The Toga and the SWORD

A History of Rome for Beginning Latin Students

by Clint Hagen

For my students,

past,

present,

and future.

Last update of this text: March 13, 2022

THE TOGA AND THE SWORD

a history of Rome for middle school students

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Figure 1. The Roman Empire at its greatest extent, 117 AD[a]

INTRODUCTION

The history of Rome, from 753 BC to the fall of the western empire in AD 476, is a big, big story. Many authors (and usually teams of authors) have written about it more completely and in more detail than I have in this book. But I hope *The Toga and the Sword* will provide a good starting point for young students who are eager to learn Roman history but need a text that is more accessible for their reading level.

The title refers to two sides of Roman history. The toga was a symbol of peace. It is difficult to fight or even run in a toga. It was also a symbol of Roman citizenship, with all of the benefits that gave to so many people. On the other hand is the sword, representing Roman conquest and the power of violence, whether it is directed at other groups of people or at other Roman citizens. If I had to sum up the story of Rome, I might say that it's about the power of peace and good government versus the power of violence and conquest. In a sense, maybe that's what all history is about.

I have had wonderful teachers. My junior high Latin teacher, Shirley Wood, was a funny (and punny) lady who radiated excitement and joy. She passed away some years ago. My high school Latin teacher, Laura Giles, is basically my second mom. I don't know that I would have survived high school without her. She saw the potential in me even when I was a huge pain in her behind.

Dr. Randy Todd taught me Latin for five out of my eight semesters at college. I had other excellent teachers as well, but his mentorship and his belief that I could succeed meant the world to me.

As a teacher, I hope that I can give to my students the same things my teachers have given to me. I want them to have knowledge, yes; but even more importantly, I want them to be inspired and encouraged. I hope this book helps.

I. Roman History in Context

Before we dig into the history of the Roman people, let's talk about what happened before. This will give you a sense of what was going on in the world before the rise of the Romans.

Phillipus Dicit

Don't forget that BC (or BCE) dates move backwards. 1000 BC is earlier than 500 BC. Also, remember that centuries *end* with a year that begins with the number of that century. So, the 1st century goes from 1 to 100, and the 2nd century goes from 101 to 200. This guide uses BC ("before Christ") and AD (*anno domini*, "in the year of our Lord") abbreviations, but you may also see BCE ("before the common era") and CE ("common era") used instead. When there is no abbreviation, you can assume that it's an AD/CE date.

The abbreviation "c." stands for the Latin word "*circa*," which means "about" or "around." We use it when we don't know the exact date.

The Bronze Age

The bronze age is a period of history that begins c. 3300 BC in the middle east. We call it the "bronze age" because it's during this time that humans begin to use bronze (an alloy of copper and arsenic and/or tin) to create tools and weapons, as opposed to the stone tools and weapons of the stone age. By c. 3200 BC the bronze age had reached Europe, followed by southeast Asia c. 3000 BC and China c. 2000 BC.

There were many major technological advancements during the bronze age. Writing first begins during this time, as does our earliest literature. The first alphabets are also created during this time. Stonehenge in England and the Great Pyramid in Egypt were built during this time, and humans domesticated horses.

All of this allowed people to live in bigger cities and have centralized government and laws. As a result, empires began to rise in Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, China, and the Americas. The great epics of Greek mythology, like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are set during this time period, although they will not be written down until much later.

The Iron Age and Classical Antiquity

The bronze age gives way to the iron age c. 1200 BC in Europe and the near east. At this point, we are only concerned with the part of the world in which Rome would eventually flourish; there are, of course, things going on in eastern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Americas. Iron begins to replace bronze as the primary metal for tools and weapons. By the 8th century BC (remember, that's 800-701 BC) we reach the period called **classical antiquity**. In academics, the term "classics" and "classical" refer to the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome.

Classical Greek civilization begins before Roman civilization. By the time **Rome is founded in 753 BC** (according to legend), the Greek city-states like Athens and Sparta are flourishing. While the Romans are conquering their neighbors and are still relatively unknown outside the Italian peninsula, the Greeks engage in a major war with the Persians (the Greco-Persian War, 499-449 BC). Shortly thereafter, Alexander the Great of Macedon (northern Greece, now once again an independent country called Macedonia) will put together one of the largest empires of the ancient world, stretching from Greece to India. When Alexander dies in 323 BC, the Romans are at war with their next-door neighbors the Samnites. Thus, Hellenistic (i. e., Greek) civilization spread across eastern Europe and into Asia long before the Romans ventured outside of Italy. Rome enters the stage of the larger Mediterranean world during the three Punic Wars (264-146 BC), and eventually would conquer most of Europe and the ancient near east. That, of course, is the subject of the rest of this book.

Figure 2. The Empire of Alexander the Great[b]

The Middle Ages

The **western half of the Roman empire fell in AD 476**. The chaos that resulted from this fall threw Europe into decline, both in terms of population and the advancement of technology. In Europe, the Roman Catholic Church and various European monarchies grew in power. Among the notable events of this period are the Crusades, the rise of Islam in the middle east, and the birth of Christian monasticism. Charlemagne, the Frankish king, reunited some of the area once ruled by Rome under his leadership, which he called the Holy Roman Empire. However, Italy would not be a united country again until 1890.

Figure 3. Frankish Empire of Charlemagne[c]

In the meantime, the eastern half of the Roman Empire continued in Greece, Asia minor, and the middle east. Its capital was Constantinople (modern Istanbul). This would become known as the Byzantine Empire and would last in various forms until 1453 when it would fall to the Ottoman Empire.

The Renaissance

In the 14th century, the writings of the classical world began to be rediscovered in western Europe. This period is called the Renaissance, which means "rebirth." Inspired by the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome, whose culture had been lost in the middle ages, scientists, writers, artists, and philosophers flourished. This movement started in Italy and gradually moved across the entirety of Europe.

The Renaissance is followed by the Age of Exploration, when the European powers begin to explore the rest of the world, including the Americas. Next is the Age of Enlightenment, which saw the beginning of modern science and the philosophical schools that would eventually lead to the American revolution and other movements towards democracy in the western world. This brings us close enough to the modern world in which you live today.

II. Periods of Roman History

Roman history is traditionally divided into three parts. These are named after the form of government that the Romans used at the time. This can be further subdivided into phases.

Monarchy
753-510 BC

Rome is ruled by seven kings

Figure 4. Romulus, first king of Rome, and his twin brother Remus, being nursed by a she-wolf[d]

Republic
509-27 BC

Rome is ruled by two consuls, elected annually.

Figure 5. Roman consul accompanied by two lictors[e]

Conquest of Italy
458-275 BC

Rome comes into conflict with other Italian tribes and conquers or makes alliances with them.

Mediterranean Expansion
264-133 BC

Rome begins to expand into other parts of the Mediterranean world, including north Africa and Greece.

Late Republic
147-27 BC

Rome's expansion continues, but internal conflicts arise that result in civil war.

Empire
27 BC – 476 AD

Rome is ruled by emperors.

Figure 6. Gold coin ("aureus") with portrait of Augustus, the first emperor[f]

Principate
27 BC-284 AD

The empire is ruled by a single person, usually called princeps *("first citizen").*

Dominate
284-476 AD

After a period of military anarchy during the 3rd century, the empire is divided into east and west and will remain divided (for the most part) until the fall of the western empire.

As mentioned before, the eastern Roman empire continued after 476 as the Byzantine empire. It lasted until 1453.

III. The Founding of Rome

Many Greek cities in the ancient world had some connection to the Trojan War. The kings of Sparta and Mycenae as well as the kings and princes of many other Greek cities fought in this war. Like the Greek cities that were at the height of their power when Rome was founded, the Romans claimed to be descended from a hero of the Trojan War. In this case, the Romans claimed to be the descendants of **Aeneas**, a prince who fought on the Trojan side of the war. (This is legend rather than history, of course; but it is important to understand how the Romans thought about their origins.)

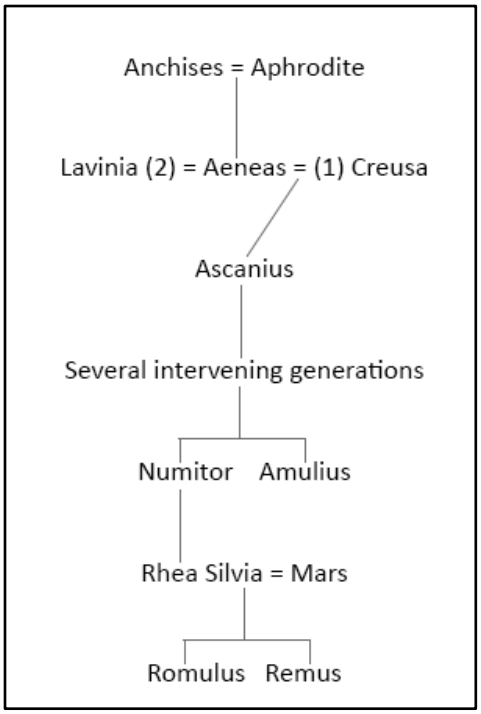


Figure 7. The genealogy of Romulus and Remus

Aeneas was the son of Anchises and Aphrodite. He and his wife Creusa had a son, Ascanius.[1] When the Greeks took the city of Troy, Aeneas' family attempted to escape, but Creusa died as they tried to flee to the harbor. Aeneas, his son Ascanius, his father Anchises, and some other Trojans sailed from Troy in search of a new home, which they would eventually find in Italy.

Aeneas' son Ascanius would found the city of **Alba Longa**, where his descendants would rule for many years. Several generations later, Amulius would become king of Alba Longa by expelling his brother Numitor. In order to keep Numitor from having any male descendants, Amulius forced his niece Rhea Silvia to become a priestess of the goddess Vesta, which would mean she could not marry.

However, the god Mars (the Roman equivalent of Ares) fell in love with the young priestess, and she gave birth to twin boys.

Amulius ordered that the two boys be thrown into the Tiber River, but the servants who were supposed to carry out this task felt sorry for the boys and instead left them at the edge of the river, which was in its flood season at the time. When the waters returned to their normal level, the boys were found by a she-wolf, who nursed them. They were found by a shepherd named Faustulus who, with his wife Acca Larentia, named them **Romulus and Remus** and raised them as their own.

[1] Ascanius is also sometimes called Iulus, from which the Julian clan derived its name (as in Julius Caesar).

When the boys grew older, the discovered their true parentage. After helping their grandfather Numitor kill Amulius and retake the throne of Alba Longa, the boys decided to found their own city.

Here is how the Roman historian Livy tells the story:

[…]Romulum Remumque cupido cepit in iis locis ubi expositi ubique educati erant urbis condendae. … Intervenit deinde his cogitationibus avitum malum, regni cupido, atque inde foedum certamen coortum a satis miti principio. Quoniam gemini essent nec aetatis verecundia discrimen facere posset, ut di quorum tutelae ea loca essent auguriis legerent qui nomen novae urbi daret, qui conditam imperio regeret, Palatium Romulus, Remus Aventinum ad inaugurandum templa capiunt.

Priori Remo augurium venisse fertur, sex voltures; iamque nuntiato augurio cum duplex numerus Romulo se ostendisset, utrumque regem sua multitudo consalutaverat: tempore illi praecepto, at hi numero avium regnum trahebant. Inde cum altercatione congressi certamine irarum ad caedem vertuntur; ibi in turba ictus Remus cecidit. Volgatior fama est ludibrio fratris Remum novos transiluisse muros; inde ab irato Romulo, cum verbis quoque increpitans adiecisset, "Sic deinde, quicumque alius transiliet moenia mea," interfectum. Ita solus potitus imperio Romulus; condita urbs conditoris nomine appellata.

(Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.6-7)

Romulus and Remus were seized with the desire to found a city in the place where they had been abandoned. The curse of their grandfathers – the desire to rule – disturbed these plans, which led to a nasty quarrel over what was at first a simple matter. Since they were twins and neither was able to claim priority based on age, they decided to consult the spirits who guarded the place by augury[2] as to who would give his name to the new city, and who would rule it after it had been founded. Romulus chose the Palatine hill as his place for observation, and Remus chose the Aventine.

Remus is said to have been the first to receive a sign: six vultures[3]. The augury had just been reported to Romulus when double the number appeared to him. Each was hailed as king by his friends: one side laid claim to the kingdom based on the time of the sighting, the other on the number of birds. Then an angry fight followed, and that turned to slaughter; in the commotion Remus was killed. The more common story is that Remus as a joke jumped over his brother's new walls and was then killed by the angry Romulus, who shouted, "So will it be for everyone who leaps over my walls." So Romulus became sole ruler, and the city was named after him, its founder.

[2] Augury is the ancient practice of predicting the future or getting supernatural advice by observing the flight of birds.

[3] Vultures are particulary important to Romulus and Remus, since they are a symbol of the god Mars, the father of the twins.

Again, this story is less history than legend. As we move through the monarchy, we gradually move away from myth and into history proper.

Phillipus Dicit

One of our best sources for the early history of Rome is *Ab Urbe Condita* ("from the founding of the city"), a work the Roman author Titus Livius. Modern scholars usually refer to him by his anglicized name, Livy. He wrote *Ab Urbe Condita* between 27 and 9 BC, during the reign of the emperor Augustus. *Ab Urbe Condita* contained 142 books covering the history of Rome from its founding to 9 BC. Unfortunately, much of it has been lost.

Books 1 through 10, which cover the founding through 292 BC, are all extant, as are books 21 through 45, covering the years 218-167 BC. This second period includes the Second Punic War.

IV. Geography of Early Rome and Italy

The area in which Rome was founded is called **Latium** (modern-day Lazio). Rome was founded on the west bank of the **Tiber river**. The Tiber headwaters are in the **Apennine mountains**, which run down the center of Italy. From there, the Tiber makes its way to the **Tyrrhenian Sea**. The Tyrrhenian is on the west coast of Italy and is part of the Mediterranean Sea, which the Romans would later call ***Mare Nostrum*** ("our sea").

At the time of Rome's founding, there were many different tribes living in the Italian peninsula. Rome will eventually come into conflict with all of them, starting with those closest to her. The **Etruscans** to the north and the **Sabines** to the east will both be important in Rome's early history.

Figure 8. Italy, c. 400 BC[g]

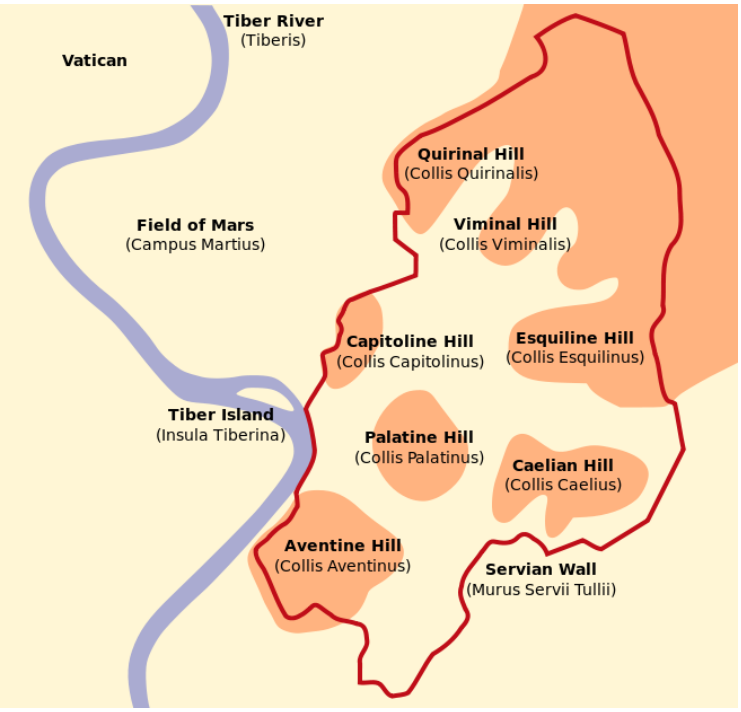


Figure 9. Rome in the time of the kings[h]

Rome is famous for being built on seven hills. These hills are the **Capitoline, Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, Caelian, Aventine,** and **Palatine**. You will remember that Romulus and Remus stood on the Palatine and Aventine hills to observe the flight of birds in their attempt to decide who should rule the city. These hills, particularly the Capitoline, made the city easier to defend. In times of crisis, the citizens could retreat up one of the hills and fight off invaders from higher ground. Northwest of the city is the **Campus Martius**, or Field of Mars, where the Roman army trained. On the west, the Tiber river forms a natural protective barrier from the Etruscans.

V. THE MONARCHY

PHILLIPUS DICIT

Remember that it's difficult to distinguish myth from history during the period of the Roman monarchy. Sometimes what is legend is easy to spot, other times it's more difficult. But even the legends speak to some underlying truths about the early development of the city of Rome.

Romulus

753-716 BC

Romulus is credited with instituting many of the things that would become the foundations of the Roman government, including the Senate and the army. He welcomed people of any condition to populate his city. As a result, the original population of Rome included many who had been exiled or otherwise had to leave their homes; and, most problematically, it contained mostly men.

Romulus is said to have solved this problem by stealing the women from a neighboring tribe, the **Sabines**. He accomplished this by holding a festival and inviting the neighbors to celebrate with them. At a certain point, Romulus gave a signal, at which the Roman men grabbed the Sabine women and fought off the Sabine men. The Sabine men returned with weapons to reclaim their daughters, but the women begged both sides not to fight. The two cities decided instead to merge into one city. The king of the Sabines, **Titus Tatius**, became co-king with Romulus for a time, although he is not counted as one of the traditional seven kings of Rome.

Numa Pompilius

716-673 BC

The first king, Romulus focused on governmental matters. The second, Numa Pompilius, focused mostly on the religious aspects of the new city. He was a member of a Sabine tribe, and he requested that Jupiter be consulted for good omens before he accepted the kingship. According to legend, he consulted with a spirit named **Egeria**, who was a forest nymph in a sacred grove near the city. The religious rituals of ancient Rome were taught by her to Numa, and he in turn instructed his people on how to worship the gods.

He built the **Temple of Janus** in the area that would later be the Forum Romanum and instituted the office of **pontifex maximus**, the chief priest of Rome. Much later, in the Christian era of the Empire, this title would be used for the Pope.

Tullus Hostilius

673–642 BC

The reign of Tullus Hostilius saw renewed conflicts with Rome's neighbors. Most notably, Tullus Hostilius conquered the city of Alba Longa, whom he had accused of stealing Rome's cattle.

Instead of a full war, the Albans and Romans each chose a set of triplets to fight for them. The Roman triplets had the family name Horatius, and the Alban triplets had the family name Curiatius. Therefore, this battle is called **the battle of the Horatii and Curiatii.**

Figure 10. The Oath of the Horatii by Jacques-Louis David[i]

Half-way through the battle, two of the Horatii had already died. The three Albans had been wounded, but the remaining Horatius, whose name was Publius, knew he could not face all three of them alone. So he began to run, and the three Curiatii followed at different paces, as their injuries allowed. Once they had become separated, Publius faced them one by one and defeated all three of them. Rome claimed victory, and the Albans submitted. Later, the Albans would betray the Romans in battle; for this, Roman legend says, Tullus Hostilius destroyed the city of Alba Longa. However, archaeology suggests that it had been destroyed much later.

Hostilius also built the Rome's first Senate house, the ***Curia Hostilia***. He died, according to legend, when he performed a sacrifice to Jupiter incorrectly and was struck by a bolt of lightning.

Ancus Marcius

642-617 BC

Rome's fourth king continued the growth of the city and expanded Roman territory to the sea, which gave Rome control over the salt beds where the Tiber River enters the sea. Salt was a very important commodity for trade, and the capture of these salt beds greatly expanded Rome's economic importance in the region. Tradition says he also built the port of **Ostia**, which was located at the mouth of the Tiber, but this is unlikely. He did, however, construct the first bridge over the Tiber river, a wooden bridge called the ***Pons Sublicius*** ("the bridge built on piles").

Tarquinius Priscus

616-579 BC

The arrival of the fifth king of Rome, Tarquinius Priscus, marks a significant change in Roman society. Although many Roman historians avoid saying it directly, these last three kings were from a tribe named the **Etruscans**, who occupied the territory just north of Latium. Tarquinii is the name of an Etruscan city, and it is thought that Tarquinius came from there. He was the first to establish gladiatorial games in Rome, which was a tradition in Etruscan culture. Perhaps more importantly, he established a system of sewers, the ***Cloaca Maxima***, that allowed the area at the foot of the Capitoline hill to be drained. This area would later become the Roman forum.

Servius Tullius

578-535 BC

Servius Tullius was the son-in-law of Tarquinius Priscus, having married Tarquinius' daughter Tanaquil. Among his achievements were the reform of the army and the building of a wall around the city, now called the Servian Wall (see Figure 8, p. 12).

Tullius' daughter Tullia married the son (or possibly grandson) of Tarquinius Priscus, and the two of them conspired to overthrow her father. The younger Tarquinius, called Tarquinius Superbus ("Tarquinius the Proud") murdered Servius Tullius and became king.

Tarquinius Superbus

534-510 BC

Having overthrown his father-in-law, Superbus is said to have built the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus on the Capitoline hill and expanded (and possible enclosed) the *Cloaca Maxima*. However, the influence of the Etruscan kings over the Romans would soon come to an end. According to tradition, Superbus' son **Sextus** assaulted **Lucretia**, the wife of a Roman nobleman named **Tarquinius Collatinus**. This, among many other abuses of power, led to a conspiracy of Roman nobles, led by **Lucius Iunius Brutus**. These nobles drove Tarquinius Superbus out of the city. Superbus allied himself with **Lars Porsenna**, the Etruscan king of Clusium, who marched on Rome.

