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AUGUSTUS AS PRINCEPS SENATUS¹

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Abstract: Octavian took the title of *princeps senatus* during the first *lectio senatus* of his long reign. The article deals with the role of the title of *princeps* of the Senate in the system of government under Augustus. I argue that the first Roman Emperor attached importance to his position of the *princeps senatus* not only in the context of the First settlement but during his whole long reign. The Emperor was eager to highlight the overall importance of this post. Moreover, he defined his place in the Senate with this position and it had functional significance for him during sessions of the *consilium publicum*. The restoration of the title of *princeps senatus* took place in a new circumstance. The reality of the epoch led to some transformations in the title's functionality.

Keywords: Augustus, Caesar Augustus, Octavian, Roman Emperor, *princeps senatus*, Roman Senate, Forum of Augustus, *summi viri*

In the second paragraph of Chapter 7 of his *Res Gestae*, Emperor Augustus notes that by the time he was writing the passage he had been the princeps of the Senate continuously for forty years.

Princeps senatus usque ad eum diem, quo scripseram haec per annos quadraginta fui /
Πρώτον ἀξιώματος τόπον ἔσχον τῆς συνκλήτου ἄχρι ταύτης τῆς ἡμέρας ἧς ταῦτα ἔγραψον, ἐπὶ
ἔτη τεσσαράκοντα (Aug., *Anc.* 7, 2).

According to Cassius Dio, Octavian took up this title in 28 BC.

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καὶ τὰς ἀπογραφὰς ἐξετέλεσε, καὶ ἐν αὐταῖς πρόκριτος τῆς γερουσίας ἐπεκλήθη, ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ ἀκριβεῖ δημοκρατίᾳ ἐνενόμιστο (Cass. Dio LIII 1,3).

My aim in this paper is to determine the role of the title of *princeps senatus* in the system of government under Augustus. To the best of my knowledge, there are no specific studies dedicated to this problem.

Some scholars do not point to the fact that Augustus was the princeps of the Senate,² whereas others only mention it in passing that the son of divine Iulius held the title.³ However, historians often give an indication that Emperor was *princeps senatus* and add their comments or thoughts on this matter. Let us give a few examples.

Some scholars posit that this position gave the Roman emperor an opportunity to be the first person to voice his opinion during Senate meetings.⁴ E. Shuckburgh writes that Octavian restituted the ancient prestige of *princeps senatus*.⁵ B. Allen suggests that Augustus “conducted a census of Roman citizens and himself assumed the title of “Princeps”, or leading citizen”.⁶ According to V. Gardthausen, the emperor attached particular importance to the title, although it did not have any connection to the actual power.⁷ In one of his works, J. Bleicken suggests that Octavian’s putting his name first in *album senatorum* should point to the fact that he took part in the previous year’s *lectio senatus* not as an official appointed by senators, but as their most respectable colleague (vornehmster Kollege) holding a higher position than they did.⁸ In the biography of Augustus written by the German scholar, the author expresses a view that since Octavian took up this post, it became assigned to him and no other person could attain it.⁹

² For example, I have not found references to the fact in the studies written by P. Sattler (Sattler 1960), R. Talbert (Talbert 1984a), M. Bonnefond-Coudry (Bonnefond-Coudry 1989), K. Galinsky (Galinsky 2012), W. Eder (Eder 2005, 13-32); E. Gruen (Gruen 2005, 33-54).

³ von Abele 1907, 13-14; Fitzler, Seeck 1918, 340; O’Brien Moore 1935, 766; Tarn, Charlesworth 1934, 123; Homo 1935, 115; von Premerstein 1937, 220; Syme 1939, 307; Mashkin [Mashkin] 1949, 309; Suolahti 1972, 211; Talbert 1984b, 164; Schmitthenner 1985, 410; Levi 1994, 260; Dettenhofer 2000, 66; Talbert 2006, 329; Shotter 2005, 31; Kienast 1999, 82; Jones 1970, 85; Bengtson 1982, 56; Егоров [Egorov] 1990, 105; Вержбицкий [Verzhbiczkij] 2003, 268; Lintott 2010, 112-113; Scullard 2011, 178; Goldsworthy 2014, 221-222.

⁴ Hammond 1933, 22, 122; Schall 1990, 186; Richardson 2012, 84.

⁵ Shuckburgh 1903, 142.

⁶ Allen 1937, 138.

⁷ Gardthausen 1896, 526-527, 570.

⁸ Bleicken 1990, 85-86.

⁹ Bleicken 1998, 321.

