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# The History of Ancient Rome

Course Guidebook

Professor Garrett G. Fagan  
The Pennsylvania State University



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Professor Fagan has an extensive record of research in Roman social history and has held a prestigious Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. He has published articles in international journals, and his book on Roman public bathing culture was published by the University of Michigan Press in early 1999. ■





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# The History of Ancient Rome

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## Scope:

In the regional, restless, and shifting history of continental Europe, the Roman Empire stands as a towering monument to scale and stability; at its height, it stretched from Syria to Scotland, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, and it stood for almost 700 years. So enormous was the Roman achievement in forging and maintaining this vast empire that the idea of Rome has left a lasting impression on the European psyche. Subsequent rulers from Charlemagne to Napoleon to Hitler were motivated to some degree by emulation of the Roman model, and if the modern movement to unify Europe under a single currency and guiding bureaucracy succeeds, it will be the first genuine and lasting realization of such emulation in 1,400 years. Under Rome, people on three continents—in Europe, Africa, and Asia—gave their allegiance to a single political system, were governed by a unified set of laws, and were members of a distinct cultural community, despite their often profound linguistic, religious, and regional diversity. So grand was the power of the idea of Rome even in ancient times that the tribesmen who destroyed the Empire in the west often called themselves Romans, and Europe has seen some form of the Holy Roman Empire for most of its subsequent history. By no means insignificant also is the huge cultural debt that Europe and the world owe to Rome in so many fields of human endeavor, such as art, architecture, engineering, language, literature, law, and religion. In this series of lectures we examine how a small village of shepherds and farmers rose to be the colossus that bestrode the known civilized world of its day and came to leave such a lasting mark on European history.

After two introductory lectures on the value of studying ancient Rome and the nature of the historical evidence for antiquity, we focus in the following four lectures on the very earliest periods of Roman history. After examining the geopolitical and cultural shape of pre-Roman Italy, the foundation legends of Rome itself, and the cycle of stories that surrounds the kings of Rome, we pause to look at the shape of early Roman society. These topics offer excellent illustrations of the problems inherent in using ancient evidence for

historical inquiry, which constitutes a running theme for the initial part of the course. Lectures 7 through 10 chart the fall of the monarchy at Rome and the foundation, in its wake, of the Republic (traditionally dated to 509 B.C.). The two major forces that influenced the shape of the early Republic, the Struggle of the Orders and Roman military expansion in Italy in the 8<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., are treated, as is the means of Roman administration of conquered territories in Italy, which lay the foundations for the later acquisition and maintenance of the Empire.

Moving outside of Italy, Lectures 11 through 15 concern the rise of the Roman Empire in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries B.C. Having examined the shape of the Mediterranean world prior to Rome's emergence onto the international scene, we devote two lectures to charting the course of the Romans' first two titanic struggles with their arch-rival in the west, Carthage. In these wars, the Romans first developed a large-scale navy, sent armies overseas, acquired foreign territories, and displayed what was to become one of their chief characteristics: a dogged determination to prevail, even in the face of seemingly impossible odds. This was particularly clearly brought out in the Second Punic War, when the gifted Carthaginian general Hannibal was abroad in Italy, threatening the very existence of Rome itself. Success in the first two Punic Wars set the stage for Roman expansion in the eastern Mediterranean, which brought Rome into conflict with the "superpowers" of the day. Following the outline of the facts of Roman overseas expansion, we seek explanations for it in Lecture 15 and thereby enter a field of heated scholarly debate.

Lectures 16 through 19 pause the narrative to examine two important thematic issues: the influence of Greek culture on Rome in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries B.C., and the nature of the Roman Republican system of government in both the domestic and provincial spheres. This latter system—complex, tradition-bound, and replete with archaisms and redundancies—has influenced the form of several modern polities, including that of the United States. Finally, we examine the pressures of empire on Roman society, charting considerable social, economic, and political changes brought about by the speed and success of Rome's overseas expansion. For it was on the rocks of these pressures that the Republic was destined to founder.



The following eight lectures, 20 through 27, follow the course of what modern scholars have termed the “Roman Revolution.” In the century between 133 and 31 B.C., the Roman Republic tore itself apart. It is a period of dramatic political and military developments, of ambitious generals challenging the authority of the state for their political development, of civil wars and vicious violence, and of some of the first great personalities of European history: Marius, Sulla, Pompey, and Julius Caesar. The story is intriguing, complicated, and at times horrendous, and it illustrates perfectly the historical principle of contingency. With a few exceptions, each protagonist in the drama of the Revolution tended to act within the bounds of necessity or precedent, and thereby to set new and dangerous precedents for later protagonists to follow. In this way, the Roman Revolution was not a staged or planned event, but a cumulative snowball of crises that combined to shatter the system of Republican government. By the time of Caesar’s assassination in 44 B.C., few could have held any illusions as to the ultimate destination of the Roman body politic: autocracy.

After pausing to examine the social and cultural life of the Late Republic, we return in Lectures 29 and 30 to the very last phases of the Revolution and the rise to power of the man who was to become Rome’s first Emperor, Augustus. Lectures 31 to 33 examine the long reign of Augustus (31 B.C.–A.D. 14) and his establishment of a new political order at Rome, called the Principate. His solution to the Republic’s problems was clever and subtle, at once radically altering the nature of government while disguising that fact under a veneer of familiar Republican forms. The Principate stood for centuries and brought stability and good government, especially to the provinces, in a way that the old Republic had been incapable of doing. It also had a flaw at its core that made life for subsequent emperors and those close to them perilous indeed. This was the issue of the succession, how one emperor passed power onto the next. Engendered by Augustus’s concealment of his autocracy under the forms of the old Republic, the problem of what happened when an emperor died was to prove the single most destabilizing factor in the Principate’s existence.

Lectures 34 to 36 cover the early Imperial period, from the death of Augustus to the instability of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. This is the era of such familiar Roman historical figures as Caligula, Claudius, Nero, and Hadrian. Rather than treat

each reign as a march of facts, we examine thematically, first, the gradual derailment of the pure Augustan Principate under his immediate successors and, second, the role of the emperor in general in the Roman world, citing examples to illustrate our points. Finally, we show how the problem of the succession combined with ominous developments among Rome's external enemies in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D. to generate a period of great crisis, indeed near-collapse, in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.

Leaving the Empire under pressure, we turn in Lectures 37 through 45 to consider some of the salient characteristics of classical Roman civilization. The selection of themes is, by necessity, limited and some omissions are unavoidable, but it addresses many topics of greatest interest to the modern historian investigating ancient Rome. Individual lectures are devoted to the broad shape of Roman society, slavery, the Roman family, the role of women in Roman society, urbanism, public leisure and mass entertainment, paganism, and the rise of Christianity.

To conclude the course, Lectures 46 through 48 return to the Empire's last centuries. We see the Empire restored to order and stability at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, but under an increasingly oppressive and militarized government. The institutionalization of Christianity as the legitimation for imperial power and the more openly autocratic regime created, in many ways, a Roman Empire closer to medieval Europe than to the Empire of Augustus. As such, the later Empire is treated only in general terms here, since it warrants closer study in and of itself. We end the course with one of the great questions in history—why did the Roman Empire fall?—and we see how, in the eyes of most modern scholars, the Empire did not fall at all but just changed into something very different. ■

# Introduction

## Lecture 1

**The Romans loved the law. They conceived of the law somewhat differently from the way we do. It wasn't the law of individual human rights the way our modern law is, but the notion that the law stands above us all.**

**W**hy study ancient Rome at all? The heritage of ancient Rome is enormous. The influence that Rome exerted on later ages, as illustrated by the Grand Tours that were conducted from the Renaissance through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has been both profound and continuous. The Roman legacy to the modern world in various spheres is inestimable. From Rome we have inherited, among other things, a reverence for the law. Certainly Rome influenced the Founding Fathers of the United States. The Roman Catholic Church is the manifestation of Rome in the modern world.



**The Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum.**

© Tom Brakefield/Stockbyte/Thinkstock

The images and themes of Roman history and culture continue to influence modern culture. Rome's is an interesting history to study due to patterns of change. Modern popular culture remains enthralled by images and themes drawn from the pagan Roman world: Julius Caesar assassinated, Nero fiddling as Rome burns, and gladiators fighting to the death before clamoring crowds.

Roman society changed enormously over its long duration: It evolved from a monarchy into a republic and then back to a monarchy; it changed from a pagan to a Christian empire; and culturally it evolved from a rustic and crude place to a sophisticated and Hellenized one. The long period of Rome's survival, coupled with the processes of change, make Rome's history more dynamic and variegated than that of any other ancient state and quite a few subsequent ones.

**In the case of the United States of America, the founders were unequivocally and directly influenced by their knowledge of the ancient Roman past in formulating the Constitution.**

This series of lectures will outline the main events of Roman history in the political, military, and social spheres. Some attention will also be paid to cultural matters where pertinent. By "ancient Rome," we mean the period from circa 1000 B.C. to A.D. 500. The course focuses especially on the period circa 300 B.C. to A.D. 300. Late antiquity (c. A.D. 300–500) is treated only briefly, and the Byzantine period (c. A.D.

300–1453\*) not at all; both are deserving of courses in their own right. In geographic terms, we shall examine Rome's expansion from a small hamlet on a hillside overlooking the Tiber River to the colossus that dominated the Mediterranean basin and northwestern Europe for a half a millennium.

Ancient history is not like modern history, which most people conceive of as "typical" history—a combination of facts about the past and the interpretation of those facts. Ancient history suffers from a relative dearth of evidence. The body of ancient evidence available to us is finite, well-known, patchy, and often contradictory. This makes the establishment of basic facts a more difficult endeavor than it is in modern history.

Due to the scarcity of evidence, the scope for interpretation is extremely wide in ancient history. The circumscribed body of ancient evidence is itself subject to constant reevaluation and interpretation. All of these circumstances

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\**Erratum:* In the lecture, the professor states that the Byzantine Empire fell in A.D. 1454. The correct date is A.D. 1453, as shown in the lecture guide.

make certainty a rare bird in ancient history. More often there are merely competing reconstructions and interpretations, with no clear way to decide among them. There are few “correct” answers to problems in ancient history; that is precisely what makes it so fascinating and exciting an endeavor. ■

### Suggested Reading

E. H. Carr, *What is History?*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

M. I. Finley, *Ancient History: Evidence and Models*.

R. Jenkyns (ed.), *The Legacy of Rome: A New Appraisal*.

### Questions to Consider

1. Is it possible that, in fact, Rome never “fell” at all, in the sense that the idea of Rome has stood consistently behind so much of subsequent European and world history?
2. To what extent does the study of ancient history differ in its objectives and methods from the study of modern history? Can you account for those differences?

# The Sources

## Lecture 2

**All history is based on what are called primary sources. The primary sources can be broadly defined as those that derive from the period under study. They can vary in terms of their focus and their quality.**

**P**rimaries sources can sometimes be removed from their subjects by some distance. Whatever the case, they hail from the cultural ethos of the ancient world. Secondary sources, in contrast, are works of modern scholarship about the ancient past. All secondary sources are grounded in the primary sources.

Historical theorists have argued at length about the relative merits of primary sources. One view, called positivism, says that one can never go beyond what the primary sources tell us. New History holds to the view that the primary evidence can be supplemented by comparative and theoretical data drawn from other realms of scholarship. The inherent bias of the practicing historian can be minimized and the past “reality” can be reconstructed by



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**The exquisitely preserved ruins of Pompeii, one of the most important primary sources on Roman life.**

close attention to the original context of the primary evidence. This is history from the bottom up.

Postmodernists argue that there is no reality beyond the text. The inherent bias of the historian cannot be overcome and, in fact, history is not reconstructed but merely constructed in the image of the historian's biases. In this series of lectures, we shall take a broadly modernist approach, while acknowledging the warnings of the postmodernists about the depth of one's own bias.

Archaeological evidence comprises any and all physical material that survives from antiquity. At just over 100 years old, scientific archaeology is a new discipline and has turned up a variety of physical evidence for our consideration. Macro evidence comprises such artifacts as entire cities, buildings, infrastructures, ships, works of art, corpses, and so on. Micro evidence offers fragments of pots, bones, textiles, and other small items, and even pollen and micro-organisms. Pottery is a very common and important type of archaeological evidence. But archaeological excavation is destructive, and the evidence it produces is mute and only speaks when interpreted.

Written evidence offers unparalleled insights into the lives of the ancients. Ancient literature is rich and varied, and it is an invaluable historical tool. The surviving body of Roman literature comprises many genres. It gives us windows into ancient life as lived by the ancients, into their values and preoccupations, the main events of their history, and their own view of themselves. But ancient literature mostly survives in medieval copies and is therefore a selected body of material subject to loss or the introduction of error in the process of copying.

Epigraphic evidence comprises inscriptions with varied content carved on a variety of surfaces. Inscriptions can be carved on stone, metal, bone, wood, bark, parchment, or papyrus. They include epitaphs, decrees, laws, commemorative and honorary texts, letters, notes, records, and graffiti. Unlike literary evidence, epigraphic evidence has

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**There is a big question as to whether history is scientific at all or whether it is just an art form.**

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not been selected or copied over the centuries but speaks to us directly from antiquity.

Ancient written evidence has its limitations. Roman literature was written by upper-class men, who mostly lived at Rome, between circa 200 B.C. and A.D. 200. Inscriptions are largely formulaic and for the most part not particularly informative for the major events of Roman history.

The study of coins (numismatics) and papyrus (papyrology) are two important subfields in the investigation of ancient evidence. Roman coins are both archaeological and epigraphic artifacts in that they can be studied from both perspectives. Papyrus is a particular kind of inscriptional source, often presenting detailed portraits of life at the local level. ■

### Suggested Reading

M. Crawford (ed.), *Sources for Ancient History*.

M. I. Finley, *Ancient History: Evidence and Models*.

L. Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*.

### Questions to Consider

1. Can the practicing historian ever overcome the bias ingrained by the social, cultural, and historical context in which that historian is operating? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Are some classes of ancient evidence more trustworthy relative to others? If so, why?



# Pre-Roman Italy and the Etruscans

## Lecture 3

**The Romans were not the first people to inhabit the Italian Peninsula. They were not even the first people to become powerful or influential within the Italian Peninsula.**

**T**he geography of the Italian Peninsula offered many benefits to its inhabitants. The peninsula is well-watered and well-endowed with natural resources. The Alps in the north and the Apennine range that runs down the center of Italy provide springs, streams, and rivers more than sufficient to supply the inhabitants. The largest rivers in Italy, and the ones with which we shall be mostly concerned, are the Po and Arno rivers in the north, and the Tiber in central Italy. The mountainous nature of the country guaranteed an abundance of wood and ores for the ancient Italians and pasture for their sheep and goats.

The peninsula's plains are fertile. The three main plains in Italy are the Po River Valley in the north, the plain of Latium around Rome, and Campania around Naples. Campania, in particular, with its volcanic soil, pleasant



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**Mount Vesuvius, the source of Campania's fertile volcanic soil.**

climate, and natural hot springs, was destined to become a popular pleasure spot for the Roman elite. The plain of Latium, on the north edge of which lay the Tiber River and the site of Rome, is surrounded by the sea to the west and mountains to the east. A range of low hills (the Alban Hills) is located in the center of the plain. All of these plains are fertile. By the time of Roman expansion into Italy, all were inhabited by settled people practicing agriculture.

With the exception of the Greek colonizers and the Etruscans, pre-Roman Italy was inhabited by nonurbanized tribal peoples. The tribal cultures of pre-Roman Italy are difficult to study. Archaeology shows that Italy had human inhabitants as early as the Stone Age. Literary sources become available only in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., by which time the immediately pre-Roman tribal cultures of Italy had existed for 500 years or more. The situation before circa 400 B.C. is therefore very hard to reconstruct.

Pre-Roman tribal Italy was a quilt of languages and cultures. Archaeology and linguistics are our main avenues for studying this period: Two archaeological keys are burial styles and pottery, and at least 40 languages and dialects have been determined. A broad division appears to have existed between settled agriculturists in the plains and their threatening, mountain-dwelling neighbors. The situation in 400 B.C. was as follows, north to south: the Celtic Gauls had control of the Po Valley; the Etruscans were to their south; then came the Romans and the Latins; the Oscans and Samnites controlled central Italy and parts of Campania; and finally, the Greeks were found in the south. The Greeks and Etruscans were urbanized cultures. The Greek colonies in Italy were localized affairs and centered on coastal cities, notably Naples and Tarentum. The Etruscans, too, were an urbanized people and were much influenced by the Greeks (i.e., Hellenized).

The origins of the Etruscans are unclear. No Etruscan literature survives; they are studied through archaeology, later Roman tales about them, mentions in Greek sources, and surviving inscriptions in their ill-understood language. They may have been migrants from the eastern Mediterranean. More likely, they were a native Italian culture (called Villanovan) that became urbanized circa 800–700 B.C., perhaps through contact with the Greeks. They were not a politically unified people but were very influential in Italy. They had

a League of Twelve Cities, which often warred with each other. They were united by language and religion, and these cities could occasionally work in concert. Originally ruled by kings, many Etruscan cities became oligarchies, ruled by councils of leading families.

The nature of Etruscan “control” in Italy is unclear. Earlier scholars imagined a sort of Etruscan Empire in Italy, stretching from the Po Valley to Campania. This empire collapsed in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. in the face of resistance from the Greeks in the south and incursions of Gauls in the north. More recently, it has been proposed that there was a looser sphere of Etruscan influence, predominantly on the cultural plane; there was no Etruscan Empire. This debate affects how historians read the early history of Rome, particularly the question of Etruscan Rome under the last kings.

The Etruscans were absorbed by the Romans, but they greatly influenced Roman culture. The main areas of Etruscan influence on the Romans were in religion and statecraft, but also in architecture. From the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. onward, the Etruscans were thoroughly absorbed into the Roman state, and by the age of the emperors, they had ceased to exist as a distinct cultural group. ■

### Suggested Reading

G. Barker, *The Etruscans*.

T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, chapters 1–2.

R. M. Ogilvie, *Early Rome and the Etruscans*, esp. chapters 1–3.

### Questions to Consider

1. How reliable are modern scholars’ reconstructions of the situation in pre-Roman Italy? On what evidence are they based, and how is that evidence deployed by modern scholars?
2. Which of the modern views of the nature of Etruscan Italy do you favor? Why?

# The Foundation of Rome

## Lecture 4

**Later Romans preserved two tales about the origin of their people and their city. Both are well known to most people. One of them surrounds the twins Romulus and Remus. The other surrounds the Trojan hero Aeneas.**

**T**he story of Romulus and Remus—their escape from death as infants and their founding of Rome—has characteristic folkloric elements that suggest it is very old and local in origin. The story of Aeneas founding Rome, on the other hand, derives from a Hellenized source, reflecting Greek legends, but it is probably older than many have assumed. In this story, Aeneas, the sole survivor of Troy, wandered the Mediterranean before settling in Italy at Lavinium, where he founded a town. The two stories were united into a single tradition by making Romulus and Remus descendants of Aeneas. Aeneas founded the Roman people; Romulus and Remus founded the city of Rome.

Archaeological evidence suggests that settlement at Rome began as early as 1500 B.C., but it does not offer any evidence that substantially contradicts the ancient legends. The site of Rome was advantageous. It overlooked a ford in the Tiber near an island in the stream; it could control north-south traffic between Etruria and Latium and east-west traffic from the interior to the coast. It was hilly, defensible, and well-watered. Signs of early human habitation (i.e., pottery shards) date to circa 1500 B.C., with the first permanent settlement, as indicated by graves, founded in circa 1000 B.C.

Originally and into the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Rome was a series of small, separate villages on neighboring hilltops; evidence of these settlements has been found. At some stage—the dates are impossible to establish—these communities coalesced into a single community, and Rome, as an entity, was born. Spectacular finds on the Palatine Hill in Rome in the 1930s revealed postholes for wooden huts that dated to the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century, circa 750 B.C. Later Romans maintained a hut on the Palatine that they called the Hut of Romulus.

That said, archaeology cannot confirm Rome's founding legends either. Archaeological evidence needs to be interpreted to make sense. The presence of worship centers embracing Aeneas in Lavinium does not prove the Aeneas legend; it is likely the result of the fame of the legend, not vice versa. The coincidence of the Palatine huts and the traditional foundation date does not prove the Romulus legend. In fact, the settlement of which the huts are part dates to 1000 B.C.



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**A bronze statue of Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome.**

Archaeological evidence is mute; it cannot prove legendary evidence, but occasionally it can disprove it. The archaeology does suggest an early pattern of settlement at Rome, becoming more complex in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and coalescing into a single community sometime after that (a process termed synoikism). Therefore, the issue of sources for this early period of Roman history is an important consideration to bear in mind. ■

### Suggested Reading

T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, chapter 3.

Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, book 1.

C. J. Smith, *Early Rome and Latium: Economy and Society, c. 1000 to 500 B.C.*

### Questions to Consider

1. Where did the ancient Roman authors get their information concerning the early period of Roman history?
2. In what precise respects do the archaeological and written sources converge or diverge in their reconstruction of Rome's founding?

# The Kings of Rome

## Lecture 5

**All our sources are unanimous that Rome was initially ruled by kings. They number the kings as seven, the first one being Romulus. Romulus was the founder of Rome. He also became its first king.**

**T**he seven kings in the so-called Regal Period (753–509 B.C.) were, in order, Romulus, Numa Pompilius, Tullius Hostilius, and Ancius Marcius (the Latin or Sabine Kings), followed by Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius, and Tarquinius Superbus (the two Tarquins were Etruscans). Each king had a set of stories attached to him.

The sources available to our main account of the early period in Livy were scant. Livy had access to now-lost written accounts by earlier writers; all, however, were far later than the Regal Period. There were received legends. Some archival and epigraphic material may have survived for Livy, but not for us. Family histories also filled out the picture. For the

modern scholar, comparative material from other early monarchies is available, as well as archaeological investigation of early Rome.

The operation of Roman kingship was noteworthy. The kings were not hereditary but were chosen by election from among a council of nobles (the Senate). Between kings, an *interrex* held office. Kings had authority over three areas of government: military affairs, administration of justice, and religion.

The existence of the kings themselves is not in doubt, but the historicity of the individual reigns is much more troublesome. There is little doubt about the



**Romulus, one of Rome's founders, was also its first king according to tradition.**

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

overall veracity of the Regal Period; the ancient written sources are unanimous about its existence. The earliest-known Latin stone inscription, found on the Black Stone in the Roman Forum and dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., mentions a king (*rex*). Comparative analysis with other (Greek, Etruscan) polities suggests that kings regularly ruled early archaic communities.

The details, however, are much more questionable. Too few kings rule over too many years (seven kings for 245 years). The stories surrounding the kings are moral dramas or etiological tales more than historical accounts. The names of some of the kings themselves raise some suspicions, as do their functions. Archaeological evidence suggests an elaboration of Rome in the period circa 625–500 B.C.; this may be the real Regal Period.

The last kings of Rome are traditionally seen as Etruscan, but this view has been recently challenged. The traditional view was that the Etruscans conquered Rome, hence the Etruscan kings. More recently, this view has been challenged in favor of an Etruscan influence on Rome that was not in the form of political domination. Rome remained predominantly Latin, with Etruscan families gaining influence there, as they did elsewhere, but there was no Etruscan period as such. ■

### Suggested Reading

T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, chapters 5–6.

Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, book 1.

R. M. Ogilvie, *Early Rome and the Etruscans*, chapters 5–6.

### Questions to Consider

1. How reliable are the legends about the kings of Rome? What methods are available to us for checking the facts about early Rome?
2. How valid is the critique of the traditional view of Etruscan Rome? Which view—the traditional or the revisionist—do you find more compelling? Why?

# Regal Society

## Lecture 6

The regal society of Rome was typically archaic. It was dominated by aristocratic landowners. There seems to have been from the start a division between free and slave. It seems that the Romans were a slaving society from very early on, as were most societies.

Below the dominant aristocrats in the regal society of Rome were those tied by bonds of favor and obligation. Among the freeborn population, the broadest distinction was that between citizen and noncitizen. All citizens were grouped into units called tribes. Initially there were three tribes, but in later centuries they reached a total of 35. One of the chief duties of citizenship was military service in the Roman army, which fought in the phalanx formation at this early date. As with contemporary societies in Greece, the citizenry was led primarily by aristocratic landowning families. All families, it seems, were grouped into clans (*gens*, *gentes*). The so-called three names of Roman citizens reflects the primacy of the *gens* in the familial and social order.

Prominent families and common families were tied by a system called *clientela*, or clientship. A patron granted favors and generally helped a client, and in return he received support, loyalty, and due deference and respect. *Clientela* helped offset the horizontal stratification of Roman society. However, not all classes or persons were involved in the *clientela* system.

At this early date, it is possible that the first social orders appeared. In Roman society an order was a social rank, a statement of status. The first order to appear seems to have been the patriciate. Patricians were defined by birth, and thus by their names; they were the most privileged group within the aristocracy. The circumstances surrounding the emergence of the patricians are obscure; various reconstructions have been offered by modern scholars. Whether or not the other social order, the plebs, was in existence in this early period is not clear.



Politics under the regal system of government was controlled by the aristocrats more by than the kings. Kings were chosen from among the members of the Senate and were ratified by the people (i.e., the adult male citizens) meeting in assembly. The status of the Senate in this very early period is unclear; it may have been an ad hoc council of advisors to the king. The people were grouped into voting units called *curiae* and met in an assembly called the Curiate Assembly (*comitia curiata*). There are parallels to this in Greek and other archaic cultures. The main function of the Curiate Assembly was to ratify the Senate's choice of a new king and to officially confer the power of command (*imperium*) on him.

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**Some of the difficulties of trying to sort out the social and political military details of this period are nicely illustrated by consideration of the Constitution of the Servian Reforms.**

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Brief consideration of the so-called Servian Constitution (named after Servius Tullius) illustrates many of the problems in dealing with the Regal Period. Many of the features of the system are clearly anachronistic, but some may date to the Regal Period. The difficulty lies in determining which ones do. ■

### Suggested Reading

G. Alföldi, *The Social History of Rome*, esp. chapter 1.

T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, chapters 4, 7, 10.

### Questions to Consider

1. Is it valid to infer the existence and operation of certain social and political institutions at an early date, for which we have no contemporary ancient evidence, from an examination of their form at a later date, for which we do? If not, what alternatives are open to us?
2. On what criteria was Roman society stratified into social classes? What was the function of *clientela*?

# The Beginnings of the Republic

## Lecture 7

**In the Roman tradition, the early Republic faced some immediate challenges, which it overcame by having all kinds of wonderful characters who had the right moral fiber to stand up against these challenges, meet them, and bring the Republic into a new dawn.**

**I**n Roman tradition, the Republic was founded following an atrocious act that spurred a coup d'état. Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of Rome, was a poor ruler who enacted various policies that were unpopular. His son, Sextus Tarquinius, raped Lucretia, a nobleman's wife, who subsequently committed suicide. This assault sparked a coup.

A family friend of Lucretia's husband, L. Junius Brutus, helped the dead woman's incensed family to organize resistance against Superbus; many members of the Tarquin clan were also part of the plot. Tarquinius was forced to abandon Rome. A plot to restore the monarchy led to Brutus having to execute his own two sons.

Assisted by Lars Porsenna, king of nearby Clusium, Tarquinius attempted to regain Rome by force of arms but failed. A subsequent attack by Porsenna on the Latins failed at the Battle of Aricia (506 B.C.), and he withdrew back to Clusium. Another ancient tradition records that the Romans surrendered to Porsenna and that he imposed a humiliating treaty on Rome.

Modern scholars have treated this cycle of stories in different ways; none accept them as they are. The stories are, on the face of it, typical of the early history of Rome: romantic, heroic, and didactic. Modern scholars have come up with a variety of alternative reconstructions of events, such as reading the expulsion of the Tarquins against the background of waning Etruscan power in Italy in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The transition from monarchy to Republic was not a single, dramatic event but a slow process stretching into

the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The story of Lucretia, on the other hand, is in fact not improbable, given comparable personal events in other royal dynasties that had broad political effects. Following the alternative ancient tradition, perhaps Porsenna took Rome and abolished the monarchy before retiring after Aricia. In the end, though, the evidence is just too unreliable to be sure about what happened in detail.

The young Republic began developing its government, and its form evolved over the centuries. The early years are, unsurprisingly, somewhat unclear. Kings were replaced by two magistrates, called consuls (or *praetors*). Later consular lists (*fasti*) go all the way back to 509 B.C., but there are some suspicions that the very early names are later interpolations. From the early Republic, the consuls shared power with colleagues with limited tenure (yearly elections). There were two popular assemblies (*comitia curiata* and *comitia centuriata*). In times of great emergency, a dictator could be installed for six months to deal with the emergency. The dictator nominated a second-in-command, the Master of Horse (*magister equitum*). The former king's duties now devolved to the magistrates and to priests, the most important of whom was the *pontifex maximus*; there was also a *rex sacrorum*, probably a purely religious incarnation of the old king.

The order of the plebs may have arisen in the early Republic. In later years, the plebs comprised all those who were not patricians. Initially, however, the plebeians may have been a restricted order of citizens, perhaps poorer and less influential men with their own sociopolitical agenda. Rich families only appear to have joined the plebs later when the plebeians became a political and social force to be reckoned with, in the context of the Struggle of the Orders. ■

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**The Roman Republic, during its long period of existence, went through a very protracted process of evolution in terms of its polity, in terms of the shape of its government.**

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## Suggested Reading

A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins*.

T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, chapter 9.

Livy, *Early History of Rome*, book 2.

R. M. Ogilvie, *Early Rome and the Etruscans*, chapters 7–8.

## Questions to Consider

1. What weight, if any, can we give to the stories of the Roman Republic's foundation?
2. On what principles was power sharing in the early Roman Republic based?

# The Struggle of the Orders

## Lecture 8

**A socio-political conflict started very early in the Republic's history and continued for the best part of two centuries on and off and was considered by the Romans to have shaped their republic in a decisive way.**

**T**he written sources for this Struggle of the Orders portray it simplistically, but a close reading can reveal, however dimly, some of the genuine issues that generated the conflict. The later sources for the struggle that survive for us to read are not without problems, but they are usable nonetheless. Our sources depict the struggle as an entirely political one, and they appear to retroject later patterns of behavior onto this early period. Despite the problems of the evidence, the outline of the struggle is clear enough, even if the details are more open to question.

Our later sources focus on one causative issue—access to the political system. This issue appears, however, to have arisen only later. Relief from debt and, in particular, from debt bondage was an early issue. The plebs also demanded judicial reform and codification of the laws to prevent arbitrary treatment at the hands of aristocrats. There was a desire for reform to distribute newly conquered territories among the poorer citizens. The struggle, then, was really a series of struggles over different issues. Our later sources have simplified this complex picture considerably.

The Struggle of the Orders dominated Roman politics in the early Republic. The patricians dominated the Roman political system in the early Republic, although plebs were not excluded per se, as the consular lists (*fasti*) show. At some stage in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, the patriciate “closed” and no additional families were admitted to its ranks. The closed patriciate then dominated politics. Thus another thread of conflict in the struggle was to re-open access to the political system to non-patricians.

But even before the closing of the patriciate, there were signs of trouble. In 494 B.C., the plebs seceded from Rome, since their demands for

economic and social reform were not met. The plebs demanded release from debt, particularly debt bondage, and arbitrary treatment at the hands of aristocrats. This suggests that the plebs were originally comprised of the

**The Struggle of the Orders, or the Conflict of the Orders, refers to an ongoing debate and conflict between the patricians and the plebeians over numerous issues.**

poorer elements in society. They left Rome and formed their own, parallel state on the Janiculum, a nearby hill. The Plebeian State was modeled on the main, patrician-dominated Republic: It had a council (the *concilium plebis*); it had elected officers (tribunes of the plebs and *aediles* of the plebs); it passed resolutions called *plebiscita*. The plebs were now firmly established as a force in Roman politics.

Exactly how the First Secession was brought to an end is unclear from our sources. Subsequent secessions of the plebs forced further reform. A crisis in 451–449 revolved around the plebs' demand for codification of the laws. A Committee of Ten (*decemviri*) was established to draw up a law code, but it attempted to subvert the Republic

and rule as a junta. The head of the Committee was Appius Claudius. In response, the plebs seceded again, the Committee of Ten was ousted, and Rome got its first code of written law, the Twelve Tables, in 449 B.C. As a result, the Plebeian State earned recognition from the Republic and was assimilated into it. New magistracies were created to suit both plebeian and patrician. One consul a year was to be plebeian. *Curule* (patrician) *aediles* were created to match *aediles* of the plebs. A new magistracy, the *praetorship*, was open to both orders.

Plebeian demands for land, debt relief, and political equality continued in the ensuing decades, and the plebs were partially successful in having them met. By 367 B.C. the main part of the Struggle of the Orders was over, but the epilogue came only in 287 B.C. when a law (the *Lex Hortensia*) made *plebiscita* binding on all citizens, patrician and plebeian.

The nature of the Roman ruling class was also transformed by the struggle. With the closing of the patriciate circa 450 B.C., wealthy nonpatricians

joined forces with the plebs. This transformed the plebeian movement into a socially diverse entity with differing goals: The rich plebs wanted access to the political system, the poorer ones wanted socioeconomic reforms.

The resolution of the struggle and the admission of the plebs into the political system created a patrician-plebeian ruling class that was largely unconcerned by the demands of the commoners for reform. After 287 B.C. the patrician/plebeian distinction became more socially than politically significant. New lines of stratification began to emerge, but they were tied to Roman imperial expansion. ■

### Suggested Reading

T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, chapters 10, 11, 13.

Livy, *Early History of Rome*, books 2–3.

R. M. Ogilvie, *Early Rome and the Etruscans*, chapters 8–11.

### Questions to Consider

1. How reliable are our sources for the Struggle of the Orders?
2. To what degree were the original goals of the struggle subverted by the selfish demands of the nonpatrician upper classes for access to government?

# Roman Expansion in Italy

## Lecture 9

**Roman expansion in Italy can be broken down into three phases. First, there is a long period of gaining control over their immediate neighbors, the Latins. ... Then the Romans turned their attention to central Italy. ... And then finally, Rome moved south and gained control over the Greek colonies.**

**F**or the first four centuries of its existence, Rome was occupied with gaining control over Latium. The early dealings of Rome with its Latin neighbors are shrouded in obscurity, but they appear varied and complex. The sources for the early expansion of Rome are not strong on fact; rather, they are full of heroic and patriotic tales that served as models for good behavior in later generations. From the Third Samnite War onward, however, our material improves considerably. The sources depict the kings mixing war and diplomacy in their dealings with the Latins.

The transition from the monarchy to the Republic weakened the Roman position, but victory over the Latins at the Battle of Lake Regillus in 499 B.C. recovered the situation. The Treaty of Cassius (*foedus Cassianum*) in 493 B.C. established a new relationship between Rome and the Latins, who were formed into the so-called Latin League.

The outline of the treaty seems clear, but the details are not. It was a military alliance (establishing a nonaggression pact, mutual friends and enemies, and equal division of spoils of war). Romans were to command any joint forces. But it is unclear whether Rome was a member of the Latin League or whether the Treaty was a bilateral agreement between Rome and the league.

The requirements of defense against continuous incursions by tribal mountain peoples in the neighborhood of Latium strengthened Rome's position among the Latins. The Aequi and Volsci, tribal mountain dwellers, launched annual raids into Latium between circa 500 and 440 B.C. Rome and the Latins resisted in tandem.