Rōmānī Praeclārī: Horatius Cocles, Cloelia, and Mucius Scaevola

Three famous stories are told about heroic acts during the conflict with Lars Porsenna. The first is that of **Horatius Cocles**. He was a descendant of the Horatii who fought against the Curiatii (see p. 13) and had lost an eye in an earlier battle – hence the nickname "Cocles", meaning "blind in one eye." As Porsenna's forces tried to cross the Tiber river over the *Pons Sublicius*, Horatius and three others attempted to block the bridge. As the other two retreated, Horatius held his position and fended off the Etruscan army while the bridge was cut down behind him. Once the bridge was down, Horatius, severly wounded and wearing full armor, uttered a prayer and threw himself into the Tiber river, eventually arriving safely on the Roman side.

PHILLIPUS DICIT

"*Rōmānī Praeclārī*" means "famous Romans." Look for this heading to read stories that the Romans found inspiring.

Cloelia was a young Roman woman who had been captured by Porsenna's forces. She escaped, along with other young girls, from Clusium back to Rome. Posenna demanded that she be returned, and either the Romans sent her back or she agreed to go on her own (versions of the story vary). Porsenna was so impressed by her bravery that he offered to free half of the other prisoners, whichever she would choose. She chose to free the young men so they could continue the fight. She received an honor usually reserved for men – an equestrian statue (i.e., a statue of her on a horse) on the Via Sacra.

The Roman senate sent the crafty **Gaius Mucius** into the camp of Lars Porsenna's army in an attempt to assassinate the Etruscan leader. He misidentified his target and killed Porsenna's scribe and then was captured by the Etruscans. Interrogated by Porsenna, he made this declaration:

"Romanus sum" inquit, "civis; C. Mucium vocant. Hostis hostem occidere volui, nec ad mortem minus animi est, quam fuit ad caedem; et facere et pati fortia Romanum est. Nec unus in te ego hos animos gessi; longus post me ordo est idem petentium decus. Proinde in hoc discrimen, si iuvat, est. Nec unus in te ego hos animos gessi; longus post me ordo est idem petentium decus. Proinde in hoc discrimen, si iuvat, accingere, ut in singulas horas capite dimices tuo, ferrum hostemque in vestibulo habeas regiae. Hoc tibi iuventus Romana indicimus bellum. Nullam aciem, nullum proelium timueris; uni tibi et cum singulis res erit." (Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 2.12)

"I am a Roman citizen; they call me Gaius Mucius. As an enemy, I desired to kill my enemy, and I am no less afraid to die than I am to murder. It is the bravery of all Romans to act and to suffer. Not only I bear this grudge against you; behind me is a long row of those seeking the same honor. Thus at this point of decision, if you desire, prepare yourself for a struggle in which you will every single hour have to fight for your life and have an armed enemy at the door of your royal tent. This is the war we, the young men of Rome, declare against you.

You have no lines of soldiers, no pitched
battle to fear; this will be between you
alone and each one of us, one by one."

Having said this, he demonstrated his strength and resolve by putting his right hand into the fire and allowing it to be burned off. Porsenna was impressed by his bravery and surprised by his madness. He sent Mucius back to Rome, saying "*in te magis quam in me hostilia ausus*" ("you are a worse enemy to yourself than to me").

Upon his return, Mucius was giving the honorary nickname **Scaevola**, which means "left-handed." These honorary nicknames are called ***cognomina*** in Latin (the singular is ***cognomen***), and they are passed down to the descendants of the person who originally earns them.

VI. Roman Society in the Early Republic

Patricians and Plebeians

The Roman people had always been divided between a ruling class (the kings and the senators) and a less wealthy and less powerful underclass. The wealthy ruling class are called **patricians**, and the lower class are called **plebeians**. At the beginning of the Republic, the fifty or so patrician families made up less than ten percent of the free population (i.e., not including slaves), but they more or less controlled all of the governmental power. The plebeians, on the other hand, had little governmental power, as we will see below. The conflict between these two groups would grow as the Republic expanded.

Government in the Early Republic

After the expulsion of Tarquinius Superbus and his family, the word "rex" (Latin for "king") became a bad word among the Romans. Thus, they set up a new system of government that attempted to guarantee that no man (for indeed, women could not vote, much less hold high office) would ever have too much power.

Figure 11. Artist's depiction of the fasces[j]

These new officials would be called **consuls**, and they would lead Rome for almost five centuries. There were always two of them (the word "*consul*" means "colleague") and they were elected every year. As each consul could veto the other, they had to agree in order to get anything done.

The consuls kept two other traditions from the Monarchy: the ***fasces*** and the **lictors**. The *fasces* was a bundle of wooden rods and an axe with the blade sticking out above. It had symbolized the power of the Roman kings, and now symbolized the power of the consuls. The *fasces* were carried by twelve lictors, who served as the consuls' bodyguard, as they had guarded the kings before.

The consuls were elected by the ***Comitia Centuriata*** ("the assembly of the centuries"). Each male Roman citizen belonged to one century, a group of 100 men, all of whom belonged to the same social class. Originally, these were based on military rank and reflected the division of legions into centuries. They could only vote, however, for men who had been nominated – and those nominations came from the Senate.

Phillipus Dicit

Benito Mussolini, who was the Prime Minister of Italy during World War II, revived the use of the *fasces* as a symbol of Roman and Italian power. This is where we get the English word "fascism," which means an authoritarian government sustained by the use of military force.

The **Senate** was made up almost entirely of patricians. It had been established by Romulus (according to legend) and continued operating during the Republic much as it had during the Monarchy, now advisors to the consuls instead of the king. Thus, it was nearly impossible in the early Republic for any plebeian to gain the consulship.

Because the consuls served only for a year, they relied heavily on the senators, who held their offices permanently unless convicted of a crime. In turn, the consuls were in charge of selecting new senators; and, of course, these selections came almost exclusively from the patrician families.

There were times, of course, when decisions had to be made quickly and having two consuls making decisions together was a problem. In these times – mainly during wartime – a **dictator** could be appointed. For modern Americans, "dictator" has a negative connotation. But in the early Republic, it was an honor to be named "dictator." The dictator was given all the power of the two consuls but was required to give up his authority as soon as the crisis was over, or, at the most, after six months.

One part of the king's authority did not go to the consuls. These were the religious duties that the kings carried out, which were subsequently given to the ***pontifex maximus*** (see p. 13). For a while, the consuls were also in charge of maintaining the roll of citizens, or the ***census*** ("census" is itself a Latin word that comes directly into English). This time-consuming task was soon given to a new pair of officers, called the **censors**. They were appointed every three to twelve years, and they held their offices for eighteen months.

Plebeian Secession

Since the plebeian families had very little power in the government, they had to find other ways to make changes in their society. The main way they did this was by **secession** (Latin *secessio*). A secession was a kind of strike; most importantly, it meant that the plebeians would temporarily refuse to serve in the army until their demands were met.

Several of these secessions took place during the early Republic, beginning with the First Plebeian Secession in 494 BC. One of the most important results of this secession was the recognition of the **tribunes of the people** (*tribunī plebis*) as part of the government. The tribunes were advocates for the plebeian tribes, and they could veto the legislation of the Senate.

Another goal the plebeians accomplished during this time was a written code of law to protect their property and liberty. This first written code of Roman law is called **the Twelve Tables** and was completed in 450 BC.

The plebeians also gained the right to elect some of the **quaestors**, who were assistants to the consuls. The quaestors were in charge of the treasury (Latin *aerarium*) and the courts of civil law. By the end of the fifth century BC the plebeians were also allowed to serve as questors.

Over time, some plebeian families became quite wealthy; but they could not become patricians, because you could only become a patrician by being the son of a patrician father. Eventually these wealthy patricians made two important gains. In 445 BC, a law was passed that allowed intermarriage between patricians and plebeians; thus, the sons of a plebeian woman who married at patrician man would be members of the patrician class. And in 367 BC, the *Lex Licinia Sextia* (the "Licinian-Sextian law") required that one of the two consuls be from the plebeian order. Nonetheless, since these offices were unpaid, only the wealthy plebeians could afford to hold them.

PHILLIPUS DICIT

Roman laws were named after the people who proposed them. For instance, the *Lex Licinia Sextia* was proposed by two tribunes, Lucius Sextius Lateranus and Gaius Licinius Stolo.

The year following the *Lex Licinia Sextia*, the office of **praetor** was created. The praetors assisted the consuls in internal matters, leaving the consuls freer to focus on military affairs. However, only patricians could serve as praetors.

The Cursus Honorum

Over time, a hierarchy of these government offices developed. If a Roman man wished to embark on a political career, the first step was military service. This would be followed by serving as a quaestor. Next, he would either serve as an **aedile**, who was responsible for public buildings and public festivals, or as a tribune. After that, he would serve as a praetor and then finally ascend to the consulship. This was referred to as the ***cursus honorum***, ("the course of honors"). Of course, this was not always strictly followed, and various scholars have different lists of which offices composed the *cursus honorum*.

Rōmānī Praeclārī: Appius Claudius Caecus

Appius Claudius Caecus served as censor in 312 BC, during which time he worked to strengthen the lower classes by creating a way for those who did not own land to vote and by allowing the sons of freedmen (former slaves) to become senators. Many of his reforms were later reversed by the consuls of the following year, but he would go on to have a successful career in politics. He is better remembered for his construction projects, both of which bore his name. He begun construction on the ***Via Appia*** ("the Appian Way"), a road that would eventually stretch from Rome to Brundisium in southeast Italy – about 350 miles. The Roman poet Statius called it *regina viārum* ("the queen of roads"), and its strategic and military importance cannot be overestimated.

He also oversaw the construction of Rome's first aqueduct, the ***Aqua Appia***. It carried water more than ten miles from springs in the countryside into Rome.

His cognomen, *Caecus*, means "blind." He is said to have lost his sight in his older age.

VII. THE CONQUEST OF ITALY

Even as the Monarchy ended, the Romans were already at war with the Etruscans who lived to their north. These wars would continue for about three centuries as the Romans sought to subjugate all of Italy under their control. Although this text will not cover all of these wars, it will highlight some important battles and generals.

Figure 12. Roman expansion in Italy, 500-218 BC[k]

The Aequi

One of the tribes the Romans fought during this period were the Aequi, who inhabited the central part of the Apennines. The Aequi had moved into the Alban hills, about 21 miles south of Rome, and set up a fortified base on Mt. Algidus. In 458 BC, fearing that the Aequi would use this base to attack Rome and her allies, the Romans sent an army, led by one of the consuls, to drive the Aequi back. This army was surrounded and defeated by the Aequi, and only a few soldiers escaped to tell the Senate what had happened.

Rōmānī Praeclārī: Cincinnatus

The Senate then appointed the farmer **Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus** as dictator. They found him plowing his fields, but he quickly changed into his toga and went into the city. On the next day, he ordered every man of military age to report to the Campus Martius. With this army, he marched on Mt. Algidus and defeated the Aequi. After this victory, he returned to his farm, having served as dictator for only fifteen days.
The city of Cincinnati, Ohio, was named for Cincinnatus. There is a statue of him in the center of the city.

Figure 13. Statue of Cincinnatus by Johann Wilhelm Beyer, Schönbrunn Garden, Vienna[l]

Veii and the Etruscans

Although the Etruscans had been driven out of Rome, they still maintained a stronghold at Veii, just north of Rome. Veii also controlled Fidenae, a city even closer to Rome, which the Romans had tried to capture in 479 BC without success. However, c. 426 BC, the Roman army took Findenae and killed the Veiian king, Tolumnius.

In 405 BC, the Romans decided that they should destroy the city of Veii. This was a difficult task because, like the city of Troy in ancient mythology, it was very well fortified. The only solution was to lay siege to the city – to encircle the city to make sure no supplies or people could get in or out. Some other Etruscan cities sent armies to rescue Veii, but they were beaten back by the Romans.

Rōmānī Praeclārī: Camillus

In 396 BC, the Roman general **Marcus Furius Camillus** managed to breach the walls of Veii by digging under and entering the city's sewer system. Veii was destroyed, all adult men in the city were killed, and all the women and children enslaved.

Afterwards, Camillus attacked Falerii, a city that had tried to help the Veiians. The Faleriians made peace with Rome, and many other cities in central Italy did the same. But because there was not much plunder from the war against Falerii, Camillus' political rivals accused him of embezzlement, and he was banished from Rome.

Later, after Rome was sacked by the Gauls (see below), Camillus came to Rome's rescue and drove the Gauls out. For this, he was called the "second Romulus," or the second founder of Rome.

Brennus and the Gauls

The name **Gauls** describes several tribes of Celtic origin that, by the 4th century BC, had spread across central Europe. Their territory included parts of what is now France, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, and northern Italy.

In 390 BC, the Gallic tribe called the **Senones**, under the command of their chieftain **Brennus**, drew very near to Rome. The Roman army met Brennus at the point where the Allia, a small stream that joined the Tiber about ten miles north of Rome. The Gauls defeated the Romans in what became known as one of the worst disasters of Rome's early history. The Romans would refer to it as a ***dies ater*** ("a black day").

The Gauls quickly took the city of Rome. Some Romans escaped, some were killed, and some (like Marcus Manlius, below) went to the citadel on the Capitoline Hill as a last resort. The Gauls, however, were less interested in occupying the city than in acquiring plunder. They agreed to leave Rome for a ransom of gold. According to legend, the Romans accused Brennus of using unfair weights to weigh the gold. He responded by saying, "*Vae victīs*," which means "Woe to the conquered" – meaning that if you lose, you don't get to complain.

It was at this point (again, according to legend) that the exiled Camillus and his army arrived to drive the Gauls out of Italy (see above).

Rōmānī Praeclārī: Marcus Manlius

Marcus Manlius was one of the Romans who occupied the citadel on the Capitoline hill as Brennus and the Gauls took the city. The Romans say that one night, the Gauls tried to scale the side of the Capitoline hill while the Romans slept. However, the sacred geese of Juno who lived on the Capitoline heard the invaders and with their honking woke Manlius, who was able to defend the citadel from the Gallic attack. For his bravery, he was given the cognomen **Capitolinus**.

Tarentum and Pyrrhus

Tarentum was a prosperous Greek settlement in southern Italy. In 334 BC, the year Alexander the Great began his eastern campaign, the Tarentines had hired Alexander's brother-in-law,

King Alexander of Epirus (modern day Albania), to fend off invaders from the north. Alexander of Epirus got the Romans to agree not to interfere in this war, but the Tarentines themselves began to fear that Alexander meant to expand his empire by taking over southern Italy, so they withdrew their support.

Figure 14. Southern Italy at the time of the Pyrrhic War[m]

But as the Romans continued their conquest of the Italian peninsula, the Tarentines became increasingly worried. In 282 BC, the Romans sent troops to help one of their allies on the Gulf of Taranto (also called the Gulf of Tarentum) against some local raiders. The Tarentines saw this as a violation of the treaty the Romans had made with Alexander of Epirus, although the Romans believed this treaty no longer valid. In any case, Tarentum hired the new king of Epirus, **Pyrrhus**, to come to their aid against the Romans.

The Romans and Pyrrhus fought several battles in the course of this war. The Epirote troops included elephants, which frightened the Roman horses at their first encounter. The **Battle of Asculum** (279 BC) is particularly famous. Although Pyrrhus won this battle, the Epirote casualties were so high that it was virtually a loss. Thus was coined the term "a Pyrrhic victory," meaning a victory so costly that it was hardly worth it.

Eventually the Roman defeated Pyrrhus at the **Battle of Beneventum** in 276 BC, and Pyrrhus returned to Epirus. This left southern Italy virtually defenseless against the continued Roman expansion, and by 264 BC the Romans controlled virtually every part of the Italian peninsula.

VIII. THE PUNIC WARS

Carthage

The city of Carthage was founded around the same time as Rome, in the early eighth century BC by Phoenicians from the city of Tyre in modern-day Lebanon. Its location in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea made it a center for trade routes, and the Phoenicians were sea-faring people. As soon as the Romans began to acquire coastland in central Italy, the Carthaginians entered into various treaties with the Romans, and they also may have helped fund the Roman campaign against Pyrrhus. The Latin word for Carthaginian is *Pūnicus*, and the English words Carthaginian and Punic mean the same thing.

As much as the Carthaginians did not want the Romans to control the seas and the trade that crossed them, the Romans also did not want the Carthaginians to gain land in Italy. For a long time, they existed peacefully – until the city of Messana entered the picture.

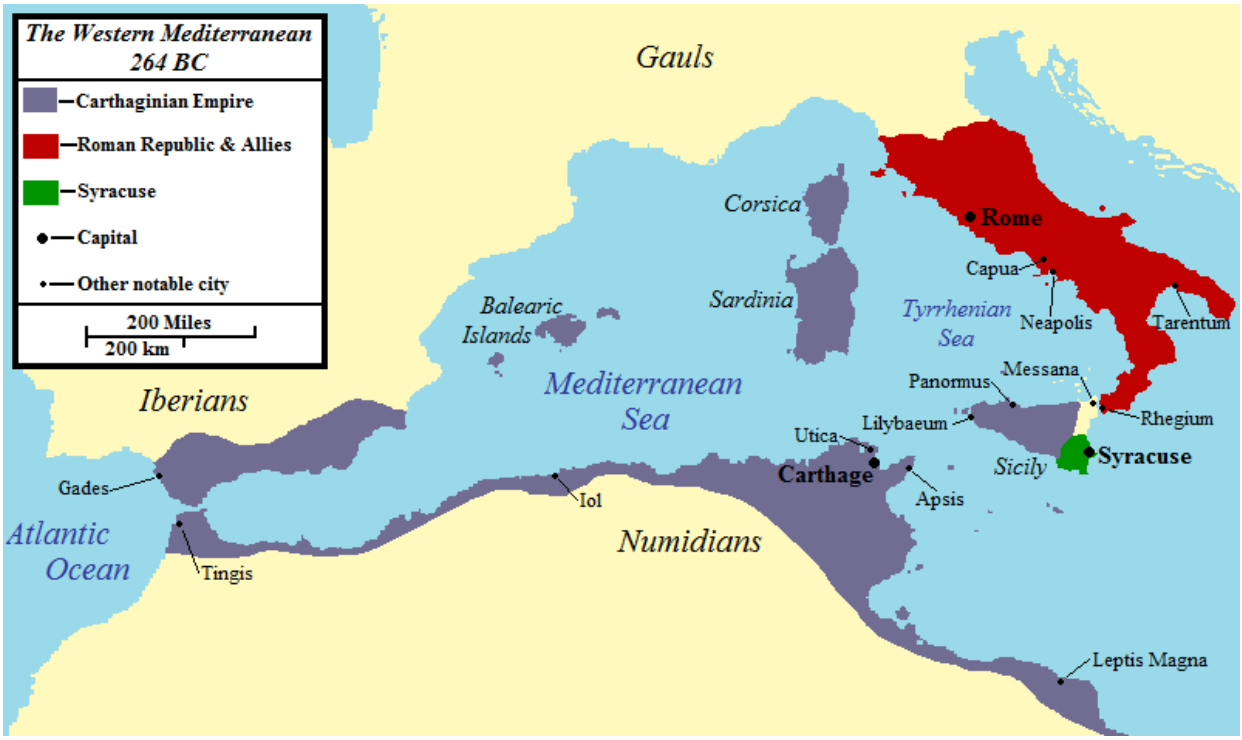


Figure 15. Rome and Carthage at the beginning of the Punic Wars[n]

Messana

One part of the Mediterranean world seems not to have been covered by the treaties between Rome and Carthage – the island of **Sicily**. In 264 BC, the city of **Messana**, under the rule of a mercenary army that called themselves the **Mamertines** ("sons of Mars"), was attacked by **Heiro II**, the king of **Syracuse**, a Greek city-state on Sicily.

The Mamertine mercenaries reached out to the nearby Punic fleet for help, which the Carthaginians gladly gave. However, once they had convinced Heiro II to call off his siege, the Carthaginians stayed at Messana. Now the Mamertines had another uninvited guest, and they called on Rome to help them. Thus, Rome and Carthage were drawn into direct conflict for the first time.

The First Punic War

264-261 BC

When the consul Appius Claudius Caudex (grandson of Appius Claudius Caecus; see p. 20) arrived at Mesanna, it was already under siege by both Carthage and Syracuse. He managed to defeat both easily, and this success made the Romans think they could quickly gain even more territory on Sicily. They made a deal with Syracuse, allowing Hiero II to keep a section of eastern Sicily, and turned their attention to the upcoming fight against Carthage.

Figure 16. Sicily, showing battles during the First Punic War

Meanwhile, the Carthaginians gathered their forces at **Agrigentum** on the southwest coast of Sicily. The Romans did not have much of a naval fleet, so they marched on land across Sicily and laid siege to Agrigentum in 262 BC. The Romans capture and enslaved the city. Having been successful for a second time in Sicily, the Romans now thought they could drive Carthage off the island entirely.

The one serious obstacle to Roman domination of Sicily was the Carthaginian navy. The Romans had almost no working ships, while the Carthaginians had an entire fleet. To this end, the Romans decided to build new ships as quickly as possible. They began in 261 BC and were finished by 260 BC.