According to H. Volkmann, the *princeps senatus* status of the Emperor gave him a special position in the Senate and enabled him to summon not only regular but also unscheduled meetings of the Senate.¹⁰ In R. Kearsley's view, Octavian holding the *princeps senatus* post is evidence that the senator consensus had been reached. This post was expressing the *auctoritas* of future Emperor Augustus that was received through *augurium salutis* based on his military success of the previous year.¹¹ U. Schall writes that following the revision of the senators list, Octavian became *princeps civium et senatus*.¹²

Russian scholar I. Shifman suggests that the *princeps senatus* title "gave [Octavian] the opportunity to influence state affairs" and "became another fundamental part in the complex structure of his supreme power that was being set up". The scholar also admits the functional significance of *princeps senatus*.¹³ In spite of the fact that some of the expressed opinions are instructive, all of them lack substantial argumentation.

In the 1990s, M. Bonnefond-Coudry justified the idea that the Emperor had decided to place himself first in the Senate's list in order to highlight the breach with the time of the triumvirate and the civil war. During this time of transition, Octavian was looking for a title that would reflect his place in the state. However, after the restoration of the Republic, the position lost its symbolic and practical significance.¹⁴ In 2013, an article by Canadian scholar G. Rowe was published. Rowe was trying to prove the point that the famous phrase in *Res Gestae*, according to which Augustus had an *auctoritas* higher than that of the other magistrates (*Anc.* 34,1), belongs to a particular event, namely to the Emperor being placed first in the Senate list. That fragment speaks of the Emperor's *auctoritas* as that of the Senate princeps.¹⁵ Certain scholars reacted to this assertion with substantiated criticism, which we also share.¹⁶ There is no need to reiterate the arguments expressed in opposition to Rowe's interpretation of the passage from *Res Gestae*. What we consider important is that during the discussion K. Galinsky agreed with M. Bonnefond-Coudry regarding the symbolic meaning of the *princeps senatus* post during the First settlement and the lack of any functionality in it.¹⁷ J. Mezheritsky took a different stance thinking that *princeps senatus* was an important element in legitimizing Augustus' spe-

¹⁰ Volkmann 1972, 1137; Volkmann 1975, 107.

¹¹ Kearsley 2009, 157.

¹² Schall 1990, 186.

¹³ Шифман [[Shifman] 1990, 95-96.

¹⁴ Bonnefond-Coudry 1993, 127-130.

¹⁵ Rowe 2013, 11-15.

¹⁶ Mezheritsky 2016, 503; Galinsky 2015, 244-249.

¹⁷ Galinsky 2015, 245-246.

cial place in the community that also happened to give Emperor the right of expressing his opinion first during the session.¹⁸

Before turning to the subject in question, I would like to remind briefly what *princeps senatus* meant during the period of the Republic. The princeps of the Senate is a person of senatorial rank, whose name was put by the censors as the first name in *album senatorum*. This title was considered extremely prestigious in Rome throughout the third and second centuries BC.¹⁹ Princeps had to belong to a patrician family.²⁰ He had to be not only a former censor, but the senior former censor. However, the criterion of seniority was not always observed. In 209 BC, the censors neglected it and elevated one of the former censors, but not the oldest one, to *princeps senatus* on the grounds that he was the best of all Romans. Later it happened that the censors raised the oldest consular to the princeps of the Senate or even acting consul.²¹

The princeps of the Senate was the informal leader of the assembly. The position's only formal advantage in comparison to the other senators was that, according to the custom, the magistrates summoning the Senate had to ask the opinion of *princeps senatus* first at the meeting.²² The position of the princeps of the Senate actually lost its significance in the post-Sullan epoch, which was due to a change in the order of senators' speeches during sessions: since the 70s B.C. the magistrate could have asked first of any of the consulars. Having lost its privileged position in the senatorial debate, the post of *princeps senatus* became a purely formal honor and, possibly after the death of the last *princeps senatus*, fell into desuetude. The list of senators thenceforth, perhaps, compiled purely on the basis of seniority with the senior *consularis* registered first.²³

¹⁸ Mezheritsky 2016, 300.

¹⁹ Mommsen 1888, 969-970; Suolahti 1972, 207; Rafferty 2011, 1.

²⁰ This statement is shared by Suolahti (Suolahti 1972, 208), M. Bonnefond-Coudry (Bonnefond-Coudry 1993, 105-106) F. Mora (Mora 2003, 502) D. Rafferty (Rafferty 2011, 2). Contra: Ryan 1998, 225-232. Previously it was thought that the *princeps senatus* should be necessarily selected from *gentes maiores*. This hypothesis was proven wrong; see Ryan 1998, 225.