During the course of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Rome had begun a series of conflicts with Veii, a powerful Etruscan town north of the Tiber. In 396, the Romans captured Veii and took all the spoils for themselves. As the Latins were about to fight over their treatment by the Romans, disaster struck from the north. Gallic raiders from the Po Valley region, known as Gallia Cisalpina, defeated a combined Roman/Latin force at Allia in 390 B.C. and captured Rome. The Romans paid the Gauls off, and the Gauls left. The Gallic raid humiliated the Romans but does not seem to have greatly undermined their overall position. Roman incursions into Etruria and Latium continued until 338 B.C., when the Romans defeated a combined Latin force and reshaped the Latin League to their own needs.

The Samnite Wars were on a larger scale than any wars previously fought by Rome, and Roman victory in the conflicts secured Roman power over all of central Italy. The Samnites were formidable opponents. They were a federation of tribal people living in the mountains of central Italy.

Tough fighting men, they were a warrior society that prized martial skill. Initially they made a nonaggression pact with Rome, but Samnite raids into Campania caused the inhabitants to appeal to Rome for help in 343 B.C. The ensuing First Samnite War (343–41 B.C.) ended with renewal of the Romano-Samnite Treaty.

The encroachment of Roman power on Samnite borders caused the Second Samnite War, an epic struggle that lasted more than 20 years. The Romans had continued to extend their influence into the outlying regions of Samnium. War broke out in 326 and lasted until 304 B.C. It was a great struggle that tested Roman resolve in the face of catastrophes such as the Caudine Forks in 321 B.C. By a combination of military operations and diplomacy, the Romans encircled the Samnites in their mountain homeland and forced their surrender. The old Romano-Samnite Treaty was renewed, but Roman power now extended deep into former Samnite territory.

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**Although the Senate was technically an advisory body, its political control over the Roman state was greatly enhanced by the wars of expansion in Italy.**

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With the end of the Second Samnite War, free Italians could have no illusions about what the Romans were ultimately aiming for. The conflict called the Third Samnite War (298–290) was, in fact, the last stand of free Italy in the face of Roman expansion. Although sparked by Roman assistance to people attacked by the Samnites, the Third Samnite War became a pan-Italic conflict. A coalition of Samnites, Umbrians, Etruscans, and Gauls fought the Romans at Sentinum in 295 B.C., the largest battle yet fought on Italian soil. The Roman victory led to the incorporation of the Samnites into the Roman administration of Italy in 290 B.C. The Romans were now dominant in central Italy, although some mopping-up operations continued for several decades.

Roman conflict with the Greek colony of Tarentum led to the invasion of Pyrrhus, Rome's first overseas enemy. Tarentum, pressed by Roman expansion, called on King Pyrrhus of Epirus for help. Pyrrhus invaded Italy in 281 B.C. with an army of 25,000 men and 20 elephants. Commanding a well-trained and well-equipped army fighting in the formidable Macedonian phalanx formation, Pyrrhus defeated the Romans twice, in 280 and 279 B.C. After a fruitless campaign in Sicily, Pyrrhus returned to mainland Italy in 275 B.C. and fought the Romans to a standstill at Beneventum in 275. Then Pyrrhus withdrew to his kingdom, leaving Rome mistress of all of the Italian Peninsula south of the Po Valley.

The expansion of Rome in Italy carried important ramifications for Roman politics, society, and culture. The authority of the Senate was greatly increased. Originally an advisory body made up of the wealthiest and most influential Romans, by the time of Pyrrhus's invasion, the Senate had become the dominant political entity in the state. This was a consequence of the constant warfare, which placed a premium on experienced commanders. There was great economic growth, as reflected in population increases, more building in Rome, an increase in available luxury goods, an increase in the number of slaves, and so on. There was also cultural change, in the form of greater contacts with the Etruscans and, especially, the Greeks. ■

## Suggested Reading

A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins*.

T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, chapters 12, 14.

Livy, *Early History of Rome*, books 4–5.

E. T. Salmon, *Samnium and the Samnites*.

## Questions to Consider

1. Was Roman expansion in Italy a conscious campaign of conquest with long-term objectives set at the outset? If not, how can the Roman conquest of Italy be characterized?
2. Did the non-Roman peoples of Italy stand any chance against Roman aggression? If so, how? If not, why not?

# The Roman Confederation in Italy

## Lecture 10

**What makes [the Romans] remarkable is that they evolved apparently quite early in their career in imperialism a method of privilege sharing with their territories.**

**T**he Romans developed early in their history a system of privilege sharing with allied or related communities that differed from the usually harsh treatment ancient victors showed to their vanquished foes. Although the origins of the system are obscure, it seems that the Romans could, under certain conditions, extend the privileges of citizenship to other communities. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., a secondary citizenship status had emerged—the state without the vote (a citizenship lacking rights of political participation, called *civitas sine suffragio*).

The Romans also embarked on a policy of colonization early in their history, and the foundation of colonies became an important diplomatic wing of Roman expansion in Italy. Roman colonies were founded in newly conquered territories and at strategically important locations. Colonies were initially comprised of Romans and Latins, the former being the largest group. Colonists enjoyed what came to be called Latin Rights (*ius Latii*), which was a sort of restricted Roman citizenship. The Roman foundation of colonies was carried on in peacetime, but it could be provocative, as when it contributed to the outbreak of the Second Samnite War.

As Roman power expanded, the Romans developed other degrees of community status (e.g., the double colonies). Beginning with Tusculum in 381 B.C., the Romans developed a community status below the colony, called the *municipium*. The rights and status of a *municipium* in the early period are unclear, but in later periods the *municipium* comprised local citizens whose ruling classes alone were admitted to Roman citizenship. Below the *municipium*, and especially in southern Italy, the Romans established treaty states (*civitates foederatae*), which enjoyed only those privileges stipulated in their treaty with Rome.

The developed Confederation of Italy allowed the Romans to divide and conquer the peoples of Italy, and it offered great benefits to the Romans. The final form of the Confederation, as it had evolved over centuries, ranked subject communities in a variety of bilateral status relationships with Rome. The final form of the Confederation was as follows: At the top were colonies of Roman citizens (*optima iure*); next came Latin colonies (*ius Latii*); *municipia* stood below the Latin colonies; and treaty states (*civitates foederatae*) brought up the rear. Within this scheme, the Romans could promote or demote communities depending on circumstances. Eventually, these statuses could be conferred by the Roman Senate on any community (e.g., colonial or Latin status could be granted to already existing communities).

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**The Roman Confederation of Italy stands at the root of Roman imperial success in the Mediterranean.**

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These bilateral arrangements effectively divided the Italians among themselves. In each case, the agreements were bilateral between Rome and the subject communities, encouraging the locals to look to Rome for their welfare. Adjacent communities could enjoy widely divergent statuses with Rome, mitigating their capability to act in concert against Rome.

The system also provided Rome with a large pool of military manpower. Whatever the status of the subject community, provision of troops for the army was a universal requirement. Rome could therefore impose the basic duty of citizenship—military service—without being obliged offer to the privileges of citizenship in return. Thus, approximately half of the Roman army came from the subject states of the Roman Confederation of Italy.

This early system of administration of conquered territories had several important long-term consequences. It was to play a vital role in facilitating Roman overseas expansion by virtue of the huge manpower Rome could bring to bear on any given situation. In times of crisis, it offered Rome security, as when Pyrrhus failed to detach Rome's allies from the Confederation or during the Second Punic War (Lecture 13). When an altered version of the Confederation was extended beyond Italy, it was to form the basis for the stability and longevity of the later Roman Empire. ■

## Suggested Reading

T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*, chapter 12.

A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, esp. chapters 1–2.

## Questions to Consider

1. What criteria did Rome apply in determining the status of subject communities?
2. To what degree did Roman political domination of Italy entail a cultural domination of the peninsula?

# **The International Scene on the Eve of Roman Expansion**

## **Lecture 11**

**People at the time did not pay much attention to the growth of Roman power. It would seem to have been a very regional thing. “It is going to affect the people of Italy, but we in Turkey and Syria are quite safe.” How wrong they were to be.**

**T**he eastern Mediterranean was the home of a civilization stretching back 3,000 years. Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor (Turkey), and Greece all had long heritages of organized and urbanized statehood. The situation in this region in circa 270 B.C. was itself complex.

Alexander the Great's conquests had created the Hellenistic kingdoms in this region, but his conquest of Persia was followed by turmoil in the eastern lands. After his death, Alexander's generals vied with one another, initially for control of the empire, but later for what part of it they could safely control. The result was a balance of power among three mutually antagonistic Hellenic kingdoms ruled by descendants of Alexander's generals: In Egypt ruled the Ptolemaic dynasty; in Syria ruled the Seleucids; and in the Macedonian homeland ruled the Antigonids.

In the buffer zones between these major states, smaller kingdoms and federations arose. the Aetolian and Achaean Leagues held sway in mainland Greece; the Attalid kingdom of Pergamum ruled in northwest Asia Minor; and the island state of Rhodes was its own entity. These Hellenistic states were sophisticated and were constantly in competition with one another. Smaller states survived by allying themselves with more powerful ones, or by playing one off the other.

In this complex international scene, the rise of Rome in Italy was not a major event. For the most part, these important and historical states paid little attention to Rome's rise. There were two exceptions: Carthage is reported to have made three treaties with Rome in 509, 348, and 306 B.C. These treaties, particularly the earliest, are disputed, but they appear to have been

**The Greek colonies on Sicily ... were ancient and formidable.**

**Much of the rest of the west, particularly the hinterland and northern reaches of western Europe, were under tribal societies of Celts and Germans.**

designed to protect Carthaginian interests in Italy. In 273 B.C., the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt declared friendship with Rome, clearly a response to Pyrrhus's failure in Italy. This ensured the survival of Ptolemaic Egypt until 31 B.C.

There was little indication in circa 270 B.C. that Rome was on the brink of conquering the entire Mediterranean basin, which it would do in little more than 100 years. The superpowers were Egypt and Syria in the east and Carthage in the west. Rome had a naval capacity, but it was not a major naval power. Rome

had a coastal defense navy and had even fought some naval battles, but did not compare with the other big powers, including Rhodes and especially Carthage. Carthage became the first adversary of expanding Rome. ■

### Suggested Reading

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, 113–16, 150–51.

E. S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*.

### Questions to Consider

1. What factors can you identify in the shaping of the international scene in the Mediterranean prior to about 270 B.C.?
2. How did Rome measure up as a major power on the eve of her expansion overseas? What advantages did it have for the coming struggles?



# Carthage and the First Punic War

## Lecture 12

Rome's rise to dominance can broadly be divided into two halves. The first deals with the western Mediterranean, specifically the city of Carthage. In the second half, it turns its attention to the highly developed Hellenist and Hellenistic half of the eastern Mediterranean in the period beginning around 200 B.C. or so.

Rome's rise to dominance of the entire Mediterranean basin falls into two broad phases. First came the conflicts with Carthage that led to Rome controlling the entire western Mediterranean. Second came Rome's complex involvement in the affairs of the Hellenistic kingdoms to the east.

Carthage was an ancient Phoenician city run by a mercantile oligarchy. Located in what is modern-day Tunisia, the city had a long history of involvement in the western Mediterranean. By tradition, Carthage was founded in 814 B.C. by Phoenician traders. Located on a superb harbor with a fertile hinterland and endowed with an enterprising populace, the city quickly rose to a position of power.

By the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Carthaginian trading posts could be found all along North Africa, in western Sicily, in Sardinia, in Corsica, and in Spain. Conflict with the Greek colonies of Sicily, especially Syracuse, was frequent in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. By the time the Romans had conquered the Italian mainland, a sort of balance of power obtained in Sicily, with Syracuse dominant in the eastern half of the island and Carthage in the west. Carthage maintained her overseas interests through diplomacy backed by a large fleet and mercenary armies.

Originally ruled by a governor, Carthage's autocracy had early given way to an oligarchy of ruling families. As in the Roman Republican oligarchy, two judges (*suffetes*) were elected annually, and there was a senate-like council. An unusual feature was a permanent court of 104 lifetime members, who scrutinized the affairs of professional generals and admirals.

The Carthaginian government was driven by concerns of profit and cost-effectiveness, which differed greatly from Rome's motivation. Carthage was run like a large company, with citizens getting a share in the profits of trade. The Carthaginians resorted to war when necessary but preferred peaceful means of resolving potential conflicts. In contrast, the Romans were motivated by the sociopolitical considerations of loyalty to one's friends and allies and maintaining face.

The First Punic War started small and by accident but developed into a titanic struggle for control of Sicily. The spark that ignited the First Punic war was small. Italian adventurers, called the Mamertines, seized the eastern Sicilian city of Messina and, when pressured by Syracuse, appealed first to Carthage and then to Rome. The humiliation of the Carthaginian fleet and the movement of the Romans into Sicily caused the Carthaginians to send troops to Sicily to crush the Mamertines. This affair brought Rome and Carthage into open conflict.

The course of the war fell into three phases. The first phase (264–260 B.C.) saw Roman and Punic armies fighting on land in Sicily. The Roman feat of arms in storming and capturing Agrigentum in 262 B.C. cowed the Carthaginians, who avoided engaging the legions in a set-piece land battle for the rest of the war.

Roman frustration at the Punic ability to resupply Sicily by sea led to the second phase of the war, fought on the Tyrrhenian Sea and in Africa (260–255 B.C.). The Romans built a huge fleet in a few months and put to sea in 260 B.C., defeating the Carthaginians at the Battle of Mylae. A Roman invasion of North Africa in 256 B.C. ended with the ambush and defeat of the Roman force in 255 B.C., followed shortly thereafter by the destruction of the Roman fleet in a storm off Sicily.

The third and final phase of the war was fought on Sicily and the surrounding seas (255–241 B.C.). The Carthaginians fought most of this phase of the war as a guerrilla campaign from their impregnable bases at Mount Eryx and Mount Hercte in western Sicily. Both sides also vied for control of naval bases in Sicily.

Carthaginian cost-effective thinking hampered their war effort and, in 241 B.C., when they faced a new Roman fleet at the Aegates Islands, they were roundly defeated. The Carthaginians surrendered, and the Romans imposed weighty terms. The Romans imposed a huge war indemnity and debarred Carthage from Sicily (which Rome promptly annexed).

The First Punic War had important ramifications for Rome and for Carthage. Rome enjoyed several benefits as a result of its victory. They had been drawn out of the Italian Peninsula and now possessed their first overseas province, the fertile island of Sicily. They now possessed the largest fleet in the Mediterranean. They took advantage of their fleet and Punic weakness to annex Sardinia and Corsica in 238 B.C., further encroaching into the traditional Carthaginian sphere of activity. Roman tenacity and determination in the face of adversity had been made clear to all.

Defeat drove Carthage to new pastures. The closing of the seas around Sicily and Italy drove Carthage westward. Between 241 and 220 B.C., the Carthaginians carved out a small empire in Spain. In certain Carthaginian circles, the Roman victory was too bitter a pill to swallow, and an even larger conflict was to emerge from this circumstance. ■

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**For the Carthaginians the defeat at the hands of the Romans was humiliating to be sure. It also had some very important ramifications.**

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### Suggested Reading

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 12.

Lancel, *Carthage: A History*.

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, book 1.

## Questions to Consider

1. What advantages did Carthage have over Rome as it entered the First Punic War?
2. How do you explain the Carthaginian failure in this conflict? Can you identify any single turning point in the war and argue why it was decisive?

# The Second Punic (or Hannibalic) War

## Lecture 13

**Carthaginian expansion in Spain proved to be the spark for the second major conflict between Rome and Carthage, the Second Punic War, which took a very different course from the first one.**

**W**hile Carthage was active in Spain, Roman attention was diverted to the Adriatic Sea and the Po Valley. The activities of pirates along the eastern Italian seaboard drove Rome to conduct military operations in Illyria on the eastern Adriatic. In 229 B.C., the region was declared a Roman protectorate. To block another Gallic incursion into Italy from Gallia Cisalpina, the Romans invaded the region in 225 B.C. and annexed it as a province in 220 B.C.

Carthaginian expansion in Spain provided the spark that ignited the Second Punic War. Under able leadership, the Carthaginians had gained control of much of eastern Spain by 220 B.C., a fact finally noticed by the Romans. The main Carthaginian leader was Hamilcar Barca, a veteran of the Sicilian campaigns in the last phase of the First Punic War. He allegedly harbored an intense hatred of Rome. Hamilcar Barca was the father of Hannibal.

Sometime in the mid-220s B.C., the Romans and Carthaginians reached agreement on spheres of influence in Spain, according to the account of Polybius. The details of this Ebro Treaty are disputed. Carthage undertook not



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**The Second Punic War led to the annihilation of Carthage.**

to extend its power north of the River Ebro. Whether the Romans undertook not to interfere south of this river is not made explicit in our sources. The Romans took under their protection the town of Saguntum, which lay south of the River Ebro. It is not clear when this agreement with Saguntum was reached; we do not know whether it was before or after the Ebro agreement.

Hannibal had been in command in Spain since 221 B.C. War was declared in 219 B.C., following Hannibal's attack on Saguntum and the rejection by Carthage of a Roman ultimatum to hand him over for trial.

The Second Punic War was fought simultaneously in several theaters of operation, and it stretched the resources of both sides to their limits. The Romans prepared for a replay of the First Punic War. In Hannibal, however, the Romans faced one of history's greatest military minds. Hannibal seized the initiative and invaded Italy from the north, forcing the Romans to fight for their very survival.

Hannibal marched his army over the Pyrenees, through hostile territory in southern France, and over the Alps. He arrived in Italy in the spring of 218 B.C., catching the Romans completely by surprise. After defeating a small Roman force at Ticinus, Hannibal crushed a large Roman army at Trebia in 218 B.C. The following year, he ambushed and destroyed a consular army at Lake Trasimene in Etruria.

Facing this crisis, the Romans declared a dictator, Q. Fabius Maximus, who adopted Fabian tactics in dealing with Hannibal during the rest of 217 B.C. New consuls in 216 B.C. advocated crushing Hannibal with a single stroke. A joint consular army, some 80,000 strong, charged the Punic army at Cannae in 216 B.C. The resulting defeat was the worst reverse ever inflicted on the Roman military, and it left Rome itself open to attack by Hannibal.

Hannibal, however, could not drive home his advantage. The Romans did not negotiate a peace, as might have been expected. The Roman allies in central Italy stood firm and did not defect to Hannibal. Hannibal had no siege equipment and no local support to press a siege of Rome. Despite his spectacular early successes, Hannibal's subsequent campaign in Italy (216–

203 B.C.) was little more than an irritant to the Romans, whose attentions were diverted elsewhere.

The Romans were simultaneously fighting Carthaginian forces in Spain and Sicily. The Roman objective was to prevent reinforcement of Hannibal. The campaigns were difficult and marked by several Roman defeats, but eventually the Romans prevailed in both theaters. Syracuse had foolishly sided with Hannibal after Cannae. It was taken in 211 B.C., and Sicily was secured for Rome. Hasdrubal, Hannibal's brother, succeeded in breaking out of Spain and making it to Italy, but he was defeated and killed at the battle of the Metaurus in 207 B.C.

The emergence of P. Cornelius Scipio on the Roman side spelled victory for the Romans. Victorious in Spain, young Scipio advocated an invasion of Africa to draw Hannibal out of Italy. Despite intense opposition, he won the debate and took a large force to Africa in 204 B.C. Hannibal left Italy the following year to defend his homeland. He was defeated at the Battle of Zama in 202 B.C., and Carthage surrendered.

Roman terms were harsher than at the end of the First Punic War. Carthage had to pay a huge war indemnity. Carthaginian territories in Spain were ceded to the Romans, and in Africa large tracts of Punic territory were awarded to the native kingdom of Numidia (modern Algeria), now a Roman ally. The Carthaginian navy was limited to 10 ships. As for Hannibal, he was spared but hounded by the Romans for the next 20 years, until he was forced to commit suicide in 182 B.C.

The Second Punic War had several important consequences for Rome. It revealed much about the Roman mentality; for the Carthaginians, it led to their ultimate annihilation.



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**Hannibal (d. 182 B.C.), the legendary Carthaginian general.**

The Romans had become masters of the western Mediterranean. In 196 B.C.\*, Rome formed two new provinces in Spain from the former Punic holdings there. Rome would be occupied for the next two centuries in conquering the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. Roman interest in the south of France increased; Rome was concerned with keeping a land route open to her new Spanish possessions. Control of this region was secured by 180 B.C.

Above all, the war highlighted Roman tenacity in the face of adversity and the iron grip the Romans held on Italy through their carefully constructed Confederation.

Carthage lost everything and was eventually destroyed by the suspicious Romans. In 149 B.C., in one of the most disgraceful episodes in Roman history, the Romans picked a fight with Carthage and besieged it. The Carthaginians held out for three years, but the city fell and was destroyed in 146 B.C. The site remained vacant for a century. ■

### Suggested Reading

T. J. Cornell et al., *The Second Punic War: A Reappraisal*.

Livy, *The War with Hannibal* (books 21–30 of his *History of Rome from its Foundation*).

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, book 3.

### Questions to Consider

1. Who was responsible for starting the Second Punic War?
2. Despite his early successes, why did Hannibal ultimately fail in his invasion of Italy?

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\**Erratum*: In the lecture, the professor states that Spain was formed into two provinces in 197 B.C. The correct date is 196 B.C., as shown in the lecture guide.



# Rome in the Eastern Mediterranean

## Lecture 14

[Polybius] was motivated, he tells us, to write his history of Rome specifically to address the question of how the Romans managed what he considered to be a remarkable achievement, the conquest of what he regarded as the entire civilized world in a space of a little over 50 years.

For contemporaries, the emergence of Rome onto the civilized stage as they would have perceived it—namely, the eastern half of the Mediterranean—was a bewildering event in its speed and success. Little more than 50 years elapsed between Rome's first moves eastward at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and her defeat of every major power and extension of control over the entire region. Polybius, a Greek hostage at Rome in the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century, was prompted to write his history of Rome out of a need to explain these events. His account remains invaluable, and it is our earliest extant written source on Roman history.

In three wars, the Romans took on and defeated the formidable kingdom of Antigonid Macedon. The First Macedonian War (215–204 B.C.) was fought while the Second Punic War was still in progress. Following Cannae (216 B.C.), Philip V of Macedon made a pact with Hannibal, since he believed that Roman power in Italy had been broken. To prevent Philip from aiding Hannibal, the Romans sent a small force against him and fomented local wars in northern Greece. The war was little more than a series of skirmishes. It came to a negotiated end in 204 B.C. Nevertheless, the Macedonians' actions reinforced the determination of the Romans, to whom Philip had now been identified as an enemy.

The Second Macedonian War (200–196 B.C.) was fought in the mountains of northern Greece and saw the Hellenistic king humiliated by defeat at Cynoscephalae. Roman allies in the east, Pergamum and Rhodes, appealed to Rome against Philip and the Seleucid king Antiochus III, who had signed a nonaggression pact with each other. Despite being exhausted after the Second Punic War, the Romans sent a force into Macedon.

After several years of cat-and-mouse maneuvering, the armies clashed by accident at Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C., and the Macedonians were roundly defeated. A negotiated peace saw Macedon debarred from Greece and the Aegean Sea. More importantly, the Romans now considered themselves

**True power, as far as the Romans were concerned at this time, was not controlling territory. It was just this sort of incident, telling people what to do, and they obeyed.**

protectors of the Greeks, a position strengthened by the complete withdrawal of Roman troops from the region in 194 B.C.

The Third Macedonian War (172–168 B.C.) spelled the end of the Antigonid dynasty in Macedon. Philip's son and successor, Perseus, abandoned his father's compliant stance toward the Romans and began infiltrating Greece and the Aegean. Diplomatic efforts to forestall a crisis failed, and war broke out in 172 B.C.

After three years of maneuvering, the Romans and Macedonians clashed at Pydna in northern Greece.

Perseus was utterly defeated and deposed, and his kingdom was divided into four republics. When these republics revolted under an Antigonid pretender in 150 B.C., Rome intervened and annexed the former kingdom as a province (146 B.C.). In this year, Rome destroyed Corinth to punish rebellious free Greeks. The Romans now had a permanent presence in the eastern Mediterranean.

While the conflicts with Macedon were continuing, the Romans also defeated Seleucid Syria and became the masters of the eastern Mediterranean. Despite the Roman declaration of a free Greece in 196 B.C., many Greeks were suspicious of Rome's ultimate intentions. Disillusioned with Roman hegemony, in 193 the Aetolian League invited Antiochus III of Syria to liberate Greece. The Romans were already suspicious of Antiochus because of his pact with Philip and his harboring of Hannibal at court.

When Antiochus landed in Greece in 192 B.C., he was met with Roman arms. He was driven out completely in 190 B.C. The Romans counterattacked into Asia in 189 B.C. and, although outnumbered by a factor of three, defeated a massive Seleucid force at the Battle of Magnesia in that year. The Roman

General Scipio Africanus was once again a victor over a more powerful foe, Antiochus was forced to pay a vast indemnity, and Syria was debarred from operating in Asia Minor.

In 168 B.C., the Rhodians attempted to mediate between Rome and Perseus of Macedon. Roman suspicion was aroused, and Rhodes was ruined by a single decree of the Senate. In the same year, Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria attempted to invade Ptolemaic Egypt but was turned back by an unarmed embassy from the Roman Senate. As a result of the Macedonian and Seleucid Wars, Rome had by 160 B.C. gained control of both the eastern and western Mediterranean. Roman power was immense, and it could be exercised to the detriment and humiliation of entire states without violence. The mere threat of confrontation with the legions was now sufficient to humble kings at the head of their armies. ■

### Suggested Reading

A. Lintott, *Imperium Romanum*, chapter 1.

Livy, *Rome and the Mediterranean* (books 31–55 of his *History of Rome from its Foundation*).

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, book 17.

### Questions to Consider

1. What factors account for Rome's success in her dealings with the eastern Mediterranean powers throughout the period covered in this lecture?
2. Could Macedon or Syria have defeated Rome? If so, how could they have achieved this goal?

# Explaining the Rise of the Roman Empire

## Lecture 15

The Romans didn't gain their empire by shaking people's hands and kissing babies. They gained it by fighting battles, as we saw unequivocally in the last three lectures. They fought battle after battle, war after war, almost continuously taking on new and more distant foreign powers and always remarkably emerging victorious.

The Romans won their empire by virtue of their superior military might and great reserves of manpower. The Roman army of the Republic was a fine fighting machine. It was not a standing army, but instead it was raised ad hoc. It was composed of citizen-soldiers formed into legions and of allied troops under Roman commanders. Soldiering was a duty of citizenship, so each soldier provided his own equipment.

The legion was an independent fighting unit of about 4,500 infantrymen, subdivided into tactical units called maniples, 30 per legion. Each maniple was comprised of two centuries, each headed by a centurion. The troops were divided by age and equipment into three classes of maniples (10 per class per legion).

In battle, the Roman army was a formidable opponent and tactically malleable. The army went into battle in a set formation, the *acies triplex*. It charged on command, throwing two volleys of javelins before engaging at close quarters with short swords. Because of the manipular and century



Detail from Trajan's Column, showing Roman troops mobilizing for battle.

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organization, the Roman army was more flexible in the midst of combat than were other ancient armies.

The Roman army was characterized by rigid discipline and devotion to duty. The marching camp is a good indication of Roman discipline: Camps were identical in layout; thus, each soldier knew his place and could eat and rest well before action. There was a system of rewards and punishments to encourage the men to perform well and dissuade them from shirking. Finally, the Confederation of Italy gave the Romans access to vast reserves of manpower that their opponents could not match.

Ancient explanations varied as to why the Romans conquered the known world as they did. Polybius came up with layered reasons for the Roman success. The overarching explanation was fortune's wheel in the grand scheme of things. There were two more immediate reasons: the Roman army was practically invincible, and the Roman state was stable and well-balanced, allowing the Romans to concentrate on fighting opponents.

The Romans themselves did not do a lot of soul searching. To them, their empire seemed to be the natural order of things. They believed that the power of their gods and the devotion of the Roman state was reflected in the success and extent of their empire. There were some vague notions that their admirable qualities (justice, loyalty, hard work, and frugality) had earned them their empire. The latter view sometimes came close to a notion of civilizing the world.

Modern explanations are more searching, but they often reflect more the values of their proponents' times than they do ancient conditions. A variety of ideas have, at one time or another, held sway. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, vague notions formed of the Romans civilizing the world. Theodore Mommsen formulated the notion of defensive imperialism in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. According to this theory, which stood for 100 years, the Romans obtained their empire through actions taken out of fear inculcated by the Gauls in 390 B.C. and Hannibal in the Second Punic War.

W. V. Harris painted a very different picture in 1979. He asserted that the Romans actively sought their empire for classically imperialist motives:

greed and a desire for power. Roman society was highly bellicose, and this impelled them to act. More recently, an approach based on systems analysis has emerged: The Roman Confederation of Italy was essentially military in nature and, to justify their continued leadership of the Confederation, the Romans were impelled to use the armies of which they gained control every year.

In each case, the modern explanations for Roman imperialism reflect the tenor of their formulators' own times better than ancient times. Mommsen's defensive imperialism was appealing to 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century imperialists. Harris's aggressive Romans were reflections of the postcolonial era, particularly post-Vietnam America. The modern systems analysis fits our computerized era. None of these views is wrong, but nor are they entirely convincing.

It was in the nature of ancient states to expand; the Romans did it best. Expansion was the bread-and-butter of ancient societies. The Romans behaved like any other ancient state, but they did so more effectively. Historical contingency had given them control over great manpower resources, so their natural expansion was rapid and effective. ■

### Suggested Reading

W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*.

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, book 6.19–42.

### Questions to Consider

1. Which explanation of Roman imperialism do you find most convincing? Why?
2. Given ancient realities, are we correct in even applying the notion of imperialism to the Romans?

# **“The Captured Conqueror”—Rome and Hellenism**

## **Lecture 16**

**To begin, it must be stated straight out that the Hellenization of Rome is not a straightforward process that starts in x B.C. and ends in y B.C. It is a long and complicated process that has no real clear beginning or, for that matter, any clear ending.**

**H**ellenization started well before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Roman exposure to Greek culture came early, and its beginnings are lost to us. There are no starting or end dates for the process of Hellenization of Rome; it was a complex process of acculturation.

The Etruscans, thoroughly Hellenized, were probably the medium for early Roman contact with Greek culture. The story of Aeneas, firmly rooted in Greek legend, illustrates this fact. In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, the Romans moved further south in Italy and encountered firsthand the Greek city-states in Naples, Tarentum, and elsewhere. Roman involvement in the eastern Mediterranean, however, hurried the process.

Polybius (c. 200–118 B.C.) illustrates the situation in the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century. Polybius was a rising Achaean statesman from Megalopolis in the Peloponnese. He was a typically urbane and educated Greek, and he was headed for prominence in the Achaean League. Following the Battle of Pydna, he was denounced to the Romans and interned without trial in Italy for 16 years.

Polybius was no hostage in our sense of the word. He struck up a relationship with P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, son of the victorious general at Pydna. Polybius remained in Rome, as a “guest” of the Scipiones. His treatment and position were not atypical for thousands of Greeks who came to Rome as slaves in those years, hastening the process of Hellenization.

There are multiple symptoms of Rome’s Hellenization in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. Education changed, and a true Latin literature emerged. Livius Andronicus, a half-Greek from Tarentum, acted as mentor to the children

**If many Romans were exuberantly embracing Greek culture, there was also something of a traditionalist, nationalist counterreaction, as symbolized by Marcus Porcius Cato Censorinus (Cato the Elder).**

of a leading Roman senator in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Andronicus translated Homer's *Odyssey* into Latin and composed Greek-style literary works in Latin; thus, he started the history of Latin literature.

Subsequent Latin authors show increasing familiarity with and usage of Greek genres and modes of expression. Some early Roman authors composed in Greek, such as Q. Fabius Pictor, the first Roman historian. The rise of Roman literature was facilitated by the Hellenization of Roman educational practices from the 3<sup>rd</sup>

century onward. Many tutors and teachers in Rome were Greeks. Under their influence, traditional "practical" Roman education gave way to a Hellenized, verbally focused education.

Greek embassies and intellectuals began coming to Rome and giving public lectures. Carneades of Cyrene, head of the Academy in Athens, dazzled the Roman upper classes with his rhetoric and learning in the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century. Asclepiades of Bithynia rose to great prominence as a doctor and medical lecturer circa 130–100 B.C.

Roman art and architecture become Hellenized. Romans prized Greek works of art, and originals or copies circulated widely. Roman public architecture to this date was drab and rather Etruscan; it utilized mostly wood, mud brick, and plain stone. Successful Roman generals began building Greek-style temples in a new medium: marble. Subsequent public buildings in Rome became more and more elaborate and lavish.

Roman reaction to the process was mixed and complex. Many Romans exuberantly embraced the sophistication of Greek culture and language. Roman aristocrats, we hear, adopted Greek dress, language, and habits. How much the lower orders followed suit is not clear.



There was also a traditionalist counterreaction, symbolized by Marcus Porcius Cato the Censor (234–139 B.C.). Cato was from Tusculum, outside Rome; he rose to prominence as a statesman, soldier, and writer. He valued the old traditions of Rome: severity, seriousness, devotion to military duty, hard work, frugality, and so on. Publicly, he railed against Hellenization. He educated his own son in the traditional fashion. He had Carneades ejected from Rome for undermining traditional values. He particularly hated Greek doctors.

Privately, he was very familiar with Greek language and culture. He displayed an intimate knowledge of Greek literature even as he condemned it. He wrote works in a rustic Latin style that consciously contrasted with the sophisticated Greek.

In sum, the Hellenization of Rome should not be simplified as a one-way process starting at a certain time and ending in another. It was a long and complicated process. ■

### Suggested Reading

Beard and Crawford, *Rome in the Late Republic*, chapter 2.

Plutarch, *Makers of Rome*, 4 (“Cato the Elder”).

### Questions to Consider

1. What were the media through which Greek culture penetrated Rome?
2. What were the different degrees of Roman reaction to Hellenization? Was the process limited to the upper classes alone?

# Governing the Roman Republic, Part I— Senate and Magistrates

## Lecture 17

The shape of the Roman government, the shape of the Republic, was partly a product of the nature of the Romans themselves. They were very dichotomous in their outlook. They were innovative, adaptive, and dynamic people, but they were also extremely conservative.

The Roman Republican government was not based on a written constitution. It evolved over time and was in place by 150 B.C. The Struggle of the Orders and Roman expansion helped shape its evolution and had created a parallel Plebeian State, which had amalgamated with the Republic by the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.

The shape of the government was a product of Roman innovation and conservatism. Roman expansion in Italy and beyond also influenced the shape of the Republic. It reflects the dichotomous nature of the Romans: at once innovative and highly conservative of old traditions (the *mos maiorum*, or way of the ancestors). This tension with the Romans between innovation and conservatism created a highly complex system of administration replete with redundancies.

The two wings of government were meetings of citizens and executive officers, called magistrates, attached to those meetings. The meetings of citizens came in two forms: the Senate and the popular assemblies. Most Roman officers were attached to the Senate and were called magistrates. Two sets of officers, however, were attached to one of the popular assemblies: the tribunes and aediles of the plebs. Most Roman magistrates were elected by popular vote and held office for one year.

The Senate was the preeminent body in the state by virtue of tradition and circumstance rather than by virtue of any legal power. Its function was advisory, to issue *senatus consulta* (decrees) on issues it had debated as guidance for the magistrates. The Senate had no legal power to pass laws. The origins of the Senate are obscure, but its pre-eminence developed

in response to Rome's expansion, its constant warring with neighbors and then foreign states in Italy and beyond: Originally comprising experienced and educated leaders and generals, by 150 B.C., it was formed from ex-magistrates and the richest and most influential men from prominent families. While Rome's expansion was in progress, the advice of the Senate was carefully heeded.