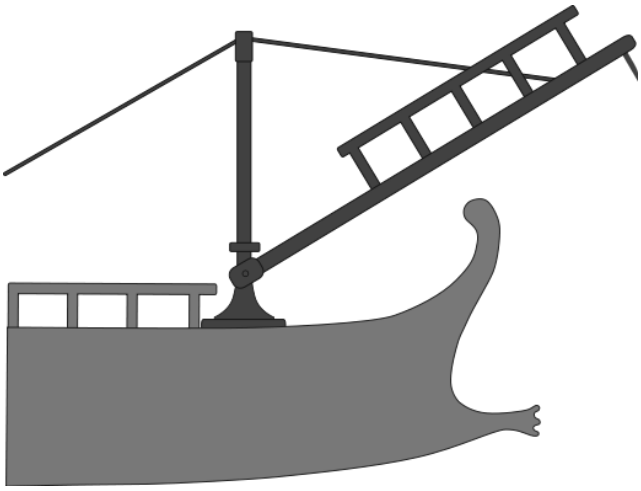


Figure 17. Diagram of a ***corvus***[o]

Knowing that they were still better suited to fighting on land than on sea, the Romans added boarding-planks to their ships. The Athenians had developed these during the Peloponnesian War. These boarding-planks, which the Romans called ***corvī*** ("crows" or "ravens"; the singular is ***corvus***), were tied to the mast of the ship and could be released to dig their metal spikes into a nearby enemy ship, allowing Roman soldiers to board. This effectively turned a sea battle into a land battle.

In 260 BC the Roman consul **Gaius Duilius** and a fleet of 140 Roman ships met the Carthaginian fleet of about 130 ships off the coast of **Mylae**. The Punic admiral, perhaps expecting an easy victory over a fleet so new to war on the sea, attacked recklessly and was unprepared for the *corvī*. Many Carthaginian ships were captured, and the Punic navy retreated.

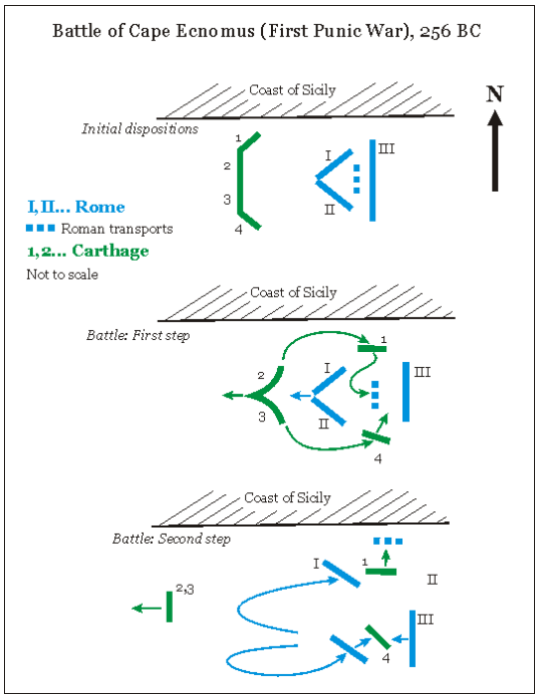


Figure 18. Hasdrubal's tactics at Cape Ecnomus[p]

Again encouraged by victory, the Romans decided to invade Africa and put an end to the Carthaginians once and for all. The consuls **Vulso** and **Regulus** set out in 256 BC with 150 warships, 80 transports, and approximately 15,000 troops. They met the Carthaginian fleet at Cape Ecnomus. **Hasdrubal**, the Punic admiral, attempted to draw the Roman fleet in and flank them from the edges (see Figure 18). The tactic almost worked, but it was not executed perfectly, allowing the Romans to break through the middle.

Regulus landed in Africa in 256 BC. Shortly after that, the Carthaginians hired a Spartan mercenary, **Xanthippus**, to help them. Xanthippus defeated the Romans at the Battle of Carthage and took Regulus captive. The Roman army was destroyed. A few thousand soldiers survived to board ships back to

Rome, but the fleet was caught in a storm on the way back, destroying 170 ships.
The next few years saw several battles between Rome and Carthage in and around Sicily. The Romans were defeated at Drepana, and the Carthaginians under the command of **Hamilcar Barca** were able to retake many towns in Sicily. Nonetheless, the Romans won what would be the last battle of the First Punic War near the **Aegates Islands**.

The First Punic War ended in part because of a change in the Carthaginian government. Land-owning aristocrats, mostly concerned with farming, took over the government from the merchants, who were more concerned with the sea. They were not interested in continuing the war against Rome and told Hamilcar to negotiate a peace treaty.

In this treaty, the Carthaginians agreed to abandon their holdings in Sicily and any islands between Sicily and Italy. They also paid a substantial fine of 3200 talents.[4] Sicily became the **first Roman province.**

The Second Punic War

218-202 BC

The Second Punic War is, along with the Gallic Wars, probably the best-known of all Roman wars, and for good reason. While the First Punic War took place mostly in and around Sicily, the second was waged not only in Italy and northern Africa, but also in Spain and Greece. The generals of the Second Punic Wars, both Roman and Carthaginian, employed innovative and daring tactics that would be studied for generations to come.

After the end of the First Punic War, Carthage had taken over most of southern Spain. Hamilcar Barca had given assurance to the Romans that he would not go beyond the Ebro River, and had left the city of Saguntum, which was a Roman ally, alone.

After Hamilcar's death, his son **Hannibal** became the Carthaginian general in Spain. After a quarrel between the Carthaginians and Saguntum, Hannibal laid siege to Saguntum, who appealed to its ally Rome for help. Most historians agree that Hannibal chose to provoke the Romans deliberately, at least in part because of the hatred of Rome he had inherited from his father.

The Romans, who were at the time engaged in a conflict in Illyria, did not respond to Sagutum's request quickly enough. Perhaps they thought that Saguntum would hold out against the siege. But when Saguntum fell to Hannibal in 218 BC, the Romans issued an ultimatum. They sent representatives to Carthage demanding the surrender of Hannibal unless the Carthaginians wanted war. The Carthaginians chose war.

[4] A talent equaled 6000 denarii, and a denarius was the average daily pay for hired labor.

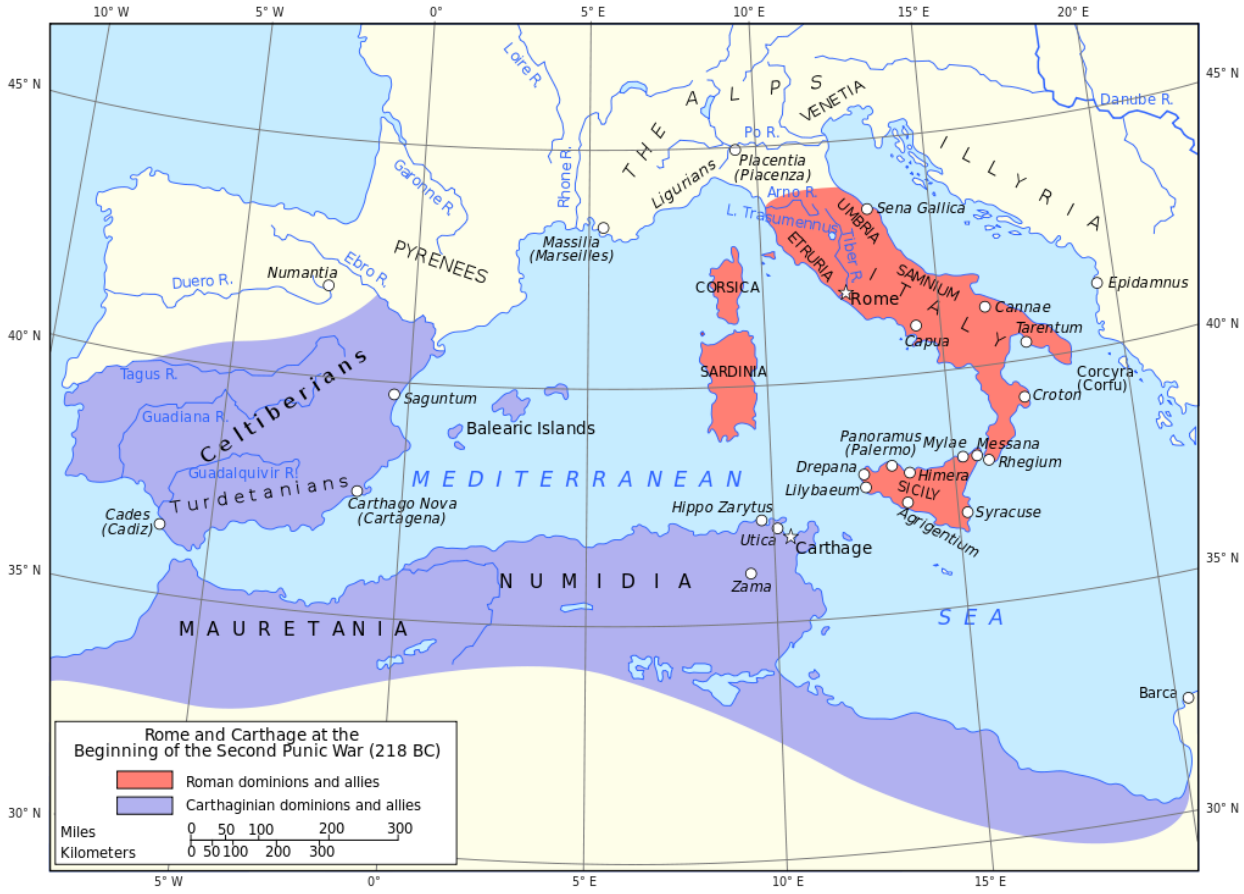


Figure 19. Roman and Carthaginian territory at the beginning of the Second Punic War[q]

The Romans prepared two armies. The first, under the command of the consul **Publius Cornelius Scipio**, set sail for Massilia (modern-day Marseilles), intending to use that as a base for invading Spain. The other prepared to invade Africa.

Hannibal's plan was quite daring: he would march from Spain, over the Alps, and invade Italy. By the time Scipio arrived in Massilia, Hannibal had already crossed the Rhone river and was now closer to Italy than Scipio himself was. But in crossing the high mountains of the Alps, Hannibal suffered great losses. He arrived in Italy with about 30,000 soldiers and twenty elephants. His numbers grew, however, as he made alliances with some of the tribes of northern Italy joined the fight against Rome.

Scipio had sailed back to Italy, and in 218 BC his army met Hannibal's at the Ticinus River, a minor skirmish in which Hannibal was victorious. The Romans recalled the second army, which had been on its way to Africa, to join the fight against Hannibal. Nonetheless, Hannibal continued to advance, defeating the Romans at the Trebia in 218 BC and at the **Battle of Lake Trasimene** in 217 BC. At Trasimene, Hannibal's army killed one of the consuls of the year, Gaius Flaminius. This left Hannibal's path to Rome open.

Attacking a city as fortified as Rome required a base of operations. Unfortunately for Hannibal, not a single town among Rome's Italian allies offered Hannibal a place to camp. So he passed by Rome and went to the south, hoping to find allies there.

While Hannibal was looking for help among Rome's neighbors, the Romans were looking for new leadership. The massive defeat at Lake Trasimene and the death of Flaminius had made them very worried. They appointed **Quintus Fabius Maximus** as dictator, and he took control of the Roman forces. Instead of facing Hannibal's army directly, Fabius chose to harass and delay Hannibal with small skirmishes. For this, he earned the agnomen **Cunctator** ("the delayer"). Fabius was not entirely unsuccessful. He very nearly corned Hannibal in Campania, south of Rome, by blocking the passes in the mountains. Hannibal escaped by using a surprising tactic. He tied sticks to a herd of 2000 oxen and lit the sticks on fire. The oxen ran through one of Fabius' camps and set it ablaze.

Back in Rome, the Senate had grown tired of Fabius' tactics. The Romans wanted Hannibal out of Italy. In 216 BC, they elected two new consuls who led a force of 50,000 men into battle against Hannibal. They hoped to overwhelm Hannibal by sheer numbers.

The **Battle of Cannae** turned out to be one of the biggest military defeats the Romans had ever suffered. Hannibal employed a tactic to what Hasdrubal had attempted at Cape Ecnomus (see Figure 18), but this time the tactic worked.

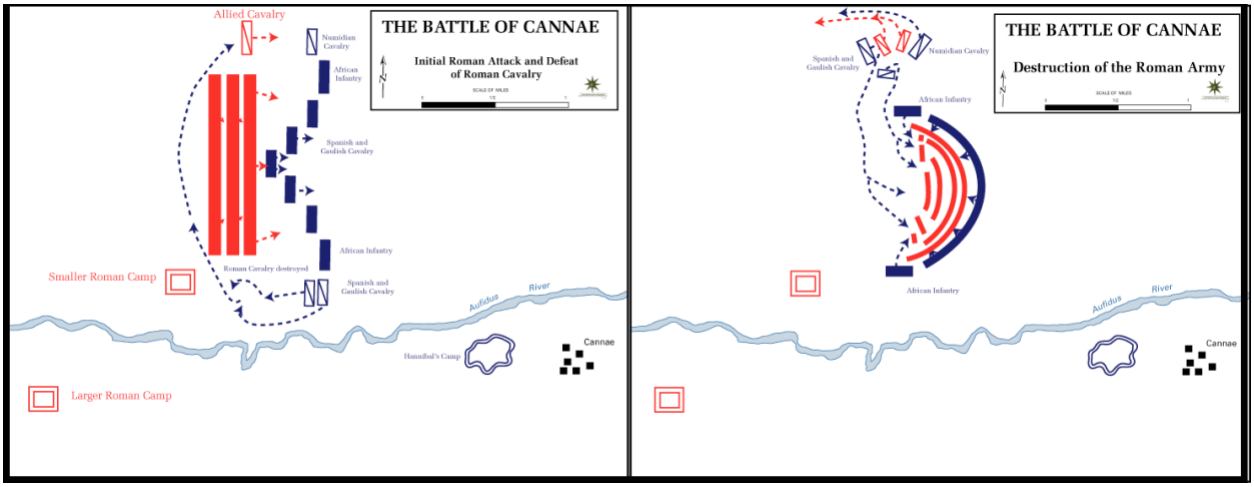


Figure 20. Hannibal's tactics at Cannae[r]

Outnumbered, Hannibal ordered a retreat of the center of his line. The Roman infantry rushed forward, only to be attacked from the sides by the Carthaginian horsemen. The Romans found themselves surrounded and were massacred. Very few of the 50,000 escaped, while Hannibal only lost about 6000 men. One of the consuls was killed; the other escaped. Also among those who survived this slaughter was the younger **Publius Cornelius Scipio**, son of the consul of 218 BC who had fought Hannibal at Ticinus River.

The defeat at Cannae cost the Romans dearly. The Roman death count for the war was now over 100,000 men, and many of Rome's Italian allies were wavering in their support. Hannibal took some Italian towns, but the Romans remained strong and even began to take some of the cities back. If Hannibal was going to continue to fight in Italy, he would need reinforcements from Spain.

The younger Scipio, who survived the battle at Cannae, was given command over the Roman army in Spain. Having learned from the disaster at Cannae, Scipio organized his forces in smaller, more maneuverable groups. The Romans took New Carthage (modern Cartagena). **Hasdrubal**, the brother of Hannibal and the Punic commander in Spain, managed to escape Scipio's advance.

Hasdrubal took his armies and made the march from Spain over the Alps to Italy. He hoped to meet Hannibal, who was still in southern Italy, somewhere in the middle. However, the Romans defeated Hannibal at the Metaurus River in 207 BC. This signaled the beginning of the end for Hannibal.

Having conquered Spain, Scipio returned to Rome in 206 BC and was elected consul. He wanted to get Hannibal out of Italy once and for all, and he proposed to attack Carthage directly. For this purpose, he raised an army of volunteers. After being trained in Scipio's new tactics, they landed in northern Africa in 204 BC.

After about a year of fighting, the Carthaginians decided to seek peace. But while the two sides were discussing the terms of the surrender, Hannibal returned from Italy with his armies. He and Scipio met in battle at **Zama** in 202 BC. Scipio's smaller and more flexible units allowed the Romans to survive and initial onslaught of elephants. The Romans were also helped by cavalry from some of Carthage's neighbors. In the end, the Carthaginians were defeated and most of them were killed. Hannibal, however, escaped.

The final settlement of the Second Punic War greatly favored the Romans. Carthage had to give up any territory it owned outside of Africa and grant independence to the neighboring tribes who had helped the Romans. They were forbidden to wage war outside of Africa, and even in Africa they could not wage war without getting permission from Rome. The Carthaginian fleet was greatly reduced, and Carthage had to pay Rome 10,000 talents over the next fifty years. (Remember that the Carthaginians had payed 3200 talents at the end of the First Punic War.)

These terms were incredibly harsh, and it was inevitable that they would be violated.

Rōmānī Praeclārī: Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus

The hero of the Second Punic War came from a very distinguished family. His family, the Corneliī, were one of the six major patrician families of the Republic, and the Scipio branch of the Corneliī family was particularly notable. His great-grandfather, grandfather, and father had

all been consuls; and his father (also named Publius Cornelius Scipio) was a general in the First and Second Punic Wars.

He earned the cognomen Africanus for his defeat of the Carthaginians in Africa, and he is generally called Scipio Africanus by modern scholars to distinguish him from his father and his son, who was also named Publius Cornelius Scipio.

He became a general at the age of 25, having not yet served in any high government position, much less consul. His innovative tactics and ultimate defeat of Hannibal make him one of the most famous Romans of his time.

Between the Second and Third Punic Wars

202-149 BC

Despite the harsh terms imposed on the Carthaginians, they would not fight the Romans again for half a century. During this time, the Romans were occupied with other matters. In particular, they wanted to regain the territory in northern Italy temporarily lost to Hannibal, reclaiming what they called Cisalpine Gaul. Cisalpine Gaul is the part of what is now Italy that is not on the peninsula, but south of the Alps. They also finished the job started by Scipio Africanus in Spain; for, although the Carthaginians had been driven out, it took some time to bring the entire region under Roman control.

The Third Punic War

At the conclusion of the Second Punic War, Carthage had been forced to give independence to some neighboring tribes. One of these, the Numidians, continued to expand their territory by taking more territory from Carthage. Since the terms of the peace of after the Second Punic War forbid Carthage from waging war without Roman permission, there was little the Carthaginians could do. They appealed to Rome for help to settle the dispute.

The Romans continued to hold a grudge against Carthage. **Marcus Porcius Cato** (often called Cato the Elder), who was consul in 195 BC and censor in 184 BC, had taken to ending every speech he made in the Senate, regardless of the topic of the speech, by saying "*censeo Carthaginem esse delendam*" ("I think that Carthage must be destroyed").[5]

The Romans were unsympathetic to Carthage's call for help, which allowed the Numidians to continue attacking Carthaginian land. Carthage, fed up with the continued harassment of the Numidians, eventually went to war in 150 BC. The Romans, perhaps looking for an excuse to finish Carthage once and for all (and perhaps to divide up her wealth among themselves) viewed this as a violation of the treaty signed at the end of the Second Punic War and set out for Carthage with an army.

[5] Sometimes he is quoted as saying "*Carthago delenda est*" ("Carthage must be destroyed").

The Romans could not immediately breach Carthage's walls, so they besieged the city. The siege lasted three years. One young officer particularly distinguished himself. **Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus** (usually called Scipio Aemilianus) was the adopted grandson of Scipio Africanus. He became so popular that he was allowed to run for consul in 147 BC, even though he was too young to be consul. He was elected and put in charge of the war against Carthage. Scipio Aemilianus took Carthage in 146 BC. The city was quite nearly burned to the ground, and the people of Carthage were sold as slaves.

Figure 21. Roman holdings at the end of the Third Punic War, 146 BC

From this point until 117 AD, when the Roman empire reaches its greatest size, the Romans will continue their conquest of the Mediterranean. The riches and land gained by these conquests had a profound effect on Roman politics and social structure, which in some ways was unprepared to govern such a large empire.

IX. The Gracchi Brothers

Beginning with Scipio Africanus, it became common for land to be given to soldiers as part of their reward for their military service. The people conquered by the Romans were often made slaves, and those slaves worked the new, larger farms (in Latin, *latifundia*). With slaves working the fields, the rural poor began to move into the cities.

At the same time, the wealth generated by war enlarged the cities, giving rise to a new class of citizens whose wealth was based not just on land ownership, but also in business investment. These men, called the ***equites*** (Latin for "knights"), found it very difficult to rise through the political ranks of Rome despite their wealth. The old families of Rome jealously guarded their power, and the senators and consuls continued to be almost exclusively the descendants of those who had served as senators and consuls before. In fact, it was so rare for an outsider to become a high-ranking official that there was a name for a man who attempted to do. Such a man was called a ***novus homo*** ("a new man").

Another new social class that developed during this time period was that of the ***libertī*** (the singular is ***libertus***), or "freedmen." Not all of the slaves taken in the wars worked the farms; many of them were well educated and served as scribes, bookkeepers, craftsmen, doctors, and teachers. It was not uncommon for these slaves to be allowed to buy their freedom or to be freed after performing an important service. These former slaves were the *libertī*, and they were granted citizenship upon gaining their freedom. Their former masters became their patrons, helping them set up businesses in return for their support in politics. Thus citizens with political ambitions had an incentive to free their slaves.

Phillipus dicit

There are several different ways in which the Romans grouped themselves socially, and it might be helpful to summarize them here.

First, of course, is citizenship. Roman men were citizens and had the right to vote. Roman women, although citizens, did not have the right to vote. In some of Rome's colonies and provinces, there were also men who were citizens who lacked the right to vote.

Then there is ancestry. This divided Romans into patricians and plebians (see p. 18). You had to be born (or adopted) into these groups.