²¹ Rafferty 2011, 2-3; Suolahti 1972, 208-209; Meier 1984, 192.

²² Mommsen 1888, 969-970; Ryan 1998, 348-350, 356; Rafferty 2011, 1-2; Suolahti 1972, 210; Meier 1984, 191.

²³ In more detail, see Rafferty 2011, 5-22; Tansey 2000, 25-28. In the full sense of the term, the last *princeps senatus* was M. Aemilius Lepidus (cos. 77 BC). After him, historical sources indicate the titles of some other politicians as *princeps senatus* but in those instances the term lacks its authentic meaning and only serves to acknowledge their special position amongst their contemporaries. Those politicians are Q. Lutatius Catulus (cos. 78 BC), P. Servilius Vatia Isauricus (cos. 79 BC), M. Tullius Cicero (cos. 63 BC) (Suolahti 1972, 211; Rafferty 2011, 18; Meier 1984, 196). F. Ryan (Ryan 1998, 223) includes Cicero in the list of the *principes* of the Senate. For the arguments against this assumption, see Rafferty 2011, 2.

When did Octavian become the princeps of the Senate? There are two major hypotheses regarding that. According to the opinion of T. Mommsen and his followers, it happened in 28 BC as described by Cassius Dio (Cass. Dio LIII 1,3).²⁴ To the best of our knowledge, T. von Abele was the first to oppose this dating and suggest a different one, 29 BC. He reasoned that *lectio senatus* took place in 29 BC on the basis of information of Dio (Cass. Dio LII 42,1) and it was then that Octavian appointed himself to the *princeps senatus* position. The German scholar suggested that τὰς ἀπογραφάς stands for censorial measures performed by the future Emperor Augustus between 29 and 28 BC. In the conditions of a real ἀπογραφή, i.e. censorship, appointment to the *princeps senatus* position would not have taken place.²⁵ A considerable number of scholars share T. von Abele's views on this question.²⁶ A. Jones went so far as to date this 27 BC.²⁷ Unfortunately from the texts of some other researchers it is not clear whether it was 29 or 28 BC that Octavian became the *princeps senatus*.²⁸ J. Scheid tried to reconcile the two main versions of the date when Octavian became the *princeps* of the Senate. He suggests that the Emperor took up the position in 29 BC. The French historian presumes that Augustus simply did not include the year, in which he wrote the passage in question – AD 13 – among the forty years during which he had been the *princeps senatus*.²⁹

I would like to add a couple more points in favour of the dating proposed by T. von Abele. An appointment to the *princeps senatus* could not have occurred during the census procedure. Throughout the Republic, the appointment to principatus took place strictly before the composition of senatorial list, in other words before *lectio senatus*. The latter procedure began only when *princeps senatus* had been chosen. Censors conducted the compilation of the roll of senators as a rule during their first year in office and before the census itself.³⁰ First *lectio senatus* after the civil war was conducted by Octavian and Marcus

²⁴ Mommsen 1883, 32; Mommsen 1888, 894; Gardthausen 1896, 527; Pelham 1879, 324; Hammond 1933, 122; O'Brien Moore 1935, 766; von Premerstein 1937, 220; Allen 1937, 138; Tarn, Charlesworth 1934, 123; Suolahti 1972, 210-211; Wiseman 1971, 168; Brunt, Moore 1983, 49; Talbert 1984b, 164; Bleicken 1990, 85-86; Bonnetfond-Coudry 1993, 127; Tansey 2000, 27; Levi 1994, 260; Kienast 1996, 62; Talbert 2006, 329; Bringmann, Wiegandt 2008, 269; Kearsley 2009, 158-157; Ridley 2011, 297; Richardson 2012, 82-84; Rowe 2013, 13; Mezheritsky 2016, 300, 828; Шифман [Shifman] 1990, 95; Вержбицкий [Verzhbiczkij] 2003, 268; Токарев [Tokarev] 2011, 137.

²⁵ von Abele 1907, 13-14.

²⁶ Fitzler, Seeck 1918, 340; Машкин [Mashkin] 1949, 310; Bengtson 1982, 56; Schmitthenner 1985, 410; Rich 1990, 132; Scullard 2011, 178.

²⁷ Jones 1970, 85.

²⁸ Dettenhofer 2000, 66; Shotter 2005, 31; Goldsworthy 2014, 220-222; Schall 1990, 186.