The magistrates attached to the Senate were the prestigious officers of the state. Office holding was predicated on the concept of power sharing and was based on two important concepts: collegiality and limited tenure of office. Limited tenure of office ensured that authority circulated frequently; and collegiality ensured that every magistrate had a least one colleague who had equal powers with himself and thus could veto his actions. This obviated the threat of autocracy. Since the Roman Republic had begun as a reaction against a monarchy, the notion of power-sharing was central to holding office in the Republic.

By 150 B.C., a hierarchy of office (*cursus honorum*) had been established, effectively channeling candidates to increasing levels of responsibility and authority in an ordered sequence: Quaestors were the most junior magistrates and had certain financial duties. This office was limited to candidates at least 25 years old; 10 were elected annually. Aediles oversaw the fabric of the city, what went on in it, and the games. This office was limited to ex-quaestors at least 36 years old; four were elected annually. Praetors served important judicial, political, and military functions and had to be ex-quaestors at least 39 years old; six were elected annually. With the praetorship came the grant of *imperium* (command). Consuls were the leading annual magistrates, with complete political, judicial, and military powers. This office was limited to ex-praetors at least 42 years old; two were elected annually.

In addition to the annually elected magistrates, two other offices existed. Two censors were elected every five years and held office for 18 months. This office was limited to ex-consuls. The duties of censors included holding

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**This is the  
government that  
is right there in  
front of you, one  
that you can see,  
watch, heckle,  
and praise as  
you see fit.**

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a census of Roman citizens (counting them and assigning them to classes), reviewing public morals, revising the roll of senators, and seeing to tax collection and public construction.

In extraordinary circumstances, the regular constitution could be suspended and a dictator appointed. This man had to be an ex-consul and was nominated by a magistrate. He had no colleague. He was given a specific task and held office for six months or until his task was completed, whichever came first. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., this position had pretty much disappeared in practice. There were also provisions for an *interrex* to arrange elections as necessary.

A Roman magistrate had to do his job personally, and not by delegation. Ritual and public appearance were a big part of the magistracy. For example, *lictors* carried the bundle of rods (*fascēs*) symbolizing *imperium*. The higher the office, the more *lictors* (“lictors” in English) appeared in the retinue of the official. Magistrates also carried out certain religious functions. This was a physical, face-to-face type of government. ■

### Suggested Reading

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapters 11 and 18.

Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, book 6.1–18.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why was the Roman Senate the leading body of the state by 150 B.C.?
2. Was the Roman system of office-holding in the Republic efficient? Was efficiency its goal?

# Governing the Roman Republic, Part II— Popular Assemblies and Provincial Administration

## Lecture 18

The popular assemblies played a vital role in the Roman Republic. They were the bodies that elected all the officers of the state, be they the magistrates attached to the Senate or the tribunes and aediles of the plebs attached to one of the popular assemblies themselves.

The assemblies were the sovereign bodies of the Roman state but were organized in such a way as to favor the influential families in Rome. Roman popular assemblies were restricted by three important principles. They could only meet on being summoned by an officer. Voting was by blocs, not by individual citizens, and ceased once a simple majority had been reached. There was not a right of free address to the assembly.

There were four popular assemblies. The oldest was the Curiate Assembly (*comitia curiata*) with roots in the Regal Period; it was obscure and largely redundant by the Middle Republic. Comprised of 30 *curiae* (groups of citizens), it ratified grants of power (*imperium*) to magistrates.

The Centuriate Assembly (*comitia centuriata*) was the most complex in organization. Its roots may lie in the Regal Period, and it seems to have been the citizen body meeting in its military guise. It was summoned by military trumpet and met outside the city walls on the *Campus Martius* (Field of Mars), because no army could enter Rome under arms. The citizens were organized into 193 voting blocks called centuries, after the military units. Assignment of citizens to centuries depended on their wealth, and the rich and influential were assigned more centuries than the poor; the utterly destitute (called the head count, *capitecensi*) were grouped into one century. Voting proceeded from the leading centuries to the lower and stopped when a majority was reached, so the poor and the Head Count rarely got to vote. The Centuriate Assembly elected the consuls, praetors, censors, and (as needed) the *interrex*; it could pass laws, especially concerning war and peace; it was a court of appeal in capital cases; and it was convened by consuls or praetors.

The Council of the Plebs (*concilium plebis*), or Tribal Assembly of the Plebs (*comitia plebis tributa*), was the assembly of the Plebeian State incorporated into the Republic. It could be attended only by plebeians and was organized into 35 voting blocs called tribes, determined geographically. Voting order was determined by lot. Unlike the other assemblies, it had officers attached to it—10 tribunes and 2 aediles of the plebs, all plebeian, elected by the council every year—who convened the council. Tribunes also had the right to veto any convention or vote of any popular assembly. Following a law of 287 B.C., plebiscites (decisions of the council) had the force of law. The council became the chief legislative body in the Republic.

In response to the incorporation of the Council of the Plebs into the Republic, a more inclusive Tribal Assembly of the People (*comitia populi tributa*), comprising patricians as well as plebs, was created. It was modeled on the Council of the Plebs and was constituted into and voted in the 35 tribes. It was convened by consuls or praetors and elected the curule (patrician) aediles and quaestors each year. It could legislate on proposals of consuls and praetors, and it conducted minor trials.

The system of popular assemblies is full of redundancies, reflecting the tension between innovation and conservatism in Roman culture. New assemblies were added as new circumstances demanded, but old ones were not abolished. In all but the Council of the Plebs, the assemblies were constituted from the same citizens meeting in different voting blocs according to the assembly.

Despite its complexity, the system worked well while the elite and commoners were united in combating external enemies: The Senate convened, discussed the matter, voted, and issued its advice. The matter was then formulated as a proposal for a law and discussed in open meetings (*contiones*). Once discussion was over, a formal assembly was convened, the citizens organized into their appropriate voting blocs, the law was read, and a vote was taken.

The Roman attitude to provincial administration, in contrast, was characterized by a desire to exert the greatest control for the least responsibility. By 140 B.C., Rome had only eight provinces under its direct administration: Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Cisalpine Gaul, Nearer and Farther Spain, Africa, and

Macedonia. Even within provinces, administration was remarkably loose. A new province would be established by a committee of 10 senators who would visit the territory and assess the communities in it. Free and federated states enjoyed a treaty with Rome and were usually tax exempt. Free and immune states were tax exempt. Tributary states paid annual tribute to Rome. All provincial states were expected to be obedient and orderly, to pay taxes when required, and to supply men for the army.

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**The proconsuls and propraetors ... were responsible for two things: keeping the peace and order in their provinces. They were not concerned about local government.**

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Initially, the Romans created new magistracies (e.g., new praetors for Sicily, Sardinia, and Spain) to govern the growing empire. Increasingly, however, they preferred to extend an incumbent's power (*imperium*) for a further year, allowing him to govern a province as a proconsul or propraetor while new consuls and praetors took office. A proconsul or propraetor

was responsible for keeping the peace and seeing that taxes were collected; he had a minimal staff of a quaestor (for financial matters), representatives (*legati*), and friends he brought along to assist him (*comites*). This system of provincial administration was unsupervised and open to dreadful abuse. ■

### Suggested Reading

Cicero, *On Government*, #1 ("Against Verres").

Lintott, *Imperium Romanum*, chapters 4–6.

Taylor, *Roman Voting Assemblies*.

### Questions to Consider

1. How democratic was the Roman Republic?
2. Why did the Romans adopt a loose attitude toward governing their empire in the Republic?

# The Pressures of Empire

## Lecture 19

**The rapid rise in expansion of Rome within Italy and across the Mediterranean Sea exerted certain pressures and influences on the way Roman politics and Roman society operated that set the stage for the eventual dissolution of the whole system of government that we have examined, the Roman Republic.**

**T**he Senate's dominance was reinforced by the wars of expansion, but senatorial politics were factious. The wars of expansion greatly enhanced the Senate's position of dominance. Continuing wars and Roman successes strengthened the Senate's political position in the state. While only the assemblies passed laws, it became customary for the Senate to see its advice enacted as legislation. The Senate's corporate sense of entitlement to power and leadership grew stronger, especially in the spheres of state finances and foreign affairs, the two spheres in which its supremacy was virtually unchallenged.

The Senate had a strong corporate identity, but within the Senate there were sharp divisions. It was dominated by the nobles (*nobiles*), a small group of particularly powerful families. New arrivals (dubbed "new men") met fierce snobbery. Factions were not political parties organized along ideological lines but alliances of opportunity among influential men. A faction had a leading family with a leader and satellite families and supporters in varying degrees of influence around that leader.

The faction's function was to get its people placed in the most prestigious offices and military commands—or to block the ascent of opponents. Senatorial politics, therefore, was a personal and competitive business. Alliances within factions could form and dissolve rapidly. To a degree, foreign engagements were seen and used as tools in the constant domestic factional struggles.

The growth of empire also brought social and economic pressures. A new leading class emerged. As the empire grew, entrepreneurs made profits



out of exploiting the new territories. By circa 120 B.C., these men were known as Roman knights (*equites*), and this equestrian order formed a new social class in Rome. Simplistic distinctions between knights and senators based on wealth or occupation are not convincing; the situation was more complex. Senators could take part in trade and other business, and *equites* could own huge amounts of land. Some senators were poorer than *equites*. In reality, senators and *equites* formed the same broad socioeconomic class; all that distinguished them was participation in politics.

The stratification of Roman society and politics was now much more complex. The senatorial-equestrian class constituted the ruling elite. Within the senatorial class, there were divisions between patrician and plebeian, *nobilis* and *ordinarius*, established and new families. Equestrians overlapped with senators but did not take part in politics. Only senators and equestrians were eligible to stand for public office; an *equus* who got elected to a magistracy entered the Senate as a new man.

For the lower orders, there were also changes. For those who did not become rich, the empire was a mixed blessing. Some did well out of their soldiering and became more affluent. Others left their home farms and never returned, or they did come home and found the farm dilapidated. More and more of the latter sold their farms and went to the city to join the head count.

A manpower crisis was brewing in the mid-to-late 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. Affluent senators and equestrians formed larger and larger estates. They staffed the estates with cheap slave labor. Dispossessed smallholders fell below the property qualification for military service. The Roman army began to lack manpower. ■

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**Had the Romans not been so imperialistic and spread their empire so far and wide in so rapid a time, possibly the Senate might not have become so powerful.**

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## Suggested Reading

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapters 18, 19.

Scullard, *Gracchi to Nero*, chapter 1.

Stockton, *The Gracchi*, chapters 1–2.

## Questions to Consider

1. On what bases did senatorial politics operate?
2. Why did all Romans not benefit from the growth of empire?

# The Gracchi Brothers

## Lecture 20

**Tiberius was motivated by a single issue that he cleaved to and forced through as best he could, but Gaius Gracchus isn't. During his tribunate, he passed a whole wide range of bills on a variety of different matters. He appears to have been more of a firebrand than his brother, more openly antisenaatorial.**

**T**he Roman Revolution was not a planned event but a long series of interconnected events that spanned several generations. Unlike the Russian Revolution, for instance, nobody enacted the revolution for ideological reasons. Rather, it was a series of events in the domestic and foreign spheres that built on precedent to form an increasingly violent spiral of disorder and disruption. The ultimate effect of these events was to overthrow the Republic and replace it with the rule of the emperors.

The tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus in 133 B.C. was the starting point for the Revolution. A nobleman, Gracchus set out on the path of land reform. He was aware of the problems with land holding and manpower availability that had resulted from the growth of empire. As tribune of the plebs, he proposed a land law to reform land holding and create more small farmers who would be eligible for military service. An old law from 367 B.C. was to be revived, limiting the amount of public land (*ager publicus*) any one citizen could own. Citizens holding excessive amounts of public land had to return the surplus to the state. The repossessed land would then be distributed among the landless poor who comprised the head count. Although his law was to the disadvantage of the rich, Gracchus had support in the senate.

The issue of Gracchus's motivation has been a matter of scholarly controversy; different views conclude that he was a genuine reformer working for the benefit of the state, he was a revolutionary working for personal gain, or he was a Roman politician with one eye on a genuine need and the other on the benefits to himself and his supporters.

The conflict over Gracchus's law had disastrous consequences. Gracchus bypassed the Senate and proposed the law to the people in the Tribal Council of the Plebs. The Senate contracted another tribune, M. Octavius, to veto Gracchus's bill. Gracchus responded by having Octavius deposed by the plebiscite. He thereby undermined one of the central concepts of Roman office holding: collegiality. His law passed, but the Senate refused to fund its implementation. Gracchus then proposed a law diverting the taxes from the new province of Asia (the former kingdom of Pergamum) to fund his land reform. He thereby insinuated the popular assembly into the Senate's traditional preserves of state finances and foreign affairs. Believing that the work of the Land Commission needed further

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**The legacy of the Gracchi brothers was an appalling one. The situation in Rome, the old accepted consensus of patterns of behavior, had been washed away completely.**

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protection, Gracchus declared his intention to stand for the tribunate of 132 B.C. He thereby undermined the other central concept of Roman office holding: limited tenure of office.

Alarmed senators could see in front of them the prospect of rule by tribunes at the head of the tribal assembly. As Gracchus held an election rally, some senators went out of the Senate house and beat him and 300 of his followers to death with bench legs. The corpse of Gracchus, like that of a common criminal, was thrown into the Tiber.

Whatever his motives or intentions, Gracchus's legacy was not a good one. In pushing his land bill through, he had exposed a fatal weakness in the traditional machinery of Republican government: the Senate had no legal power, but the tribal assembly did. Others wanting to challenge the Senate now had a new avenue to power opened for them. More importantly, violence had been used to suppress Gracchus, and thereby it entered Roman domestic politics for the first time.

The tribunates of Gaius Gracchus in 123–21 B.C. were more overtly revolutionary than Tiberius Gracchus's had been. Gaius Gracchus was not

motivated by one issue but instead passed a series of laws on various issues. The purpose of these laws was to gain support for himself. Gaius Gracchus was more of a demagogue than Tiberius Gracchus and more antagonistic toward the Senate. His laws seem to have been intended to garner support for himself from several groups:

- The people, by means of the provision of cheap grain, employment on road repair projects, and the foundation of overseas colonies for the landless;
- Knights, by means of fiscal proposals and authorization to sit on juries in extortion cases; and
- The Italian allies, by means of Latin rights becoming fully enfranchised and non-Latin allies being given Latin rights.

The issue of the status of the allies had emerged as a serious one in the 120s B.C., and the Romans were reluctant to share citizenship so widely; Gaius Gracchus's proposal for mass enfranchisement undermined his popularity. In 122, the Senate contracted with a tribune, M. Livius Drusus, to outbid Gaius Gracchus. Livius offered free grain, colonies in Italy rather than overseas, and better treatment in the army for allies.

The people deserted Gaius Gracchus for Livius; tensions rose as his second tribunate came to an end and he faced prosecution. Fearing for his own safety, Gaius Gracchus began using surreptitiously armed bodyguards. When a brawl broke out at a political meeting, a riot resulted, and the Senate issued a decree of martial law (*senatus consultum ultimum*). Gaius Gracchus and 3,000 of his supporters perished in the ensuing street fighting.

The Gracchi had challenged the Senate's authority, indicated a novel route to power at Rome, and paid a heavy price for doing so. But by suppressing them with violence, the Senate paved the way for the ultimate collapse of the Republic. ■

## Suggested Reading

P. A. Brunt, *Social Conflict in the Roman Republic*, chapters 4–5.

D. C. Earl, *Tiberius Gracchus*.

Plutarch, *Makers of Rome*, 5 (“Tiberius Gracchus”) and 6 (“Gaius Gracchus”).

J. M. Riddle (comp.), *Tiberius Gracchus: Destroyer or Reformer of the Republic?*

Scullard, *Gracchi to Nero*, chapter 2.

D. Stockton, *The Gracchi*, chapters 3–8.

## Questions to Consider

1. What motivated Tiberius Gracchus to act as he did? Was he a revolutionary at heart?
2. Was the use of violence against the Gracchi justified? If not, what other avenues of opposition were open to the Senate?

# Marius and Sulla

## Lecture 21

**We will look at the careers of Marius and then of Lucius Cornelius Sulla, the next protagonist of the empire, who was an opponent of Marius. And their careers overlapped, so we will look at each of them in turn.**

Roman politics became more polarized in the wake of the Gracchi. Roman politicians increasingly fell into one of two groups. Those who followed the new route to power pointed out by the Gracchi were termed *populares* (men of the people) and favored using tribunes, the tribal assembly, and an antisenatorial posture to enable their advancement. In opposition to the *populares* stood the self-styled *optimates* (best ones), who looked to the traditional, Senate-dominated way of doing things. These groups were based more on methods than on ideology in the modern sense.

C. Marius, a new man from Arpinum in Italy, rose to prominence by virtue of spectacular military successes. Marius's early political career was lackluster. He first gained fame by defeating enemies of Rome in Numidia. Jugurtha, king of the allied kingdom of Numidia, had been fighting a war with Rome from 111 B.C. onward. Jugurtha eluded defeat through a combination of clever military tactics and bribery of Roman commanders.

While serving as an officer in Numidia, Marius stood for the consulship of 107 B.C. on the promise of ending the Jugurthine War in one year. As consul for the second time in 105 B.C., he ended the war and had Jugurtha captured. The officer who actually effected the capture was named L. Cornelius Sulla.

Marius was now the people's military hero. In 104–100 B.C. he achieved an unprecedented position of power as a result of the threat of Germanic tribes in the north. Since the 120s B.C., two Germanic tribes, the Cimbri and Teutones, had left their native lands in Denmark and had been wandering near the Italian border and in Gaul. They had already defeated three Roman armies when, in 105 B.C., they crushed a consular army at Arausio in Gallia Transalpina (a new province formed in 121 B.C.).

Memories of the Gallic sack of 390 B.C. caused panic at Rome; Marius was cast in the role of savior. Holding successive consulships (104, 103, 102), Marius raised and trained a new army and crushed the Teutones at Aquae Sextiae (Aix-en-Provence) in 102 B.C. and the Cimbri at Vercellae in 101 B.C. In 100 B.C. Marius was supreme, now holding his sixth consulship in eight years. Not as sharp a politician as he was a soldier, Marius was outmaneuvered by his opponents in his sixth consulship at Rome, and he retired to private life.

To effect his victories, Marius made several important military reforms. His reforms contributed to the ultimate professionalization of the Roman army (e.g., standing legions, standards) and made it more effective in the field. In terms of enlistment, however, he made a major move. Marius enrolled and equipped at state expense the unused head count (*capitecensi*) at Rome. These soldiers were promised land grants in return for their service.

**Sulla was a patrician. Unlike Marius, he is not a new man. He is from a well-established, if impoverished, patrician family.**

The move had lasting political ramifications largely unrealized by Marius himself: It created a landless soldiery dependent on the patronage of its commanders for the rewards of service. Through Marius's reforms, the Roman military

became more efficient but also more politicized. The events of Marius's sixth consulship in 100 B.C. illustrate the point well.

Sulla rose to prominence initially as a subordinate of Marius but later as a commander in his own right during the Social War (91–88 B.C.). A patrician, Sulla emerged under Marius but had no love for him. Sulla had served with Marius against Jugurtha, whose capture he had organized, and the Teutones. Sulla hailed from an old but impoverished patrician family, the opposite of Marius. Sulla and Marius may initially have been on good terms, but they fell out at some stage, possibly over Marius's failure to acknowledge Sulla's capture of Jugurtha.



The issue of allies continued to burn in the 90s B.C. but flared into war in 91 B.C. when a tribune, M. Livius Drusus, prepared to pass a law enfranchising the allies but was murdered before it could be passed.

In response, some of the allies, especially the Samnites and some south-Italian communities, formed a secessionist state (Italia) and went to war with Rome. It was a vicious but needless conflict, for the Romans conceded enfranchisement to all loyal communities within one year of the outbreak of hostilities. Many rebels now reverted to Rome, but the Samnites continued to fight.

This War of the Allies (as “Social War” means) lasted three years and saw Marius emerge from retirement to take command of the Roman forces in north Italy, while Sulla, as *propraetor*, got the southern theater of command. Although Marius and Sulla cooperated during the Social War, their enmity broke out once more at war’s end and cast the Republic into the abyss of civil war. ■

### Suggested Reading

T. F. Carney, *Marius*.

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapters 21, 22.

A. Keaveney, *Sulla*, chapters 1–3.

Plutarch, *Fall of the Roman Republic*, 1 (“Gaius Marius”).

Scullard, *Gracchi to Nero*, chapter 3.

### Questions to Consider

1. What motivations can you discern for the actions of Marius and Sulla? How different or similar were they?
2. What caused the Social War? Who was to blame for its outbreak?

# “The Royal Rule of Sulla”

## Lecture 22

We have seen already the development in the revolution from relatively innocuous roots to a situation involving increasing levels of disorder. Under Sulla, whole new depths of disorder were plumbed and opened for the Roman state.

With the Social War ended, the enmity between Marius and Sulla reached new peaks that led to the setting of the worst precedents yet in the Roman Revolution. During the Social War, an eastern king had risen to challenge Roman authority in Asia; competition for the command against him led Sulla to take drastic measures.

Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus was an ambitious king who, in 89 B.C., took advantage of Roman preoccupations in Italy to seize Asia and raise the banner of Greek revolt against Rome. In a desperate act, the so-called Asiatic Vespers, Mithridates ordered all Romans and Italians in his realm killed on a single evening. The resulting bloodbath, by some accounts, killed as many as 80,000 people.

Both Sulla and the aging Marius wanted the command against Mithridates, both for its glory and for the promise of riches that it offered. As consul in 88 B.C., Sulla was assigned the command by the Senate, according to traditional procedure. Marius contracted a colorful tribune, P. Sulpicius Rufus, to assign the command to him by vote of the people. The situation illustrates well the division between *optimatis* (Sulla accepting command from the Senate) and *popularis* (Marius having the command voted to him by the people).

Sulla's reaction and Marius's counterreaction were both swift and violent, setting a bad precedent. Sulla went to his six legions in Campania and garnered their support. He then turned his army on Rome and drove Marius out of the city, calling him a tyrant. Having settled affairs in Rome and put a bounty on Marius's head, Sulla went east to fight Mithridates.

Although Sulla was trying to reinforce a traditional government rather than overthrow it, he had carried out the single most revolutionary act in Roman history to that time: He had marched a Roman army against Romans. With this precedent now in play, Sulla unknowingly condemned the Republic to decades of more and increasing violence.

Marius fled to Africa but in 87 B.C. returned to Italy; joined forces with a rebel consul, L. Cornelius Cinna; and marched on Rome to reverse Sulla's settlement. Marius then wreaked his revenge on the city that had betrayed him until Cinna intervened to stop the butchery and chaos. Declaring himself consul for the seventh time for 86 B.C., Marius died within days of taking office.

Sulla returned from the east to wage an all-out war on his opponents in Italy. After fighting a difficult and indecisive campaign against Mithridates in 88–83 B.C., he returned to fight a major civil war in Italy. Between 88 and 84 B.C., a strange situation obtained: Sulla was fighting a war on behalf of a Rome governed by his political opponents; a showdown was imminent.

After concluding a disgraceful peace with Mithridates in 85 B.C. and plundering the rich cities of the east, Sulla returned to Italy in 83 B.C. Sulla fought and defeated his opponents in open battle until, by mid-82 B.C., he was left in sole control of Rome and Italy. Under his supervision, the Roman Revolution plunged to new depths of depravity.

After his victory, Sulla enacted large-scale purges called proscriptions and revived the long-dormant office of dictator, although in modified form.

When he entered Rome in mid-82 B.C., Sulla began to have his enemies (captured Samnites) executed piecemeal. Answering appeals from the Senate for a less chaotic procedure, he organized these executions as proscriptions, which were carried out all over Italy for almost a year. Sulla and his supporters posted lists of the proscribed. People appearing on the lists could be killed for a reward. Their property was confiscated and auctioned off at

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**All in all, the career of Sulla is a rather harrowing one and brings us closer to the ultimate shape of the Roman Revolution ...**

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knock-down prices. Many in Sulla's faction took the opportunity to settle old scores or to acquire desirable real estate by proscribing its owner.

Sometime during this period (in 82 or 81 B.C.), Sulla was appointed dictator, an office that was out of favor and had lain dormant since the Hannibalic War. Sulla modified the dictatorship in two important respects. He was to hold the post not for the traditional six months but for as long as he wanted, and he took as his specific dictatorial assignment the exceptionally broad task of "writing laws and organizing the state." Sulla then used his new power to redraft the government of Rome.

As dictator, Sulla issued legislation aimed at turning back the clock on the revolution and restoring traditional senatorial government. Sulla's legislation was clearly aimed at reversing the trend toward *popularis* government at Rome. Although thoughtful, Sulla's settlement was reactionary and backward-looking. He muzzled the tribunate and the Tribal Assembly: ex-tribunes were debarred from holding any other office and could not propose legislation; plebiscites were subject to a senatorial veto. He reformed the Senate, expelling many of its members and installing newcomers loyal to himself. He tried to prevent army commanders from doing what he had done. He also issued other regulations of a sensible nature that were to stand for many decades, such as his establishment of permanent courts of inquiry or the stiffening of the *cursus honorum*. In 79 B.C., his legislative program completed, Sulla resigned his dictatorship and retired into private life; he died the following year.

Sulla's career is emblematic of the Roman Revolution as a whole. As a person, Sulla was an odd mix of mediocrity and brilliance, indolence and action, and placidity and viciousness; he may have been a sociopath. His career illustrates the broad nature of the Roman Revolution: personalities operating with relatively narrow vision and thereby setting dangerous precedents for the future. Sulla reacted to circumstances as he saw fit at the time (such as marching on Rome); he gave little thought to the example he was setting. His attempted restoration of senatorial government was doomed by the personal power politics of the Republic, which could not allow so useful a tool as the tribunate to lie in abeyance for long. Within nine years of

his death, Sulla's settlement had been completely dismantled, and the Roman Revolution moved into its final and bloodiest stages. ■

### Suggested Reading

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 23.

A. Keaveney, *Sulla*, chapters 4–12.

Plutarch, *Fall of the Roman Republic*, 2 (“Sulla”).

Scullard, *Gracchi to Nero*, chapter 4.

### Questions to Consider

1. Was Sulla a revolutionary at heart?
2. Could Sulla's restoration have been successful? If so, how?

# Sulla's Reforms Undone

## Lecture 23

**Over the course of the 70s B.C., this Sullan restoration, the Sullan Settlement, was undone completely. By 70 B.C., it was entirely washed away.**

**I**mmediately after Sulla's death, the bad precedent he had set for the future was made manifest. One of the consuls of 78 B.C. rose in armed revolt. M. Aemilius Lepidus attempted to promulgate popularist legislation, such as the restoration of the tribunate and the return of confiscated land to Italians dispossessed by Sulla's program of colonization.

Lepidus joined forces with rebel Italians in Etruria and northern Italy and marched on Rome in 77 B.C. The Senate declared martial law and raised forces. Lepidus was defeated at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge and died shortly afterward. That Lepidus had attempted armed insurrection in the first place was an omen of worse to come.

Lepidus's revolt, and that of Q. Sertorius in Spain, helped bring Pompeius Magnus (Pompey) to prominence. Pompey had joined Sulla as a young man in 83 B.C. and had successfully fought against the Marians in Africa. He showed his audacity by demanding a triumph for these actions from Sulla—and getting it. When Lepidus revolted, Pompey, though underage and never having held a magistracy, was granted the *imperium* of praetor and was given a command.

With Lepidus defeated, Pompey used his army to “suggest” to the Senate that he be given the command against a more powerful opponent: Q. Sertorius in Spain. Sertorius was a Marian who had successfully organized Spain into a counter-Rome, complete with its own senate and coinage. He had held out against Sulla's lieutenants and was now reinforced by the remnants of Lepidus's defeated army.

Pompey was sent by the Senate to defeat Sertorius, which he did in a difficult six-year campaign (77–72 B.C.) that ended only when Sertorius

was treacherously murdered by a jealous underling. Pompey's settlement of Spain was equitable, and he earned many friends there.

While Pompey was in Spain, the plutocrat M. Licinius Crassus grew powerful at Rome, particularly as a result of a slave war in southern Italy. Crassus had benefited financially from Sulla's proscriptions, although his early career was otherwise unremarkable. Crassus stemmed from an old patrician family. He greatly increased his wealth by buying up the property of the proscribed and by engaging in a variety of business ventures, such as renting out slaves. He deployed his wealth in vast bribing operations to secure election to magistracies, through which he advanced in proper order. Otherwise, these years at Rome were relatively tranquil, though they proved to be a calm before the storm.

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**The early careers of Crassus and Pompey show us that the Sullan Settlement was absolutely doomed.**

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The revolt of Spartacus offered Crassus a chance for military glory, which was tarnished by the interference of Pompey. The massive influx of slaves into Italy as a result of the growth of empire had proven problematic for Rome.

In 135–133 B.C., there had been a huge revolt in Sicily that had needed a consular army to suppress. In 73 B.C., another great slave revolt, the last in ancient history, broke out in Capua. The ringleader was a Thracian gladiator called Spartacus, who trained his army to fight efficiently and ruthlessly looted the rich properties, at first in Campania, then throughout Italy. Armies sent against him were defeated until Crassus, as *propraetor* in 71, defeated Spartacus and either returned the survivors to their owners or crucified them along the Via Appia to the gates of Rome.

Crassus's success, however, was undermined by Pompey, who returned from Spain, assisted in the mopping-up operations, and claimed some credit for suppressing the revolt. Crassus, therefore, had no love of Pompey. Crassus and Pompey became consuls for 70 B.C. and, together, saw to the final dissolution of the Sullan settlement.

Pompey's actions on returning from Spain are instructive. On the pretext of helping to put down Spartacus, he retained his army intact. He then camped his army near Rome and "requested" a consulship in recognition of his services—this despite his never having held any magistracy to that point. So green was Pompey when it came to being a magistrate that he asked the scholar M. Terentius Varro to prepare a handbook of advice for him.

Crassus reacted not by challenging Pompey's threatening behavior but by imitating it. Crassus camped his army near Rome and requested his own consulship. The known enemies therefore became consuls in 70 B.C. and staged a public reconciliation.

The remaining inconvenient elements in Sulla's settlement were removed. The courts were taken away from sole senatorial control and divided between senators, equestrians, and the mysterious *tribuni aerarii*. The Senate was purged by friendly censors (the first in 17 years); many of the expelled were Sulla's nominees. The tribunate was restored to its full, pre-Sullan powers.

Crassus and Pompey's motivation in doing all this was no doubt to maximize their future options for manipulating the system for their own benefit. Under the Sullan settlement, they could only deal with the Senate; with that settlement overturned, they could make use of tribunes and the people as well.

The early careers of Crassus and Pompey showed that the Sullan settlement was doomed. Sulla's attempt to turn the clock back and restore the Senate to supremacy had failed. Roman politics had become too cutthroat to allow so useful a tool as the tribunate to languish unused. More importantly, Sulla's career itself offered an indication of the dizzying heights one could reach with military backing. That Lepidus, openly, and Crassus and Pompey more cryptically, followed this lead boded ill for the future. ■



## Suggested Reading

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 24.

Plutarch, *Fall of the Roman Republic*, 3 (“Crassus”).

Scullard, *Gracchi to Nero*, chapter 5.

Seager, *Pompey*, chapters 1–3.

A. M. Ward, *Marcus Crassus and the Late Roman Republic*, chapters 1–4.

## Questions to Consider

1. Did the Senate live up to the expectations placed on it by Sulla’s settlement?
2. In what respects were Pompey’s and Crassus’s backgrounds and early careers similar or different?

# Pompey and Crassus

## Lecture 24

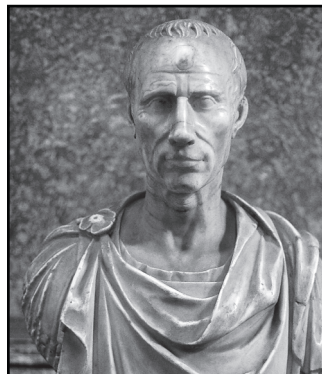
Crassus's efforts to block the enormous popularity of Pompey, which in the course of the 60s B.C. rose to new heights on the back of various developments in foreign affairs, was to bring into the picture a new and very able player in the political theater of the Roman Revolution: Gaius Julius Caesar.

Events in foreign affairs in the 60s B.C. led to Pompey's emergence as a popular military hero. Mithridates of Pontus was let off the hook by Sulla in 83 B.C. He started a new war in Asia in 75 B.C. Despite the best efforts of Rome's generals, the war dragged on into 67 B.C. Mithridates's war in Asia exacerbated the Mediterranean's pirate problem, which Pompey was selected to rectify with a grant of unprecedented power.

To strengthen his position, Mithridates worked in league with the pirates of Rough Cilicia, whose activities now reached an alarming new intensity, threatening the grain supply of Rome itself. The people became agitated and a tribune, A. Gabinius, proposed a law conferring vast *imperium* on Pompey to tackle the pirate problem.

The law was passed; Pompey was to have *imperium infinitum* (power not limited to a province) over all local governors in the entire Mediterranean Sea, all of its islands, and for 50 miles inland. The grant of *imperium* was for three years to deal with the pirates. Pompey was also appointed to oversee the grain supply of Rome for five years.

Pompey effected his three-year commission in three months, treating the pirates with leniency and settling them as traders and farmers in Cilicia. With the pirates defeated, Pompey had his huge *imperium*



Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.).

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transferred to Asia, so he could bring the war against Mithridates to an end. Technically, Pompey's *imperium* had lapsed with the defeat of the pirates. A tribune, C. Manilius, proposed a law in 66 B.C. transferring Pompey's *imperium* to the entire Near East to settle affairs there. With the law passed, Pompey devoted the next four years to defeating Mithridates and reorganizing the entire geopolitical situation in the Roman east.

In his arrangement of eastern affairs, Pompey behaved like an absolute monarch: forming new provinces, adjusting existing ones, making alliances, and negotiating treaties, all on his own authority. In 63 B.C., Pompey's actions in the east were at an end, and he was ready to return to Rome.

Crassus moved as best he could to counter the huge power and great popularity of Pompey. While Pompey was covering himself with glory in the east, Crassus did his best to undermine his position in Rome. Crassus backed several measures aimed at limiting or undermining Pompey's position and strengthening his own. He backed the career of an able young nobleman, Gaius Julius Caesar.

With access to Crassus's coffers, Caesar advanced up the *cursus* in proper order and, in 63 B.C., he won both the praetorship and the position of *pontifex maximus*, the lifetime high priesthood of Rome that conferred huge prestige on its incumbent. Pompey's return was now imminent. Many remembered what had happened upon Sulla's advent from the east 20 years previously.

An attempted coup d'état in 63 B.C. highlighted how unstable Roman politics had become. L. Sergius Catilina (Catiline), a desperado who had thrice failed to gain election to the consulship, resolved on armed insurrection. There was some suspicion that Crassus was behind the plot, yet another attempt to undermine Pompey, but this seems unlikely.

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**There seemed to be pools of people around who seemed to be ready to take up arms against the state as soon as someone raised the banner of insurrection.**

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Cicero, one of the consuls for 63 B.C., uncovered Catiline's plan, orchestrated opposition to it, and oversaw the execution of several of the conspirators in Rome on 5 December. Catiline, meanwhile, had joined his army in Etruria and was killed in battle as his army was defeated in the field. The whole episode speaks volumes about how unstable the Roman Republic had become as a result of 70 years of revolutionary politics. ■

### Suggested Reading

Plutarch, *Fall of the Roman Republic*, 4 ("Pompey").

Sallust, *The Conspiracy of Catiline*.

R. Seager, *Pompey*, chapters 4–6.

A. M. Ward, *Marcus Crassus and the Late Roman Republic*, chapters 5–6.

### Questions to Consider

1. What does the rivalry between Pompey and Crassus tell us about the operation of the Revolution?
2. What aspects of Catiline's conspiracy are the most illuminating for the state of Roman Republican politics?

