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Course Guidebook

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PUBLISHED BY:

THE GREAT COURSES
Corporate Headquarters
4840 Westfields Boulevard, Suite 500
Chantilly, Virginia 20151-2299
Phone: 1-800-832-2412
Fax: 703-378-3819
www.thegreatcourses.com

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Gregory S. Aldrete is the Frankenthal Professor of History and Humanistic Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay. He received his B.A. from Princeton University and his Ph.D. in Ancient History from the University of Michigan. His interdisciplinary scholarship spans the fields of history, archaeology, art history, military history, and philology.

Among the books Professor Aldrete has written or edited are *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome*; *Floods of the Tiber in Ancient Rome*; *Daily Life in the Roman City: Rome, Pompeii, and Ostia*; *The Long Shadow of Antiquity: What Have the Greeks and Romans Done for Us?* (with Alicia Aldrete); and *Reconstructing Ancient Linen Body Armor: Unraveling the Linothorax Mystery* (with Scott Bartell and Alicia Aldrete).

Professor Aldrete has won many awards for his teaching, including two national ones: He was named the Wisconsin Professor of the Year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and he received the American Philological Association Award for Excellence in Teaching at the College Level (the national teaching award given annually by the professional association of classics professors). At the state level, he was selected from among all professors in the University of Wisconsin System to receive a System Regents Teaching Excellence Award, and his campus granted him its highest teaching award, the Founders Association Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Professor Aldrete's research has been honored with a number of fellowships, including two year-long humanities fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Solmsen Fellowship at the Institute for Research in the Humanities in Madison. Additionally, he was a fellow of two NEH seminars held at the American Academy in Rome and was a participant in an NEH institute at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 2014–2015, Professor Aldrete was the Martha Sharp Joukowsky Lecturer for the Archaeological Institute of America, for which he gave a series of public lectures across the United States.

Professor Aldrete's innovative Linothorax Project, in which he and his students reconstructed and tested ancient linen body armor, has garnered considerable attention from the media, having been featured in documentaries on the Discovery Channel, the Smithsonian Channel, and the National Geographic Channel and on television programs in Canada and across Europe. His research has also been the subject of articles in *U.S. News and World Report*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Der Spiegel* magazine, and *Military History* and of Internet news stories in more than two dozen countries.

Professor Aldrete's other Great Courses are *History of the Ancient World: A Global Perspective*; *The Decisive Battles of World History*; and *History's Great Military Blunders and the Lessons They Teach*. ■

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The Rise of Rome

The Roman Republic is one of the most famous and influential states in all of world history, and the story of its spectacular rise and disastrous fall has exerted an irresistible fascination for the last 2,000 years. Rome's contributions to art, architecture, law, language, religion, science, philosophy, and culture still surround and constantly affect us today. The unusual political structure of the Roman Republic has as served a model and a source of inspiration for others hoping to establish later republics that would seek to emulate ancient Rome's success. Among the more notable of these imitators are the creators of the Florentine Republic in the Renaissance, the Founding Fathers of the United States, and the 18th century French intellectuals who established a republic in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Rome's military triumphs have inspired generations of would-be conquerors, and the famed discipline and organization of its legions have provided models for countless later armies.

This course traces this history of the Roman Republic from its humble beginnings in the 8th century B.C. as an undistinguished cluster of mud huts beside the Tiber River until it reached its peak of power in the 1st century B.C., by which time it had established complete dominance over the entire Mediterranean basin. The central theme of the course is an investigation and analysis of the various factors that account for and explain its rise, including geography, cultural values, political structure, social structures, military strategy, leadership, and economic considerations. The very successes of the Roman Republic, however, also sowed the seeds of its eventual destruction by creating a set of tensions at the heart of Roman society itself that fostered resentment among its citizens, and a fatal destabilization of its institutions. The course thus also features a deep investigation of the underlying and proximate reasons for the collapse and ultimate fall of the Roman Republic.

In order to place this central narrative in context, it additionally includes an examination of the period of the Roman monarchy which preceded the republic, as well as various key aspects of Roman civilization, including religion, slavery, education, food, housing, employment, the art of rhetoric, and gender roles in Roman society. The chronological narrative of the course covers the foundation of the republic and the creation of its institutions, an account of the gradual expansion of Roman power throughout Italy, and Rome's unique policy toward the conquered Italians, which would play a vital role in its later successes. The course then presents Rome's explosion out of the Italian peninsula and the initiation of its takeover of the Mediterranean, beginning with the republic's dramatic battle to the death with its archrival, Carthage, led by the brilliant general Hannibal. This is followed by the conquest of Greece and the eastern Mediterranean, events which end up fundamentally transforming Rome through the infusion of vast wealth and, more importantly, by introducing Greek culture to Rome. Finally, we trace the history of the late Roman Republic, the turbulent period during which stresses undermined the republic even as it reached its peak of power. This era is also home to a sequence of some of the most famous and dynamic people in Roman history, including the dueling warlords Marius and Sulla; the ambitious, rulebreaking Pompey the Great; the superlative general and leader Julius Caesar; history's greatest orator, Cicero; the talented but flawed Mark Antony; Cleopatra, the clever Queen of Egypt; and the wily and manipulative politician Octavian. Each of these key figures is examined in detail, and their personalities, actions, and influence are explored.

This course presents a lively, engaging account of the rise and fall of the Roman Republic accompanied by insightful and in-depth investigations of the key factors and personalities that shaped its history. ■



Rome is arguably the most influential city in Western history. For over half a millennium, Rome dominated the Western world politically and militarily; and even when the empire fell and Rome lost its political hegemony, the city continued to be the seat of the Roman Catholic Church. In this lecture, you will consider the geographical, political, and cultural features of ancient Rome that contributed to the city's rise to prominence.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

- ◆ Let's say you were hypothetically planning to establish a city with the intent that it would one day conquer and dominate the entire Mediterranean. You could probably do a lot worse than placing it on the exact site where the city of Rome was actually founded. This location possessed a number of geographic advantages that would serve the Romans well over the course of their ascendancy.
- ◆ The Italian Peninsula, which famously resembles the shape of a boot, thrusts down from the north into the Mediterranean Sea at roughly the sea's midpoint. All maritime traffic between east and west has to funnel into the narrow straits between the toe of Italy and the island of Sicily, or else circle around between Sicily and North Africa.
- ◆ The city of Rome lies about halfway down the peninsula on its western side, along the banks of the Tiber River. Thus, by a gift of geography, Rome conveniently sits at a centralized location within Italy, from which it was well situated to eventually expand and dominate the peninsula; also, Italy itself is in a central position within the Mediterranean basin, and is similarly well placed to control the broader region.
- ◆ Two important mountain ranges which further define the Italian Peninsula played roles in Rome's history. To the north, the Alps lie across the top of the boot and separate Italy from Europe. Although pierced by a few passes, they are generally high and icy, and are a natural barrier hindering northern expansion, or—to look at it the opposite way—

helping to protect Italy from northern invasions. The second significant mountain chain is the Apennines. These form the spine of Italy, running the entire length the peninsula from north to south and dividing it in two.

- ◆ When we zoom in on the specific position of Rome within Italy, we find the city situated not at the mouth of the Tiber River but about 15 miles inland, at a point where there is an island in the middle of the river called, not very imaginatively, Tiber Island.

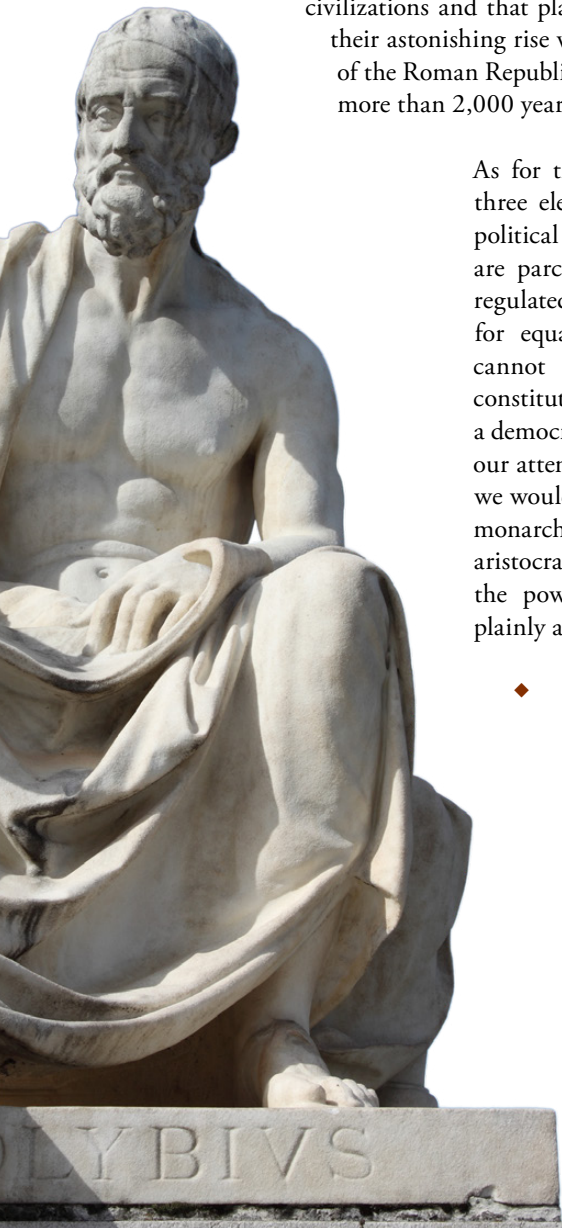


- ◆ The ford below Tiber Island formed a natural communication node within Italy. A second feature of the Tiber is that, up to Tiber Island, it is navigable. This meant that the site of Rome would have good access to the sea and to maritime trade and communication.
- ◆ The next important geographic feature present at Rome which made it an attractive site for settlement was a number of modest hills located close to the river crossing. These constituted defensive sites on which to build fortresses for protection. In addition, this particular point along the Tiber was prone to frequent floods, and the hills provided high ground to flee to when the waters rose.
- ◆ The two most important hills are the ones closest to the Tiber: the Capitoline and the Palatine. The Capitoline had fairly steep slopes, which made it a good stronghold from attackers. The Palatine, the central hill of Rome around which the others cluster, was important because it directly overlooked the crucial Tiber River crossing. An outpost on the Palatine could control traffic across the river at this point.
- ◆ Within the large central bend of the Tiber was a flat, marshy plain known as the Campus Martius. The Romans used this field for a wide variety of festivals and athletic events, as a place for soldiers to gather prior to going to war, and for citizens to cast their votes in elections.
- ◆ Rome possessed a number of geographical advantages, but those advantages alone are not enough to explain why it was Rome and not some other village that would grow and expand to dominate the Mediterranean. There were other cities, even within Italy, with comparable geographic characteristics. Still, geography helps, and Rome definitely occupied a promising location.



POLITICS NOT AS USUAL

- ◆ One factor that made the Romans different from all other civilizations and that played a key role in accounting for their astonishing rise was the unique political structure of the Roman Republic. The historian Polybius, writing more than 2,000 years ago, describes it this way:



As for the constitution of Rome, it has three elements, each of them possessing political powers. These respective powers are parceled out, and the whole system regulated with such a scrupulous regard for equality and equilibrium that one cannot say for certain whether the constitution on the whole is an aristocracy, a democracy, or a monarchy. If we focused our attention on the power of the consuls, we would be inclined to see the system as monarchical; if on the Senate, it seems an aristocracy; and finally, if one considers the power possessed by the people, it plainly appears to be a democracy.

- ◆ Polybius is describing what today we might term a mixed constitution: a political system in which power is divided among different branches of government, which themselves are controlled by different groups within society.

- ◆ There is more to Polybius's analysis, however. According to him, not only did the Roman Republic cleverly divide political power among its three branches of government, but the three components were also bound together in a complex web of interdependency:

Whenever any one of the three branches becomes overbearing and displays an inclination to be contentious and encroach upon the others, the mutual interdependency of all three, and the possibility of the ambitions of any one of them being checked or blocked by the others, then curbs this tendency. And so, the proper equilibrium is always maintained.

- ◆ To Polybius, this was the secret strength of the Roman Republic—that its political structure managed to capture the best elements of three different forms of government, and fuse them together into a dynamic but balanced whole. One can debate just how accurate Polybius's assessment of the Roman constitution was, but in a world in which the current and previous states were mostly monarchies and aristocracies with a smattering of democracies, there was indeed something unusual about the structure of the Roman Republic.

CULTURAL IMPACT

- ◆ We in the modern world continue to be affected by the culture of the ancient Romans. This lasting influence can be seen in the language with which we communicate, as a large percentage English words derive from Latin; in the laws by which we organize our society, as the majority of the world's legal systems are based on Roman law; and even in how we tell time, as our calendar is almost identical to the one developed by the Romans.
- ◆ Even the buildings of ancient Rome cast a long shadow. The Flavian Amphitheater—commonly known as the Colosseum—is the direct ancestor of all modern sports arenas, and the Pantheon, with its colonnaded facade and triangular pediment fronting a large dome, is the architectural inspiration for government buildings and museums



around the world. Likewise, the humble but all-important engineering infrastructure of the modern industrialized world can trace its origins directly to Roman sewers, aqueducts, roads, and bridges.

- ◆ Rome has come to represent many different concepts and stereotypes, both positive and negative. The Roman Republic has at times been held up as an ideal form of government, but it is also cited as an example of a system that harbored divisive, and ultimately self-destructive, values and institutions. Similarly, commentators have looked to Roman culture as a model of inclusiveness, efficient pragmatism, and streamlined administration, but it is also condemned for its cruelty, inequality, and oppression.

- ◆ On one hand, Rome boasted enormous and spectacular buildings that were marvels of engineering and that were adorned with a stunning profusion of sumptuous decoration. The city was the focal point of opportunity, wealth, culture, and luxury. On the other hand, Rome is often viewed as a place that was corrupt, decadent, crowded, filthy, and dangerous, with rampant poverty, crime, and disease. One way or another, however, Rome has both served as a reference point and occupied a central place in the imaginations of every generation that has followed.

Suggested Reading

Boatwright, Gargola, and Talbert, *The Romans*.

Everitt, *The Rise of Rome*.

Walbank, *Polybius*.

Ward, Heichelheim, and Yeo, *A History of the Roman People*.

Questions to Consider

- ✎ How great an advantage do you think the location of Rome gave it, and which geographical feature of the site do you think was most helpful or useful to the Romans?
- ✎ Do you think Polybius's unusual combination of being a Greek who was a victim of Roman imperialism but also had befriended some of the most powerful Romans makes him more or less objective when it comes to writing the history of Rome, and why?



THE MONARCHY AND THE ETRUSCANS

LECTURE 2

For the Romans, everything begins with Rome, and Roman history itself begins with the date traditionally ascribed to the city's foundation—April 21, 753 B.C. Despite the great importance attached to the foundation of Rome, it is difficult to determine what really happened; no contemporary account survives, and later ones are heavily weighted with propagandistic purposes. This lecture examines the incredible accounts of this early period in Roman history.

FOUNDATION MYTHS

- ◆ Archaeological evidence tells us that the site of Rome was inhabited hundreds of years before the city's supposed foundation; there are graves in the area from at least 1000 B.C. However, the archaeological evidence also suggests that, starting from around 700 B.C., close to the legendary foundation date, the population did start to increase rapidly. From there, the first signs of major urban structures in stone begin to appear.
- ◆ The Romans themselves told many stories about their city's establishment. In some cases, the stories conflict with one another. But over time, several figures came to dominate these accounts. The first of these focuses on Aeneas, who appears as a minor character in Homer's epic poem the *Iliad*.
- ◆ Aeneas was allegedly the son of a Trojan prince and the goddess Aphrodite. When Troy was destroyed by the Greeks, he managed to escape the destruction and flee the burning city, disappearing into the wilderness. That is as far as his legend goes in Greek tradition. The Romans, however, saw an opportunity to co-opt this missing hero from Greek culture for their own propagandistic purposes.
- ◆ As memorialized by the Roman poet Virgil in his masterpiece, the *Aeneid*, after escaping Troy, Aeneas wandered around the Mediterranean having various adventures until he eventually washed ashore in Italy. There, he married a local girl from one of the Latin tribes. Aeneas's descendants would found the city of Rome, and thus Aeneas is credited as being the forefather of the Roman people.



- ◆ Aeneas's son, Iulus, was said to be the progenitor of one of the most eminent families in later Roman history, the Julii. This was the family of such illustrious figures as Julius Caesar and Augustus, the first emperor. By asserting that they were descended from Iulus, the Julii also laid claim to divine lineage, because Iulus's grandmother was the goddess Aphrodite.
- ◆ The second important foundation story tells how the city of Rome itself began, and focuses on twin brothers named Romulus and Remus. One of the descendants of Iulus became king by the duplicitous means of expelling his brother and murdering his brother's children. He then forced his brother's daughter to become a Vestal Virgin to ensure that she would have no children who might seek revenge against him.

- ◆ The Vestal Virgin became pregnant, however, and claimed that she had been raped by Mars, the god of war. She gave birth to twins, Romulus and Remus. Because of their possibly divine parentage, the king was afraid to kill the babies directly, so he had them put in a basket and thrown into the Tiber River to drown.
- ◆ The Tiber was in flood at the time, and the basket was eventually deposited by the floodwaters on the slopes of the Capitoline Hill. The babies were found by a she-wolf who nursed them and looked after them with the help of a woodpecker. Ultimately, the boys were discovered by a shepherd, who raised them as his own. In time, the shepherd revealed the secret of their birth, and they overthrew the king.



- ◆ Having established their archetypal hero credentials by being exposed as infants, once grown to adulthood, Romulus and Remus decided to establish a new city on the spot where the wolf had rescued them. Almost immediately, they got into an argument over who should be the king of the new city. They were twins, after all, and did not know which one of them was older.
- ◆ Romulus and Remus could not agree, so they opted to let the gods choose the king. To do this, each brother went to the top of one of the hills and looked for a sign, with Romulus standing on the Palatine Hill. Remus received the first sign when six vultures flew overhead. Shortly afterward, however, 12 vultures flew over Romulus.
- ◆ This left the brothers still arguing, with each claiming the gods had picked him—Remus saying he had the first omen and Romulus saying he had the better omen. In the end, they couldn't settle their differences and, growing angry, Romulus solved the problem by murdering his brother. Thus Romulus became the first king of the city that came to bear his name.
- ◆ The earliest version we have of the Romulus and Remus story dates from 200 B.C. It therefore represents later mythologizing and, from a historical standpoint, is highly untrustworthy. Rome's foundation myths contain some important themes, however, and are revealing about the way the Romans viewed themselves.
- ◆ The focus of the stories is always on the city of Rome. The Aeneas myth provides links to Greek civilization and culture and positions Rome within a larger context. The Romulus story is an unusual foundation legend because it places a fratricide as the event which began Roman history. It also introduces the theme of powerful men fighting each other to see who will control Rome, an idea that will recur many times throughout Roman history.

THE RAPE OF THE SABINE WOMEN

- ◆ Conventionally, Roman history is divided into three distinct eras according to the type of government in place at the time. The first of these was the monarchy, when Rome was ruled by kings. This period begins with Romulus in 753 B.C., and it continues until the expulsion of the last of the kings in 509 B.C.
- ◆ The Romans claimed to have had only seven kings, which seems improbable given the length of time that the monarchy was supposedly in power. In fact, the entire period of the monarchy is shrouded in uncertainties, and much of it still falls under the category of myth rather than history.
- ◆ One of the first great problems confronting Romulus was a very practical concern—he and his followers were nearly all men, and for obvious reasons, if they wanted their city to have a future, they needed women. His solution was to invite one of the neighboring tribes, called the Sabines, to a big feast in the new city. The curious Sabines agreed to come. During the festivities, a signal was given at which point the Romans all tried to grab a young Sabine woman and run off with her. This event became known as the rape of the Sabine women.
- ◆ The Sabines were understandably unhappy that their daughters had been kidnapped by the Romans, so they attacked Rome. The Romans barricaded themselves on top of the Capitoline Hill, with the angry Sabines surrounding them below. The Sabine and Roman men were about to start fighting and killing each other, when suddenly, the kidnapped Sabine women ran between the two groups, stopping the battle.
- ◆ Despite their initial abduction, enough time had passed that the Sabine women had seemingly begun to fall in love with their Roman abductors. They pleaded with the men not to fight, saying that the Sabine women would lose no matter what happened; if the Romans won, it would mean that their fathers and brothers had been killed, and if the Sabines won, it would mean that their husbands had been killed.

- ◆ At this plea, the Romans and Sabines agreed to make peace, and, what's more, to combine their two peoples together. The new state would be ruled by Romulus and the Sabine king jointly. Whatever the truth of this story, it provides a precedent for two important aspects of Roman culture: Rome's assimilation with its neighbors, and the presence of dual magistrates.

ETRUSCAN INFLUENCES

- ◆ Most of the legendary kings of Rome seem to have Roman or Sabine names, but at least the last two clearly had Etruscan ones. At this time, the Etruscans were a thriving, sophisticated civilization

that dominated the northern half of the Italian peninsula. The fact that the last Roman kings bear Etruscan names has usually been interpreted to mean that, at some point, the growing village of Rome came to the attention of its Etruscan neighbors, and that the Etruscans imposed their rulership on the Romans.

- ◆ Recently, some scholars have questioned the idea of Rome falling under Etruscan control, pointing out, for example, archaeological evidence suggesting that by this time, Rome was probably larger and possibly more powerful than any contemporary Etruscan city. Whichever interpretation is correct, it is certain that the Etruscans would exert influence on Roman culture, and so it is worth looking at them in more detail.



- ◆ The Etruscans have long been described as mysterious, and they are hard to fully understand for a number of reasons. One is the longstanding debate about their origins. Some argue that the Etruscans came from the Middle East; others that they arose in Italy. Scholars—and now scientists, using DNA testing—have not yet reached an agreement on this issue.
- ◆ Another element of mystery is the Etruscan language, a non-Indo-European one that had fallen out of use by the mid-1st century A.D. Because the Etruscans adopted an alphabet based on the Phoenician one, we can read their words; we do not always know what those words mean, however, and the majority of Etruscan inscriptions consist of proper names.
- ◆ A pronounced degree of social stratification seems to have developed in the Etruscan communities, with the emergence of a dominant aristocratic class. Starting in the late 8th century B.C., some of the towns in southern Etruria rapidly evolved from clusters of thatch-roofed clay huts into genuine city-states.
- ◆ Wealthy Etruscans soon came to live in sturdy, rectangular structures of brick or stone with terra-cotta-tiled roofs. There are signs of urban planning and standard civic features, such as streets, drainage channels, walls, fortifications, and religious sanctuaries. The Etruscan city-states do not seem to have been united politically, and they often fought with one another and competed for trade.
- ◆ Contact with the Phoenicians and the Greeks brought an influx of ideas and artistic styles, as well as a new alphabet. The Etruscans liked to adopt and adapt foreign influences. The Etruscan elites imported luxury goods from overseas, which they used to project a sense of their social status and power.
- ◆ The political structure of Etruscan civilization seems to have been a confederation of strong, rich cities. Their kings were important figures. They served as commanders of the army, high priests, and chief judges

and are depicted wearing purple robes and golden crowns. The robes of the Etruscan kings are thought to be the basis for the Roman toga, which would later become famous as the symbol for Roman citizenship.

- ◆ The Etruscans also seem to have been fond of public entertainments, including chariot races and combats to the death, which were held as part of funeral ceremonies. It is apparently from the Etruscans that the Romans took the idea of gladiatorial contests, and chariot racing later became the most popular form of Roman public entertainment.
- ◆ Whether through outright political control or innocent cultural interaction, the influence of Etruscan civilization on the Romans was significant. Soon, however, the Romans would come into more direct conflict with their neighbors, ultimately eclipsing the Etruscans completely. This moment would spark a revolution in Rome, transforming the monarchy into a republic and launching the Romans on their path to domination of the Mediterranean.

Suggested Reading

Borrelli and Targia, *The Etruscans*.
Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*.
Grandazzi, *The Foundation of Rome*.
Spivey, *Etruscan Art*.

Questions to Consider

- ✚ Discuss the ways in which the Romulus/Remus foundation story is both typical and atypical of such foundation legends.
- ✚ Of the various aspects of culture that the Romans may have borrowed from or at least shared with the Etruscans, which do you believe are the most significant?



ROMAN VALUES AND HEROES

LECTURE 3

Perhaps the best way to gain insight into Roman culture is to examine what the Romans themselves identified as being the qualities of the ideal Roman. In terms of understanding them and their behavior, it matters less whether Romans in reality lived up to these standards, but rather how they wanted to appear to others. This lecture paints a portrait of the ideal Roman by examining stories of early Roman heroes, as recounted by the historian Livy.

MUCIUS SCAEVOLA

- ◆ Imagine that your nation is at war with a dangerous enemy. In order to save your country, you have volunteered to sneak into the enemy headquarters and assassinate their leader. Unfortunately, your attack fails. Worse, you are captured and dragged before the enemy king. He wants to obtain information about your country's plans but knows that you will not reveal the information willingly. Therefore, he decides to torture you to find out what you know, so he has a blazing urn of fire brought into the room. What would you do if faced with this desperate situation?
- ◆ According to Livy, this was exactly the plight that a young Roman named Mucius found himself in during one of the many wars in Rome's early history. Rather than be intimidated by the king's threat of torture, however, Mucius found a way to psychologically turn the tables on his captor. According to Livy's account, Mucius boldly declared:

I am a Roman citizen. My name is Gaius Mucius. I came here to kill my enemy and I am not afraid to die. Romans know both how to act with bravery and how to show bravery in suffering. I am the first to attempt to kill you, but I will not be the last, because there are many others like myself who will take up my mission. Therefore, prepare yourself to live in danger, to fear for your life every hour of the day. ... Watch me and learn how unimportant the body is to those who have dedicated themselves to a greater cause.

- ◆ At the conclusion of this proud statement, “Mucius thrust his right hand into the flames and held it there. As the flesh burned from his bones, Mucius gave no sign that he felt anything.” Upon seeing this unbelievable display of willpower, the king was so astonished—and so intimidated by Mucius’s fanaticism—that he released Mucius and ended the war, wisely preferring not to fight against a nation of such formidable opponents.
- ◆ To honor his deed, the Romans bestowed a new name upon Mucius—one that would be passed down to his descendants, serving for all eternity to remind them and everyone who interacted with them of his sacrifice. From then on, he was known as Mucius Scaevola, which can be loosely translated as “Mucius the Lefty.”



- ◆ In the value system Mucius embodies, the individual is much less important than the group. This Roman emphasis on the good of the state trumping the good of the individual sharply contrasts with the earlier Homeric Greek value system, embodied by figures such as Achilles, in which the paramount virtue was personal glory.
- ◆ Mucius also demonstrates the qualities of cleverness and resourcefulness. Even after his mission apparently fails, he uses his mind to find a way out of a seemingly hopeless situation and to intimidate the enemy king into making peace, thus achieving his overall purpose through unexpected means.
- ◆ Finally, he demonstrates a superhuman degree of willpower and determination when he voluntarily burns off his own hand. This is the crucial moment of the story, and it is this act, more than anything else, that elevates Mucius beyond the ranks of ordinary citizens to heroic status.

CINCINNATUS

- ◆ The majority of the accounts in Livy focus on youthful action heroes, but there are several well-known stories whose protagonists display a more complicated or nuanced set of societal values. One of these concerns an older man, a retired general named Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus.
- ◆ Cincinnatus lived in the 5th century B.C. at a time when Rome had only recently overthrown its monarchy and become a Republic. The experience of living under kings had left the Romans with a deep-seated hatred of any one man having absolute power. Under their new political system, the Romans went to great lengths to spread political authority among a variety of individuals and institutions.
- ◆ The Romans were a very practical people, however, and they realized that in moments of extreme danger when the state itself was threatened with complete destruction, it was necessary to put a single person with absolute power in charge in order to enable swift and decisive action. When such a person was appointed, he was called a dictator, and his term was strictly limited to no longer than six months.

- ◆ In Livy's account, an enemy army had invaded Roman territory and succeeded in trapping the Roman army. The capture of the army would have resulted in the destruction of the Roman state, so in this time of emergency, the Senate determined that a dictator was needed. They selected the retired general Cincinnatus, and a delegation of the Senate was sent to inform him.
- ◆ They found the old warrior hard at work on his tiny, three-acre farm. Cincinnatus put on his toga, accepted the appointment to the dictatorship, and quickly organized the Roman defenses. Through a series of brilliant maneuvers, he completely defeated the enemy and rescued the surrounded Roman army. Although Cincinnatus had been granted the dictatorship for a period of six months, he resigned after only 16 days.
- ◆ The key moment in this story is the one at the very end: After winning his victory and saving the state, Cincinnatus was beloved by everyone and at the height of his popularity. He was also still dictator, and he therefore possessed absolute power over the Roman state and everything and everyone in it.
- ◆ One might naturally assume that this would be the sort of position most people would aspire to and would want to savor as long as possible—loved by all and wielding total control. Cincinnatus, however, chose to defy this expectation, and instead of enjoying the power and fame that he had, after all, deservedly won through his own talent and efforts, he voluntarily resigned from the dictatorship and returned to his farm.
- ◆ Why would Cincinnatus give up fame, power, and fortune in exchange for obscurity, poverty, and hard work? The main answer, of course, is that he exemplifies the Roman Republican attitude of being uncomfortable with one person having too much political authority, even if that one man is himself.
- ◆ Both for the Romans and for later civilizations, Cincinnatus became the paradigm for a type of altruistic behavior that was perhaps more ideal than reality—that talented individuals should use their gifts for the benefit and glory of the state, and not seek reward or fame for themselves.



- ◆ Cincinnatus also embodies the concept of the citizen/soldier/farmer, a concept absolutely central to the Romans' image of themselves. The perfect Roman was a man like Cincinnatus: in times of peace, a hard-working, self-sufficient farmer; in times of war, a tough and hardened soldier; and at all times, an honest and engaged citizen. How often and to what degree reality differed from this ideal is less significant than the fact that the ideal existed, and that men like Cincinnatus were constantly being cited as role models to be emulated.

HORATII AND CURTIATII

- ◆ Another story from Livy involves another war between Rome and its neighbors—this time, the Albans. Because the two sides are so evenly matched, each realizes that the war will be very destructive to both the winner and the loser. They therefore agree to hold a combat between three warriors from each side, with the result to determine the outcome of the war.
- ◆ As chance would have it, in each of the armies there happened to be a trio of brothers, all renowned for their skill and strength. The triplets on the Alban side were called the Curiatii, and those on the Roman, the Horatii. On the day appointed for the duel, the feuding armies encamped on opposite sides of a field and the two sets of triplets strode into the open space between them.



- ◆ At first, they were evenly matched. After a few moments of combat, however, the tide turned sharply against the Romans. Two of the Roman Horatii were killed, although all three of the Alban Curiatii incurred slight wounds. Now it was three Curiatii against the lone remaining brother of the Horatii.
- ◆ Although badly outnumbered, Horatius had one thing in his favor: He was uninjured, whereas each of the Curiatii had a minor wound. Seeing in this a chance, he began to run, and the Curiatii set off in pursuit. As the chase progressed, however, the three Curiatii became spaced out wider and wider, as each was only able to run as quickly as his particular injury allowed.
- ◆ Once a sizable gap opened up between the first two Curiatii, the remaining Horatii brother suddenly spun around and engaged the foremost of the Curiatii. In this one-on-one battle, the uninjured Roman had the advantage. He quickly slew the first of the Curiatii, then waited for the second to arrive. By the time the third and most severely wounded of the Curiatii labored onto the scene, the second had already been killed. The third soon followed.
- ◆ In this story, we see on display the by now familiar Roman virtues of bravery and willingness to sacrifice yourself for your country. In addition, the victor displayed resilience in not giving up when things seemed to be going badly, and ingenuity in coming up with a successful strategy.
- ◆ While almost all of Livy's stories focus on male heroes, this particular tale has an interesting postscript which indicates some expectations for behavior for Roman women. After receiving the acclamation of his peers, as was customary, the surviving one of Horatii stripped the arms and armor off the men he had killed, and then set off triumphantly for home, bearing these bloody trophies.

- ◆ As fate would have it, the sister of the victorious Horatii happened to be engaged to marry one of the slain Curiatii. When she recognized in her brother's hands the blood-stained cloak of her fiancé—a cloak she had woven herself and given as a gift to her lover—she understandably burst into tears.
- ◆ Her brother was so enraged by her display of grief, which marred his own victory and glory, that he drew his sword and stabbed her to death. As he did so, he shouted, “Go then to your betrothed, ... forgetful of your dead brothers, of the one who still lives, and of your country! Let every Roman woman who mourns for an enemy be punished in this way!”
- ◆ Horatius was put on trial for the murder of his sister, but after a speech by his father defending his actions, he was acquitted by popular acclaim. Both Horatius's words and the outcome of the trial make it quite clear where the priorities lay for Roman women, who were expected to subsume their personal wishes and desires to the interests of their family and the state.

