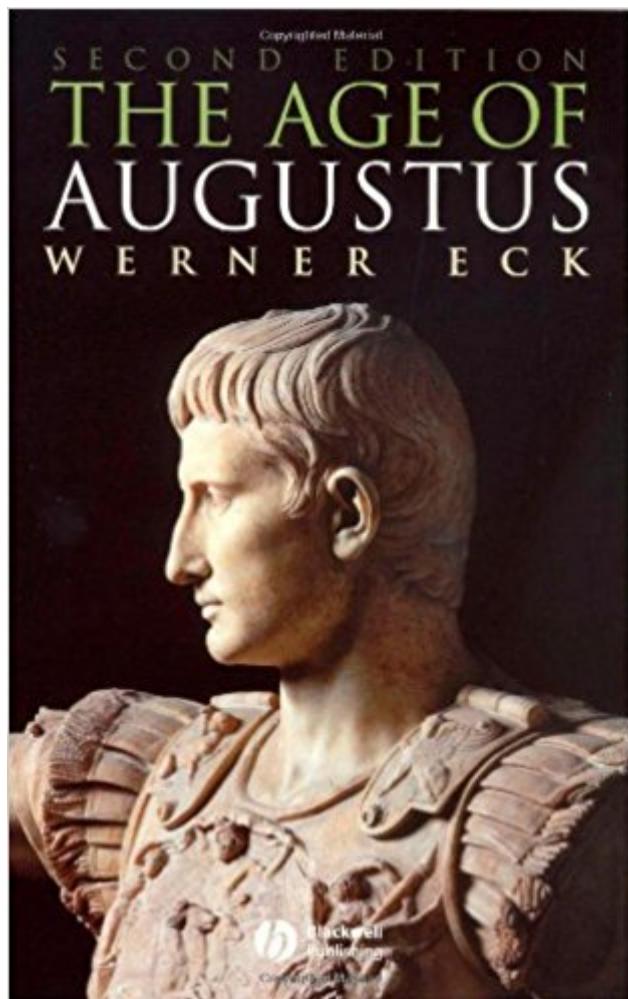


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The Age Of Augustus



Synopsis

In this updated edition of his concise biography, Werner Eck tells the extraordinary story of Augustus, Rome's first monarch. Incorporates literary, archaeological, and legal sources to provide a vivid narrative of Augustus' brutal rise to power. Written by one of the world's leading experts on the Roman empire. Traces the history of the Roman revolution and Rome's transformation from a republic to an empire. Includes a new chapter on legislation, further information on the monuments of the Augustan period, more maps and illustrations, and a stemma of Augustus' family. Thorough, straightforward, and organized chronologically, this is an ideal resource for anyone approaching the subject for the first time.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Wiley-Blackwell; 2 edition (August 13, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1405151498

ISBN-13: 978-1405151498

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #163,321 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #47 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Rome #263 in Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Rome #313 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Ancient

Customer Reviews

"Eck has produced a second edition of *The Age of Augustus* good news, especially as this is not just the same lucid book of 2003 with additional bibliography, but has a new chapter, a section on the German wars, and new illustrative material, growing by more than forty pages." (Greece & Rome, 2008) Praise for the first edition: "[Eck's] narrative (in this fine translation) is readable, rarely obscure and fluently glosses difficult terms and concepts in a way that obviates the need for a glossary. Moreover, he skillfully handles difficult constitutional matters without confusing the beginner, points out controversial issues, and marks his divergences with current scholarly opinion." (Bryn Mawr Classical Review) "The book provides a narrative of Augustus' achievements and expenditures on behalf of the Roman *res publica*. Eck is of course a recognized authority. He is the pre-eminent Roman administrative historian,

prosopographer, and epigraphist of our time. (The Classical Journal)

This concise biography tells the extraordinary story of Augustus, Rome's first monarch. It traces the history of the Roman revolution and Rome's transformation from a republic to an empire. Werner Eck provides a vivid narrative of Augustus' brutal rise to power. From the war against the assassins of Julius Caesar to his struggle against Antony and Cleopatra, this book describes the key aspects of Augustus' reign and the expansion of his empire. This updated edition includes a stemma of Augustus' family, new information on the monuments of the Augustan period, a new chapter on legislation, new information on the Augustan wars against the German tribes, and additional maps and illustrations. Organized chronologically, *The Age of Augustus* is an ideal resource for anyone approaching the subject for the first time.