# The First Triumvirate

## Lecture 25

**It seemed that Caesar was the chief mover here, proposing that Pompey be brought in and join forces with them and that Crassus, Pompey's old rival and Caesar's former patron, also be brought into the deal. This is an informal political arrangement that most modern scholars refer to as the First Triumvirate.**

Pompey's return from the east was not marked by the despotism and proscriptions that many had feared. Opposition in the Senate, led by a group of die-hard conservatives under M. Porcius Cato, forced Pompey and Crassus into an uneasy political alliance, with Caesar as the glue. Pompey returned to Italy in 62 B.C., disbanded his army, and entered the city as a private citizen.

Any relief that people felt was short-lived, since the Senate promptly began filibustering in the matter of Pompey's two basic demands: land for his veterans and ratification of his eastern settlements. In doing so, the Senate was following the direction of Crassus as well as the die-hard conservatives led by M. Porcius Cato (sometimes called Cato the Younger), the great-grandson of Cato Censorinus (the Censor). Now that its hero's work was done, the mob showed little enthusiasm for Pompey's attempted bypassing of the Senate by means of a tribune.

When Caesar returned from his governorship of Spain in 60 B.C., he also faced the newly obdurate Senate and was blocked in his requests for a triumph and consulship. This opposition actually wrought dire results for the Republic. Caesar approached Pompey and proposed an alliance against the Senate; Caesar also brought in Crassus, his old patron. The three most powerful, ruthless, and unscrupulous men in the state were now working together, and they arranged for Caesar to be elected consul for 59 B.C. The historian M. Terentius Varro described this arrangement as "the beast with three heads."

The Triumvirate's existence was made manifest in Caesar's consulship, which was marked by violence, intimidation, and legislation to benefit himself, Pompey, and Crassus. For example, he had Cato arrested and basically prorogued the Senate. In conjunction with a tribune, P. Vatinius, Caesar as consul orchestrated a campaign of legislative favor granting for himself and his fellow Triumvirs.

Caesar assigned to himself a five-year command in Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul and in Illyria; he would command five legions when his consulship ended. Pompey saw to the passage of a land law benefiting his veterans, and his eastern settlements were ratified. Crassus gained several profitable laws, particularly in relation to the tax returns from Asia. All of these measures were passed by means of violence and intimidation.

**That is a very important point to appreciate, that Caesar's commentaries should be read, above all, as pieces of political propaganda.**

The meetings that dealt with the passage of Pompey's land bill offer a good illustration of Caesar's methods. In the face of opposition from his colleague in the consulship, M. Calpurnius Bibulus, Caesar summoned a popular meeting to question Bibulus on his opposition. Caesar then summoned another meeting and invited Crassus and Pompey to speak on the merits of the land bill. On the night

before the voting, Caesar's followers occupied the Forum and, as the voting proceeded, prevented Bibulus and three tribunes from making their way to the podium to intercede their veto.

Bibulus and his colleagues were manhandled, the consular *fascēs* were broken, and Bibulus himself was smeared with dung. The group had to flee to a shrine of Jupiter to seek refuge from the mob. In the wake of these events, Bibulus stayed home for the rest of his consulship; indeed, he was besieged there. As a result, Caesar had a free rein to behave as he saw fit.

Following his consulship in 59 B.C., Caesar took up his five-year command in Transalpine Gaul and used it to embark on a full-scale war in the rest of Gaul. This war, which lasted 10 years, was not mandated by the Senate

but was a personal war of conquest for Caesar's glory. It was a remarkable military achievement and saw Caesar carry Roman arms over the Rhine into Germany and across the English Channel into Britain.

By the end of the war in 49 B.C., Caesar had added all of modern-day France and parts of modern-day Switzerland, Holland, and Germany to the Roman Empire. Caesar's conquests also carried urbanized Mediterranean culture into northern Europe on a permanent basis and, as such, had a profound effect on subsequent European history.

Caesar's campaigns in Gaul are described in compelling detail in his own *Commentaries*, a model of concise, clear, and clipped Latin prose that was much admired by contemporaries. The *Commentaries* also served as political propaganda for Caesar, broadcasting his military glory. ■

### Suggested Reading

Appian, *Civil Wars*, book 2.

Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*, book 7 (Caesar's account of the siege of Alesia in 52 B.C.).

Seager, *Pompey*, chapter 7.

Ward, *Crassus*, chapter 8.

### Questions to Consider

1. What benefits were there in alliance for Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar?
2. Could the Senate have prevented the formation of the Triumvirate? Was the course of action the Senate actually embarked on wise?

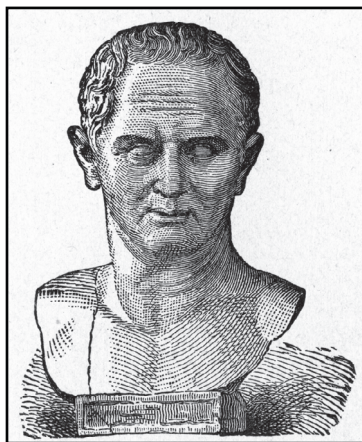
# Pompey and Caesar

## Lecture 26

[Clodius'] behavior in 57 B.C. and 58 B.C. is well worth looking at because it demonstrates something of the tensions that existed between the Triumvirs, especially between Pompey and Caesar.

Caesar's achievements in Gaul caused some tensions within the Triumvirate, now the dominant force in domestic politics. Tensions within the Triumvirate were exploited by the Senate in an attempt to drive a wedge into the alliance. The career of P. Clodius Pulcher is illustrative. Clodius was a tribune in 58 B.C. Through the proposal of popular measures backed by intimidation and thuggery, he all but ruled in Rome. He was perceived as a member of Caesar's camp, but this is only partially true.

After gaining ascendancy over the mob, Clodius attacked Pompey. First, Cicero, a supporter of Pompey, was banished in 58 B.C. Then Clodius's thugs turned on Pompey himself. Pompey organized his own gang of thugs under T. Annius Milo, which basically vied with Clodius's group over the next five years. However, in 57 B.C., Pompey restored order and stabilized Rome's grain supply, thus becoming the ascendant Triumvir in Rome. All of these circumstances raised tensions in the Triumvirate, now exploited by a conservative faction (the self-styled *optimates*) in the Senate who, led by Cato and Cicero, began lobbying for Caesar's recall and prosecution for his behavior as consul in 59 B.C.



Cicero (106–46 B.C.), Roman orator and statesman.

The Teaching Company Collection.

Caesar called a meeting at the town of Luca, just inside his province, in 56 B.C. to resolve these tensions. At this meeting, several important agreements



were reached. Caesar, whose conquest of Gaul was not complete, had his command extended for a further five years. To balance this move, Pompey was given a five-year command in Spain, with a dispensation to exercise it through legates. Chafing for military glory to match that of his colleagues, Crassus got a five-year command in Syria. Crassus and Pompey were to be consuls in 55 B.C.

These arrangements demonstrate the power of the Triumvirate: the big three made these decisions among themselves, with no reference to the Senate. Most measures were then forced through by means of tribunes and popular votes.

Events in 54–49 B.C. brought the Triumvirate to an end, left Caesar and Pompey facing off against each other, and eventually led to civil war. First, in 54 B.C., Julia, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife, died in childbirth. The marital link between Pompey and Caesar was broken, and it was not renewed. Also in 54 B.C., Crassus set off to earn his military glory by attacking the neighboring Parthian Empire on Rome's eastern frontier. Greatly underestimating the military abilities of the largely cavalry-based Parthian forces, Crassus met defeat and death at the battle of Carrhae in 53 B.C. His death left Caesar and Pompey alone in the Triumvirate.

In 52 B.C., the situation in Rome reached a new nadir. Street fighting between Clodius and Milo effectively blocked government and saw Clodius murdered and the Senate House burned to the ground, igniting widespread fires in Rome. A *senatus consultum optimum* (final decree of the Senate) was declared, and Pompey was appointed sole consul for the year to restore order, which he did by force.

The *optimates* exploited the growing rift between Caesar and Pompey and forced civil war in 49 B.C. In the years 52–49 B.C., the calls of the *optimates* for Caesar's prosecution grew more strident. Exploiting Pompey's vacillating character and recent good work on behalf of the state, the *optimates* manipulated him into believing he was the protector of tradition against the threat of Caesarian domination.

While not openly hostile to his supposed ally, Pompey nevertheless did little to block the moves against Caesar during these years. As his command in Gaul drew to a close, Caesar faced political extinction, and possibly assassination, at the hands of his enemies if he returned to Rome as a private citizen.

Caesar attempted to negotiate for an end to the deadlock, but the *optimates* blocked his every move. In December of 50 B.C., Caesar issued his final offer: He and Pompey would relinquish their commands simultaneously. The Senate voted 370 to 22 in favor of the motion, thereby isolating the ultraconservative element. Not to be outdone, the *optimates* prevailed on Pompey to mobilize his legions and save the Republic. In response, Caesar moved his legions close to Italy. Despite several last-minute attempts to avoid civil war, on 10 January, 49 B.C., he crossed the Rubicon—the river that marked the border between Italy and his province. In doing so, Caesar declared war on the state. The greatest of all of Rome’s civil wars had begun. ■

### Suggested Reading

Caesar, *Civil War*, book 1.

C. Meier, *Caesar*, chapters 1, 12.

Plutarch, *Fall of the Roman Republic*, 5 (“Caesar”).

Scullard, *Gracchi to Nero*, chapter 6.

Seager, *Pompey*, chapters 9–14.

### Questions to Consider

1. Was the breakdown of the First Triumvirate inevitable? If so, why?
2. Who was responsible for starting the civil war: Caesar, Pompey, or the *optimates*?

# “The Domination of Caesar”

## Lecture 27

First, we must establish Caesar in power, and this was done ... in a widespread civil war between Caesar and Pompey and the supporters of Pompey, the conservative element in the Senate—all those who recognized that Caesar represented something different, something new in their midst, a man who was set on ruling them all as an autocrat.

The civil war of 49–45 B.C. was tantamount to a Roman World War in its extent; throughout, Caesar’s military genius shone brightly. Despite being outnumbered, Caesar and his famed “speed of movement” (*celeritas*) drove Pompey and the *optimates* out of Italy in 49 B.C. and eastward toward Pompey’s power base.

After breaking a siege at Dyrrhachium, Pompey moved eastward and was engaged by Caesar at Pharsalus in northern Greece in 48 B.C. Despite a great numerical disadvantage, Caesar’s experienced legions crushed their opponents. Reviewing the carnage in the aftermath of the battle, Caesar commented, “It was they who wanted it so.” Pompey fled the field and headed further east to continue the fight. Stopping in Egypt, however, he was ignominiously murdered by a local claimant to the Ptolemaic throne.

Having chased Pompey to Egypt, Caesar got embroiled in dynastic politics there and was delayed in Alexandria during the winter of 48–47 B.C. This was also when Caesar commenced his love affair with Cleopatra, one of the protagonists in the Egyptian dynastic feud and an able and ambitious woman. The affair produced a son, Caesarion, born in 47 B.C.

Next, Caesar fought local renegades and supporters of Pompey in Asia, Africa, and Spain, defeating all in his path. In 47 B.C., he suppressed a native revolt in Asia in five days, giving rise to his famous dictum “*Veni, vidi, vici*” (“I came, I saw, I won”). In 46 B.C., he fought a set-piece battle in Thapsus in Africa, defeating the Pompeians decisively. In the wake of this defeat, the leader of the *optimates*, Cato, committed suicide at Utica in Africa.

The following year, 45 B.C., Caesar crushed another of Pompey's armies at Munda in Spain. The battle of Munda marked the official end of the civil war. Although pockets of resistance to Caesar and his successors were to continue for a decade, after Munda, Caesar was the unchallenged master of the Roman world.

Caesar's means of legitimizing his constitutional position showed a disregard for traditional forms and conservative sensibilities. Caesar enacted a policy of sparing his captured opponents (*clementia*), which was a shrewd political maneuver to place them forever under an obligation to him. He placed some of his spared opponents in positions of responsibility in his new regime (such as C. Cassius Longinus, who became praetor in 44 B.C.). But when Caesar began to organize his official position in the state, he revealed an almost total lack of tact in his exercise of power. Ignoring its hateful associations with Sulla, Caesar employed the dictatorship, in conjunction with frequent consulships, as his office of choice.

In 49 B.C., Caesar was dictator for only 11 days, long enough to organize consular elections and see himself installed as consul for 48 B.C. In 47 B.C., he resumed the dictatorship and held it continuously from then until his death. In fact, it was extended from a 1-year to a 10-year duration in 46 B.C. and to lifetime tenure in February 44 B.C.

Aside from this irregular usage of the Republican offices, Caesar displayed in his words and deeds little concern for conservative opinion. He said that Sulla "did not know his ABCs" when he gave up the dictatorship, thereby signaling his intent to rule as dictator for as long as he could. He declared the Republic a mere word without form or substance. On one occasion, he greeted the senators while seated like a despot. The Senate, in response, acted with abject sycophancy in voting him honors, including even deification.

In 44 B.C., the infamous crown-offering incident occurred, which was taken by many as a sign that Caesar's ultimate goal was kingship itself. As dictator, Caesar passed a mass of legislation on various issues, but none of it was aimed at regularizing his position or tackling the fundamental ills of the state. In fact, Caesar was planning another major military enterprise against the Parthians when disaster overcame him in March of 44 B.C.

Alarmed by Caesar's openly autocratic behavior, a group of nobles numbering perhaps 80 members and led by C. Cassius Longinus conspired to assassinate the tyrant. It carried out the act on 15 March (the "ides of March"), 44 B.C. But the limited focus of the so-called Liberators proved their greatest mistake.

At a Senate meeting in Pompey's theater, Caesar was surrounded by a group of conspirators and was cut down at the foot of Pompey's statue by 23 stab wounds. Declaring the tyrant justly killed, the conspirators rushed from the scene, believing they had restored the Republic to liberty. Events were to prove them mistaken. ■

**This conspiracy, who we will call henceforth the Liberators, decided that they were going to murder Caesar.**

### Suggested Reading

Caesar, *Civil War*, books 2–3.

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 27.

C. Meier, *Caesar*, chapter 14.

Scullard, *Gracchi to Nero*, chapter 7.

Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, 1 ("Caesar").

### Questions to Consider

1. Could Pompey's side have prevailed in the civil war? If he had won, would Pompey have behaved any differently from Caesar?
2. Was Caesar's assassination justified? Could Caesar have solved the problems of the Republic?

# Social and Cultural Life in the Late Republic

## Lecture 28

Despite its rather tumultuous political life, the Late Republic was a time of great social and cultural change. One of the characteristics of the social life that we can see in this period that is very marked is an enormous increase in the wealth and ostentation of the Roman ruling elite.

In art and architecture, the great wealth of the Roman nobility led to increasing luxury in public building and display, while the poor appeared to get poorer. The vast wealth of the Roman elite in this period is reflected in several sources. Pliny the Elder comments on the great increase in domestic architectural luxury in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. The number of rustic villas owned by the elite increased perceptibly. Pompey built a luxurious stone theater and adjacent gardens and portico in 55 B.C. Caesar and Pompey sponsored lavish public entertainments.

In contrast, the living conditions of the poor grew worse as the population and ethnic heterogeneity of the mob increased during this period. The population of Rome in 50 B.C. can reasonably be estimated at one million, the largest urban concentration in preindustrial Europe. The gulf between rich and poor, always a feature of Roman society, is one factor in the instability of the Late Republic, in that willing recruits were always available for the ambitious man looking to raise an armed force.

The ethnic diversity of the populace contributed to the cultural vibrancy of the period for all levels of society. Hellenization was now more or less complete, and as Rome was the center of wealth and power for the entire Mediterranean, the city was the natural destination for experts in all sorts of fields. Vast amounts of Greek art came to Rome as plunder, especially following Sulla's campaigns in Asia. These artworks stood as models for Romans to copy. In addition, numerous artisans, thinkers, doctors, teachers, and philosophers flocked to Rome in this period. The career of the doctor Asclepiades of Bithynia is an apt example of this trend.

In the area of literature, the Late Republic saw the appearance of several authors who used Greek models to expand the boundaries of Latin usage. The Roman elite was routinely educated in Greek as well as Latin, often by Greek slaves at home and Greek professors in rhetorical schools. Several prominent authors of the period used Greek models for their work.

The poet Catullus used the elegies of Callimachus to produce intensely personal poetry of a sort previously unknown in Latin. Sallust looked to the 5<sup>th</sup>-century B.C. Athenian historian Thucydides to formulate a staccato and restless style for the composition of contemporary historical works. Lucretius wrote a lengthy poem that expounded the Greek materialistic philosophy of Epicureanism in verse, thereby expanding the Latin vocabulary.

Marcus Tullius Cicero's life and career offer several illustrations of the social, cultural, and political life of the Late Republic. Cicero was native of Arpinum, a town southeast of Rome, who came to the city to get educated. Like any young man, he harbored ambitions for a public life, but he chose oratory and the courts rather than the army and military glory as his avenue to prominence.

After several high-profile court cases, Cicero won the attention of the nobility and rose through the *cursus* in proper order. The pinnacle of his political life was reached in 63 B.C. when, as consul, he suppressed the conspiracy of Catiline. As a new man, Cicero yearned for the full approval of the old Roman nobility but failed to receive it, despite having adopted its conservative political values.

Cicero's enormous literary output fully reveals his genius. Cicero wrote dozens of speeches, both political and forensic; he composed treatises on various subjects; and he composed a voluminous correspondence that he never intended to have published. Aside from the speeches, which were

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**There is no doubt that the towering cultural figure of this period, and the one who has exerted the greatest influence in subsequent years, is Marcus Tullius Cicero.**

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the bread-and-butter of his public life, all of Cicero's literary works were composed in his spare time or during his periods in the political wilderness.

Cicero's correspondence provides the fullest source we have for events in Rome's history, offering an almost day-by-day commentary on developments. As a result, the 20 years covered by his letters are the best documented in all of Roman history. ■

### Suggested Reading

Boethius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*, chapter 6.

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 29.

Plutarch, *Fall of the Roman Republic*, 6 ("Cicero").

Rawson, *Cicero*.

Scullard, *Gracchi to Nero*, chapter 10.

### Questions to Consider

1. What factors contributed to the cultural life of the Late Republic?
2. Is the common view that the Romans slavishly copied Greek cultural achievements justified? If not, in what areas can their contributions be identified? Is this mode of analysis even a valid one?



# Antony and Octavian

## Lecture 29

**[Octavian] was really an unknown, untried entity, and by being adopted by Caesar, some of his supporters and family members felt that his life was in grave danger, either from the Liberators or from a jealous Mark Antony.**

**T**he Liberators had formulated no plan for what to do once Caesar was dead, and this gave Caesar's faction an opportunity to organize itself. The Liberators seemed to believe that the Republic would spring reborn, phoenix-like, from the ashes of Caesar's tyranny. They made no plans to dispose of Caesar's supporters, now led by Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony), Caesar's right-hand man. They made no moves to secure broader military or popular support. Worried by the mob's sullen reception of their newly won liberty, the Liberators withdrew to the Capitol in fear.

As the confusion began to die down and the Caesarians realized they were not targets of murder plots, Mark Antony seized the initiative from the inert assassins. He staged Caesar's funeral in the very center of Rome, in the Forum. Here he gave an inflammatory speech and unveiled Caesar's will, in which the dictator left 300 sesterces to every Roman citizen in the city. These actions, combined with the pathetic sight of their hero's butchered corpse, roused the mob into a riot in which the Liberators were forced to flee the city altogether. With the Liberators driven out, Antony stood supreme in the Caesarian camp.

Caesar's will contained a surprise for Antony and brought into play a man who was eventually to emerge as Rome's first emperor. In addition to various bequests to the mob, Caesar designated in his will his great-nephew, C. Octavius, as his adopted son. C. Octavius, only 18 years old in March 44 B.C. and of obscure origins by Roman noble standards, was away in Illyricum, training to join Caesar's planned Parthian campaign. When he heard of his adoption by Caesar, he acted with great boldness and traveled to Rome to claim his inheritance.

Now with the name C. Julius Caesar Octavianus (hereafter Octavian), the young man met with Antony to stake his claim. Antony acted with unwise haste and snubbed the youth out of hand; it proved a mistake. Meanwhile, the Senate vacillated, and tensions between the Liberators and Antony erupted into open conflict.

**For having brought Octavian on board, then having snubbed him and ignored him, the Senate now had to put up with his military autocracy in the city of Rome itself.**

The Senate's confusion is evidenced by its simultaneous pardoning of the Liberators and ratification of all of Caesar's acts. Antony and the Liberators appeared to be coming to an understanding, insofar as the Senate assigned commands to members of the conspiracy and to Caesarians alike. Antony reshuffled the Senate's allotment of commands to favor himself, giving himself Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, in addition to Macedonia as assigned him by the Senate.

The Senate's appointee to Cisalpine Gaul, the conspirator D. Brutus, refused to relinquish his command, as he considered Antony's claim to it illegitimate. Antony then marched against Brutus and besieged him at Mutina in his province. Antony now made a move against Octavian, and he attempted to have him arraigned on trumped-up charges. In response, Octavian raised two legions from among his father's veterans in Italy, a force soon augmented by mass defections from among Antony's troops—such was the pull of the name Caesar.

A two-sided power struggle now evolved between the Liberators and the Caesarians on the one hand and between Antony and Octavian within the Caesarian camp on the other. The ineffectual Senate was caught in the middle. In the matter of Mutina, the Senate sided with Brutus, its appointee to Cisalpine Gaul, and commanded the consuls for 43 B.C. to relieve him from Antony's siege.

At Cicero's instigation, the Senate conferred propraetorian status on Octavian and assigned him the task of helping the consuls remove Antony, thus making him help one of his uncle's (and adoptive father's) assassins. Both Cicero

and the Senate saw Antony as the major threat to the Republic's liberty and seemed to have believed that Octavian could be used and then discarded.

In fighting outside Mutina, Antony was bested and withdrew to his province in Transalpine Gaul. But within a few weeks, he had returned with a huge force drawn from Spain and Gaul and occupied Cisalpine Gaul unopposed. Octavian had assisted Brutus in Mutina, but he refused to cooperate with him further and returned to Rome, expecting appreciation and some reward from the Senate; instead, he found himself snubbed.

Having declared Antony a public enemy, the Senate honored the Liberators and snubbed Octavian, with disastrous results. Decimus Brutus was granted triumph, Antony was outlawed, and Octavian was ignored. Octavian then marched his army to Rome in the late fall of 43 B.C. and occupied it. He staged consular elections and saw himself elected consul at age 20. He formalized his rift with the Liberators by having their amnesty of the previous year revoked. Far from discarding Octavian, the Senate now had to endure his unbridled military autocracy. But Octavian realized his ascendancy was temporary and turned his mind to making his position more secure. ■

### Suggested Reading

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 28.

Shotter, *Augustus*, chapters 1–3.

Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, 2 (“Augustus”).

Syme, *Roman Revolution*, chapters 8–10.

### Questions to Consider

1. To what extent was the trouble in which the Liberators found themselves following Caesar's assassination of their own making? What could they have done differently?
2. What does Octavian's rise to prominence tell us about Roman society and the politics of the Late Republic?

# The Second Triumvirate

## Lecture 30

[The Second Triumvirate] was a period when Octavian and Antony joined hands and formed a body to run the state, effectively a military junta. ... They also dealt decisively with the Liberators in the eastern half of the empire and then they divided the empire up between themselves and began to govern.

Octavian's position in the early fall of 43 B.C. was precarious. Antony was marshaling huge forces in both Gauls. Driven from Rome and Italy, the Liberators fled to the east, there to organize Republican resistance to Caesarian domination. To strengthen his position, Octavian mended his bridges with Antony and, together with another leading Caesarian, M. Aemilius Lepidus, formed the Second Triumvirate. Together, they marched their combined forces to Rome.

The Second Triumvirate differed significantly from the first. Its dominance was formalized in a law passed by a tribune, P. Titius, on 27 November, 43 B.C. According to this law, Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian were named *triumviri rei publicae constituendae consulari potestate* (Board of Three with Consular Power for the Organization of the State) for a period of five years. In effect, the three were a military junta with dictatorial powers.

The Second Triumvirate dominated Roman politics for the next decade. But like in its informal predecessor, the relationship between the Triumvirs was strained. Short of money to pay their troops, the first act of the new Triumvirate was to instigate proscriptions of the suspect in the city and in Italy. Thousands perished and had their property confiscated.

The leading victim of these proscriptions was Cicero, who had supported Octavian against Antony in the affair of Mutina. He had delivered devastating oratorical attacks against Antony in the Senate; the speeches, called *Philippics*, survive extant. Antony did not forget Cicero's enmity, and Octavian acquiesced in having his former supporter proscribed.

Chased down while fleeing to the coast, Cicero was decapitated on 7 December. His head and hands were nailed to the speaker's platform (Rostra) in the Roman Forum, the place where Cicero had delivered so many of his famous orations. The Triumvirs also orchestrated the deification of their slain leader, C. Julius Caesar, and initiated the construction of his temple in the Roman Forum. Octavian could now claim divine descent. He immediately added *divi filius* (son of a god) to his nomenclature.

The Triumvirs then moved against the Liberators. The Liberators were building significant forces in Greece and the east. Antony and Octavian went east with their combined forces and met the Republican armies at Philippi in September 42 B.C.

In two related battles, the Republicans were bested, and Cassius and Brutus, the leaders of the conspiracy, committed suicide. (Notably, Octavian was a sickly youth, and he played little or no role in these victories.) The Caesarians were now supreme in the Roman world.

Tensions within the Triumvirate emerged almost immediately. When the Triumvirate had been formed, Lepidus had been assigned a minor territory in Africa, so he was effectively sidelined as a major player. Following Philippi, Antony moved further east, since this is where most of his assigned territories lay; Octavian stayed in Italy. Octavian made himself unpopular with his arrogant attitude and massive confiscations of land to settle his veterans (only 11 of the 45 Caesarian legions were to remain under arms).

The obscure affair of Perusia showed how tense were the relations between Antony and Octavian. In 41 B.C., Mark Antony's brother, L. Antonius, and his wife, Fulvia, fomented armed insurrection against Octavian in Italy. Mark Antony's involvement is moot, but the actions themselves speak volumes about the perceived relationship between the two leading Triumvirs. Octavian

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**The Triumvirate,  
which had lapsed in  
38 B.C. (but no one  
had paid any attention  
to that fact; it was  
rather inconvenient)  
was renewed  
retroactively.**

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moved against Antonius and Fulvia and besieged them at Perusia. Antonius was spared, but Octavian ordered the Perusine councilors executed, making himself still more unpopular in Italy.

Antony moved west in 41–40 B.C., and civil war between him and Octavian seemed imminent. At a meeting at Brundisium in 40 B.C., however, their differences were resolved and the assignment of territories was refined: Octavian got the entire west, Antony the east, and Lepidus was confirmed in Africa. Antony was married to Octavian's sister, Octavia, since Fulvia had died shortly after the Perusine affair.

For the next four years, the Triumvirs were primarily engaged with affairs in their respective halves of the empire. The Triumvirate was renewed, Lepidus was squeezed out, and Octavian and Antony focused their attention on their own spheres of jurisdiction.

In 37 B.C., the Triumvirate was renewed for a further five years, with Lepidus still holed up in Africa. Sextus Pompeius, a son of Pompey, had organized a sort of pirate kingdom in Sicily and Sardinia that took Octavian four years to suppress. Following Sextus's defeat in 36 B.C., Lepidus made his move and tried to seize Italy and Sicily but was easily put down by Octavian. Lepidus was stripped of his triumviral powers and "retired" to a seaside town near Rome. Antony, meanwhile, was occupied in the east with ineffectual campaigns against the Parthians. He made his base in Alexandria and inherited Caesar's dalliance with the Ptolemaic queen, Cleopatra. ■

### Suggested Reading

Appian, *The Civil Wars*, book 3.

Plutarch, *Makers of Rome*, 9 ("Mark Antony").

Raaflaub and Toher, *Between Republic and Empire*, chapter 4.

Scullard, *Gracchi to Nero*, chapter 8.

Syme, *Roman Revolution*, chapters 14–18.

## Questions to Consider

1. What factors dictated the relationship between the members of the Second Triumvirate?
2. What similarities and differences can be identified in the histories of the First and Second Triumvirates? What, in particular, do the differences tell us about the progress of the Roman Revolution?

# Octavian Emerges Supreme

## Lecture 31

**It was in the wake of this victory in 31 B.C. that Octavian was to create a whole new system of government, known as the Principate, and usher in a new era of Roman history—often called the Imperial Period, or the empire.**

In the five years following 36 B.C., Octavian reinvented himself as the savior of traditions of the west and launched a propaganda campaign against Antony. Seeing the broad support he had garnered in his struggle against Sextus Pompeius, Octavian determined to change his political image and seek bases for his power other than the military. In so doing, Octavian showed that he was already thinking in the longer term about how the Roman state could be reorganized and rendered stable once more.

In a remarkable political PR stunt, he began to position himself as the defender of traditional western Roman ways. He did so mainly by portraying Antony as in the thrall of a foreign despot who had designs on the Roman Empire as whole. Antony's behavior played directly into Octavian's hands, particularly the event in 34 B.C. known as The Donations of Alexandria.

Antony and Cleopatra lived openly as a couple in Alexandria, despite Antony's marriage to Octavia. In 34 B.C., to celebrate his victories against the Parthians, Antony staged a pageant in the gymnasium in Alexandria. In this Donations of Alexandria, Antony and Cleopatra appeared enthroned with their three children and Caesarion. Caesarion was hailed as King of Kings, Cleopatra as Queen of Kings. The eastern Roman Empire was divided among Antony and Cleopatra and their three children, and Caesarion was acclaimed the true son of Caesar, a direct challenge to the basis of Octavian's legitimacy. Given these factors, Antony and Octavian began preparing for war.

After a diplomatic war of words in 33–32 B.C., the civil war, when it came, proved anticlimactic. Antony and Octavian had very different reactions to



the lapse and nonrenewal of the Triumvirate in 33 B.C. Antony behaved as if the lapse had not occurred, and he continued to use the title of Triumvir until his death. Now the respecter of Roman ways, Octavian abandoned the title and technically reverted to the status of a private citizen. However, using tribunes and intimidation, he successfully outmaneuvered the consuls of 33 B.C., both of whom supported Antony, and drove Antony's supporters in the Senate out of Italy.

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**In other words, the Republic tore itself apart because of its very nature.**

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In 32 B.C., Octavian revealed the contents of Antony's will, which shocked public opinion in the west. Antony declared Caesarion the true heir of Caesar. Antony wished to be buried by Cleopatra's side. Rumors that Antony intended to move the seat of Roman government to Alexandria and install Cleopatra as queen of the Romans turned the tide of opinion in favor of Octavian. Italy, and soon the western provinces, took an oath of allegiance to Octavian. This oath became the basis of Octavian's claim to leadership of the west. In contrast, Antony had no legal standing whatsoever in Roman eyes.

The two leaders moved against each other in the summer of 31 B.C., but the war, declared against Cleopatra, ended quickly. Antony's armies and fleet moved into Greece and camped at Actium on the Adriatic. Octavian moved to counter him with 30 legions and some 600 ships. Under the direct command of M. Vipsanius Agrippa, one of Octavian's leading supporters from the very beginning his career in 44 B.C., Octavian's fleet crushed the combined navy of Antony and Cleopatra in the bay at Actium on 2 September, 31 B.C. The land forces did not engage.

In the wake of Actium, Antony and Cleopatra fled back to Egypt, pursued by Octavian. Their troops either capitulated or deserted en masse to Octavian. As Octavian closed in on Alexandria in 30 B.C., Cleopatra committed suicide, followed shortly thereafter by Antony. Caesarion was murdered, but Antony's children by Cleopatra were spared. Octavian annexed Egypt as a province, thereby ending the history of the last and longest-lived of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Octavian also gained access to the vast wealth of the Ptolemies, allowing him to pay off his troops with money to spare.

In 29 B.C., his victory complete and now in sole control of the entire Roman world, Octavian returned a hero to Rome and began the long process of reorganizing the state. His emergence as sole ruler also brought the Roman Revolution to an end.

Looking back over the course of the Roman Revolution, it has proven a hard task to determine when the Republic ceased to exist. The best view is that there was no definitive moment when the Republic ended, but rather there was a process of gradual and gathering ineffectiveness that saw more and more power concentrated in the hands of individuals at the heads of armies rather than in those of legally elected and duly appointed magistrates. The Republic then did not so much fall as fade away imperceptibly. A city-state government had basically been shown incapable of governing an empire. ■

### Suggested Reading

Dio, *The Reign of Augustus*, books 50–51.

Gurval, *Actium and Augustus*.

Raaflaub and Toher, *Between Republic and Empire*, chapter 5.

Syme, *Roman Revolution*, chapters 19–22.

### Questions to Consider

1. What external factors and/or personal qualities favored Octavian over Antony in the period 36–31 B.C.?
2. Would a victory by Antony at Actium have changed subsequent events significantly?

# The New Order of Augustus

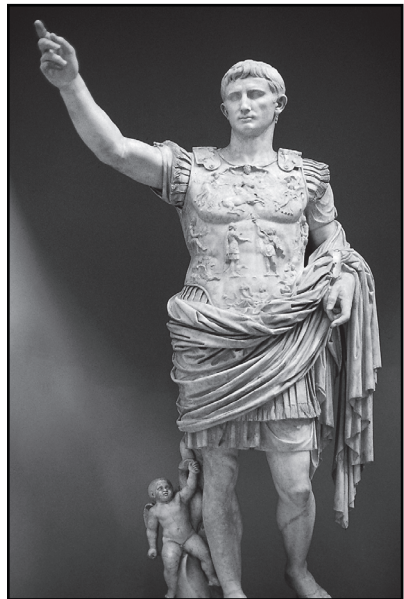
## Lecture 32

In some ways, the system of government that Augustus developed was not really written down; it didn't spring out of his head overnight. He didn't sit down with a group of consulars and then write it down and present it to people. Rather, it was a series of agreements that are often called constitutional settlements by modern scholars.

Over the course of his long reign, 31 B.C.–A.D. 14, Octavian reorganized the Roman state. After an initial period following Actium, Octavian gradually arranged the state on a new footing and placed himself at its head. The development of the new order was an evolutionary process of trial and error, adjustment and refinement, that lasted almost 30 years. By 2 B.C., Octavian, renamed Augustus in 27 B.C., had reestablished the tottering Roman state by virtue of a governmental system termed the Principate.

In his creation of the Principate, Augustus was primarily concerned with preventing more civil war, bringing stability to the Roman state, and avoiding the fate of his adoptive father, Caesar.

From 31–27 B.C., Octavian held the consulship continuously, and he appears to have relied on the oath of 32 B.C. as the ultimate source of his legitimacy. Beginning in 27 B.C., he began to regularize his position more systematically. There were many phases in the development of his position and the evolution



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**Augustus (63 B.C.–A.D. 14), Rome's first emperor.**

of the Principate, but two major events stand out. First, on 13 January 27 B.C., Octavian staged the First Constitutional Settlement. Entering the Senate, Octavian announced his retirement to private life. In a carefully staged piece of political theater, the senators entreated him to reconsider. After some wavering, Octavian finally acquiesced and accepted a package of powers and honors that placed him at the helm of the Roman state. He was renamed Emperor Caesar Augustus, a name replete with symbolic meaning. He accepted a huge province of all the regions of the empire with troops stationed in them (except Africa), which he governed with a 10-year grant of *imperium proconsulare* (provincial gubernatorial authority, valid only outside Rome). The other provinces of the empire remained under the authority of the Senate, governed not by Augustus's legates but by the Senate's proconsuls.