Suggested Reading

Livy, *History of Rome*.

Questions to Consider

- ✎ What social and cultural purposes are served by having shared stories of heroic figures? You may want to consider unity, identity, explanation, and values.
- ✎ How much do you think it matters whether stories about heroic or foundational figures are true or not?



THE EARLY REPUBLIC AND RURAL LIFE

LECTURE 4

Sometime around 500 B.C., Romans transformed their city from a monarchy, the traditional form of government in Rome and most other Italian cities up to that point, into the Roman Republic. Exactly how this crucial moment came about is shrouded in a dense accretion of later mythologizing and propaganda; nevertheless, the legends surrounding the republic's inception are worth considering for what they reveal about the core values by which Romans chose to define themselves.

THE RAPE OF LUCRETIA

- ◆ While nearly all of the stories about early Roman heroes recounted by the Roman historian Livy focus on men, one important story revolves around a Roman woman, named Lucretia. Her story involves a number of dramatic elements, including a contest of wives, a rape, and a suicide. Lucretia came to be a role model for Roman daughters, who learned her story from their parents.
- ◆ The king who ruled Rome at the time was Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, and he was of Etruscan origin. At least in the traditional view, the Romans had more and more come to resent being ruled over by what amounted to a foreign nobility. In spite of his name, which means “Tarquinius the Proud,” the king was purportedly arrogant and ruled by fear. He had several senators murdered, did not take advice from the Senate, and is otherwise depicted as conforming to the image of a tyrant.
- ◆ As Lucretia's tale begins, the Roman army is encamped around an enemy city, laying siege to it. A group of young Romans, including Tarquinius the Proud's son, who was named Sextus Tarquinius, were sitting around the campfire drinking and boasting. Each asserted that he had the best wife.
- ◆ Unable to resolve the argument, at last one of them hit on a solution to put the question to the test and determine whose wife was most virtuous. He urged them to ride back to Rome in the middle of the night, burst into their respective homes, surprise their wives, and see what they were up to while their husbands were away in the field fighting, stating that “The truest test of a wife is to return home unexpectedly and surprise her.”

- ◆ Being all rather drunk, they readily agreed to this plan, jumped on their horses, and rode back to Rome. To their disappointment, at house after house when they burst in, they found their wives eating, gossiping, and partying with their female friends—until they arrived at Lucretia's house. They found Lucretia alone except for her servants, sitting and spinning cloth by the light of a single lamp. She was clearly the most virtuous wife, and won the contest.
- ◆ Unfortunately, her display of womanly virtue attracted an unwanted admirer. Sextus Tarquinius, the king's son, became filled with a villainous lust for Lucretia. A few days later, he returned to Lucretia's house alone. As befits an honored guest, Lucretia served him dinner, and let him stay in the guest room. When everyone was sound asleep, Tarquinius crept into Lucretia's bedroom, and threatened to kill her unless she had sex with him. Despite this dire threat, Lucretia stoutly resisted his advances, stating that she would prefer death.
- ◆ Unable to overcome her with physical threats, Tarquinius switched tactics. He said that he would murder both her and one of her male slaves and place their naked bodies in bed together so that everyone would believe that she had been discovered committing shameful adultery. Threatened with this disgrace, Lucretia gave in. Tarquinius raped her, and then he left.
- ◆ Lucretia promptly sent a messenger to her husband and her father, instructing them to come at once and to each bring along a trustworthy friend. Her husband brought a man named Lucius Junius Brutus. When they arrived, she related what had happened, stating, "Only my body has been violated. My mind is free of guilt, as death will be my witness. Swear by your right hands and promise that the rapist will be punished. He is Sextus Tarquinius."
- ◆ They all swore the oath and tried to comfort her, but she replied, "As for me, although I acquit myself of guilt, I do not absolve myself from punishment. Never let any unchaste woman live by citing me as an example." She then took out a knife which she had kept concealed under her clothes and plunged it into her heart.



- ◆ Holding the dagger dripping with her blood up in the air, Brutus proclaimed: “I swear by this blood, most pure until a prince polluted it, and I call upon you, the gods, to witness my oath that I shall pursue Tarquinius the Proud, his evil wife, and all their children with fire, sword, and all other force I possess, and I will not allow them or anyone else to rule as king at Rome.”
- ◆ Brutus and the others present led a rebellion against the entire Tarquin family, ultimately expelling the Tarquins from Rome. The Romans then established the Roman Republic. Brutus was elected as one of its first consuls, or chief magistrates.

IDEALS AND IDEALISM

- ◆ In analyzing the story of Lucretia, it is useful to divide the story into two distinct parts: the contest of the wives, and the rape and the establishment of the republic. The first section, the contest of the wives, establishes Lucretia as the ideal of Roman womanhood. Whereas the other wives are discovered gossiping with one another and socializing, Lucretia is found in her own home industriously working and supervising the labor of her servants.
- ◆ It is particularly significant that what Lucretia is found doing is sewing. In the ancient world generally, one of the most important duties and economic contributions of women was to weave fabric and sew clothing. Even as far back as Homer's *Iliad*, skill at weaving was listed among the top criteria by which women were judged and for which they were valued.
- ◆ To the Romans, a woman's place was in her home; the fact that this is where Lucretia is found further attests to her superiority. It also speaks to her modesty, which was a much-praised quality in Roman women. Finally, Lucretia scorns socializing with other women in favor of hard labor for the benefit of her family.
- ◆ The second half of Lucretia's story features her displaying additional virtues. When threatened by Tarquinius with the choice of yielding to his lust or being killed, she unhesitatingly chooses death. In doing so, she demonstrates great courage. What eventually causes her to submit to Tarquinius is not the threat of bodily harm, but rather the fear that her honor will be disgraced if Tarquinius frames her. She thus shares with Roman men the ideal that one's reputation is even more important than one's life.
- ◆ After Tarquinius leaves, Lucretia summons her husband, informs him of her rape, and commits suicide. This is a troubling episode; even though she herself admits that she is not guilty, she punishes herself anyway. Her stated reason for this extreme action is telling—she does not want to provide a precedent for future unfaithful women to cite in order to escape punishment.

- ◆ She is thus represented as being self-consciously aware of her potential as a role model and an exemplar, and is determined to set the bar of moral rectitude as high as possible. Again, she is more concerned with protecting her reputation—and perhaps even more importantly, that of her husband and her family—than she is with preserving her own security and happiness.



- ◆ From a modern perspective, the fact that one of the main examples of behavior presented to young Roman girls for emulation involved a woman who is raped and commits suicide is rather disturbing. One characteristic shared by the accounts of male Roman heroes such as Mucius, Horatius, and Cincinnatus is that each is threatened with what looks like certain death, but in the end, all three survive and are showered with honors and rewards. Lucretia, the lone female protagonist, however, is the unlucky hero who actually dies rather than live happily ever after.
- ◆ This story probably reveals more about Roman males' fears and concerns, than it does about the behavior of actual Roman women. One can only speculate how the story might have been different if Roman women had been allowed to write their own accounts of female role models and heroines.
- ◆ Finally, in addition to offering moral instruction, Lucretia's tale also has vital significance in Roman history. The consequences of the famous oath taken by Brutus are the end of the monarchy and the creation of the republic. It is intriguing that this crucial moment in Roman history is prompted not by a man, but by a woman.
- ◆ While this story tells us a great deal about Roman values, it is far less certain how accurately it reflects the historical moment when the republic was formed. In reality, the transition from monarchy to republic was likely much less abrupt than this tale suggests. Many of the key institutions that are most associated with the republic, such as the Roman Senate and the division of citizens into voting groups, had, in fact, already been established during the monarchy.
- ◆ The government of Rome during the monarchy already had strong oligarchic elements, making it more of a system in which political power was wielded by an aristocratic elite rather than a true despotism. Conversely, during the republic, this aristocratic class still held a central role, making the republic less democratic than is often portrayed. The supposedly antimonarchical rebellion staged by Brutus and other Roman elites may actually have been more of a coup in which one aristocratic faction displaced another.

THE TWELVE TABLES

- ◆ A key moment in the development of the Roman Republic took place around 450 B.C. At that time, a special commission of 10 men was appointed and given extraordinary powers to create a code of laws. Two successive commissions in 450 and 451 ultimately came up with a legal code known as the Twelve Tables. As its name indicates, the code was inscribed on 12 bronze tablets, or tables, which were then set up in the Roman Forum.
- ◆ The Twelve Tables do not form a coherent legal system. Rather, they are a collection of separate laws regulating specific situations. The Roman legal code would continue to grow in complexity over the next millennium, eventually becoming a vast and sophisticated legal system on which most modern legal codes are based.
- ◆ The Twelve Tables of the early republic strongly reflect the concerns of contemporary Romans, and are clearly the product of an agrarian society in which most people were farmers and the basis of the economy was agriculture. It also is plainly a code developed by a society in which the family was the core social unit, and males, especially the father of the family, were granted enormous power and respect.
- ◆ The majority of the Twelve Tables deal with relatively mundane matters. For example, there are laws governing inheritance, marriage, divorce, debt, boundary disputes, and false witness. Many of the laws govern the petty sorts of conflicts that arise among farmers—what happens, for example, if fruit from one man's tree falls onto his neighbor's land and the neighbor's animals eat it.
- ◆ Like most other early legal codes, such as those of Hammurabi or the Old Testament, the Twelve Tables are retaliatory—if you harm someone else, that same harm is then done to you. It is a harsh code, and the punishment for many offenses is death. Even in this fairly simple first attempt at a legal code, however, there are some interesting distinctions made.

- ◆ For example, if a thief broke into your house at night or was armed, you were allowed to kill him; if the break-in occurred during the day and the thief was unarmed, you were supposed to summon your neighbors and apprehend him. Other interesting provisions include a law that punished using sorcery or magic to harm someone, and several statutes that set limits on how elaborate or expensive a funeral you could hold for a deceased relative.



- ◆ The emphasis in the Twelve Tables on laws related to farming reminds us just how much of an agrarian society early Rome really was. Around 90 percent of the Roman population lived in the countryside. If you were a typical Roman, the story of your life was that you were born on a family farm, you lived on the family farm, you tilled the soil, you probably never traveled more than 20 miles from your home, you married someone from a nearby farm, you ran your own farm, and you died on the farm.
- ◆ History books and documentaries tend to focus on city life because that is where everything happens. One can view civilization itself as primarily an urban phenomenon. Politics, government, religion, law, art, war, buildings, trade, literature—all of these happen in cities. While this is true for Roman civilization too, the Romans always retained a strong identification with the small-time family farmers who were their ancestors.

Suggested Reading

Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*.

Flower, *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic*.

Questions to Consider

- ✦ What do you think the story of Lucretia tells us about the role and status of women in Roman society, and would you tell this story to your own daughters as a tale of an inspirational woman?
- ✦ The Romans liked to think of themselves as a nation of simple farmers. In what ways would having a nation made up of such farmers be advantageous and/or disadvantageous to a civilization?



THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

LECTURE 5

Throughout history, the political structure and institutions of the Roman Republic have had many admirers. The historian Polybius, for example, credited the constitution of the republic as the explanation for Rome's strength and astonishing military success. This lecture examines the institutions of the Roman Republic to discover what was so original and distinctive about them.

CITIZENSHIP

- ◆ One of the most important distinctions in Roman society was that between citizens and noncitizens. The number of citizens was always a small minority of the total populace. Even later, at the height of the Roman Empire, at a time when there were perhaps 50 million people living within the empire, it is estimated that there were only about 6 million citizens.
- ◆ The requirements for full citizenship were that you had to be a free adult male. Thus, by definition, women, children, and slaves were excluded from being full citizens. In addition, you had to have passed the census, which identified your age, geographical origin, family, wealth, and moral virtue.
- ◆ For hundreds of years, the Romans were reluctant to extend citizenship even to the thoroughly Romanized inhabitants of Italy, until forced to do so by the Social War in the late republic. Once Rome acquired overseas provinces, it still remained reluctant to grant citizenship to provincials on a large scale.
- ◆ The visible symbol of citizenship was the toga, a garment derived from the Etruscans. Roman citizens wore plain white togas. By law, only citizens were allowed to wear them.



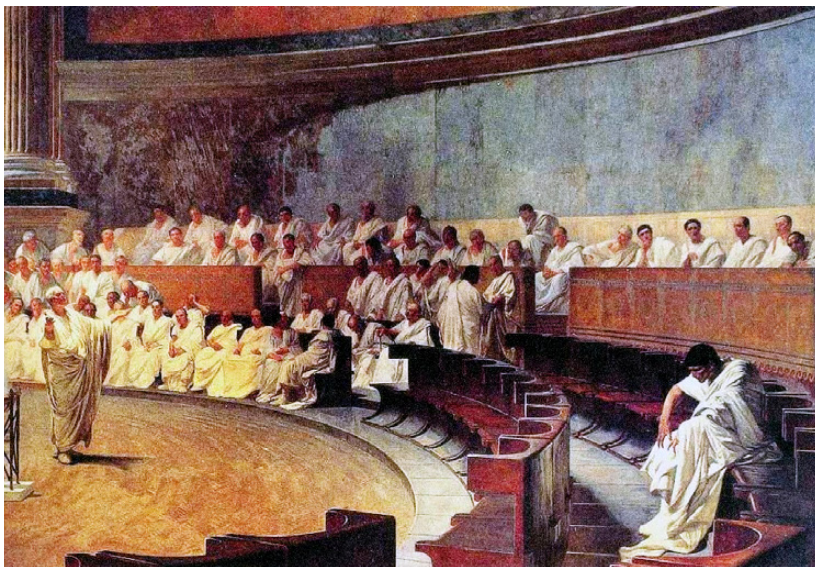
- ◆ During the early and middle Republic, the two main duties of a citizen were to fight in the army and to cast one's vote in elections. Being a citizen gave you protection and—in theory at least—equal treatment under the law.
- ◆ In social terms, Roman citizens were formally divided into two groups, the patricians and the plebeians. This distinction went back to the earliest days of Rome, when society was dominated by a small number of wealthy, landowning families who collectively became known as the patricians—literally, “the fathers.”
- ◆ This dominance became institutionalized through laws stating that only patricians were eligible to hold high political office, and that patricians could only marry members of other patrician families. The sole way to possess patrician status was to be a member of one of this small set of families.
- ◆ All nonpatricians—the vast majority of the citizen body—were labeled plebeians. These distinctions resulted in considerable social unrest, culminating in a struggle known as the Conflict of the Orders, which lasted from the beginning of the 6th century B.C. until 287 B.C.
- ◆ As a result of these struggles, the privileges of patricians were steadily eroded and eventually eliminated, although being a member of a patrician family continued to convey a certain status throughout Roman history. From 445 B.C. on, patricians and plebeians were allowed to legally intermarry.
- ◆ Another way in which Roman citizens were divided up was by wealth. Every so often, the state appointed a special magistrate called a censor to review the wealth and moral worthiness of all citizens. If your total wealth was more than 400,000 sesterces, you were granted equestrian status.
- ◆ Equites wore special gold rings and had togas with a narrow purple stripe, so that anyone encountering them in the street would instantly know their status. Many equestrians seem to have operated successful commercial enterprises. In the empire, a number of important government posts were allotted to equestrians.

GOVERNMENT

- ◆ The core of the Roman government centered around a series of magistracies, or offices. All of these magistracies shared a number of characteristics: officeholders obtained their positions by election; officeholders served one-year terms; officeholders had to meet minimum age requirements for each office; and each office was collegial, meaning that more than one person held the same title at the same time.
- ◆ The lowest magistracy was the quaestorship. Under the fully developed system, quaestors were supposed to be 30 years old and were in charge of various financial affairs. Originally there were only two quaestors elected each year; over time, however, there was need for more and more officials, and the number grew to 20. Different quaestors had varying specific duties, with some, for example, in charge of monitoring taxation, others overseeing financial matters in a province, and others controlling government finances.
- ◆ The next magistracy was the aedileship. Aediles had to be 36 years old, and four were elected each year. The aediles were responsible for a variety of urban affairs, including the maintenance and repair of urban infrastructure, monitoring markets to insure fair trade and enforce uniform standards of weights and measures, and staging public festivals.
- ◆ Above the aediles were the praetors, who had to be 39 years old. As with the quaestors, the number of praetors gradually increased over time, from one to as many as eight. Praetors mainly served judicial functions, overseeing law courts and the running of the judiciary system.
- ◆ The most prestigious post of all was the consulship. Consuls had to be 42 years old, and only two were elected each year. They acted as the chief executives of the state, and, at least during most of the republic, served as the generals of Rome's armies.
- ◆ Finally, there was the Roman Senate. The word "senate" is derived from the Latin *senex*, meaning "an old man," and during the monarchy, the Senate seems to have been just that: an advisory council to the kings

composed of elderly aristocrats. In the republic, the Senate became one of the most powerful elements of the government. Senators wore togas with a thick purple stripe, proclaiming their special status.

- ◆ The membership of the Senate varied, probably between 300 and 500 individuals, and the only way you could join it was to have held one of the major magistracies in the Roman government. Thus, it was a body entirely composed of former magistrates. Membership was for life; even if you never held another office, you would remain a member of the Senate until death.
- ◆ The formal legislative powers of the Senate were somewhat limited. Its main function was advisory. The Senate would meet, debate, and then issue a decree of the Senate—a *senatus consultum*—which gave its advice on a certain matter. However, because it consisted of Rome's social, political, and financial elite, its advice on matters both domestic and foreign was taken seriously, and almost everything it recommended came to pass. Over time, it also acquired a number of formal powers, especially in regard to foreign affairs.



- ◆ The ambition of all Roman patricians was to move up the ladder of offices, which was known as the *cursus honorum*, or the “course of honor.” The perfect career for a politician was to be elected to each of the offices at the minimum age; but you were constantly competing, not only with all your peers of the same age, but with everyone from earlier years who had not been one of the fortunate few to win election at the minimum age.
- ◆ There was one other important elected office that was not considered part of the traditional *cursus honorum* and that did not earn you membership in the Senate. This was the office of tribune of the plebs, whose primary duty was to protect and look out for the rights and interests of plebeians. This office was added as a result of rising tensions between patrician and plebeian which may have culminated in a sort of mass walkout strike by the plebeians.
- ◆ The number of tribunes varied over time. Like other magistrates, they gained office by election and served one-year terms. To safeguard plebeian rights, they had a number of unusual powers. A tribune could directly propose legislation to the assemblies, and he himself enjoyed a special status of immunity intended to protect him.
- ◆ The tribunes’ most potent prerogative, however, was the tribunician veto. This gave them the right to declare laws invalid, to revoke actions of other officials, and to overturn legal decisions. This powerful privilege was rarely invoked, but was intended, by its very existence, to curb the worst excesses of patrician power.

PATRONAGE

- ◆ One final significant component of Roman social structure was not delineated by a formal or legal set of rules, yet it played an important part in daily life. This was the patronage system, which developed as a way to link together Romans of varying status.

- ◆ In many respects, the structure of Roman society was designed to pit various groups against one another: patrician versus plebeian, free versus slave, citizen versus noncitizen. Such a society needed something to counteract these tensions, and for the Romans, it was the patronage system.
- ◆ Powerful men would serve as patrons to a group of their social or economic inferiors, who were known as the man's clients. Patrons would offer financial or legal help and protection to their clients. For example, a client who was down on his luck might get a gift of cash or even food from his patron in order to provide for his family. A patron might help a client obtain a job, or might use his influence to get one of his clients out of a legal scrape.
- ◆ Of course, patrons were not just doing this out of the goodness of their hearts. Whereas clients tended to get material aid from patrons, in return, the clients would perform actions that enhanced the prestige or reputation of their patrons. For example, clients would be expected to support their patron with their votes during an election.

Suggested Reading

Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*.

Taylor, *Roman Voting Assemblies*.

Wallace-Hadrill, *Patronage in Ancient Society*.

Questions to Consider

- ✚ To what degree does the constitution of the Roman Republic deserve to be considered democratic?
- ✚ What strengths and weaknesses do you see in the structures and institutions of the Roman Republic?



THE UNIFICATION OF THE ITALIAN PENINSULA

LECTURE 6

Rome's conquest of the Italian Peninsula was neither rapid nor inevitable; it was a long, gradual process lasting from the foundation of the republic around 500 B.C. down until roughly 250 B.C. Rome's military successes during this period are attributable more to dogged persistence than to any significant technological or tactical superiority.

ETRURIA AND THE LATIN LEAGUE

- ◆ The story of Rome's expansion into Italy predictably begins with their closest neighbors—the Etruscans and the Latin tribes of central Italy. Etruscan power was incrementally fading away, and Rome was able to encroach into their territory of Etruria, capturing such Etruscan strongholds as Veii and Tarquinia.
- ◆ The struggle against Veii was especially prolonged, but significant, because Veii was located close to Rome in the same part of the Tiber River basin, and subjugating it removed one of Rome's main rivals in central Italy. Rome fought at least three distinct wars against Veii, which included a number of defeats for Rome.
- ◆ The process of subduing all of the Etruscan cities was a prolonged one, with the last holdouts not submitting to Rome until well into the 3rd century B.C. In taking over Etruria from the Etruscans, much arable land was confiscated and redistributed to colonists from Rome.
- ◆ Rome's immediate neighbors in central Italy were the cities of what is now known as the Latin League. In 499 B.C., Rome won a victory against the league. Shortly thereafter, the two sides signed a treaty in which they were on roughly equal footing, with each agreeing to come to the aid of the other if attacked. While the language of the treaty was technically defensive, in practice, Rome and the Latins would cooperate on numerous battlefields for over a century.

- ◆ In concert with the Latin League, Rome fought many battles against mountain tribes such as the Aequi, the Volsci, and the Hernici, and gradually defeated them. In this process, Rome cleverly used a divide-and-conquer strategy, making temporary alliances with one tribe while focusing their attention on another. Once that enemy had been defeated, Rome would break their alliance and attack their former ally.
- ◆ After defeating the various mountain tribes, Rome promptly turned against its former partners, the Latin League. By 338 B.C., Rome had defeated all of the Latin cities and officially dissolved the league. These Latin cities were very similar in culture and language to the Romans, and thus were easy to assimilate.

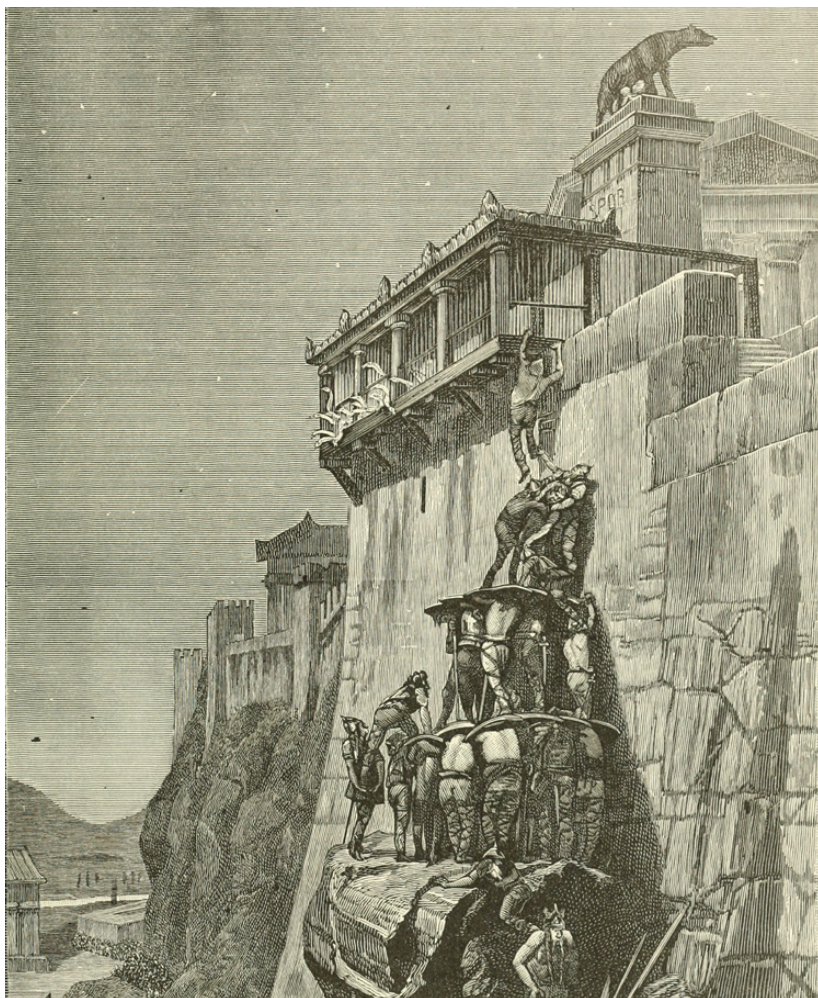
THE GAULS AND THE SAMNITES

- ◆ Rome's expansion into northern Italy soon brought them into contact with the Gauls, a Celtic culture based in what is now modern France. While the Romans were encroaching on the old Etruscan territory from the south, the Gauls had begun to do the same from the north, crossing the Alps and occupying much of the fertile Po River valley.
- ◆ When the Romans and Gauls inevitably came into conflict, the immediate outcome proved to be one of the worst disasters in Roman history. At the Battle of the River Allia in 390 B.C., the Gauls inflicted a crushing defeat on the Romans. The Gauls then exploited their victory by sweeping down into central Italy and actually sacking the city of Rome.
- ◆ Fortunately for the Romans, the Gauls were more interested in plunder than in territory. In exchange for a bribe of 1,000 pounds of gold, they were ultimately persuaded to depart. The sack of Rome by the Gauls effectively halted Roman expansion to the north, and for the next several centuries, the Romans mostly left the Gauls alone.



- ◆ To the south of Rome, there was a powerful federation of cities collectively known as the Samnites. The Samnites were perhaps the most serious foe that Rome faced in central Italy. They were a warlike and aggressive people, and between 343 B.C. and 290 B.C., the Romans fought three major wars against them.
- ◆ The Second Samnite War ended with an embarrassing defeat for the Romans when, at the Battle of the Caudine Forks in 321 B.C., the Samnites ambushed a Roman army in the mountains and compelled large numbers of Roman soldiers to surrender. The Roman captives were then subjected to a ritual humiliation in which they had to walk like beasts of burden beneath a yoke.

- ◆ Just a few years later in 298 B.C., the Third Samnite War erupted. Remnants of the Etruscans, Umbrians, and even some Gauls joined in against the expanding threat of Rome. How serious a rival the Samnites still were, however, is suggested by the fact that, even at this point, the Samnites likely had a larger population and controlled more territory than Rome.



- ◆ This Third Samnite War lasted until 290 B.C. The key moment was the Battle of Sentinum in 295 B.C. The Romans faced a massive host of Samnites, Gauls, and Etruscans, but cleverly split up this formidable coalition by sending a diversionary force to raid Etruscan territory, causing the Etruscan contingent to depart in order to defend their homes. The Romans then attacked the still sizable Samnite-Gallic army.
- ◆ Sentinum can be considered one of the truly pivotal battles in all of Roman history because it effectively established the Romans as the most powerful force on the Italian Peninsula. In the aftermath of this battle, the Samnites were abandoned by their allies, and Rome was able to concentrate its power against them. After several more battles, the Romans at long last succeeded in subduing the belligerent Samnites.
- ◆ One lasting effect of the Samnite campaigns was that, during the fighting, to facilitate the rapid movement of troops, the consuls began construction of the great Roman road system that would eventually link Rome with the rest of its empire. Roman roads were marvels of engineering, and many are still in use today.

CONQUERED PEOPLES

- ◆ Throughout the process of unifying the Italian Peninsula under its control, Rome adopted an unusual way of treating the people they defeated. Normally in the ancient world if you conquered a place, you enslaved the inhabitants and imposed taxes on them. For the Romans, however, it was more common to pursue a strategy of integration. This took the form of extending varying degrees of Roman citizenship to the defeated Italians.
- ◆ Often, local aristocratic families were granted full Roman citizenship. On rare occasions, entire cities were awarded this status. Some cities were given half-citizenship, which meant that they had most of the private rights of citizens, such as legal protections, but not the public rights, such as the right to vote. Finally, many cities were given the status of *socii*, or allies, of Rome.

- ◆ Implicit in this system was the idea that the conquered peoples might one day move up to the next higher status; thus, allies could aspire to eventually gain the rights and privileges of half-citizens, and half-citizens might ultimately graduate to full citizenship.
- ◆ Conquered areas were sometimes required to pay tribute to Rome, and sometimes they were not. The one universal obligation imposed on the vanquished, whether full citizen, half-citizen, or ally, was to provide troops for the Roman army. All subjugated Italian cities had to put their armed forces under the command of the Romans and send their men to serve in the Roman military. They also had to yield full control of their foreign-policy decisions to the Romans.
- ◆ This strategy of sharing some form of citizenship was an unusual one in the ancient world. On the surface, it might appear that the Romans were being generous; however, the practical effect of making the primary obligation of the conquered to supply men for the army rather than paying money was that it gave Rome nearly unlimited manpower to draw upon. Given the policy of near-constant warfare that Rome pursued, having access to enormous manpower reserves was an obvious military advantage. Furthermore, troops who served with the Roman army also tended to become Romanized, picking up the Latin language and Roman customs if they did not share them already. Latin soon became the dominant common language of the entire Italian Peninsula.
- ◆ While the Romans could be generous conquerors, they could also be brutal, and on occasion they were, particularly if a city that had been granted privileges chose to revolt against them. Then they might well raze the city to the ground, enslave the populace, or slaughter them entirely—sometimes deliberately mutilating bodies, lopping off limbs, and chopping pets in two.

- ◆ Rome was fond of establishing colonies as another way to control conquered territory. An estimated 30,000 full Roman citizens were gifted land and settled in such colonies all over Italy, and they were joined by a similar number of chosen allies. Thus, the people of Italy were bound to Rome through a mixture of threats, rewards, and laws.
- ◆ In Rome, the population of the city itself soon swelled to approximately 150,000 inhabitants, necessitating continual rounds of infrastructure expansion. With the Italian Peninsula firmly under their control, the Romans were now in a position to begin thinking about crossing the seas and, for the first time, expanding outside of Italy.

Suggested Reading

Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*.
Walbank et al., *The Cambridge Ancient History*.

Questions to Consider

- ✚ When considering the conquest of Italy, do you think the Romans appear to be an unusually warlike civilization?
- ✚ How do you assess the wisdom of the Romans' policy of sharing some degree of citizenship with the conquered Italians?



ROMAN RELIGION: SACRIFICE, AUGURY, AND MAGIC

LECTURE 7

The Romans viewed themselves as both a religious people and one that was favored by the gods, and they would have pointed to divine providence as one of the explanations for their rise and success. As Rome began to expand and conquer other peoples, the conquered peoples' beliefs and gods often incorporated into Roman religion.

GODS AND GODDESSES

- ◆ Roman paganism was a polytheistic religion. For the Romans, the world was a place inhabited by an infinite number of gods. When the Romans encountered other religions, they were very open about adding these new gods to the list of those they already worshipped. Thus the Roman pantheon was constantly expanding.
- ◆ Each individual would pick one or more gods to worship as his or her particular guardians. Because certain gods were associated with specific cities and professions, these gods would probably have received particular attention from people of that profession or who lived in that city.
- ◆ Roman religion did not possess a standardized sacred text. While there were certain rituals, such as sacrifice, that were commonly prescribed for the worship of the gods, there was no central and all-encompassing theology. Roman religion was a loose collection of diverse gods and practices allowing a great deal of variety and personal choice.
- ◆ Roman religion featured different types of gods whose powers, inclinations, and areas of influence varied greatly. The state religion was based on the worship of a subset of all these gods who were thought to be particularly concerned with the success and preservation of the Roman state, but individuals could choose any combination of gods to pay homage to.
- ◆ The most prominent Roman gods were what might be termed the Olympian gods. This set of deities, derived from the Greek gods said to live on Mount Olympus, included Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Venus, Neptune,

Apollo, Diana, Ceres, Bacchus, Mercury, Minerva, Vesta, and Vulcan. Among the most important of these for the Romans were Jupiter, the king of the gods, and Mars, the god of war.

- ◆ In addition to these gods, there were what might be called demigods—men who had attained divine status, such as the Greek hero Hercules. There were many entities which might be called gods as well, such as spirits of streams, rivers, and trees. Such a god was a *genius loci*, literally “the spirit of the place.” Some gods were personifications of abstract qualities. The most important of these to the Romans were Fortuna, or luck, and Victoria, victory.
- ◆ Finally, there were all the gods borrowed from other cultures, including Egyptian, Etruscan, and Germanic ones. Further complicating Roman religion was the fact that when encountering new foreign gods, the Romans sometimes decided that these gods were simply local variants of gods they already knew.