Next is whether your family had previously held high political office. Once a member of your family had held the consulship, the family was considered *nobilis* ("noble").

Finally, there is the rank given to a person by their wealth as assessed in the census. The senators and *equites* had the same census rank (above those of the middle and lower classes).

In this political environment, conflict between the various social and economic groupings naturally arose. One source of this conflict was a direct result of Rome's numerous wars. The Roman legions were made up of landowners, because those who owned land would be wealthy enough to supply their own equipment. If the land you owned met a certain minimum value, then you could be drafted into the army. Over time, this minimum amount was lowered; but even so, there were no longer enough land-owners to keep the army supplied. This was made worse by the large *latifundia*. The owners of these large farms owned a lot of land, but only represented one man to be drafted into the army.

Tiberius Gracchus

Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus was the grandson of Scipio Africanus on his mother's side. His father, who shared his name, had been consul in 177 BC and again in 163 BC. He became tribune in 133 BC and set about to reform the way land (and therefore wealth) was distributed among the citizens of Rome. This would help increase the number of soldiers available, but it would also mean that some of the wealthiest would lose some of their land. The Senate, obviously, was opposed to such an idea.

The bill that Tiberius introduced dealt with the *ager publicus* ("the public land") that the Roman government acquired after the Second Punic War. The government had assigned these lands to various citizens for their personal use. Tiberius' bill required that no citizen should hold more than 500 *iugera* (about 300 acres), and that anything above that be distributed to other citizens.

Thinking that the Senate would reject his bill, Tiberius Gracchus took his legislation directly to the popular assembly (*Concilium plebis*). Although this was an uncommon practice, it did have some precedence in Roman law. But when the bill was to be presented, another tribune, Marcus Octavius, forbid the bill to be read. Since each tribune was allowed to veto legislation, this brought the bill to a stop. But the assembly, wanting to get the bill through, voted to remove Octavius from office and replace him with a new tribune friendly to those who wanted land reform. A commission was set up to oversee the reforms, consisting of Tiberius Gracchus, his brother **Gaius Gracchus**, and Tiberius' father-in-law **Claudius Pulcher**, the senior senator. The Senate fought back by refusing to fund this new commission.

In the same year, **Attalus III**, king of Pergamum in Asia Minor (modern western Turkey) died. He had no heirs, and instead left his kingdom to the Roman people. Tiberius Gracchus proposed that this new land and wealth should be given to the same small landowners that would benefit from his recent land reform. He threatened to bypass the Senate again; to avoid this, they agreed to fund the land reform commission.

Tiberius Gracchus announced his intention to stand for election to the tribunate again for the following year. It is not clear if such a move was illegal, but it was certainly unusual. Some of Tiberius' supporters began to fall away, and rumors suggested that Tiberius intended to set himself up as some sort of king. While the popular assembly debated whether or not Tiberius

could run for tribune again, the former consul Scipio Nasica and some senators arrived and clubbed Tiberius to death, along with hundreds of his supporters.

Gaius Gracchus

The younger Gracchus, although he had served on his brother Tiberius' land reform commission, survived his brother's murder. He became tribune in 122 BC and continued his brother's work. He also expanded on it by establishing Roman colonies at Tarentum, Capua, and even at the site of Carthage, which was renamed Junonia. This provided land to both Roman citizens and Rome's Italian allies.

He also instituted a reform of Rome's **grain supply**. In the city, the price of grain varied between high and low depending on supply. By building warehouses at Ostia and by getting the government to buy grain in bulk, the price could be controlled. This reform won him the support of the urban lower classes.

Gaius also got legislation passed to reform Rome's judicial system. The courts that tried provincial governors charged with extortion had juries entirely composed of the senatorial class, who were reluctant to convict their fellow senatorials. Gaius' law moved these courts into the hands of the *equites*. With the support of these allies, Gaius was re-elected as tribune for 121 BC.

While Gaius was in Africa to start the new colony of Junonia, the senators and the other tribune, Marcus Livius Drusus, campaigned to turn the people against Gaius Gracchus. Drusus promised to found twelve new colonies in Italy to be populated by the poorest citizens, who would be given the land rent-free. This legislation never came to be, but the promise of it drew support away from Gaius Gracchus.

Gaius was defeated for a third term as tribune. Shortly thereafter, the consul **Lucius Opimius**, provoked some of Gaius' supporters to violence. Opimius used this incident to convince the Senate the Gaius was a danger to the Roman people. The Senate issued a decree called the ***Senatus Consultum Ultimum*** ("a final decree of the Senate") against Gaius Gracchus. This allowed Opimius to hunt down Gaius and his supporters. Surrounded and with his supporters put to death or flight, Gaius ordered one of his slaves to kill him.

X. Gaius Marius

As you can see in the stories of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, the Roman Republic was under great strain, both internally and externally. Their time in government gave rise to two political parties in Rome. These are not political parties in the modern sense of the word – there was no formal structure or philosophical framework. Still, these labels are helpful as we seek to understand Roman politics during this time.

Those who followed the path of the Gracchi brothers in promoting policies that benefitted large groups of voters are referred to as the ***populares*** (an adjective meaning "of the people"). The opposing group tried to gain political power in more traditional ways, like the reputation of their family, personal alliances with other aristocrats, and their clients and freedmen. This group called themselves the ***optimates*** ("of the best," or "of the noblest").

The War Against Jugurtha

Jugurtha was a Numidian prince. (The Numidians held the land near Carthage, as you might remember; see p. 32). When his father died in 118 BC, Jugurtha was supposed to share the kingdom with his brothers; but he killed one of them and drove the other into exile. His exiled brother Adherbal appealed to Rome for help, and the Romans sent a commission to Africa to settle the matter. They gave Adherbal the eastern half of Numidia and Jugurtha the western half.

In 115 BC, Jugurtha made war on Adherbal again. Adherbal asked the Romans for help once more, but Rome refused. Jugurtha sacked Adherbal's capitol city Cirta, which was a major trading port, killing not only his brother but also many foreign merchants. This caused concern among the Roman equestrian class, which led to a declaration of war.

The initial Roman efforts against Jugurtha were very weak. Jugurtha used bribes to obtain favorable terms with the Romans, and when these bribes were uncovered, Romans were both angry and embarrassed. Eventually, the command of the forces in Africa fell to Gaius Marius.

The Rise of Marius

Gaius Marius was an equally talented general and politician, but no one in his family had ever held the consulship. As a *novus homo*, his ambition was to become consul and make his family part of the noble class. He had been elected praetor in 115 BC, although accusations of bribery swirled around his campaign. (These accusations appear to have been true, but he was never charged.) He was elected consul in 107 BC, and he was given charge over the war in Numidia. In general, his politics place him as a member of the *populares.*

In order to recruit troops for the war against Jugurtha, Marius made a big change to the long-standing practice of only recruiting landowners in the army. Any physically fit man could join Marius' army. These landless volunteers, who would become an increasingly greater

percentage of the legions, were more loyal to their commander than to the Roman Republic. They would end up supporting the commander not only in military campaigns, but also in any political contests that followed.

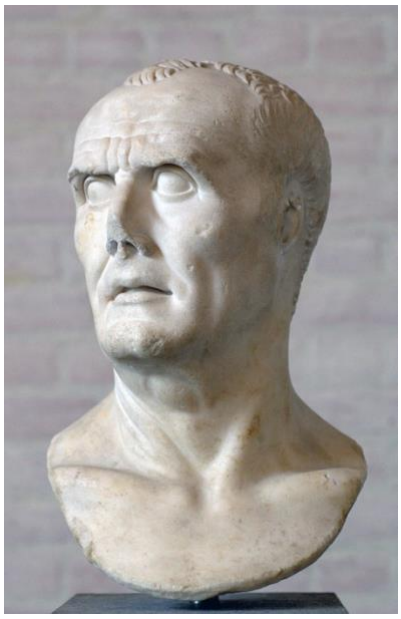


Figure 22. Bust of Marius, Glyptothek Museum, Munich[5]

After training his new recruits, Marius made quick work of the Numidian army. In order to capture Jugurtha himself, Marius sent his quaestor **Lucius Cornelius Sulla**, who convinced one of Jugurtha's allies to betray him and lead him into an ambush. (We will see Sulla again later.)

Marius became extremely popular after this war, especially among his soldiers and the equestrian class, who benefitted from the Roman control of the port at Cirta.

The Romans were facing a new threat at this time: the migration of German tribes (the Cimbri, Teutons, and Tigurini) towards Roman territory. Twice the German tribes asked Rome for land in exchange for military service. Twice their request was rejected. At the **Battle of Arausio** (modern Orange, France) in 105 BC, the Germans defeated Roman army, which lost about 80,000 men. The situation began to remind Romans of the stories of the Brennus sacking Rome in 390 BC (see p. 23).

So great was the Roman fear of these German tribes that, having given Marius command of the armies to defeat them, they elected him consul in 104 BC and for each of the next four years. While there had been men who served as consuls more than once, they had rarely served in consecutive years. Certainly no one before Marius served five consecutive years in the consulship.

Like Scipio Africanus before him, Marius reorganized the army in response the tactics of a new enemy. He increased the number of infantry in the legion from 3000 to 6000 and got rid of the lightly-armed skirmishers. These new larger legions were divided into **cohorts** of 600 men (one-tenth of a legion), which allowed increased flexibility without losing strength. The new army was trained in sword techniques used by gladiators, and their physical training was increased. This "new" army quickly drove back the German tribes, and Marius became more popular than ever. He was compared to Camillus (see p. 22) and called the savior of Rome. When he entered into his sixth consulship in 100 BC, it seemed that he might be able to have as many consulships as he desired.

But with Rome at peace, it was easier for his enemies to oppose him. To combat these enemies and to secure the passage of legislation that would benefit his veterans, Marius relied on two politicians of the *populares*: Gaius Sevilius Glaucia and **Lucius Appuleius Saturninus**.

The Fall of Marius

Saturninus was a cunning politician who had no problems with using violence to accomplish his goals. While serving as tribune in 103 BC, another tribune tried to block Saturninus' legislation. Saturninus' supporters threw stones at the opposing tribune until he withdrew his veto.
Much of the legislation proposed by Saturninus passed only under the threat of violence. Some of it seems to have been crafted specifically to anger the *optimates*. For example, when Saturninus proposed legislation that would send Roman forces to fight against Mithradates VI of Pontus, he attached a clause that would require all senators to take an oath to obey these laws. This oath had to be taken within five days, and those who refused would be kicked out of the senate, exiled, and fined.

Marius faced a decision. Would he take the oath and offend the *optimates* senators who opposed Saturninus? At the last moment, he took the oath and said he would observe the law "as far as it was legal." This basically made his oath meaningless and signaled that his support of Saturninus was not very strong.

Saturninus began to decline in popularity, even among the *populares*. Determined to stay in office, he ran for and won the tribunate, while his ally Glaucia won the consulship. They hired gangsters to rid themselves of political opponents, and the Senate had finally had enough. They called for a state of emergency and issued the ***senatus consultum ultimum*** against Saturninus and Glaucia.

It fell to Marius to enforce the Senate's decree, but he was reluctant to kill his former allies. Instead, he imprisoned them. The nobles and *equites* responded in an angry mob, climbing the building where the two were imprisoned and ripping off the roof. They pelted Saturninus and Glaucia to death with the roof tiles.

Marius' political career was ruined. He had lost the trust of both political factions. The Senate repealed all of Saturninus' legislation. In 98 BC, Marius suddenly "remembered" a vow he had made to the goddess Magna Mater and began a pilgrimage to the east, removing himself from Roman political life altogether.

XI. THE SOCIAL WAR

91-83 BC

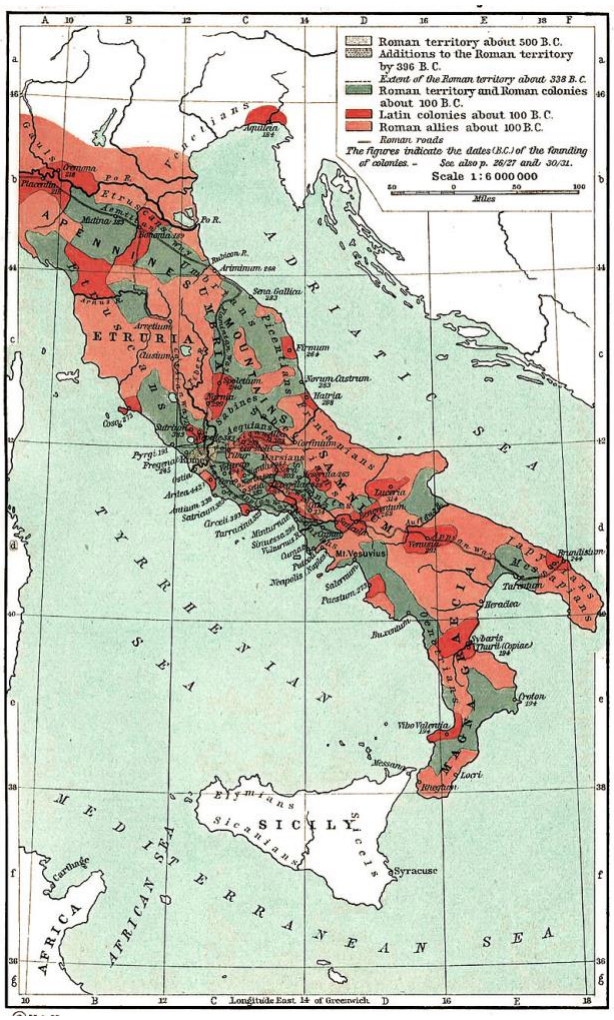


Figure 23. Italy at the beginning of the Social Wars, 100 BC[1]

The Roman army had come to rely more and more heavily on her Italian allies. These non-Romans had served in the army but only had a kind of partial citizenship. They could not vote or hold office and did not have the protections against government abuse that Roman citizens had. More importantly, they did not receive the distribution of land that was given to other veterans of the army.

In 91 BC, the *popularis* tribune Livius Drusus attempted to fix this situation. His legislation proposed extending full Roman citizenship to the Italian allies, and his proposal of such a law led eventually to his assassination. This led the Italian allies to believe they might never be granted full citizenship. The praetor Gaius Servilius Caepio was sent to some of the major Italian towns to calm and reassure the allies, but his message was not well received. When he visited the Abruzzi tribe in Asculum (modern Ascoli), the members of the Abruzzi attacked the praetor and killed him and his lictors. The war that Livius Drusus had tried to prevent began.

This war is called the **Social War**, after the Latin word *socius* ("ally"). It is sometimes called the **Italian War**, as well.

The Italians, led by the Marsi and Samnites, declared themselves independent and set up a confederacy they called Italia. Its capital was Corfinium, about 75 miles from Rome. They formed an army and were able to recruit 100,000 soldiers, many of whom had been trained in the Roman legions. The Romans asked Marius, as well as other former generals, to serve as lieutenants in the war, but they gave the command to the two consuls Lucius Julius Caesar and Publius Rutilius Lupus. Neither of these consuls had experience leading an army of this kind.

The Italian allies experienced many early successes in the war, and in 90 BC the Senate granted Roman citizenship to all of her allies who had remained loyal, as well as any who would stop their rebellion immediately. This immediately gave citizenship to the Etruscans and Umbrians

and some other allies. The next year, citizenship was granted to all free men on the Italian peninsula.

Nonetheless, the war continued. The Italian confederation saw the offer as half-hearted, since the new citizens were added to the Roman tribes in such a way as to keep their voting power from overtaking the voting power of the older citizens.

In southern Italy, the commander **Lucius Cornelius Sulla** became famous for his many victories. (This is the same Sulla who helped secure the death of Jugurtha; see p. 37.) Marius, too, continued to serve the Romans by winning many battles in central Italy.

The Romans won this war, although they did not gain anything that couldn't have been done by enacting the legislation proposed by Livius Drusus before the war. Regardless, they managed to keep their alliances in Italy from falling apart. The Italian allies gained their citizenship, and Italy was united under one government in a way it had not been previously.

XII. The First Civil War

In 88 BC, while the Social War was still going on, Rome also became involved in a war with **Mithridates VI of Pontus**. As the Social War drew to a close, two generals hoped to be given command against Mithridates: Marius and Sulla. Sulla was part of the *optimates* and was allied with those who had stood against Marius in the decade before. Those *optimates* were still in power, and so Sulla expected to be named to the command. He was elected consul in 88 BC, all but ensuring his command.

But in the same year, a tribune named **Publius Sulpicius Rufus** put forward several pieces of legislation in one bill. First, he proposed to distribute the new citizens created after the social war among the existing tribes, which would give them more voting power. Second, he proposed to recall all those who had been exiled during the recent wars. Third, he proposed to remove from the Senate anyone who owed a debt greater than 2000 denarii, which was a relatively small amount for a wealthy Roman. And finally, he proposed to replace Sulla with Marius in the command against Mithridates. This last proposal was made to gain the support of Marius and his allies so that the first proposal, which was the most controversial, could be passed.
Sulla attempted to prevent the passage of this bill by declaring religious holidays. (The assembly could not meet on religious holidays.) But Sulpicius and his supporters formed a mob and rioted. Sulla was forced into hiding, and Marius sheltered him. Sulla then revoked the religious holidays, and Marius allowed him to leave provided that he would go into exile.

Figure 24. Denarius with a portrait of Sulla

Sulla Marches on Rome

Sulla did leave the city, but instead of going into exile he went to the army he was supposed to command, which was stationed at Nola (near Naples). He convinced this army, who had great personal loyalty to Sulla, to march on Rome. This ignited Rome's first Civil War.

Phillipus dicit

Careful readers will remember that Marius' reform of the army (see p. 38) had created groups of soldiers who were more loyal to their commander than to the Roman government. Ironically, it was this same personal loyalty that allowed Sulla to convince his army to march against their own government.

Sulla's army reached Rome before Marius and Sulpicius had any time to prepare and he quickly took over the city. Setting fire to areas of Rome that opposed him, he nullified Suplicius'

legislation and compelled the newly-elected consul for 87 BC, **Lucius Cornelius Cinna**, to swear an oath of loyalty to him. Having completed these tasks, he set out with his army to the east.

Cinna, however, did not keep his oath. As soon as Sulla had departed, he put forward a bill to restore Sulpicius' legislation benefitting the Italian allies. This led to a clash in the Forum of two mobs, one of Italians and another of middle- and lower-class Romans, led by the other consul, Gnaeus Octavius. Cinna was driven out of the city, but following the example of Sulla he raised an army of Italians. Cinna called Marius back from Africa, where he was living in exile, and Cinna and Marius marched on Rome.

Marius' Last Days

After taking the city, Marius made the most of the opportunity to take revenge on those who had opposed him. His followers killed many of his political opponents and decorated the rosta (the platform in the forum from which speeches were delivered) with their severed heads. Their property was taken away and auctioned off. In 86 BC, Marius "won" his seventh consulship. He died a few days later, possibly from a stroke, leaving Cinna as the most powerful man in the city.

Meanwhile, Sulla conquered Athens in 86 BC and was fighting against Mithridates VI in the east. Cinna sent his co-consul to take over Sulla's command, but the troops muntinied and murdered their commander once they arrived in Asia minor.

Anxious to return to Rome, Sulla made peace with Mithridates. In 83 BC, leaving some troops as a garrison in Asia minor, he set out for Rome. Several military leaders joined Sulla's cause. Among these were **Marcus Licinius Crassus** and **Gnaeus Pompeius**, whom we call "Pompey" in English.

The Return of Sulla

Meanwhile, the consuls of 82 BC, Gnaeus Papirius Carbo and Gaius Marius (adopted son of the recently deceased seven-time consul) prepared to defend the city. Although they raised a good-size army from the Italian allies, neither was adequately prepared to command forces against Sulla. When Carbo's forces met Sulla's at Clusium (modern Chiusi), his soldiers were quickly demoralized. Carbo fled to north Africa.

The younger Marius, meanwhile, was tasked with defending the city. His army and Sulla's met at the **Battle of the Colline Gate.** The Samnite forces fighting with Marius managed to defeat one wing of Sulla's army, but the other wing prevailed. If Carbo had taken his troops to Rome instead of fleeing, the result might have been different.

Sulla's reign of terror began almost immediately after the Battle of the Colline Gate. Thousands were killed, often having been tortured first. Six thousand Samnites were tortured to death just outside a meeting of the Senate where Sulla was speaking. Their screams caused some senators to faint.

Sulla's Reign

Sulla began posting lists of people to be killed. The people on these lists were sometimes political enemies, sometimes personal enemies, and sometimes simply rich men whose property Sulla and his followers wished to obtain. These lists became known as **proscriptions** (from the Latin *proscribo,* "to write" or "to publish"). The people on this list could be killed by anyone, often with a reward attached. Sulla confiscated the wealth and property of those killed and revoked the citizenship of their children.

Sulla used much of this confiscated wealth to fulfill the promises he had made to his soldiers, including payment for service, pensions for veterans, and land; but he was not able to raise enough money in this way. He demanded money from the Italian allies to help pay these costs, and especially those who had fought against him. Some cities that had strongly supported Carbo and Marius were completely destroyed.

The office of dictator had not been used since 202 BC. For Sulla, however, the Senate revived the office – not so that he could lead a war effort, but so that he could reform the Roman constitution. This new dictatorship did not have a term limit, so Sulla could continue as dictator for as long as he pleased. This use of the word "dictator" is much closer to the way we use it today – a tyrant who rules by military might.

