but open debate was forbidden; all that citizens were allowed to do was vote. There were different kinds of assembly, each with its own rules: in the assembly that elected praetors and consuls, for example, the voting system was weighted in favor of property owners in the belief that they would act with care because they had the most to lose if any mistakes were made.The Roman constitution made it so easy to stop decisions from being made that it is rather surprising that anything at all got done. The Romans realized that sometimes it might be necessary to override the constitution. In a grave emergency, for a maximum of six months, a dictator was appointed who held sole power and could act as he saw fit.The Roman Senate was mainly recruited from officeholders. By Octavius day, a quaestor automatically became a lifelong member, and he and his family joined Romes nobility (if he was not already a member of it). Senators were prohibited b...Revue de pressePraise for CICERO: A TURBULENT LIFE'An engrossing book ... Everitt brings [Cicero] alive, making hima credible as well as a remarkable figure' (Allan Massie, Literary)'Unobtrusively crammed with fascinating information about Roman life and customs, splendidly clear and coherent in its narrative and altogether convincing in its portraiture' (Sunday Independent)'[Anthony Everitt's] achievement is to have replaced the austere classroom effigy with an altogether rounder, more awkward and human person' (Financial Times)'Excellent ... Cicero comes across much as he must have lived: reflective ... charming and rather vain ... Everitt does a good job of bringing Cicero and his age to life' (The Wall Street Journal)'[Everitt makes] his subject - brilliant, vain, principled,

opportunistic and courageous - come to life after two millennia' (The Washington Post)'Gripping ... Everitt combines a classical education with practical expertise ... He writes fluidly' (New York Times)'An exhilarating portrait of Roman social customs and politics.' (Publishing News)'A comprehensive and readable account of [Augustus and the Roman world]' (Peter Jones, Literary)'Exemplary ... this deals with the man as much as the myth and makes for an enthralling read' (Good Book Guide)'(An) exemplary biography' (Guardian, Alex Butterworth)'(An) informative biography' (Independent, Justin Wintle)