RELIGIOUS ORDERS

- ◆ In ancient Rome, there were very few professional priests. There was a great variety of types of priests; with a few exceptions, however, priesthood was not a full-time occupation, nor did most priests receive any specialized training. Priests mainly performed certain public rituals and sacrifices.
- ◆ The most prominent priests, who were almost exclusively male, were members of several important priesthoods called colleges. Each college had a fixed number of positions. When one member died, a new one was selected to take his place. Once elected to a priesthood, one held the office until death.
- ◆ The most important of these colleges was the Pontifical College. It contained 16 men called pontifices and 15 called flamens. The leader of this college was known as the *pontifex maximus* (“great priest”), and was considered the overall head of religious affairs.

- ◆ Each of the flamens was associated with one particular god. Of these, 12 were known as minor flamens. The remaining three, the major flamens, were associated with three gods who were thought to have special links to the Roman people: Jupiter the king of the gods; Mars the god of war; and Quirinus, a deity associated with the Roman state and citizenship.
- ◆ Attached to the college of the pontiffs was a group of six women known as the Vestal Virgins. These were women who served Vesta, the goddess of the hearth. The most important duty of the Vestal Virgins was to tend the sacred fire. If this fire was allowed to go out, it was considered an omen foretelling the destruction of the city.
- ◆ To be a Vestal Virgin, a woman had to be a virgin, and had to remain a virgin the entire time she served the goddess. If a Vestal Virgin lost her virginity and was discovered, she was dressed in funeral clothes, carried in a funeral procession, and then buried alive in an underground room.



- ◆ Vestal Virgins had to serve for 30 years. In the first decade of their service, they learned their duties; in the second, they performed them; and in the third, they taught others. After 30 years, they had the option of resigning from the priesthood and getting married, but few did this.
- ◆ The next most important college was the college of augurs, who were 16 in number. These priests had a specialized job; they had to discern the will of the gods through the interpretation of various signs. Much of Roman religious ritual practice, including augury, may have been derived from or at least influenced by the Etruscans.
- ◆ The three main categories of augury were the observation of the flight and feeding habits of birds, the inspection of the internal organs of sacrificed animals, and the interpretation of portents, such as lightning, natural disasters, and bizarre occurrences. By law, all important public acts or events had to be preceded by some form of augury; if the omens were unfavorable, the event had to be cancelled.
- ◆ In times of great disaster, when the state itself seemed threatened, another college, the decemviri, was called upon. The decemviri were the custodians of a group of ancient scrolls called the Sibylline Books, supposedly given to the Romans in the earliest days of their history by a prophetess known as the Sibyl. The priests would randomly pluck a page from these books and read it; whatever it instructed, they would do. Usually this involved the introduction of a new god or ceremony.
- ◆ Another important priestly college was the fetials. This priesthood, with 20 members, performed religious rites involving international relations, including declarations of war and the signing of treaties.

RELIGIOUS RITUALS

- ◆ Sacrifice was a major part of religious worship. The Romans sacrificed many different animals to their various gods, including goats, cows, bulls, sheep, pigs, birds, dogs, and horses. Male animals were sacrificed to male gods, and female animals to goddesses. White animals were sacrificed to gods of the sky, and black animals to gods of the underworld.

- ◆ A sacrificial animal had to be perfect. Any deformities or unusual coloration or characteristics rendered an animal unsuitable for sacrifice. If the animal had horns, ribbons were tied around them. If the sponsor of the sacrifice was rich, he or she would have the horns gilded with gold.



- ◆ Located outside of temples were altars, which was where the sacrifices actually occurred. When the animal was led to the altar, it was a good sign if it went willingly. If it struggled a lot, the officiant was supposed to get another animal and start over.
- ◆ Before the sacrifice, the worshipper would go inside the temple and, if making a vow, would write it on wax tablets and attach these to the cult statue. At the sacrifice, everyone involved had to be sure they had washed their hands, and the priests had to cover their heads. Except for the prayers, everyone was expected to remain silent. But throughout the course of the sacrifice, one person played a flute.
- ◆ Once the animal had been led to the altar, the prayer was recited, following the usual prayer formula of invocation of the deity's name, the geographic locations associated with the deity, and the actual request being made. If it was a large animal, one of the priest's attendants struck it on the head or neck with a hammer or axe, and then another cut its throat. They cut upward if it was for a god of the skies, downward if it was for a god of the underworld.
- ◆ The kill needed to be done cleanly and efficiently. If it was performed sloppily, this was a bad omen. The worst thing of all that could happen would be if the wounded animal broke free and ran off. This once occurred at a sacrifice over which Julius Caesar was presiding, and because he ignored it, he received much criticism.
- ◆ The internal organs were then removed, in particular the heart, liver, and intestines. These organs were cut up and burned in a fire on the altar. This comprised the actual offering to the gods and, as they were burned, the priest directed the following phrase to the god being honored: "Be you increased by this offering."
- ◆ If an error was made at any stage of this process, the whole thing had to be repeated, along with an extra prayer and sacrifice to make up for the error. Sometimes the priest would make a preliminary preemptive sacrifice in order to atone ahead of time for any error he might make.

- ◆ Some aspects of the Romans' religion we might consider more as superstitions than formal religious beliefs. Superstitions were widespread in the Roman world and were not limited to uneducated or unsophisticated Romans. One Roman general always carried around a little statue of the god Apollo; whenever he got in trouble, he would kiss it and pray to it.
- ◆ The Romans often tried to place curses on their enemies to bring them bad luck. Individuals would invoke magical powers to curse their enemies and cause them misfortune. Oddly enough, the exact details of many of these curses are known to us today because of the way in which they were created: The text of the curse was written on a tablet, often by a professional sorcerer, and then sent to the gods of the underworld by being dropped down a well, thrown in a cave, or buried.

Suggested Reading

Rüpke, *A Companion to Roman Religion*.
Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion*.

Questions to Consider

- ✚ What are the most significant ways in which Roman notions of the role and purpose of religion differ from those of modern monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam?
- ✚ What social and psychological purposes are served by the rituals and superstitions described in this lecture?



THE FIRST PUNIC WAR: A WAR AT SEA

LECTURE 8

The Punic Wars were a true turning point in Roman history. They were both the closest that Rome came to total defeat and the stepping stone to its ultimate success. Before the wars, Rome was an up-and-coming but still relatively minor power. After the wars, they were the most powerful state in the western Mediterranean.

THE RISE OF CARTHAGE

- ◆ The year 264 B.C. was a fateful one for Rome. In that year, Rome captured the last remaining Italian city, and got enmeshed in its first overseas war. This was the First Punic War, which was fought against the city of Carthage. Rome and Carthage would eventually fight a series of three wars, which the Romans would call the Punic Wars.
- ◆ Like Rome, Carthage was in charge of a rapidly expanding empire. By the mid-3rd century B.C., it was Rome's main rival in the western Mediterranean. Also like Rome, Carthage was located in an important strategic position. Located on the coast of North Africa, with a good harbor at the bottleneck where the Mediterranean was narrowest, Carthage could command all sea travel going from east to west.
- ◆ According to legend, Carthage had been founded around 750 B.C. as a trading outpost of the Phoenician city of Tyre, but had eventually broken away and set up its own empire, bringing most of the local North African tribes under its command. Unlike Rome, Carthage did not incorporate its conquered territories or share any degree of citizenship with their inhabitants. Instead, Carthage forced defeated states to pay tribute to them.
- ◆ By the time of the outbreak of the First Punic War, Carthage held the coastline of North Africa from modern Libya to Morocco. A scattering of Carthaginian outposts stretched southward along the Atlantic coast of Africa, and Carthaginian settlements were also founded in Spain, Sardinia, Corsica, and the Balearic Islands.

- ◆ While the early Romans were primarily farmers, the Carthaginians were merchants. Especially lucrative was Carthage's control over regions with rich mineral resources. Mines in Spain and Sardinia yielded valuable metals, including silver, copper, and iron. Carthaginian merchants established trade networks with Britain that gave them access to tin, a rare but highly valued resource in the Mediterranean.
- ◆ From naval voyages to the west coast of Africa, as well as land trade routes deeper into the continent, Carthage obtained gold, ivory, and even elephants, which were trained and incorporated into the Carthaginian army. The city maintained a large merchant fleet, and carried out an active trade in both staples and luxury items all over the Mediterranean.
- ◆ Compared to Rome, the number of Carthaginian citizens was small. When they needed an army, the Carthaginians would use their wealth to hire mercenaries, and would recruit soldiers from the indigenous tribes in the territories that they controlled. To protect their merchant ships, the Carthaginians maintained one of the largest and most powerful fleets of warships in the Mediterranean.
- ◆ While the political system of Carthage was technically a mixture of oligarchy and democracy, true power resided in the hands of a small group of wealthy merchant families. The Carthaginians maintained the religious practices of their Phoenician ancestors, and there was a close association between the city's political and religious affairs.

THE SEEDS OF WAR

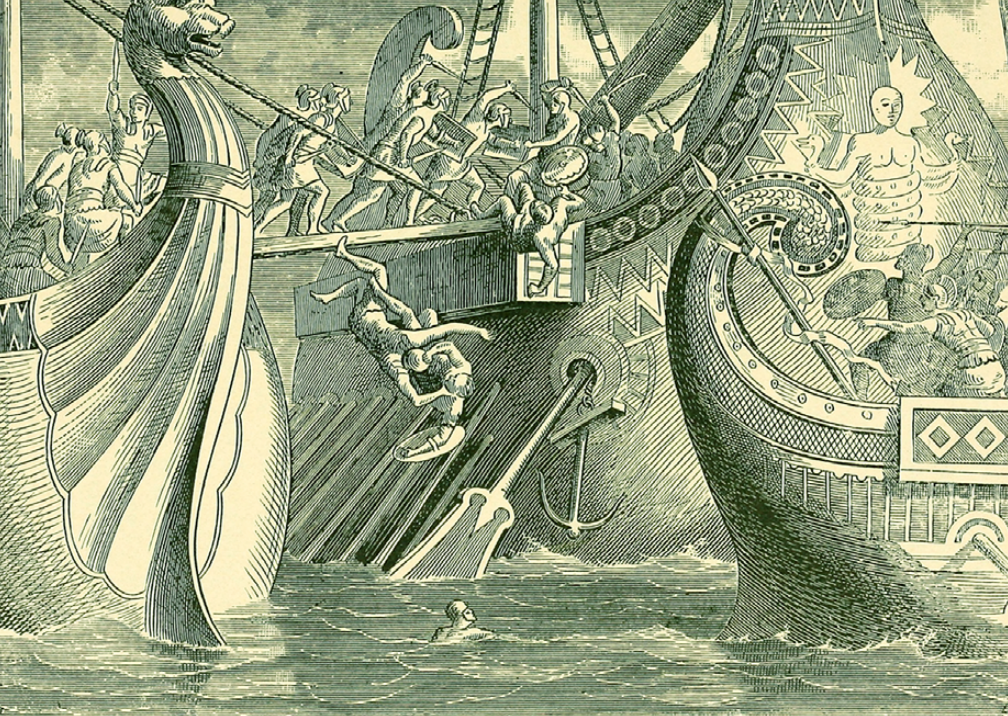
- ◆ Prior to the First Punic War, Rome and Carthage had a long history of relatively amicable diplomatic relations. Over the previous 250 years, they had signed a sequence of three treaties with one another, acknowledging each other's respective zones of influence and pledging noninterference within those. By 264 B.C., however, each side had expanded to the point where direct conflicts of interest between them became unavoidable.

- ◆ Both Rome and Carthage naturally wished to possess the vital sea straits that passed to the north and south of the island of Sicily. Whoever controlled these waterways would have a stranglehold on east-west trade in the Mediterranean.
- ◆ Sicily was home to a number of particularly wealthy cities; whoever could bring these cities under their control stood to reap substantial economic benefits. The Romans may also have felt an obligation to protect the trading interests of former Greek cities in southern Italy, which were now their allies and were losing out to Carthaginian merchants.
- ◆ Also factoring into the underlying causes of the First Punic War was the long series of conflicts that Rome had recently fought against its fellow Italians. These conflicts had left the Romans with an almost paranoid fear of powerful neighbors. In addition, many ambitious aristocrats would favor almost any war, which they viewed as a chance to gain military glory.
- ◆ Rome and Carthage were founded at roughly the same time, and they were both young, vigorous, growing expansionist empires. Despite these similarities, their differences were even more pronounced. Rome's military strength was its army composed of citizen/soldier/farmers; Carthage's was its navy, while its army was heavily dependent on mercenaries and conscripted foreign tribes.
- ◆ While the true underlying causes of the Punic Wars lay in the fundamentally geography-based rivalry between Rome and Carthage, the more immediate cause had to do with the actions of a band of mercenaries known as the Mamertines. Originally from the region of Campania in Italy, they took their name from the Italic god Mamers, a version of the Roman god of war, Mars.
- ◆ The Mamertines had been hired as mercenaries by the ruler of Syracuse, the wealthiest and most powerful city in Sicily, to help capture another Sicilian city, Messina. During a period of political instability in Syracuse, the Mamertines abandoned their employer and opportunistically seized control of Messina, murdering many of the Messinians in the process, then launching raids into Syracusan territory.

- ◆ Once a new, dynamic Syracusan leader arose, the Mamertines feared retribution for their earlier actions. Accordingly, they sought a powerful patron outside of Sicily who might offer them protection from Syracuse. In 265 B.C., with a Syracusan army threatening Messina, the Mamertines invited Carthage to send military forces to their assistance. Eager to expand their influence in Sicily, the Carthaginians quickly accepted, occupying a fortress at Messina with a token force.
- ◆ The Mamertines became worried that the Carthaginians would not leave once the crisis was over, so they sent a message to Rome asking the Romans to send a military force as well. The Mamertines may, in fact, have sent invitations to both groups simultaneously, but the Romans were slower to respond. In 264 B.C., the Roman consuls successfully persuaded the Roman people to vote for an expedition.
- ◆ The arrival of the Romans caused the Carthaginians to ally themselves with Syracuse against Messina and their new Roman friends. Open warfare soon broke out. The First Punic War had begun. It would prove to be the longest continuous war of the ancient Mediterranean world, lasting for more than 20 years.

EMPIRE AGAINST EMPIRE

- ◆ Foremost among the difficulties facing Rome in the First Punic War was that the Romans had committed themselves to a war over an island, against an opponent that possessed one of the largest and most powerful fleets of warships in the Mediterranean.
- ◆ The Romans lacked a sizable navy, had a farming culture's generally suspicious view of the sea, and, when they did venture out to sea, initially proved to be terrible sailors who repeatedly and fatally ignored threatening weather. Nonetheless, with typical Roman determination, they threw themselves into the war effort.



- ◆ Ancient warships were delicate and could not stay at sea for long. As a result, most of Carthage's fleet was in storage at the outbreak of war. Rome took advantage of this temporary lull in Carthaginian sea power to quickly transport both of its consuls and their armies to Sicily to begin an aggressive campaign.
- ◆ Confronted by the powerful Roman force, Syracuse switched sides, signing a treaty allying themselves with Rome against Carthage. The Romans then besieged and captured the Carthaginian stronghold of Agrigentum. Alarmed by these successes, the Carthaginians recalled their current commander in Sicily.
- ◆ Encouraged by these easy victories, the Romans began to think about seizing all of Sicily for themselves. They realized, however, that if they were to take and hold the island, they would need a navy. In 261 B.C., they began the construction of a full-size fleet to match Carthage's.

- ◆ The Romans could not match the experience and skill of the Carthaginian sailors when it came to the complex maneuvers that were typically used to win naval battles. Realizing this, the Romans adopted an innovative strategy of closing with the enemy ships and boarding them, effectively turning the sea battle into a land battle between soldiers—a type of warfare at which they excelled.
- ◆ In 260 B.C., the Roman and Carthaginian fleets met in battle. The overconfident Carthaginian ships plunged straight toward the Romans, whereupon the Roman ships surprised them, dropping gangplanks across to the Carthaginian ships and quickly capturing the leading squadron of 30 vessels. Using this technique, the Romans won several shocking victories, conquered most of Sicily, and even landed a force in Africa to threaten Carthage directly.
- ◆ The Romans had never really learned to be good sailors, however. In 255 B.C., Roman admirals ignored the signs of an approaching storm. When the storm was over, only 80 out of 250 Roman ships were left. As many as 100,000 Romans had been drowned in one afternoon. In 253 B.C., an even worse storm caught a newly built Roman fleet and sank it, drowning thousands more. In 249 B.C., another 93 out of 123 ships were lost by the Romans in a naval battle at Drepana.
- ◆ Meanwhile, Carthage had finally come up with an excellent general—a dynamic and skilled tactician named Hamilcar Barca, who reinvigorated the Carthaginian war effort in Sicily. Hamilcar swiftly attacked and recaptured most of the cities of Sicily. Everything was finally going Carthage's way.



TURNING THE TIDE

- ◆ Back in Carthage, a new political faction had taken control of the Carthaginian government. The city's leaders were heavily focused on issues on the mainland of Africa, and were not that interested in events in Sicily. They withdrew or dismantled most of the Carthaginian fleet, and failed to provide Hamilcar with necessary supplies or any reinforcements.
- ◆ The Romans once more had the upper hand in Sicily. Their armies pressed Hamilcar, retaking a number of cities. Hamilcar fought on cleverly, making the best of his resources, and the war dragged on. In 241 B.C., at the Battle of the Aegates Islands, a new Roman fleet decisively defeated a hastily assembled and probably undermanned Carthaginian one.
- ◆ With the last hope of support gone, the Carthaginian forces in Sicily were in an impossible position. In 241 B.C., Carthage and Rome signed a peace treaty, bringing the long war to an end. Carthage was allowed to recall Hamilcar and his remaining troops to Africa. In return, Carthage agreed pay a large cash indemnity to Rome, surrender all claims to Sicily, and acknowledge Roman dominion over the island.
- ◆ The First Punic War marks an important turning point in Roman history, not so much because it removed Carthage as a rival for dominance—it did not—but because it brought Rome its first major overseas territory. This acquisition created a bureaucratic dilemma regarding how to administer the newly gained territory.
- ◆ After a bit of experimentation, Rome decided that Sicily would become a Roman province under the direct control of a Roman governor. The main requirement imposed on the Sicilians would not be to supply troops to the Roman military, but to pay annual taxes. This solution, of turning territories into tax-paying provinces under the command of a Roman governor, would be applied to all future Roman conquests.

- ◆ Although Rome was clearly the winner of the First Punic War, Carthage was far from vanquished as a rival to Rome for domination of the western Mediterranean. Carthage still possessed its African territories, as well as its outposts in Spain and on other islands in the Mediterranean. The fates of both sides would be spectacularly determined in the Second Punic War, which would break out just two decades later.

Suggested Reading

Goldsworthy, *The Fall of Carthage*.
Lazenby, *The First Punic War*.

Questions to Consider

- ✦ Although they are very different societies, at the beginning of the First Punic War, Rome and Carthage seemed fairly evenly matched. What were the greatest strengths and weaknesses of each side, and which do you think were most important in the long run?
- ✦ Which side had the moral high ground in the First Punic War? To put it another way, who is most to blame for starting the war?



THE SECOND PUNIC WAR: ROME VERSUS HANNIBAL

LECTURE 9

The Second Punic War was the crucible in which the Roman Empire was forged. During the war, Rome suffered a staggering series of horrific defeats that brought it to the brink of collapse. In managing to survive, and then eventually to prevail, Rome emerged from the war indisputably the strongest power in the Mediterranean.

SETTING THE STAGE

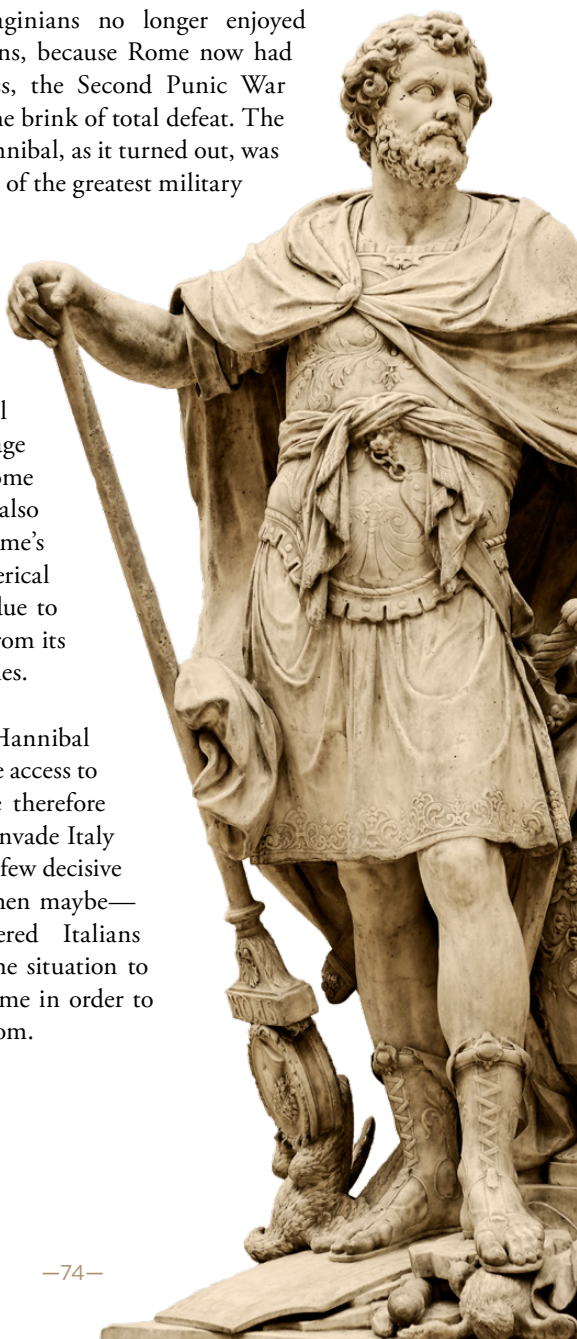
- ◆ Rome came away from the First Punic War in possession of Sicily, but Carthage, while bruised, was far from beaten. Carthage still held the coastline of North Africa from modern Libya to Morocco, and was desirous of enlarging its territory.
- ◆ The First Punic War had thwarted Carthaginian expansion northward among the islands of the Mediterranean. To the south, there were only the empty wastes of the Sahara. To the west was the Atlantic Ocean, and to the east was the powerful kingdom of Hellenistic Egypt.
- ◆ The one remaining option was to hop across the Strait of Gibraltar and move into Spain. The Carthaginians had long owned several outposts on the Mediterranean coast of Spain, and they now looked to expand from these footholds into the rest of the peninsula.
- ◆ The leader in this effort was Hamilcar Barca, who had so effectively led the Carthaginian armies in Sicily until betrayed by a lack of support from his own government. He now applied his considerable military skills to conquering the warlike Celtiberian tribes of Spain, and succeeded in bringing many of them under his control.
- ◆ Legend has it that when Hamilcar left for Spain, he asked his nine-year-old son, Hannibal, if the boy would like to accompany him. When young Hannibal enthusiastically replied yes, Hamilcar supposedly made the boy place his hand on a sacrifice and swear a solemn vow to always view Rome as an enemy. When he was 26 years old, Hannibal assumed command in Spain, and continued his father's work.

- ◆ With the Carthaginians moving northeast from Spain and the Romans advancing southwest from Northern Italy, a collision between the two states seemed inevitable. War appeared to be averted, however, when Rome and Carthage signed a treaty in which the Carthaginians promised not to advance north of the Ebro River, while presumably being granted a free hand to the south of it.
- ◆ South of the Ebro, one of the major cities not yet under the control of Carthage was the town of Saguntum. This city seems to have entered into some sort of agreement with Rome, although the exact nature of their relationship is unclear. Saguntum was plainly not directly under Rome's control, but was perhaps considered an ally of Rome.
- ◆ Saguntum raided nearby territories under the control of Hannibal and the Carthaginians. In revenge, Hannibal attacked Saguntum. Rome decided it had to come to the aid of its friend, and, with this incident as the instigating spark, the Second Punic War began in 219 B.C.
- ◆ The question of which side was the aggrieved party is debatable. Carthage no doubt viewed Rome as being in violation of its treaty obligations, while Rome would have seen itself as simply helping an ally. A good measure of blame could be placed on Saguntum for entering into what was obviously a provocative relationship with Rome, and for foolishly raiding Carthaginian territory.

HANNIBAL WREAKS HAVOC

- ◆ At the beginning of the First Punic War, Carthage had seemed to have a slight edge over Rome. At the beginning of the Second Punic War, Rome was clearly far more powerful. They could call on the vast manpower reserves of all of Italy to field an army that was many times larger than anything Carthage could hope to assemble.

- ◆ Even at sea, the Carthaginians no longer enjoyed superiority over the Romans, because Rome now had a larger fleet. Nevertheless, the Second Punic War would see Rome come to the brink of total defeat. The reason for this was that Hannibal, as it turned out, was something exceptional: one of the greatest military geniuses of all time.
- ◆ Hannibal astutely realized that Carthage stood almost no chance against the might of Rome in a traditional conflict, and that Carthage could not wait and let Rome take the initiative. He also realized that one of Rome's greatest assets was the numerical advantage Rome enjoyed due to being able to raise troops from its Italian half-citizens and allies.
- ◆ For Carthage to win, Hannibal somehow had to deny Rome access to its manpower reserves. He therefore decided on a bold plan to invade Italy itself. If he could just win a few decisive victories on Roman soil, then maybe—just maybe—the conquered Italians might take advantage of the situation to revolt and turn against Rome in order to regain their ancestral freedom.





- ◆ Hannibal's first dilemma was the practical question of how to get his army to Italy. The only choice was to march his army from Spain across the Alps and down into Italy. The Alps, however, were tall, icy, prone to landslides, and infested by murderous hill people, and it was believed to be impossible to cross them with a large army.
- ◆ In early May of 218 B.C., Hannibal set out with an army of 40,000 men and 37 elephants. Incredibly, he made it, although the ice, snow, landslides, and hill people took such a toll that when he finally arrived in northern Italy, he only had 26,000 men and one elephant left.
- ◆ The Romans were shocked and alarmed to find an enemy in Italy itself, and they quickly dispatched an army of 40,000 men under the command of both consuls to wipe out Hannibal's smaller and travel-weakened army. At the Battle of the Trebia in 218 B.C., Hannibal's military genius enabled him to completely outwit the Roman commanders and lure them into a trap. The Romans were badly beaten and the majority of their army destroyed.
- ◆ In usual fashion, the Romans drew on their manpower to raise another army, and sent it after Hannibal in 217 B.C. Hannibal again caught the Romans by surprise by marching his men southward into Etruria via an unexpected route that was thought to be impassable. He cut through the marshlands of the Arno River, a difficult feat, especially because the river was swollen by winter rains.
- ◆ Having broken into the heartland of Italy, Hannibal raided towns and destroyed farms. Goaded into a carelessly hasty pursuit by these actions, the Roman army rushed after Hannibal. This enabled him to set an ambush for the Romans in northern Italy along the foggy shores of Lake Trasimene, where his army pounced on them as they were strung out in marching formation. The unprepared Romans were slaughtered.

- ◆ The Romans were beginning to become alarmed, and a steady old general named Fabius Maximus was appointed dictator. He advocated a cautious policy of avoiding open battle and waiting Hannibal out. For a brief time, the Romans followed this plan. They also took advantage of the lull to raise several more armies.



- ◆ Soon, however, more hot-headed politicians took over and decided to crush Hannibal once and for all. A colossal army of 80,000 men marched out, led by both Roman consuls. By now, Hannibal was in south-central Italy. The Roman force caught up with him on August 2, 216 B.C., near a small hilltop town called Cannae.
- ◆ The Battle of Cannae is the most impressive monument to Hannibal's genius, and is still studied today as an example of brilliant strategy. In a single afternoon, Hannibal's troops hacked to death the incredible total of 65,000 Romans. This ranks among the bloodiest days in military history.
- ◆ The Battle of Cannae was one of the darkest moments in Roman history, and it threw the Romans into a frenzy of panic and despair. In Hannibal, they had finally met an enemy who seemed able to defeat any number of men that the Romans threw at him. Hannibal marched to the gates of Rome itself, but the Romans barricaded themselves in and refused to surrender.
- ◆ In the aftermath of Cannae, some of the Italian cities revolted against Rome, as Hannibal had hoped they would, and came over to the Carthaginian side. The vast majority of Italian cities, however, remained faithful to Rome, and Hannibal was reduced to roaming up and down Italy, unconquered and undefeated, but frustrated, looking for someone to fight. This went on for the next 12 years.

CHANGING TACTICS

- ◆ The Romans may have been afraid to face Hannibal, but they were not afraid of the other Carthaginian commanders. Rome raised more armies, which it sent to Spain. After some initial missteps, the Roman command fell to a young man in his twenties named Publius Cornelius Scipio, who, as luck would have it, turned out to be something of a military genius himself. Scipio conquered the Carthaginian territories in Spain, even capturing the key coastal city of New Carthage.

- ◆ A key moment came when a large Carthaginian army under the command of Hannibal's brother, Hasdrubal, set off to reinforce him in Italy. If these reinforcements had reached Hannibal, they might have given him the strength to force a showdown with the Romans in Italy. But the Romans intercepted Hasdrubal's army and destroyed it. Hannibal learned of the disaster when the Romans threw the severed head of his brother over the walls of his camp.
- ◆ Scipio next took the campaign to North Africa, which he invaded in 204 B.C. In Africa, he managed to pick up yet more allies. Of these, the most significant was the powerful kingdom of Numidia, renowned for its excellent horsemen. With Numidian aid, Scipio then marched on Carthage itself.
- ◆ Alarmed by the threat of Scipio, the Carthaginian high command ordered Hannibal to leave Italy and return to North Africa to defend the city. Sadly, Hannibal had no choice but to embark his remaining grizzled veterans and leave Italy, having won every battle in spectacular fashion, but having failed to achieve the strategic victory that he needed.
- ◆ The two armies came together outside Carthage at the Battle of Zama in 202 B.C. What should have been an epic showdown between two of history's greatest generals turned out to be something of an anticlimax. By now, the Romans knew how to neutralize the Carthaginian war elephants, and Scipio's generalship proved to be a match for Hannibal's.
- ◆ In addition to being on equal strategic footing, Scipio's troops were simply better, more numerous, and more enthusiastic than Hannibal's discouraged, aged veterans. Thus, for the first time, Hannibal was defeated. Carthage surrendered in 201 B.C., bringing the Second Punic War to a close.

- ◆ This time, Rome was determined to so weaken Carthage that it would never again pose a threat. Carthage had to pay a crushing cash indemnity over a 50-year period, give up almost all its territory except for the city itself, and keep only a small army and a token fleet of no more than 10 ships. Scipio became known as Scipio Africanus.
- ◆ Numidia became a client kingdom of Rome. There was no formal agreement, but clearly the Romans considered Numidia to be in the subordinate position, with Rome as its patron. Parts of Spain and North Africa were organized as taxpaying Roman provinces, and were assigned Roman governors.

Suggested Reading

Daly, *Cannae*.
Goldsworthy, *The Fall of Carthage*.

Questions to Consider

- ✚ Do you think it was possible for Hannibal to have won the Second Punic War? What should he have done differently?
- ✚ What was the most important factor in Rome's success—the generalship of Scipio, their manpower reserves, their determination, the loyalty of the Italians, or something else?



ROME CONQUERS GREECE

LECTURE 10

Can you accidentally conquer the world? As unlikely as it sounds, this question is at the heart of a famous debate about the fundamental nature of Roman imperialism: whether Rome's conquest of the Mediterranean was deliberate or accidental, aggressive or reactive. This lecture invites you to consider these issues through the lens of the Roman conquest of Greece and its territories in the eastern Mediterranean.

EARLY ENTANGLEMENTS

- ◆ Rome only became directly involved in the Hellenistic world—by which we mean the eastern half of the Mediterranean—toward the end of the 3rd century B.C., at about the same time that it was locked in the titanic struggle of the Second Punic War against Carthage.
- ◆ At the time, the most powerful states in the Hellenistic world were three great monarchies that had been formed by the division of Alexander the Great's empire among his generals after his death in 323 B.C. These were the Antigonid Kingdom, based in Macedonia and at times including Greece and Anatolia; the Seleucid Kingdom, centered in Syria and sometimes extending into the Middle East and Mesopotamia; and the Ptolemaic Kingdom, which held Egypt and had ambitions to expand into Palestine and the islands of the Mediterranean.
- ◆ In addition to these major players, there were a number of smaller but still important political entities, such as the kingdom of Pergamum in Asia Minor, and two federations of Greek city-states: the Aetolian League, composed mainly of cities in central Greece, and the Achaean League made up of Greek cities of the Peloponnesus, the southern part of mainland Greece.
- ◆ There were also dozens of petty kingdoms and unaligned city-states scattered throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Since the death of Alexander the Great, all of these states had engaged in a bewildering and seemingly perpetual series of shifting alliances and wars with one another.