Sulla's constitutional reforms were aimed mainly at strengthening the Senate, which had long been a goal of the *optimates*. He restored the Senate's veto power over legislation, limiting the power of the tribunes which had been a favorite tool of the *populares*.

Sulla remained dictator for three years. Then, in 79 BC, he resigned his dictatorship and retired to his farm in Campania. He died the next year. But the consequences of what Sulla did (and what he failed to do) would reach far beyond his death.

XIII. The Rise of Pompey

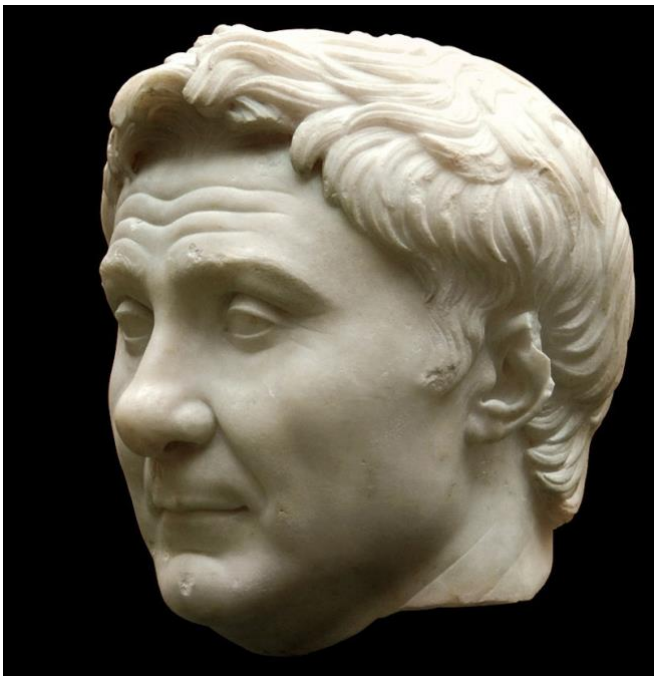


Figure 25. Pompey the Great, marble, 1st century AD, New Carlsburg Glyptotek, Copenhagen[u]

One lesson some learned from Sulla is that a single powerful man, with the support of an army, could rule Rome. In Italy, Marcus Aemelius Lepidus, one of Sulla's supporters, tried to lead a revolt, but this was stopped by the proconsul Quintus Lutatius Catullus and Pompey (whom we met earlier; see p. 43). Similarly, when Marius' former lieutenant Quintus Sertorius revolted in Spain, the Senate again sent Pompey – this time with the proconsul Metellus Pius – to put down the rebellion.

In 71 BC Pompey returned to Italy with his troops. Although it was not permitted for a commander to bring his army into Italy, Pompey claimed that his troops were there to help **Marcus Crassus** finish putting down Spartacus' slave rebellion. He brought his army within miles of Rome and then requested permission from the Senate to run for consul – even though he had never held any of the other offices of the *cursus honorum* (see p. 20). Crassus, the other commander with an army in Italy, could have opposed Pompey. Instead, he joined in Pompey's request. Thus Pompey and Crassus were elected and served as consuls for 70 BC.

Rōmānī Praeclārī: Cicero

In the same year that Pompey and Crassus held their first consulships, a young lawyer by the name of **Marcus Tullius Cicero** began to establish his reputation as Rome best orator and lawyer. Cicero was born in Arpinum, where Marius also had been born; and, like Marius, he was a *novus homo*, in that no one in his family had held the consulship.

In 70 BC, he led the prosecution of Gaius Verres, the former governor of Sicily, who was accused of corruption and extortion. In this, Verres was perhaps not much different from many provincial governors of the time who enriched themselves at the expense of those they governed. Cicero's prosecution was so brilliant and contained so much evidence of Verres' guilt that Verres voluntarily went into exile before the trial ended.

We will read more about Cicero's role in history as we continue, but his contributions to Latin literature are also very important. Of his 88 speeches, 58 of them are extant. ("Extant" means

that the works survive to our time.) He also wrote books on rhetoric (how to make speeches), of which six are extant, and philosophy, of which eight books are extant.

Even by the first century AD, Cicero was recognized as the master of Latin prose. He is widely studied during the Roman empire and beyond, and his style was imitated by many other great writers, including St. Jerome, who translated the Bible in Latin, and St. Augustine, the Catholic theologian.

In the middle ages, philosophers who studied Cicero further developed his ideas about natural law and innate rights, which taught that all people have rights just by the fact that they are people – and idea echoed by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

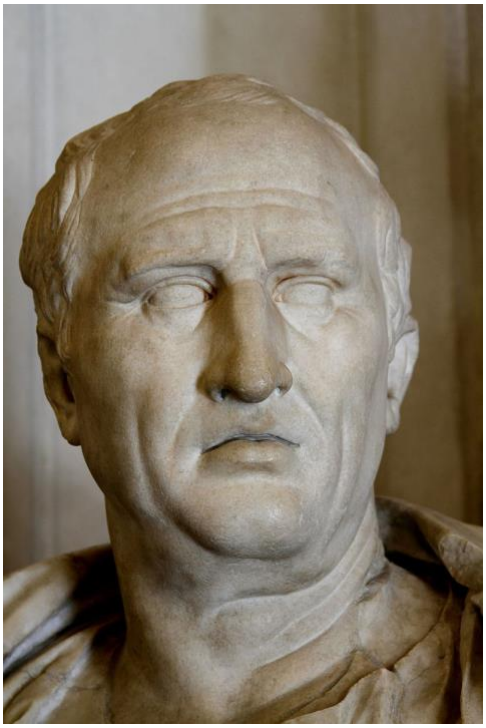


Figure 26. Bust of Cicero, 1st century BC, Capitoline Museum, Rome[v]

Pompey's Reforms

Having angered the Senate by the demands he made as his army camped near Rome in 71 BC, Pompey passed legislation that restored the power of the tribunes to the strong position they had held before Sulla. Additionally, Pompey and Crassus appointed censors for the first time in a decade. The new census removed 64 men from the Senate, as they no longer met the property requirements.

It was customary at this point in Roman history that a consul be assigned a province to govern after his consulship. This was called a proconsulship. Pompey decided not to take a proconsulship and instead wait for a more important assignment to come up. He didn't have to wait long. In 67 BC, the raids of pirates on Roman ships in the Mediterranean Sea became a major issue. Aulus Gabinius, a tribune, helped pass a law giving Pompey supreme command of the Mediterranean against these pirates. This law was called the **Lex Gabinia**.

The following year, another tribune, Gaius Manilius, proposed to give Pompey command over the forces of the East (what we now call the middle east). This law, the **Lex Manilia**, was passed with the support of the great orator Cicero.

Crassus Tries Strengthens his Position

When Pompey departed to the East, Crassus took the opportunity to set out of Pompey's shadow and begin to build his own following. With Pompey in control of the East, Crassus

looked to the west. He installed one of his allies as the governor of Spain. He also proposed to annex Egypt and to place the young **Gaius Iulius Caesar** in charge. The Senate rejected this.

Crassus then allied himself with **Lucius Sergius Catilina**, whom we call **Catiline** in English. Catiline had been a strong supporter of Sulla and had no problem using violence to achieve his goals. Catiline wanted to run for consul in 66 BC, but the Senate would not allow it. He therefore attempted to murder the two winning candidates. His followers failed to keep his plans secret, and they were not successful in murdering the consuls. Despite his obvious guilt, Catiline was never tried, thanks to the influence of Crassus.

The Catilinarian Conspiracy

Two years later, Catiline was allowed to run for consul. But he lost to the *novus homo* Cicero and Gaius Antonius Hybrida, who became the consuls for 63 BC. Crassus dropped his support for Catiline but had one of the tribunes introduce legislation for an extensive redistribution of land in Italy and the province. His aim in this legislation was to form a commission to redistribute any land Pompey might want to give to his veterans. The new consul Cicero, however, figured out what Crassus was up to and defeated the bill.

In the same year, Catiline ran for consul again – and again he was defeated. He decided that if he could not win the consulship with votes, he would take it with swords. He gathered an army that planned to march on Rome, but again details of the plot leaked out. With the Senate on high alert and guards patrolling the streets of Rome, Catiline delayed his attack.

He embarked on a new plan. This time he would try to engineer multiple riots all across Italy to divert attention while he took Rome. Cicero, having discovered this plan, spoke boldly in the Senate denouncing Catiline (this speech is called *In Catilinam I,* or "The First Catilinarian"). Some of Catiline's supporters tried to convince the Allobroges, a Gallic tribe, to join their cause. The Allobroges, however, had no intention of fighting Rome and delivered the information they had been given to Cicero.

When the Senate was presented with this evidence, they agreed (over the objections of Julius Caesar) that Catiline and his supporters must be put to death. Cicero ordered the execution of many of his supporters – the ones who were in Rome – on the following day. Catiline himself would die in battle later. Cicero was celebrated as the man who had saved the Republic.

Pompey's Return

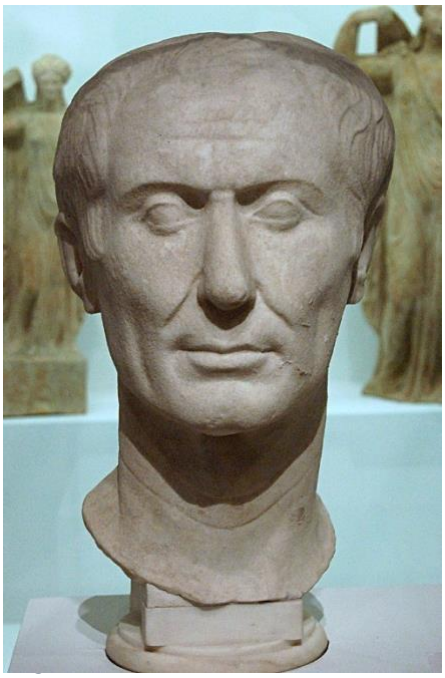
Perhaps more clearly than anyone else, Cicero saw the dangers that lay ahead. When Pompey returned to Rome at the end of 62 BC, Cicero tried to bring him on board with his program of protecting the Roman constitution. Pompey seems to have been agreeable to this plan. Contrary to expectations, he disbanded his army as soon as they landed on Italian soil.

The Senate, however, purposely offended Pompey. Under the leadership of Crassus and others, they delayed the ratification of the peace agreements Pompey had made in the East. Worse

yet, they continued to put aside the matter of assigning Pompey's veterans land and the other rewards due to soldiers.

At this point, perhaps the most famous Roman of all enters the stage to help Pompey – Julius Caesar.

XIV. Julius Caesar and the First Triumvirate



"Tusculum Portrait" of Caesar, c. 45 BC, Museo d'Antichità, Turin, Italy[w]

Gaius Iulius Caesar had similar ambitions to Pompey, Sulla, and Marius, who was his uncle. After serving as praetor in 62 BC, he became governor of Hispania Ulterior (modern south-east Spain). He returned to Rome in 60 BC to run for consul, which he won with the financial support of Crassus. Before his consulship in 59 BC, the Senate decreed that the consuls of 59 BC would not get provinces to govern, as was customary, but would be "Commissioners of Forests and Cattle" in Italy, which Caesar considered a slap in the face.

At this point, still the year before his consulship, he met with Crassus and Pompey. (They invited Cicero to join, but he refused.) The three men privately swore to support each other politically. This alliance is called **The First Triumvirate**.[6]

The alliance revealed itself during Caesar's consulship. He introduced an act that provided land for Pompey's veterans. When opposition to the act by his co-consul Lucius Calpurnius Bibulus and others threatened to block the bill, Caesar brought in a group of Pompey's former soldiers who put an end to any opposition. After this, any other legislation he proposed passed easily.

Perhaps the most important law Caesar passed was the **Lex Vatinia**, which gave him the governorship of Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum for five years. Later, the Senate offered him Narbonese Gaul as well, knowing that if they did not assign it he would likely take it anyway.

The Gallic Wars

58 – 50 BC

The Gauls were a Celtic people who inhabited the area we now call France and also the northern part of Italy. The Romans referred to the part of Gaul near Italy *Gallia Cisalpina* (Cisalpine Gaul, or "Gaul on this side of the Alps") and the other part *Gallia Transalpina* (Transalpine Gaul, or "Gaul across the Alps"). At the time of Caesar's consulship, Rome had two provinces in this area: one called Cisalpine Gaul and the other called Narbonensis, which occupied the very southern part of Gaul.

[6] Historians correctly point out that the First Triumvirate was not a triumvirate in any official sense. The Second Triumvirate (see p. 57) will have a legal structure that the First Triumvirate lacked.

The Gauls were organized into many different tribes, and the often fought between themselves. By 100 BC, German tribes had begun to invade Gallic territory, which had made an already unstable political situation even less stable.

In 58 BC, one of the Gallic tribes, the Helvetii, who occupied what we now call Switzerland, began to move west towards the territory of the Aedui. In order to do this, they had to cross part of the Roman province of Cisalpine Gaul, which Caesar could not allow.

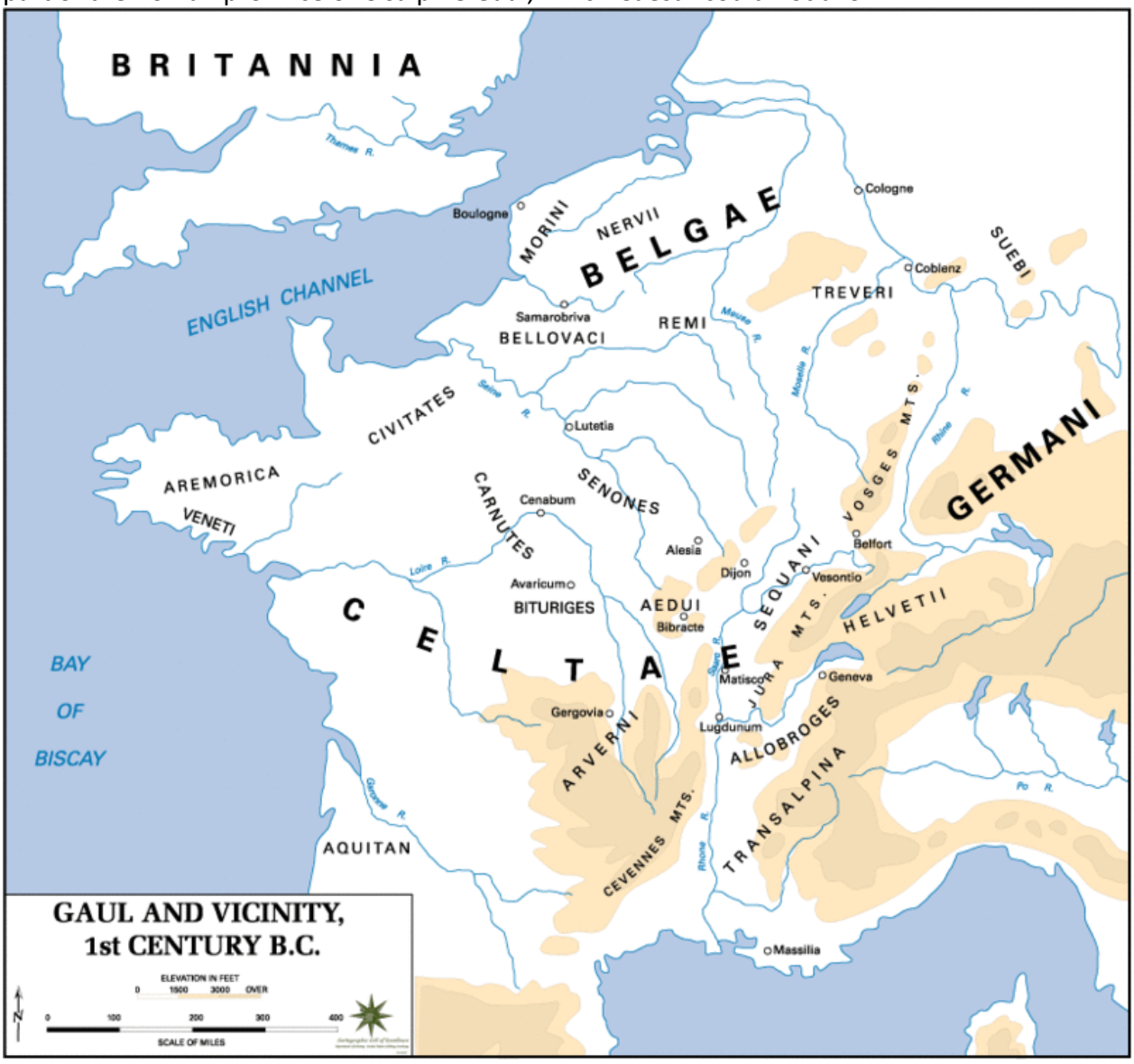


Figure 28. Gaul in the first century BC[x]

Caesar prevented them from crossing through the province by demolishing a bridge over the Rhone River near Geneva. The Helvetii, undeterred, moved northward and used an alternative route to the territory of the Aedui. Caesar met them again at **Bibracte** (modern Autun) and

defeated the Helvetii, ordering them to go back to their previous homeland. This can be considered the first battle of the Gallic War.

When the German chieftain Ariovistus threatened to enter Gaul, the Gallic tribes turned to Caesar for aid. Caesar tried to negotiate a treaty and prevent war, but Ariovistus did not believe that the Roman general could negotiate on behalf of the Gauls. Caesar defended the Rhine as the northern border of Gaul and, with the assistance of Gallic warriors, defeated Ariovistus' army, providing long-term security for the Gauls.

Caesar's troops set up their winter quarters in Cisalpine Gaul at the end of 58 BC. The next year, word came to Caesar that the Belgae had been gathering troops to drive him out of Gaul. He crossed the Alps with his army and quickly defeated the disorganized Belgae.

Continuing across northern Gaul, Caesar defeated a revolt of the Veneti near the English Channel. In 55 BC and again in 54 BC, Caesar sent scouting missions into Britain. Here, he was less successful. A huge storm battered the Roman fleet, and the Britons rallied. Although Caesar managed to cross the River Thames and invade the fortress of the British king Cassivellaunus, he pushed no further. A peace treaty was signed promising British tribute to Rome, but it would be nearly a century before Britain became a Roman province.

In the fall of 54 BC, Caesar called together all of the Gallic chieftains. It was clear at this meeting that the Gauls were not happy about Roman rule. Not knowing where a rebellion might arise, Caesar dispersed his legions throughout Gaul.

In 52 BC, the Gauls united behind the leader of the Averni, **Vercingetorix.** Instead of facing the Romans directly, Vercingetorix's forces used the tactics of guerilla warfare, engaging only in small skirmishes, kidnapping messengers and scouts, and burning towns to the ground to prevent the Romans from using them as base camps. His strategy was fairly successful, but Caesar was patient. He drove Vercingetorix into the hilltop fortress at Alesia, where the final battle of the war would take place.

In 52 BC, Caesar began **Battle of Alesia** by laying siege to the fortress. Vercingetorix sent messengers on horseback, under the cover of night, each to their home tribes with a request for help. The soldiers of Gaul answered the call, attacking the Roman siege and attempting to squeeze Caesar's army between the walls of the fortress and the Gallic army. Caesar diverted part of his army to fight the new arrivals and took command of this group of soldiers himself.

When Caesar's forces broke the Gallic counter-siege, the Gauls scattered. There would be a few minor skirmishes afterwards, but for all practical purposes the war was over. Caesar would forever be known as the conqueror of Gaul.

The Comentarii de Bello Gallico

While Caesar was fighting in Gaul, he was also sending reports back to the Senate. These reports take the form of the *Comentarii de Bello Gallico*, or "Commentaries on the Gallic War," (sometimes called *De Bello Gallico* or *Bellum Gallicum*), which is Caesar's account of the war. The book is written in the third person to give it an appearance of objectivity, but the true purpose of this book seems to be to control the narrative about the events in Gaul and to paint Caesar as a military hero in the eyes of the Roman public. In this sense, it was very successful.

Caesar's *Comentarii* are often the first "real" Latin students read; certainly this was the case for much of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Many students have been compelled to memorize its now-famous opening line:

Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres, quarum unam incolunt Belgae, aliam Aquitani, tertiam qui ipsorum lingua Celtae, nostra Galli appellantur.	All Gaul is divided into three parts, of which the Belgae inhabit one, the Aquitani another, and those who in their own language are called the Celts and, in our language, the Gauls inhabit the third.

(*Comentarii de Bello Gallico*, 1.1)

Pompey and Crassus in Rome

Even while Caesar was in Gaul, he kept close watch on the political landscape back in Rome. His ally in Rome was **Publius Clodius**, who was tribune in 58 BC. Clodius used a combination of mob violence and legislation to accomplish his aims. In order to serve Caesar's interests and to satisfy a personal grudge, Clodius managed to exile Cicero and send another opponent of Caesar's, **Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis**, or Cato the Younger, to Cyprus as governor.

But Clodius made a serious mistake when he turned his hired mob against Pompey. For some time, Pompey was not able to leave his own house. But when word reached Pompey's veterans of what was happening, they arrived to free their former leader; and Pompey's ally **Titus Annius Milo** gathered his own band of hired thugs to combat Clodius. Clodius' power in the city began to diminish, which Pompey proved by passing legislation to recall Cicero from exile.

Even though the city under Pompey's control, one of the men running for the consulship of 55 BC campaigned by promising that, should he be elected, he would recall Caesar from Gaul. This prompted the three triumvirs to meet at **Luca** for a conference.

At Luca, the three agreed that Pompey and Crassus should run for the consulship of 55 BC to avoid Caesar being recalled from Gaul. In return, after the consulship, Pompey would become governor of both provinces in Spain for five years and Crassus would govern Syria for five years.