**[The Achievements of the Divine Augustus] is a fascinating document and claims to have been written by Augustus himself in A.D. 13, the year before he died.**

This settlement placed Augustus at the head of all of Rome's legions, administered through personally appointed and trusted legates, and thus it obviated the threat of army commanders causing civil war. Augustus's *imperium*, however, was only effective outside Italy. Within Italy, he continued to hold the consulship annually. In 23 B.C., following an illness and perhaps in response to a conspiracy

against his life, Augustus staged the Second Constitutional Settlement, a refinement of the first. In this arrangement, Augustus's *imperium* was made *maius* (greater), allowing him to interfere in any province of the empire. Within Italy, Augustus was granted *tribunicia potestas* (tribunician power) for five years. This power gave him all the prerogatives of a tribune of the plebs without monopolizing the consulship.

Augustus's system of government underwent further fine-tuning after 23 B.C., but its essential characteristics were in place by that year. Augustus was a member of all the priestly colleges of Rome, and he became chief priest (*pontifex maximus*) in 12 B.C. The army, now formed into a professional standing force of some 28 legions stationed at the empire's borders, took an oath of loyalty to him personally. He was declared exempt from certain

laws and was granted certain privileges. He received innumerable honorific titles, the most telling of which came in 2 B.C.: Father of his Country (*Pater Patriae*). This title placed the entire Roman Empire in a relationship to Augustus analogous to that of a family to its head.

Several characteristics of the new system warrant attention. All of Augustus's powers and titles were, officially, granted to him voluntarily by the Senate and people of Rome. The twin powers of *imperium maius* in the provinces and *tribunicia potestas* in Italy gave Augustus an avenue into all regions of the empire and all wings of administration. The familiar and traditional Republican forms were maintained: consuls continued to be elected, senatorial meetings held, popular votes taken. In essence, Augustus was grafted on top of the old Republican institutions.

Augustus was most tactful in his exercise of power. He referred to himself by the innocuous (and familiar Republican) title *princeps* (leading citizen), not dictator or, worse, king. The entire system came to be termed the Principate. He consulted the Senate about all official business and treated the senators with courtesy and deference. Rather than using his legal powers directly, he preferred to have his wishes enacted through the intangible personal quality of *auctoritas* (which is untranslatable but roughly equivalent to prestige, influence, authority, and ability all rolled into one).

Ultimately, however, Augustus's position had been won by force of arms, and his authority relied on the swords of the army, now his personal fighting force.

The remarkable document called *The Achievements of the Deified Augustus* (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*) allows us to read Augustus's own summary of his political career and position in the state. ■

### Suggested Reading

Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*.

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 30.

Dio, *The Reign of Augustus*, books 52–53.

Jones, *Augustus*, chapters 4–7.

Shotter, *Augustus*, chapters 4–7.

### Questions to Consider

1. What were the essential characteristics of the Augustan Principate?
2. Despite being a sham, how did Augustus sell his position to the Roman nobility and populace? Why did these parties buy into the fabrications of the Principate?

# The Imperial Succession

## Lecture 33

**The Principate did offer many benefits to the Roman Empire, but it had a flaw. It had a flaw at its very core that was generated by the nature of the Principate itself. This problem was the problem of the succession.**

For most of the empire's inhabitants, the Principate was a vast improvement on the chaotic Republic. It succeeded in bringing peace and good government to the Roman Empire. Augustus ushered in a period of peace and prosperity unparalleled in European history before or since; this *Pax Augusta*, or *Pax Romana*, stood for almost 200 years. Under Augustus and the Principate, provincial administration was centralized and governors were made accountable directly to the emperor. The days of extortionate proconsuls milking their provinces to finance domestic political competition were over. Augustus created the world's first standing, professional, volunteer army and employed it in expanding and then defending Rome's frontiers.

Following Actium, Augustus demobilized all but 28 of the 60 legions under his command. He employed the remainder in expanding Rome's frontiers up to the Danube and Rhine rivers. The standing legions were then stationed along the frontiers, far from Rome, under the command of Augustus's personally chosen representatives (*legati Augusti*). The army of 28 legions of Roman citizens and a like number of noncitizen auxiliary troops numbered about 300,000. There was also a mass of cultural, legislative, social, and economic developments in this period that we have not the space to examine in detail here. For the majority of the empire's inhabitants, then, Augustus's Principate brought peace, prosperity, good government, and stability.

For all its virtues, the Principate had a flaw at its core: the succession problem. Technically, the Principate was a package of powers voted to Augustus personally, and it should have lapsed on his death. The artifice of expressing his dominance in nonthreatening, traditional Republican terms caused a problem for Augustus. Since he was a sort of super magistrate,

his death would technically see the end of the Principate, with government reverting to the Senate, people, and annual magistrates. Given the mayhem of the Late Republic, however, such a reversion would only bring the definite threat of civil war.

Augustus had determined early that the Principate was essential to the peace and stability of the empire and should continue after his death. But Augustus could no more designate a successor than could a consul or praetor; to have

**The transfer of power from one governing party to another is always a difficult and problematic issue.**

done so would have exposed the autocratic nature of the Principate in too raw a fashion. Therefore, the issue of what was to happen on Augustus's death was a serious problem.

Like any good Roman, Augustus harbored aspirations for his family, and his response to the succession issue was to favor members of his own family with various signs of preference. His machinations over the succession during his long reign are labyrinthine and would require close study of his family tree to be fully comprehensible. Therefore, we treat his system in broad terms and use illustrative examples.

Several indicators were used to mark out princes in his family as potential future emperors; in ascending order of significance, princes could be given legal privileges to stand for high office years in advance of the legally prescribed age (e.g., his nephew Marcellus); princes could be given important military commands (e.g., Tiberius, Gaius Caesar); princes who were not members of Augustus's immediate family could be brought in either through marriage to his only natural child, Julia, or through direct adoption by Augustus himself (e.g., Marcellus, Agrippa, Tiberius through marriage; or Gaius and Lucius Caesar or Tiberius through adoption); princes could be given a share of Augustus's *imperium* or, ultimately, his tribunician power to become virtual co-emperors (e.g., Agrippa and Tiberius). By means of this last arrangement, a new emperor was all but already installed before Augustus's death, thereby ensuring a smooth transition.



Given the indirect nature of Augustus's indications of preference, the succession problem proved the single most destabilizing factor in Augustus's reign, as well as that of subsequent emperors. Augustus's designation of five princes over the course of his long reign suggested to some that hidden hands were at work manipulating the accession of one of them.



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Augustus marked out five men as his successors: Marcellus (d. 23 B.C.), Agrippa (d. 12 B.C.), Gaius (d. A.D. 2) and Lucius (d. A.D. 4) Caesar, and Tiberius (who eventually did succeed Augustus in A.D. 14). Uncertainty over the succession led to competition within the imperial house as princes and their supporters jockeyed for position in Augustus's favor-dispensing procedure. In the end, Tiberius, the natural son of Augustus's wife Livia by a previous marriage, became the next emperor.

**Augustus ushered in the Pax Romana, a period of peace and prosperity unparalleled in European history before or since.**

The rumors about Livia provide an illustration of the issues involved. Since so many of Augustus's favored candidates had to die to allow Tiberius to succeed, some suspicion fell upon Livia as having rid the imperial house of all obstacles to her son's accession. Most nefarious of all is the suggestion that, despite more than 50 years of marriage, she eventually poisoned Augustus himself to clear the path for Tiberius. These rumors are undoubtedly exaggerated, and Livia can be acquitted in most of the allegations, but they cannot be discounted completely. More importantly, their very existence shows how destabilizing the imperial succession problem was perceived to be, even by the Romans themselves. Future emperors were to face the same problems, as we shall see. ■

## Suggested Reading

Dio, *The Reign of Augustus*, books 54–56.

Jones, *Augustus*, chapters 8–16.

Shotter, *Augustus*, chapter 9.

Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, “Tiberius.”

Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome*, books 1–6.

## Questions to Consider

1. In what respects was the Principate an improvement on the Republic? Who benefited from the change in the governmental system, and who was disadvantaged by it?
2. Was the solution Augustus chose for the succession problem his only option? What could he have done differently?

# The Julio-Claudian Dynasty

## Lecture 34

**The Julio-Claudian dynasty stretched from A.D. 14, the death of Augustus on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August of that year, through to A.D. 68, the summer of that year, with the toppling of Nero.**

**T**he family of Augustus was the first and best-documented dynasty of the Roman imperial period. Among other sources, the *Annals* of Tacitus (written c. A.D. 120) and the biographies of Suetonius allow us a close and detailed view of these Julio-Claudians. Tacitus, a Republican-minded senator, wrote his *Annals* with an incisive intelligence and cutting wit. Suetonius, an equestrian secretary in the imperial service, wrote racy biographies of the Caesars from Julius Caesar to Domitian. His work is less useful than Tacitus's but nonetheless has its benefits.

The Julio-Claudian dynasty ruled from A.D. 14 to 68 and encompasses four emperors. Tiberius (r. 14–37), Augustus's stepson, was a manic-depressive whose reign was unpopular but generally successful. The reign of Gaius, a.k.a. Caligula (r. 37–41), who was Tiberius's great-nephew, was an unmitigated catastrophe. The young man was either corrupted by absolute power or crazy and was the first emperor to be assassinated. Claudius (r. 41–54) was Caligula's uncle. He ruled well and efficiently, even if he was unpopular with the ruling classes. Nero (r. 54–68), Claudius's stepson and adopted son, was another disaster. He spent his time in idle pursuits while persecuting his family and members of the elite. An army revolt ousted him in the summer of A.D. 68 and brought the dynasty to an end.

The detailed history of this family is worthy of a course in itself, so we take three exemplary incidents to illustrate the transformation of the Augustan Principate into a more openly autocratic system that continued to face the problem of the succession.

The career and demise of the praetorian prefect Sejanus (A.D. 14–31) illustrated the problems and dangers of rule by one man. Tiberius acceded

awkwardly to the imperial purple in A.D. 14. He had been waiting in the wings for 54 years and was prone to depression and dark moods. Between A.D. 14 and 23, L. Aelius Sejanus, the commander of the imperial guard, insinuated himself into Tiberius's confidence and friendship and gained huge power and influence as a result.

In A.D. 26, Sejanus helped persuade Tiberius to retire from Rome to the island of Capri in the Bay of Naples. From then until his fall in October 31, Sejanus was virtually emperor himself. He orchestrated the demise of the family of Germanicus, the prince whom Augustus had marked out

**Nero fled to a country villa and had himself killed by one of his attendants ... . With**

**Nero died the Julio-Claudian dynasty.**

to succeed Tiberius in the third generation of the Principate. Sejanus's goal appears to have been to position himself with Tiberius as Agrippa had been with Augustus: the trusted outsider brought into the family and made the successor.

By A.D. 31, Sejanus seemed to have succeeded, as he was promised the hand of an imperial princess, held *imperium*, was consul with

Tiberius, and lacked only tribunician power to be installed as co-emperor. But Tiberius, apparently made aware of Sejanus's machinations, suddenly turned on his protégé and ordered him arrested. There followed a purge and a witch hunt in which all of Sejanus's family, and many of his supporters were murdered. His career shows how getting too close to the emperor was perilous indeed.

The death of Caligula and the accession of Claudius revealed that the Republic was truly dead and hinted at the true basis of imperial authority. Caligula was assassinated by members of his own guard on 24 January, 41. In the ensuing confusion, the Senate met to discuss the future. At first there was talk of restoring the Republic. Soon, however, various senators began proposing that they be the next *princeps*.

While the Senate met and discussed the situation, the praetorian guard chose its own emperor: Claudius, Caligula's reclusive and bookish uncle. On the

night of 24–25 January, tense negotiations took place between the guards in their camp and the Senate; disorder appeared imminent. However, whatever military support the Senate had evaporated and Claudius was forced on the reluctant senators for confirmation. The whole incident shows that 72 years of rule by the Caesars effectively killed the Republic and threw some light onto the essentially military basis of imperial rule.

The overthrow of Nero in A.D. 68 finally revealed the truth: The army made or broke emperors. Nero was largely uninterested in matters administrative. He spent most of his reign writing bad poetry and performing on stage. He also persecuted members of his family, whom he saw as threatening his power, going so far as to murder his own mother when she interfered unduly in his exercise of supreme power. Disgusted, several senators plotted his downfall but were discovered in A.D. 65, with predictable results.

An army revolt in Spain three years later, however, proved decisive: Nero melodramatically despaired and took his own life in the summer of A.D. 68. The aged governor of Nearer Spain, Sulpicius Galba, in essence became emperor when proclaimed as such by his troops. Since Nero had eliminated all possible successors as rivals, the Julio-Claudian dynasty died with him. That it was the army, and not a senatorial plot at Rome, that ousted Nero revealed for all to see the true nature of the Principate: a military autocracy.

Several salient features of the nature of imperial power at Rome are revealed in these incidents. The succession continued to be destabilizing, as revealed by the career of Sejanus, the proposal by senators following Gaius's death that they be the next emperor, and the death of Nero. The danger of getting too close to the source of power was made clear by Sejanus's demise. The military basis of imperial power was hinted at by Claudius's accession and revealed by Nero's fall.

In the wake of the Julio-Claudians's demise, there was a round of civil wars in A.D. 69 as imperial governors fought it out for the purple. The next dynasty to rule, the Flavians (A.D. 69–96), was established in power by force of arms. ■

## Suggested Reading

Graves, *I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God*.

Scullard, *Gracchi to Nero*, chapters 13–14.

Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, “Caligula,” “Claudius,” “Nero.”

Tacitus, *Annals of Imperial Rome*, books 6–12.

## Questions to Consider

1. What does the history of the Julio-Claudians reveal about the exercise of imperial power at Rome? How were Augustus’s ideals maintained or overturned in these years?
2. Were the Julio-Claudians a success or a failure? Why?

# The Emperor in the Roman World

## Lecture 35

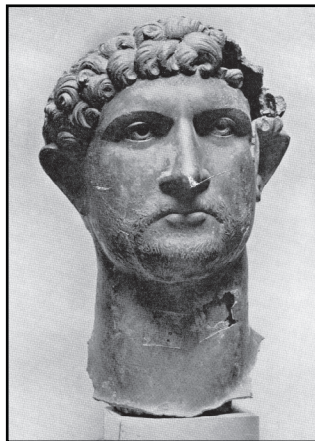
**The period covered by this lecture is basically that from the fall of the Julio-Claudians, A.D. 69, through to the establishment of the Severan dynasty in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D.**

**T**he collapse of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the civil wars of A.D. 69 set the pattern for the history of the Principate. Throughout the history of the Principate, the succession problem determined a particular pattern of events. Successive dynasties presided over periods of stability, but each dynasty collapsed amid civil war.

Following the Julio-Claudians came the Flavian dynasty (A.D. 69–96), established by Vespasian, general of the Danubian legion. The Flavians were followed by the Antonine, or Adoptive, dynasty (A.D. 98–180). The Severans (A.D. 193–235) followed the Antonines.

Between dynasties, civil wars were fought or threatened. The collapse of the Flavian dynasty in A.D. 96 saw an old senator, Nerva, chosen as emperor, but when the legions on the Rhine began grumbling, Nerva adopted their commander, Trajan, as his son and successor and so forestalled civil war. Trajan was the first of the Adoptive Emperors (A.D. 98–180), a childless dynasty determined by adoption rather than by blood relationship, that presided over the empire's greatest period of power, peace, and prosperity.

The last of the Adoptive Emperors (or Antonines), Marcus Aurelius, reverted to blood succession and was followed by his son, Commodus, who ruled disastrously. Commodus's assassination in A.D. 192



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**Hadrian (A.D. 76–138) traveled to every part of the empire during his imperial reign.**

was followed by long years of instability as three army groups fought to place their commanders on the throne. Eventually, L. Septimius Severus, the governor of the Danubian province of Pannonia, won out and established the Severan dynasty (A.D. 193–235). The broad pattern of imperial history, then, is a product of the succession problem, with chaos intervening when no clear successor was marked out for a given incumbent.

**A feature of the imperial system that evolved over the course of the *Pax Romana* ... was that it became more and more openly autocratic.**

It would be tedious to review each imperial reign in detail, so here we adopt a thematic analysis of the emperor's position in the Roman world. The Principate became increasingly autocratic as time went on (cf. Severus, a tough general). As memories of the Republic faded and people grew accustomed to emperors, the niceties of the Augustan system fell away.

The process was already well underway in the Julio-Claudian period, but by the Severan period the openly military nature of the Principate was beyond doubt (cf. Cassio Dio's account). Emperors secured their rule above all by pleasing the army and maintaining control over it; failure to do so could result in disaster (e.g., Galba or Pertinax). Severus's last words were "pay the soldiers well; despise the rest." The emergence of the literary genre of panegyric illustrates this process. More illustrative still is the spread of the oriental-tinged imperial cult, the worship of dead and sometimes of living emperors as gods.

While in power, the emperor was unassailable and could spend his time as he saw fit. Hardworking and conscientious emperors spent their days in dealing with major state affairs or even ordinary supplicants and petitioners; dissolute or lazy ones occupied themselves with debauchery or play. Rather like Republican magistrates, emperors were expected to carry out their duties in person, so a careful ruler would spend considerable time dealing face-to-face with embassies and ambassadors, hearing cases and petitions, leading armies, touring the provinces, and attending in person to other matters of state. Bad emperors simply ignored all that; in a sense, an emperor *was* what he *did*.



It is a moot point to what extent there was any imperial policy and to what degree emperors determined such policy, if at all. Certain tasks were seen as expected imperial behavior, such as public building in Rome, provision of supplies for the city, and other acts of largesse. All emperors, good or bad, took part in such activities. However, scholarly opinion is divided on the extent of imperial control over policy, even whether there was such a policy.

The contrast between Trajan and Hadrian, or the peripatetic Hadrian and the stay-at-home Antoninus Pius, seems to suggest that emperors were the guiding force and leading policy makers in running the empire. In contrast, the successful maintenance of order even when bad emperors were ignoring state affairs suggests the opposite. The better view is the latter, that the empire ran itself at the local level and that energetic or lazy emperors could come and go and affect the course of events or not as they saw fit. The emperor was, in essence, a very remote figure to the vast bulk of those living in the empire. Most people didn't even know the emperor's name; their concerns were overwhelmingly local.

The only means of removing an emperor from power was by murder or rebellion. No emperor was refused the powers of office by the Senate. No emperor retired voluntarily. If unsatisfactory, emperors could be removed only by force.

Throughout this period, the administration of the provinces continued to be very efficient and successful. They benefited the most from the imperial regime. Peace and good order generated Europe's single longest period of unified stability. Augustan reordering of provincial administration was his most successful legacy to the Imperial Period.

The governors, appointed by the emperors and accountable to them, tended to rule for about 4–5 years (the precise duration varied). The chief concerns of the central authorities were the maintenance of peace and good order and the collection of state taxes. In all other respects, local municipalities ran their own affairs, as we shall see in a later lecture. ■

## Suggested Reading

Historia Augusta, “Hadrian,” “Marcus Aurelius,” and “Heliogabalus.”

Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*.

Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, “Galba-Domitian.”

## Questions to Consider

1. Did the emperor determine imperial policy? What evidence is there for such a policy at all?
2. In what ways did the rule of Roman emperors resemble or differ from modern systems of governmental administration?

# The Third-Century Crisis

## Lecture 36

**Severus Alexander did his best with the situation that confronted him and spent some time in the eastern half of the empire fighting the enemies of that part of the world. He was murdered by his troops ... and as a result of this event, the Severan dynasty collapsed.**

**T**he crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century was the product of both external and internal factors. The external factor was a change in the nature of Rome's enemies outside the empire. Along the Rhine and Danube, previously fragmented groups of tribes amalgamated during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. into great and aggressive confederations capable of fielding vast armies.

Ironically, these tribal confederations were partly the product of cultural influence from Rome. The aggressive proclivities of Germanic tribal culture were amplified in these confederations. Along the Rhine and Danube, the Romans now found themselves facing the Franks, Alamanni, and Macromanni rather than the multifarious smaller tribal units of the past.

Additionally, pressure from the westward migration of the Huns out of the steppes of central Asia caused a domino effect that placed great pressure on Rome's borders. New tribes, previously unknown to the Romans, began to appear at or close to the borders of the empire, notably the Goths from Poland. Some of these tribes launched major incursions into the empire in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. In A.D. 253, the Franks, numbering perhaps 200,000 men, poured across the Rhine and spent the next five years ravaging Gaul and Spain. In A.D. 265, the Goths launched a seaborne invasion of Asia Minor and Greece and plundered Athens, Corinth, and Olympia, to the horror of the civilized world.

Along Rome's eastern border, the tottering Parthian kingdom, weakened by Roman invasions under Trajan and Septimius Severus, finally yielded in the 230s to the unified and aggressive Sassanid Persians. Claiming the territory of the old Persian kingdom of Cyrus and Darius, the Sassanids invaded the eastern Roman provinces in force under their vigorous king, Shapur I

(A.D. 242–272). Rome's eastern capital, Antioch, fell to the Sassanids in A.D. 260 and perhaps on another occasion before that. The emperor Valerian was captured in battle by the Sassanids in the same year and died their prisoner.

The internal factor was the severe uncertainty generated by the succession problem. The continual usurpation and challenging of the ruling emperors made it impossible for the Romans to respond to these external threats. In these years, Roman armies fought each other as frequently as they did the Goths or Persians. The internal and external factors played off each other to

**Whilst the powers  
of the Empire  
of the Gallic**

**Provinces and the  
Palmyran kingdom  
were around,  
foreign invasions  
did not happen.**

generate the crisis, and the events surrounding the capture of Valerian in A.D. 260 and the subsequent reign of his son, Gallienus, illustrate the nature of the crisis perfectly.

The result of the crisis was the fragmentation of the empire into three smaller units under localized regimes that could deal more effectively with the threats from outside the empire.

In Gaul, the general who finally expelled the Franks in A.D. 258 declared himself emperor. C.

Latinus Postumus drove the marauding Frankish hordes back across the Rhine and was declared emperor by his troops. The governors of Spain and Britain transferred their allegiance to Postumus, who declared the Empire of the Gallic Provinces (*Imperium Galliarum*).

Since the central authorities were helpless to act, the western provinces were effectively detached from the Roman Empire and now formed their own state, which stood with its own senate, emperors, army, and foreign policy for 12 years. In the east, the Roman dependency of Palmyra emerged as a defender of the borders there and was soon detached from the central authorities.

Under King Odenathus and, later, his wife Zenobia, Palmyra first secured Rome's eastern frontiers from the Sassanids and then annexed territory for itself. Unlike the *Imperium Galliarum*, this was a less recognizably Roman state and, by A.D. 270, it controlled Syria, Egypt, and much of Asia Minor.

Both of the breakaway states earned legitimacy and the loyalty of their regional populations by providing the peace and security that the central authorities could not offer. The Roman Empire seemed to be breaking apart. ■

### Suggested Reading

Brauer, *The Age of the Soldier-Emperors*.

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 41.

Historia Augusta, “Severus Alexander,” “Valerian,” “Gallienus,” and “Postumus.”

Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire*, chapters 4–8.

### Questions to Consider

1. Could the crisis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century have been avoided? If so, how?
2. Which factor, external or internal, was more determinative in generating the crisis?

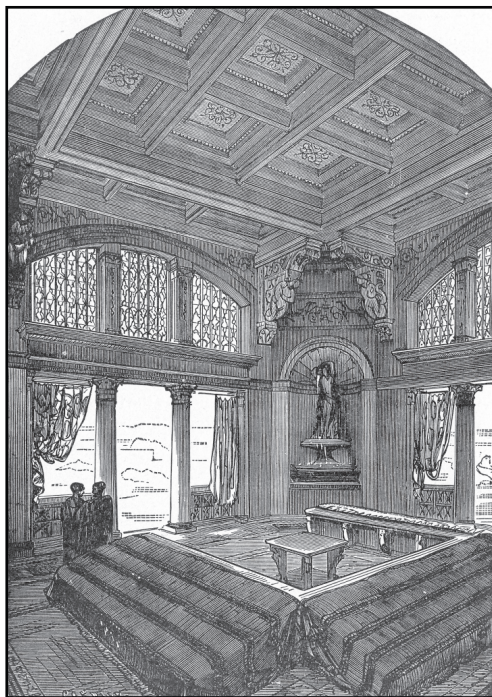
# The Shape of Roman Society

## Lecture 37

**We are going to leave the Roman Empire on the ropes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. and pause to examine a variety of aspects of Roman society and culture from a thematic perspective.**

Our assessment of themes in Roman society and culture focuses on the central period, covering the Middle Republic to the High Empire, in which classical Roman civilization was at its height and relatively consistent. Such a survey can be only that, given restrictions on time and space, but we will touch on many of the salient features of Roman civilization. Our sources, including writings of such authors as Cicero and Pliny the Younger, and inscriptions offer us a good insight into this period.

Roman society was intensely hierarchical and status conscious. In broad outline, Roman society was marked by rigid hierarchies of status, determined by law. The broadest division was between slaves and freeborn (slavery is detailed in Lecture 38). Until A.D. 212, the next major division was between citizen and noncitizen. The major advantage of citizenship lay in the judicial realm.



**The dining room, or *triclinium*, of an aristocratic Roman home.**

Within the citizen body itself were different orders of status. Senators were the richest and most privileged. Equestrians (*equites*) were of the same socioeconomic class as the senators but were classified as one notch below them. In townships across the empire, the local aristocracy eventually came to be defined as an order, called decurions. The commoners were grouped into the order of plebs.

The privileged were further differentiated by the perpetuation of the social class of patricians, the evolution of “noble” as opposed to “ordinary” senators, by the proximity of individuals to sources of influence (such as the emperor), and so on.

The ranks of status were fixed and maintained by law. The senatorial, equestrian, and decurional orders had minimum property qualifications for membership. Among the freeborn, privileged (*honestiores*) and nonprivileged (*humiliores*) were defined by law and treated accordingly within the judicial system.

Aside from legal definitions, public appearance was vital in establishing and maintaining status. The status of a member of the elite was identifiable through status symbols, themselves legally restricted to the different ranks.

Senators had the right to wear a toga with a broad purple stripe and sat in the front seats at spectacles and public events; they also monopolized all the important priesthoods at Rome.

Equestrians wore a toga with a narrow purple stripe, wore a gold ring, and occupied seats behind the senators at spectacles. As the Imperial period wore on, official honorific titles were also arrogated to these orders, defined once more by law. Only a senator could be *vir clarissimus* (further refined in the Late Empire to *vir spectabilis* and *vir illustris*), while only equestrians could be termed *vir egregius* or *perfectissimus*.

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**Pliny's statement, “nothing is more unequal than equality itself,” can offer no better illustration of the enormous gulf that yawns between Roman social values and our own.**

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The usurpation of any of these status symbols was taken very seriously by the authorities (that is, the elite) and many laws, empire-wide and local, protected their usage strictly. The centrality of public appearance in defining status was generated by the nondocumentary nature of the ancient world: you were who you appeared to be.

Relations between the classes and orders were defined by tradition and *clientela* (patronage). Given the hierarchical nature of the system, Roman society was permeated by notions of respect and deference, made manifest in *clientela*. Not everyone, however, was part of a patron-client relationship and, in general, relations among the classes were marked by habits of deference and precedence. This goes a long way to explaining how so few families managed to monopolize the Roman Republican magistracies, despite the dependence of the system on popular voting. Consideration of the typical day for the person of importance highlights all of these characteristics, especially the outward show of status.

Despite the sharp divisions among the classes, the system worked very well for centuries. The best model for its operation is not a pyramid but an atomistic one, in which the center is occupied by the person of prestige and influence who is surrounded by a swirling cloud of the extended family and dependents of varying status. The dependents are not fixed in place but jostle for proximity to the man of influence. The dependents themselves may be at the center of their own retinue of dependents. The topography of the typical Roman town reflects this social order, with the houses of the important and the less important evenly distributed throughout rather than grouped into high-class neighborhoods and ghettos.

Pliny the Younger stated that “nothing is more unequal than equality itself.” People who *deserve* respect and don’t get it are being treated unfairly. The idea of equality in society was not a part of Roman thinking. ■

### Suggested Reading

Alföldy, *Social History of Rome*, chapters 4–5.

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 39.



Cicero, *Murder Trials*, chapter 1 (“In Defence of Sextus Roscius of Amerina”).

Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, chapter 6.

### Questions to Consider

1. Why was Rome not a more egalitarian society? What factors contributed to its strictly hierarchical structure?
2. As you read Cicero’s speech listed under Suggested Reading, what characteristics of Roman society can you identify, as expressed by Cicero either explicitly or implicitly?

# Roman Slavery

## Lecture 38

In this lecture, I would like to survey the condition of Roman slaves. It is a characteristic feature of all ancient societies, and sad to say, looking at the broad history of humankind, in most societies that are documented, slavery has been a feature or characteristic of so many of them.

**A**mong the Romans, as in most human societies throughout history, slavery was an unchallenged norm. The Romans accepted slavery as natural and regarded it as the lowest status-grade in their social hierarchy. Slavery has been a feature in most human societies throughout history, and Rome was no exception. No inhabitant of the Roman Empire is on record challenging slavery on principle. For the Romans, slavery was not determined by race or ethnicity but by status.

The ramifications of this situation were many. Anyone could fall into slavery, so there was often no racial distinction between slave and owner. Once enslaved, it was possible to re-emerge and rejoin free society. Slavery in Rome was also not primarily a matter of exploitation of labor (on a Marxist model), since slaves did all sorts of lowly tasks alongside freeborn people (e.g., manual work), as well as many tasks valued and respected by the Roman elite (e.g., educating their young).

There were five sources of slaves for the Romans. Prisoners of war became slaves. The Latin for slave (*servus*, or “spared person”) derives from this source of slavery, since prisoners of war were technically casualties of battle and so should, by rights, be dead. Children born to slaves in-house were themselves slaves, termed *vernae*.

Slaves were not allowed legal marriages, but they could form partnerships; issue from such partnerships was born into slavery. Legal complications ensued when slave and free reproduced (the general principle was that if either partner was a slave, the child was too). Unwanted children were

sometimes sold into slavery or exposed; foundlings could be enslaved by their finders.

Trade beyond the frontiers brought slaves into the empire. It seems likely that finds of Roman luxury goods outside the empire are the result of trade in slaves. Piracy and brigandage could result in people finding themselves enslaved.

The living conditions of individual slaves varied considerably and were always totally dependent on the whim of the owner. Trusted and skilled slaves who worked close to an owner could live comfortably and enjoy some freedom of movement. Slaves involved in menial tasks had it harder. In no case should the life of the Roman slave be glamorized; all were utterly at the whim of their owners. Violent treatment was often the norm for the slave, as anecdotes reveal.

Slave society was as permeated by notions of status as was free society, and this hierarchy served to keep the slave population divided against itself. Slaves who worked in town thought themselves better than those working on the same owners' country estates. Skilled slaves had a sense of superiority over menial workers. Some slaves were appointed foremen in charge of other slaves (*vilici*). This hierarchy among slaves illustrates how deeply ingrained in Roman society were notions of status and deference.

Wealthy Romans could own thousands of slaves and, although open slave revolts were rare, there are signs, including some laws, that the free population lived in some fear of the slaves in their midst—signs such as the law requiring that all slaves in a household be executed if one of them murdered the owner. The slave revolts in Sicily in 135–133 B.C. and that of Spartacus in south Italy in 75–73 B.C. are the only two organized revolts on record in Roman history. Slaves, however, resisted on a small scale on a daily basis, as reflected in the characterization of them by their owners as lazy, unreliable, deceitful, and so forth.

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**By and large,  
slaves who worked  
for people in town  
felt themselves  
superior to slaves  
who worked out in  
the fields.**

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It is a remarkable feature of Roman society that freed slaves joined the ranks of the citizen body. Roman slaves could be freed, again at the whim of their owners. Freed slaves were termed *liberti* (freedmen). Freedom came through a ritual called manumission, carefully regulated by law. Many owners freed slaves in their wills, as a sign of their generosity and wealth more than of their affection for the individuals involved.

Freed slaves joined the citizen body, though they were debarred from certain rights (holding office, for instance) until the third generation from manumission. Freedmen became clients of their former owners, often continuing to carry out the tasks they had performed while in servitude. The freeing of slaves reflects less the humanity of the Romans and more the need to offer a carrot to the loyal slave to ensure good service. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*.

Cicero, *Murder Trials*, chapter 2 (“In Defence of Aulus Cluentius Habitus,” part I).

Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*.

### Questions to Consider

1. What conditions and attitudes lay at the root of Roman—indeed, of all—forms of slavery?
2. What attitudes toward slaves and slavery have you detected in your reading of ancient evidence so far in this course?

# The Family

## Lecture 39

If you ask a 15-year-old boy how his family is, he might relate about his parents, brothers and sisters. Then ask the same question of a 50-year-old man married with three children, and you are going to get a very different answer. The word “family” itself is flexible both between cultures and even within cultures.

The family, a flexible entity in any society, was a broad concept in Roman society that differed from our modern concepts of what constitutes a family. The word *familia* in Latin denoted something much more extensive than the modern nuclear family, although it incorporated that entity. *Familia* could apply to immediate relatives, extended relatives, dependents, and even slaves within the house; *domus* (household) was also used to denote what we today would consider covered by “family.”

The most fundamental formative factor in shaping the Roman family was land ownership. Without land in the ancient world, one was destitute and had to become a tenant on someone else’s land, sell oneself into slavery, or join the urban mob. Therefore, maintenance and/or extension of a family’s landholdings was a primary concern. Since land was passed down within a family, the presence of a guiding hand was required to make sure that the patrimony was maintained intact for future generations. This situation did not necessarily apply as strictly to the lower orders, so what follows is largely a portrait of what upper-class families were like.

Among upper-class families, the ancestors (*maiores*) were of great importance (cf. *Mos maiorum*, the “ways of the ancestors,” discussed in earlier lectures). The maintenance not only of the patrimony but also of the family’s reputation and status was vital. As well as portrait busts, waxen death masks (*imagines*) of dead ancestors were kept in the family shrine and were brought out at funerals to emphasize that family’s particular history of service to the state. Polybius’s description of an aristocratic funeral reveals much about family ideology and the importance of the ancestors.

The Roman family differs from the modern in several other important respects. The upper-class families were rarely based on a marriage of love and mutual affection, which we regard as fundamental qualities of the

successful modern family. Instead, marriages were often arranged for the social and/or economic benefit of the marrying families. Relationships within a Roman family were as status bound as any in Roman society, with a spectrum of possible relationships between husband and wife, father and children, mistress of the house and in-laws, owners and slaves, and so on.

**There were taboos on selling children into slavery or beating one's wife, taboos of social custom that limited the application of *patria potestas*.**

Relations between family members were also different from what we would expect between the same people today. Newlyweds did not leave to form their own households, but the bride joined

her husband's family and moved into her father-in-law's house. Slaves were often used to raise children, and relations between mothers and their children were more distant than we consider appropriate today.

Within the Roman family, the eldest living male (*paterfamilias*) exercised complete legal authority over the members of his household. From earliest times to the end of the Roman Empire, the legal rights of the *paterfamilias* were asserted as paramount. A father possessed the fatherly power (*patria potestas*) and wielded a guiding hand (*manus*) over all the people living under his roof. The earliest body of written Roman law, the Twelve Tables of 449 B.C., asserts this fatherly power, and it was never legally impugned.

By virtue of his authority, the *paterfamilias* had the right to beat, kill, or sell into slavery any person under his *potestas*. He also owned all the property that fell under his household, including that of his children, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. The absolute primacy of the *paterfamilias* is revealed in the Roman system of nomenclature, in which the father's name determined that of all offspring.