- ◆ When the Romans began to interact with the eastern Mediterranean, they were entering into a very different realm. The dominant culture and language of the Hellenistic world were Greek. Compared to the cities and cultures of the western Mediterranean, the east was richer, more urbanized, and more culturally sophisticated. It was also something of an unknown land to the comparatively provincial Romans.
- ◆ Rome's very first involvement in the east took the form of a series of relatively minor conflicts known as the Illyrian Wars. Illyria is the region just across the Adriatic Sea from the eastern coast of Italy, and encompasses the areas that today are the countries of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- ◆ The Illyrian shoreline is uneven and rocky, with innumerable small inlets and coves. This makes it perfect territory for pirates, who could dash out from hidden sites and pounce on merchant vessels plying their trade up and down the coastline. Several small states who were allies of Rome and lived along the Adriatic were the most direct victims of the pirates. They began to pester their Roman patrons to do something about this perennial problem.
- ◆ Finally, in 230 B.C., the Romans dispatched a pair of envoys to Queen Teuta, the ruler of Illyria, to complain about the situation and to demand that her subjects cease attacking Roman vessels. Teuta saw these demands as foreign interference in a traditional Illyrian lifestyle, and contemptuously dismissed the Roman ambassadors. As if this were not enough of an insult, one of the Romans was killed while returning to Italy.
- ◆ Rome promptly declared war, sent a huge force of 200 ships and 20,000 men, and seized control of Illyria. Rome did not annex Illyria, however. Instead, the Romans imposed a number of strict conditions on the chastened Teuta, left part of the area under control of a client king, and made other cities "friends" of Rome.
- ◆ Technically, all that Rome left behind from this first incursion into the east was its friendship. Soon after, the client king began encroaching on some of the other cities; he apparently did not understand the meaning

of Roman friendship. Rome promptly sent an army and, in 219 B.C., crushed the client king in what became known as the Second Illyrian War. Rome then withdrew all its troops, again leaving behind only their friendship.

EXPANSION AND CONQUEST

- ◆ A bit later, during the height of the Second Punic War, Rome got involved with a more serious eastern foe. While the Carthaginian general Hannibal was running amok in Italy, the king of one of the three main Hellenistic kingdoms saw an opportunity to expand his territory while Rome was preoccupied.
- ◆ This king was Philip V of Macedon, a youthful ruler with grandiose ambitions. Philip entered into an alliance with Hannibal, a move sure to incur the paranoid suspicions of Rome. Rome countered by allying itself with the kingdom of Pergamum and the Aetolian League of Greek cities.
- ◆ With Rome too distracted by Hannibal to put much effort into the conflict with Philip, the war ended inconclusively; but Rome was now deeply entangled in a web of relationships of varying formality with numerous eastern states, a situation that almost ensured that they would be drawn into further conflicts.
- ◆ Philip's ambitions were only temporarily curbed. In 202 B.C., he again attempted to expand by swallowing up some of the lesser Greek states. Among the allies of those attacked was the kingdom of Pergamum, which had long had friendly relations with Rome. Pergamum appealed to Rome for assistance, and the Romans felt obligated to respond. With Carthage by now decisively crushed, the Romans, after some initial dithering, answered the Greek appeal to their friendship with a substantial army.



- ◆ The outcome was determined in one afternoon in 197 B.C. at the Battle of Cynoscephalae. Beyond its political consequences, this battle was an important moment because it was the first major meeting between the new Roman war machine and the older, highly regarded military system developed by Alexander the Great, and used by all of his Hellenistic successors.
- ◆ On one side of the field, the Macedonian phalanx marched downhill and smashed into the Romans, pushing them backward. On the other, the Romans threatened to break the Macedonian phalanx. The crucial turning point in the battle came when an enterprising Roman junior officer saw a chance to sweep around one side of the Macedonian phalanx and assault it from the rear. Victory at Cynoscephalae went to the Romans.
- ◆ After soundly defeating Philip, the Romans turned around and reinstated him as the ruler of Macedon, with the status of a client king. Second, Philip had to withdraw his garrisons from occupied Greek cities, disband his fleet, and pay a sizable cash indemnity to Rome.
- ◆ The Illyrian War and the first two Macedonian wars raise interesting issues about Roman imperialism. On the one hand, you could interpret the Romans' repeated withdrawals from the region, even after winning decisive victories, as evidence that they were not seeking to extend their empire. Over and over again, they immediately removed their troops and made no attempt to seize any of the lands for themselves.
- ◆ On the other hand, you could argue that, by leaving behind a web of friendship ties, the Romans knew that sooner or later this would provide them with an excuse to come back and use military force, to fight more wars, and for individual politicians to gain glory.
- ◆ A generation later, Rome's old friend, Pergamum, sucked them into a conflict with the second of the great Hellenistic Kingdoms, the Seleucid Empire. The current Seleucid king, Antiochus III, was seeking to expand his territory, and began to encroach upon Pergamum and other cities. The king of Pergamum appealed to Rome for help, and in 196 B.C., the Romans sent Flamininus, the general who had defeated the Macedonians,

to meet with Antiochus. Flamininus demanded that Antiochus yield some of the cities he had recently taken and ordered him to stay away from the independent cities of Asia Minor.

- ◆ Somewhat reasonably, Antiochus replied that Flamininus had no right to place such restrictions upon him, and furthermore, that Flamininus was not the official spokesperson for all Greek cities. Meanwhile, the Aetolians, formerly allies of Rome, now joined up with Antiochus. To the Romans, this seemed like insolence from Antiochus and betrayal by the Aetolians. Rome swiftly dispatched an army and, in 191 B.C. at Thermopylae, the Romans easily thrashed the combined Seleucid-Aetolian army.



- ◆ Antiochus sued for peace, and offered all that the Romans had earlier demanded and more. Back at Rome, however, the younger brother of Scipio Africanus, Lucius Cornelius Scipio, was consul, and was intent on gaining fame to equal that of his illustrious brother. With Africanus accompanying him as advisor, he set off for the east at the head of an army. Antiochus had no choice but to attempt to fight. At the Battle of Magnesia in 190 B.C., the Roman military system once again proved superior to the Hellenistic one, and Antiochus was soundly beaten.
- ◆ Antiochus had to surrender all of his holdings in Asia Minor, and pay Rome a massive cash indemnity. Again, though, Rome did not depose Antiochus, nor did it take any land for itself, instead giving it to its eastern allies, especially Pergamum. Then Rome withdrew its soldiers, leaving only their friendship behind.
- ◆ Things seemed settled for a brief period until Philip, the Antigonid king, died, and his son, Perseus, ascended to the throne of Macedon. After having lost twice to Rome, Philip had followed a strategy of appeasement toward Rome, and accordingly had been left alone by them, but now Perseus reversed this policy. His desire to stir up trouble found fertile ground among some of the Greeks, who had descended into internecine squabbling. The ultimate result of all of this intriguing was the Third Macedonian War, which broke out in 171 B.C.



- ◆ Perhaps at last getting fed up with these recurrent Macedonian wars, the Romans deposed Perseus and abolished the Macedonian monarchy. They attempted to establish in its place four weak and separate republics, while at the same time coopting much of the wealth of Macedon, such as its rich mines.
- ◆ The Romans' arrangement for the partition of Macedon was not met with favor by the Macedonians. Twenty years later, in 149 B.C., they rebelled at the instigation of a rather interesting rabble-rousing figure who claimed to be a lost son of Perseus. The Fourth Macedonian War had begun. Once more, the legions marched east, and predictably, the rebels were thoroughly trounced. This time, at long last, the Romans chose not to withdraw their troops, but instead annexed Macedon and turned it into a Roman province under the control of a Roman governor.
- ◆ After a revolt in 146 B.C., the Romans stripped the Greek city-states of most of their remaining sovereignty. From this point on, they were effectively under the control of Rome, although it would be almost another century before they were formally organized as a Roman province.
- ◆ Of the three great Hellenistic kingdoms, Antigonid Macedon had now ceased to exist, while the twice-defeated Seleucid kingdom had dwindled to the point where it was no longer a significant force. The third kingdom, Ptolemaic Egypt, had wisely stayed out of the conflicts with Rome, and in the latter stages, had actively sought friendship with the Romans.

ANALYZING ROME'S INTENTIONS

- ◆ Polybius, the Greek historian who was a victim of Roman imperialism, wrote, "It was not by accident or without knowing what they were doing that the Romans boldly struck out for universal domination and rule—and accomplished their aim." It is easy to sympathize with Polybius, and indeed the argument that Rome's actions were intentional is supported by the most basic fact of all—that Rome had conquered and annexed most of the Hellenistic world by 133 B.C.

- ◆ Nevertheless, one could look at the course of Roman involvement and conclude that the Romans seemed to have little or no desire to become entangled in Hellenistic affairs or to expand eastward. Circumstances repeatedly forced them into a hegemonic role, but they always assumed this role reluctantly. They ignored provocations of the most blatant kind, and, when finally compelled to intervene with military force, they repeatedly withdrew their legions immediately and completely.
- ◆ The same historical evidence can be used to support both interpretations. From the very first conflict with Queen Teuta onward, one can view almost every one of these wars either as examples of the Romans intrusively meddling in affairs outside their domain, or as the Romans simply being good neighbors who were drawn into a war by their generosity in responding to calls for help from victimized people.

Suggested Reading

Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*.
Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome*.

Questions to Consider

- † Which of Rome's eastern wars do you think was the most important, and why?
- † Which interpretation of Roman imperialism do you find more convincing—that it was accidental and passive, or that it was deliberate and aggressive? Explain your reasoning.



THE CONSEQUENCES OF ROMAN IMPERIALISM

LECTURE 11

When we think of imperialism, we tend to assume that the victorious state imposes its culture upon the vanquished one. While there is no doubt that Rome's military and political domination of Greece was ruthless and total, it was Greek culture that took on an important role at Rome. This lecture will investigate the influence of Greek culture on Rome, as well as other repercussions of Rome's conquests in the Mediterranean.

EAST AND WEST

- ◆ The course of Roman imperialism followed very different paths in the two halves of the Mediterranean. In the earlier gradual conquest of Italy and then the western Mediterranean, Rome had to fight a number of extended wars, such as those against the Samnites and Carthage. Furthermore, in some of those wars, Rome's very existence was threatened.
- ◆ When the wars were over, at least in Italy, Rome bestowed some degree of citizenship, or at least allied status, on their defeated foes, who were then integrated into Roman society. The main obligation placed upon them was to supply troops to Rome's military. Rome imposed their culture on the defeated.
- ◆ By contrast, in the east, the wars tended to be short, and Rome itself was never seriously threatened. These were wars of expansion, not survival. In the east, the conquered regions had to pay large cash indemnities, or were transformed into taxpaying provinces under Roman administrators, and citizenship was only bestowed on a very restricted basis. The main obligation was to provide income, not troops.
- ◆ The eastern conquests brought both Greek culture and great wealth to Rome. As for those defeated in the east, the principal effects of Roman imperialism upon them were devastation, oppression, exploitation, looting, and enslavement.

PROBLEMS OF ADMINISTRATION

- ◆ By the 3rd century B.C., the strains of trying to run an empire using the political structure of a city were beginning to show. Most urgently, there was a severe shortage of magistrates within the existing system who could be employed to act as governors of the new provinces that the Romans were establishing.
- ◆ While it might seem obvious that the solution was to create a new post—that of a governor—that would have been too radical an innovation for the Romans. Instead, they found a way to stretch the current system. They did this by extending the power of some of the annual magistrates for an additional year or more without them actually holding the office. This process of extending magisterial authority was called *prorogation*.
- ◆ Another quirk of the administrative system that developed during this time was that sometimes the Roman government would not actually directly involve itself in the collection of taxes. Instead, it would sell contracts to private associations of businessmen called *publicans*, who would submit bids to the government.
- ◆ The publicans would have a set amount of time to go out to a specific region and collect taxes. If they could collect more than they had bid, they made a profit. As you can imagine, this led to a great deal of exploitation and brutality, and publicans were not popular with the provincials.

ARTS AND CULTURE

- ◆ As the conquest of the Greek east proceeded, Roman officers were exposed to the Greeks' sophisticated culture, with all of its remarkable achievements in literature, art, theater, architecture, and philosophy. Like many other civilizations who had come into contact with Greek culture, the Romans were very impressed by it.
- ◆ The Romans brought Greek culture back with them to Rome in the very literal form of stolen manuscripts and artwork, which they used to adorn their houses and gardens. A staggering number of Greek statues, vases,

paintings, and other decorative objects were looted from Greece and relocated to Rome. Greek culture was also imported to Rome in the form of the Greeks themselves.

- ◆ Thousands of formerly free Greeks were enslaved and shipped to Italy. Many of them ended up laboring on plantations in the countryside, but others, especially those who possessed skills such as literacy or medical training, ended up in the cities, where their talents were employed to serve their new masters. Others became household slaves, frequently acting as tutors to the children of wealthy Roman families.



- ◆ Another incentive for adopting Greek culture was that it offered a new arena for status competition among Roman aristocrats. These men were always eager to find a new way to distinguish themselves from their peers, and they now began to compete to see who could conspicuously display the best knowledge of Greek culture. For children of the Roman elite, education began to include learning to read and write Greek, memorizing long passages from Homer, and studying the writings of Greek philosophers.
- ◆ It soon became stylish and desirable to be able to casually drop quotes from Greek authors and thinkers into your conversations, speeches, and letters. Any self-respecting Roman aristocrat now had to show his sophistication by assembling a collection of Greek art and displaying it around his home. Horace was indeed correct that, while Rome conquered Greece politically, Greek culture conquered Rome.

EFFECTS OF IMPERIALISM

- ◆ Roman imperialism created a vicious circle that ultimately made almost every segment of Roman society unhappy and resentful. Here's how it worked: The Roman army was supposed to be a militia of citizens serving short terms, but the reality is that constant wars forced people to serve long terms. Service in the army was not open to all citizens, but rather only to those who met a certain wealth qualification, which was usually achieved by owning land.
- ◆ Military service soon began to disrupt the economy, as men who had to leave their farms for such a long period of time often ended up losing the farms, because they were not there to maintain them. In addition, many poor people heard stories about the riches acquired by some soldiers, and so voluntarily sold their farms in order to join the army, with dreams of making their fortunes.
- ◆ While a few soldiers did come back fabulously wealthy, overwhelmingly, the average legionary did not come home a rich man. Ultimately, thousands of veterans returned to Italy after having served their country for many years without anything to show for it, and having lost their

farms. Many of these veterans ended up flocking to the city of Rome in the hope of finding some form of employment, where they hung around, bitter and idle.

- ◆ With the influx of former legionaries in the capital city, the population of Rome reached the phenomenal size of approximately 1 million people by the 1st century B.C. An unforeseen long-term consequence of Roman imperialism, therefore, was the disruption and loss of small family farms. This was a serious problem, if you keep in mind that the small-time family farmer—the soldier/citizen/farmer ideal exemplified by Cincinnatus—had been the backbone of Rome, which greatly contributed to its rise.
- ◆ Meanwhile, successful generals were returning to Italy with great wealth, but what could one do with such wealth? You could hoard it, but that doesn't do much for you. You could give it away, and many aristocrats did just this, sometimes building massive public works and donating them to the state to enhance their status. Finally, you could invest. But what is there to invest in?
- ◆ There was no stock market in Rome, and you couldn't buy mutual funds, or government bonds. The one thing you could buy, however, was land. And just as many aristocrats loaded with cash were looking for land to buy, there were all these small family farms being sold, or falling into debt and being auctioned off. So they bought them up. The completely unintended consequence of this sequence of events was that the Italian countryside and the entire economy of Italy were profoundly changed, from a vast number of tiny, private family farms, to a small number of gigantic, plantation-like estates owned by just a few rich men.



- ◆ Another intensely unhappy stratum of Roman society was that of the half-citizens and allies in Italy. These were the people who, for centuries, had been providing much of the manpower that enabled Rome to win its wars. These were the ones who had faithfully stayed loyal to Rome even in its darkest moments. By the 2nd century B.C., they felt that they deserved to get full Roman citizenship.
- ◆ In this, the half-citizens and allies were totally correct; they did deserve full citizenship, and had amply earned it. The Romans, however, were mired in tradition, and dragged their feet in extending Roman citizenship. As a result, Rome's once-loyal allies also became angry and embittered.
- ◆ Others who were dissatisfied with Roman imperialism included the millions of slaves who had lost their freedom, been robbed, displaced from their homelands, and shipped off to Italy to work for the Romans. Obviously and justifiably, they were extremely resentful and unhappy. Finally, there were all the areas conquered by Rome, which had lost their independence and now labored under heavy tax burdens.

Suggested Reading

Astin, *The Cambridge Ancient History*.
 Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*.

Questions to Consider

- ✚ In the long run, do you believe that Rome's incorporation of Greek culture will exercise a positive or a negative effect on their civilization?
- ✚ Of the various internal tensions produced by Roman imperialism, which one do you think will prove the most destructive to the Roman Republic?



ROMAN SLAVERY: CRUELTY AND OPPORTUNITY

LECTURE 12

In a study of ancient slavery, a famous historian once argued that, although the institution of slavery itself has been present in innumerable civilizations going back to the very earliest cities in Mesopotamia, in all of human history there have been only five genuine slave societies—meaning ones whose economy was fundamentally dependent upon slave labor. One of these, of course, was classical Rome.

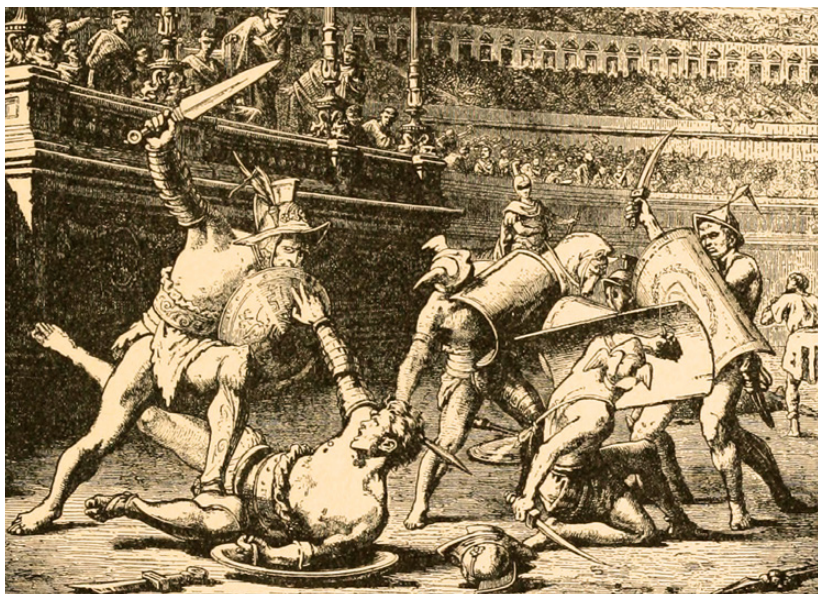
IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS

- ◆ It is important to point out some key differences between slavery in the Roman world and slavery as we today, especially Americans, usually conceive of it. When we think of slavery, we tend to imagine the particular form that was practiced in the American South. Roman slavery was a very different institution, for a number of reasons.
- ◆ The first and by far the biggest difference between Roman slavery and slavery as we often think of it is that Roman slavery was not racial slavery. Slaves were any and all races, genders, cultures, and ages.
- ◆ A second major difference was that the line between slave and free person was not rigid, as in the more familiar later types of slavery. In the Roman world, slavery was a permeable boundary through which people passed in large numbers in both directions.
- ◆ What unites all forms of slavery, however, is the basic fact that it is an institution which strips human beings of their essential humanity, and treats them instead as objects. Under Roman law, slaves were regarded as pieces of property, just like any other item that was owned by their master.

SLAVE ORIGINS

- ◆ The most common source of slaves in the Roman world was military conquest. Whenever a Roman army took the field, it was inevitably followed by a train of slave dealers. The soldiers would catch people, club them over the head, and sell them on the spot to the slave dealers, who in turn would send them to one of the great slave markets, such as the strategically located islands along trade routes.

- ◆ The numbers of slaves generated by Rome's wars were truly astounding. Even Rome's early wars produced large numbers of slaves. The Third Samnite War at the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. resulted in 55,000 Samnites and Gauls being taken captive and then sold into slavery. Rome's destruction of Carthage in the Third Punic War flooded the slave markets with hundreds of thousands of new slaves at once.
- ◆ Another important source was the children born of slaves, who inherited their parents' servile status. Scholars have spent a lot of time arguing about whether Roman slavery was self-sustaining through slaves reproducing, or if it had to be replenished by military conquest or other mechanisms that would provide a constant influx of new slaves.
- ◆ Early in Roman history, it was possible for free citizens who had fallen into debt, and were unable to pay it off, to become slaves. Free people could also become slaves as the result of legal action; for example, if they were convicted of certain crimes, the judge might condemn them to slavery.



- ◆ It was not uncommon for unwanted babies to be exposed after birth, and most sizable towns seem to have had an informally recognized location where such babies were abandoned. Slave dealers regularly passed by these spots and collected these babies, who were then raised as slaves. Finally, desperate free people could actually voluntarily sell members of their family, or even themselves, into slavery.
- ◆ At times when the market was glutted with captives, an unskilled adult male slave might sell for around 2,000 sesterces—perhaps roughly equivalent to two years' worth of the Roman version of minimum wage. Skilled slaves could sell for considerably more. Slaves could be bought outright, which was most common. Some dealers also rented slaves out for a certain time period, ranging from a few hours to an entire year.

SLAVE LIFESTYLES

- ◆ The lifestyle of Roman slaves could vary enormously. One significant distinction was between rural and urban slaves. Rural slaves tended to be unskilled farm workers, and their lives were often extremely harsh and exploitative. They were frequently chained together, and they spent their time doing heavy manual labor in the fields under the eyes of cruel overseers. At night, they were locked up in a small, often underground, jail-like enclosure known as an *ergastulum*. This type of slave was rarely freed by his master and had little to look forward to in life.
- ◆ Urban slavery encompassed a much wider range of experiences. Some slaves, particularly those assigned to menial tasks such as cleaning or carrying things, suffered through an existence similar to that of rural slaves. Other urban slaves, however—particularly household slaves—lived lives of considerably greater physical comfort, even if their status as property was the same. Some of these household slaves were raised together with the children of the master, and thus ended up being their childhood playmates and friends.

- ◆ In adulthood, household slaves might become the confidantes of their masters, and might receive similar educations, have their own families, and live nearly as well as the free members of the family. Many skilled professions, such as teacher, carpenter, doctor, and clerk, were often filled by slaves who enjoyed, at least to some degree, the high standard of living and the respect due to individuals with their talents.
- ◆ Wealthy Roman households could have an array of slaves, each performing a narrowly specialized task. There were doormen, hairdressers, valets, personal doctors, tutors, porters, kennel masters, and slaves to carry litters and umbrellas. The serving of meals might employ several slaves to carry dishes, others to remove them, yet more to serve wine, and one slave to do nothing but slice meat. Preparing the food might also require a legion of chefs.
- ◆ Many of these slaves, especially those who possessed a skill or talent, harbored the hope that they might actually buy their freedom from their masters through an odd Roman institution known as the *peculium*. A *peculium* was a fund of money that the slave was allowed to build up; once it reached his or her own value, the slave could give it to the master and literally buy their way out of slavery. A slave might also use it to purchase the freedom of his spouse or children.



- ◆ The *peculium* was viewed by the Romans as an incentive for slaves to work harder. Thus, a master might tell a slave who was a teacher that he could keep a percentage of all the tuition money that he generated, or inform a slave who worked as a salesman that he could keep a percentage of the profits from his sales. One calculation suggests that it would take a particularly industrious and thrifty slave roughly seven years to buy his or her freedom.
- ◆ A sizable number of urban slaves were also freed outright by their masters. The act of freeing a slave was known as manumission. It most commonly occurred either posthumously in a will, or when a man became a paterfamilias and freed his childhood slave friends. So many Romans were freeing slaves in their wills that eventually a law was passed prohibiting anyone from freeing more than 100 slaves in a will.

Suggested Reading

Bradley, *Slavery and Rebellion in the Roman World*.

———, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*.

Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World*.

Questions to Consider

- ✚ Was the form of slavery practiced by the Romans better in any way than that found in the Pre-Civil War United States, or are such distinctions meaningless when compared to the fundamental fact of people being treated as objects?
- ✚ What insights into Roman culture and values are revealed by the way that they assigned names?



ROMAN WOMEN AND MARRIAGE

LECTURE 13

A major obstacle to studying the lives of Roman women is the problem of surviving sources. The sources available to us were all authored by men; as a result, nearly everything we know about Roman women is filtered through the lens of how Roman men viewed them. We have almost nothing that records the true thoughts, feelings, or attitudes of Roman women. This lecture thus examines what historians think they know about the lives of Roman women.

STATUS

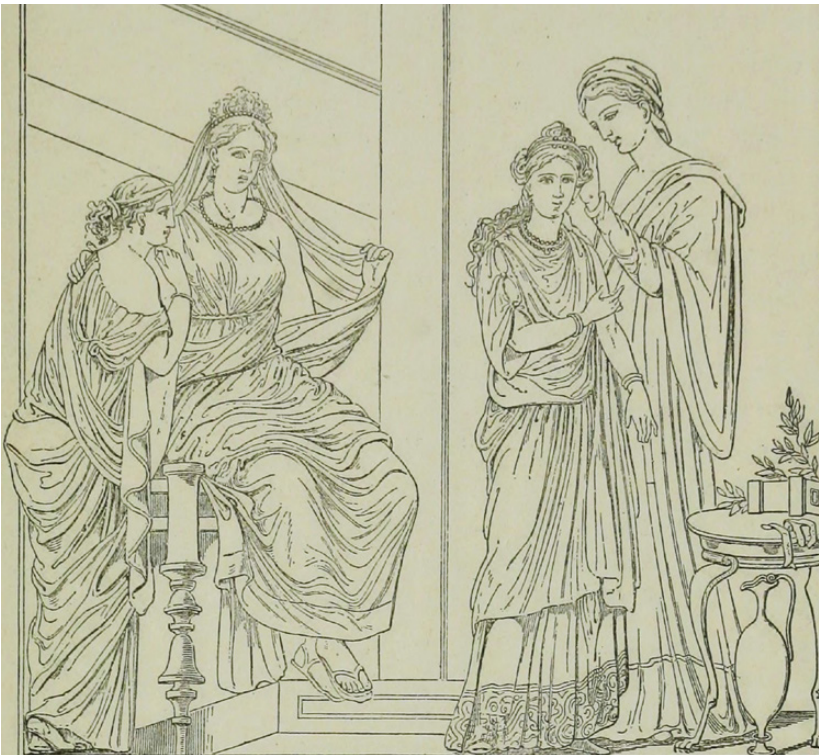
- ◆ One of the most revered and powerful figures in Roman society was the *paterfamilias*—literally, “father of the family”—who was the oldest living male in a Roman household. The *paterfamilias* wielded *patria potestas* (“paternal power”) over all the members of his extended family, including adults, children, and slaves.
- ◆ In the most extreme example, a *paterfamilias* had the power to put to death his own children. He arranged marriages for his children, and he could command them to divorce; he could sell members of his family into slavery; and he could order a newborn baby to be abandoned. He was truly the ultimate authority figure.
- ◆ Women did not have equal legal status with men. By law, Roman girls and women were almost always under the jurisdiction of a male, whether a *paterfamilias*, a husband, or a legally appointed guardian. Over the course of her life, a woman might pass from the control of one male to another—most typically, from father to husband.
- ◆ Despite their inferior legal status, Roman mothers were expected to be strong figures within the household, to play an important role in supervising the upbringing and education of children, and to maintain the smooth day-to-day running of the household. Above all, the Roman wife was expected to be self-effacing and to provide strong support for, but not any challenge to, the *paterfamilias*.

- ◆ Roman women in poor families often had to work hard, just like the men in the family. Most women's day-to-day lives were thus not significantly different from men's, although legally, they were accorded inferior status. Women could not vote in elections or run for political office, and, with a few exceptions, were not permitted to take part in the speechmaking and debates that characterized Roman civic life.
- ◆ The one area in which a few women routinely held significant public positions was religion. There were certain rituals, especially those involving female deities, that the Romans believed had to be performed by women. There were several established priesthoods whose members were all female, such as the Vestal Virgins.
- ◆ Upper-class girls were raised almost entirely within the household, rarely venturing outside the house itself. The chief figure in their lives was their mother, who supervised whatever education they received. In terms of reading, writing, and literature, the education that these girls obtained varied enormously from house to house.
- ◆ There are a few famous examples of highly educated women, but on the whole—and especially during the early and middle Republic—excessive knowledge or intellectual ability in women was regarded with suspicion and disfavor. The main focus of a girl's education was to learn how to spin thread and weave clothing.

MARRIAGE

- ◆ Upper-class girls typically led sheltered lives, and many may have hardly left their home before their marriage. Most aristocratic women were probably married off in their mid-teens, and a woman who was not wed by the age of 20 was considered a deviant. The emperor Augustus would later formalize this judgment by passing a law that heavily penalized any woman over the age of 20 who was unmarried.

- ◆ The man that a girl wed was selected by her father, usually for economic or political reasons. Notably, the Romans allowed marriages between closer family members than we would. It was permissible for first cousins to marry, for example, and from the early empire on, uncles could even marry their nieces.
- ◆ Roman law did not recognize a marriage with a foreigner, a slave, or a freedman. Also, until fairly late in Roman history, Roman soldiers were not allowed to marry. It was nonetheless common for soldiers to form lasting relationships with women, and for the two to live together and consider themselves a couple. Women could not inherit from soldiers, however, and any children soldiers had were considered illegitimate.



- ◆ Making a marriage legally binding was a very simple process. The only requirement was that there be a public statement of intent. Marriage was viewed as a religious duty whose goal was to produce children, thus insuring that the family gods would continue to be worshipped.
- ◆ During most of the republic, the most common form of marriage was known as a manus marriage. In this type of marriage, the woman was regarded as a piece of property that passed from the hand of her father to that of her husband. The woman had no rights, and any property she had was under the control of her husband.
- ◆ While a legally binding marriage could consist of merely a statement of intent, there were many rituals commonly performed to mark the occasion symbolically. For example, the bride-to-be would typically dedicate her childhood toys to the household gods, signifying that she was making the transition from child to woman.
- ◆ During the wedding ceremony—which was common, although not required to make the marriage legal—various sacrifices would be performed in front of a gathering of friends and relatives. A feast would usually follow the ceremony, with the bride and groom sitting side by side.

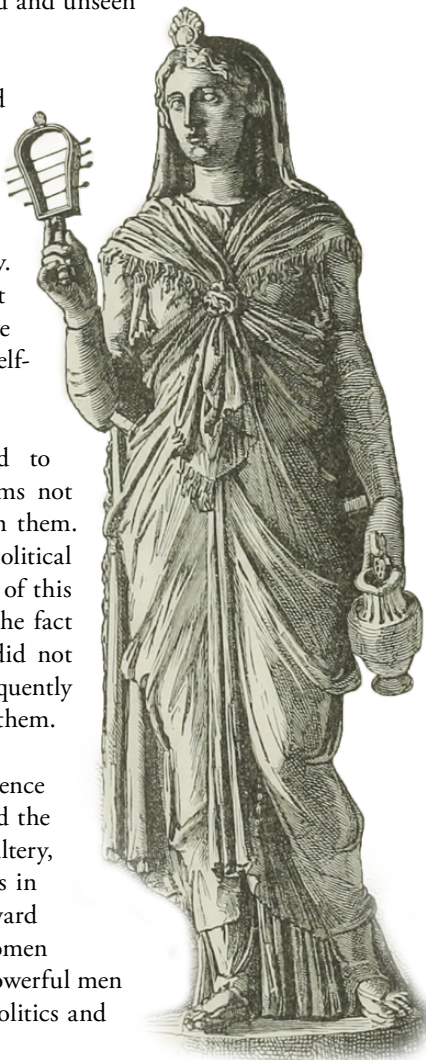
FAMILY

- ◆ The main duty of a Roman wife was to produce children. Unsurprisingly, however, because some women were married before they were physically mature, many young wives died of complications during childbirth.
- ◆ One of the main sources of information on Roman women is their tombstones. Many of these record the sad stories of girls who were married at 12 or 13 years of age, gave birth five or six times, then died in childbirth before they reached the age of 20.



- ◆ Tombstones are also the best guide to what Roman men considered the ideal qualities of a wife. Some of the most common positive attributes used by husbands to describe their deceased wives include chastity, obedience, friendliness, frugality, contentment at home, piety, simple dress, and skill at spinning thread and weaving cloth.
- ◆ One way that Roman men were praised on their tombstones was to say that they treated their wives kindly, with the implication that such kindness was unnecessary and perhaps even unusual. In a manus marriage, for example, a husband could beat his wife with impunity, and was expected to do so if she “misbehaved.”
- ◆ Divorce was as easy as marriage. All a couple had to do was declare that they were getting divorced, and they were. There was often pressure for women to remarry, especially if they were still of prime childbearing age.