XV. The Second Civil War

In 54 BC, Caesar's daughter Julia died. She was also Pompey's wife, and was an influential force in keeping the two men working together. The next year, Crassus, then governor of Syria, was killed in battle with the Parthians. Meanwhile, the political atmosphere of Rome continued to deteriorate. In 52 BC, a confrontation between the rival gangs of Milo and Clodius ended with Clodius' murder. Clodius' supporters rioted in the Forum and burned the Curia (the Senate house) to the ground, along with other buildings. The Senate passed an emergency decree giving Pompey the power to restore order by any means necessary. Pompey was declared the sole consul (which, for all practical purposes, is the same as being dictator). He restored order, to the extent that it was possible.

In 51 BC, some of the *optimates*, fearing the growing power of Caesar, sought to remove him from command of the army in Gaul. Pompey persuaded them to wait until the following year, but the intentions of the Senate were plain. Caesar wisely still had allies in Rome, among them **Marcus Antonius** (Mark Antony). When the Senate tried to remove Caesar in 50 BC, the tribune Curio suggested that both Caesar and Pompey should give up their commands and offices. This, of course, was vetoed by Pompey's supporters.

Pompey then convinced the Senate that he should lead an army to Parthia in the East, and that Caesar should give up two of his legions to support this effort. When these two legions arrived in Italy, Pompey instead stationed them at Capua instead of taking them to the East.

At the very end of 50 BC, the Senate stripped Caesar of his command. Curio could not stop the Senate this time, but he did get them to pass legislation also stripping Pompey of his command. The consul Marcellus, a supporter of Pompey, told the Senate that Caesar's army had already entered Cisalpine Gaul and would soon march on Rome. He asked the Senate to declare Caesar as a public enemy, a motion which Curio vetoed. The fight that followed saw Curio and Caesar's other supporters fleeing Rome to join Caesar and Marcellus going to join Pompey, who brought the two legions up from Capua to defend the city.

Caesar Crosses the Rubicon

The Rubicon river (which is actually a small stream) marked the border between Italy and the province of Cisalpine Gaul. In crossing it with his army, Caesar would violate Roman law. From there, he would either win or be killed as a traitor. As he crossed it in 48 BC, he said, "*Alea iacta est*," "the die is cast." By this he meant that he would roll the dice and take his chances on the outcome. Even today, the phrase "crossing the Rubicon" means making a decision from which there is no turning back.

Caesar was at a disadvantage in terms of numbers. He had about 50,000 men, whereas Pompey had the entire rest of the Roman army. But Caesar had other advantages. His men had been

fighting together for a long time, whereas Pompey's troops were still coming together. In addition, by marching in the middle of winter, he maintained the element of surprise.
In the first days of 49 BC, Caesar marched rapidly down Italy's eastern coast. Cities surrendered to him as he went, and some of Pompey's forces even defected to Caesar's side. Pompey and his allies hurried south to Brundisium and sailed to Greece, hoping to regroup.

Caesar arrived at Brundisium too late to prevent Pompey's tactical retreat. He then headed for Rome, where he reorganized the government as he saw fit. He put **Marcus Aemilius Lepidus** in charge of the city and made Marcus Antonius governor of Italy and commander of all its forces. Other allies he sent to secure Rome's supply of grain and to strategic locations to block the potential return of Pompey. Caesar himself went to Spain to deal with the forces there that were still loyal to Pompey.

In the East, Pompey was recruiting soldiers. By the end of 49 BC, he had nine legions under his control and would soon add two more from Syria. But Caesar again surprised Pompey by not waiting for him to return to Italy. Instead, in the early days of 48 BC, he landed south Dyrrhachium (in modern Albania), where Pompey intended to gather his forces before setting sail to Italy. The two armies raced to take Dyrrahchium, but Pompey got there first. Pompey's forces were victorious at the **Battle of Dyrrhachium**.

Caesar then made for Pharsalus (in Thessaly, Greece) to regroup. At this point, Pompey could have gone to Italy while Caesar was still in Greece. Instead, he followed Caesar to Thessaly, hoping to put an end to him. Instead, he found his army put to flight by Caesar's impressive tactics. After the **Battle of Pharsalus**, which was the final battle of this second Civil War, Pompey's army was scattered and Pompey himself fled.

The Death of Pompey

Pompey fled to Egypt, which itself was in the middle of its own civil war between Ptolemy XIII and his sister Cleopatra VII, who were fighting over their father's throne. When Pompey landed, Ptolemy XIII's men escorted him to shore and then killed him. They did not want Caesar to come to Egypt with his army. When Caesar landed there a few days later, they presented Pompey's head to him pickled in brine.

XVI. The Dictatorship of Caesar

Before leaving Egypt, Caesar ensured the Cleopatra VII ascended to the throne. On his way back to Italy, he paused to fight Pharnaces, the son of Mithridates VI (see p. 42), who had taken advantage of the turmoil the recent Civil War had caused in the East and had taken several Roman provinces. Caesar defeated Pharnaces at the **Battle of Zela** (47 BC), where he is said to have uttered the now-famous phrase "*Veni, vidi, vici*" ("I came, I saw, I conquered").

Caesar returned to Italy in the summer of 47 BC but had to set out for Africa the next year to quell a rebellion there, led by Cato and other former supporters of Pompey. These he defeated at the **Battle of Thapsus**. Afterward, Cato committed suicide.

Upon returning to Rome in 46 BC, Caesar was proclaimed as dictator for the next ten years. During the years that followed, he put down a rebellion in Spain and began his reconstruction of the Roman government. Among his reforms was an expansion of the Senate from 600 to 900 members, a major building program, the founding of new colonies across the provinces, and a reform of the calendar that moved the new year to January 1 and made the year 365 days long.

Caesar's Assassination

By 44 BC, Caesar held more power than any Roman had held up to that point. The Senate proclaimed him dictator for life (*dictator perpetuus*), which did not sit well with those who were hoping for a return to the old Republican government. In the minds of some, there was little difference between a dictator for life and a king – and Rome had not had a king since 509 BC.

One of the men concerned about the return of a king to Rome was **Marcus Iunius Brutus**, who was a descendent of the Lucius Iunius Brutus who had driven the Tarquin kings from Rome (see p. 15). Along with **Gaius Cassius Longinus** and about 60 other senators, they plotted to kill Caesar.

On the Ides of March (March 15) of 44 BC, Caesar went to the meeting of the Senate, which at that time was meeting in the Theater of Pompey. Pretending to approach him with petitions, the conspirators gathered around him and stabbed him to death. He died at the foot of a statue of Pompey.

XVII. The Second Triumvirate

If those who murdered Caesar expected the old Republic to rise from the grave of its own accord, they were mistaken. Caesar's death only served to create a power vacuum, waiting for someone else to step in.

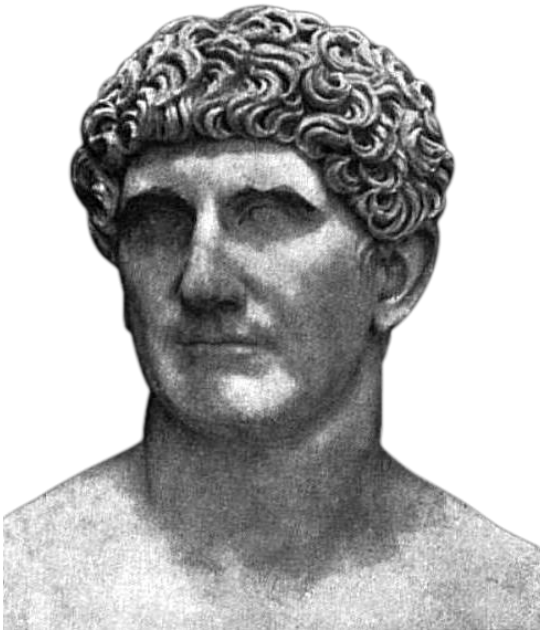


Figure 29. Bust of Marcus Antonius, Vatican Museum, Rome[y]

Marcus Antonius, who was with Caesar consul in 44 BC, gathered all of Caesar's papers from his widow Calpurnia. Lepidus, another of Caesar's allies, gathered a legion outside the city preparing to invade the city and kill the conspirators who had killed Caesar. Antonius persuaded him to wait and took charge of the gathered troops. He also convened the Senate and convinced them to keep all of Caesar's laws in force and grant amnesty to the conspirators.

At Caesar's funeral, Antonius delivered a short speech. Caesar's will was read, which gave the city of Rome a new park and also gave each citizen 300 sesterces (about 75 denarii). More importantly, it left the rest of Caesar's estate to his grand-nephew, Gaius Octavius Thurinus, and adopted him as his son. After his adoption, Octavius was renamed **Gaius Iulius Caesar Octavianus**; in English, he is called Octavian.

Antonius and Octavian came into conflict over Caesar's wealth, much of which Antonius had spent trying to win the favor of Caesar's former allies. Antonius tried to take over Caesar's armies in Gaul in attempt to follow in his mentor's footsteps, but Octavian also commanded their loyalty as their former commander's son.

Cicero's Last Stand

Cicero, seeing the values of the old Republic slipping away, became increasingly critical of Antonius. He gave a series of fourteen speeches, which he called the *Phillipica* (or, in English, Phillipics), calling Antonius a tyrant, a thug, a drunk, and a coward.

Cicero instead embraced the young Octavian, whom the Senate was now allowing to run for consul ten years before the required age – not so much because he thought Octavian would be a good leader, but because he wanted to be rid of Antonius.

The Conspirators

Meanwhile, those who conspired against Caesar were still looking for ways to return Rome to the old days. Brutus and Cassius had fled to the East and were recruiting armies there. Decimus Brutus was holding the city of **Mutina** (modern Modena) in northern Italy, which Antonius attacked. Decimus Brutus repelled Antonius' forces, and the consuls of 43 BC, Hirtius and Pansa, were killed during the siege.

The Senate declared Antonius a public enemy and gave Brutus and Cassius official control of all of the eastern provinces. They heaped praises on Decimus Brutus and gave him control over all the armies of Italy. But for Octavian, who had helped to rescue Decimus Brutus during the siege of Mutina, they did nothing. This gravely offended Octavian.

Octavian marched on Rome in 43 BC and forced himself into the consulship vacated by the deaths of Hirtius and Pansa, with one of his relatives as co-consul. His first act was to give every soldier in the legions 500 denarii, and his second was to set up a court to punish those who had murdered Caesar. He repealed the Senate's decree against Antonius, whom he then went north to meet.

Formation of the Second Triumvirate

Antonius, Lepidus, and Octavian met near Bologna in northern Italy and agreed to cooperate. They formed themselves into an executive council which was ratified by a law, the ***Lex Titia,*** in November of 43 BC. Each of the three was given provinces to govern: Antonius took Cisalpine Gaul and northern Transalpine Gaul; Lepidus received Narbonensis and the two Spains; and Octavian took the least profitable of the provinces – Northern Africa, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica.

The Return of Proscriptions

Following the example of Sulla (see p. 44), the Triumvirate revived proscriptions, the infamous publication of lists of people to be killed. Among those killed were at least 130 senators and 2000 *equites*. Among these was Cicero, who was killed in December of 43 BC. His tongue and hands, the tools of a gifted speaker, were nailed to the rostra (speaking platform) in the Forum.

The next task the Triumvirs undertook was to hunt down Caesar's assassins. The armies of Octavian and Antonius met Brutus' and Cassius' forces at two battles in **Philippi** in Macedonia in 42 BC. In the first battle, Brutus defeated Octavian while Antonius defeated Cassius. In the aftermath, Cassius committed suicide. Brutus then engaged in a second battle, which he lost; and, following Cassius' example, he took his own life.

The Supremacy of the Second Triumvirate

The victory at Philippi gave the Second Triumvirate complete control of the Roman world. Now that the eastern provinces were no longer under the control of Brutus and Cassius, the three men reorganized their governorships. Antonius had grown to distrust Lepidus, whom he

accused of conspiring to join Pompey's son Sextus. Antonius took Narbonensis from Lepidus, and Octavian took over Lepidus' governorship of Spain. Lepidus was given Africa, mostly just to get him out of the way. This left Antonius in control of all the east and Gaul, except for Cisalpine Gaul which now became part of Italy. But Octavian still held Italy, which proved to be the key to his future success.

Antonius went to Egypt, where he embarked on a political partnership and romance with Cleopatra VII. Octavian went to Italy, where **Sextus Pompey**, son of Pompey the great, had gained control of the seas and was shutting off the grain supply to Rome. In order to appease Sextus, Octavian divorced his wife Clodia and married Scribonia, one of Sextus' relatives.

The Pact of Brundisium

In 40 BC, Sextus Pompey met with Antonius in Greece and formed an alliance, Octavian's marriage to Scribonia notwithstanding. Antonius then sailed to Brundisium in southern Italy in order to recruit troops for a coming war against Parthia.

Arriving at Brundisium, Antonius found that Octavian's army was already there. They did not allow Antonius' forces to enter the city. Instead, Octavian demanded a renegotiation of their control of the provinces. The result of this conference, known as the **Pact of Brundisium**, gave Octavian control of Illyricum and all of the western provinces, leaving Antonius with the eastern provinces and Lepidus with Africa. Antonius also took Octavian's sister Octavia as his wife.

Sextus Pompey, feeling that Antonius had betrayed him, returned to blocking the Italian ports. Octavian and Antonius had to negotiate with him again to open the ports; this time, the gave him control of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica (which he already controlled unofficially) and also the part of Greece south of the isthmus of Corinth, which is called the Peloponnese.

The War against Sextus Pompey

Antonius returned to his wars in the east, thinking that Sextus Pompey would keep Octavian's power in check. But Octavian was not content to allow Sextus Pompey to interfere with his ambitions. He divorced Scribonia to marry Livia, a strong and ambitious woman from a prominent Roman family and declared the province of Sardinia to be his. These events would lead to open warfare with Sextus.

After being defeated by Sextus Pompey in Sicily in 38 BC, Octavian called for help. He brought the admiral **Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa** back from Gaul and asked Antonius to come to help as well. Antonius and Octavian met in Tarentum the next year to renew the terms of the triumvirate for another five years. Antonius gave Octavian 120 ships to fight Sextus Pompey. In return, Octavian promised to send Antonius 20,000 soldiers to the East.

With these ships and the brilliant tactics of Agrippa, Octavian defeated Sextus Pompey at **Naulochus** in 36 BC. The people of Rome rejoiced at the end of the blockade of the grain supply. When he returned to the city, he was praised beyond all measure. Statues were put up

in his honor, and he was given the military title "*Imperator Caesar*." (*Imperator* is the Latin word for a triumphant general; later, it will become the title of the Emperor of Rome.)

Antonius in the East

Antonius, meanwhile, had married Cleopatra VII in 37 BC. He reorganized the eastern territories, giving several territories to Cleopatra. In 36 BC, he defeated the Parthians. His control of the east was absolute. But he was still distrustful of Octavian, and Octavian did not trust him. Octavian's supporters began to criticize Antonius for his marriage to a foreign queen and the gifts of land to her that, they said, rightly belonged to the Romans. Like Caesar and Pompey before them, the two men were too ambitious to share power, and a third Civil War seemed inevitable.

The Third Civil War

Octavian refused to send Antonius the troops he had promised in the Pact of Brundisium and returned only about half of the ships Antonius had loaned him to fight Sextus Pompey. In 35 BC, Antonius finally divorced Octavia – he had not divorced her previously despite his marriage to Cleopatra.

Octavian declared war against Cleopatra in 32 BC. By doing so, he avoided the appearance of starting another civil war. The effect, however, was the same. The two sides met at **Actium** on the west coast of Greece. Agrippa, Octavian's admiral, set up a blockade that caused famine and disease in Antonius' camp. Unable to break the naval siege, Antonius and Cleopatra fled to Egypt. His armies, left without a leader, surrendered to Octavian.

It would not be until 30 BC that Octavian went to Egypt. For the most part, he wanted the wealth of the Egyptians that Antonius and Cleopatra controlled. The port city of Alexandria surrendered after a short struggle, and Antonius and Cleopatra both committed suicide.

XVIII. THE END OF THE REPUBLIC

Figure 30. The *Augustus of Prima Porta*, 1st century AD, Vatican Museum[2]

Octavian was now the undisputed master of Rome. Although the old offices of the Republic – the Senate, tribunes, praetors, consuls, and the rest – continued to exist, they had been stripped of any real power.

Many scholars have debated about what caused the end of the Republic. Some ancient authors regarded it as a moral failure. Rome, having conquered the Mediterranean world, no longer feared for her safety, and the people grew soft and abandoned the virtues of their ancestors. Others suggest that the institutions of the Republic were inadequate for managing such a vast empire, both in terms of government and economics. The Republic thus crumbled under its own weight. Both of these are somewhat accurate explanations, but not complete explanations. The actions of Octavian fall in line with those before him, like Marius, Sulla, Pompey, and Caesar. All of these men, and many other Romans, valued their own personal glory, reputation, and authority (in Latin, *gloria*, *dignitas,* and *auctoritas*) more than they valued anything else.

When Octavian returned to Italy in 29 BC with the treasures of Egypt in hand, he was embraced as a savior. The doors of the **Temple of Janus**, which were closed only during times of peace, were closed for the first time since the end of the First Punic War in 241 BC. To his title of Imperator, they added many others, including *princeps civitatis* ("first man of the state").

He was elected consul in 31 BC and for every year that followed. All the while, he promised that he would give up this extraordinary power as soon he had restored the Republican government to working order. He and Agrippa, his co-consul for 31 BC, began by reducing the size of the Senate to about 800. They also reformed the quaestorship, reducing their number from forty to twenty, and requiring that quaestors be at least twenty-five years old. The age requirement of praetors was reduced to thirty-two, and the age requirement for consul was lowered to thirty-five.

In 27 BC, Octavian appeared in front of the Senate and offered to give up all his powers. The Senate rejoiced at this "restoration of the Republic," and immediately gave August control over

Spain, Gaul, Egypt, and Syria for the next ten years. Three days after this, the Senate honored Octavian with the title of "*Augustus*," a title with both political and religious overtones – perhaps best translated as "revered."

Most historians mark this day in 27 BC as **the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire**. From here forward, Octavian is always called Augustus, and he becomes the first emperor of Rome.

XIX. THE REIGN OF AUGUSTUS

27 BC – AD 14

The change from Republic to Empire was not easy or immediately obvious. Augustus continued to promise that he would restore the Republic, and many of the things he was now doing had been done before by others. And, of course, there were many who still opposed him for various reasons.

In 24 BC, it was discovered that a group of noblemen were conspiring to assassinate Augustus. No sooner had that conspiracy been stopped than Augustus became seriously ill. Thinking he might not survive, Augustus gave his signet ring to his trusted general Agrippa. This ring was used for signing documents and symbolized a passing of power from one man to another. Normally, a dying man would give his signet ring to his eldest son, but Augustus had no male children.

Rōmānī Praeclārī: Agrippa

Figure 31. The front of the Pantheon, Rome[aa]

Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa was a brilliant general, particularly when it came to warfare on the sea. Without him, it is very doubtful that Augustus (then Octavian) could have won the battle of Actium.

He also built the original Pantheon, a temple to all gods, in Rome. Although this Pantheon was destroyed in a fire in AD 80, part of his design was used by the emperor Hadrian when he rebuilt the Pantheon c. 126. The temple still has the inscription from Agrippa's original building:

M·AGRIPPA·L·F·COS·TERTIVM·FECIT

Romans used a lot of abbreviations in their inscriptions, so the full inscription can be read as "*Marcus Agrippa Luciī Filius Consul Tertium Fecit*," or "Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, consul for the third time, made this."

The Settlement of 23 BC

After he recovered from his illness, Augustus made more changes to the way he was running the Roman government. Many Roman nobles still viewed the consulship as the biggest achievement one could have in government, but since Augustus had held the consulship every

year since 31 BC, only half the number of consulships were available for other people to hold. Augustus therefore resigned the consulship.

Instead, he rested his authority mainly on the office of the tribune, who, as you will remember, was able to veto legislation. The tribunate came with another advantage: it was a high crime to physically harm a tribune in any way. This is called "tribunician sacrosanctity" or "tribunician inviolability." Augustus retained the governorship of his provinces and was also given *imperium* ("military command") over all provinces and Italy. His power, and the power of future emperors, rested on these two offices which had existed during the Republic – but now he held them permanently and at the same time.

As in the days of the triumvirate, all Roman magistrates swore an oath to uphold Augustus' decisions (*acta*). Similarly, every soldier took a personal oath to the emperor, and counted on him for payment and other rewards of service, a trend that began with Marius' reform of the army (see p. 37).

Over time, Augustus created a very stable form of government. His citizens enjoyed a period of peace and stability that they had not had since the days of Sulla. This period of peace is known as the **Pax Romana** (or sometimes the Pax Augusta), and it lasted until AD 180.[7] He also built magnificent public buildings. The historian Suetonius writes:

Urbem neque pro maiestate imperii ornatam et inundationibus incendiisque obnoxiam excoluit adeo, ut iure sit gloriatus marmoream se relinquere, quam latericiam accepisset.	The city, which was not adorned for the majesty of an empire and was subject to floods and fires, he decorated in such a way that he could claim that he had found the city made of brick and left it a city of marble.