²⁹ Scheid 2007, 38.

³⁰ Moore 2013, 79-81.

Agrippa in 29 BC, according to Cassius Dio (Cass. Dio LII 42,1-4). It was their first year performing the censorial functions. Taking into account these facts and the practice of the Republican period, it is most probable that Augustus became *princeps senatus* in 29 BC (Cass Dio LII 42,1; LIII 1,3).

Therefore, J. Bleicken's theory, according to which Octavian put his name first in the Senate list in order to show that he participated in *lectio senatus* of the previous year not as an official appointed above senators, but as their colleague of a higher rank,³¹ is incorrect due to chronological reasons. More so, the Senate list was not announced publicly; it was done in a confidential manner. Only once *album senatorum* was ready, it was announced from the Rostra letting senators know who became *princeps senatus*, who stayed in the Curia and who had been expelled.³² In a situation like this, *patres* learnt that Octavian had become *princeps senatus* only at the end of this procedure. Further on, however, it could have made a difference that the revision of the Senate was conducted by Augustus who was the chairman of the Curia, i.e. an informal head of the Senate, and a person of significant authority.

According to Cassius Dio, Octavian "was called princeps of the Senate" (Cass. Dio LIII 1,3: ἐν αὐταῖς πρόκριτος τῆς γεροῦσίας ἐπεκλήθη). The procedure of appointing Octavian to the position of *princeps senatus* is worth of special scrutiny. There is a variety of opinions on this matter among scholars. According to J. Firth, the Emperor was appointed to this "post" by Agrippa.³³ U. Schall suggests that Augustus was made the *princeps senatus* by senators.³⁴ R. Kearsley proposed that the appointing of the *princeps senatus* title was performed by both Octavian and Agrippa.³⁵ Her hypothesis is correct. It is substantiated by the facts from the Republican period when censors only appointed the *princeps senatus* by a collective and unanimous decision.³⁶ In our case, there is no doubt that the initiative was coming from Octavian; Agrippa was the person whose support the Emperor needed. It becomes clear that the formal decision was made by Octavian and Agrippa, as the designation of princeps of the Senate was a joint operation of censors throughout the Republic. *De facto*, of course, it was the Emperor himself who made himself the first man of the Senate. Therefore, it is evident that Firth's opinion is incorrect; and so is Schall's whose suggestion is unlikely since only censors could decide who would be the princeps of the Senate.

³¹ Bleicken 1990, 85-86.

³² Moore 2013, 82.

³³ Firth 1925, 168.

³⁴ Schall 1990, 186.

³⁵ Kearsley 2009, 157.

³⁶ Moore 2013, 80-81.

I certainly agree with the idea proposed by M. Bonnefond-Codry that the revival of the position of the princeps of the Senate by the future Emperor Augustus demonstrated a break with the previous period of civil strife and connected with the First settlement.³⁷ However, I argue that this reason was not the only one leading to the restoration of the title. Quite recently, the idea has been expressed by J. Yu. Mezheritsky, but unfortunately not sufficiently justified, according to which the title of *princeps senatus* fixed and confirmed the status of *princeps civitatis* held by Octavian. In 29 BC, the future Emperor had already been one of the *principes* but he lacked the formal attestation of his position.³⁸ This notion seems quite right. A fact in favour of this hypothesis is that after 209 BC one of the most important conditions in appointing to *princeps senatus* was that the censors considered the candidate to be the *princeps Romanae civitatis*.³⁹ This did not eliminate other criteria. When Octavian took the “post” of *princeps senatus*, not only did he become the informal head of the Senate but he also overtopped other *principes civitatis* and this pre-eminence was officially recognized by the Roman society.⁴⁰ In 29 BC the Emperor occupied the consulate, which only gave him one-sided influence on the Senate – he could direct the discussion but not express his own views. When the young Caesar became the *princeps senatus*, he also received the opportunity to influence decisions in the Curia. According to M. Bonnefond-Codry, after Octavian had adopted *cognomen* “Augustus”, the title of *princeps senatus* fell into oblivion.

It may be that the name of Augustus better described his place in the state, but it does not mean that other positions/titles were less important to the Emperor. The time of search did not end for the Emperor and it is evident from the

³⁷ Bonnefond-Codry 1993, 128-130; Cf. Galinsky 2015, 245.

³⁸ Mezheritsky 2016, 299-301. The connection between the “post” of *princeps senatus* and the title *princeps Romanae civitatis* was previously noted in historiography (Shuckburgh 1903, 149).