- ◆ A woman was supposed to spend most of her time within the confines of the household. When upper-class women did venture out of the house—to visit the marketplace, the baths, temples, or female friends—they were often transported in curtained litters carried by slaves, both to avoid the filth in the streets and to stay concealed and unseen in public.
- ◆ Women were supposed to be modest and chaste. A Roman matron's clothing was intended to cover her completely, and statues frequently depict women making a specific gesture meant to communicate their *pudicitia*, or modesty. Fidelity to one's husband was crucial. It was considered wrong for a woman to be avaricious, ambitious, ostentatious, or self-promoting.
- ◆ Husbands and wives were obligated to produce children, but there often seems not to have been a lot of affection between them. Marriage was seen as a social and political relationship, not a romantic one. Some of this lack of warmth was no doubt due to the fact that many Roman men and women did not themselves choose their spouses, and frequently there was a vast age difference between them.
- ◆ There was, of course, a degree of divergence between the ideal behavior of wives and the reality. Some women did commit adultery, and sometimes divorced their husbands in order to marry others. Especially toward the end of the republic, a few notable women who were either married or related to powerful men were even able to have an impact on politics and government and exercise power.



- ◆ Comparatively little is known about the lives of lower-class women who had to work outside the home in order to help support their families or themselves. They might work as vendors in the marketplace, for example, or learn a trade. Women also commonly served as midwives, and as wet nurses in wealthy families. While women could not act onstage in theatrical productions, they could perform in mime and pantomime shows, and as musicians.
- ◆ Particular notoriety surrounded women who worked as innkeepers, waitresses, bartenders, maids, and cooks. There seems to have been an expectation that many of these workers would combine their duties with prostitution. Indeed, there are surviving bills from inns at which the itemized list includes charges for food, lodging, and the sexual services of the maids. Although prostitutes were looked down upon, prostitution itself was legal and was one of the careers open to poor women.

Suggested Reading

D'Ambra, *Roman Women*.

Fantham, *Women in the Classical World*.

Lefkowitz and Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*.

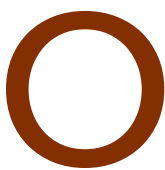
Questions to Consider

- ✎ How do the status of and expectations for women in Roman society compare to those found in other cultures and eras of history?
- ✎ Do Roman marriage rituals and customs make their culture seem more empathetic and familiar, or more incomprehensible and alien?



ROMAN CHILDREN, EDUCATION, AND TIMEKEEPING

LECTURE 14



ne of the greatest differences between the ancient world and modern industrialized societies is the decline in infant mortality. In ancient Rome, roughly one-third of babies did not survive their first year of life. The mortality rate prior to puberty was as high as 50 percent. Every parent would probably have endured the deaths of about half of his or her children, and every adult the deaths of half of his or her siblings. It is impossible to judge what psychological effects these experiences had on Romans, but it would certainly have affected one's outlook on life.

BOYS AND GIRLS

- ◆ When a child was born, it was placed on the floor in front of the father. If it was a boy, and the father wanted to acknowledge it as his son, he would pick it up. This action meant that he agreed to accept it as his own son and to raise it.
- ◆ If it was a girl, the father would not pick it up; he would simply instruct one of the women, either his wife or a slave, to feed it. If, for whatever reason, he did not want it, he would leave it on the floor and the baby would be taken outside and abandoned.
- ◆ Romans thought that in order to produce strong children and soldiers, it was important not to be too nice to babies. Babies were therefore bathed in cold water, and all throughout childhood, they were forbidden to take warm baths, for fear that it would make them soft.
- ◆ For the first several months of life, a Roman baby would be tightly wrapped in cloth so that it could not move, with its arms and legs tied to sticks so that they could not be bent. Eventually they freed the right arm but not the left, in an attempt to make sure the baby would grow up right-handed, because left-handedness was regarded as unlucky.
- ◆ Men would often instruct their wives to breastfeed not only their own children but the slave children as well, the idea being that when they grew up, the slave children would be unusually loyal to their master because they had all been raised on the same milk.

- ◆ Babies suffering pains from teething had sheep's brains rubbed on their gums, which was thought to soothe the discomfort. Alternatively, they were sometimes given magic amulets containing a gritty substance derived from the horns of snails.
- ◆ Roman law defined childhood as the period between birth and age 12 for a girl, and between birth and age 14 for a boy. A Roman boy was known as a *puer*. The symbol of his childhood was his clothing, known as a *toga praetexta*, which was a toga with a purple stripe along the edge.
- ◆ Roman boys were expected to be tough, and were forbidden from eating lying down, which was the mark of an adult. Boys were also not allowed to get much sleep, because it was believed that too much sleep decreased intelligence and stunted growth.
- ◆ The term for a girl was *puella*, although this term was also sometimes used for adult women who had not given birth or were still virgins. All children, both free and slave, grew up together and played together. This often led personal slaves to be genuinely loyal to and fond of their masters; they were, after all, old childhood playmates.

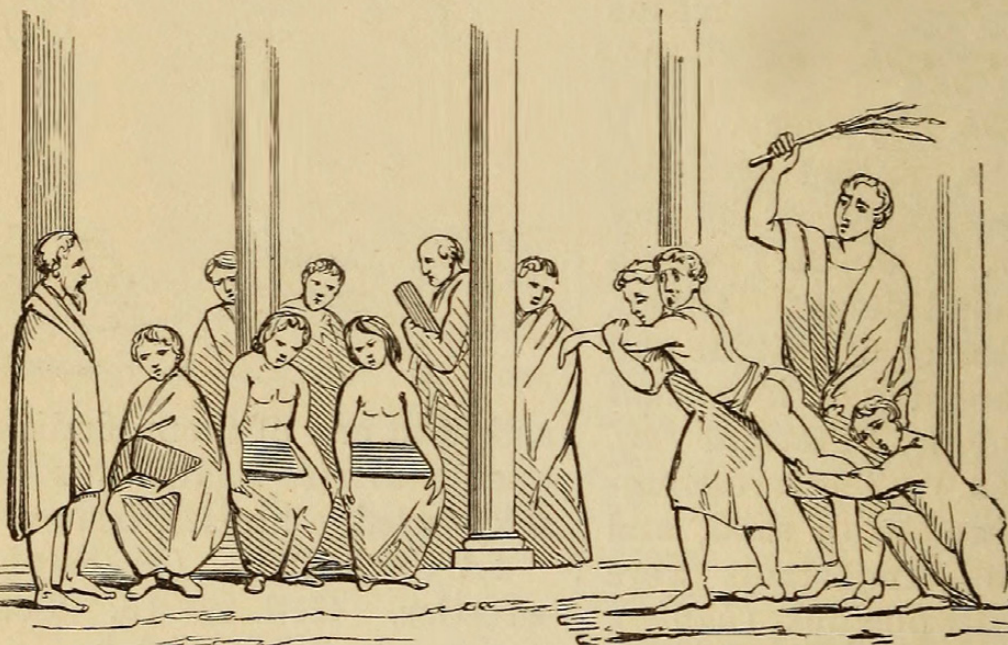


- ◆ Like children in almost any era and society, Roman boys and girls played with a variety of toys. Balls and hoops were perennially popular. Roman children engaged in such timeless activities as building sandcastles, spinning tops, and skimming rocks across the surface of water.
- ◆ Children played with small clay, wood, or even bronze figurines, including representations of animals, soldiers, and gladiators. A variety of dolls have been found, ranging from crude stuffed bundles of cloth to elaborate wooden or ivory manikins with articulated joints. Children also had pets, such as birds, dogs, and rabbits.

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

- ◆ In traditional Roman society, and particularly before Rome's overseas conquests, education was conducted by the father, who taught his sons whatever he thought was necessary. In this period, a basic level of literacy and military training was the totality of education deemed useful. More formal education was primarily restricted to male children of the elites. Girls would have been instructed in spinning, weaving, and household management.
- ◆ The great change in Roman education happened, as did so many other major changes, when Rome conquered Greece. Exposure to Greek literature and culture raised expectations of what an aristocrat should know. They would now be expected to know both Greek and Latin, to be familiar with the literature of both cultures, and to be able to give formal orations in public.
- ◆ The hundreds of thousands of Greek citizens who were enslaved by Rome provided a ready source of teachers. From this time on, the structure of Roman education was that the student passed through a series of teachers. The highest goal, toward which each Roman student's education was aimed, was to produce an eloquent speaker.

- ◆ The first teacher was known as the *paedagogus*. This was a household slave to whom young boys, and occasionally girls, were entrusted. Ideally, the *paedagogus* was an educated Greek slave who could give the child his preliminary instruction in Latin and Greek. Technically, the main duty of the *paedagogus* was to look after and protect the child. Thus, whenever the boy went out in public, he was always accompanied by his *paedagogus*.
- ◆ Another task of the *paedagogus* was to restrain and discipline mischievous children, usually either by twisting their ears or beating them with a cane. Depending on their relationship, Romans tended to look back on their *paedagogus* with either fondness or hatred. There are many examples of men who, once they became adults, freed their old tutor out of gratitude.
- ◆ Around the age of six or seven, the student began to attend a more formal type of school. The new teacher was not a household member, but rather a man who made individual contracts with parents to instruct their children in reading, writing, and arithmetic. He was known as the *litterator*.
- ◆ Often, a boy would progress through a series of *litteratores*. He might learn basic reading, writing, and counting from one, more sophisticated knowledge of the same subject from a second, and then literature from a third.
- ◆ A teacher of the more advanced levels was called a *grammaticus*. On a typical school day, classes began at dawn, and boys had to get up long before this, get dressed, eat a simple breakfast, and then, accompanied by their *paedagogi*, walk to school. If the boy was very young, he might be carried on the slave's shoulders.
- ◆ There were no actual school buildings, so classes might be conducted anywhere. A teacher might rent a shop or an apartment, or set up school in a corner of the forum or in a colonnade. This would certainly have made for a distracting academic environment; the teacher and students might find themselves trying to hold classes surrounded by the bustle of people buying and selling, and of officials conducting state business and trials.



- ◆ One Roman source describes the method for teaching young children how to form the letters of the alphabet. A wooden board would be prepared, with the letters carved deeply into its surface. Children would take a pointed metal cylinder called a *stilus* and trace the letters, following the grooves.
- ◆ Texts were extremely expensive and fragile, and only the teacher would likely have any. Much of Roman education consisted of the teacher reading aloud from texts while the students memorized long passages by heart. Classes lasted from dawn until noon, with breaks for holidays and summer vacation.
- ◆ The two main characteristics of this phase of schooling were endless amounts of memorization, reinforced by brutal beatings whenever a student failed to perform properly. The teacher had a wide range of punishments available. The most common and simplest was to strike a student's hands with a cane made of reeds. For more egregious offenses, the teacher might would beat the student's body with a whip consisting of multiple strips of leather.

- ◆ The ultimate punishment available to the teacher was the *catomus*, in which the student was stripped naked and stretched across the backs of two other students, one of whom would grasp his legs, and the other his arms. The teacher then flogged the unfortunate victim with a wooden stick.



- ◆ The last couple years of a student's instruction focused on literature, particularly on Homer and on Roman historical literature, such as Virgil. This phase of education usually ended around 13 years of age. There were no colleges or universities, but the wealthiest, most ambitious, or most promising students might go on to a third class of instructor known as the *rhetor*. The *rhetor* was a specialist in training students to be effective public speakers.

TIMES AND DATES

- ◆ Like most cultures, the Romans placed importance on the key chronological stages of a person's life—birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood—and marked the transition from one state to the next through customs and rituals. But a complex society needs many other ways of ordering, structuring, and measuring time. Farmers, for example, need to know when to plant their crops.
- ◆ For the Romans, each day was divided into two periods: the time when it was light outside, and the time when it was dark. Each of these periods was then subdivided into 12 hours. Superficially, this sounds a lot like our modern system of 24-hour days.
- ◆ There was one rather significant difference between our days and Roman days, however: Roman hours were not of a fixed length. Rather, they were equivalent to the amount of light or darkness on a given day divided by 12. Meetings could therefore be scheduled only very approximately.
- ◆ One of the most common tools that the Romans employed to measure the passage of time, the sundial, was based on the daily motion of the sun. A sundial might consist of nothing more complex than a stick placed in the ground to crudely track the progress of the sun, or it could be an elaborate marble shell with curved paths carved into it that corresponded to the progress of the gnomon's shadow.
- ◆ For situations such as limiting how long a speaker in a court case could talk, the Romans sometimes used water clocks, in which a given amount of water would take a known amount of time to drip out.

- ◆ Like us, the Romans divided the year into 12 months. During the republic, they only had 355 days in a year. As a result, the calendar would get severely out of line with the natural seasons after a few years. If left uncorrected for long enough, this could have disastrous consequences for farmers; if they went by the calendar, it would lead to their planting crops at the wrong time of year.
- ◆ Every so often, Roman priests would declare an intercalary month, which was inserted between two existing months in order to bring the months back into line with the natural seasons. There was no set timetable for inserting intercalary months, and the calendar could get far out of alignment if, in a time of crisis, for example, the priestly colleges were not regularly meeting.
- ◆ The Roman calendar was reformed by Julius Caesar in the late stages of the Roman Republic. Caesar added 10 days to the calendar, thus making a year 365 days long. To take care of the extra one-quarter of a day, he instituted the leap year, with one extra day added every four years. This reformed calendar, known as the Julian calendar, is pretty much the same one we use today.
- ◆ The modern English names of the months of the year are all derived from the names used by the Romans. Specifically, the original Roman names were *Januarius*, *Februarius*, *Martius*, *Aprilis*, *Maius*, *Junius*, *Quintilis*, *Sextilis*, *September*, *October*, *November*, and *December*.
- ◆ Several of the month names refer to Roman gods. *January*, for example, is named after the Roman god Janus. From *Quintilis* through *December*, the names were derived from numbers. *December* was the tenth month rather than the twelfth, because Romans originally began each year with March rather than January. Later in Roman history, the fifth and sixth months were renamed *Julius* and *Augustus* to honor Julius Caesar and the emperor Augustus.

- ◆ The Romans picked three days of each month, gave them special names, and indicated all other days by their relationship to these three. The first day of each month was known as the kalends. The day of the month on which the moon was full was called the ides, which usually fell on a day toward what we think of as the middle of the month. The nones was the day nine days before the ides.

Suggested Reading

Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*.

Harlow and Laurence, *Growing Up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome*.

Questions to Consider

- ✎ How do you think the experiences of Roman childhood and education shaped the attitudes of Roman adults?
- ✎ How would the Romans' methods of timekeeping influence how they viewed the world around them? Consider especially living in a world without a readily available way to precisely measure time during the day.



FOOD, HOUSING, AND EMPLOYMENT IN ROME

LECTURE 15

Food, housing, and employment are truly foundational requirements, and this lecture will discuss each in turn. As you proceed, you will see what was available to the typical Roman with respect to food, housing, and employment, and what attitudes the Romans had toward these basic necessities.

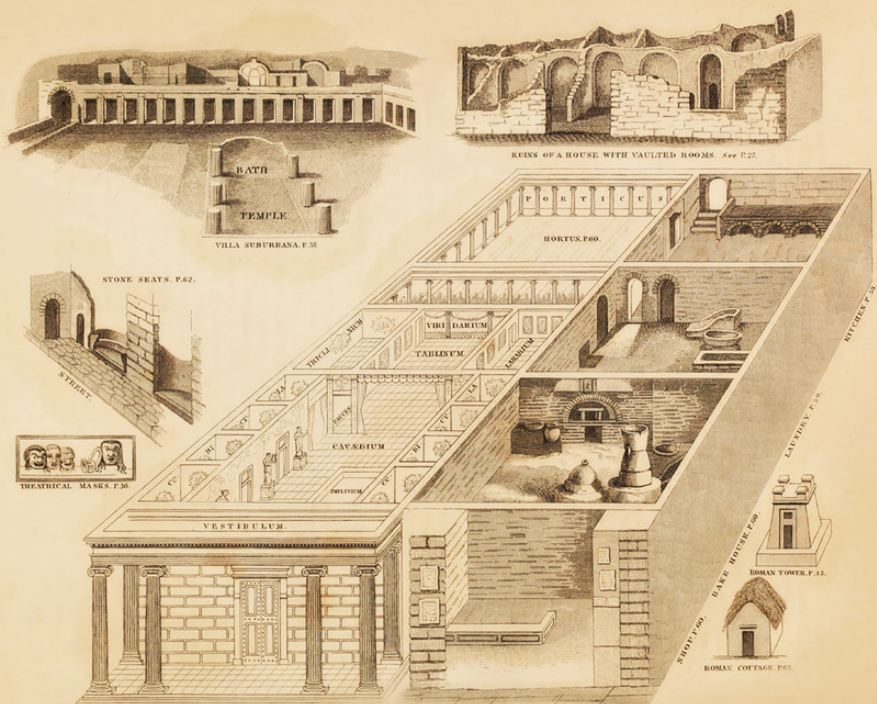
SETTING THE TABLE

- ◆ The traditional view of the diet consumed by the vast majority of inhabitants of the ancient Roman world is that it consisted of three main food items: grain, olive oil, and wine.
- ◆ The grain most commonly grown was wheat, but the Romans also cultivated barley and other cereal crops. These were usually consumed either as bread or as a kind of porridge or gruel.
- ◆ Estimates derived from ancient evidence and studies of the diets of rural Mediterranean peasants at the dawn of the 20th century suggest that as much as 80 percent of the caloric intake of about 80 percent of Romans may have come from grain, olive oil, and wine.
- ◆ Recent scholarship has begun to complicate this monotonous picture, proposing that a greater variety of foods was eaten. Even if the percentages creep down a bit, however, these three staples certainly formed a large part of the typical Roman's diet.
- ◆ One characteristic shared by these items that made them attractive to cultivate is that all three could be preserved for a substantial period of time and then eaten later. The grain/olive oil/wine diet would have been supplemented by seasonal fruits and vegetables, when they could be obtained. Meat, especially red meat, would have been a rarity.
- ◆ Pork was the most readily available meat product, and appears to have been quite popular with the Romans. Where available, fish was also greatly enjoyed. Adding some flavor to this diet was a kind of fish sauce called *garum* that seems to have been much loved by the Romans.

- ◆ While the culinary lives of most Romans were monotonous, it was a different story for rich, upper-class Romans. Their wealth enabled them to eat a vast array of exotic comestibles and to hold lavish banquets. Breakfast and lunch were usually light meals, while dinner was the principal meal of the day.
- ◆ At a formal Roman dinner party, the guests arrived, removed their shoes, and were led to a dining room called a triclinium. Romans lay down on couches when they ate, leaning on their left elbows.
- ◆ Romans used knives and spoons, but not forks. The first course of appetizers was little treats, such as olives, snails, vegetables, eggs, or shellfish. Main courses were elaborate meat dishes. Boar and sow's udders were very popular. A particular delicacy was eels and lampreys.
- ◆ Many Roman aristocrats owned heated fishponds in which eels were raised, and they competed to see who could grow the biggest and tastiest ones. Dessert consisted of nuts and fruit, such as apples, pears, and figs.
- ◆ There might be entertainment at a banquet, such as music, jugglers, magicians, actors, or a literary reading of poetry or history. After dinner was eaten, there would be drinking and conversation. The host would determine the ratio of wine to water that would be served, and would often select a topic of conversation.
- ◆ The Romans, like the Greeks, usually diluted their wine with water before drinking it. Romans also enjoyed some wines that were served warm, and these often had spices added to them. A popular hot wine was *mulsum*, which was sweetened with honey.

HOME SWEET HOME

- ◆ When it comes to housing, the experiences of Romans varied greatly according to economic status. The inhabitants of the countryside lived in houses made of stone or mud brick, often with several generations of the family sharing rooms with farm animals.



- ◆ Rich people in the city lived in a private house known as a domus. The wealthy also often owned sumptuous country villas. The majority of people living in Rome, however, rented apartments. Each domus only contained one family, but an apartment building could shelter hundreds.
- ◆ Roman houses in the city had few or no windows. From the outside, a house would have resembled a blank wall. The center of the house, and its focal point, was the atrium. This was usually a courtyard with a large opening in the ceiling to admit light. Adjacent to the atrium was a raised platform where the paterfamilias would sit when receiving visitors of lower status.

- ◆ The dining room, or triclinium, also usually opened onto the atrium. In the back of the house were a series of tiny rooms which functioned as the bedrooms. Each of these was called a *cubiculum*. The quarters for slaves and women were also at the rear of the house.
- ◆ Some Roman houses included a walled enclosure at the back that served as a garden. Roman houses were more or less the same range of sizes as modern houses, with the average house being around 2,000 square feet.
- ◆ The most obvious and famous feature of Roman houses was the lavish decoration of the walls and floors. Much of the expense and effort that in a modern home might be spent on furniture and decorative objects, the Romans directed toward ornamenting the structure itself.
- ◆ In many rooms, all four walls were plastered over and then completely covered in elaborate wall paintings, while the floors were coated with intricate mosaics. The palette of colors employed in Roman wall paintings was dominated by large expanses of black, gold, and blood red.



- ◆ Another focal point of ornamentation was the floors, which were covered with mosaics formed by taking very small cut pieces of colored stones and pressing them into wet mortar to form images ranging in complexity from simple black-and-white geometric patterns to astonishingly detailed color pictures.
- ◆ By current standards, Roman houses would have appeared surprisingly empty. Much of the basic furniture was made of wood or bronze. Romans could choose from an assortment of chairs, stools, and sofas with varying numbers of legs.
- ◆ In addition to furniture, smaller household objects would have included a full assortment of pots and pans, eating utensils, wood and wax tablets to write on, and olive oil-burning clay lamps, which brought light to dark interiors.
- ◆ The domus was not so much the dwelling of a nuclear family, but rather of an extended household comprising relatives, slaves, and servants. Roman homes do not seem to have had pronounced internal divisions among areas inhabited by men, women, and children, or even between master and slave, and standards of privacy were probably less than many modern people are accustomed to.
- ◆ The average urban Roman dwelt in apartment buildings called insulae, literally meaning “islands,” because of the way in which they often extended over an entire city block. Insulae were located all over the city of Rome, and some of the larger ones might have had 10 or more storeys.
- ◆ Because of the destruction caused by the collapse of poorly built insulae, laws were passed attempting to limit the height of insulae. Usually these limits were around 60 or 70 feet. Because such legislation was repeatedly passed, it suggests that these restrictions were routinely ignored.
- ◆ Insulae housed a wide variety of tenants of differing socioeconomic classes. The ground floor apartments would have been rented to the wealthiest tenants, who did not want to have to trudge up many flights of stairs to reach their dwellings.

- ◆ Often, the row of rooms opening onto the street were rented out as shops and small businesses. As you climbed up the levels of the insulae, the wealth of the tenants declined and the number of people per room increased.
- ◆ The least desirable rooms were located under the eaves of the roof, which frequently leaked and were plagued by vermin. A chamber pot served as a toilet, and despite legislation prohibiting such actions, full pots were routinely dumped out the window and into the street.
- ◆ Romans living in these apartments would have had a much more rudimentary set of possessions than what was owned by wealthy Romans in a domus. Their sum total of worldly goods may have consisted of nothing more than a few articles of clothing, bedding, footwear, a lamp, cookware and utensils, and perhaps some crude furniture.

IT'S A LIVING

- ◆ Employment for 80 to 90 percent of people in the Roman world simply meant being a farmer out in the countryside. The remaining population who were not in the army mostly lived in cities; for them, there was a variety of ways that they earned a living.
- ◆ The upper-class Romans who wrote all the surviving sources had very definite ideas about work and employment. They believed that most types of employment were morally degrading, and that truly civilized people should not work at all. Only those people who were so rich that they did not have to do anything to earn a living were considered fully human and civilized.
- ◆ The things that aristocrats did that we would consider jobs, like serving as a lawyer or being elected to a magistracy, such as praetor or consul, were not considered real jobs, because you received no pay. Politics and the law were truly the preserve of rich men, because they entailed spending a lot of money with no return.

- ◆ In keeping with the republican ideology of virtue exemplified by Cincinnatus, the only profession that did not degrade someone was farming. Rich men were expected to gain and maintain their wealth primarily by owning land. Of course, by the middle Republic, aristocrats did not do any actual farming themselves.



- ◆ This was the Romans' ideology, but in reality, the picture is more complex. Many rich Romans acquired their fortunes through means other than farming. Some were moneylenders who charged up to 60 percent annual interest on a loan. Some had shops that produced goods such as lamps, bricks, or clay plates and containers.
- ◆ While the upper classes could afford to be choosy about employment, the vast majority of people in cities had to work. The working classes can be divided into two basic groups: those whose profession required some sort of training, talent, skill, or capital, and those who were unskilled and sold their labor for wages.
- ◆ Skilled workers were often slaves or ex-slaves. In inscriptions on tombstones, approximately two-thirds of those who identify themselves as some sort of skilled worker are freedmen. Skilled work included manufacturing luxury items, making footwear, and providing specialized services to the rich.
- ◆ Although aristocrats regarded work and moneymaking with scorn, many freedmen seem to have taken great pride in their work. This can be seen most clearly on their tombstones, which often boasted a sculptural relief showing the deceased engaging in whatever profession he or she had practiced.
- ◆ Another way we know about Roman jobs is from trade associations called *collegia*. The members of a *collegium* would often put up monuments commemorating their accomplishments. The *collegia* also seemed to play a role in politics; much of the graffiti on Roman walls consists of *collegia* urging other people to vote for a certain politician.
- ◆ The lowest among the employed were the unskilled workers, called *mercenarii*, who had nothing to offer except their labor. They would hire themselves out in exchange for a salary to perform various menial jobs. This was considered the most degrading form of labor because Romans equated it to becoming someone's slave.

- ◆ A day's worth of work was known as an *opera*, and contracts would specify the number of days of his labor that a *mercenarius* was selling to an employer. The most common type of day labor job was simply to carry things around.
- ◆ A sizeable percentage of the free inhabitants of Rome would have found employment in two fields in particular: the supply of food and other commodities to Rome, and the construction industry. A single construction project of the emperor Claudius employed 30,000 men for 11 years as diggers.

Suggested Reading

Aldrete, *Daily Life in the Roman City*.

D'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome*.

Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*.

Wilkins and Nadeau, *A Companion to Food in the Ancient World*.

Questions to Consider

- ✦ What would you find to be the most unpleasant aspect about the options available to the typical Roman in terms of dining or housing?
- ✦ Do you agree or disagree with the attitude of Roman elites that there is something fundamentally demeaning about having to engage in business or to work for someone else?



THE GRACCHI ATTEMPT REFORM

— LECTURE 16 —

The year 133 B.C. marks an important moment of transition in Roman history. It was the beginning of a tumultuous century during which tensions that had been building over hundreds of years would finally boil over, resulting in the violent collapse of the Roman Republic. Ironically, the inciting event was an attempt to save the state, and potentially to cure some of the serious problems that afflicted it.

THE GRACCHI

- ◆ The reform effort begun in 133 B.C. was initiated not by a disenfranchised outsider, nor by a member of one of the many unhappy and resentful groups in Roman society, but instead by two brothers, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, who were firmly embedded within what was then the most powerful, successful, and dominant family in Rome.
- ◆ The Gracchi brothers were the grandsons of the illustrious Scipio Africanus, who had defeated Hannibal during the Second Punic War. In more recent times, their father had been elected consul twice and censor once. They were part of the extended Aemilian clan, whose ranks populated many of the most important magistracies and generalships.
- ◆ By the late 2nd century B.C., Rome's spectacular achievement in conquering most of the Mediterranean had resulted in almost every segment of Roman society feeling resentful and unhappy.
- ◆ Some of the main disgruntled groups included veterans, who felt that they had not been rewarded for their service; poor Romans, many of whom had lost their family farms; Italians allies and half-citizens, who correctly felt that they were long overdue to be granted full Roman citizenship; aristocrats, who felt that the most powerful families were monopolizing government offices, and hence the routes to fame and fortune; and the conquered peoples themselves, many of whom now labored as slaves on large Italian plantations.

- ◆ The Gracchi brothers were among the very small group of Roman elites who had unambiguously benefitted from Roman imperialism, and thus were not members of any resentful group. Despite his privileged status, however, the elder Gracchi brother, Tiberius, apparently began to be concerned that the grievances of some of these groups were justified and that the republic would face a crisis if they were not addressed.
- ◆ In an attempt to do something about this dilemma, in 133 B.C., despite his aristocratic status, Tiberius ran for and was elected tribune of the plebs. One of the powers of this office was the ability to propose legislation directly to the citizen voting assemblies, the *Comitia Centuriata* and the *Comitia Tributa*. Accordingly, he proposed reviving and enforcing an existing law that had the practical effect of limiting the amount of land that any one person could own.



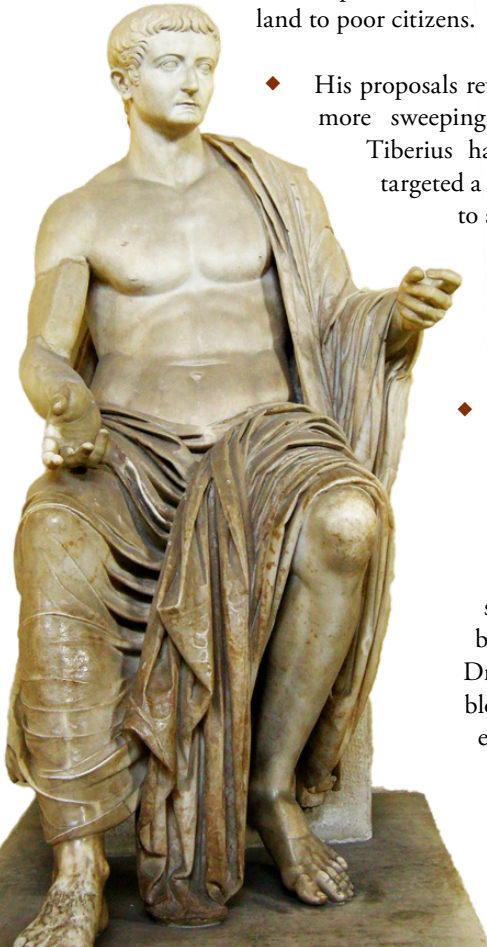
- ◆ Tiberius also proposed taking some of the territory that had been acquired by the Roman state in the course of its conquest and giving plots of this public land to poor Roman citizens who lacked any of their own, thereby transforming homeless people into productive farmers. These proposals were squarely aimed at trying to turn back the clock to a time before the emergence of large, slave-run plantations, to an era when Rome's economy was based on small family farms.
- ◆ What was radical about Tiberius's actions was not so much the proposals themselves—there were already similar initiatives underway—but that he bypassed the Senate and presented them directly to the voting assemblies of the people. To the Senate and the Roman elites that it represented, this end run around them was a move that threatened to rewrite the rules of power within the Roman Republic, to their loss and the people's gain.

THE OPPOSITION

- ◆ The situation surrounding Tiberius Gracchus's reforms escalated when the Senate allied with another tribune, who promised to use his veto power to block a vote on Tiberius's proposals. Traditionally, tribunician vetoes had been employed to nullify egregious actions of senatorial magistrates; to wield the veto power against a fellow tribune of the plebs in this way was unprecedented.
- ◆ Tiberius's response to this ploy was also unprecedented: He went back to the citizens and got them to vote to remove the other tribune from office. With his rival thus disposed of, the people voted to enact his agrarian reform proposals, including a land commission composed of Tiberius, his brother Gaius, and their father-in-law.
- ◆ The Senate then attempted to thwart Tiberius by utilizing its authority to control state expenditures. They simply refused to allocate any funds to the land commission to use to purchase or redistribute land. Fortuitously for Tiberius, however, right at this moment, the last King of Pergamum died without leaving any heirs. In his will, the king bequeathed his kingdom to Rome.

- ◆ Tiberius promptly put a proposal before the people's assembly that would divert the money from this legacy to the land commission. Not surprisingly, it passed. This act set yet another significant precedent, because the people were enacting laws that involved foreign affairs—an area that had traditionally been the prerogative of the Senate. Tiberius broke yet another tradition by announcing that he would run for reelection as tribune—normally a one-year magistracy—in order to continue his work and ensure that it was not undone.
- ◆ While both sides had been stretching tradition and the time-honored divisions of political power, the Senate's next move took things to a whole new level. At an assembly concerning the forthcoming tribunician election, a number of senators and their followers became enraged. Breaking up wooden benches to make clubs, they beat to death Tiberius and nearly 300 of his followers.
- ◆ This was a shocking event. Politicians at the highest level of Roman society were openly killing one another. Debate and discussion had been replaced by gang violence. Unfortunately, the murder of Tiberius Gracchus was an omen of the future, a symptom of the decline of the Roman Republic, as open violence would more and more frequently become a part of Roman politics over the next century.
- ◆ While clearly much of the opposition to Tiberius Gracchus was conservative reaction against his agrarian reform proposals, it is significant to note that the land commission was not dissolved after his death. Thus, at least for some aristocrats, the problem was not the proposals themselves, but rather jealousy over who should get the credit for them. Nevertheless, the agrarian reform process stagnated, not much was done, and 10 years went by with little having changed.
- ◆ In 123 B.C., Tiberius's younger brother, Gaius Gracchus, decided to pick up where his brother had left off. He ran for and was elected tribune, and promptly put forward the same proposals that Tiberius had. Gaius was aware that there were many other unhappy groups in Roman society, and so he appended a whole slate of additional laws.