(Suetonius, *Vita Divi Augusti* 28*)*

The Problem of Succession

It was not clear, however, what would happen when Augustus died. His illness during 24 BC caused him to think seriously about that possibility. Constitutionally, the Roman people (or at least the Senate) should have the right to choose. But Augustus feared the return of civil war and thought it would be better if he chose a successor. Unfortunately, he had no sons.

His daughter Julia was married in 25 BC to **Marcus Claudius Marcellus**, who was also Augustus' nephew-in-law. (He was the son of Augustus' ex-wife Octavia and her first husband.) Augustus promoted him through the ranks of government. At the age of 19 he was a senator. However, when Augustus fell ill in 24 BC, he was still too young to rule, and thus Augustus gave the signet ring to Agrippa.

[7] There were still wars being fought during the Pax Romana, but they were happening on the edges of the empire, far away from Italy.

The next year (23 BC), Marcellus died of an illness. Although it was rumored that either Agrippa or Augustus' wife Livia may have somehow killed Marcellus, this seems unlikely. In 21 BC, Augustus persuaded Agrippa to divorce his wife and marry the widowed Julia and began to promote him as a possible successor. He also adopted as heirs the two sons of Agrippa and Julia, named **Gaius and Lucius Caesar**.

Agrippa died of heart failure in 12 BC, and his sons Gaius and Lucius were still too young to serve in government. Thus, Augustus looked to **Tiberius Claudius Nero**, who was the son of his wife Livia. He required Tiberius to divorce his wife Vipsania and marry Julia, but this union was not successful. Neither of them liked the other, and ultimately Julia was accused of being unfaithful. This made Tiberius very angry, but Augustus continued to promote him.

Tiberius, no longer willing to endure the humiliation of Julia's unfaithfulness, left Rome to live on the Greek island of Rhodes in 6 BC. Augustus eventually became so disturbed by Julia's behavior that he exiled her in 2 BC and executed a number of men she had been involved with. Tiberius returned from Rhodes in AD 2.

In that same year, Lucius Caesar died on his way to fight in Spain. Two years later, Gaius Caesar died in battle against the Armenians. Tiberius now was clearly the man who would replace Augustus.

Augustus, however, wanted to make sure that Tiberius would have a successor, too. He required Tiberius to adopt **Germanicus**, the son of Tiberius' brother, and required Germanicus to marry Agrippina, the daughter of Agrippa and Julia.

The result of all of this was a delicate balance between two sides of Augustus' family: the Julian *gens* ("clan") and the Claudian *gens*. He much favored the Julian *gens* because of his connection to Julius Caesar, but also had adopted Tiberius, who came from the Claudian *gens* of Livia's first husband. This dynasty of emperors is therefore called the **Julio-Claudian Dynasty**.

Foreign Affairs Under Augustus

Part of Augustus' plan to provide peace and stability for Rome was to expand the empire to places where the borders would be easier to defend. He finished the conquest of Spain and the regions of the Alps, and also expanded Roman territory in the Balkans (modern day Albania, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia).

In Germany, however, he was less successful. In an attempt to expand Roman territory across the Rhine to the Elbe river, Augustus' general **Quinctilius Varus** was ambushed in AD 6 in the **Teutoburg Forest** by the German commander **Arminius** (also called by his German name, Herman). Almost no Roman soldiers survived, and Varus committed suicide. The standards of these three legions (*Legiones XVII, XVIII, et XIX*), the symbols of Roman power, were lost. This battle is regarded as the Romans' worst defeat in their entire history. No Roman legions would

ever be called by the numbers XVII and XIX again, and XVIII would only be used briefly in the second half of the 1st century AD.

On the eastern side of the empire, Augustus created **client kingdoms** to serve as a buffer between the provinces and other enemies. These client kingdoms kept their own government while receiving support from Rome in exchange for protection.

Augustus also encouraged the growth of big cities in the provinces. Many modern cities, like Barcelona in Spain, Lyons in France, and Tangier in Morocco, owe their foundations to this policy.

The Death of Augustus

Augustus died on August 19, AD 14 at the age of 76. As they had done with Caesar before him, the Senate declared him to have become a god, an honor they would bestow on other good emperors as well. Having served almost sixty years in government, Augustus had nearly completely transformed the Roman state. From this point forward, the question will no longer be "should Rome have an emperor?" but "who will be the next emperor?". In many ways, the days of the kings had returned; but instead of ruling a small, struggling city, the new "kings" ruled one of the largest empires ever created.

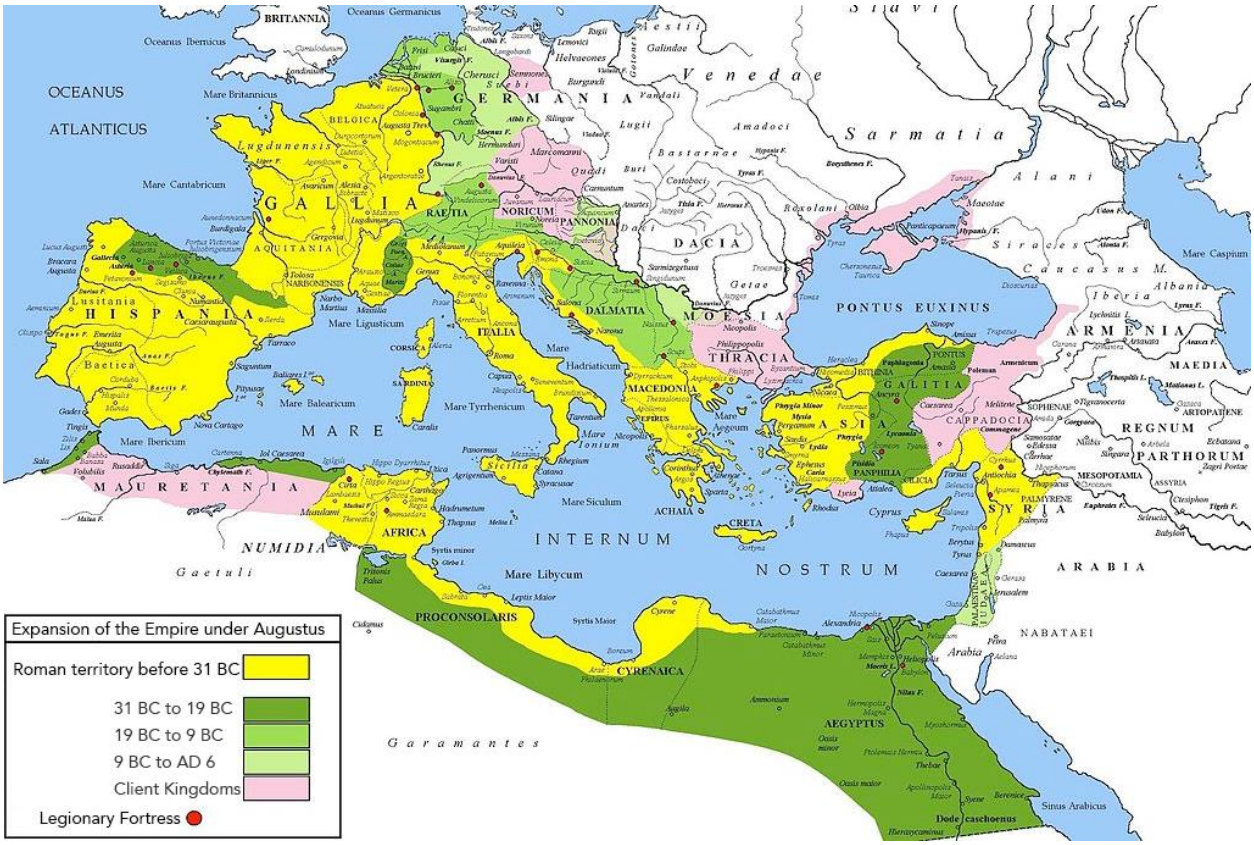


Figure 32. The Roman Empire at the death of Augustus[bb]

XX. Tiberius

AD 14-37

Augustus and the four emperors that followed him all belonged to the Julio-Claudian dynasty. All of them are related by blood to either Augustus or his third wife Livia. When Augustus died in 14[8], Tiberius, Livia's son by her first husband, became emperor.

Figure 33. Aureus (gold coin) of Tiberius, 1st century AD[cc]

Tiberius was 55 years old when he became emperor. Shortly afterwards, the legions of Pannonia (modern Hungary) and the lower Rhine rebelled – they had been away from Rome too long and paid poorly. Tiberius sent his son Drusus II and his nephew Germanicus (whom he had adopted at Augustus' command) to lead these legions.

Germanicus

Wanting to restore the morale of the legions, Germanicus decided to avenge the Roman loss at the Teutoburg Forrest (see p. 64). From 14 to 16, he battled the Germans and their leader, Arminius. He recovered two of the legionary standards lost by Varus but was never able to fully conquer Germany. Tiberius ordered him back to Rome, following the policy of Augustus that it was best to leave the Rhine as the northern border of the empire.

Germanicus was immensely popular with the army and the Roman people, especially after his recovery the two standards. Tiberius then put him in control of the entire eastern half of the empire. But in 19, Germanicus died in Syria. He may, some historians suggest, have been

[8] Remember, when there is no BC or AD marking, you should assume it's an AD date.

poisoned by Piso, the governor of Syria. Certainly Germanicus' widow **Agrippina** believed that Germanicus had been poisoned, and she also thought that Tiberius had ordered Germanicus' death.

Shortly afterwards, Tiberius' own son Drusus II died (in 23), and Tiberius adopted Agrippina's sons, Nero[9] and Drusus III, as his heirs. It seemed that the feud between Agrippina and Tiberius had been put aside.

Sejanus

Lucius Aelius Sejanus was the captain of the **Praetorian Guard**, which was the emperor's personal bodyguard. The leader of the Praetorian Guard is called the **Praetorian Prefect**.

Sejanus desperately wanted to become part of the Imperial family and perhaps the next emperor, and the adoptions of Agrippina's sons did not fit into his plans. Over time, he convinced Tiberius that Agrippina still hated him and would eventually conspire against him.

Tiberius Retires to Capri

At Sejanus' urging, Tiberius left Rome in 26 and went to the island of Capri in the Bay of Naples, leaving Sejanus in control of the city. Agrippina and her eldest son Nero were exiled in 29, and her other son, Drusus III, committed suicide in 30.

But Agrippina and Germanicus' third son, Gaius, was a favorite of Tiberius. Tiberius had recommended him as heir to the throne in a letter to the Senate. Sejanus began to plot against the life of Gaius. But Gaius' grandmother, Antonia, the daughter of Marcus Antonius, sent word to Tiberius, revealing her suspicions of what Sejanus was about to do. Tiberius summoned Gaius to Capri and sent **Naevius Sutorius Macro** to Rome to take over command of the Praetorian Guard.

With Macro, he sent a letter asking the Senate to arrest Sejanus. They did, and Sejanus was put to death, his body thrown into the Tiber River.

Treason Laws

Tiberius was shocked and saddened that Sejanus, whom he had trusted, betrayed him. He decided that all other traitors needed to be found and executed. The charge of *maiestas* ("treason") became common as politicians attempted to use Tiberius' increasing paranoia against their enemies.

[9] This is not the Nero who will eventually be emperor.

The Death of Tiberius

Tiberius spent the last ten years of his life almost exclusively on Capri. In 41, when he realized he was nearing death, he attempted to return to Rome, but only got as far as Misenum, a small town on the north of the Bay of Naples. He died there. It was rumored that he was smothered with a pillow by the Praetorian Prefect Macro, but this allegation could not be proven.

Gaius, the son of Agrippina and Germanicus, became the next emperor. He is usually referred to by his nickname, Caligula.

XXI. Caligula, Claudius, and Nero

Caligula

37-41

Figure 34. Caligula, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, Denmark[dd]

Although his official name was Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, Gaius had been nicknamed **Caligula** as a small boy. When his father Germanicus was with the legions near Germany, Gaius used to dress in a little soldier's uniform his mother had made for him. The word for the heavy boots soldiers wore is *caliga*, and *Caligula*, the nickname the soldiers gave the little boy, means "little boots."

Caligula was a very popular emperor at the start, especially because his father had been so beloved by the Roman people. But in the first few months of his reign, he became very ill; and, for whatever reason, he was never the same afterward.

Caligula became an embarrassment to Rome. He liked to think of himself as a ruler like the Egyptian Pharaohs, and he wanted to be worshiped as a sun god. He confiscated property from citizens, imposed new taxes, and spent money so fast that he nearly depleted the imperial treasury.

He executed many people whom he thought were conspiring against him. Some of these conspiracies were imagined, some were real. Finally, a member of the Praetorian Guard named **Cassius Chaerea** killed him in one of the secret passageways of the imperial palace. Chaerea had not acted alone. He was part of a group of prominent senators, soldiers, and other government officials that decided Caligula's rule needed to come to an end.

Claudius

41 – 54

While the Senate debated on how to replace Caligula, his uncle Claudius (the brother of Germanicus) secured the loyalty of the Praetorian Guard by promising them each 15,000 sesterces. The Guard asked the Senate to agree to make Claudius emperor, and the Senate had little choice but to agree.

Claudius had suffered greatly because of either a birth defect or an early illness. He was physically deformed, socially awkward, and had a speech impediment that made him sound as if he were not very smart. Augustus, however, had recognized that Claudius actually had a sharp mind and provided him with a good education. He was trained in history and law, which is not bad training for an emperor.

Figure 35. Bust of Claudius, National Archaeology Museum, Naples, Italy[ee]

His reforms of the imperial bureaucracy were significant. Under his rule, the government became more effective and efficient. Many of the officials working in the government were freedmen who had come from Greece or farther east.

He built a new port at Ostia, which had become unusable because of the silt the Tiber left there as it entered the sea. Soon, Ostia became a large and prosperous city. He also invaded Britain, which Julius Caesar had attempted in 55 and 54 BC. Claudius was successful where Caesar had not been, and the province of Britain was created in 52.

It was Claudius' wives who caused him the most trouble. His first two wives he divorced when they were unfaithful to him. His third wife, **Valeria Messalina**, was only 15 when they were married (Claudius was 47). Although she gave birth to two children, a daughter named Octavia and a son named Britannicus, she was unhappy in her marriage to an older and physically handicapped man.

Messalina fell in love with **Gaius Silius**, and together they plotted to kill Claudius. While Claudius was in Ostia, they got married. When word of this marriage and the plot to kill him reached Claudius, Messalina, Silius, and the others who had conspired with them were executed.

Claudius next married his niece Agrippina the Younger. Agrippina the Younger was Caligula's sister, the daughter of Claudius' brother Germanicus. Marriage to one's niece was not permitted under Roman law, so Claudius had the law changed. Agrippina's main goal seems to have been to make her son heir to the throne. Her son, Nero, was the child of her first marriage. This suited Claudius, as his son Britannicus was only five and thus not ready to be part of the government. Claudius arranged for his daughter Octavia to marry Nero, and then adopted him as his heir.

In 51, Agrippina's friend **Sextus Afranius Burrus** became Praetorian Prefect. Claudius died a few years later (54) from natural causes. At least one ancient source suggests that Agrippina poisoned him, but there is no evidence or even motive for that. Agrippina already had everything in place for her son to become emperor.

Nero

45 – 68

Figure 36. Bust of Nero, Capitoline Museum, Rome[ff]

Nero was the son of Agrippina the Younger (the daughter of Germanicus) and Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, whom Agrippina divorced to marry Claudius. He was only sixteen years old when he became emperor, and he depended heavily on three people for advice and support: his mother Agrippina, the Praetorian Prefect Burrus, and his tutor **Seneca**. Following the example of Claudius, he promised each member of the Praetorian Guard 15,000 sesterces.

For the first eight years of his reign, Nero followed the examples of Augustus and Claudius. Under the guidance of his mentors Burrus and Seneca, Nero ran the empire smoothly. His mother Agrippina, however, was ruthless in her desire to direct and control the government and, therefore, to direct and control Nero. Agrippina had many rivals of her family murdered, including some of the freedman who had helped Claudius run the empire.

Seneca and Burrus, wanting to free the empire from Agrippina's influence, reminded Nero that he could do what he wanted now that he was emperor, and they built up his ego by pretending that all decisions made by the government were his. Nero was interested in art, music, poetry, and chariot racing, and his mentors encouraged these interests. In the end, by flattering Nero and acting as if he could do no wrong, the created a monster they could not control.

Nero inherited his mother's paranoia. In 55 he had Claudius' son Britannicus murdered in order to remove him as a possible contender for the throne. Four years later, he had his mother killed. (He had a boat built that was supposed to fall apart and cause Agrippina to drown. When that failed, he ordered the captain of the ship to kill her.) In 62, he divorced Octavia (he later had her murdered) and married **Poppaea Sabina**. Poppaea Sabina had been the wife of **Marcus Salvius Otho**, the future emperor.

The Praetorian Prefect Burrus died in the same year (62) and **Ofonius Tigellinus** became Prefect. Seneca, Nero's former tutor, retired. Now Nero was free from all of those who offered him guidance in his early years, and his character was revealed.

Like Caligula before him, Nero was an excessive spender. But he was also a performer – he loved to drive chariots in races, perform in musical competitions, and even appear as an actor on stage, which in earlier times was a job only fit for the lower classes. The number of nobles murdered during Nero's reign is impossible to count. Nero confiscated their wealth after their death to pay for his spending.

War in Britain and Judea

In 61, a rebellion broke out in Britain. The widowed queen of the Iceni, a tribe inhabiting what is now East Anglia (Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire), sought to drive the Romans out because of their excessive tax and debt collection practices. Her name was **Boudicca**, and she was able to defeat the Roman army at Camulondonum (modern Colchester) and at Loninium (modern London), where she killed 70,000 Roman colonists. She was eventually defeated by the Roman general **Suetonius Pallus** at a battle near Litchfield, after which she took her own life. Thus the Roman holdings in Britain were expanded.

In 66, the inhabitants of Judea (modern Israel and Palestine) began rioting in Jerusalem. The Roman governor had failed to stop the violence committed by Greeks against Jews in the city of Caesarea. The governor of nearby Syria also failed to put a stop to these revolts. At this point, Nero sent the general **Titus Flavius Vespasianus** (called Vespasian in English) to put an end to the Jewish rebellion. Although it was a long campaign, with particularly bloody battles at Jerusalem and Masada, but he was eventually successful.

The Great Fire at Rome

In 64 BC, during a particularly hot summer, a fire broke out in the slums between the Palatine and Caelian hills. This fire raged for nine days, consuming numerous apartment buildings (*insulae*), some temples, and even Nero's palace. At the time, Nero was in Antium. Some ancient historians say that he was participating in a music contest, which is where the idea that Nero "fiddled while Rome burned" comes from.

Ancient historians are divided on what caused the fire. Some say it was an accident, which is easy to imagine in the slums of the city where houses are close together and buildings are built of wood. Some accuse Nero of orchestrating the fire.

In either case, Nero rushed back to Rome and attempted to put the fire out. When he could not, he opened the Campus Martius and his personal gardens to provide shelter for those who lost their homes. But whatever credit he gained by these actions, he was still extremely unpopular among the nobles. When he took 120 acres of the land cleared by the fire to build his new palace, the rumors that he had started the fire began to rise. Nero's ***Domus Aurea*** ("the

Golden House") was a massive palace with gardens and an artificial lake. The entryway housed a giant statue of Nero (called the Colossus of Nero) that was 120 feet tall.

Nero's Persecution of Christians

Nero desperately wanted to find someone to blame for the fire. With the help of Tigellinus, he accused the small Christian community in Rome of wanting to destroy the empire. Although Romans were open to recognizing new gods, the god of the Jews and Christians was incompatible with their religion, because they insisted that their god was the only one. In addition, the Christians would not worship the emperor and his ancestors, which Nero found particularly objectionable. The historian Tacitus reports that Nero had Christians crucified, torn apart by dogs, and burned alive.

Nero's Death

By 68, Nero had put himself in a difficult situation. In addition to all of the murders, the confiscation of property, and the fire, he now had failed to pay his soldiers consistently – probably because his own spending had drained the treasury. The loss of military support for Nero made it possible for **Servius Sulpicius Galba**, the governor of Hispania Terraconensis, to bribe the Praetorian Guard by promising them 80,000 sesterces each. (As you can see, the price of bribing the Praetorian Guard continues to rise.) The Guard proclaimed their support for Galba, leaving Nero vulnerable to attack at any moment. He asked one of his freedmen to put a sword to his throat, and thus he died. It is said that his last words were, "*Qualis artifex pereo!*" – "What an artist I am killing!"

With Nero's death, the Julio-Claudian dynasty comes to an end. The next year would bring the empire to its first real crisis of leadership.

XXII. The Year of the Four Emperors

As we have seen, the military (and, particular, the Praetorian Guard) had a great deal of influence on who would become emperor. Now, for the first time ever, a man who was not even in Rome at the time was proclaimed emperor. He was also a man in no way related to the Julian and Claudian *gentes*.

Galba

68 – 69

The Senate was glad to recognize Galba as emperor, since he came from an old senatorial family. A messenger brought the news to Galba in Spain, and he set out for Rome at once. His immediate goals were to restore the treasury and regain the support of the military, but neither of these made him popular. To balance the budget, he cut some of the grain dole (the free grain provided to the poor). He also failed to give the Praetorian Guard their promised payment. Finally, he angered the legions of the Rhine by recalling their commander Verginius Rufus, a respected veteran general. When he chose a senator with virtually no political or military experience as his successor, his former ally Otho (the ex-husband of Poppaea Sabina), turned against him. He went to the Praetorian Guard and promised them a payment (the amount is unknown) if they would make him emperor. They murdered Galba and his chosen successor on January 15, AD 69.