³⁹ F. X. Ryan argues that after 209 BC it was customary for censors to appoint to the *princeps senatus* whomever they deemed the *princeps Romanae civitatis* (Rank and Participation in the Republican Senate. pp. 230-232). Yet the only direct argument provided by F. X. Ryan in favour of his theory is the evidence of *lectio senatus* of 209 BC. That year, censors neglected the criteria of seniority of the censor and elevated one of the former censors, but not the oldest one. Q. Fabius Maximus was made the *princeps senatus* by censors on the basis that they considered him the *princeps Romanae civitatis* (Liv. XXVII 11.9-12). Therefore, in my opinion it would be more appropriate to consider this new criterion as one of the principal, but not the only one.

⁴⁰ The term *princeps civitatis* stood for the consular in the period of the Republic. With onset of the principate, the situation did not change. The emergence of the main princeps did not eliminate other *principes* (Aug., *Anc.* 12; Gelzer 1975, 47-48; Wickert 1954, 2029, 2031, 2054; for the list of *principes* of the Augustan period, see Wickert 1954, 2027-2028). That is why when Octavian became first in the senate list, he automatically became higher than other *principes*.

facts. In the future, Augustus acquired among other things powers of tribune, became the *pontifex maximus* and received the title *pater patriae*.⁴¹ Contrary to the opinion of M. Bonnefond-Codry, the title of the *princeps senatus* did not fall into oblivion after the transitional period between the victory at the Actium and the First settlement of 27 BC. To support her point of view, the scholar refers to the fact that neither coinage legends nor inscriptions “which list titles and functions” indicate that the Emperor occupied the post of the princeps of the Senate.⁴²

Indeed, Octavian did not indicate it on the coins that he was the *princeps senatus*; however, this is not so surprising. Coins of the Republican period indicate the office of magistrate who was responsible for the issue. Occasionally, the title of *imperator* occurs in the legends.⁴³ The titles of *parens patriae* and *pontifex maximus* appeared for the first time on the coinage in 44 BC.⁴⁴ The position of the princeps of the Senate is different in nature and can in no way be placed on the same level as magistracies or even quasi-magistracies, or priestly offices. It was only the first position on the Senate’s list.

As for the inscriptions, the situation is not so unambiguous. Only in one epigraphic source it is directly stated that Augustus was the princeps of the Senate but that inscription is extremely important. This is *Res Gestae* written by the Emperor himself (Aug., *Anc.* 7,1). If this position was of no importance to him, he could simply give no indication of it in the list of his “Deeds”, by analogy with a number of other points that Augustus preferred to omit.⁴⁵ However, following a long period after the First settlement, not only did he write that he had been the *princeps senatus*, but also emphasized that he had been holding this post for 40 years! He was proud that this had been such a long period of time and paraded the fact. The monument was intended primarily for the Roman audience and for the posterity,⁴⁶ which indicated that Augustus wanted next generations to remember him as the *princeps senatus*.

This is not the only epigraphic source that relates to Augustus as *princeps senatus*. The construction of the new Forum Augustum ended in 2 BC with the consecration of the temple of Mars Ultor. The Forum itself was opened three years earlier.⁴⁷ The statues of so-called *summi viri* were one of the main fea-

⁴¹ For detail summary of the powers and titles acquired by Augustus, see Kienast 1996, 63-67.

⁴² Bonnefond-Coudry 1993, 130.

⁴³ Crawford 2001b, 599, 601, 725, 732, 736, 740, 742, 744. About various officials who issued coins, also see Mattingly 1960, 29-34.

⁴⁴ Crawford 2001a, 488, 491, 493-494; Stevenson 2007, 120.

⁴⁵ In more detail, see Ridley 2003, 67-142.

⁴⁶ Ridley 2011, 267; Yavetz 2002, 5.