The *patria potestas* passed on to the eldest son when the *paterfamilias* died. In the case of a head of a household who had no sons or children to inherit his

land/status, resort could be had to adoption or the appointment of a guardian from among the male members of the extended family.

Legalities, however, rarely circumscribe social realities, and in actuality fathers did have limits placed on their behavior by circumstances and tradition. The potentially tyrannical powers of the *paterfamilias* over his household appear to have been rarely realized; few cases of abuse are on record.

Several factors served to limit the extent of paternal power. Low life expectancy ensured that sons rarely reached the prime of life still under the thumbs of their aged fathers. Custom dictated that before resorting to the dire punishments of household members, fathers consulted a family council whose decisions were socially binding. Taboos were placed on some activities legally within the ambit of the *paterfamilias*; for example, it was socially unacceptable to beat one's wife. Despite its apparently draconian nature, then, the system of *patria potestas* appears to have worked well throughout Roman history. ■

### Suggested Reading

Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family*.

Cicero, *Murder Trials*, chapter 2 ("In Defence of Aulus Cluentius Habitus," parts II–III).

Dixon, *The Roman Family*.

Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, chapter 7.

### Questions to Consider

1. What are the major differences between Roman families and their modern counterparts?
2. Why were Roman fathers given such sweeping powers over the members of their households?

# Women in Roman Society

## Lecture 40

All freeborn women in Roman law were required at all times in their lives to be under guardianship and the care of some man or other. Naturally, daughters would be born into the *patria potestas* of their fathers, just as their brothers would have been.

The position of women in Roman society varied according to their status, though there were some universal laws and attitudes that applied to all women. In some respects the study of Roman women independently of their men is misleading, since women derived their status from association with their men and shared the outlook and attitudes of their particular class; a woman's status was derived from reference to her men, fathers, husbands, and brothers. Women shared the attitudes of their class, and there is no evidence that the consul's wife shared any sense of sisterhood with the kitchen maid.

Nevertheless, certain laws and attitudes were applied to all women by virtue of their gender. All freeborn women were required to be under a legal guardian for their entire lives, although the strictness of this requirement dissipated over time. For instance, the ancient system of marriage (*confarreatio*), by which the bride moved the *manus* of her father to that of her husband or his father, gave way to a less formal sort of marriage involving no transfer of *manus*.

Unlike other ancient Mediterranean societies, Roman women could own and inherit property and were often educated as well as their men. Under the less-formal marriage, a woman retained control of the dowry she brought with her into the marriage. However, all women were viewed by men as weaker and less reasonable than men and as naturally prone to promiscuity.

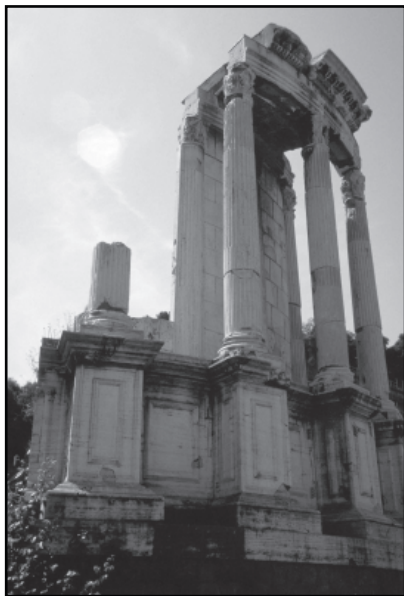
These attitudes probably derived from land ownership and the need to keep women under closer scrutiny to obviate the threat of illegitimate children and the ensuing risk to the patrimony. The situation among the lower



orders, where men and women would have shared the burdens of labor, was undoubtedly more equal, although not entirely egalitarian.

As with the powers of fathers, legal sources only portray part of the picture and do not describe real life. Despite these legal stipulations, some women amassed great power and influence in Roman society, especially in the late Republic and early Empire. Republican women like Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, were highly respected and/or influential members of high society. Under the Principate, the imperial women, like Augustus's wife Livia or his daughter Julia, all played major roles in the history of the times. All of these women, however, had to act behind the scenes, since women were officially debarred from public life.

In the male ideal, the duties of the Roman women lay in the domestic sphere, but a variety of sources shows clearly that women of substance could enjoy high public profiles. In the ideal situation, a Roman woman's place was in charge of the domestic affairs of the household. A woman moved from being a *puella* to a *virgo* prior to marriage to a *matrona* after some years of marriage and several children. The ideal Roman woman of any age should possess the quality of *pudicitia* (a combination of modesty, chastity, fidelity, and fertility), as well as education (but not too much) and agreeableness (but she must not be overly friendly). Cornelia was, in many ways, an embodiment of these ideals.



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**The Temple of the Vestal Virgins in Rome.**

Women who crossed these ideals were subject to opprobrium by society at large, such as Clodia or Sassia, who were castigated by Cicero, or Sempronia,

who was vilified by Sallust. It is worth noting that analogous ideals also applied to men; it's not as if men could do as they wished while women were held to high standards.

Despite the essentially domestic nature of the ideal, the sources are clear that women could enjoy high public profiles, especially in religious worship. Local aristocratic women could be prominent in their municipalities. Official inscriptions sometimes honor local women, evidently people of importance in their regions. Similarly, some public buildings in Roman cities were erected by women, such as the Eumachia building in Pompeii's forum, erected by a priestess. Indeed, it was as priestesses that Roman women could enjoy an honored public life, most notably the Vestal Virgins at Rome.

Among the lower orders, the situation was quite different. Some sources suggest that women of the lower classes enjoyed greater freedom and equality than did upper-class women. Livy's speech of Spurius Ligustinus reveals the hard work to which some women were subjected. Relief sculptures and other sources show women at work alongside men. Naturally, slave women had it the hardest, being subject to sexual abuse in addition to the degradations associated with the servitude they shared with male slaves. ■

### Suggested Reading

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, books 1–4.

Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power, and Politics in the Early Empire*.

Fantham et al., *Women in the Classical World*, chapters 7–13.

### Questions to Consider

1. In the books of *The Golden Ass* that you have read so far, how are women portrayed? What are their characteristics, how do they interact with the male characters, and what social positions do they occupy?
2. Could Roman women be considered liberated or oppressed? To what extent, indeed, can these modern categories be profitably applied to ancient societies?

# An Empire of Cities

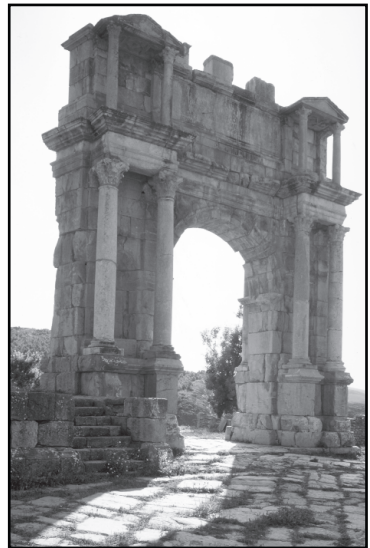
## Lecture 41

**In many ways, and sometimes even expressed by the Romans themselves quite clearly, the city was a manifestation of the majesty of the Roman state. It was, above all, the urban center that represented what Rome and the Roman Empire was.**

**A**t the local level, the Roman Empire was run by municipal authorities. The central imperial authorities were concerned with peace and taxes; local authorities dealt with the everyday lives of the empire's inhabitants. Land not owned by the emperor or the Roman people was assigned to cities to govern. The empire, then, resembled a quilt of municipal territories, each with an urban center, agricultural territory, and estates and villages. Each city had its own citizenship, allowing one to take part in local politics.

The populations of Roman cities were generally small by modern standards, numbering usually in the low tens of thousands. The status gradation of townships initiated by the Romans as they conquered Italy was eventually extended to the whole empire, creating a myriad of colonies, *municipia*, and tributary towns in all corners of the empire.

Despite considerable divergence in detail, municipal administrations tended to adhere to a broad, Republican format. Where pre-Roman forms of municipal administrations existed, they were left in place (especially in the cities of the Greek-speaking east). In the nonurbanized west, however, the Romans established cities and



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**A Roman road and arch, Algeria.**

created systems of local government modeled on their own Republic. A town council was made up of decurions—wealthy local notables, rather like senators of Republican Rome. There was a popular assembly of town citizens that elected annual magistrates. The councils and magistrates had different designations based on local custom, but the commonest forms were two consuls of headmen (*duoviri*) and two administrators (aediles) below them, all four elected annually.

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**Perhaps the most striking symbols of the centrality of the city to Roman culture are, beyond the roads that link the cities, the systems of aqueducts which often feed large cities.**

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There is also evidence of local dictators, quaestors, prefects, and censors. The chief duties of these local authorities were to run the affairs of the city and its territory, resolve local disputes, and collect taxes for handing over to the central authorities

every year. Even with the change to the Principate, this Republican form of local administration was maintained intact.

The remains of cities dot the Roman Empire and share many similar elements; the erection and maintenance of public buildings was the responsibility of the local authorities and rich private citizens. Using Pompeii as an exemplar, we can get an idea of the physical appearance of Roman cities. The Roman city had at its heart a forum, which was the religious, economic, political, and judicial center. The buildings associated with the forum reflect these functions.

The city also offered a variety of amenities not available in the countryside: taverns, snack shops, public toilets, and places of entertainment and relaxation. People lived in apartments or townhouses, depending on their means. Zoning on the modern model was not practiced, so that apartments, houses, shops, bars, and public facilities of all sorts are found evenly distributed throughout Roman towns.

Public buildings directly reflected the dignity of the community and usually were erected and maintained by local officials and magnates, as inscriptions

make clear. This system of deployment of private wealth for public benefit has been termed “euergetism” by modern scholars. Euergetism was a social contract: The upper classes provided the public amenities and entertainments for the locality in return for increased prestige and status among the local population.

Urban centers served a variety of functions for the rustic population of their territories, so that the city was the senior partner in the arrangement. The city’s forum is where the nine-day markets took place. All elections took place in the city. Important religious festivals were staged in the city’s temples and forum. Spectacles, theater events, and other entertainments were to be found in the cities. Cases were usually heard in the basilica near the forum.

The primacy of cities over the countryside finds physical manifestation in Roman aqueducts, which took water from local springs, often miles from town, and channeled it into the urban center for use. ■

### Suggested Reading

Anderson, *Roman Architecture and Society*, chapters 4–6.

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, books 5–11.

Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, chapters 1–2.

Stambaugh, *The Ancient Roman City*.

### Questions to Consider

1. In what respects were Roman cities similar or different from modern ones?
2. Why did Roman cities maintain Republican forms of administration when the main government had changed to an autocracy?

## Public Entertainment, Part I— The Roman Baths and Chariot Racing

### Lecture 42

I want to look at chariot racing and, before looking at that, look at an extremely popular form of public leisure, and one that was sponsored in no small way by benefactors the Roman world over, and that is the habit of public bathing.

An essential part of the euergetistic contract was the provision of entertainments and conveniences (*commoda*) for the people. This culture of public leisure and mass entertainment evolved during the late Republic and early Imperial periods.

The politicians of the late Republic, and the emperors after them, nurtured their popularity by supplying the people with leisure activities. These activities took various forms, from straight cash handouts to public banquets to the provision of buildings for entertainment and the entertainments themselves. Aside from gladiatorial games, to be examined in the next lecture, two of the most popular forms of public leisure were the public baths and chariot races.

Public bathing was a habitual element in daily life, and the baths became a symbol of Roman civilization. By the time of Augustus, public bathing had become a regular feature of the daily routine, so that public baths are one of the most ubiquitous and distinctive of Roman buildings.

From obscure origins, public baths emerged in the middle and late Republic as nodes of social life in the Roman world. They are mentioned in the plays of Plautus (c. 200 B.C.). However, their heyday occurred under the emperors in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries A.D. They have been found in every sort of Roman settlement, from country villas to forts.

Their designs vary enormously in the particulars, but the basic elements are always present. There was a series of heated rooms through which the bather

progressed in sequence. The bathers shared communal bathing in heated pools. Several ancillary facilities were available.

The complex bathing ritual was a decidedly sociable and popular experience. The entire ritual required several hours to complete if one was to enjoy a full circuit, and its public nature promoted relaxation and bonhomie. In fact, the secondary, social aspects of bathing gradually became the main reason for the popularity of the baths: here is where Romans met, relaxed, drank, snacked, gossiped, joined parties of friends for dinner, and generally mingled.

These features of the baths raise interesting questions about the daily operation of Roman society: Did men and women bathe together? How hygienic were the baths? Did all the classes go to the baths together at the same time? Could slaves be found there?

The baths built by the emperors in Rome reflect the importance of the habit and the processes of imperial euergetism in the capital. The staggering scale and magnificence of some of the imperial baths in Rome clearly reflect the centrality of the habit in daily life. For example, the Baths of Caracalla and of Diocletian each covered around 30 acres. That the baths were built at the emperor's expense demonstrates the importance of euergetism to the imperial regime. All around the empire, local authorities and private benefactors provided baths, on a smaller scale than those at Rome, for their communities. In addition to the larger baths at Rome and elsewhere, there were also humbler neighborhood baths run as businesses.



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**The entrance to the Baths of Diocletian in the Piazza della Repubblica, Rome.**

Of the mass entertainments available to the Romans, chariot racing was the most popular; in terms of scale, it was the largest entertainment event staged by the Romans. Chariot racing was an ancient form of competition, going back to the Greek Olympics and beyond. The Romans transformed the sport into a mass entertainment. Chariot racing took place in circuses—large, bullet-shaped arenas. The Circus Maximus at Rome stood four stories high and could seat perhaps 200,000 spectators. When the races were on, the city was practically deserted.

The races were carefully organized by team and rider, and the teams attracted a fanatical following among the mob. The chariot racers were organized into four teams, or factions: white, green, blue, and red. A regular race featured three chariots from each faction, though sometimes only one from each team took part. The chariots themselves could be two-, four-, or six-horse vehicles, requiring great skill and strength to control. Races ran for seven laps of the circus and were violent affairs, especially when a chariot crashed, or “shipwrecked,” in the lingo of the punters.

A major attraction of the races was betting. The racing factions attracted fanatical followers that were to gain political prominence in the late Imperial period in the eastern half of the empire. The gravestones of chariot drivers reveal something of the complexity and allure of the sport. ■

### Suggested Reading

Balsdon, *Life and Leisure*, chapter 8.

Fagan, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World*.

Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome*, chapters 1–5.

Yegul, *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity*.

### Questions to Consider

1. How is the popularity of the baths to be explained?
2. What were the main attractions of chariot races?



## Public Entertainment, Part II—Gladiatorial Games

### Lecture 43

The Colosseum in Rome has stood now for almost 2,000 years as a symbol not just of the city of Rome but of the ancient civilization that produced it. It has generally evinced wonder and appreciation from the people who have visited it.

The Colosseum is a remarkable site to visit, and it is not hard to see why. It stands some 170 feet high and measures 205 yards by 170 yards on its axes; 130,000 cubic yards of cut stone was used in its erection, along with tens of thousands of tons of concrete. Some 300 tons of iron alone was used to clasp the cut stone blocks together. It is an enduring monument to Roman civilization, so long as its function is put to the side. It is the instantly recognizable symbol of the modern city and ancient civilization of Rome. And the gladiator, one of the most enduring and readily recognizable images of ancient Rome, is a perplexing feature of Roman life.

The Roman Colosseum is a superlative engineering and architectural achievement, a true physical expression of the Roman love of scale, beauty,



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**The Roman Colosseum.**

and proportion. Its function as an arena for the staging of spectacles of unimaginable violence reflects another love of the Romans. Today, the gladiator is also an enduring popular image of ancient Rome, but scholars have found it difficult to explain why such bloody events appealed to the Romans so greatly. In this lecture, we examine the phenomenon of the games and survey the modern explanations for them.

Gladiators originated in Italy, came to Rome by the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., and became immensely popular in the late Republic and under the emperors. Where gladiators first appeared is a matter of some debate, but the context of funeral games for fallen warriors in south Italy offers the best explanation to date. The first gladiators to fight at Rome did so in a funerary context: To honor a prominent member of the Junian clan in 264 B.C., his grandsons set four pairs of slaves against each other outside his tomb. Throughout most of their history, the gladiatorial games retained a quasi-religious and commemorative quality.

The late Republic and early Empire saw a great increase in the scale and magnificence of the games, as well as their popularity. The competing aristocrats in the Roman Revolution used the games to gain popularity with the masses to aid their careers. This was because, unlike many of the people's entertainments, games were provided by an individual (called an *editor*), not by the state at public expense. Politicians progressing through the *cursus honorum* were expected to provide games at their own expense.

Caesar and Pompey staged games that raised the bar on the expected scale and magnificence of the spectacle. Caesar also began the process of decoupling the games from funerals by holding games in honor of his daughter's memory nine years after her actual death and burial. The emperors picked up on these precedents to hold vast and ever-more-complicated spectacles whenever they saw fit, though usually on the pretext of some celebratory or commemorative occasion. In the municipalities of the empire, the staging of the games was the product of euergetism among the local ruling elite.

Staging a developed gladiatorial spectacle was complex, and the lives of gladiators cannot have been pleasant. The man who wanted to put on games was required to make serious preparations. The developed spectacle

was in three parts: A beast hunt and/or animal fights (*venatio*) occupied the morning. At lunch time, public executions by various means were staged. The gladiators closed out the show as the headline event.

The *editor* therefore had to find animals for the *venatio*, the more exotic and/or fierce the better; find victims for the executions and arrange for interesting modes of killing; and, finally, find quality troops of gladiators. The quality and scale of the games directly represented the wealth and connections of the *editor* and would have been among the important days in the *editor's* life. The mechanics of putting on the games raise interesting questions: Did the *editor* buy the gladiators or hire them? How was the gladiatorial school (*ludus*) reimbursed for damaged goods on return? Was there big business in collecting and shipping animals for display? Did Roman magistrates deliberately sentence people to the arena to help a friend in need of victims for execution?

Gladiators were trained in specific modes of combat. There were several sources of gladiators. They included slaves bought by the owner of a *ludus*, people condemned in court to the training school, and even volunteers from among the population. Once in the *ludus*, the gladiator was assigned to a certain class of fighter that matched his physical build and was trained by a specialist (*doctor*) in that mode of combat. The *ludus* at Pompeii is a good example of what a training school looked like.

The gladiatorial combats were thus no mere mindless slaughter but carefully thought-out struggles between men armed to their advantage and disadvantage (e.g., the *secutor* and the *retiarius*). Life in the *ludus* must have been unrelentingly harsh and purposefully brutalizing.

Explaining the games has been a problem for modern scholars. Some features of the games suggest explanations in themselves. The strict seating of the crowd by social rank suggests that the arena was a manifestation of the Roman social order. Spectators were seated by rank, all wearing the official garment of citizenship, the toga.

The destruction in the arena of threats to the human or social order, in the form of beast hunts and executions, reinforced to the spectators their own power over potentially disruptive forces. The presence of the emperor and

popular appeals to him by the crowd turned the arena into political theater. The military nature of the games suggests that they were a vehicle for reminding the Romans of their martial spirit in times of peace. None of these observations, however, is sufficient in itself to explain the games.

Other modern explanations founded in theories of sociology, anthropology, or psychology have also been proffered. Simplistic and moralizing explanations are to be avoided: The Romans cannot be shown to be more evil or cruel than modern humans are. One scholar has suggested that the games emphasized the social rebirth of the outcast gladiator through the exercise of laudable Roman qualities (martial skill, endurance, courage, manliness). Another has seen them as feeding a deep emotional need in the Romans to ward off despair. Yet another has suggested that the games were liminoid rituals, by which potentially disruptive forces in society are harnessed and staged in a controlled environment for limited periods. A very recent idea has been to equate the games with comparative cultural phenomena of mass human sacrifice. It seems to me, however, that the games were simply fun; in our own culture of mass entertainment and violent spectacle, the games don't seem so alien. ■

### Suggested Reading

Futrell, *Blood in the Arena*.

Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*.

Plass, *The Game of Death in Ancient Rome*, part I.

Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*.

### Questions to Consider

1. Were the gladiatorial games simple spectacles of slaughter or something more structured? Are there any useful contemporary analogies?
2. How do you explain the phenomenon of the gladiatorial games?

# Roman Paganism

## Lecture 44

**The dominant religions of the modern age are religions of ethics, moral fiber, dogma, and teachings. They are often religions of the book. The ancient Roman gods were not really concerned about moral matters and ethical matters.**

**T**he pagan gods, ultimately, were in charge of natural forces (wind, sun, storms, earthquakes, growth, etc). They also came to be associated with human endeavors (birth, war, sowing, harvesting). In short, the gods could influence the outcome of any process that was risky, uncertain, or incomprehensible. The Romans therefore had multiple gods, each with its own province or set of provinces.

Aside from the familiar deities of Jupiter (the sky), Venus (sex), Neptune (the sea, earthquakes, and horses), or Mars (war), the Romans acknowledged thousands of minor deities with more specific spheres of influence: Consus (stored grains), Flora (fruits and crops), and so forth. The breakdown of gods was extreme: The doorway (a place of uncertainty) had four deities (including the familiar two-faced Janus) associated with it, and the god Robigus was in charge of mold and rust.

The Roman gods were anthropomorphic and were subject to the full gamut of human emotions: lust, anger, deceit, arrogance, happiness, and so forth. They could be seen as occupying specific places (Jupiter Capitolinus, Apollo Palatinus, etc.). Above all, the gods demanded from humans recognition and respect. One showed recognition by building them temples and sanctuaries and showed respect by establishing a cult for their regular worship and consulting the deity before embarking on any enterprise involving that deity's province. Important deities could have days set aside for their worship by a community as a whole; these were the pagan religious festivals.

Animism was also a feature of Roman religious belief. As inheritors of a Judeo-Christian polemic against paganism, we are inclined to scoff at such a belief system as silly and laughable. In fact, paganism was a valid

and vital religious system that for millennia helped to make sense of a capricious world.

The worship of the Roman gods lay in correct ritual practice designed to placate potentially inimical deities or seek the favor of potentially friendly ones—to maintain the *pax deorum* (Peace with the Gods). One did this by alleviating divine displeasure when it was incurred or obviating it before it arose. This relationship of the Romans with their gods is described by the term *pietas*.

There were three forms of ritual observance. Prayers were essentially formulaic contracts with the deities that involved the following order of things: Calling on the deity using the correct name and designation; stating one's request (citing precedent, if possible); and stating one's part of the bargain, making vows to be fulfilled when the god has done his or her part.

**As a whole, the Roman state religion was a rather dignified and aloof business.**

The sacrifice of animals or plants apparently had its origins in the notion of feeding the gods with life forces. Sacrifice, too, was hedged about with strict ritualistic observances and followed particular formulae. A mistake in a prayer or ritual would require it to be restarted from the beginning. In 176 B.C., a mistake was made in a prayer during a three-day Latin festival, and the whole festival had to be started again.

Divination sought to determine the gods' disposition toward any given enterprise at that moment; it was not seeing the future. Divination took various forms, the most common being augury (observing birds) and haruspicy (examining entrails of sacrificial victims, especially the liver). Allied to divination was the reading of unsought-for signs from the gods (*prodigia*), usually unnatural or unusual occurrences.

The favor or disfavor of the gods, and so the success of the prayer or ritual, was made manifest in the outcome of one's endeavors. Failure in any endeavor usually entailed the seeking of religious, as well as reasonable, explanations. The flouting of religious preparations before embarking on an

enterprise invited disaster. Roman religion therefore served to reinforce the legitimacy of the successful and confirm the failure of the vanquished.

The chief religious staff of Roman religion came from the same stock as politicians and generals. There was no separation of religious and state business. The four chief colleges of priests in Rome were staffed by senators, especially patricians. The most prestigious college was the pontificate, whose president was chief priest (*pontifex maximus*) of Rome; the *pontifices* kept records of *prodigia* and, when they proved inadequate, consulted the Sibylline Books. The Roman elite therefore supplied society's religious as well as its political and military leaders. In addition, specific temples and cults had their own priests and ministers.

Roman state religion was a rather staid and dignified business, since the emphasis was on public appearance and ritualistic practice, but was very tolerant. The Romans deemed as superstition a belief system that seemed to them baseless, overly emotional, or fanatical. They also disparaged magic, although it was very popular among the masses. The observance of religion, as far as the state cults was concerned, was serene, ancient, traditional, and dignified.

Given its nature, Roman religion was accumulative and tended to absorb rather than stamp out new deities and cults that it encountered. All across the empire, the Romans adopted and adapted the cults they encountered. The process is called *interpretatio Romana*, and it saw native gods equated with Roman deities, such as Minerva and Sulis in England. The Romans, however, occasionally suppressed cults for political or social reasons. They took a negative view of Christianity as it arose in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. ■

### Suggested Reading

Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, chapter 9.

MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*.

Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods*.

## Questions to Consider

1. In what respects did Roman gods and religious observances differ or resemble their modern counterparts?
2. Given the nature of their beliefs, did the Romans have a deep capacity for religious intolerance?



# The Rise of Christianity

## Lecture 45

**By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, around A.D. 200, Christianity was a minority religion by all means but was well established in various urban centers around the Roman Empire.**

**A**mong educated Romans, ethics were guided by philosophy rather than religions like Christianity. In the absence of a strongly ethical element in their state religion, the Romans looked to philosophy for rules of living. The main schools of philosophy were all derived from the Greek world, and they differed significantly in what they recommended as the best mode of behavior.

Even if Second Temple Judaism was highly ritualistic like its surrounding pagan cults, Judaism contained a strong ethical component. Although the Romans regarded Jewish beliefs as somewhat silly, they nevertheless courted the favor of the Jewish god through the priests of his temple in Jerusalem. There was some persecution, but generally Rome was tolerant of Judaism as another of the main belief systems of the eastern part of its empire. They could have had little idea that from this rather marginalized religious group would emerge a new belief system that would actively stamp out the worship of the ancient gods.

The historical life of Jesus, given its sources, is all but impossible to reconstruct. The gospels are not biographies or histories of Jesus but statements of religious belief written by Christians for Christians; other sources are equally unreliable (e.g., Josephus). Despite many modern attempts to do so, the reconstruction of the historical Jesus is really not possible. However, it is beyond doubt that he existed and taught in Palestine, founding a new religious movement in the process. But the vast majority of his contemporary world took no notice.

The greatest period of Christianity's growth was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D., despite occasional persecutions by pagan authorities. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Christianity had to overcome a serious internal dispute before spreading out

across the Mediterranean. Paul's victory in a dispute with Peter helped to set Christianity on its proselytizing mission. Peter had wanted converts to become Jews before becoming Christians; Paul disagreed, won, and began to establish Christian communities around the Mediterranean. By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Christianity, although a minority religion, was established in many eastern cities and quite a few western ones.

The Roman persecutions of Christianity were sporadic, regional, and not generated by pure religious intolerance but by the practical consequences of Christian beliefs. The Romans acted against other religious beliefs that threatened the political (Druidism) or social (Bacchic rites) order. The Romans considered Christianity subversive for a variety of reasons: Refusal of Christians to acknowledge the state gods threatened the *pax deorum*.

Christian secret meetings at night seemed suspicious. There were rumors of cannibalism (eating flesh, drinking blood).



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**Diocletian (right) instituted the Great Persecution against the empire's Christians. Constantine the Great (left) not only decriminalized but institutionalized the faith.**

Roman persecutions of Christians were occasional, half-hearted, and politically motivated. Nero started the first persecution in the wake of the Great Fire in Rome in A.D. 64. Following this, Christianity was proscribed but largely left alone until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. As Roman emperors faced uncertain times and sought to justify their fragile regimes by appeals to divine legitimation, Christians came under fire under Decius in A.D. 249. That persecution lasted for about 12 years and was aimed at maintaining the *pax deorum*. The reorganization of the Roman Empire and reestablishment of order (covered in the next lecture) saw the Great Persecution under Diocletian, initiated again for political reasons and lasting from A.D. 299 to 311. All of these pagan persecutions of the Christians paled into insignificance compared to the sustained and systematic persecution leveled

by the victorious Christians against both pagan outsiders and heretics within their ranks.

Christian success was due to many concurrent factors, including the rise in religiosity in the Roman Empire in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D. These centuries have been termed the “Age of Anxiety” by one scholar; people were looking to new religious forms for comfort in an uncertain world. Magic, superstition, and oracles all boomed in popularity. A clear manifestation of this anxiety is the great popularity of eastern mystery religions that brought the initiated into a close contract with the deity (e.g., Isis, Mithras, etc.). These religions were exclusive and promised great rewards, and they also charged for initiation.

Christianity offered more than philosophy or the mystery religions. Philosophical humanism needed education to be understood, while Christianity did not. Mystery religions were expensive, while Christianity was free. Christianity accepted all comers. Its doctrines promised eternal future succor in return for temporary present suffering. The church was well organized into cells (churches) under local bishops and deacons. By A.D. 300, nevertheless, Christians comprised only a handful of the population; however, they were well established, well organized, and dedicated. The 4<sup>th</sup> century was to bring them triumph. ■

### Suggested Reading

Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*.

Wilken, *The Christians as the Pagans Saw Them*.

### Questions to Consider

1. What advantages did Christianity have over competing belief systems? Why was it regarded as subversive by the authorities?
2. In a historical sense, was Christianity destined to prevail? If not, at what stage(s) could it have failed?

# The Restoration of Order

## Lecture 46

I want to cover the remarkable period that stretches from A.D. 270 up to that of 306 or so, the early part of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, which sees the restoration of the Roman state to order. In fact, under the emperor Diocletian, it basically sees the Roman Empire restored and reinvented on an entirely new footing.

**T**he restoration of order started in A.D. 268 with Claudius II Gothicus and accelerated under Aurelian in the 270s. Claudius II succeeded in driving the marauding Goths back across the Danube. But Claudius, an Illyrian army officer, fell ill and died only two years into his reign.

Aurelian, a man of action, reunified the empire in A.D. 270–275. Another Illyrian army officer, Aurelian was declared emperor on Claudius's death. Nicknamed *manu ad ferrum* (Hand on Hilt), he was a professional soldier whose reign was a whirlwind of action. In A.D. 271, he visited Rome and initiated the building of the massive walls that still stand to a circuit of 12 miles, with 18 gates and numerous towers.

In A.D. 272–273, Aurelian turned to Palmyra. After campaigns through Asia Minor and Egypt, he made a daring march across 80 miles of open desert, carrying all his army's needs with him, and besieged Palmyra. After its fall, Palmyra was spared complete destruction by Aurelian's orders. Queen Zenobia was captured and was sent to Rome, where, after walking in Aurelian's triumph in A.D. 274, she was married to a senator and lived out her days in Tibur (Tivoli), near Rome. As



In A.D. 273, Aurelian regained Palmyra, in modern-day Syria, for the empire.

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Aurelian was returning west, however, he heard that Palmyra had revolted, so he returned and destroyed the place utterly.

Following his successes in the east, Aurelian was hailed as *Restitutor Orientis* (Restorer of the East) on his coins and turned his attentions to the Empire of the Gallic Provinces in the West. A large battle on the Marne in A.D. 274 saw Aurelian victorious. Aurelian's coins now hailed him as *Restitutor Orbis* (Restorer of the World).

Aurelian's death was ludicrous and was emblematic of the instability of the age. A secretary who felt threatened by Aurelian's anger forged a death list of army officers in the emperor's hand and showed the forgery to the officers. Thinking themselves doomed, the officers murdered Aurelian in A.D. 275.

The aged senator Tacitus ruled only six months and was succeeded by Probus in A.D. 276. Probus finished Aurelian's work; he repelled barbarian invasions and strengthened the empire's frontier defenses, but he became unpopular with the troops due to his rigid disciplinary standards. The soldiers eventually tired of his peacetime projects, revolted, and killed him in A.D. 282.

A civil war followed Probus's death, and the empire seemed doomed to more years of chaos. Diocletian, another Illyrian army officer, became emperor in A.D. 284, defeated his opponents, and began the job of consolidating the gains of Aurelian and Probus. He set the empire on a new footing with sweeping reforms; he also was the first and only emperor to tackle the succession problem methodically.

Diocletian reformed the Principate into the Dominate, an openly autocratic military regime with divine legitimation. Under Diocletian, the emperor became the open font of all authority, and court ritual became imbued with elaborate pomp and ceremony. Diocletian was the earthly representative of the gods, especially Jupiter and Hercules, whose worship now became major cults of imperial loyalty. Christians, who refused to participate in these cults, were persecuted with increasing ferocity in the Great Persecution.

Diocletian established the economy and administration of the empire on a permanent war footing, dividing the old provinces into many smaller units

for ease of tax collection and issuing a maximum price edict to keep inflation down. He centralized the organization of the Roman state. He reformed the army, placing greater emphasis on cavalry over infantry and establishing mobile strike forces at strategic points near the frontiers to tackle barbarian and Persian incursions.

Diocletian's most revolutionary step, however, was the division and localization of imperial power with the establishment of the Tetrarchy, rule of four princes. Diocletian learned from the security successes of the regional jurisdictions of Palmyra and the Empire of the Gallic Provinces, and he appointed his chief general, Maximian, as his co-emperor. Maximian, however, had his authority limited to the west, while Diocletian focused on the east.

By A.D. 290, it was clear that this system was a success, so Diocletian took it a step further. He nominated himself and Maximian as *Augusti* and appointed below them two junior emperors, or *Caesari*. The Caesars were able army officers: Galerius in the east under Diocletian and Constantius in the west under Maximian.

In the Tetrarchy, the Caesars—not blood relatives of the Augusti but bound to them by marriage and adoption—would succeed the Augusti and then nominate two Caesars as replacements, and so on. The Tetrarchy was the first attempt by an emperor to tackle the succession problem head-on. In imperial ideology, the Tetrarchy ruled as a united group, issuing edicts in the name of all four, each one celebrating the triumphs of individual members, and so on. An ancient statue of the Tetrarchs in Saint Mark's Square in Venice perfectly captures the tone of the system.

Diocletian created a stable system, but it was an empire under siege, and the Tetrarchy was fatally flawed. The empire of Diocletian and subsequent emperors lasted for two centuries, but it was under constant pressure, internal and external. This Roman Empire was a darker place, more heavily taxed, more centrally controlled, entirely at the service of the army as guarantor of its existence, and at its head were aloof, distant, absolute, and divinely mandated monarchs. The late empire, to be examined more closely in the next lecture, was a very different place from that of Augustus or Hadrian.

Confident in the virtues of the Tetrarchic system, Diocletian, became the first Roman emperor to retire voluntarily in A.D. 305—to a fortress-palace in Split, Croatia. He forced his co-emperor Maximian to do likewise, so that the Caesars Galerius and Constantius ascended as Augusti.

The problem was that Maximian retired reluctantly, and his son, Maxentius, felt cheated of power by the Tetrarchic system. In A.D. 306, Maxentius seized Rome and declared himself Augustus, with Maximian's support. In distant Britain, Constantius had died also in A.D. 306, and his natural son, Constantine, was declared Augustus by the troops.

Therefore, in A.D. 306, there were four men claiming the title of Augustus: the two legitimate former Caesars (Flavius Severus and Galerius) and two usurpers, Maxentius and Constantine. Thus revealed on its first outing was the fatal flaw in the Tetrarchy as a system of succession: It required Romans to ignore family loyalties altogether. ■

### Suggested Reading

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 42.

Williams, *Diocletian and the Imperial Recovery*.

### Questions to Consider

1. How effective and necessary were Diocletian's reforms?
2. What influences and precedents can be detected in Diocletian's formulation of the Tetrarchy? Could the Tetrarchy have worked well as a mode of succession? If so, how?

