

Caesar's estate: the conflict between Antony and Octavian

Caesar's solemn funerals are celebrated on the 20th of March 44 B.C. Antony's figure distinguishes itself, he is Caesar's lieutenant (his right-hand man during the military campaigns) and reads to the crowd the dictator's testament, which offers to the people the 'Gianicolo' gardens and 300 sestets for each plebeian. With a theatrical gesture he shows the Caesar's bloody dress to the crowd, provoking a popular revolt: Cesarids' houses (Bruto, Cassio and the other conspirators) and their houses are assaulted, forcing them to escape.

The following day of the funerals, a nineteen-year-old youth (Octavian) presents to earn the heredity.

As Gaio Octavio's son and Caesar's grandnephew he takes the name of Gaio Julius Caesar Octavian. He gets soon the veterans and senators' approval while Antony, who aims for becoming the successor, considers him a rival and tries to obstacle him. The two men fight to each other in Modena: Octavian wins and marches to Rome, proclaiming himself a Roman consul.

After his nomination for the consul position in 43 B.C. Octavian announces his revenge against Caesar's killers and maked an alliance with Antony. They forms the second triumvirate with Marcus Aemilius Lepidus (commander of Caesar's cavalry). Differently from the first triumvirate, it is a public and official treaty which persists for 5 years, it is used to divide the control of the provinces. Antony gets married with Octavia (Octavian's sister) to reinforce his union with Octavian; while Lepidus is settling in Spain, Antony and Octavian march against Caesar's killers who are organizing an extreme defense in Greece. The final battle takes place at Filippi (Macedonia): it is the defeat of Brutus and Cassius that kill themselves.

Octavian immediately returns to Italy, where he fights against Sestus Pompeus, Pomeus Magnus's son, who is practicing piracy on the Mediterranean Sea. The senate celebrates him as the restorer of the seas' peace.

After Filippi's victory, Antony appropriated of the Eastern province after his victory in Filippi where he had the occasion to know Cleopatra. He falls in love with her, he repudiates Octavia and marries Cleopatra with a ceremony in Alexandria of Egypt, so he sits in a golden throne wearing the typical clothes of the Eastern sovereigns, who are worshipped as gods from their subjects. Cleopatra gives birth him two twins who are called Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene.

- Cleopatra influences profoundly Antony, pushing him to get attitudes of a king-pharaoh and to support the independence of Egypt from Rome. This shocks deeply the Romans, in favour of Octavian, who instigates a denigrating campaign against his rival:
- Octavian, has at heart Roman interests, while Antonio has lost his mind and may transfer the capital in Egypt;
- Octavian affirms to represent the true values of the Res Publica: honesty, sobriety, austerity, while Antonio lives in the eastern luxury and softness;
- Octavian wants to defend the institutions and the traditional religion, while Anthony aspires to be worshipped as a god;
- Octavian is a true Roman man, Antonio, instead is maneuvered by a woman, Cleopatra, immoral and corrupted, who threw over him a spell to seduce him.

The decisive battle occurs in 31 A. C. at Actium, on the western coast of Greece. Antony and Cleopatra have a higher number of men and ships, but Agrippa, admiral of Octavian's fleet, manages to capture their supplies. Rather than falling into Octavian's hands, the couple decides to flee to Egypt and to commit

suicide. According to tradition, Cleopatra is made from an asp bite her breast (other than by a cobra, considered a sacred snake) hidden in a fruit basket.

Octavian has won. When he returns to Rome, a new era begins.