⁴⁷ Anderson 1984, 69; Geiger 2008, 61.

tures of the new Forum. They were placed in the niches of semi-circular exedrae and in porticos. On the north side, there were statues of Alban kings and ancestors of Princesps from *gens Iulia* and on the south side there were sculptures of Roman kings and heroes of the Republic (Ov., *Fast.* V 563-6; Suet., *Aug.* 31,5; SHA., *Alex. Sev.* 28,6).⁴⁸

The gallery of heroes was directly connected with the personality of Augustus.⁴⁹ In the Forum, a quadriga was placed bearing an inscription with the indication of Augustan title *pater patriae* and enumeration of Emperor's victories.⁵⁰

Thus, the emperor was represented as the greatest among the great heroes of Rome's past. Augustus wished to be most closely associated with these figures of past. The *summi viri* were his forbears.⁵¹ More than that, the gallery of heroes created a fixed memory of the group of people. It helped to create a new history, its Augustan version, available to the general public.⁵² The statues carried two inscriptions, each a *titulus* containing a name, a *cursus honorum* of the honorand, as well as an *elogium* detailing his deeds.⁵³ There is evidence that inscriptions were likely made by Augustus himself, or at least that he influenced their content.⁵⁴ The selection of persons for the gallery of heroes was also

⁴⁸ Zanker 1991, 85-86; Hoffer 1988, 194; Geiger 2008, 1, 95, 129, 137.

⁴⁹ Zanker 1988, 214.

⁵⁰ Unfortunately, we do not know where it was located. There are no archaeological traces of it left in the Forum (Strocka 2009, 53; Geiger 2008, 61). It's commonly thought that it stood in the center of the Forum. (Geiger 2008, 4, 61, 64, 73; Frisch 1980, 93; Ganzert, Kockel 1988, 150-151; Zanker 1991, 76; Coarelli 2007, 111; Shaya 2013, 85. P. Zanker (Zanker 1988, 214) does not note where it was placed. V. M. Strocka (Strocka 2009, 53) presumes that it could be in the vestibule of the temple or in the center of the square. There is disagreement among scholars as to whether the statue of Augustus stood on the quadriga or not. Some think it did (Ganzert, Kockel 1988, 150-151, 156; Coarelli 2007, 111; Luce 1990, 125; Shaya 2013, 86), some think the opposite (Geiger 2008, 95; Strocka 2009, 53). There is an opinion that the statue of Victoria stood alongside the depiction of the Emperor (Zanker 1991, 76). As U. Schmitzer (Schmitzer 2012, 87) rightly observed, what is significant is the symbolic presence of the Emperor as the champion in his Forum and not whether the statue of Augustus stood on the quadriga or not. According to J. Geiger (Geiger 2008, 66, 68) the gallery of heroes is the visual representation of the Restored Republic.

⁵¹ Zanker 1988, 214; Zanker 1991, 107; Shaya 2013, 86. Gowing 2005, 145.

⁵² Gowing 2005, 40, 142-143, 145; Shaya 2013, 92; Geiger 2008, 71-72.

⁵³ Zanker 1988, 211; Zanker 1991, 83-84; Hoffer 1988, 194; Anderson 1984, 75; Geiger 2008, 61, 96-97; Coarelli 2007, 110.

⁵⁴ Pliny the Elder says that (Plin., *Nat.* XXII 6, 13.: *Quod et statuae eius* [Scipio Aemilianus] *in foro suo divus Augustus subscripsit*) princeps took part in the composition of the eulogy for Scipio Aemilianus. Based on the style and content correspondences between the surviving eulogy texts at Augustus' forum and the Emperor's *Res Gestae*, P. Frisch (Frisch 1980, 92-97) shows that the former were most likely written by the princeps himself. Scholarly opinions on this matter are: a) the eulogy texts were masterminded by the Emperor (Ganzert, Kockel 1988, 155); b) if

carried out under the control of the emperor, which does not exclude various influences on him in that matter.⁵⁵ The princeps even paid attention to the iconographic details of statues (Gell., IX 11,10).⁵⁶

Scholars have already pointed out the coincidence of some offices and posts indicated by Augustus in his *Res Gestae* and in *elogia* of heroes from *Forum Augustum*.⁵⁷ Some of the Republican *summi viri* held the post of *princeps senatus*. Among the *principes senatus* of the past centuries, in the Forum there were statues of M. Valerius Maximus (dict. 494) (*CIL* VI 8.3. 40920=InscrIt. 3 60,78),⁵⁸ Q. Fabius Maximus Verrucosus (cos. 233, 228, 215, 214, 209) (InscrIt. XIII. 3. 80 = Inscr. Dessau 56)⁵⁹ and presumably M. Aemilius Lepidus (cos 187,175) (*CIL* VI 8.3 40939).⁶⁰ It is not just this fact that was indicated in the inscriptions, but also the number of times the person held the title was mentioned (*CIL* VI 8.3. 40920 = InscrIt. XIII 3. 60, 78: “*Princeps in senatum semel lectus est*”; InscrIt. XIII 3. 80 = Inscr. Dessau 56: “*Princeps in senatum duobus*

the texts were not composed by Augustus, then at least he had a strong influence on their content (Zanker 1991, 85; Zanker 1988, 212; Hoffter 1988, 194).