Julius Caesar was murdered on March 15, 44 BC by his Republican opponents and, though an amnesty was proclaimed, public opinion turned against the assassins and Antony stirred up enough unrest to drive them from Rome. Octavian rose to power in order to avenge his adopted father and he, Antony, and Lepidus formed a triumvirate, with a mandate from the senate granting them virtually unlimited power for 5 years. They followed Sulla's example and enacted proscriptions against political opponents that allowed anyone to kill them and left the senatorial class so crippled that the coalition was able to fill the gaps with their own people, what Ronald Syme has called *The Roman Revolution*. Octavian established power through his legions - settling them, against precedent, within Italy - thus gaining a broad clientele that thought militarily. Public opinion turned against Antony once he named Cleopatra "Queen of Kings" and after it was discovered that he had left Roman territories to her children in his will. In order to avoid a civil war, the Senate declared war on Cleopatra and sent Octavian to defeat both of them. He effectively cut off Antony's supply line across the Adriatic and Antony's soldiers and the eastern kings in his coalition began defecting. The summer brought an outbreak of disease in Antony's camp and come August his troop strength was halved. Octavian decided to make a stand at Actium and a naval battle was fought. Popular belief (and "popular history") holds that he was shocked that his "lover," Cleopatra, had fled the battle and, heartbroken, he sailed after her, abandoning his troops. This completely ignores the historical record and Eck writes that Antony sought "an encounter as a means of fleeing - a decision that may seem paradoxical, but in fact made perfect sense. He did not intend to seek victory, as is evident from the fact that his ships carried large sails, which would only have been in the way in a pitched battle. Antony's actual goal was to break through the blockade and flee."

Afterwards, Octavian was able to negotiate favorable conditions with Antony's remaining troops, furthering his base of power. By now the Roman populace was completely exhausted following two decades of civil war, and men in power remembered the Republic as "no longer living experience, but merely hollow shells." Octavian and his political friends decided that in order to establish their power they had to restore, in name, the old Republic. He initially relinquished his power but the Senate was now also powerless and Octavian remained consul while retaining command of the provinces - the real source of power - and his imperium did not require any additional titles. In 28 and 27 BC, when the Senate celebrated the "restoration of the Republic," this was actually true viewed against the past two decades. In effect, much of Octavian's reforms were to change things by making them stay the same - by reviving Republican traditions under his monarchical rule. Eck writes that "even this apparently conservative epoch is marked by profound change." Octavian chose for himself the name Imperator (Gaius Julius) Caesar Augustus and instituted slow reforms that were only complete near the end of his life. Later emperors based their powers chiefly on his legal precedents and even took his name - which was initially merely that - and turned its components into a title. At the end of his 45 year rule there were no longer any members of the Senate who hadn't served under a Princeps, and to try to undo or reverse this would create a power vacuum resulting in a civil war.

I suppose the above title could also be ascribed to Augustus himself, especially when compared to the life and career of Julius Caesar. While Augustus never measured up to Caesar's military, rhetorical and literary genius, his achievements, and by extension the fortunes (and borders) of Rome during his four-decades rule, arguably surpassed those of his uncle. Through great savvy and ruthlessness Augustus brought relative peace and stability to Rome and ensured an orderly continuation of his policies through a planned, although at times convoluted, transfer of power to his adopted "son" Tiberius. The German historian Eck's narrative is rather dry but his book is effective, and efficient in its brevity, in recounting the main events and achievements during Augustus' long reign. The main reason for the book's conciseness is that Eck provides little background information or context to the Roman polity, as well as to the key figures that shaped the world from which Augustus emerged. For this reason, the reader would profit by reading a book about Rome around this period (perhaps a biography of Julius Caesar) to better understand the conflicts between political factions and learn about men like Sulla, Pompey, Antony, Cicero and Caesar himself, who were at the center during this tumultuous time in Rome's history.

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