- ◆ Among Gaius's proposed reforms were laws providing that soldiers' clothing be provided at state expense rather than the cost being deducted from their salaries; that new roads be built, which helped farmers get their crops to market more cheaply; that colonies be founded, including one near the site where Carthage had been destroyed; and that juries include representation from the poorer classes.
- ◆ Particularly notable was a plan for the state to provide subsidized grain to poor citizens who lived in the city of Rome. One might view this as an early example of a welfare program. Another significant proposal was that the Latin allies in Italy finally be granted full Roman citizenship. And the centerpiece, of course, was a proposal to distribute public land to poor citizens.



- ◆ His proposals reveal that Gaius had in mind a much more sweeping reform of Roman society than Tiberius had contemplated. Gaius's proposals targeted a range of unhappy groups, and sought to shift the balance of power even more in favor of the people. They also made him extremely popular with the groups that they benefitted, and he was reelected tribune.
- ◆ The Senate was quite upset by these proposals, but because of the odium that had accrued to them for the murder of Tiberius, they were initially reluctant to move so openly against Gaius. Instead, they sought to beat Gaius at his own game by backing another tribune, Livius Drusus, who undermined Gaius by blocking his proposals and pandering even more egregiously to some of the disgruntled groups.

- ◆ The opposition to Gaius Gracchus continued to grow, culminating in the passage of a special decree known as the *senatus consultum ultimum*. This in essence was a declaration of martial law that empowered the magistrates either to use, or to condone the use of, any force they deemed appropriate, if they felt the Roman state was imperiled.
- ◆ With the *senatus consultum ultimum* supplying legal justification, one of Rome's consuls stirred up a violent attack on Gaius and his supporters. While not wanting to dirty their hands directly, the Senate had, for all practical purposes, put a bounty on Gaius Gracchus. Gaius at first tried to flee, but later committed suicide to avoid capture.

THE AFTERMATH

- ◆ Many of the tragedies of the next 100 years might have been avoided if the Gracchi's proposals had been accepted, but the ruling class was resistant to change and would not concede. Even more than fearing change, however, they were jealous of any one of their own number who found a novel way to increase his popularity and move ahead of his peers. This may be the real reason why they were so opposed to the reforms of the Gracchi brothers.
- ◆ One of the great mysteries concerning the Gracchi is what their motivations were. Were they unselfish and idealistic reformers trying to do what they thought was best for the health of their country, or were they self-interested, ambitious aristocrats who had come up with a clever new way to gain power? Ancient sources are split on this issue, with some praising the altruism of the brothers while others accuse them of harboring kingly ambitions.
- ◆ Whatever the reason for the Gracchi's attempts at reforms, there were several serious consequences resulting from these events. First of all, the experiments with reform were squelched, ensuring that all the various resentments that had been simmering would continue to fester and grow worse. Unable to have their grievances resolved through constitutional means, discontented elements would soon resort to even more extreme forms of violence than had been associated with the Gracchi.



- ◆ A second major legacy of the Gracchi was the undermining of many of the institutions of the republic. For example, the potential for exploiting the office of tribune to bypass the Senate and allow legislation to be directly enacted by the people was now plain for all to see, as was the possibility of employing rival tribunes to check one another's actions.
- ◆ For the remainder of the republic, there would be constant strife between tribunes and the Senate, as well as among the tribunes themselves. In addition, a destructive paradigm had been established for violence as an acceptable part of politics, a trend that would continue to grow worse.
- ◆ Finally, the rise and fall of the Gracchi increased the already present factionalism among the ranks of Roman aristocrats. The most significant form that this would take during the rest of the late republic was a struggle between two groups often referred to as the Optimates and the Populares. The Optimates were stereotypically viewed as representing the traditional aristocratic elites, whereas the Populares championed the cause of the common people.

- ◆ These two factions are sometimes referred to as political parties. This is a misleading designation, however, because they were not formal affiliations, nor were they actual organizations in any sense. They were more akin to loose and constantly shifting informal alliances.
- ◆ The Optimates, whose self-chosen name literally means “the best people,” tried to portray themselves as noble defenders of the old traditions that had made Rome great. The Populares, on the other hand, positioned themselves as selfless servants of the will of the people. In reality, both groups were entirely self-serving.

Suggested Reading

Crook et al., *The Cambridge Ancient History*.
Stockton, *The Gracchi*.

Questions to Consider

- ✎ Do you think that the motivations of the Gracchi were primarily altruistic or self-serving?
- ✎ If all of Gaius Gracchus's proposals had passed, do you think it would have solved some of the problems facing the republic and given it a longer lease on life?



GAIUS MARIUS THE
NOVUS HOMO

LECTURE 17

The final 80 years of the Roman Republic was characterized by a series of pairs of Roman aristocrats fighting with and murdering one another to see which one would emerge as the dominant figure in Rome. Their motivation was usually nothing more than personal ambition, but their private feuds ended up engulfing the republic in a series of increasingly destructive and large-scale civil wars. The first in this sequence of ambitious warlords was a man named Gaius Marius.

RISE TO POWER

- ◆ Gaius Marius was somewhat unusual in that he did not spring from one of the established elite families such as the Aemelii, Metelli, or Claudii, but was instead a comparative outsider. He was from an equestrian Italian family from the town of Arpinum, and no member of his family had ever held a significant office in the Roman government.
- ◆ Marius would hold the highest office, the consulship, no fewer than seven times—a record in Roman history up to that point. Such a man, one from a previously undistinguished family who held high office in Roman government, was unusual, and was known as a *novus homo*, or “new man.”
- ◆ Rome was a society that gave advantages to insiders and the established order. To gain admission to this exclusive club, an outsider like Marius needed help. One way to do this was to attach yourself to or ingratiate yourself with one of the grand families. Marius climbed the first step on the ladder to success by becoming a client of one of the oldest, most prestigious families at Rome, the Metelli.
- ◆ He also managed to marry far above his station, securing as his wife Julia III, a member of the old patrician Julian family. Under the patronage of the Metelli, Marius was elected tribune in 119 B.C. and praetor in 115 B.C. He served as governor of one of the Spanish provinces, and there gained useful military experience fighting against the unruly hill tribes, who practiced hit-and-run warfare.

- ◆ It was at this time that war against the Numidian king, Jugurtha, broke out. In 109 B.C., Quintus Caecilius Metellus, Marius's mentor, was sent to North Africa to defeat Jugurtha. As might be expected, Metellus took along his promising protégé, Marius, as a junior officer in this campaign. Metellus was moderately successful—enough that his consulship was extended in 108 B.C. so that he could continue pursuing Jugurtha.
- ◆ Thus far, Marius's career had certainly been successful—especially for a *novus homo*—but was still within the usual route that an ambitious upper-class Roman might follow, and there was nothing particularly radical about Marius's actions. That changed dramatically the next year. Marius announced that he wanted to return to Rome to run for election to the consulship for 107 B.C.
- ◆ Naturally, one of Marius's first steps was to go to his patron, Metellus, to seek his blessing and support, and to request leave from his military post in order to return to Rome and begin his campaign for the consulship. Metellus, however, apparently thought that this was too much, too soon for a *novus homo*. Accordingly, Metellus stated that Marius should wait quite a few years, until Metellus's own son was old enough to run for the consulship, and then the two men could campaign for election jointly.
- ◆ Normally, this would be the end of the matter. Marius might be disappointed, but that was how the game of politics worked; he would just have to be patient and wait his turn. But Marius was not patient. He took the shocking step of going against the wishes of his patron by departing for Rome anyway, campaigning on his own, and being elected consul for 107 B.C.
- ◆ Marius next wanted a military command. Adding injury to insult, he spread rumors that the Jugurthine War was not being run well, and that Metellus was a poor commander. In a series of speeches and letters, Marius appealed to the common people and represented himself as a dynamic leader who was one of them, in contrast to the effete and ineffectual noblemen from the old patrician families.



- ◆ Such accusations found favor with the masses, resulting in legislation being passed by the tribal assembly which took the North African command away from Metellus and gave it to Marius. The popular assembly was now directly meddling in foreign affairs. Marius's actions were also a terrible insult to the entire patron-client system, and to the patrician families of Rome in general.
- ◆ Now Marius had his command, but because it had come through the people rather than the Senate, he technically did not have troops, and the aristocratic Senate was not going to provide them to someone who had so offended one of their number. His solution was to open up enlistment to any citizen who cared to volunteer, regardless of wealth.
- ◆ Marius also reorganized his legions, gave them more professional training, and emphasized drill and formations. This made his troops more flexible in battle. Marius's new methods of recruitment, as well as his new methods of training, resulted in the army's transformation from a citizen militia into a standing semiprofessional army.
- ◆ An ominous change was that, because soldiers such as Marius's volunteers could not rely on the state to grant them land or money at the end of their service, they were dependent on the patronage of their commanders to come up with such rewards. Effectively, this meant that these armies were not public armies of the Roman Republic, but instead were more akin to being the private armies of their respective commanders.
- ◆ This shift in loyalties created all sorts of potentially dangerous consequences, including that soldiers would only listen to the orders of their general and patron rather than those of the state and Senate, and that even after discharge from the ranks, veterans would retain their loyalty to commanders in a patron-client type relationship.

ENTER SULLA

- ◆ Marius took over the war in North Africa and, after spending some time training his newly enlisted troops, began to get the upper hand over Jugurtha. Marius was a good general, and quite popular with his men. He cultivated this reputation by sharing their hardships, and not allowing himself the luxuries that his rank would normally allow.
- ◆ Jugurtha was still a formidable opponent, and the war against him was not an easy one. He finally met his downfall, however, not by being openly defeated by the Romans, but rather by treachery.
- ◆ One of Jugurtha's main supporters in his struggle against Rome had been Bocchus, his father-in-law, who was also the monarch of the neighboring kingdom of Mauretania. Bocchus was the sort of ruler who always tried to hedge his bets, however, and even while notionally assisting Jugurtha, he also maintained diplomatic relations with Rome.
- ◆ One of Marius's junior officers who dealt with Bocchus was a young, ambitious member of an old patrician family which had recently fallen on hard times. This man, Lucius Cornelius Sulla, had been selected by Marius to serve as his quaestor during the North African campaign. He was thus a protégé of Marius in much the same way that Marius had started out as a protégé of Metellus.
- ◆ In the course of his interactions with Bocchus, Sulla had seized the opportunity to ingratiate himself to such a degree that Bocchus regarded him as a friend. A bit later, when Jugurtha sought refuge at Bocchus's court, Bocchus summoned his Roman friend, Sulla, and offered to betray Jugurtha by handing him over to the Roman. Sulla informed Marius of the offer, and received the go-ahead to capture Jugurtha.
- ◆ The unfortunate Jugurtha was transported back to Rome where he was displayed in chains as part of the triumph held in 104 B.C., which Marius now got to celebrate for his North African victory. Jugurtha met an ignominious end, being strangled to death in prison.

- ◆ With his victory over Jugurtha, Marius's popularity—at least among some elements of Roman society—soared. One minor note of discord slightly marred his moment of triumph, however. Instead of Marius garnering all the glory for the victory himself, his assistant, Sulla, was receiving some of the accolades for having engineered the capture of Jugurtha. Still, things were definitely looking good for Marius, and on a wave of popular acclaim, he was elected to a second consulship.



GERMANIC TRIBES

- ◆ The war against Jugurtha had proven beneficial to Marius's career, but a new—and much more serious—foreign threat would soon propel it to unheard-of heights. Since the Gallic invasion in 390 B.C., Rome's northern border along the Alps had been relatively stable. Now, however, several migrating Germanic tribes that had been driven from their homelands by a combination of population growth and environmental change began to encroach into Transalpine Gaul.
- ◆ The two largest and most threatening of these tribes were the Teutones and the Cimbri. In 113 B.C., they inflicted a defeat on a Roman consul and his army, but did not immediately press their advantage. After meandering around for a couple years, in 109 B.C. they entered the Rhône Valley and requested permission to settle in Roman territory in return for serving as Roman mercenaries. This offer was rejected by the Senate, whereupon the Germans thrashed another consul and army that had been dispatched to thwart their advance.
- ◆ In 107 B.C., they ambushed and defeated yet a third consular army, this time adding the ritual humiliation of forcing the prisoners to walk under the yoke. They followed this up in 105 B.C. with a deeper incursion into Roman territory, although again the Germans made diplomatic overtures to the Romans for a peaceful settlement. The proconsul who was facing the Germans already had a substantial army, but because the Romans were now taking the northern threat more seriously, the Senate sent out one of the consuls with an additional army as reinforcements.
- ◆ The largest battle yet between Romans and Germans was fought at Arausio in 105 B.C. Unfortunately for the Romans, their two commanders fell to squabbling with one another, with the result that they failed to coordinate their attacks. The Germans were thus able to defeat them sequentially in what proved to be the most costly Roman defeat since Hannibal's victory over them at the battle of Cannae a century earlier.

- ◆ The crushing defeat at Arausio threw the Romans into a panic about the northern menace and, in this crisis, the Roman people looked to their most renowned general, Marius, to save them. Marius had just completed his defeat of Jugurtha, and was now elected consul for a second time by popular demand.
- ◆ Marius energetically threw himself into preparing his army, replicating the methods of recruitment and training that he had used successfully earlier. Marius was very fortunate to have time to institute this training while the Teutones diverted to raiding Gaul for a couple of years and the Cimbri became entangled in an abortive invasion of Spain.
- ◆ All of this preparation occupied several years, during which time Marius was reelected to the consulship a stunning five years in a row. This was a shocking departure from precedent, made possible by a combination of his enormous popularity and the urgency of the threat of the Germans. This did, however, cause resentment and jealousy among the Roman elites.
- ◆ In 102 B.C., the Germans launched a multipronged attack on Italy. The Teutones swarmed down from Gaul through the Rhône valley and approached Italy along the coast from the west, while the Cimbri advanced directly south over the passes through the Alps. Leaving a colleague to try to hold off the Cimbri, Marius moved against the Teutones in Gaul. He did not rush into combat prematurely, but shadowed his opponents, assessing their strength and allowing them to deplete their supplies.
- ◆ Despite taunts from the Teutones, Marius refused to come out and face them in open battle. The frustrated Germans tried an assault against Marius's fortified camp, but this was easily repulsed by the disciplined Romans. Finally, they simply bypassed Marius and headed for the passes that would take them into Italy proper. Marius then left his camp and marched in their wake, harassing them, but still avoiding a pitched battle.

- ◆ Near the town of Aquae Sextiae, Marius judged that the moment had arrived. The night before the battle, he sent a force of 3,000 men to circle around behind the enemy and hide there. In the morning, he drew up the rest of his army on some high ground, and he himself allegedly took a position in the front ranks, like an ordinary legionary. If true—and it may well be—this is an unusual case of a Roman commander directly participating in combat.
- ◆ The Teutones charged ferociously up the slope at the Romans and were met first with a hail of javelins, and then with a solid wall of Roman shields and swords. The battle continued with fierce hand-to-hand combat, until the 3,000 Romans planted during the night by Marius emerged from their hiding place and crashed into the German rear. This proved to be the turning point, and tens of thousands of Teutones were slaughtered by the exultant Romans.



- ◆ There was still the threat of the Cimbri, however, and Marius now rushed to his colleague's assistance. The combined Roman armies fought the decisive engagement in 101 B.C. at the Battle of Vercellae. With Marius taking the lead in command, the battle proved nearly as great a victory as Aquae Sextiae, and the Cimbri were completely routed.
- ◆ Marius returned to Rome to great adulation and celebrated a massive triumph. Even though the menace of the Germans was now eliminated, a grateful populace elected Marius to a sixth consulship.
- ◆ Now, Marius needed to reward his troops, and to do that he needed land to give them. This prompted him to form an alliance with one of the tribunes, an ambitious and volatile young politician named Saturninus. This was an act that, within two years, would bring Marius crashing down from his pinnacle of popularity.
- ◆ Saturninus was a fiery orator, and was not above employing violence and intimidation to achieve his ends. He was eager to use the power of the tribune and the people's voting assemblies to enact radical legislation, putting forward a stream of proposals, including monthly grain distributions to poor citizens in Rome, granting land to veterans, and establishing colonies of veterans.
- ◆ Saturninus pushed things further by introducing some proposals that were guaranteed to personally offend and alienate the Senate, such as requiring them to publicly take oaths to support his legislation. He also introduced a piece of legislation that became known as the *maiestas* law, which made it illegal to "injure or diminish the honor or dignity of the Roman people." Because of its vagueness, this law could be exploited to attack and destroy political opponents.
- ◆ Naturally, the Senate and the Optimates were opposed to this program. Many poorer Roman citizens also turned against it, because the beneficiaries of many of these proposals were Italian half-citizens and allies, and full Roman citizens resented what they perceived as a dilution of their privileges. This led them to reject Saturninus's proposals, and rioting broke out in Rome.

- ◆ Because of his need to reward his troops, Marius supported Saturninus too long, and the backlash against the tribune carried over to Marius, tarnishing his reputation and causing him to lose his popularity with the people. The Senate was already jealous of Marius and looking for a chance to knock him down a notch or two, so were eager to blame him as well.
- ◆ Under direct orders from the Senate to quell the rioting in his role as consul, Marius grudgingly obeyed. This marked the first time that a Roman used troops against other Romans, even though it was at the behest of the Senate. Marius also withdrew his protection from Saturninus, who was subsequently stoned to death by the mob.
- ◆ Embarrassed and with his reputation badly damaged, Marius abruptly announced in 98 B.C. that he needed to fulfill a religious vow, and therefore had to leave Rome immediately and go to the eastern Mediterranean. In reality, it was a self-imposed exile. Marius would ultimately come back to Rome, however, and his career would have a surprising resurgence and second act.

Suggested Reading

Evans, *Gaius Marius*.
Sampson, *The Collapse of Rome*.

Questions to Consider

- ✦ Should Marius be admired as a clever, successful, self-made hero, or as an arrogant self-promotor who harmed his country?
- ✦ Given the crisis of the German invasions, was it justified to break with tradition and elect Marius to the consulship five years in a row?



SULLA THE DICTATOR AND THE SOCIAL WAR

LECTURE 18

At what point is it no longer possible to reverse the downward trajectory of a civilization or state? When does the accumulation of problems achieve an irresistible momentum, and collapse become inevitable? These are questions that haunt the next two decades of Roman history, with the state riven by a vicious civil war between the Romans and their oldest allies, and the longstanding rivalries among Roman politicians set to explode.

PROPOSED REFORMS

- ◆ During most of the 90s B.C., with Marius temporarily removed from the scene in a self-imposed exile in the east, the Senate and the Optimates controlled affairs. They had thwarted earlier reform attempts, such as those of the Gracchi brothers, and they now adopted a hard line against change. As a result, the resentments of veterans, the poor, the equestrians, the lower classes, and the Italians continued to fester.
- ◆ In 91 B.C., yet another tribune, Marcus Livius Drusus, came forward with a slate of proposals for laws that would address some of the still unresolved problems. Interestingly, Drusus was not a representative of the Populares, but instead of the Optimates. He seems to have adopted a moderate stance, believing that some change was necessary to avoid chaos. He thought it would be smarter for the Optimates to offer some compromises, rather than risk losing their grip on power entirely.
- ◆ His three main proposals were: to give land to veterans and the poor through the establishment of new colonies; to admit 300 equestrians to the Senate, doubling its size, and drawing juries from this larger pool; and finally, to extend citizenship to all Italians south of the Po River. This was one of those compromises that gave more than some groups had wanted to concede, but offered less than others had hoped for—thus, it fully pleased no one. Still, it seemed as if the first two proposals would be passed by both Senate and people.

- ◆ Just as with the Gracchi, there is uncertainty about the degree to which Drusus's actions were motivated by altruistic concern for his country and how much he was driven by seeking to enhance his reputation and attract supporters. What might have happened had Drusus's legislation passed is unknown, however, because before the vote could take place, Drusus died under mysterious circumstances, most likely stabbed by an assassin.

THE SOCIAL WAR

- ◆ The death of Drusus and his legislation was the last straw for the long-suffering Italian allies. Once again they had had the prize of citizenship dangled before them, only to have it denied. Fed up with the Romans' intransigence, many of the Italians now broke into open rebellion against Rome. The resulting conflict became known as the Social War, from the Latin word *socii* ("allies").
- ◆ The confederacy of Italian allies modeled itself after the Roman state. They set up a Senate-like assembly composed of 500 members, and established a capital city, which they named Italia.
- ◆ The Social War was particularly bitter because it was, in essence, a civil war. Both sides were using the same tactics and equipment, and it pitted against one another men who for centuries had fought together. Rome had the advantage in having more total troops, as well as an experienced body of officers to call upon. Among these was Lucius Cornelius Sulla, who enhanced his reputation by ably leading armies against the rebels in central Italy.
- ◆ In 90 B.C., in an effort to quell the revolt and prevent it from spreading, the Romans proclaimed that full citizenship would be granted to all Latins and Italians who had remained loyal, and further stated that any rebels who immediately ceased hostilities and renewed allegiance to Rome would also be awarded full citizenship. This had some effect, and although the war continued, similar laws were passed in each of the two subsequent years, eroding support for the rebellion.

- ◆ The Italians achieved some early successes but, as the weight of Rome's resources came to bear upon them, the tide turned in Rome's favor. Nevertheless, the war dragged on until 88 B.C., when Roman armies finally crushed the most intransigent of the insurgents.
- ◆ The war brought considerable death and devastation to central Italy, produced hordes of refugees and burdensome debts, and set a very harmful precedent for civil war being used to solve political disagreements—all of which should have been easily avoidable if the Romans had only done the obvious and justified thing by extending citizenship to the Italians much earlier.
- ◆ On the positive side, the ranks of Rome's citizens were now increased by at least half a million, and all of Italy became fully Romanized and integrated into Roman culture. As the war was winding down, Sulla, who was clearly on the ascendant, was elected consul for the year 88 B.C.

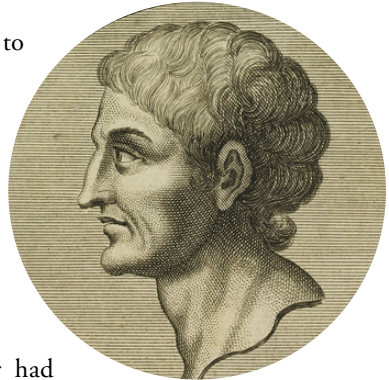


SULLA'S RISE

- ◆ Sulla soon aspired to enhance his military laurels. Conveniently for Sulla, just as the Social War was winding down, a new external foe had emerged in King Mithridates VI of Pontus, a realm located near the Black Sea. Mithridates actually had talent and ambition, and he would prove to be a thorn in Rome's side for several generations.
- ◆ After a series of inciting incidents, the armies of Mithridates and his generals swept into Greece and parts of Macedonia, and the entire eastern holdings of Rome seemed to be crumbling. The situation was grave, and the Senate authorized a powerful army to go east and confront Mithridates. But there was some dispute as to who would receive command of Rome's army.
- ◆ Marius, now elderly, felt that the command should be his due to his previous successes against the Germans. The Senate, however, favored Sulla, and announced that the command against Mithridates would go to him. By now, though, there had been too many examples illustrating how the will of the Senate could be circumvented.
- ◆ Sure enough, a tribune backed by Marius came forward with a raft of new proposals, among them one that would strip the command from Sulla and award it to Marius. The now-predictable riots ensued, but the bill passed, and Sulla was forced to flee the city. Rather than going meekly into exile, however, Sulla took the six legions he had raised to fight Mithridates and marched on Rome.
- ◆ Sulla's move was so unexpected that there was no organized opposition. His men captured the city, brutally cutting down any who opposed them, and setting fire to their houses. Sulla declared the equivalent of martial law, and had Marius and 11 of his most prominent supporters condemned as traitors to the state. He also, of course, had the command against Mithridates switched once again from Marius to himself.

- ◆ Now it was Marius who was on the run, escaping and finding refuge in North Africa. Having allied himself firmly with the Optimate faction, Sulla pushed through several bills whose intent was to solidify their control and curb the power of the tribunes and popular assemblies. This was the first time that a Roman had marched on Rome, using a Roman army against his own country, and it set a horrible precedent.
- ◆ With his dominance reestablished and the Senate seemingly in control in Rome, Sulla took his army and left for the east to campaign against Mithridates. Back in Rome, meanwhile, opposition to Sulla coalesced around a politician named Cinna, who allied himself with Marius. By appealing to Marius's veterans, slaves, and disgruntled Italians, the two men raised an army, and, at its head, Marius marched on Rome.
- ◆ After a brief siege, Marius captured the city, killed one of the consuls, and embarked on a bloody purge of his enemies, who were unconstitutionally executed without a trial. Their property was confiscated and their severed heads were put on display on the rostra in the forum. Marius now contrived to have himself appointed for the year 86 B.C. to a record seventh consulship, and, predictably, had the Mithridates command transferred from Sulla to himself.
- ◆ Marius did not enjoy his triumph for long, however. Only a few days after taking office, the 70-year-old Marius became ill. He fell into a delirium in which he feverishly imagined that he was leading the army against Mithridates. Dreaming of the command that had been denied him, Marius died only 17 days into his seventh consulship.
- ◆ Rome was still controlled by Marius's followers, who began to raise forces with which to oppose Sulla. In the east, Sulla half-heartedly pursued the war against Mithridates. In 85 B.C., he hastily made a treaty with Mithridates, and in 83 B.C., Sulla set sail for Italy, bringing five legions of his troops along with him.

- ◆ For a second time, Sulla marched at the head of a Roman army against his own capital city. In a battle just outside the city gates, Sulla defeated his enemies. Some of these, such as the son of Marius, committed suicide, while others fled to remote provinces. By 81 B.C., the various opponents were vanquished and Sulla was once more on top.
- ◆ This time, Sulla was determined to settle affairs to his liking with such finality that no opposition would be left to thwart him. He had the Senate officially endorse all of his previous actions and, most consequentially, appoint him dictator, which gave him unlimited power to do anything he wanted.
- ◆ In the past, the office of dictator had been accompanied by a strict term limit of no more than six months. Sulla, however, had himself made dictator without any time limit. He claimed that his only goal was to restore the republic, and to return Rome to its old-fashioned virtue. To achieve these ends, he settled on a two-part strategy.
- ◆ The simpler and more direct component of Sulla's plan was to eliminate anyone who might be a threat or who might disagree with him. This was accomplished via a mechanism known as proscription, which involving publishing lists declaring certain individuals outlaws. These individuals had their citizenship revoked and a reward placed on their heads. Anyone could lawfully kill such proscribed persons and claim the reward.
- ◆ The property of the proscribed was seized and auctioned by the state. Sulla filled the proscription lists with the supporters of Marius, political opponents, wealthy people whose property he wished to seize, and many others. Thousands were said to have been killed, including 15 ex-consuls, 90 senators, and 2,600 equestrians.



- ◆ The second stage of Sulla's plan was to implement a series of reforms that would allegedly restore the republic to its traditional state, one in which the Senate and nobles had complete control. To do this, he increased the power of the upper classes and Senate by reorganizing the voting assemblies to give them more weight, granting the Senate greater control over proposing and approving legislation, enlarging the number of senators to 600, preventing anyone from holding offices consecutively, and limiting the power of the tribunician veto.
- ◆ Having reorganized the republic to his satisfaction, Sulla resigned from the dictatorship, withdrew to his country estate in Campania, began to write his memoirs, and indulged in his favorite pastimes of hunting and drinking. He plainly envisioned for himself a long, comfortable retirement, but it was not to be. Much like Marius, a short time after reaching the peak of power, Sulla fell ill. He died after only a year of retirement.

Suggested Reading

Dart, *The Social War*.
Keaveney, *Sulla*.

Questions to Consider

- ✎ Whose actions were more innovative, Marius's or Sulla's?
- ✎ Whose actions were more detrimental to the Roman Republic, Marius's or Sulla's?



THE ERA OF POMPEY THE GREAT

LECTURE 19

Among the millions of boys in the ancient world who dreamed of emulating Alexander the Great, there was one who would grow up to see his ambitions realized: Gnaeus Pompeius, better known as Pompey the Great. Pompey was precocious, achieving astonishing successes while just in his twenties. Like Alexander, he led an army rampaging through the east, conquering a vast swath of territory and amassing unprecedented renown and riches. While his career would win him everlasting glory, it would also hasten the destruction and collapse of the Roman Republic.

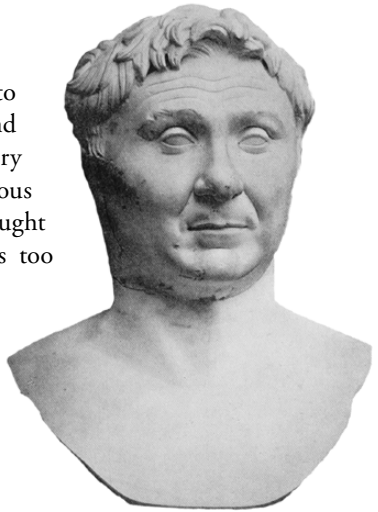
EARLY LIFE

- ◆ Pompey's father, Pompeius Strabo, was a well-regarded general and influential politician who, as consul in 89 B.C., managed to climb to the highest levels of the Roman government. He owned large estates in the northern Picenum region of Italy, an area that would be a fertile source of clients and soldiers for both Strabo and his son.
- ◆ While Strabo certainly had a successful career, he seems to have had an off-putting personality that hindered his popularity. Strabo's son, Pompey, apparently inherited his father's military competence and also significantly improving upon his disposition. The younger Pompey had an appealing personality that enabled him to win friends and attract followers.
- ◆ Pompey's charisma was demonstrated early on when a near-mutiny among Strabo's troops was calmed by the 18-year-old Pompey, who stepped up to bring them back in line, at one point even flinging himself down across the gate of the camp to prevent the troops from running off.
- ◆ Pompey's most dominant personality trait, however, was ambition. This was coupled with a burning impatience that made him loathe the idea of slowly working his way up the ladder of government posts and offices in the manner that good Roman aristocrats were supposed to.

- ◆ Politics at Rome over the last few decades had been dominated by the struggles between Sulla and Marius and their respective followers. In 83 B.C., when Pompey was still only 23 years old, Sulla returned from the east with his army and made his infamous march against Rome.
- ◆ Although Marius himself had recently died, his faction still officially controlled the government, and thus a Roman civil war was imminent. In this crisis, Pompey decided to throw his support behind Sulla.

SUPPORT OF SULLA

- ◆ Technically, Pompey was too young to hold any elected office or to command troops in any capacity other than as a very junior officer. However, the ambitious Pompey just could not stand the thought that here was a war, but that he was too young to play an important role.
- ◆ With the model of Alexander and his youthful feats in his mind, Pompey was determined to get involved. If he couldn't do it officially, he would find another route.
- ◆ Pompey's solution was to raise his own private army drawn from his father's veterans and his clients in Picenum, and to equip it using his family's wealth. Pompey had absolutely no legal authority or authorization to do this, but he would not let a little detail like that impair his chances of gaining glory.
- ◆ By these means, Pompey assembled his own army of no fewer than three legions. As the army's self-appointed general, Pompey marched off to join the civil war on Sulla's side. He may have been arrogant, but he had skill to back it up, winning several battles on his way to join up with Sulla.



- ◆ In the civil wars that followed, Pompey was a strong supporter of Sulla, commanding armies victoriously in Italy, Sicily, and North Africa. He hunted down Sulla's enemies so enthusiastically that he earned the nickname *carnifex adulescens*, meaning "the young butcher."
- ◆ When he returned to Italy, he asked Sulla if he could celebrate a triumph. Sulla was initially reluctant to grant such an exalted honor to a man so young, but he eventually gave in and allowed Pompey to have his triumph.
- ◆ Pompey continued pursuing and defeating Sulla's enemies. One of the most notable of these was a man named Quintus Sertorius, who was based in Spain and had already defeated several Roman armies sent there against him. In 77 B.C., Pompey was dispatched to Spain to deal with this dangerous opponent.
- ◆ Although Sulla died in 78 B.C., his followers, including Pompey, continued pressing the war against Sertorius. At first, things did not go well for Pompey. Sertorius repeatedly outmaneuvered him, and even defeated Pompey and his lieutenants in several battles. In one of these, Pompey was wounded and only narrowly escaped being captured by Sertorius's troops.
- ◆ The war continued for several years, but with the assistance of reinforcements from Italy, Pompey and the other generals gradually began to get the upper hand. Although at the peak of his power, Sertorius had controlled nearly the entire Iberian Peninsula, he now found himself hemmed in from several sides and pushed into an ever smaller territory.
- ◆ Sertorius's allies began to melt away. In 73 B.C., he was murdered by one of his own officers who had turned traitor. No doubt the assassin expected to receive a rich reward from Pompey for this betrayal, but was severely disappointed when Pompey instead had him executed.