⁵⁵ Geiger 2008, 72-73. According to Zanker (Zanker 1991, 85), Augustus took part in the selection of the characters. Neudecker (Neudecker 2010, 177) suggests that Augustus chose persons personally.

⁵⁶ Schmitzer 2012, 82-83. Zanker 1988, 212.

⁵⁷ Anderson 1984, 83-84.

⁵⁸ This is only one indication that he was *princeps senatus*. There is possibility that it was invention of later annalists (supposedly by Valerius Antias). See; Suolahti 1972, 212; Geiger 2008, 139. In any case even through this fact was an fiction, Augustus exploited it (Geiger 2008, 161, 139).

⁵⁹ As mentioned before, according to Livius, it was exactly this person who got chosen to be *princeps senatus* based on the fact that he was *princeps Romanae civitatis* (Liv. XXVII 11, 9-11). It is likely that there is a link between the setup of the eulogy in the forum and Livius' report of the reasons for choosing Fabius Maximus as the first man. The fact that Fabius was chosen because one of the censors considered him the princeps of all Romans could have given some moral justification to the reason why the Emperor took up the first man's position.

⁶⁰ The inscription is very fragmentary and there are doubts that it speaks of him. Given his achievements for the benefit of the Republic, he was a possible candidate to be included in the gallery of heroes (Geiger 2008, 150). Geiger wonders, if the inscription speaks about Lepidus, then the question arises whether it mentioned that he was *princeps senatus* 6 times in a row? The scholar suggests that this fact had been omitted in Augustus' interest. According to the author, by the time of the inauguration of the Temple of Mars Ultor and official opening of the forum in 2 BC, the Emperor had been the senate's first man for 26 years. The scholar reasons this from the fact that the Emperor first appeared at the head of the Curia list in 28 BC. Lepidus died in 152 BC, i.e. 27 years after he took up the “post”. Such comparison would not have benefited the Rome's new ruler (Geiger 2008, 150, 159, 161-162). As I showed above, Octavian became *princeps senatus* in 29 BC. In this case, if Geiger's hypothesis is right, it has to be corrected. According to my dating, both men were senate's princeps for 27 years. Displaying this similarity, however, was not in Augustus' interest.

lustris lectus est”). The *elogia* are the earliest epigraphic attestations of the title.⁶¹ Given that the *elogia* for heroes were composed by Augustus, the indication of the post of *princeps senatus* in the texts of inscriptions should be regarded as an allusion to Augustus and as an emphasis on his status as the *princeps* of the Senate. The texts of the *elogia* of former *principes* also shows the Emperor’s intention to underline and revive the prestige of this position.⁶²

Courts were held at the Forum Augustum and the sessions of the Senate took place in the temple of Mars Ultor (Suet., *Aug.* 29,2; 21,2; Cass. Dio LV 10,1-5).⁶³ So, there were a lot of Romans at the Forum. Any of them who visited the forum of Augustus and who saw the statues of famous politicians of the past and their *elogia*, on some of which the position of the princeps of the Senate was mentioned, must have remembered that the living Emperor, like some of these heroes, was the princeps of the Senate and had been such for a very long time.

The title of *princeps senatus* was important for Augustus not only in the framework of the First settlement. Throughout all three *lectiones* of the Senate he put his name first in the senatorial list. Moreover, the senatorial commission, which conducted the fourth *lectio* in AD 4, did not deprive him of this title. Could they place a name of another person in the first line of *album senatorum*? The answer is no. (Cass. Dio LV 13,3; *Aug., Anc.* 7,1). In the Senate of Augustan time, no one except for him could take up the title of *princeps senatus*. It is hard to imagine anyone else but the Emperor in this position, sitting in the back rows of the Senate.

By that time, the indivisible link between the figure of the Emperor and the title of *princeps senatus* was already formed in public opinion. This is clear from the words of Ovid in his *Ars Amatoria*, the first two books of which were published at the end of 2 BC or at the beginning of 1 BC. In the first book, the poet writes about Gaius Caesar – grandson of Augustus, his adoptive son and prospective heir:

⁶¹ Geiger 2008, 160.

⁶² G. Rowe (Rowe 2013, 14) writes about the Emperor’s interest in the *princeps senatus* title in connection with the *elogia* of *summi viri*. R. Neudecker (Neudecker 2010, 168) speaks of a special attention that Augustus paid to the texts of *elogia*.