# Constantine and the Late Empire

## Lecture 47

**Constantine the Great was undoubtedly one of the most important of all the Roman emperors, and in terms of some of his reforms, and particularly his conversion to Christianity, set the stage for much of subsequent European history.**

**C**onstantine established the pattern for rule of the late empire through a complex, protracted civil war against three rivals, finally consolidating his rule in A.D. 326. He also carried out several notable reforms and continued and expanded the practice of recruiting Germans into the army.

Claudius II Gothicus had defeated the Goths, but he recruited some of them into his army, a practice followed by Probus. Constantine now intensified this process and did it more regularly. He promoted the cavalry still further above the infantry in the Roman army, demoting the old legions to little more than border guards. He continued the erosion of the old Senate's role and all but abolished the distinction between senator and equestrian by creating offices open to both.

The imperial bureaucracy increased greatly; a host of officials now interceded between commoner and emperor. Between A.D. 324 and 330, Constantine founded a second capital at the site of Greek Byzantium, now renamed Constantinople. Diocletian had made his home among the Nicomedians in Asia, so there was a partial precedent for Constantine's



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**Constantine's reforms set the stage for much of subsequent Roman—and European—history.**



actions. However, a new and official capital of the empire was a major move that heralded the eventual splitting of the empire into eastern and western halves, each with its own emperor.

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**The story of the late empire was a dark and rather depressing one.**

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Constantine began the process of institutionalizing Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, which had several serious ramifications for the empire and the church. Contrary to popular belief, Constantine did not make Christianity the official state religion of Rome. Rather, he decriminalized it and favored it personally above other cults. Then, in A.D. 313, in the Edict of Milan, he made religious faith free and open, releasing Christians from centuries of suspicion. He gave land and money to the church to build places of worship and get established.

Constantine's conversion to Christianity has been the subject of much speculation by ancients and modern alike. Some see it as a genuine religious conversion, as reflected in the legend of his revelatory conversion on the eve of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in A.D. 312. Others see in it a more cynical political move to garner support for himself from all available quarters in the face of an uncertain future.

The evidence is in favor of the latter view, since Constantine did decidedly un-Christian things: He maintained pagan cults; he allowed himself to be portrayed as a pagan god in his coins; and his official monuments extol the virtues of Sol Invictus, Jupiter, Hercules, and other traditional gods. Constantine finally was baptized on his deathbed, by which time he had helped to move Christianity from the fringe to the mainstream of Roman religious practice.

One of Constantine's most influential acts was to interfere in Christian dogmatic disputes and support the notion of doctrinal orthodoxy. The early church was actually a series of churches that conducted doctrinal disputes among each other. With the new partnership between church and state, such diversity of opinion could not be tolerated; heresies had to be eliminated.

In A.D. 317, Constantine sent in troops to deal with the Donatist heretics in Carthage, which resulted in banishments and even executions; active persecution of the Donatists continued until it was abandoned as unsuccessful in A.D. 321. In A.D. 325, Constantine summoned the Council of Nicea, where about 300 bishops formulated the cardinal elements in “right-thinking” Christianity, creating a dogmatic orthodoxy that stands still at the heart of Roman Catholicism. By the time Constantine died in A.D. 337, however, Christianity was no more united doctrinally, and heresies flourished in various parts of the empire.

As subsequent emperors faced an increasing spiral of difficulties, numerous and differing efforts were made to obviate them. Theodosius the Great (A.D. 379–395) finally divided the empire into two halves officially, in the face of continued risks to the empire’s security. Barbarian and Persian incursions continued in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, so that few emperors were happy to rule alone.

In A.D. 378, the emperor Valens was slaughtered along with his army by Goths at Adrianople in Thrace. His successor, Theodosius, finally made official what had been a de facto arrangement for some time when, in his will, he divided the Roman Empire into eastern and western halves, with separate rulers in each. Unfortunately, subsequent eastern and western emperors rarely got along and sometimes quarreled over border territories. Neither east nor west could resist the final arrival in Europe of the Huns from Asia, who wreaked havoc until turned back by the death of their king Attila in A.D. 454.

“Barbarization” was the process whereby Germanic leaders and peoples came to play more important and central roles in the life of the empire. As Roman armies got weaker in the face of stronger and more frequent barbarian attacks, the authorities (especially in the west) were inclined to hire Goths and other barbarians to fight for them and/or settle potential invaders inside the empire.

More and more the Germans settled in the empire on their own terms, not absorbing Roman customs but living in what amounted to tribally run statelets within the empire. Germanic leaders also became more powerful at

court, as with Stilicho, the formidable general of Theodosius and Honorius, or Ricimer, who made four emperors.

By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, some emperors were mere puppets of their Germanic military advisors. Barbarization is also manifest in the decline of the cities, the backbone of Roman civilization. The story of the late empire was a dark and rather depressing one. Cities declined in importance and extent, and aristocrats moved into huge villas in the countryside.

Throughout all this, religious disputes continued uninterrupted in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. The Christian authorities increasingly set out to destroy the traditional pagan cults. The last pagan emperor of Rome was Julian (A.D. 360–363), who attempted to reverse the inroads made by Christianity. After him, all emperors were Christian. Theodosius aggressively attacked the pagan cults and issued edicts of intolerance against them. ■

### Suggested Reading

Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*.

Cary and Scullard, *A History of Rome*, chapter 43.

### Questions to Consider

1. What effects did Constantine's reign have on subsequent events?
2. What problems did the western empire face in its last 200 years of existence?

# Thoughts on the “Fall” of the Roman Empire

## Lecture 48

The fortunes of both halves of the empire began to diverge markedly. The division was carried out to increase the security of the empire as a whole. ... Unfortunately, in the course of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, these states proved to be mutually suspicious and often quarreled over various border territories.

The last act of the Roman Empire’s history was a series of military catastrophes. Following the division of the empire in A.D. 395, the fortunes of the two halves begin to diverge. Although carried out to ensure security for both halves, the division created two mutually suspicious states that often quarreled over border territories. The east remained strong while the west became increasingly weaker.

A succession of child emperors in the west, who ruled on the sufferance of Germanic military advisors (called Masters of the Soldiers), ended in A.D. 476 when the last emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed and replaced by the German chieftain Odoacer. Throughout this period, barbarization continued and intensified as more and more Germanic tribes (including the Vandals) moved into imperial territory and settled there, often with the emperor’s consent.

The career of Alaric illustrates the problems faced by the west in these years. Alaric and his Visigoths began invading the empire on an annual basis in A.D. 396. The eastern emperors paid him off with cash. Roman victories over him in A.D. 402 and 403 were not followed up, and Alaric would return every summer, demanding his payments in return for not doing damage.

By A.D. 408, Alaric had settled in the Balkans, and he turned west after the eastern empire paid him off. In A.D. 409 he invaded Italy, demanding his ransom, and was paid off and appointed Master of the Soldiers in an attempt by the Romans to bring him into the fold. In A.D. 410, Alaric tired

of imperial politics and set his Goths loose on Rome for three days, ravaging the city for the first time in 800 years.

The question of why Rome fell has been one of history's great problems for 500 years. It has generated myriad explanations with varying degrees of cogency. Various broad general explanations have been advanced. The notion of increased decadence is popular but unsupported by the evidence. The notion that Christianity weakened the empire also holds no water, since the east was more devout than the west but did not fall.

Marxist class-war analysis, as well as the idea of popular degeneration of elite culture, are entirely without ancient support. In fact, any explanation that superimposes modern prejudices on ancient conditions (such as the racial miscegenation theories of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century eugenics) is largely nonsense.

Specific general explanations have also been proposed. Catastrophic event explanations—climate change, lead poisoning, ecological depletion, or massive depopulation—also have little support among modern historians, despite getting wide publicity in the media. Increased corruption in the late empire has been posited as a general cause for the empire's fall, but it cannot be proven specifically as a cogent reason for collapse. The Germanic invasions have long been blamed outright for the collapse of the west, but the problem of the eastern empire's survival makes the invasions alone insufficient to explain the fall.

The following are complex, nongeneral explanations. The divided empire thesis sees so many forms of division within the empire (Christian versus pagan, rich versus poor, elevated versus humble, barbarian versus Roman, etc.) that the empire tore itself apart. The barbarian invasion argument, once a specific general explanation, has been broadened into a systems analysis approach that sees the barbarian incursions and internal weaknesses feeding off each other in a sort of positive feedback loop that led to the collapse.

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**Right up until the end, people of the Byzantine kingdom called themselves *Romaioi*, Romans.**

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The explanation for the fall probably should be sought in as broad a base as possible. One currently fashionable school of thought, the transformationist school, denies the fall altogether and stresses the continuities between the late Roman Empire and medieval Europe. It is an interesting approach with much going for it, but it's still hard to accept that nobody noticed the end of Roman governance in the west.

Complex events have complex reasons, and the broadest possible approach is the wisest. In general, I ally with the complex explanation school. A very broad approach is the best, so that systems analysis offers the best way forward.

The major problem in Rome's fall is explaining why the eastern empire survived and the west did not. Some of the arguments advanced are that the east had more defensible borders; the east relied less on Germanic troops and military advisors; the east had a greater population, less oppressive taxes, but more money; and Constantinople was practically impregnable.

The chief enemies of the east, the Persians, were a cohesive society with their own internal problems and could be dealt with more easily than the nonurbanized Germanic tribes facing the west. Ultimately, it was the eastern Roman Empire that survived as the Byzantine Empire for another 1,000 years and acted as the chief vehicle for the preservation of ancient Mediterranean culture into the modern era. And right up until the end, people of the Byzantine kingdom called themselves *Romaioi*—Romans. ■

### Suggested Reading

Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*.

Kagan, *The End of the Roman Empire*.

## Questions to Consider

1. Do you think the Roman empire fell? If so, which explanation is the most cogent?
2. Why do you think that the eastern Roman empire survived when the western Roman empire did not? Do the reasons adduced in the lecture convince you?

## Timeline

### BC

c. 1200.....	Trojan War; in legend, Aeneas arrives in Italy.
c. 1000.....	Settlement on Palatine.
c. 800.....	Huts on Palatine and in Forum.
753.....	Traditional date of the founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus.
753–509.....	Regal Period.
c. 600.....	Great Sewer ( <i>Cloaca Maxima</i> ) built; Forum area drained.
510–509.....	Ejection of Tarquinius Superbus; establishment of Roman Republic.
509.....	First treaty with Carthage.
509–31.....	Republican Period.
500–440.....	Incursions of Aequi and Volsci.
494.....	First Secession of the Plebs.
493.....	Treaty of Cassius between Rome and the Latins.
449.....	Secession of the Plebs; Laws of the Twelve Tables published.
396.....	Romans capture Etruscan city of Veii.
390.....	Battle of Allia: Rome sacked by Gauls.
367.....	Licinian laws; Plebeians admitted to magistracy.



348.....	Treaty with Carthage renewed.
343–41.....	First Samnite War.
340–338.....	Revolt of Latin League.
326–304.....	Second Samnite War.
321.....	Roman humiliation at the Caudine Forks.
306.....	Third treaty with Carthage.
298–290.....	Third Samnite War.
295.....	Battle of Sentinum.
287 .....	Hortensian law ( <i>lex Hortensia</i> ): <i>plebiscita</i> binding on all citizens.
281–275.....	Invasion of Pyrrhus of Epirus.
280.....	Battle of Heraclea.
279.....	Battle of Asculum.
275.....	Battle of Beneventum.
273.....	Friendship established with Ptolemaic Egypt.
264–241.....	First Punic War.
262.....	Romans storm Agrigentum successfully.
260.....	Roman naval victory at Mylae.
255.....	Roman force in Africa destroyed; fleet destroyed in storm.
241.....	Battle of the Aegates Islands; Sicily made Rome's first province.
241–220.....	Carthaginian conquest of Spain by Barca family.
238.....	Sardinia and Corsica annexed.

229.....	Roman protectorate over Illyria established.
c. 226.....	Ebro Treaty; friendship with Saguntum precedes or follows it?
220.....	Gallia Cisalpina formed into a province.
219–202.....	Second Punic War; invasion of Italy by Hannibal.
218.....	Battle of Trebia.
217.....	Battle of Lake Trasimene.
216.....	Battle of Cannae.
215.....	Philip V of Macedon allies with Hannibal and Carthage.
215–204.....	First Macedonian War.
209.....	Carthaginian forces in Spain defeated.
207.....	Battle of the Metaurus River.
203.....	Hannibal leaves Italy.
202.....	Battle of Zama.
200–196.....	Second Macedonian War; Macedon barred from Aegean Sea.
197–133.....	Roman wars in Spain.
196.....	Two provinces formed in Spain (Ulterior and Citerior).
192–189.....	War with Antiochus III of Syria.
189.....	Battle of Magnesia.
172–168.....	Third Macedonian War; Macedon divided into four republics.
168.....	Battle of Pydna; Rhodes ruined by decree.

149–146.....	Third Punic War; revolt in Macedon.
147.....	Macedon formed into province of Macedonia.
146.....	Revolt of Achaean League; Corinth destroyed; Carthage destroyed.
135–133.....	Major slave war in Sicily.
133.....	Tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus; Gracchus and 300 followers murdered in riot; Pergamum willed to Rome.
129.....	Pergamum formed into province of Asia.
123–121.....	Successive tribunes of Gaius Gracchus.
121.....	First passage of <i>senatus consultum ultimum</i> ; G. Gracchus and 3000 followers killed in streetfighting.
121.....	Gallia Transalpina (or Narbonensis) formed into province.
111–105.....	Jugurthine War in Numidia.
107.....	First consulship of Marius.
105.....	Battle of Arausio, Italy threatened by Cimbri and Teutones.
105–102.....	Successive consulships of Marius (#s 2–5).
102.....	Battle of Aquae Sextiae, Teutones defeated.
101.....	Battle of Vercellae, Cimbri defeated.
100.....	Sixth consulship of Marius; <i>senatus consultum ultimum</i> passed.
91.....	Murder of tribune M. Livius Drusus.

91–88.....	Social (Italic) War; universal grant of Roman citizenship to allies.
88.....	Sulla marches on Rome; Asiatic Vespers.
88–84.....	First Mithridatic War.
87.....	Marius and Cinna seize Rome.
87–83.....	Cinna controls Rome.
86.....	Seventh consulship of Marius; Marius dies (January).
85.....	Sulla makes Treaty of Dardanus with Mithridates.
83.....	Sulla returns to Italy; civil war.
83–81.....	Second Mithridatic War.
82–81.....	The Sullan proscriptions.
82–79.....	Sulla dictator “to write laws and organize the state”; strengthens position of Senate, muzzles tribunate.
78.....	Death of Sulla; revolt of M. Aemilius Lepidus; Pompey given command.
77–72.....	Pompey fights Sertorius in Spain.
74–63.....	Third Mithridatic War.
73–71.....	Slave revolt of Spartacus.
71.....	Crassus defeats Spartacus; Pompey returns from Spain.
70.....	Consulship of Pompey and Crassus; Sulla’s restoration undone.
67.....	Gabinian Law ( <i>lex Gabinia</i> ) confers <i>imperium infinitum</i> on Pompey.

66.....	Pirates crushed; Manilian Law ( <i>lex Manilia</i> ) gives Pompey command against Mithridates.
63.....	Death of Mithridates; Pompey reorganizes the east; Catilinarian conspiracy in Italy.
62.....	Pompey returns to Italy and “retires.”
60.....	Caesar, Pompey and Crassus form First Triumvirate.
59.....	First consulship of Caesar; legislation favors Triumvirs.
58–49.....	Caesar conquers Gaul.
56.....	Conference of Triumvirs at Luca.
55.....	Pompey and Crassus consuls; legislation favors Triumvirs.
54.....	Death of Julia, Caesar’s daughter, Pompey’s wife.
53.....	Battle of Carrhae, Crassus killed invading Parthia.
49.....	Caesar crosses Rubicon (10 January); Civil War begins; Caesar dictator for eleven days.
49–45.....	Civil War between Caesar and Pompey.
48.....	Caesar consul; Battle of Pharsalus; Caesar defeats Pompey; Pompey killed in Egypt.
47.....	Caesar suppresses revolt in Asia ( <i>Veni, vidi, vici</i> ).
47–44.....	Successive dictatorships of Caesar.

- 46..... Battle of Thapsus in Africa; Cato commits suicide at Utica; Caesar's dictatorship extended for 10 years.
- 46–44..... Successive consulships of Caesar.
- 45..... Battle of Munda in Spain.
- 44..... Caesar's dictatorship made lifelong (February); Caesar assassinated (15 March); Octavius adopted by Caesar and named Octavian; siege of Mutina begins.
- 43..... Octavian defeats Antony and, seizing Rome, becomes consul; Octavian, Antony and Lepidus form Second Triumvirate (23 November); proscriptions, death of Cicero (7 December).
- 42..... Double Battles at Philippi (September), Triumvirs defeat Liberators.
- 41..... Perusine War in Italy.
- 40..... The Peace of Brundisium between Antony and Octavian.
- 37..... Triumvirate renewed.
- 36..... Defeat of Sextus Pompeius in Sicily; Lepidus squeezed out of Triumvirate.
- 34..... The Donations of Alexandria.
- 34–31..... Propaganda war between Antony and Octavian.
- 33..... Triumvirate lapses; Octavian's second consulship.
- 32..... Italy and the west take oath of allegiance to Octavian.

- 31..... Battle of Actium; Octavian defeats Antony and Cleopatra.
- 31 B.C.–A.D. 476 ..... Imperial Period.
- 30..... Egypt annexed as Roman province.
- 27 B.C.–A.D. 14 ..... Reign of Augustus as first Roman emperor.
- 27..... First Constitutional Settlement (13 January).
- 23..... Second Constitutional Settlement.
- c. 4..... Birth of Jesus of Nazareth.
- 2..... Augustus named Father of his Country (*Pater Patriae*).

### **AD**

- 14..... Death of Augustus (19 August).
- 14–37..... Emperor Tiberius.
- 14–68..... Julio-Claudian dynasty.
- 24–31..... Ascendancy of Sejanus.
- c. 30..... Crucifixion of Jesus.
- 37–41..... Emperor Gaius (Caligula).
- 41..... Gaius (Caligula) first emperor to be assassinated.
- 41–54..... Emperor Claudius.
- 54–68..... Emperor Nero.
- 64..... Great Fire in Rome, Christians persecuted for first time.
- 66–70..... Jewish revolt in Palestine.
- 68..... Nero deposed by army revolt.

68–69.....	Emperor Galba.
69.....	Civil War; Year of the Four Emperors: Galba (January) Otho (January–April), Vitellius (April–December); Vespasian (December– ).
69–79.....	Emperor Vespasian.
69–96.....	Flavian dynasty.
70.....	Jerusalem sacked, Temple destroyed.
73.....	Siege of Masada.
79–81.....	Emperor Titus.
81–96.....	Emperor Domitian.
96–98.....	Emperor Nerva, first of the Good Emperors.
98–117.....	Emperor Trajan.
98–180.....	Adoptive dynasty (sometimes called the Antonines).
106.....	Formation of Dacia as province.
114–117.....	Eastern wars of Trajan, three new provinces formed.
117–138.....	Emperor Hadrian; abandons Trajan's eastern provinces.
c. 122.....	Construction on Hadrian's Wall in Britain begins.
138–161.....	Emperor Antoninus Pius.
c. 150–200.....	Gradual formation of Germanic tribal confederations.
161–169.....	Emperor Lucius Verus.
161–180.....	Emperor Marcus Aurelius (rules alone 169–180).



180–192.....	Emperor Commodus; adoptive succession abandoned.
192.....	Commodus assassinated; Emperor Pertinax (January–March); emperorship auctioned in forum by Praetorian Guard.
193–197.....	Civil war between Severus, Clodius Albinus, and Pescennius Niger.
193–211.....	Emperor Septimius Severus.
193–235.....	Severan dynasty.
211–212.....	Emperor Geta (murdered by Caracalla).
211–217.....	Emperor Caracalla.
217–218.....	Emperor Macrinus (non-Severan usurper).
218–222.....	Emperor Elagabalus.
c. 220.....	Emergence of Sassanid Persia in east.
222–235.....	Emperor Severus Alexander.
235–238.....	Emperor Maximinus.
235–285.....	The Crisis of the Third Century; many emperors and usurpers including:
238–244.....	Emperors Gordian I, II, III.
244–249.....	Philip the Arab.
249–251.....	Emperor Decius.
c. 250–260.....	Persecutions of Christians by Decius and Valerian.
253–260.....	Emperor Valerian
253–258.....	Franks ravage Gaul and Spain.
253–268.....	Emperor Gallienus (rules alone, 260– ).

258.....	Declaration of The Empire of the Gallic Provinces ( <i>Imperium Galliarum</i> ); Spain and Britain defect to new state.
265–268.....	Gothic assault on Asia Minor and Greece.
268–270.....	Emperor Claudius II Gothicus.
269–270.....	Palmyra controls Syria, Egypt, parts of Asia Minor.
270–275.....	Emperor Aurelian.
273.....	Defeat of Palmyra.
274.....	<i>Imperium Galliarum</i> defeated; empire reintegrated.
275.....	Aurelian assassinated by officers.
275–276.....	Emperor Tacitus.
276–82.....	Emperor Probus.
282.....	Probus murdered by his soldiers.
282–284.....	Civil war.
284–305.....	Emperor Diocletian; major reforms; establishment of Tetrarchy.
299–311.....	The Great Persecution of Christians, particularly fierce under Tetrarch Galerius.
305.....	Diocletian and Maximian retire.
306.....	Constantine declared Augustus by troops; Maxentius seizes Rome; Tetrarchy fails.
306–337.....	Emperor Constantine the Great (rules alone, 324–337).

311.....	Galerius issues Edict of Toleration of Christianity.
312.....	Battle of the Milvian bridge; Constantine's vision; Constantine gains control of western part of the empire.
313.....	Edict of Milan tolerates all forms of worship.
314.....	Council of bishops at Arelate.
317–21.....	Persecution of Donatists in Africa.
324.....	Constantinople founded.
325.....	Council of Nicaea.
330.....	Constantinople becomes new capital of Roman Empire.
337–361.....	Emperor Constantius II.
361–363.....	Emperor Julian the Apostate.
364–375.....	Emperor Valentinian.
364–378.....	Emperor Valens (east).
375–83.....	Emperor Gratian.
378.....	Battle of Adrianople, Valens killed by Goths.
379–395.....	Emperor Theodosius the Great gains control of whole empire.
391.....	Edicts of intolerance against paganism; Christianity instituted as official religion.
395.....	Empire officially divided in Theodosius's will into east (under Arcadius) and west (under Honorius).
c. 395–402.....	Alaric and the Visigoths harry east.

395–408.....	Ascendancy of Stilicho.
395–423.....	Emperor Honorius (west).
c. 400.....	Cities and trade begin to decline in west; Germanic tribes settled in large numbers in Gaul and along Danube frontier.
402–410.....	Alaric turns to Italy.
409.....	Vandals and others overrun Spain.
410.....	Sack of Rome by Alaric (23 August); Britain abandoned.
429.....	Vandals seize Africa.
451.....	Battle of Chalons; Huns defeated.
451–453.....	Attila the Hun invades west.
453.....	Death of Attila.
455.....	Vandals sack Rome.
455–72.....	Ascendancy of Ricimer.
475–476.....	Romulus Augustulus, last western emperor.
476.....	Traditional date for the Fall of the Roman Empire.
476–493.....	Odoacer becomes King (Emperor) of Italy.
476–1453.....	Eastern Empire survives as Byzantine empire/kingdom.

## Glossary

(Latin terms are printed in italics and translated in either parentheses or the entry).

***Acies triplex*** (tripartite battle formation): The set formation of the Roman Republican army when attacking.

**aediles**: The aedileship originated as an office of the Plebeian State and became an optional magistracy in the regular *cursus honorum*; four were elected annually (six after reforms introduced under Caesar), two plebeian and two patrician (the latter termed “curule aediles”). They were in charge of the fabric of Rome, the marketplace, and public games. They had no *imperium*.

**archaeology**: The study, by excavation or survey, of physical remains from the ancient world.

**augury**: The practice of divination by several means, such as looking at the sky, birds, or interpreting omens.

**auspices**: The reading of the gods’ attitude toward a project by five means, including looking at the sky, birds, the sacred chickens feeding, or the behavior of four-legged beasts. All public business had to have favorable auspices in order to proceed. Since auspices lasted 24 hours, failure to secure favorable auspices on one day could be reversed the next.

**barbarization**: Term for the growing presence and prominence of Germanic peoples in the western empire during the Late Empire.

***Boni*** (“The Good Men”): A self-styling of the conservative senators, it denoted right-thinking, decent men in the Senate who respected the traditional ways of doing things.

***capitecensi*** (“Head Count”): The lowest social class in the Roman citizen census; having no property to declare to the censors, they were counted by

their heads alone, hence the name. They were grouped into a single century in the *comitia centuriata* and voted last, if they got to do so at all (since voting stopped when a majority was reached).

**censors:** Two magistrates elected every five years for an 18-month tenure of office. They counted citizens, assigned them to their classes, reviewed the register of senators and public morals, and let contracts for tax collection and public construction. They had no *imperium*.

**clientela** (“clientship”): The social system of binding high and low families together by ties of granting favors and meeting obligations. Originated in the Regal Period.

**colony:** Rome started settling colonies of Latins and citizens early, as a means of securing territory. Eventually “colony” became the highest status a subject community (whether founded by Rome or not) could attain, whereby all freeborn male inhabitants became Roman citizens.

**comitia** (“assembly”): Term applied to the Roman popular assemblies convened for voting on a law: the Curiate Assembly (*comitia curiata*); Centuriate Assembly (*comitia centuriata*); Tribal Assembly of the People (*comitia populi tributa*); and Tribal Assembly of the Plebs (*comitia plebis tributa*) a.k.a. the Council of the Plebs (*concilium plebis*). All voting was done in blocks as appropriate for each assembly.

**consul:** Chief annually elected Republican magistrate; two elected each year; top powers in political, judicial, and military spheres. They had the greatest *imperium* in the state.

**cursus honorum** (“run of offices”): Enforced order of office holding in Republican Rome, based on criteria of wealth, age, and experience. The order of ascent was quaestor (or tribune of the plebs) => aedile (optional) => praetor => consul. Ex-consuls could also become censors or dictators, and patrician ex-consuls could be elected as *interreges*.

**debt-bondage:** The archaic system of ensuring cheap labor for the landowning gentry. In return for subsistence, poorer citizens became

indentured servants of the landowners. One of the main issues that generated the Struggle of the Orders.

**dictator:** Extraordinary magistracy instituted in crises. A dictator was appointed by a magistrate and suspended the normal government of Rome. He had no colleague but appointed an assistant called the Master of Horse (*magister equitum*). He held office for six months or until he had completed his specific task. A dictator had the combined *imperium* of the suspended consuls and was so entitled to 24 lictors.

**dominate** (< *dominus*, Latin for “master”): The term sometimes applied to the autocratic system of rule founded by Diocletian and also to the period of its operation (A.D. 284–476). The term is used chiefly to distinguish it from the Principate, as established by Augustus.

**Donatism:** Heresy popular in Africa in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. It disputed the right of “traitors,” Christians who complied with pagan demands for the burning of Scripture during the Great Persecution (A.D. 299–311), to be full members of the Church.

**editor:** One who put on gladiatorial and related spectacles at personal expense for the entertainment of the commoners.

**epigraphy:** The study of inscriptions (on any surface) that derive directly from the ancient world.

**faction:** Term applied to politically allied groupings in Republican senatorial politics. Applied later to the four chariot-racing teams (white, blue, green, red) and their supporters.

**fusces:** Bundles of rods carried by lictors as marks of a magistrate’s *imperium*. Outside Rome an ax was added to the rods to symbolize the magistrate’s ability to order either corporal or capital punishment.

**fasti:** Lists of annual consuls kept at Rome and other towns, usually in the forum. Later, notable events were added under their appropriate years,

making surviving *fasti* (mostly from Italian towns) valuable witnesses to events.

**freedman** (Latin, *libertus*): A former slave raised to the status of citizenship upon manumission but still bound to the owner as a client.

**Gallia** (Gaul): The Roman name for the Celtic-controlled sector of mainland western Europe. It was divided into two parts, *Gallia Transalpina* (Gaul across the Alps) comprising France, Belgium, and parts of Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland; and *Gallia Cisalpina* (Gaul this side of the Alps), in the Po Valley in north Italy. Both regions eventually came under Roman control.

**gens** (plural, *gentes*): Normally translated as “clan,” this refers to groupings of aristocratic families that seem to have their origin in the Regal Period.

**Hellenism, Hellenization** (< “Hellas,” the Greek word for “Greece”): The process whereby features of Greek culture were adopted by another culture in a variety of spheres. The Hellenization of Rome started early (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. at the latest) but increased in pace following direct contact with the Greek mainland in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C.

**Hellenistic Period/Kingdoms**: Name given to the period after Alexander the Great’s death in 323 B.C.; it ended in 31 B.C., the year when Ptolemaic Egypt fell to Rome. The kingdoms into which Alexander’s eastern empire divided and which existed in this period are termed Hellenistic.

**Imperial Period**: Habitual designation for the period from Augustus to the “fall” in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, so covering the period 31 B.C.–A.D. 476. Usually subdivided into the early Empire (Augustus-Nerva), the High Empire (Trajan-Severans), and the Late Empire (3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries).

**imperium**: Originally this term meant the “power of command” in a military context and was conferred on kings and, later, on consuls and praetors (and dictators). It was also used to denote the area over which the Romans had the power of command, and hence came to mean “empire” in a territorial sense.



***Interpretatio Romana*** (“the Roman meaning”): The process in paganism of identifying newly encountered deities with established Roman divinities, such as the Punic Melqart with the Roman Hercules.

***interrex*** (plural, *interreges*): Extraordinary Republican magistracy elected when no consuls were in office. *Interreges* had to be patrician and held office for five days in order to conduct consular elections. They could be replaced after five days by another five-day *interrex*, this process continuing until consuls had been elected. They had no *imperium*.

**Latin Rights** (*ius Latii*): A half-citizenship conferred by Rome on deserving allies and colonists. Latin Rights embraced all the privileges and obligations of full citizenship minus the right to vote or stand office (though naturalization was possible by moving to Rome itself).

**lictors**: Officials who carried the *fascēs* in public as the badges of a magistrate’s *imperium*. The number of lictors reflected the magistrate’s relative level of *imperium*: six each for praetors (two when in Rome); 12 each for consuls; and 24 for dictators (but before Sulla, only 12 when in Rome).

**ludus**: Any place of training or basic education, especially a gladiatorial training school.

***maiores*** (“elders, ancestors”): The influential and important ancestors of leading Roman families and of the state as a whole. Roman conservatism frequently looked to the *mos maiorum* (the way of the ancestors) for examples and guidance.

**manumission** (“release from authority”): The ceremony of freeing a slave.

***manus*** (“hand, authority”): An important concept in Roman domestic relations, the term denoted the authority—as represented by the hand and what was in it—wielded by fathers over their dependents, husbands over wives, owners over slaves, and so on.

***municipia*** (“township”): This technical term fluctuated in meaning over the centuries but basically described a township under Roman rule in which the freeborn inhabitants had Latin Rights or, later, full citizenship. Eventually it came to denote any self-ruling Italian community, and many provincial ones as well, that was not a citizen colony.

**mystery cults/religions**: Predominantly eastern cults in which a select group of initiates went through secret rites about which they were sworn to secrecy (hence the “mystery”) and thereby entered into a special relationship with the deity concerned (e.g., Mithras, Isis). A major rival to Christianity, such cults became very popular in the west in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D.

**names, Roman**: The full citizen’s name usually had three elements: the *praenomen* (identifying the individual; very few were in general use), the *nomen* (identifying the clan), and the *cognomen* (identifying a family within a clan). Extra names (usually heritable) could be accumulated through adoption or as honorific titles, or as nicknames.

**oligarchy**: “Rule by a few” selected usually on the basis of birth (aristocracy) or wealth (plutocracy) or a combination of the two. From the Greek *oligos* (few) and *arche* (leadership).

***optimates*** (“The Excellent Men”): Term applied initially to broadly conservative senators who favored the traditional role of the Senate at the state’s helm. Eventually, it applied especially to die-hard conservatives, who opposed each and every departure from traditional procedure.

**order** (< *ordo*, the Latin word for “rank”): The term applied to the various social classes of citizens organized by status. Over the long course of Roman history five orders appeared: patrician, plebeian, senatorial, equestrian, and decurional.

***paterfamilias*** (“father of the family”): The legal head of the Roman family, he was the eldest living male and wielded *patria potestas* (the fatherly power) over all who lived under his roof.

***pax deorum***: Term used to describe the desirable *modus vivendi* between gods and humans, it was maintained by proper ritual observance.

***Pontifex Maximus***: chief priest of pagan Rome.

***Populares*** (“Men of the People”): Term applied to (usually young) politicians who followed the lead of Ti. and C. Gracchus and employed the tribunate and plebeian assembly to implement their political agenda. *Populares*, therefore, drummed up support by backing popular measures (land distributions, cheap or free grain, debt relief, etc.) and tended to adopt a strongly anti-Senate posture.

***praetor***: Second highest annually elected Republican magistracy. Originally assistants to the consuls, six were elected each year by 150 B.C., with two more added by Sulla. They carried out judicial, political, and military functions. They had *imperium*, but lesser than that of the consuls.

***Praetorian Guard/Prefect***: Originally a special detachment of soldiers who guarded the CO’s tent (*praetorium*) in an army camp, the term was adopted for the imperial guard of the emperor in Rome. Formed by Augustus and discreetly billeted in towns around Rome, they were barracked in a single camp on the outskirts of the city by Tiberius in A.D. 23. They numbered from 9,000–16,000 men, depending on the emperors’ inclination. They played some role in imperial politics (it has often been exaggerated), killing some emperors (e.g., Gaius [Caligula]), elevating others (e.g., Claudius, Otho and Didius Julianus). Their commander, a prefect of Equestrian status, could be a person of great influence, as was the case with Sejanus under Tiberius or Macrinus, who himself became emperor in A.D. 217–218. They were disbanded by Constantine in A.D. 312.

***Principate***: Term used to describe both the imperial system established by Augustus and the period of its operation (27 B.C.–c. A.D. 284).

***prodigia***: Unasked-for signs from the gods, usually in the form of extraordinary or supernatural occurrences.

**publicani** (literally “public men”): Term used to denote companies of (usually) equestrian members who purchased public contracts let by the censors. The most powerful were the tax collectors, who competed for contracts for particular regions, thus leaving those regions open to widespread abuse and extortion.

**quaestor**: Most junior magistracy in the *cursus honorum*, 10 were elected annually. They had financial duties and no *imperium*.

**Regal Period**: The period when kings ruled Rome, traditionally dated 753–509 B.C.

**Republican Period**: Traditionally dated 509–31 B.C., this long period of oligarchic rule by Senate and magistrates is often subdivided into the early Republic (down to 264 B.C. and the First Punic War), Middle Republic (264–133 B.C.), and the Late Republic (corresponding to the Roman Revolution, 133–31 B.C.).

**Romanization**: Modern historians’ term for the process of making previously uncivilized regions into Roman ones (although it can be applied also to the adaptation of urbanized cultures to the Roman way).

**Senate**: Council of Roman aristocratic advisors, first to the kings, then to the magistrates of the Roman Republic, and finally to the Emperors. Its origins are obscure.

**senatus consultum (ultimum)** (“[final] decree of the Senate”): Advice issued by the Senate to magistrates; it was not legally binding. The final (*ultimum*) decree was essentially a declaration of martial law first issued in 121 B.C. amid the disturbances surrounding C. Gracchus’s attempt for a third tribunate and the last was issued when Caesar invaded Italy in January 49 B.C.

**tribe**: A grouping of Roman citizens defined by locality (like a parish or county). There were originally only three tribes (hence the name, derived from the Latin *tres*, meaning “three”), but the number of tribes increased with Roman expansion and was eventually set at 35 (4 urban, 31 rural).