SPARTACUS

- ◆ With Spain pacified, Pompey returned to Italy, where another ongoing conflict offered a further chance to win military glory—the slave revolt of Spartacus. Spartacus was a Thracian by birth who had been captured and enslaved by Rome.
- ◆ Condemned to fight as a gladiator, Spartacus was sent to a gladiator school at Capua, on the Bay of Naples. Spartacus led a revolt of the gladiators at his school, and he and 73 others slew their overseers and escaped.



- ◆ Spartacus and his followers based themselves on Mt. Vesuvius, and launched forays against the nearby plantations of wealthy Romans. They would attack the plantations and then free the slaves laboring on them, most of whom joined Spartacus's band.
- ◆ With his numbers swollen to more than 50,000 through raids, runaways, and sympathizers, Spartacus created a sizable army. He made extremely effective use of it, too, defeating several successive overconfident Roman military forces that were sent against him.
- ◆ What had begun as a seemingly minor rebellion had developed into a major crisis. At the time, Pompey was still in Spain mopping up Sertorius's forces, so the Roman Senate turned to another of its leading generals, Marcus Licinius Crassus, and tasked him with the job of suppressing Spartacus's revolt. Crassus was an ambitious aristocrat who was famous for being fabulously wealthy.



- ◆ Crassus came from an old aristocratic family and had been a member of Sulla's faction, and he is arguably as close an approximation to an entrepreneurial business tycoon as one can find in Roman history. By the time of his death, he had amassed wealth amounting to nearly 170 million sesterces—the largest private fortune we know of in ancient Rome.
- ◆ Crassus was given an army of four legions to suppress Spartacus, and he used his personal wealth to raise even more. He was proceeding with caution when word arrived that Pompey had returned to Italy with his troops and was also marching against Spartacus. Not wanting to share the credit, Crassus stepped up his campaign, cornering Spartacus and decisively defeating him. To discourage future slave rebellions, Spartacus and 6,000 of his followers were crucified along the length of the Appian Way between Capua and Rome.
- ◆ It seemed as if Crassus's victory should gain him great prestige, but at the last moment, Pompey found a way to insert himself into the campaign and steal much of Crassus's glory. A small group of 5,000 slaves had broken away from the main group before the battle. Pompey managed to intercept and destroy them, enabling him to claim that he had been the one to strike the final blow that ended the slave rebellion.

CONSULSHIP AND CONQUEST

- ◆ In 71 B.C., Pompey was still only 35 years old. He had been victorious in Italy, Sicily, North Africa, Spain, and southern Gaul, and now celebrated another triumph for his recent successes in Spain. Despite all these achievements, however, he was not yet a senator, and had never held an actual elected office in the Roman government. He let it be known that he wanted to run for the very highest post, the consulship.
- ◆ Not only had Pompey never held any of the usual offices that led up to it, but he was also too young to be legally eligible for the consulship. On the other hand, he was very popular and still retained control over what amounted to a personal army. The only individual who might have been able to stand up to the intimidation of Pompey's armies was Crassus, who also coveted the consulship.

- ◆ Although he was jealous of his younger rival, Crassus realized that if the two men worked together, they could both get what they wanted. Thus, Pompey and Crassus formed an alliance, and, as a result, both were elected consul for 70 B.C. Pompey had completely circumvented the normal route to the consulship, but by this point he was so powerful that his wishes could not be ignored.
- ◆ The most significant legislation that Pompey presided over as consul was a series of measures restoring the powers that Sulla had stripped from the office of tribune. Pompey did this because he wanted to use tribunes as his pawns and employ their ability to propose laws that could be ratified directly by the voting assemblies of the people, thereby circumventing the Senate. His efforts were successful.
- ◆ Next on Pompey's agenda was another military command. One of the great problems at this time was piracy. Pirates infested much of the Mediterranean, and plundered Roman merchant ships at will. Pompey's campaign against the pirates turned out to be amazingly successful. Unfortunately for him, however, it had been so efficient that his command was over in a short period of time and he was once again left looking for an opportunity to win further glory.
- ◆ The best possibility centered around Rome's old enemy, King Mithridates. The wily Mithridates, ruler of the kingdom of Pontus on the shores of the Black Sea, had been defying Rome for decades, and had managed to survive or even defeat a whole series of eminent Roman generals who had been sent against him. The current general was a man named Lucullus, who, in 68 B.C., had just suffered an embarrassing defeat at the hands of one of Mithridates's allies.
- ◆ In 66 B.C., with a large army allocated to him by new legislation, Pompey swept into Pontus, promptly defeated Mithridates's much weaker force, and captured his kingdom. Mithridates himself escaped and fled to the east, eventually taking refuge on the Crimean Peninsula.

- ◆ Though he continued plotting against Rome, Mithridates was no longer a credible threat. Instead of pursuing him, Pompey turned south and invaded the neighboring kingdom of Armenia. Having subdued Armenia, Pompey then claimed that he was concerned that the neighboring kingdoms might prove hostile, and thus that a preemptive strike was necessary.
- ◆ Pompey continued onward, invading and conquering Albania and Bithynia, then turning south into Syria, what is now Palestine, Nabatea, and Judea. Pompey was having the time of his life, rampaging throughout the eastern Mediterranean, racking up riches and glory. While contemplating heading toward Egypt, however, Pompey got a piece of bad news. Far to the northeast, after doggedly having fought the Romans for 25 years, Mithridates had finally given up and committed suicide. This meant that Pompey's command was now at an end.



- ◆ Pompey's personal wealth and prestige were now truly enormous. He took his time returning to Rome, accepting en route the adulation of Greek states, who lavished honors on him. In Rome, he celebrated yet another triumph, during which he wore a cloak said to have belonged to Alexander the Great. Pompey even took to arranging his hair in a dramatic, swept-back pompadour, in imitation of Alexander's famous hairstyle.
- ◆ Pompey's entire career was a challenge to the republic. He rose to power by working outside the system and irretrievably undermined the institutions of the republic. He set precedents that could not be undone. Nevertheless, in 62 B.C., when he had reached the pinnacle of his power and might have taken over the state, he had enough respect for the republic that he disbanded his army and returned to Rome.

Suggested Reading

Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*.

Leach, *Pompey the Great*.

Seager, *Pompey*.

Questions to Consider

- ✚ In his rise, Pompey broke many traditions and circumvented all the normal procedures. Do you think these actions were destructive to the institutions of Rome, or did they constitute necessary changes to an outdated system?
- ✚ Do you agree with Lucullus's accusation that Pompey specialized in stealing credit for achievements that others had really done the hard work for, or does Pompey fully deserve the credit for his accomplishments?



THE RISE OF JULIUS CAESAR

LECTURE 20

When Pompey the Great triumphantly returned to Rome late in 62 B.C., it seemed unimaginable that there could ever be anyone who could possibly compete with him. Yet, as fate would have it, there was already present within the republic a man who, within a mere decade, would first match Pompey's fame, and then eclipse it. This was Gaius Julius Caesar. Although Pompey and Caesar would eventually become bitter rivals, they began as allies.

THE FIRST TRIUMVIRATE

- ◆ When Pompey returned to Rome from the east, the dilemma facing him was what to do next. There really was no higher position that he could aspire to unless he took the final step of overthrowing the republic and seizing complete power for himself. With his loyal troops behind him, he almost certainly could have done this, and there were many among Rome's elites who both feared and expected him to do so.
- ◆ Instead, Pompey landed peacefully in Italy, disbanded his armies, and respected the conventions of the republic. Even though he had made his entire career by breaking or subverting the rules of the republic, in the end, Pompey did not put his personal ambition ahead of the state itself.
- ◆ The next year, the most pressing obligation that Pompey faced was to fulfill the expectations of his veterans that, in return for having loyally served him, they would receive grants of land from the state upon their discharge. In addition, Pompey needed the Senate to officially ratify his settlement of affairs in the eastern Mediterranean.
- ◆ Pompey no doubt assumed the Senate would move quickly to do both of these things; but once he had disbanded his armies, he lost the coercive power that they exerted, and the Senate delayed granting him what he wanted. All through 61 and 60 B.C., the Senate continually stalled, dithered, or found other issues to distract it, while Pompey grew more and more impatient with their intransigence.

- ◆ Pompey was not the only prominent Roman who had become frustrated with the Senate at this particular moment. Pompey's old rival, Crassus, was also finding his efforts to pass legislation stymied by the Senate. Even though he resented Pompey's having surpassed him in wealth and fame, Crassus was still one of the richest, most powerful, and eminent statesmen of the day. Finally, there was a third Roman, whose ambitions were being thwarted by the Senate. This was the up-and-coming politician, Gaius Julius Caesar.
- ◆ Born in 100 B.C., Caesar was a younger contemporary of Pompey and Crassus. Caesar came from one of the oldest patrician families, the Julii. Up to this point, he had cultivated a solid, but not exceptional career, which had followed a much more conventional path than Pompey's. He now aspired to jump into the top ranks of Rome's politicians by being elected to the consulship; however, much of the Senate opposed his candidacy.
- ◆ These three men, who should have been natural rivals, found common cause against the Senate, and joined together so that each could get what he wanted. Their informal alliance became known as the First Triumvirate.
- ◆ The First Triumvirate's immediate purpose was to get Caesar elected consul for the year 59 B.C., with the understanding that he would use that position to force through grants of land for Pompey's veterans. Caesar was plainly the junior member of the triumvirate, while Pompey was clearly the senior partner.

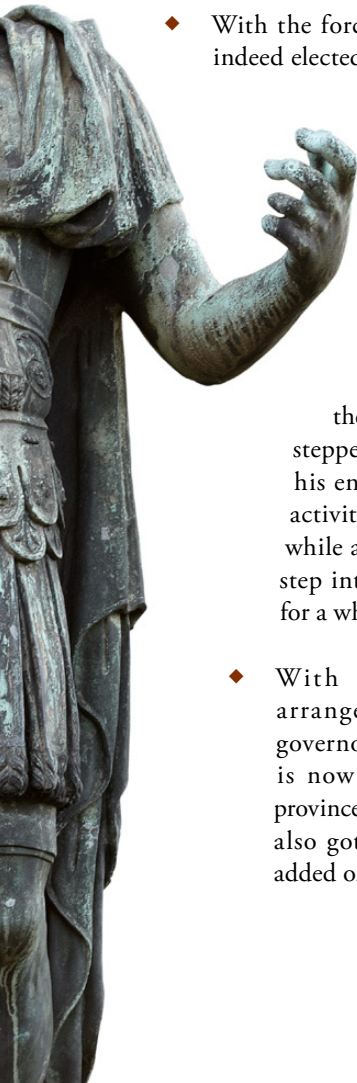
THE RISE OF CAESAR

- ◆ In addition to coming from an illustrious old family, Caesar had connections to some of the more powerful recent figures within the republic. Caesar's aunt had married the great general and statesman Marius, and in 84 B.C., Caesar himself had married the daughter of one of Marius's key supporters.

- ◆ During the dictatorship of Sulla, who employed proscriptions to slaughter nearly all the members of Marius's faction, probably the only reason that the teenage Caesar escaped the purge was because he was deemed too young to be worthy of notice. Caesar, however, harbored great ambitions.
- ◆ After Sulla's dictatorship ended, Caesar embarked on what superficially looked like a very standard career for a young Roman politician. He started at the bottom, and he held the right offices in the right sequence. Yet, throughout this seemingly conventional stage of his career, there were hints of his already sizable ego and of the intense ambition that burned within him.
- ◆ Caesar served in the army as a military tribune, a junior level officer, and gained some fame for prosecuting cases in the Roman law courts. In 69 B.C., he held a quaestorship, and was assigned to a province in Spain, where he discharged his responsibilities in a dutiful manner and made useful contacts among the Spanish tribes.
- ◆ In 65 B.C., Caesar was aedile for the city of Rome, a post that primarily focused on mundane tasks such as maintaining the city's roads and sewers. The aediles were also responsible for overseeing public festivals. Caesar saw an opportunity to gain popularity with the common people by providing public entertainments on an unprecedented scale.



- ◆ Caesar continued to work his way up through the usual offices, including a stint as proconsul, or governor, in Spain, during which he won additional military glory. He returned to Rome in 59 B.C., desiring to ascend the final step on the ladder of offices by being elected consul. His successes had started to elicit jealousy from other aristocrats, and a sizable portion of the Senate balked at throwing their support behind his candidacy. This is why he entered into the First Triumvirate with Pompey and Crassus.



- ◆ With the forceful backing of Pompey and Crassus, Caesar was indeed elected as one of the two consuls for 59 B.C. Caesar ended up completely dominating affairs, and often simply ignored the plaintive protests of his fellow consul, a rival politician named Bibulus. Eventually, Bibulus felt so left out and offended that he retired, effectively leaving Caesar in charge.
- ◆ As consul, Caesar overrode the protests of the Senate and rammed through legislation granting Pompey's veterans land, as well as gaining ratification for Pompey's settlements in the east. Caesar's next dilemma was that the instant he stepped down from the consulship at the end of his term, his enemies would bring lawsuits against him for illegal activities. Because office-holders could not be prosecuted while actually holding office, if Caesar could immediately step into another government post, he would remain safe for a while.
- ◆ With the aid of Pompey and Crassus, Caesar arranged to get a proconsular command: a five-year governorship of the province of Cisalpine Gaul, in what is now northern Italy. This was a relatively peaceful province, and came with a modest allotment of legions. Caesar also got jurisdiction for Transalpine Gaul and Illyricum added on to it.

THE CONQUEST OF GAUL

- ◆ Although Caesar's provinces were peaceful, they bordered Gaul and other regions to the north that were inhabited by dozens of barbarian tribes. These included Celtic, Belgian, and Germanic groups, and Caesar plainly viewed their proximity as a ripe opportunity for him to win military glory.
- ◆ The various tribes were not united, and spent much of their time in conflict with one another. Individually they were fierce and skilled warriors, but they lacked the disciplined organization that was one of the main characteristics of the Roman military system.
- ◆ In the series of wars that Caesar fought against these tribes, he revealed a true talent for warfare, and proved to be an outstanding general with keen strategic and tactical abilities as well as an inspirational leader of men who shared the hardships of his troops.
- ◆ Caesar's conquest of Gaul was fairly blatant imperialism. It has been stated that over the course of nearly a decade campaigning in Gaul, Caesar's actions resulted in the death of at least a million Gauls and the enslavement of another million, and these numbers are probably not much of an exaggeration.



- ◆ Even the Romans thought Caesar's behavior was questionable. The Senate actually proposed a bill stipulating that Caesar should be turned over to the Gauls as a sort of war criminal for his unwarranted attacks. Caesar was careful, however, to always have a tribune or two back at Rome under his control who could veto any legislation that would hurt him.
- ◆ Although physically absent from Rome, Caesar made sure that the people of the city were continually reminded of his feats of military glory. At the end of each campaign season, Caesar himself wrote up an account of his accomplishments, and arranged to have these narratives circulated at Rome. These first-hand dispatches constituted a form of propaganda that enhanced Caesar's reputation. Collected together, these accounts are known as *The Gallic Wars*.

RISING TENSIONS

- ◆ Throughout his conquests, Caesar had maintained his alliance with Pompey and Crassus. The more success Caesar had, however, the greater the tensions among them grew. Pompey had arranged to be given a proconsulship in Spain, but had chosen to remain in Rome governing Spain through legates—an act which was of dubious legality.
- ◆ Meanwhile, if Crassus hoped to keep up with his rivals, he now desperately needed to achieve some great military victory in order to match Pompey's conquest of the east and Caesar's exploits in Gaul. He thus connived to be put in charge of the province of Syria, which bordered the powerful eastern kingdom of Parthia. In 54 B.C., Crassus marched out to invade Parthia with a substantial army of seven legions.
- ◆ Unfortunately, Crassus was not a military commander of genius like Caesar, or even of solid competence like Pompey. In one of the greatest Roman military disasters up to that point, nearly the entire army was killed or captured. Crassus and his son were both slain, and Crassus's head and hands were cut off and put on display at the Parthian court.

- ◆ Pompey was jealous of Caesar, and the Senate was resentful of Caesar's popularity—not to mention deeply concerned about the private army that he had forged. Thus, Pompey, the man who had made a career by circumventing the Senate, found himself rather oddly allying with the Senate against a man who, in many respects, was a younger, even more ambitious version of himself.
- ◆ The Senate demanded that Caesar end his governorship, disband his troops, and return to Rome. Caesar procrastinated. Proposals and counterproposals flew back and forth between Rome and Caesar, but with neither side willing to give in, the Roman Republic now faced the grim prospect of civil war.

Suggested Reading

Caesar, *The Gallic Wars*.

Gelzer, *Caesar*.

Goldsworthy, *Caesar*.

Yavetz, *Julius Caesar and His Public Image*.

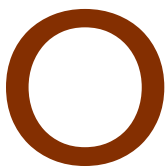
Questions to Consider

- ✚ How would you assess Caesar's campaigns in Gaul? Were they necessary wars to pacify a dangerous region that should be regarded as glorious military achievements, or were they unjustified, unprovoked aggression that resulted in genocide?
- ✚ Compare Caesar's actions to Pompey's. Who did more to undermine the institutions of the Roman Republic?



CIVIL WAR AND THE ASSASSINATION OF CAESAR

LECTURE 21



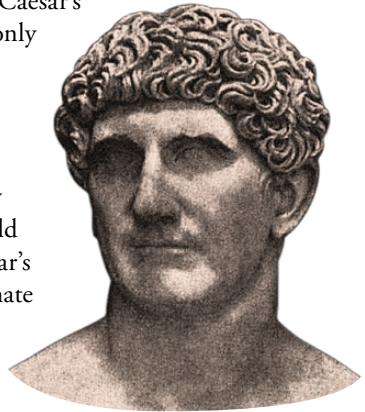
n the morning of January 11, 49 B.C., Julius Caesar stood lost in thought on the banks of the Rubicon, a small river that was the official boundary between the province Caesar governed and Italy proper. The instant that he traversed this boundary at the head of troops, it was an illegal act and amounted to a declaration of war against his own state, the Roman Republic.

MOTIVATIONS

- ◆ Caesar had spent the previous nine years campaigning in Gaul. While he was popular with the Roman people, Caesar had made many enemies in the Senate, and this faction sought to curtail his rise by ending his governorship and, perhaps more importantly, forcing him to disband the large, loyal, and battle-hardened army that he had accumulated over the course of his campaigns.
- ◆ Caesar had been willing to do this, but only if he could stand for election for the consulship for 49 B.C., even though he was not physically present at Rome, as was customary for such candidates. Caesar desired to move seamlessly from one magistracy to the other, and thereby evade his opponents' attempts to bring lawsuits against him—something they could not do so long as he was a currently serving office-holder.
- ◆ When this request was denied, Caesar's agents in Rome claimed that he would disband his troops and return to Rome as a private citizen if Pompey agreed to simultaneously do the same. It is uncertain whether this offer was sincere but, feeling that they finally had a chance to knock Caesar down a peg or two, the senatorial hardliners were not interested in negotiation.
- ◆ They first maneuvered to have two of Caesar's legions stripped from him and transferred to Pompey, and eventually managed to have Caesar declared a public enemy, accompanying this action with the passage of the *senatus consultum ultimum*, a special and controversial decree that empowered the state's representatives to use any means necessary to defend the republic.

- ◆ Caesar always kept a few tribunes in his employ at Rome, and two of these tried to veto this measure, but were ignored and even threatened with bodily harm, resulting in their fleeing Rome to join Caesar. One of these tribunes was a promising protégé of Caesar's named Marcus Antonius, more commonly known today as Mark Antony.

- ◆ Caesar's enemies had now backed him into a corner, so he either had to accede to their demands or else openly revolt against the state. Giving in would probably have meant the end of Caesar's political career. Despite this, the Senate genuinely seem to have believed that he would obey.



- ◆ Even if he did decide to rebel, they assumed that nothing much would happen until spring, because it was midwinter and troops usually did not campaign then. They should thus have had ample time to muster and organize their own sizable military forces as well as those of Pompey, enabling them to crush any attack launched by Caesar.
- ◆ One of the distinguishing characteristics of Caesar as a general was decisiveness, and he displayed it now, choosing instead to immediately cross the Rubicon and march on Rome. He only had a single legion with him, but this move caught the Senate completely by surprise and totally unprepared. Caesar advanced south into Italy, sweeping aside the minor forces that attempted to stop him.
- ◆ Realizing that they did not have the resources to stop Caesar, Pompey and the anti-Caesar faction of the Senate fled Italy for regions in which they could muster troops. These included Spain, North Africa, and the Greek East, much of which considered Pompey its personal patron and where many of his veterans had settled.

- ◆ The rationale offered by Caesar for his actions was that the Senate's brushing aside of the tribunes' vetoes, and their issuance of the *senatus consultum ultimum*, had been illegal, and thus that he was merely defending the laws of the republic. Caesar's quick march had gained him Italy, but the war was by no means won, and, in fact, the military resources available to Pompey and the Senate were substantially greater than those commanded by Caesar. The republic now faced the prospect of a long and destructive civil war.

WAR

- ◆ Leaving Mark Antony and a man named Lepidus in charge of Italy and Rome, Caesar first targeted his foes in Spain. In a lightning campaign in Spain lasting less than two months, he defeated the Pompeian forces there and returned to Rome, where he was appointed consul for the year 48 B.C.
- ◆ Hoping to win over those who were not adamantly opposed to him, Caesar exhibited restraint, deliberately not emulating Sulla, who, a generation earlier, had similarly marched on Rome and then indulged in a bloody purge of his enemies. He also passed popular legislation aimed at alleviating debt, encouraging business, and permitting those who had been exiled by Pompey to come home.
- ◆ Meanwhile, Pompey had established himself in the east, where he was industriously assembling a very large and steadily growing army, which included many veteran troops. The challenge posed by Caesar seems to have galvanized and rejuvenated Pompey, who now exhibited the energy and drive that had characterized the early stages of his career.
- ◆ Ancient sources claim that Pompey personally oversaw the training of his men, going so far as to participate in the drills himself, and even demonstrating fighting techniques to the recruits. Judging Pompey to be the most serious threat facing him, and one that would only grow more dangerous with time, Caesar decided to force an immediate confrontation with his old rival.

- ◆ Caesar gathered his legions at Brundisium, a port on the heel of the Italian peninsula that was the standard departure point for travel eastward, but getting them to Greece presented a serious problem. He had few transport ships, Pompey's much superior navy controlled the seas, and Caesar was low on supplies for his army. In a typically daring move, Caesar undertook a risky winter-time crossing, dodging Pompey's ships and sailing across the Adriatic with about half his men.



- ◆ Caesar tried to seize one of Pompey's supply dumps at Dyrrhachium, but Pompey intercepted him with a force that probably at least doubled the number of Caesar's army. After some complicated siege warfare and skirmishing, Caesar's now starving army was compelled to retreat and retreat again, falling back southward all the way to Pharsalus in Greece.
- ◆ Pompey's followers felt that they now had Caesar on the run, and urged Pompey to seek a decisive battle in which Caesar and his army could be destroyed once and for all. Pompey agreed, and the stage was set for the final showdown between Caesar and Pompey at the Battle of Pharsalus. Pompey commanded about 45,000 troops, versus perhaps 25,000 for Caesar.
- ◆ In order to equal the length of Pompey's line, Caesar had to deploy his men in a substantially thinner formation; but when the battle began, they held their own, and the outcome remained uncertain. The decisive moment occurred on the flank opposite the river, where Caesar's cavalry succeeded in routing their Pompeian counterparts. With Pompey's cavalry protecting that side of his line cleared away, Caesar was able to direct a contingent of troops that he had previously held back to attack this exposed flank.
- ◆ Under pressure from two sides, the Pompeian line crumbled, and Caesar had at last won a great and decisive victory over his rival. When Pompey saw the battle beginning to turn against him, he tore off the emblems of his rank and fled from the field. While he managed to escape, thousands of his men were killed and tens of thousands captured.
- ◆ Seeking asylum, Pompey escaped to Egypt, which was one of the last remaining major independent kingdoms around the shores of the Mediterranean that was not yet under Roman control. Knowing that Caesar was likely to pursue Pompey to Egypt, and hoping to curry favor with him, the Egyptians promptly murdered Pompey. When Caesar landed in Egypt three days later, he was presented with Pompey's pickled head preserved in a jar of brine. Egypt was the last Hellenistic kingdom surviving from the break-up of Alexander's empire, and it was still ruled by direct descendants of Alexander's general, Ptolemy.



- ◆ Currently, the country was enmeshed in a civil war between two of Ptolemy's descendants, the teenaged king Ptolemy XIII and his sister Cleopatra VII. Although he only had one legion with him and had yet to deal with his senatorial foes, Caesar immediately inserted himself into this local conflict on the side of Cleopatra. It was a rash move, and Caesar found himself in a very dangerous situation, trapped and besieged in the palace at Alexandria by more than 20,000 pro-Ptolemy soldiers.
- ◆ After holding out for several months, Caesar was rescued by the arrival of several more of his legions, and with these reinforcements he was then able to defeat the pro-Ptolemy faction and place Cleopatra on the throne as Queen of Egypt. At some point during all of this, the 53-year-old Caesar embarked upon a famous affair with the 22-year-old Egyptian queen. The union produced a son named Caesarion, whom Cleopatra hoped would be officially recognized as Caesar's heir.

- ◆ Much of the Senate, although inclined to favor Pompey, had officially taken a neutral, wait-and-see position while the civil war played out. As Caesar's successes continued, some of these senators openly began to side with him. Pompey was now vanquished, but Caesar still had to deal with the hardcore group of senators who were irretrievably opposed to him.
- ◆ The most prominent of these was the stern and inflexible Cato the Younger, who had been especially active in spurring the Senate to issue its ultimatum to Caesar that prompted the civil war, and who had consistently remained a fiery opponent of his. Caesar's Egyptian adventures had kept him away from Rome until late 47 B.C., but he could not stay in Rome long, and soon had to depart once again for Africa, where Cato and the other senators opposing Caesar had gathered their forces.
- ◆ Caesar was outnumbered yet again. After some preliminary fighting, the final battle took place in 46 B.C. near the town of Thapsus. Caesar's legionaries methodically moved forward, slicing through the enemy lines and completely routing their foes. In the aftermath of the battle, a number of the defeated army's leaders committed suicide, Cato among them.
- ◆ Some other leaders, including Pompey's two sons, Gnaeus and Sextus, fled to Spain, where they drew upon Pompey's connections there to organize the opposition to Caesar. Eventually, they would become dangerous enough that Caesar would have to lead one final campaign against them in Spain in early 45 B.C. Following Caesar's victory, the long civil wars were at last over.

CONSPIRACY

- ◆ Caesar was now indisputably the sole ruler of Rome. Given the Romans' long-standing hatred for kings, he had to find a way to rule Rome as one person, but somehow avoid appearing like a king. While his attention was mainly focused on winning the civil wars, he had simply gotten himself elected consul over and over again; but after a few years, this provoked resentment among Roman aristocrats because he was monopolizing one of the two available consulships.

- ◆ Caesar then turned to Roman tradition, where there had been a special government post of dictator to which the Romans occasionally appointed someone in times of extreme emergency. Dictators exercised supreme power over the state, but were strictly limited to no more than a six-month reign. Several times, Caesar got himself appointed dictator for brief periods, and then began stretching this, becoming dictator for a year, and then for renewable terms.



- ◆ Finally, on February 14th, 44 B.C., Caesar arranged to be given the dictatorship as a lifetime appointment. This was an insult to the republic, and was tantamount to being a king. This act provoked great resentment, which was not helped by the fact that Caesar just did not behave very modestly. Caesar was rude to senators, and didn't even try to pretend that they were his peers.
- ◆ These actions led to a general feeling that Caesar was acting too much like a king. People began to look to the politician Marcus Junius Brutus to do something about Caesar and his perceived kingly ambitions. In 44 B.C., a conspiracy of 60 senators, which included both former Pompeians as well as some previous backers of Caesar, coalesced around Brutus.
- ◆ The conspirators carried out their assassination, but they do not seem to have had much of a plan for what to do if they actually succeeded. Perhaps they simply assumed that the Roman Republic would instantly be restored. In the immediate aftermath of the murder, they delivered self-congratulatory orations to the people, in which they declared that they had freed the Roman Republic from tyranny, and they symbolically displayed the red cap traditionally worn by slaves who had been granted freedom.
- ◆ The majority of the Roman people, among whom Caesar had always been very popular, received these declarations sullenly, failing to demonstrate any of the enthusiasm that the assassins had hoped for. Meanwhile, the rest of the Senate fearfully waited to see which way the wind would blow. After all, Caesar's loyal lieutenants, Mark Antony and Lepidus, were in or near Rome, and they might easily summon Caesar's veterans to violently avenge his murder.
- ◆ In the end, the Senate tried to have it both ways, tacitly approving of the actions of the conspirators, but simultaneously officially endorsing all of Caesar's acts and appointments. The conspirators reached an uneasy temporary reconciliation with Antony and Lepidus, and the Senate declared that Caesar would be granted the honor of a state funeral. Now everyone nervously waited to see what would happen next.

Suggested Reading

Gelzer, *Caesar*.

Goldsworthy, *Caesar*.

Questions to Consider

-  Consider the various actions of Caesar once he had achieved victory in the civil war (land reform, public works, celebrations, calendar reform, governing policies, attitudes toward the senate and people). Was he a good ruler? If he had lived longer, would it have been a good thing for Rome?
-  In the end, do you think Caesar really wanted to be king of Rome? Why or why not?



CICERO AND THE ART OF ROMAN ORATORY

LECTURE 22

The late Roman Republic was certainly one of the most dramatic eras in Roman history, and it was a period that produced an astonishing number of famous individuals. Many of them are so well-known that their names are still widely recognized today: Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Pompey the Great, Cleopatra, Brutus, Crassus, and Octavian. In this environment, one of the most extraordinary individuals was a politician thought by many to be the greatest public speaker of all time.

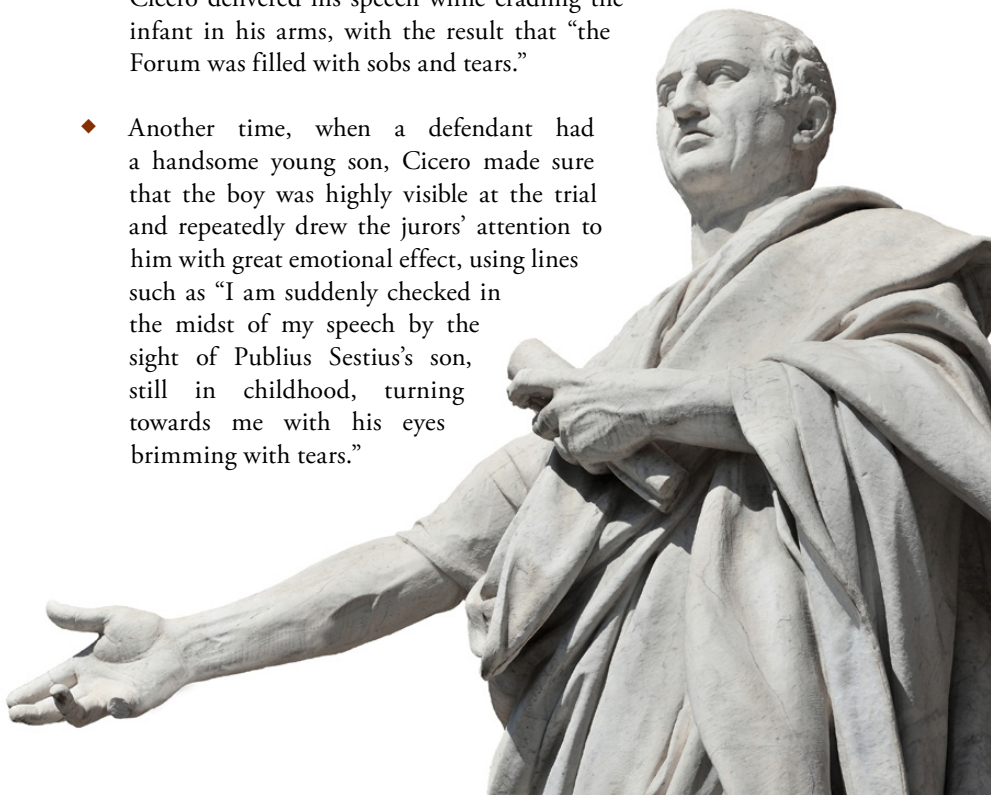
CICERO'S WORK

- ◆ Cicero was born 106 B.C., which means that he was just a few years older than Julius Caesar. Rather than being from one of the established aristocratic or senatorial clans, his family was only of modest equestrian status from the little town of Arpinum. In the political scene at Rome, Cicero was a *novus homo*—a “new man”—and thus had to work extra hard to claw his way up the political ladder.
- ◆ For those studying Cicero and his era, one very useful thing is that he wrote a lot. His surviving writings comprise not only more than three dozen of the speeches that he composed, but also philosophical works, political treatises, and meditative essays on such topics as grief, fate, duty, and religious practices. He even published seven entire volumes consisting exclusively of the letters—more than 900 in number—that he wrote to friends and family, along with many of their replies.
- ◆ Cicero's works include a number of very interesting handbooks describing his ideas regarding how to be an effective and persuasive public speaker, whether making an argument in a courtroom, giving an oration to a crowd of citizens in the forum, or just trying to convince any audience through verbal persuasion.
- ◆ In addition to laying out a philosophy concerning the Roman orator and his role in society, these handbooks discuss issues such as training and education for orators, practical tips and advice on public speaking, how to compose, memorize, and deliver speeches, and they contain a wealth of illustrative examples drawn from previous history as well as Cicero's own experiences.