⁶³ Shaya 2013, 89-90; Neudecker 2010, 161-167. For further details on use of the Forum, see Anderson 1984, 88-97.

Tale rudimentum tanto sub nomine debes, | Nunc iuvenum princeps, deinde future senum (Ov., *Ars*, I 193-194).⁶⁴

By 1 BC, Augustus had already been the *princeps senatus* for 28 years. According to M. Bonnefond-Codry, in purely practical terms the place of the princeps of the Senate also did not matter to the Emperor because he did not use the right of his title to express his opinion first and changed the order of speeches in the Curia. He expressed his opinion “among the last”, according to Cassius Dio:

μέντοι καὶ ἐν τοῖς πρώτοις ἀλλ’ ἐν τοῖς ὑστάτοις ἀπεφαίνετο, ὅπως ἰδιοβουλεῖν ἅπασιν ἐξεῖη καὶ μηδεὶς αὐτῶν τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γνώμης, ὡς καὶ ἀνάγκην τινὰ συμφορονῆσαι οἱ ἔχων, ἐξίστατο (Cass. Dio LV 34,1).⁶⁵

The sentence of Cassius Dio refers to c. 8 AD, which was at the end of Augustan reign. We do not know when this practice was introduced. In my view, it is imprudent to think that Augustus never used his right to speak first during his reign (Cass. Dio LV 34,1). My point is indirectly confirmed by Dio’s passage mentioned above. Apparently, the emperor used to take advantage of his right to speak first during the meetings but this caused senators to consider his opinion as an imperative. To avoid that, Augustus introduced the new practice – speaking last in the order of the meetings. This kind of behaviour during the Curia sessions led senators to believe that the Emperor could voice his opinion on a subject both first (as befits the *princeps senatus*) and last. This is clear from the passage Tacitus quotes that refers to the very beginning of Tiberius’ rule:

igitur Cn. Piso ‘quo’ inquit ‘loco censebis, Caesar? si primus, habebo quod sequar: si post omnis, vereor ne imprudens dissentiam’ (Tac., *Ann.* I 74, 6-7).⁶⁶

⁶⁴ As far as I know German scholar V. Gardthausen was first who paid attention to this passage of Ovid in relation to princeps senatus under Augustus (Gardthausen 1904, 1120-1121). But, the scholar paraphrased it only without any conclusions in relation to the history of the title under the first Roman Emperor.

⁶⁵ Bonnefond-Coudry 1993, 130. Cf. Hammond 1933, 274.

⁶⁶ Even if the quoted words are the expression of the ancient author’s thoughts, they are still important to the point we expressed in the main body of the text. Being a senator, Tacitus was well aware of the meetings procedures, so it is unlikely that he would have veered away from reality in his descriptions of the senatorial proceedings, also considering the audience his work was aimed at. In other words, the historian did not perceive it as strange that the Emperor could either go first or last during the meetings in the Curia.

This excerpt indirectly proves that Augustus indeed used the privilege of his *princeps senatus* title. The refusal to use the right of expressing one's opinion first in the Senate, by a person with such authority as Augustus, was meant to impress contemporaries. When an influential person of Augustan rank does not enjoy his legal rights, but instead gives this opportunity to others, this only further emphasizes his influence. This was remembered by the contemporaries and Cassius Dio (Cass. Dio LV 34,1).

It was only a person of very significant authority who could change the order in which senators were asked for their opinion; who could restore the right of *princeps senatus* to speak first during the Senate sessions, which, being the key element in this position, was lost in the 70s BC. Augustus was exactly the person who had enormous *auctoritas* starting already from 29 BC.⁶⁷ That is why there is a reverse correlation between the "post" of *princeps senatus* and the Emperor's *auctoritas* – it was due to the latter that it became possible to restore the title's original prestige.

In conclusion, it is important to note that Octavian became *princeps senatus* in 29 BC. The fact that he occupied this post not only pointed to the breach with the era of civil wars, but also fixed the young Caesar's status as *princeps civitatis* and put him above other *principes*. The position never lost its ideological significance for Augustus who remained *princeps senatus* until the end of his rule. The Emperor was eager to highlight the overall importance of this post. The title continued to have functional significance. The reality of a new epoch led to some transformations in the title's functionality – despite his status as the first man, the Emperor could have his say first and last in the order alike. The long period of time, during which Augustus was *princeps senatus*, caused the post to become associated with the figure of the Emperor.

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⁶⁷ Lacey 1998, 17; Galinsky 1998, 18.

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