**Tribune of the Plebs:** Not technically a magistrate, this was the officer attached to the Tribal Assembly of the Plebs; his title derives from the tribal organization of this assembly. He had to be plebeian, was sacrosanct and could not be harmed while in office, was entrusted with looking after the interests of the plebs and could convene discussion sessions (*contiones*) or voting sessions (*comitiae*) of the plebs. His most important power was a veto on meetings of all assemblies and the Senate and on all legislation.

**triumvirate:** Latinate term applied to any board of three men empowered to carry out some task (e.g., Ti. Gracchus's land commission). Usually applied (technically incorrectly) to the pact between Crassus, Pompey and Caesar formed in 60 B.C. (the so-called First Triumvirate). The Second Triumvirate comprised of Octavian, Antony and Lepidus and was legally instituted in 43 B.C.

**Venatio** ("the hunt"): Wild beast hunt and/or animal fights that constituted the first installment of the developed gladiatorial spectacle.

## Biographical Notes

These notes are divided into two groups: (A) ancient authors and (B) historical figures. Note that these two categories are *not* mutually exclusive.

All names are listed by the form used in common English currency (e.g., “Pompey” for “Pompeius”) and by whatever name they are best known (“Caesar” for “Gaius Julius Caesar,” “Tiberius” for “Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus”).

### A Main Ancient Authors

**Cassius Dio** (c. A.D. 164–230). Lucius Cassius Dio was a Greek senator from Asia Minor who composed an 80-book history of Rome, of which all survives, in full or summary (“epitome”) form. More useful for Imperial than Republican history, Dio is especially illuminating when addressing contemporary events under the Severans.

**Cicero** (3 January 106–7 December 43 B.C.). Marcus Tullius Cicero, a “new man” from Arpinum, was a moderately successful politician but a master craftsman of Latin prose. His huge corpus of surviving writings includes letters, treatises, and speeches. All are historical sources of unparalleled usefulness.

**Dionysius of Halicarnassus** (flourished c. 30–10 B.C.). A teacher of rhetoric who arrived in Rome at the beginning of Augustus’s reign and published his 20-book *Roman Antiquities* about 20 years later. The work covered Roman history from earliest times to the outbreak of the First Punic War, and the first eleven books have survived intact (taking the story down to 441 B.C.), with fragments of the rest also known. As such, Dionysius’s work is a valuable resource for the early history of Rome. Rather like Livy, however, Dionysius’s work often reads like a eulogy of Roman virtues, as manifested among the ancestors (*maiores*).

**Livy** (59 B.C.–A.D. 17). Titus Livius hailed from Patavium in Cisalpine Gaul and benefited from the explosion of literary culture in Augustan Rome. He composed a 142-book history of Rome called “From the City’s Founding” (*Ab Urbe Condita*), of which all but two books survive in full or summary form (the so-called *Periochae*). Taking Rome’s history to 9 B.C., Livy’s history is marred by overt moralization and patriotism.

**Plutarch** (c. A.D. 50–c. A.D. 120). L. Mestrius Plutarchus is an excellent example of the truly Greco-Roman culture that the Romans forged in the Imperial period. Born and raised in Chaeronea in central Greece, he traveled widely in the empire (including to Egypt and Rome) but lived most of his life in Greece. Yet he considered himself Roman. His voluminous writings include his very useful series of “Parallel Lives” of famous Greek and Roman historical figures. He also wrote rhetorical and philosophical treatises, dialogues, and antiquarian investigations (“Greek Questions” and “Roman Questions”), mostly of a religious bent (Plutarch spent his last 30 years as a priest at Delphi in Greece). His biographies of major Romans, however, constitute his most useful contributions to this course

**Polybius** (c. 200–118 B.C.). Polybius, son of Lycortas, was a prominent Greek politician in the Achaean League who, after Pydna in 168 B.C., was denounced to the Romans and interned as a hostage in Italy. Here, he was befriended by the Scipiones and wrote 40 books of *Histories* to document and explain Rome’s rapid rise to world dominion. Only five books survive intact, most others are known from excerpts, fragments, and summaries. Polybius, our earliest extant source for Roman history, provides a unique outsider’s view on the Middle Republic and, as such, can be used with great profit.

**Suetonius** (c. A.D. 70–130). Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus hailed from an Equestrian background, probably from North Africa. He was a friend of Pliny the Younger and became a secretary in the imperial service of Hadrian, but was fired in circa 120. Among other things, he wrote biographies of the “Twelve Caesars” (Julius Caesar–Domitian) that are racy and entertaining to read but not the most reliable as historical sources.

**Tacitus** (c. A.D. 56–120). So little is known of Cornelius Tacitus's life that his *praenomen* is not recoverable with any certainty (it may have been Publius or Gaius). He had a successful senatorial career under the tyrant Domitian and reached the governorship of Asia under Trajan. He wrote several monographs, but his masterpiece was the *Annals*, covering the reigns of the Julio-Claudian emperors; he also wrote the *Histories*, describing the civil wars of A.D. 69 and the Flavian dynasty. Neither work survives intact. Tacitus wrote in a clipped, acerbic style and, possessed of an acute intelligence and Republican inclinations, presents a dark and gloomy picture of life under the emperors.

## B Historical Figures

**Aeneas**. Legendary sole survivor of Troy who traveled the Mediterranean and founded a line of kings at Lavinium in Latium. From this line sprung Romulus and Remus, who founded the city of Rome.

**Agrippa** (c. 63–12 B.C.). Marcus Vispanius Agrippa, of obscure birth, was an adherent and lifelong friend of Augustus. He joined Octavian at the very outset of his career, orchestrated the victory at Actium, and undertook several important military commands on behalf of Augustus. From 23 B.C. onwards, he was Augustus's chosen successor, married to the emperor's daughter and, from 18 B.C. until his death in 12 B.C., virtually co-emperor with Augustus. He had five children by Julia, and all three of his sons (Gaius Caesar, Lucius Caesar, and Agrippa Postumus) were adopted by Augustus as his own at various stages.

**Alaric** (A.D. ?–410). King of the Visigoths, circa A.D. 395–410, he embarked on a series of annual incursions first into the Balkans and then, when bought off and facing serious resistance, into Italy. Made Master of the Soldiers in A.D. 409, he sacked Rome in A.D. 410 and died shortly afterward.

**Antony, Mark** (83–30 B.C.). Marcus Antonius, of distinguished birth, fought under Caesar in Gaul and became an ardent and trusted supporter. As a close friend of Caesar's and consul in 44 B.C., he expected death with his patron but was spared. He then orchestrated the expulsion of the Liberators, snubbed Octavian, fought against him, and then joined



him and Lepidus to form the Second Triumvirate in 43 B.C. As Triumvir he went east where he inherited Caesar's affair with Cleopatra VII of Egypt, fought the Parthians and saw Octavian consolidate his hold on the west. In the final conflict at Actium in 31 B.C., Antony was defeated and, with his armies defecting en masse to Octavian, he committed suicide in August 30 B.C.

**Augustus** (23 September 63 B.C.–19 August A.D. 14). Arguably the single most important and influential man in Roman history, he was born Gaius Octavius, of humble stock. His great-uncle, however, was Julius Caesar, in whose will he was adopted in 44 B.C. Despite being unknown and inexperienced, Octavius, now Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (Octavian), embarked on a bold and dangerous political career that showed daring and ruthlessness in equal measure. Along with Antony and Lepidus, he became a member of the Second Triumvirate, a legally instituted board of military dictators, and competed with Mark Antony and the Liberators for the leadership of the Roman world. By 31 B.C. he had secured this goal and, renamed Imperator Caesar Augustus in 27 B.C., he became Rome's first emperor, ushering in the Imperial Age and establishing the Principate, which remained the institutional and administrative basis for the Roman Empire for 300 years. He died peacefully at a villa in Nola on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the month that now bore his name.

**Aurelian** (A.D. 215–75). Lucius Domitius Aurelianus, one of the Illyrian Soldier-Emperors (A.D. 270–75) was a man of great energy. He threw back barbarian invasions, initiated the construction of the massive circuit of walls still to be seen at Rome today, and reunited the divided empire. Defeating, in turn, the eastern threat of Palmyra and the western secessionist state *Imperium Galliarum*, he brought the empire under one ruler again. He was murdered by some of his officers who erroneously believed he had marked them for death.

**Brutus** (1; 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.). Lucius Junius Brutus reputedly led the coup d'état against Rome's last king, Tarquinius Superbus; he was one of the Republic's first two consuls. Many exemplary stories surround him, making the historical Brutus hard to discern.

**Brutus** (2; c. 85–42 B.C.). Marcus Junius Brutus was a descendant of the previous entry. He made a show of defending Republican values against both Pompey and Caesar while courting them both. He sided with Pompey in 49 B.C. and, spared after Pharsalus, benefited greatly under Caesar's *dominatio*: he was governor of Cisalpine Gaul, 47–45 B.C., praetor in 44 B.C., and designated consul for 41 B.C. Despite these signs of Caesar's favor, Brutus joined the conspiracy against Caesar and became, along with Cassius, a leader of the Liberators. He committed suicide after the defeats at Philippi.

**Caesar** (100 B.C.–15 March 44 B.C.). Gaius Julius Caesar was born into an ancient but eclipsed patrician family. Possessed of astonishing intellectual talents and great charisma, his early career was bankrolled by Crassus but was not markedly revolutionary. That changed in 60 B.C. when he joined Pompey and Crassus to form the so-called First Triumvirate, an informal pact between the three to act together. His consulship of 59 B.C. was marred by massive operations of violence and intimidation. From 58–49 B.C. he conquered all of Gaul for Rome. During this time the Triumvirate broke apart, and Pompey and Caesar were left to fight it out. An enormous civil war (49–45 B.C.) saw Caesar victorious on all fronts. Ensconced in the dictatorship and displaying no tact in the exercise of power, Caesar died at the hands of a conspiracy of noblemen calling themselves The Liberators.

**Cato the Censor** (234–139 B.C.). Marcus Porcius Cato “Censorinus” was an eminent statesman and stalwart traditionalist who, in his public posture at least, championed old Roman ways against Greek influence. His familiarity with the Greek language and detailed knowledge of its literature suggest otherwise.

**Claudius** (10 B.C.–A.D. 54). Tiberius Claudius Nero Germanicus was the third Julio-Claudian emperor (A.D. 41–54). Shunned by his family due to his physical defects, he devoted his youth to study and scholarship. When his nephew Gaius (Caligula) was murdered, Claudius was reputedly found by soldiers in the palace and declared emperor on the spot. The story may mask a more complex and intriguing reality. His reign was largely successful; he added Britain to the empire, ruled conscientiously, and tried to act moderately. Senatorial opposition, however, was strong and he was forced to rely increasingly on freedmen from his own house for administrative support.

He was poisoned by his niece and fourth wife, Agrippina the Younger, in A.D. 54 so that her son, Nero, could succeed to the throne.

**Constantine the Great** (c. A.D. 272–337). Flavius Valerius Constantinus was the son of Tetrarch Constantius I. When his father died at York in Britain in A.D. 306, Constantine was hailed as emperor, contrary to the stipulations of the Tetrarchy. From then until A.D. 324, Constantine worked to establish his sole rule over the whole empire. As emperor he consolidated on Diocletian's restabilization of the empire, founded an eastern capital at Constantinople, thereby paving the way for the final division of the empire into eastern and western halves. His most lasting legacy, however, was in the area of religion, where he decriminalized and then favored Christianity. By intervening in doctrinal disputes, he laid the foundations of Catholicism by insisting on an orthodox dogma that all Christians had to adhere to. He died peacefully near Nicomedia, being baptized shortly before the end.

**Diocletian** (A.D. 240s–312). Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus was of obscure origins but became one of Rome's most important emperors. Coming to power in civil war in A.D. 284, he set about building on the work of his predecessors who had reintegrated the empire. Diocletian's reign, therefore, was one of consolidation. He introduced a mass of reforms in the imperial administration and bureaucracy, court protocol, and military organization that laid the basis of Late Imperial Rome. His religious policy was one of divine legitimization of imperial authority by Jupiter and Hercules, thereby setting him at odds with the Christians. The Great Persecution (A.D. 299–311) initiated under his rule was the closest pagan Rome came to a systematic elimination of Christianity, and even it was regional and sporadic. Having established the Tetrarchic system of succession, he was the first and only emperor to retire voluntarily in A.D. 305, only to see his clever succession scheme fall apart around him.

**Gaius (Caligula)** (A.D. 12–41). Son of Germanicus Caesar, the adopted son of Tiberius, Gaius (nicknamed *Caligula* "Little Boot" by the legions as a child) became emperor in March A.D. 37. Despite having no experience of administration or military affairs, he was invested with all the powers of the Principate by a fawning Senate. His rule was disastrous and may have been marked by insanity (though the ancient evidence for sheer mania is

not reliable). As the emperor's behavior became increasingly unacceptable, a conspiracy of Praetorian Guardsmen orchestrated his murder on 24 January A.D. 41.

**Gracchi.** The brothers whose careers as tribunes of the plebs mark the beginning of the Roman Revolution. Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (ca 170–133 B.C.; tribune 133 B.C.) tackled land reform and employed unc customary methods to get his measures passed and implemented. He was murdered along with 300 followers in a senatorial-led riot while holding an election meeting for a planned second tribunate. His brother, Gaius Sempronius Gracchus (c. 160–122 B.C.; tribune 123, 122 B.C.) implemented a more overtly anti-senatorial slate of legislation. He backed enfranchisement of the Italian allies but thereby undermined his popularity at Rome. Amid growing tensions he died in vicious street fighting in 121 B.C., along with 3,000 of his followers.

**Hadrian** (A.D. 76–138). Publius Aelius Hadrianus, the second of the Adoptive Emperors (A.D. 117–138), was an eccentric who traveled to every part of the empire during his reign. His accession appears to have been orchestrated by Trajan's wife, Plotina. He reversed Trajan's bellicose policies and speeded up a consolidation of the frontiers made manifest in his famous wall in northern Britain.

**Hannibal** (247–182 B.C.): Punic general who almost destroyed Rome in the Second Punic War. Having commanded Carthaginian forces in Spain in 221–219 B.C., Hannibal invaded Italy in 218 and inflicted three crushing defeats on the Romans at Trebia, Trasimene, and Cannae. Defeated at Zama in North Africa in 202 B.C., he was hounded by the Romans until he committed suicide in 182 B.C.

**Lepidus** (?–12 B.C.). Marcus Aemilius Lepidus stemmed from a respected noble house. He was a supporter of Caesar's in Spain during the civil war and his Master of Horse in 46–44 B.C. Following Caesar's murder, he allied with Antony and, as governor of Gallia Transalpinga, reinforced Antony in his flight from Mutina. He formed the Second Triumvirate with Octavian and Antony in 43 B.C. Outstripped in ambition and ruthlessness by his colleagues, he was sidelined in Africa and, after a show of force against

Octavian in Sicily in 36 B.C., he was stripped of his powers and housed in Circeii, near Rome. He died there in 12 B.C.

**Marius** (c. 157–86 B.C.). Gaius Marius, a “new man” from Arpinum, was catapulted to prominence by his successful resolution of military crises. Between 107–100 B.C. he held six consulships, in open contravention of both tradition and law. He also reformed the army in various ways, particularly in enlisting as a matter of course the Head Count and equipping them at state expense. After a disastrous sixth consulship in 100 B.C., Marius retired to private life but emerged again to take command of the Roman forces in the northern theater of the Social War (91–88 B.C.). His ensuing conflict with Sulla ended with his taking up a seventh consulship (86 B.C.), but he died a few days into it.

**Nero** (A.D. 37–68). Born L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, he became Nero Claudius Caesar on his adoption by Claudius in A.D. 52. His mother, Agrippina, was the sister of Gaius (Caligula) and wife of Claudius and one of the most powerful women in Roman history. Nero came to power at age 16 and proved disastrous as emperor. He devoted his time to poetry and the arts, paying little attention to administration. He was paranoid about rivals to his position and murdered most potential successors or anyone who threatened his position, including Agrippina herself in A.D. 59. He survived a major conspiracy in A.D. 65 only to fall to an army revolt in A.D. 68. He committed suicide while on the run, reduced to the status of a public enemy.

**Pompey** (106–48 B.C.). Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, the political ally and then archrival of Julius Caesar, was born of a prominent Picene family and entered Roman politics as an upstart supporter of Sulla in 83 B.C. Successful in military matters, most spectacularly against the pirates in 66 B.C., he became a popular hero. He formed the First Triumvirate with Caesar and Crassus in 60 B.C., but thereafter relations with Caesar deteriorated until civil war erupted in 49 B.C. Now posing as the champion of the Republic against Caesarian tyranny, Pompey met defeat at Pharsalus in 48 B.C. and, on fleeing to Egypt, was ignominiously decapitated by a claimant to the Ptolemaic throne in that year.

**Romulus and Remus.** Legendary brothers and descendants of Aeneas who founded Rome in 753 B.C. Romulus killed Remus over an argument about the size of Rome, and ascended into heaven when he died.

**Romulus Augustulus** (emperor, A.D. 475–476). Neither the birth nor death date of this figure is known but he may have survived into the 6<sup>th</sup> century. As a boy, he was the last emperor of the western Roman Empire, deposed by the German Odoacer in A.D. 476. His name, ironically, echoes both the founder of Rome (Romulus) and the founder of the rule of emperors (Augustus). His overthrow marks the traditional date of the Fall of the Roman Empire.

**Scipio Africanus** (236–183 B.C.). Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus was an eminent figure in the Scipionic family. He rose to prominence leading Roman armies to victory over the Carthaginians in Spain and defeated Hannibal at Zama in 202 B.C. He was involved in subsequent Roman campaigns in Spain and the eastern Mediterranean.

**Septimius Severus** (A.D. 145–211). Lucius Septimius Severus, of a prominent North African family, founded the Severan dynasty (A.D. 193–235) after coming to power in civil war. As an army man, he was blunt and direct and crafted a new and more openly militaristic version of the emperorship. He fought campaigns against the Parthians, capturing their capital in A.D. 198. He died at York while on campaign in Britain in A.D. 211.

**Severus Alexander** (c. A.D. 209–235). Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander, the last of the Severan dynasty, ruled as a front for his mother, Julia Mamaea. Facing mounting general disorder and the emergence of Germanic confederations in the north and Sassanid Persia in the east, Severus spent his last years on campaign against both threats. He was murdered along with his mother by his own troops at Mainz in Germany. His death heralded a half-century of disorder and mayhem.

**Sulla** (c. 138–78 B.C.). Lucius Cornelius Sulla “Felix” was a scion of a patrician house fallen on hard times. He emerged as an officer under Marius in the Jugurthine and Germanic wars, 107–100 B.C. He made a name for himself commanding Roman forces in the southern theater in the Social War

(91–88 B.C.) and was rewarded with the consulship of 88 B.C. Notorious for turning his armies against his political opponents, being the first to institute proscriptions, and reviving an enhanced version of the dictatorship to reform the state along conservative lines.

**Tarquinius Superbus.** The last king of Rome. He was expelled in a coup in 509 B.C. but made several attempts to regain the city. He died, unsuccessful, at Cumae in 495 B.C.

**Theodosius the Great** (c. A.D. 346–935). Theodosius was the last truly strong emperor of Rome (A.D. 379–395), and the last emperor of a united empire. He settled large numbers of Goths in the empire and made treaties with Persia. Ruling out of Constantinople, he spent some years in the west on campaign and visited Rome in A.D. 389. As a devoted Christian, he issued edicts of intolerance against paganism and would not countenance heresy. When he died, he divided the empire into eastern and western halves in his will, assigning his sons Arcadius and Honorius to rule each half respectively.

**Tiberius** (39 B.C.–A.D. 37). Tiberius Claudius Nero, later Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus, was the second emperor of Rome (A.D. 14–37) and the first of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Stepson of Augustus, he was not much liked by his stepfather but, due to the vicissitudes of fortune, ascended to the throne in A.D. 14 as Augustus's adopted son. His reign was partly successful but marred by some dreadful periods of tyranny, notably that following the fall of Sejanus in A.D. 31–33. A manic-depressive, Tiberius retired to Capri in A.D. 26 and never returned to Rome, leaving the administration of the empire to the Senate and his other subordinates.

**Trajan** (ca A.D. 53–117). Marcus Ulpius Traianus was the first of the Adoptive Emperors (A.D. 98–117). Governor of Germany, he was adopted by the wavering Nerva in the face of army grumblings. He was a conscientious emperor, tolerant, unassuming, and even-handed. He conducted major campaigns in Dacia (A.D. 101–2, 105–6) and in the east, and added four new provinces to the empire (Dacia, Armenia, Arabia, Mesopotamia). He died of fever returning from his campaigns in the east.

## Bibliography

**Important Note:** Any bibliography of modern works on Roman history is potentially vast. Presented below is a very personal choice of what I consider some of the more influential and recent works. The bibliographies of these titles will readily lead interested readers to additional, more focused studies of specific topics.

**\* Denotes essential reading**

***Ancient Works*** (all references are to English translations in the Penguin Classics series, unless otherwise indicated):

\*Appian, *The Civil Wars*

\*Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (Oxford World's Classics edition, translated by P.G. Walsh, 1994)

\*Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (Oxford edition, edited by P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore, 1967)

\*Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul, The Civil War*

\*Cicero, various works. The Penguins Classics feature:

*On Government* (extracts from several works)

*Letters to Atticus* (complete translation)

*Murder Trials* (four complete forensic speeches)

*Selected Letters* (parts of *Letters to Friends*)

*Cicero's Letters to Atticus* (the complete correspondence)

*Selected Political Speeches* (seven speeches)



\*Dio, *Roman History*. The Penguins Classics feature:

*The Reign of Augustus* (books 50–56 of the original work)

\*The *Historia Augusta* (Augustan History). The Penguin Classics feature:

*Lives of the Later Caesars*, vol. 1 (Hadrian–Heliogabalus)

The other HA biographies (Severus Alexander–Numerian) are available in the Loeb Classical Library series published by Harvard University Press.

\*Livy, *The History of Rome from its Foundation*. The Penguin Classics feature:

*The Early History of Rome* (books 1–5)

*Rome and Italy* (books 6–10)

*The War with Hannibal* (books 21–30)

*Rome and the Mediterranean* (books 31–55)

\*Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*. The Penguin Classics feature:

*Makers of Rome*

*The Fall of the Roman Republic*

\*Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*

\*Sallust, *Jugurthine War and Conspiracy of Catiline*

J. A. Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford, 1998). An invaluable collection of translated excerpts from authors, inscriptions, papyri and coins assembled under thematic headings.

\*Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* (Caesar–Domitian)

\*Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome, The Histories*

### **Modern Works:**

#### **General:**

*The Cambridge Ancient History*, volumes 7–12. A detailed account of Roman history, in the form of chapters written by eminent (mostly English) scholars in their respective areas of expertise.

G. Alföldy, *The Social History of Rome*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Baltimore, 1988). Excellent survey of the subject infused with many perceptive insights.

E. H. Carr, *What is History?* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London, 1986). The idea of history perceptively discussed.

\*M. Cary and H. H. Scullard, *A History of Rome Down to the Reign of Constantine*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (New York, 1979). A standard and respected survey of the subject, if a little dry and dense.

\*M. Crawford (ed.), *Sources for Ancient History* (Cambridge, 1983). Eminent historians outline the relative merits of literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence.

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M. Grant, *A History of Rome* (New York, 1976). A succinct account of the main events.

S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Oxford, 1996). The best reference book for classical antiquity in English.

R. Jenkyns (ed.), *The Legacy of Rome: A New Appraisal* (Oxford, 1992). A recent assessment of the heritage of Rome to the modern world in specific fields.

L. Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions* (Baltimore, 1991). A readable survey of Latin inscriptions in their various forms.

\*H. H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (London, 1982). An excellent and lucid overview of the period covered.

### **Early Rome and the Etruscans:**

A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins* (Ann Arbor, 1965). Interesting and learned assessment of the early period of Rome's history.

G. Barker, *The Etruscans* (Malden, Mass, 1998). A recent and thorough analysis; particularly strong on the archaeological evidence.

\*T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome* (New York, 1995). Eminently readable, thorough, and stimulating account of Roman history from pre-Roman Italy to 264 B.C. Especially valuable for its summary of otherwise obscure Italian archaeological discoveries.

R. M. Ogilvie, *Early Rome and the Etruscans* (London, 1976). A now-classic assessment of early Roman history.

E. T. Salmon, *The Making of Roman Italy* (London, 1982). Emphasizes the unity of Italy under Roman suzerainty.

H. H. Scullard, *The Etruscan Cities and Rome* (London, 1971). It's all in the title.

A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford, 1973). Thorough study of the subject, with some useful observations on the early sharing of citizenship in Latium and the origins of the Roman Confederation in Italy.

C. J. Smith, *Early Rome and Latium: Economy and Society, c. 1000 to 500 B.C.* (Oxford, 1996). An excellent illustration of how archaeology can be used to throw light on this early period.

## Rise of the Roman Empire and Governing the Republic:

P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower, 225 B.C.–A.D. 14* (Oxford, 1971). Sustained critique of Toynbee's *Hannibal's Legacy*.

T. J. Cornell, B. Rankov, and P. Sabin (eds.), *The Second Punic War: A Reappraisal* (London, 1996). A stimulating and insightful series of essays by leading scholars on disputed aspects of this dramatic struggle.

P. Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley, 1990). Thorough treatment of the subject, sometimes overwhelming in its scope.

———, *Hellenistic History and Culture* (Berkeley, 1993). A more focused treatment than his *Alexander to Actium*.

W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327–70 B.C.* (Oxford, 1979). Brilliantly argued critique of defensive imperialism.

L. Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire*, revised edition (London, 1998). A lucid account of the development of the Roman army from earliest times to the early Empire.

S. Lancel, *Carthage: A History* (Oxford, 1995). Thoroughgoing account of Carthaginian history that embraces the Phoenician background; the archaeology of the site of Carthage; the political, military, cultural and artistic life of the ancient city; and its legacy to the modern world.

———, *Hannibal* (Oxford, 1998). Recent and detailed account of Hannibal's life and campaigns.

J. F. Lazenby, *The First Punic War* (Stanford, 1996). This, the first thorough treatment in English of this landmark conflict, documents the war's military operations in considerable detail.

F. Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (Ann Arbor, 1998). A clever but ultimately unconvincing attempt to argue that the Roman Republic was more democratic than has been generally thought.

K. Raaflaub, "Born to be Wolves? Origins of Roman Imperialism," in R. W. Wallace and E. M. Harris, eds., *Transition to Empire: Essays in Greco-Roman History* (London, 1996), 273–314. A concise exposition of the systems analysis approach to explaining Roman imperialism.

R. Stewart, *Public Office in Early Rome: Ritual Procedure and Political Practice* (Ann Arbor, 1998). A look at the evolution of office-holding in the early Roman Republic with an emphasis on the lot and the ritualistic nature of magisterial duties.

L. R. Taylor, *Roman Voting Assemblies from the Hannibalic War to the Dictatorship of Caesar* (Ann Arbor, 1966). A classic and lucid account of the subject that throws much light on the workings of the Roman Republic.

A. J. Toynbee, *Hannibal's Legacy: The Hannibalic War's Effects on Roman Life* (Oxford, 1965). A classic study arguing that the Second Punic War was the central catalyst for subsequent events in Roman history.

### **The Roman Revolution:**

M. Beard and M. Crawford, *Rome in the Late Republic* (Ithaca, 1985). Introductory thematic survey to the society, culture, and politics of the period.

P. A. Brunt, *Social Conflict in the Roman Republic* (London, 1971). Concise survey of the issues that stimulated the Struggle of the Orders and the Roman Revolution.

T. F. Carney, *A Biography of C. Marius* (Chicago 1970). Remarkably, this short book is the only full-scale modern assessment of Marius's career in English.

D. C. Earl, *Tiberius Gracchus: A Study in Politics* (Brussels, 1963). Short, sober, and lucid assessment of Gracchus's career.

P. A. L. Greenhalgh, *Pompey*, 2 vols. (London, 1980, 1981). The first volume, *The Roman Alexander*, covers Pompey's career down to 59 B.C.; the second, *The Republican Prince*, the period of his ascendancy.

E. S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley, 1974). Erudite and controversial analysis of the post-Sullan period.

A. Keaveney, *Sulla: The Last Republican* (London, 1982). The most thorough treatment in English, but not entirely convincing in its attempt to portray Sulla as greatly misunderstood.

C. Meier, *Caesar* (New York, 1995). Readable, if undocumented, biography of Caesar that also addresses many aspects of Late Republican politics and society.

D. Stockton, *The Gracchi* (Oxford, 1979). Readable survey of the main issues surrounding these men and one of the only serious modern studies of Gaius Gracchus.

E. Rawson, *Cicero: A Portrait* (Ithaca, 1975). A thorough biography of Cicero by a leading historian of the Republic.

J. M. Riddle, (comp.), *Tiberius Gracchus: Destroyer or Reformer of the Republic?* (Lexington, Mass., 1970). Handy collection of ancient sources and modern discussions of this important figure.

R. Seager, *Pompey: A Political Biography* (Oxford, 1979). An eminently sane and thoroughly documented account.

R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939). A seminal work, casting the machinations of Augustus in a distinctly dictatorial light, as suited to the age in which Syme was writing.

A. M. Ward, *Marcus Crassus and the Late Roman Republic* (Columbia, MO, 1977). A well-documented survey.

### **Augustus and the Emperors:**

M. Grant, *The Roman Emperors: A Biographical Guide to the Rulers of Imperial Rome, 31 B.C.–A.D. 476* (New York, 1985). A short dictionary of Roman emperors, arranged chronologically; contains a useful glossary of ancient literary evidence at the back.

R. A. Gurval, *Actium and Augustus: The Politics and Emotions of Civil War* (Ann Arbor, 1995). An interesting and sustained analysis of how contemporaries reacted to the victory at Actium and how the commemoration of the battle evolved over time.

A. H. M. Jones, *Augustus* (London, 1970). A sensible and reliable outline account of Augustus's reign.

F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (London, 1977). A massive and masterful, if unabashedly positivistic, study of the subject that puts forward the view that the emperor was what the emperor did.

K. A. Raaflaub and M. Toher, eds., *Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and His Principate* (Berkeley, 1990). A collection of 19 essays by respected scholars on various aspects of Augustus's career; requires some basic knowledge to be used profitably.

D. Shotter, *Augustus Caesar* (London, 1991). A short and recent introduction to Augustus's career that covers all the issues and has useful pointers for further reading.

Readers are also directed to individual biographies of emperors, easily traceable by their names, and to the Internet site *De Imperatoribus Romanis: An Online Encyclopedia of Roman Emperors*; the site includes specific bibliographies for each entry (<http://www.roman-emperors.org>).

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Century and Late Empire:**

G. C. Brauer, *The Age of the Soldier-Emperors: Imperial Rome, A.D. 244–84* (Park Ridge, NJ, 1975). A very general overview of the darkest period of Rome's 3<sup>rd</sup>-century crisis.

P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, A.D. 150–750* (London, 1971). A fine exposition of the Transformationist view of the Late Empire

A. Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, A.D. 395–600* (New York, 1993). An excellent overview of the Late Empire from Theodosius to Justinian's Reconquest.

A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602* (Oxford, 1964; reprinted Baltimore, 1986). The standard, monumental and magisterial two-volume treatment of the Late Empire.

R. Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire* (Ann Arbor, 1992). In examining the rise and fall of Zenobia and the breakaway Palmyran state, the author explores some of the salient features of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-century crisis.

S. Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery* (London, 1985). An examination of Diocletian's pivotal reign in reestablishing order to the Roman world.

### **Aspects of Roman Culture and Society:**

J. C. Anderson, Jr., *Roman Architecture and Society* (Baltimore, 1997). A recent survey of Roman buildings and their relationship to daily life.



J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (London, 1969). A classic treatment of the subject with rich documentation from a variety of obscure ancient sources.

A. A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power, and Politics in the Early Empire* (New Haven, 1996). The life of one of Roman history's most powerful and intriguing women is thoroughly investigated.

A. Boethius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London, 1978). A standard work on the subject.

R. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family* (Oxford, 1991). An insightful and stimulating study of the nature of the Roman family unit.

———, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge, 1994). A superlative consideration of the condition of slavery in ancient Rome.

L. A. Curchin, *The Local Magistrates of Roman Spain* (Toronto, 1990). Despite the dry title, the book offers an excellent window onto municipal administration and politics.

S. Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore, 1992). A thorough introduction to the study of the subject.

G. G. Fagan, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, 1999). This book approaches the baths as historical, cultural, and social phenomena and so throws light on the daily operation of Roman society.

E. Fantham, H. P. Foley, N. B. Kampen, S. B. Pomeroy, H. A. Shapiro, *Women in the Classical World* (Oxford, 1994). Generally sound survey of the position of women in classical antiquity; the second part focuses on Roman women.

M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London, 1980). A seminal work in the field, deploying much comparative and theoretical data in approaching ancient slavery.

R. L. Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York, 1987). A lengthy study of the Christian conflict with paganism up to the death of Constantine.

W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1984). A standard, monumental treatment of Christianity's early history that covers the Jewish background, the life of Jesus, internal Christian disputes, and the conflict with paganism.

A. Futrell, *Blood in the Arena: The Spectacle of Roman Power* (Austin, 1997). A novel treatment of the games as mass human sacrifices reinforcing the reality of Roman power.

\*P. Garnsey and R. Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, Culture* (Berkeley, 1987). A sane introductory presentation of various aspects of Roman life from two leading scholars.

D. G. Kyle, *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome* (London, 1998). Rejecting the rebirth interpretation of the games (see under Wiedemann, below), this fascinating and often gruesome study highlights the scale of death and suffering in the arena as ritualized maintenance of the social and religious order.

A. Lintott, *Imperium Romanum: Politics and Administration* (London, 1993). Survey of the administration of the Roman state and empire.

R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven, 1981). An excellent introduction to the main principles and practices of paganism.

———, *Roman Social Relations, 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven, 1984). A thoughtful and well-written assessment of the life of the much-neglected Roman lower classes.

R. M. Ogilvie, *The Romans and Their Gods* (London, 1969). An elegantly concise and masterful portrait of Roman paganism.

P. Plass, *The Game of Death in Ancient Rome: Arena Sport and Political Suicide* (Madison, 1995). An anthropological analysis of the arena as a liminoid ritual that harnessed and neutralized potentially destructive forces in society.

J. E. Stambaugh, *The Ancient Roman City* (Baltimore, 1988). A clear introduction to the physicality of and living conditions in Roman urban centers.

J. P. Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, 1995). Although the most recent survey of the subject available in English, the treatment suffers from a somewhat overdependency on theoretical approaches.

\*T. Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators* (London, 1992). A stimulating read that describes all the elements in the Roman gladiatorial spectacle and argues for an interpretation of the games as metaphors of rebirth.

R. L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, 1984). An insightful book that makes comprehensible the vices of the Christian faith, as seen through pagan eyes.

F. Yegül, *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1992). A comprehensive treatment of the architectural and technological development of the Roman bath with many useful cultural and social insights.

### **End of Empire:**

A. Ferrill, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation* (London, 1986). A narrowly focused study arguing that Rome's military inability to withstand barbarian invasions caused its fall.

J. D. Hughes. *Pan's Travail: Environmental Problems of the Ancient Greek and Romans* (Baltimore, 1994). An idealistic presentation of the environmental explanation for the end of the ancient world in the west.

D. Kagan, ed., *The End of the Roman Empire* (Lexington, MA, 1992). A useful assemblage of ancient and modern views of the fall of the Roman Empire in the west.

R. MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* (New Haven, 1988). An excellent example of carefully argued, well-documented, and engagingly written general explanation for Rome's fall.