RHETORICAL SKILL

- ◆ Many ordinary Romans viewed law cases as a form of entertainment. They were considered yet another category of public spectacle, and a case involving a famous figure or a shocking crime or accusation could attract a massive audience. Particularly in the late republic—Cicero’s time—there was a whole string of very high-profile law cases implicating many of the most prominent Romans, who were brought to trial for a range of sensational crimes.
- ◆ Some of the accusations leveled against upper-class defendants at trials of this period include: murder, arson, incest, forgery of public documents, poisoning, adultery with one’s stepmother, corruption, improper use of armed gangs, sacrilege, sexual misconduct, electoral bribery, and even the desecration of a sacred grove.
- ◆ Rome had no class of professional lawyers; instead, politicians who were known as particularly good public speakers were often asked to deliver speeches on behalf of either the prosecution or the defense. The most effective of these politicians could themselves become celebrities and gain coveted status if they were consistently entertaining and successful, or won big, high-profile cases.
- ◆ At the core of Cicero’s approach to persuasion is one fundamental concept: the belief that people are primarily ruled by emotions. Accordingly, Cicero held that if one is trying to persuade an audience, the goal is not necessarily to appeal to logic or reason. While these things are useful, the most essential goal is to stimulate an audience’s emotions.
- ◆ If you can get an audience emotionally invested or riled up, then they can be made to believe whatever you want them to. According to this strategy, if you can but stir up the emotions, then many elements that are usually important—such as facts, evidence, or even the truth—suddenly matter much less. To quote Cicero’s own words, “To sway the audience’s emotions is victory; for among all things it is the single most important in winning verdicts.” He also wrote that “nothing else is more important than emotion.”

- ◆ Cicero employed many different strategies to achieve this end. A particularly interesting one was the use of props and visual aids. Cicero said that an orator is like an actor in this regard; and just like an actor, he has to prepare his stage and furnish it with the necessary props. For example, prior to one speech delivered to the people in the Roman Forum, Cicero arranged for a new statue of the god Jupiter to be set up nearby.
- ◆ Then, during the speech, he alluded to it and asked the crowd how they could possibly stand by and not take action when they were right under the very eyes of the god. The veritable forest of statues of gods, heroes, and famous men that decorated public spaces such as the Roman Forum offered ample opportunities that could be exploited for rhetorical purposes.
- ◆ Props were not limited to statues or inanimate objects. A clever orator like Cicero even made use of human beings as a sort of living prop. Once, when defending a man who had a newborn baby, Cicero delivered his speech while cradling the infant in his arms, with the result that “the Forum was filled with sobs and tears.”
- ◆ Another time, when a defendant had a handsome young son, Cicero made sure that the boy was highly visible at the trial and repeatedly drew the jurors’ attention to him with great emotional effect, using lines such as “I am suddenly checked in the midst of my speech by the sight of Publius Sestius’s son, still in childhood, turning towards me with his eyes brimming with tears.”



- ◆ Another favorite Ciceronian strategy for stirring up emotion was to focus on the personal defects of a person, either real or invented, rather than on their actual policies. Today, we might refer to this as mudslinging, and it allows the speaker to avoid having to engage in real debate about the issues, by instead just attacking his opponent. Another very modern-seeming Ciceronian trick was labeling, which refers to associating abstract positive qualities with oneself, and negative qualities with one's opponent in the listener's mind.

POLITICAL CAREER

- ◆ Cicero had initially associated with both Sulla and Pompey, although in his first important legal case in 80 B.C., Cicero alienated Sulla by attacking some of his followers. He continued to build up his reputation through involvement in a number of other court cases, and was able to parlay these successes into election to a series of political offices. He steadily worked his way up the ladder of magistracies, winning election as a quaestor in 75 B.C., aedile in 69 B.C., and praetor in 66 B.C.
- ◆ Cicero seems to have been a genuine believer in the republican constitution of Rome, and to have been worried by the ascendancy of powerful men such as Sulla, and later Pompey and Caesar, who threatened to overthrow the traditional form of the republic. At the same time, Cicero desperately wanted to join the ranks of Rome's aristocracy, and thus found it expedient to curry favor with such men. This tension would result in some occasionally awkward shifts in allegiance, as Cicero sought to balance his idealistic impulses with his ambitions.
- ◆ His career reached a pinnacle when he succeeded in winning election to the consulship for the year 63 B.C., thus completing his journey from small-town *novus homo* to the highest office in the Roman government. During his tenure as consul, he had to deal with a major political crisis: the so-called conspiracy of Catiline.

- ◆ A longstanding rival of Cicero's was Lucius Sergius Catiline, who ran against him for the consulship in 64 B.C. and lost. Catiline portrayed himself as a champion of various downtrodden groups, such as the poor and debtors, and advocated a radical set of reforms, including the redistribution of land.
- ◆ Having been thwarted in his attempt to institute change through the political process, and under constant verbal attack by Cicero, Catiline withdrew from Rome, and began to organize a possible revolution. While there were many who might have been sympathetic to Catiline, Cicero responded with a series of scathing speeches condemning Catiline that were delivered to both the Senate and people of Rome.
- ◆ These were truly brilliant pieces of invective, and they proved so successful in working up everyone into such a frenzy of fear of Catiline that, after the revolt had been suppressed, Cicero was allowed to have Catiline and his main followers summarily executed without recourse to the usual legal process.



- ◆ For the rest of his life, Cicero would go around crowing that he had neutralized one of the greatest threats ever to confront the Roman Republic. Upon reflection, however, others grew less certain about the necessity of Cicero's actions. Cicero's enemies were able to build upon this sentiment to advocate that he had acted illegally and should be prosecuted for it. It was during this period that the First Triumvirate of Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar formed and was dominating affairs at Rome.
- ◆ By 58 B.C., Cicero's ongoing, ambivalent love/hate relationships with each of these men had reached a nadir, and, without their protection, Cicero found himself vulnerable. One of his most implacable foes, a man named Clodius, introduced a law that would punish anyone who had a Roman citizen put to death without proper trial. Cicero fled from Rome and went into exile in Greece.
- ◆ Cicero's exile lasted 18 months, a period during which he seems to have been profoundly depressed. Soon the tides of political favor shifted again, and Cicero was recalled. When the First Triumvirate broke down, and civil war broke out between Caesar and Pompey and the Senate, Cicero took the side of Pompey and the Senate.
- ◆ Cicero had established enough of a reputation as an independent, and had gained enough respect for his devotion to the idea of the republic, however, that when Caesar defeated Pompey and the Senate, Caesar was willing to pardon Cicero and invite him to participate in government again. This uneasy alliance with Caesar came to an abrupt end on the March 15, 44 B.C., when Brutus and his fellow conspirators assassinated Caesar.
- ◆ Cicero seems to have been uninvolved and unaware of the plot against Caesar, but once the deed was accomplished, the assassins turned to Cicero, seeking his validation and expecting him to take a principal role in leading the Senate, which he somewhat reluctantly did. In this capacity, he helped negotiate the uncomfortable truce with Mark Antony, which at least prevented further bloodshed.

Suggested Reading

Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome*.

Everitt, *Cicero*.

Morstein-Marx, *Mass Oratory and Political Power in the Late Roman Republic*.

Rawson, *Cicero*.

Questions to Consider

- ✦ Which of the following talents or advantages do you think was the most helpful to an aspiring Roman: oratorical skill, good generalship, great wealth, charisma, personal integrity, family status and connections, or political cleverness? Why?
- ✦ Cicero's techniques for persuading an audience, and especially his strategy of stirring up their emotions, are certainly effective, but how would you assess their morality? What are the advantages and disadvantages of politicians using this sort of oratory?



OCTAVIAN, ANTONY, AND CLEOPATRA

— LECTURE 23 —

The assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. is one of the most dramatic events in Roman history. When Caesar's will was opened and read after his death, his unexpected choice of heir shifted the course of history in a sequence of events that was more surprising than any plot twist in a sensational novel.

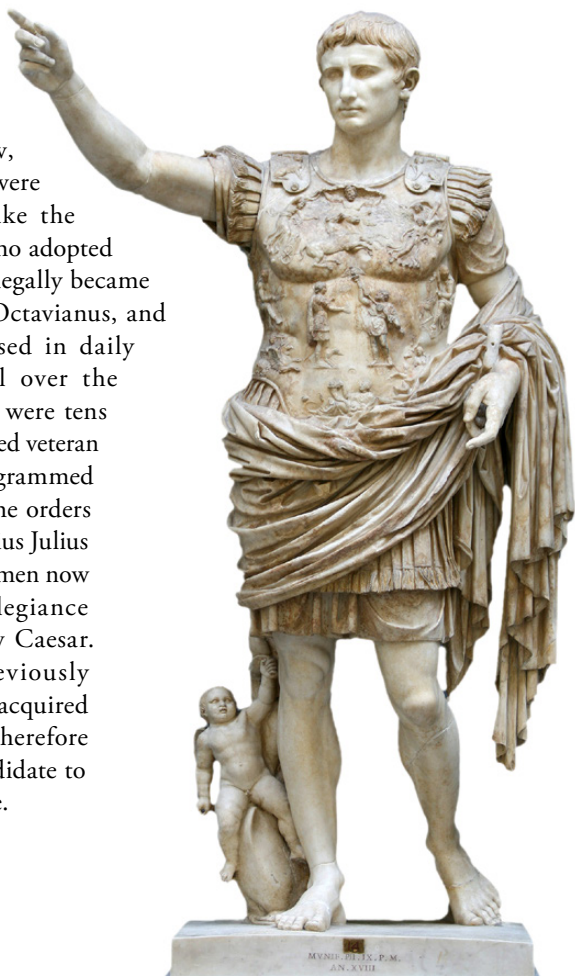
FILLING THE VOID

- ◆ When Caesar fell dead beneath a statue of his rival Pompey, stabbed 23 times by the daggers of his assassins, this created a sudden power vacuum in Roman politics. Several different men and groups immediately stepped forward with hopes of filling this void.
- ◆ First, there were the conspirators, the group of senators who had actually killed Caesar. They were led by Caesar's friend, Brutus, and another aristocrat named Cassius. These men claimed that they had murdered Caesar because he had been giving indications that he wished to make himself king of Rome, and they asserted that they had been driven to their act in order to liberate the Roman Republic from Caesar's tyranny.
- ◆ There were also several men who each tried to position themselves as the heir to Caesar's legacy and who now intended to take his place. The most prominent of these was Mark Antony. He was clearly in the strongest position, because he had been Caesar's lieutenant and right-hand man. Antony was also a highly competent general and related well to the common soldier, making him popular with Caesar's veterans.
- ◆ Another of Caesar's former officers, Lepidus, who at the time of Caesar's death was conveniently in command of a legion just outside Rome, also tried to present himself as Caesar's successor. It was a tense situation.
- ◆ Some of the assassins—or, as they now called themselves, “the liberators”—were calling for Caesar to be officially condemned as a tyrant, all his acts to be revoked, and his body flung into the Tiber, the traditional treatment for a criminal. On the other hand, many of the common people of Rome, with whom Caesar had been very popular, were howling for the assassins to be arrested and punished.

- ◆ It appeared that Antony now had the upper hand and was best placed to inherit Caesar's position, but one disquieting note marred his rise. When Caesar's will was read, to everyone's surprise, and to Antony's great annoyance, Antony was not designated as the primary heir. Instead, Caesar named his teenage grand-nephew as the primary heir, and also posthumously adopted him as his son. This 18-year-old nephew was named

Gaius Octavianus,
commonly referred
to today as Octavian.

- ◆ Under Roman law, however, when you were adopted, you can take the name of the person who adopted you. Thus, Octavian legally became Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, and the name that he used in daily life was Caesar. All over the Mediterranean, there were tens of thousands of hardened veteran soldiers who were programmed to loyally following the orders of someone named Gaius Julius Caesar. Some of these men now transferred their allegiance to Octavian, the new Caesar. Overnight, the previously obscure teenager had acquired his own army, and therefore became the final candidate to vie for Caesar's mantle.



THE SECOND TRIUMVIRATE

- ◆ Octavian was able to build up his position partly because Antony was distracted by other problems. Antony had contrived to get the Senate to grant him Caesar's old provinces in Gaul and northern Italy, and he still commanded a vast army of experienced legions. However, his uneasy truce with the so-called liberators was predictably crumbling, with the result that Brutus, Cassius, and the others were now openly raising armies of their own in various overseas provinces.
- ◆ Lepidus was still a legitimate rival who continued to maneuver against and compete with Antony for the affections of Caesar's veterans. Finally, a long-simmering animosity between Antony and Cicero had finally flared up in number of incidents in which each publicly criticized the other. This culminated in Cicero delivering a series of blisteringly abusive orations against Antony to both the Senate and the people of Rome. Known as the Philippics, these speeches are masterpieces of invective that slandered Antony as an incompetent, a drunkard, a coward, and a dangerously ambitious despot.
- ◆ Antony was now on the defensive, so Cicero pressed his advantage, goading the Senate into openly moving against him. Both consuls for 43 B.C. were dispatched against Antony with a sizable army. To prevent Octavian and his growing number of legions from aiding Antony, Cicero lured the young man over to the Senate's side by granting him membership in the Senate, giving him the same privileges to address the Senate as former consuls, and promising to waive the usual age requirements so that Octavian could prematurely run for election as a consul. Octavian was just 19 years old.



- ◆ Cicero clearly viewed Octavian as the lesser of two evils compared to Antony, and apparently believed that he could control the younger man and bend him to his will. Like nearly everyone else, Cicero seems to have greatly underestimated Octavian. Cicero's strategy of using and then discarding Octavian is revealed by his dismissive comment that, "this young man should be praised, honored, and then done away with."
- ◆ In this crisis, Antony displayed the energetic military talent that had earned him a place as one of Caesar's lieutenants. He escaped the armies sent to entrap him and took refuge in Gaul, where he sought the aid of Lepidus, who was then holding Spain. While the senatorial forces seemed to have won a victory, in the process, both the consuls were killed. Nevertheless, the Senate's position appeared fairly strong: Antony was on his heels and the Senate's allies, the Liberators, had solidified their control over the eastern Mediterranean.
- ◆ In the awarding of honors for having driven back Antony, Octavian was noticeably slighted by the Senate, which also summarily rejected his requests for rewards for his men and that he be given one of the now-vacant consulships. Octavian had had enough of Cicero's and the Senate's disrespect, so he responded to these snubs by promptly marching on Rome with his legions, which by now had grown to eight.
- ◆ Octavian soon sought reconciliation with Antony. In 43 B.C., the three rivals for Caesar's legacy—Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian—agreed to unite, at least temporarily, in order to deal with the threat posed by the Senate and the liberators. This alliance became known as the Second Triumvirate.
- ◆ Unlike the First Triumvirate, created by Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus, which was merely an informal coalition, the Second Triumvirate was a legally defined, formal pact. In it, the triumvirs divided up the western half of the empire among themselves. Antony got northern Italy and Gaul, Lepidus received Spain and Transalpine Gaul, while Octavian was left with Sardinia, Sicily, and North Africa.

- ◆ By this division, it is clear that Octavian was still very much the junior member of the triumvirate. They also revived Sulla's practice of proscribing enemies, and had 130 senators and 2,000 equites put to death. As revenge for having been slandered in his speeches, Antony insisted that Cicero's name be put on the list. Cicero was hunted down and killed in December of 43 B.C.
- ◆ Some of the proscribed had escaped their death sentences by fleeing to the eastern Mediterranean and uniting with the liberators. The battle lines were now clearly drawn between the two sides, and the final confrontation took place at a pair of battles fought near the town of Philippi in Macedonia. Octavian, who was not a gifted general, was defeated on his part of the battlefield, but Mark Antony was victorious in his section and managed to secure the overall victory. Rather than be captured by their foes, Cassius and Brutus both committed suicide.



ANTONY AND OCTAVIAN

- ◆ With the liberators out of the way, the members of the Second Triumvirate quickly turned against one another. With his prestige at a highpoint as a result of his victory on the battlefield of Philippi, Antony seized the entire eastern Mediterranean for himself, while retaining his control over Gaul. Within the triumvirate, the balance of power had shifted heavily toward Antony, with Lepidus's fortunes waning. Lepidus was left with North Africa and a sizable army, but his influence over the policies of the triumvirate was in decline.



- ◆ The real rivalry was now between Antony and Octavian, but neither one was quite ready for open conflict. Caesar's veterans, who, after all, formed the backbones of both of their armies, were vocal in their reluctance to wage war against their former comrades. After a bit of skirmishing in 40 B.C., the two men agreed to another truce, in which Antony would control the east and Octavian the west.
- ◆ This arrangement was very much in Antony's favor, because it gave him the richer, more urbanized portion of the empire, and it also saddled Octavian with the considerable problem of having to deal with the dangerous Sextus Pompey, who by now had consolidated his hold over Sicily and effectively controlled sea traffic in the western Mediterranean with his sizable navy. To cement the new agreement, Octavian's sister was forced to marry Antony.
- ◆ Sextus Pompey was threatening to cut off food supplies to Italy, so Octavian now made the war against him a priority. For all his talents as a politician, however, Octavian had proven himself to be at best a mediocre or even subpar military commander. His initial attempts at invading Sicily ended in disaster, with Octavian suffering two crushing naval defeats at the hands of Sextus.

- ◆ Fortunately for Octavian, one of his closest, most trusted, companions was a childhood friend named Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, who just happened to be an outstanding general and strategist. Furthermore, Agrippa was atypically modest for a Roman, and was willing to fight wars on Octavian's behalf, while allowing Octavian to gain the official credit for them.
- ◆ It was a beneficial partnership for both men. Agrippa lacked Octavian's social skills and political cleverness, but by serving as Octavian's loyal right-hand man and subordinating his ambitions to those of his friend, he could achieve greater power than he ever would have acquired on his own.
- ◆ Octavian now summoned Agrippa to the scene to lead the military campaign against Sextus, while he himself concentrated on diplomacy, managing to convince Antony and Lepidus that they should lend assistance by contributing ships and troops to his efforts against Sextus. The three men formally renewed their Triumvirate in 37 B.C. and, bolstered by these reinforcements, Octavian launched the assault against Sextus.
- ◆ Octavian was again defeated in a naval battle, but it didn't matter; Agrippa won the decisive victory over Sextus's fleet at the Battle of Naulochus. Extravagant honors were lavished upon Octavian at Rome for his alleged great victory over Sextus, including the erection of a golden statue of him in the Forum, and the bestowal upon him of the coveted title of *imperator*, or "victorious general."

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

- ◆ In the east, Antony had met up with Cleopatra, the queen of Egypt, which was the richest and most powerful independent kingdom remaining around the shores of the Mediterranean. The two commenced an affair. It seems to have been based at least as much on genuine love as political expediency. Antony had always had an inclination toward indulgence, and he and Cleopatra engaged in riotous parties at which he dressed up in a leopard skin as the god Dionysus while Cleopatra assumed the role of the goddess Isis.

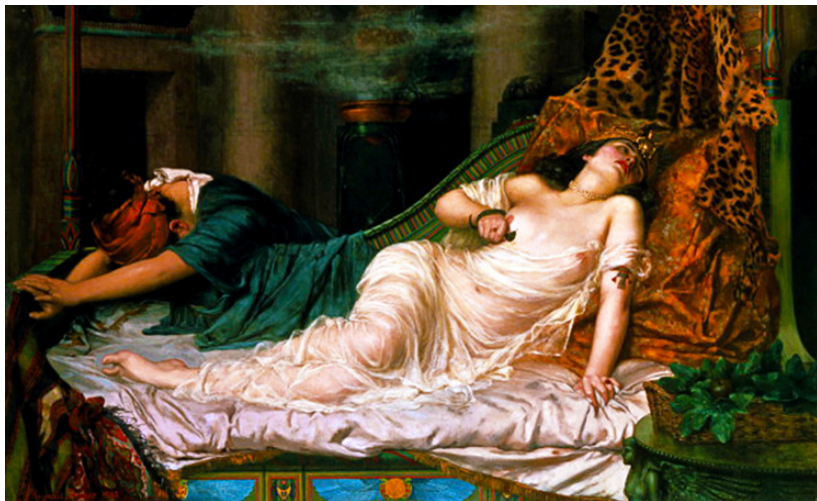
- ◆ With their relations strained by Antony's rejection of Octavian's sister, war between the two men seemed inevitable, and each tried to strengthen his position for the coming conflict. While Octavian had clearly been anticipating an eventual showdown with Antony from an early stage, Antony appears to have been a bit slow to realize the seriousness of the threat that the younger man posed. He had also been distracted by tensions and skirmishing with the powerful kingdom of Parthia, which lay along his eastern border.



- ◆ Octavian could not match Antony's financial resources, so he took a different path. He began to wage what, in modern terms, we would call a war of propaganda against Antony. Octavian posed as the champion of the Roman Republic against a dangerous foreign enemy personified by Cleopatra. Because Cleopatra was a queen, by openly presenting himself as her consort, Antony had fallen into the trap of looking like a king, so Octavian was able to exploit the traditional Roman fear and hatred of monarchs to good effect.
- ◆ While Antony was an able general, he was clumsy when it came to this sort of war for public opinion, and many of his own actions cluelessly played right into Octavian's hands. For example, he bestowed large territories in the east upon Cleopatra and openly portrayed his children with her as royal monarchs who would inherit the entire east. While he probably intended these acts as merely local ones done in order to curry favor with the Egyptians, at Rome, they stirred up considerable alarm and resentment.
- ◆ These efforts culminated in Octavian illegally obtaining Antony's will and publishing its contents, which dictated that he be buried in Egypt and lavished benefactions on his children with Cleopatra—provisions which further inflamed public sentiment against him. However, not all Romans were swayed by Octavian's propaganda campaign, and, with war looming, several hundred senators departed Rome to join Antony.
- ◆ Left even more firmly in charge at Rome, Octavian connived to have Cleopatra officially declared a public enemy of the Roman state. This was a brilliant move because it placed Antony in the position of either having to sever his ties with Cleopatra and lose his financial backing, or else remain loyal to her and find himself by law in collusion with an enemy of Rome. Antony, who really did seem to have fallen in love with Cleopatra, chose to stay with her.
- ◆ The long-anticipated war was finally openly declared in 32 B.C. Antony still appeared to have the advantage, with the larger army, more resources, and a clear superiority over Octavian as a general; but Octavian once again turned to his faithful companion Agrippa, and placed him in complete

charge of his strategy. Rather than seeking a direct confrontation with Antony's main forces immediately, Agrippa instead cleverly launched a series of quick raids against Antony's supply depots.

- ◆ These small victories bolstered the morale of Octavian's men while confounding and frustrating Antony. More importantly, Agrippa seized the initiative and steadily nibbled away at Antony's naval strength. Antony was slow to react, with the result that his main army eventually found itself blockaded and short of food, leading to starvation and disease.
- ◆ Having forced Antony into a position of disadvantage, Agrippa was now ready to commit to the main assault. The ensuing decisive naval battle between Octavian's forces and the combined fleet of Antony and Cleopatra took place on September 2, 31 B.C., at the Battle of Actium. Agrippa thoroughly out-maneuvered Antony, and won the victory for Octavian.
- ◆ When they saw the fight turning against them, Antony and Cleopatra abandoned their fleet and fled the scene in swift ships, managing to escape to Egypt. Once there, knowing that Octavian would relentlessly pursue them, rather than be captured, both chose to commit suicide.



- ◆ Octavian was left in sole command of the Roman world. He had won the military battle, but still faced a greater problem: how to rule Rome as one man and not be killed for seeming like a king. Julius Caesar had also attained total power, but had then spectacularly failed to solve this puzzle. Now it would be Octavian's turn to attempt this ultimate challenge.

Suggested Reading

Everitt, *Augustus*.

Gurval, *Actium and Augustus*.

Goldsworthy, *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*.

Questions to Consider

- ✦ Octavian's rise from obscurity to total power seems an unlikely story. What do you think were the key factors or events that made it possible?
- ✦ In the power struggle following Caesar's assassination that was waged among Octavian, Antony, Lepidus, the liberators, and Cicero and the Senate, which group or person are you most sympathetic to, and whose victory do you think would have been best for Rome as a whole?



WHY THE ROMAN REPUBLIC COLLAPSED

LECTURE 24

A number of factors played a part in the rise of the Roman Republic. Among these are the geographic and economic advantages of Rome's location, the balance of power set forth in the Roman constitution, the competition for status among Roman aristocrats, and the aggressively warlike nature of Roman culture. In this lecture, you will explore the similarly complex web of factors and relationships that led to the republic's downfall and ultimate collapse.

THE WAY DOWN

- ◆ The Romans themselves speculated quite a lot about the reasons why their Republic failed. The most commonly cited explanation offered by ancient authors was that it was due to a fatal degeneration of morals. Influential Roman authors such as Livy, Cicero, Sallust, and Plutarch expressed this sentiment, and this explanation has proven to be a popular one among subsequent writers and scholars from antiquity up until the present.
- ◆ Another major theory focuses on the institutions of the Roman Republic, arguing that the particular government and institutions that Rome developed when it was just a small city-state, and that were quite successful within that context, proved wholly inadequate when Rome had grown into a large empire that had to govern vast overseas territories. The theory that the fall of the republic was sparked by institutional failure can also trace its origins back to ancient authors such as Tacitus, and it has been an especially widespread conceit among modern historians.
- ◆ The Romans were a profoundly traditional people who were suspicious of and highly resistant to change. While their deep-rooted adoration of tradition could be a strength, it also made them inflexible and slow to react. This resistance to change was a major factor in their failure to deal with the inequalities and imbalances spawned by their own successes in conquering the Mediterranean.
- ◆ Roman imperialism unintentionally created a vicious circle in which the more wars that were fought, the more ordinary citizens sold their farms to become soldiers. Few actually realized their dreams of returning home laden with riches, so these veterans ended up disgruntled and unemployed.

Meanwhile, the plum generalships and government offices that brought coveted glory to their holders became monopolized by a smaller and smaller number of elites, resulting in the majority of aristocrats feeling resentful and left out.

- ◆ Italian half-citizens and allies similarly seethed with anger at not sharing in the fruits of empire, while the conquered peoples found themselves exploited or outright enslaved. Thus, in an odd paradox, Rome's triumphant subjugation of the Mediterranean resulted in almost every segment of Roman society becoming filled with bitter resentment. The institutional explanation for the collapse of the republic places the blame on the Romans themselves for being unwilling to adapt to face these new realities.

QUESTIONING THE FALL

- ◆ Just as the cause of the fall of the republic is much debated, so too is the exact moment of its demise. While Octavian's victory over Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. is perhaps the most commonly cited event marking this transition, arguments have been put forward for



many other possible dates, stretching back as far as the ascendancy of Scipio Africanus in the 3rd century B.C., and forward to various points during the early Roman Empire in the 1st century A.D.

- ◆ Octavian himself would have strenuously objected to the assertion that the Roman Republic reached its endpoint with his victory at Actium. Rather, he spent a great deal of effort loudly and repeatedly proclaiming that all he had done was intended to restore the Roman Republic to its previous condition and glory.
- ◆ Many Romans appear to have bought into Octavian's interpretation, at least publicly. For example, speaking of Octavian's actions, the Roman historian Velleius Paterculus wrote: "Twenty years of civil wars were ended, foreign wars were suppressed, peace restored, the frenzy of arms everywhere put to rest; validity was restored to the laws, authority to the courts, and dignity to the Senate. ... The old traditional form of the republic was restored."

THE POLYBIAN CYCLE OF GOVERNMENTS

- ◆ To account for Rome's remarkable success in conquering the Mediterranean, the Greek historian Polybius asserted that it was due to the peculiar nature of the Roman constitution, which divided power among three groups—the Senate, the people, and the magistrates—thereby creating a government which beneficially blended together elements of an aristocracy, a democracy, and a monarchy. Furthermore, these three branches of government were interdependent and could serve to check one another.
- ◆ In his work, Polybius lays out a grand theory proposing that governments naturally and inevitably evolve through a distinct sequence of different forms. Polybius hypothesizes a cyclical progression of seven stages that form an endless loop called *anacyclosis*.
- ◆ Polybius begins with human beings in a sort of anarchic condition without political structures. Eventually, a strong leader emerges who brings order and direction for the good of all, and thereby gains the respect and fealty of the group. They willingly bestow the mantle of authority upon him, and thus the first king is established, and, the first stage of the cycle—kingship.

- ◆ Over time, however, subsequent monarchs start to grow arrogant and to abuse their position of power through arbitrary or unjust actions, and the kingship degenerates into the second phase, tyranny. These outrages provoke a group of the wealthiest and most dynamic men to organize together and ultimately overthrow the tyrant.
- ◆ Those who overthrew the tyrant then take charge of running the state in a collective fashion, sharing power among themselves, and the third phase, aristocracy, is born. While the initial group acts with the interests of all in mind, once again, over subsequent generations, their descendants become addicted to wealth and status and think only of themselves, and aristocracy degenerates into its corrupt form, oligarchy.



- ◆ The ordinary people grow weary of oligarchical abuses, Polybius suggested, and finally reach a point where they rebel and kill or expel the oligarchs. Recalling their ill treatment, they do not wish to reinstate either a kingship or an aristocracy, so by necessity they themselves take up the reins of government and create a democracy. Equality and freedom of speech form two of the cornerstones of this democracy. For a time, there is harmony and prosperity. But soon corruption again creeps in.
- ◆ Greed leads to inequality and affluence fosters a sense of entitlement. Both create resentment among the populace. Unscrupulous leaders arise who play upon these feelings by making extravagant promises but in reality are only concerned with enhancing their own power. With the rise of these demagogues, democracy devolves into the next phase, mob rule. At some point, either one of the demagogues emerges as dominant over all the others and seizes sole control of the state, or there is a general collapse into anarchy followed by the emergence of a new strongman, and the entire cycle repeats itself.
- ◆ Keep in mind, Polybius himself lived at the height of the success of the Roman Republic in the 2nd century B.C., not during the late republic when it was actually collapsing. Polybius optimistically believed that the Romans had solved the puzzle of how to stop the perpetual cycle, and they did this by crafting a constitution that mixed together elements of all three of the positive forms of government: kingship, aristocracy, and democracy. He believed that by blending these three forms together at the same time in the same government, the Romans had found a way to arrest their decay, and to avoid the perils of their negative manifestations, tyranny, oligarchy, and mob rule.
- ◆ As we have seen, however, the Romans' solution was not permanent, and the republic did eventually collapse, falling into chaotic mob rule, witnessing the rise of demagogues, and ultimately resulting in the establishment of a new monarch-like figure in the form of Octavian. Thus, it might appear as if Rome's mixed constitution only temporarily managed to arrest the turning of the *anacyclosis* wheel, and that, in the end, the Roman Republic fell prey to all the usual ills predicted by Polybius's scheme.

LESSONS FOR MODERN REPUBLICS

- ◆ It is worth considering the long shadow that the memory of the Roman Republic has cast over subsequent western civilization, and the strong influence that it has wielded over recent history. Perhaps the most important manifestation of this influence in the last few centuries has been by serving as a direct inspiration for both the American and French revolutions, and for the republics each country set up in their aftermaths.
- ◆ In the last two decades of the 18th century, the government of France went through an accelerated version of the ancient Roman Republic's collapse and fall. Just like Rome, France transitioned from monarchy to a republic via a revolution, and created magistrates bearing the names senator, consul, and tribune. In ancient Rome, Julius Caesar and Octavian then rose up as popular leaders in the system, first stretching its institutions by holding multiple consulships and triumvirates, and then supplanting them altogether. This was the same arc followed in France by Napoleon Bonaparte.



- ◆ The American Founding Fathers were also inspired by the Roman Republic, and quite self-consciously thought of themselves as an improved version of it. Currently, the political experiment of the American Republic is well into its third century of existence and, while the respective histories and contexts of ancient Rome and the United States are too dissimilar to make direct comparisons, one can hope that the failure of the Roman Republic may at least suggest some of the dangers and flaws that to which such Republics can potentially fall victim.

Suggested Reading

Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic and Related Essays*.

Morstein-Marx and Rosenstein, "The Transformation of the Republic."

Walbank, *Polybius*.

Questions to Consider

- ✎ Which of the various explanations for the collapse of the Roman Republic do you find most compelling, and why?
- ✎ Do you agree with Polybius's *anacyclosis* theory of types of government? Do you believe that each type of government must inevitably degenerate into its negative form?

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