Otho

January 15 – April 16, 69

Even before Otho became emperor in Rome, the legions of the Rhine declared that their commander, **Aulus Vitellius**, should be the next emperor. Otho attempted to keep Vitellius and his supporters out of Italy by blocking the passages through the Alps, but he didn't get there in time. He was defeated at the **First Battle of Cremona**, and his army's retreat was blocked by the Po river. His army surrendered and Otho committed suicide.

Vitellius

April 16 – December 22, 69

Vitellius was the first emperor since Tiberius who had not risen to the throne with the help of the Praetorian Guard, which he immediately disbanded. But a new example had been set. On July 1, the commander in charge of Egypt declared his support for Vespasian. Vespasian was stationed in Judea after putting down the Jewish rebellions of 66 (see p. 72). A few days later, Vespasian's own soldiers declared for him. Leaving his son **Titus** in charge of Judea, Vespasian went to Egypt to attempt to cut off Rome's grain supply. Meanwhile, his ally **Gaius Licinius Mucianus**, the governor of Syria, began to march his armies toward Italy.

In the fall of 69, the legions of the Danube threw their support to Vespasian as well. They also began a march to Italy, far ahead of Mucianus. Without waiting for the troops from Syria, the Danube legions faced Vitellius' forces at the **Second Battle of Cremona**. By the time the Danube legions got to Rome, Vitellius was already negotiating with Vespasian's older brother to leave the throne. Vitellius' troops rioted when they heard he would abdicate the throne, and the Danube legions had to stop this riot by force. They killed Vitellius and began to run wild in the city, setting fires and killing any who opposed them. Fortunately, Mucianus arrived shortly and put everything in order. Vespasian became the fourth emperor of the year AD 69. In doing so, he began a dynasty of his own: the **Flavian dynasty**, after his family name.

XXIII. The Flavian Dynasty

The Flavian dynasty is named after **Titus Flavius Vespasianus**, whom we call Vespasian. It includes Vespasian, the fourth emperor of AD 69, and his two sons, **Titus** and **Domitian**.

Vespasian

69 – 79

Figure 37. Sestertius of Vespaian, celebrating his victory in Judea[gg]

Vespasian is best known as a master administrator and planner. He put down revolts in Germany and among the Belgae in Gaul. His son Titus, whom he had left in charge of Judea, put an end to the rebellions there. In the end, Titus destroyed the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. It has not been rebuilt to this day.

Phillipus dicit

The Jewish temple destroyed by Titus was the Second Temple, built c. 516 BC after the Jews returned from exile in Persia and Babylon. The First Temple, built by King Solomon, was destroyed by the Babylonians.

One wall of the Second Temple survives, which is called the Western Wall. However, the place where the temple used to be is now occupied by the Dome of the Rock, an Islamic shrine.

After the role the army played in the crisis of AD 69, Vespasian embarked on a reform of the legions. He recruited more widely from the cities of the provinces and mixed up the composition of legions so that natives of a particular province, who might be inclined to mutiny, did not serve in their province of origin. He also strengthened Rome's defenses on the northern border. He expanded the rights of citizenship all the way to Spain, fully integrating the western provinces into the citizenry for the first time.

As Claudius had done earlier, Vespasian increased the bureaucracy of the empire. However, instead of relying on freedmen as Claudius had, he appointed members of the equestrian class to those positions. He brought men into his administration not just from Rome, but from all of

Italy and the provinces, which helped him better understand the needs of the various parts of the empire.

Although he was financially conservative, he spent heavily on defense, roads, bridges, education, and public buildings. One of the public buildings whose construction began under his reign was the Flavian Amphitheater (*Amphitheatrum Flavium*), which most people now known as the Colosseum.[10]

Figure 38. The Flavian Amphitheater or Colosseum, Rome[hh]

Vespasian died in 79 after catching a fever. With his last words, he made a joke about the fact that so many emperors before him had been deified by the Senate: "*Vae, puto deus fio,*" or "Alas! I think I'm becoming a god." Indeed, the Senate did proclaim that he had become one.

Titus

79 – 81

His son, also named Titus Flavius Vespasianus, became the next emperor. In English, we usually refer to him as Titus. As mentioned above, he was the general who ended the revolt in Judea. He was very popular with the Roman people, whom he provided with wonderful shows and games.

[10] The name "Colosseum" comes from the giant statue of Nero (the Colossus of Nero; see p. 74) that the emperor Hadrian moved from the *Domus Aurea* to the space in front of the Flavian Amphitheater.

Figure 39. The Arch of Titus, Rome[ii]

In August of 79, in the earliest days of Titus' reign, Mount Vesuvius, a volcano near the Bay of Naples, erupted. This massive eruption buried the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum, killing thousands. Shortly afterwards, a massive plague broke out in the same region. Following that, a large fire broke out in Rome – not as big as the Great Fire of 64 (see p. 72), but significant nonetheless. These three disasters took a toll on Titus' energy and the resources of the empire.

Titus contracted a fever in 81 and died that September at the age of 42. Having died young, the Roman people remembered him in the same group as other great leaders who died young, like Germanicus. His brother, the emperor Domitian, built a massive arch to honor Titus, which still stands today.

Domitian

81 – 96

Vespasian's younger son, **Titus Flavius Domitianus**, became the next emperor. He had been largely ignored by his father in favor of Titus. At a young age, he had idolized the emperor Tiberius, who served as his model to a certain extent.

Unlike his father and brother, Domitian did not care about keeping the Senate happy. He put members of the equestrian order in offices usually reserved for senators and allowed equestrians to judge the trials of senators. He required that he be addressed not as *imperator* or *princeps*, but as *dominus* ("lord") – the same term that slaves used to refer to their masters.

Meanwhile, he kept the public happy with free grain and gifts of money, along with massively spectacular shows and games. He built and restored many public buildings, including a Greek-

style Stadium and Odeon on the Campus Martius, the baths of Titus and Agrippa, and a Temple of *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* ("Jupiter the best and greatest") on the Capitoline.

In 89, the governor of Upper Germany, **Lucius Antonius Saturninus**, bribed his legions into declaring him emperor, following the tactics that had worked for Vitellius and Vespasian in 69. Once Domitian had put down this rebellion (with help from the future emperor Trajan, who was then governor of Spain), he expanded the Roman empire east of the Rhine, something that all previous emperors had avoided.

He also attempted to conquer Dacia (modern Romania), but there he was unsuccessful. In the end, he made a treaty with the Dacian leader Decabalus, who was made king of Dacia with the support of Rome in return for an alliance. The Senate considered this a terrible outcome, a serious blow to Roman dignity.

The rebellion of Saturninus made Domitian paranoid. He saw conspiracies everywhere, first banishing all philosophers and astrologers from Rome and then turning on many senators and governors. Finally, he began to suspect his own wife, **Domitia**, of conspiring against him.

When Domitia learned that she would be a target, she formed an actual conspiracy with the Praetorian Prefect and some influential senators to murder Domitian. They sent Domitia's trusted butler Stephanus to deliver a document to Domitian, and while Domitian was reading Stephanus stabbed him. His death marked the end of the Flavian dynasty, and, since Domitian died without an heir, raised new questions about who should rise to the throne.

XXIV. The Five Good Emperors

Nerva

96 – 98

After Domitian's assassination, the Senate was able for the first time to choose the successor to the throne. Their choice fell to one of their own, a senior senator named **Marcus Cocceius Nerva**. He restored much power to the Senate and suspended the treason law that Domitian had used to execute so many nobles. He did not, however, have the military on his side. Some of the Praetorian Guard still supported Domitian and demanded the execution of those who had caused his death. Nerva allowed them to execute their former Prefect and several others.

It became apparent that Nerva needed to shore up his support with the military. Therefore, he adopted the governor of Lower Germany, a very well-respected military commander named **Marcus Ulpius Trajanus**. Nerva died before Trajan even got to Rome, but perhaps his most important accomplishment was the precedent he set by choosing an heir who was not related to him and had already earned the respect of the Roman people.

Trajan

98 – 117

Figure 40. Statue of Trajan, 2nd century AD, Ostia Antica[jj]

Trajan, who was born in the province of Baetica (now Spain), became the first emperor to have been born in the provinces instead of in Italy. He had served under Vespasian and Domitian in several parts of the empire. He spent two years after Nerva's death inspecting and fortifying the northern borders along the Rhine and Danube before returning to Rome. Trajan had wide support with the Senate, the army, and the Roman populace.

Italy was in economic decline at the time, which caused a decline in population. Trajan therefore set up an *alimenta*, or public assistance fund, to help pay for the care and education of children. He built many roads, bridges, and aqueducts in the provinces.

The Dacian and Parthian Wars

From 101 to 106, Trajan was at war with the Dacians. Tiberius had tried to conquer **Dacia** before, but ended up agreeing to a treaty with them instead. Although it was a

difficult war, Trajan captured the Dacian capital in 102. The Dacian king, Decebalus, agreed to become a client king of Rome; but in 105, he broke this treaty. Trajan marched again on Dacia and easily defeated the rebellion. Decabalus committed suicide, and Trajan annexed Dacia as a Roman province. The riches of Dacia's gold mines helped solve many of the empire's financial issues.

Parthia had been a thorn in the Roman side since the days of Crassus. When the Parthian king Chosroes overthrew the king of Armenia, it caused a good deal of anxiety for the nearby Roman provinces. Trajan went to war against Parthia from 113 to 117. After conquering Parthia, Trajan brought the empire to its largest territorial extent.

Trajan died returning from Judea, where had gone to stop another rebellion among the Jewish people. He had left **Publius Aelius Hadrianus** in charge of the armies of the East, and those armies hailed Hadrian as the next emperor.

Hadrian

117 – 138

Figure 41. Statue of Hadrian, Capitoline Museum, Rome[kk]

Some historians dispute whether or not Trajan actually had adopted Hadrian, but it made no difference to the legions, nor to the Senate who confirmed him as emperor. He was a well-educated and well-respected general who had served under Trajan. He was also married to Trajan's grandniece, Vibia Sabina. He was more comfortable hunting or with the army than at home. He was particularly interested in all things Greek, especially Greek art and philosophy.

Hadrian believed that Trajan's expansion of the empire was unwise and too expensive to maintain. He abandoned Trajan's conquests in Mesopotamia, returned Armenia to its previous status as a client kingdom, and made peace with Parthia. Some high-ranking military officials did not like his new plan of peace, and several were put to death after conspiring against the emperor.

Hadrian spent the vast majority of his reign touring the empire. He left Rome in 121 to tour Gaul, and then went to Britain, where he approved plans to build a wall on the northern border to keep out the Scottish raiders. This wall, some of which is still visible today, is called Hadrian's wall.

In Judea, he built a temple to Jupiter Maximus on the site of the old Jewish Temple, which resulted in a revolt. **Simon Bar Kokhba**, the leader of the Jewish rebellion, managed to take back Jerusalem from the Romans before another Roman general arrived. The Romans killed as many as 500,000 people and enslaved many more. The Jewish people were removed from Jerusalem and permitted to enter only once a year on a designated day. The city was renamed Aelia Capitolina, and the name of the province was changed to Syria Palestina. It would be another 1800 years until a Jewish state existed again, when Israel was created after World War II.

Shortly after he returned to Rome in 135, Hadrian became ill. He chose as his successor his friend **Lucius Ceionius Commodus Verus**, but Verus died in 138. He then adopted a wealthy senator, **Titus Aurelius Antonius**, and required that Antoninus adopt as his sons the young **Marcus Annius Verus** and the even younger **Lucius Verus**, son of Hadrian's recently-deceased friend. Hadrian died in 138.

Antoninus Pius

138 – 161

Antoninus was given the name "*Pius*" ("pious" or "respectful") because of his work getting the Senate to make his adoptive father Hadrian into a god and prevent the Senate from reversing Hadrian's non-expansionist policies. His reign was free of any major conflicts, either of foreign or domestic.

In Britain, he pushed the border another 75 miles north and built a second wall, now called the Antonine Wall. He also strengthened the defenses of the German border with new watchtowers and forts. Most of these would not survive the end of his reign.

Marcus Aurelius

161 – 180

The young man Hadrian had required Antoninus to adopt, Marcus Annius Verus, now became emperor. He is usually referred to as **Marcus Aurelius**. He was a practitioner of **Stoicism**, a Greek philosophy that taught that people should not be controlled by pleasure or pain, but rather by logic and fair treatment of others according to the laws of nature. He even wrote a book about his philosophy, the ***Meditations,*** which is written in Greek.

Christians, whom Aurelius believed to be a corrupting influence on the empire, were widely persecuted during his reign. Their refusal to sacrifice to and worship the emperor made them easy targets for any politician looking for a scapegoat.

Figure 42. Equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, Capitoline Museum, Rome[ll]

Aurelius appointed his brother-by-adoption, **Lucius Verus,** as his co-emperor. For the first time, Rome had two emperors of equal power, with Marcus Aurelius working mostly in the western half of the empire and Verus working most in the eastern half.

In the east, Verus won a victory over the Parthians in a war that lasted from 161 to 165. Unfortunately, soldiers in this war brought back a plague that infected people from Asia Minor to Italy, killing nearly one-third of the population in affected areas. This plague also destroyed most of the legions stationed along the Danube river, and several tribes of Germans broke through, invading as far as Aquileia in northern Italy (near modern-day Venice). Marcus Aurelius marched his army northward and recaptured Aquileia. He then marched into Pannonia and Noricum, where his enemies surrendered as soon as he arrived. In 169, having secured those provinces, Aurelius and Verus headed back to Rome. Verus died of a stroke during the journey back.

The northern and eastern borders of the empire were becoming increasingly hard to defend. German tribes, such as the Marcomanni, and old enemies such as Parthia began to cause problems for Aurelius. His war against the Marcomanni, or **the Marcomannic War**, was fought on the Danube border from 169 to 172. Its events are recorded on a giant column, the column of Marcus Aurelius, which still stands in Rome today.

Figure 43. The Column of Marcus Aurelius, Rome[mm]

In 175, the governor of Syria, **Avidius Cassius**, led a revolt. He had been told, incorrectly, that Marcus Aurelius had died, and proclaimed himself emperor. Aurelius summoned his wife **Faustina** and his young son **Commodus** to meet him in Sirmium (in modern Kosovo) and prepared to go east. But before Aurelius set out, a soldier arrived with the head of Cassius. Although the revolution was already ended, Aurelius went to the east anyway, if only to display his power. During these travels, his wife Faustina died.

For all of his good qualities, Aurelius made a major mistake in departing from the tradition of adopting worthy heirs to the throne. Instead, he insisted that his son, Commodus become the next emperor. However, he

may have had little choice. None of the previous four emperors had any natural heirs, and should Commodus have been passed over in favor of an adopted son, many Romans might well have supported whatever claim Commodus made to the throne. Had Commodus been a good and able emperor, we would likely forgive Aurelius for this departure from precedent. Unfortunately, he was not.

XXV. Commodus and the Severan Dynasty

The growth of the Roman empire, both in terms of land and citizenship, had caused major changes in its political and social institutions. The political importance of Italy had shrunk, and the cities of the provinces became more and more important. One of the effects of this was increasing disunity in the empire, as each part of the empire sought to increase its own importance. This is exemplified in the events of AD 69, as various parts of the empire declared one of its own leaders as emperor.

For the emperors themselves, personal safety became a significant concern. As a result, they became increasingly more like kings. Any sense that citizens might participate in important ways, as had been the case during the reign of Augustus, was gone.

Meanwhile, the extensive borders of the empire required enormous resources to defend. Money that once was spent on public infrastructure and poverty relief was diverted to defense, and the vast majority of Roman citizens suffered economically.

Commodus

180 – 192

Commodus was the first biological son of an emperor to rise to the throne. The son of Marcus Aurelius was by all accounts a terrible emperor. He had no interest in administering the empire, but instead chose to indulge himself in the luxuries of the empire. He liked to stage hunts of wild beasts in the Colosseum, in which he himself participated. He also fought in gladiatorial battles. He believed himself to be an incarnation of the god Hercules and renamed the city of Rome to Commodiana.

After numerous conspiracies, he was finally killed in 192 by his wrestling partner, who had been paid to strangle Commodus in his bath.

Pertinax and Didius Julianus

193

Commodus' assassins had arranged with the Praetorian Guard to recognize an elderly senator named **Pertinax**, a *novus homo* from Africa, as emperor. In order to raise money, he sold off high offices, offending the Senate. More importantly, he failed to pay the Praetorian Guard the money he had promised. He was murdered in March of 193 by the Guard, who then auctioned off the empire to the highest bidder.

The winner was a wealthy senator named **Didius Julianus** for the sum of 25,000 sesterces per man in the Praetorian Guard. But the people hated the idea of purchasing the throne, and various legions in Syria, Britain, and the Danube began to salute their leaders for emperor. The

commander of the Danube forces, **Septimius Severus**, reached Rome first. Didius Julianus was executed in early June, having reigned only about nine weeks.

Septimius Severus

193 – 211

Figure 44. Alabaster bust of Septimius Severus, Capitoline Museum, Rome[nn]

Septimius Severus was born in Leptis Magna (not far from modern Tripoli, Libya). He is the second Roman emperor born in Africa (Pertinax was the first). He was married to **Julia Domna**, a Syrian woman from a wealthy family, and they had two sons, **Caracalla** and **Geta**. He was the founder of the **Severan dynasty**, which would last until 235.

After taking the throne, he had to deal with the men who had been proclaimed emperor by other legions, including the Syrian governor Petronius Niger and the commander in Britain, Clodius Albinus. He also fought two wars against Parthia and one in Britain.

To strengthen his claim to the empire, he "reverse adopted" himself into the family of Marcus Aurelius, whom he now claimed as his adoptive father. As many emperors before him, he relied heavily on the army as the base of his power, but he increased this by having the army perform legislative functions, such as declaring public enemies and confirming his choice of successor.

By this time, the title "**Caesar**" was used for the person who would become emperor next, with the current emperor being called "**Augustus**." In 196 the army proclaimed Septimius Severus' son Caracalla as Caesar. (Caracalla's real name was **Septimius Basianus**; Caracalla was a nickname given to him based on the Gallic cloak he liked to wear, which became fashionable in Rome during his lifetime.)

Septimius Severus severely limited the power of the Senate in favor of the *equites* and greatly increased the power of the Praetorian Guard. He also created a separate treasury, the *res privata principis* ("the private property of the *princeps*"), apart from the regular Imperial treasury.

From 208 to 211, Septimius Severus, along with his two sons, fought the Scots in northern Britain. They did not succeed in extending the Roman territory, but they did reinforce Hadrian's Wall and remind the Scots that the Romans were not to be taken lightly. On the way back, Septimius Severus became ill and died in Eboracum (modern York). His advice to his sons, according to the ancient historian Cassius Dio, was to "agree with each other, enrich the soldiers, and despise everyone else." This might be the best summary of what it meant to be Roman emperor in the third century AD.

Caracalla

211 – 217

Caracalla and Geta ruled together for a while, but they could not agree on much. Each one feared that the other would assassinate him, and in December of 211 Caracalla murdered Geta. To secure the support of the army, he raised their pay by 50%. This move almost depleted the treasury, and Caracalla had to raises taxes.

In 213, Caracalla left Rome to tour the provinces. He tended first to the northern and then to the eastern border, fighting several wars along the way. But in 217, as he travelled in Asia Minor, he was murdered by the Praetorian Prefect **Marcus Opellius Macrinus**.

Macrinus

217-218

Macrinus was acclaimed emperor by the army. He became the first emperor to have not been a senator before his ascension to the throne. He "reverse adopted" himself as the son of Septimius Severus.

In Syria, however, **Julia Maesa**, sister of Septimius Severus' wife Julia Domna, was creating a plot of her own. Her grandson Varius Avitius, then fourteen years old, was a high priest of the Syrian sun god Elagabal. He is therefore called **Elagabalus** (or sometimes Heliogabalus), and his grandmother intended for him to become emperor.

Julia Maesa created a rumor that Elagabalus was the natural son of Caracalla, and therefore a true Severan where Macrinus was not. The legions of Syria, encouraged also by a large donation, proclaimed Elagabalus emperor. Macrinus fled but was hunted and killed.

Elagabalus

218 – 222

At fourteen, Elagabalus was in no way capable of running and empire. This task fell to his grandmother Julia Maesa. He appointed his friends to high office: a professional dancer became Praetorian Prefect, and a chariot racer headed the police and fire department.

At Maesa's suggestion, Elagabalus adopted her other grandson Gessius Bassianus Alexianus (better known as **Severus Alexander**) as heir and Caesar. When Elagablus realized that Severus Alexander was much more popular than he with the Senate and the people, he twice tried to kill him.

Julia Maesa and **Julia Mamaea**, the mother of Severus Alexander, asked the Praetorian Guard to protect the young Severus Alexander. They killed Elegablaus and his mother Soaemias, cut off their heads, and threw them into the Tiber. He was eighteen years old.

Severus Alexander

222 – 235

Severus Alexander was fourteen when he took the throne. His mother Julia Mamaea, like Julia Maesa before her, ran the empire on behalf of her son. She set up a council of Senators to help her with the tasks of administration.

But Severus Alexander was unable to control the armies. The Praetorian Guard revolted and killed their Prefect. They would have killed Alexander too, had his mother and guardians not quickly taken him back to his homeland in Bithynia (Asia Minor).

In the east, the Iranian King Ardashir I had overrun several Roman provinces, including Syria and Cappadocia. Alexander led his army against Ardashir in 232. This war ended with heavy losses on both sides and no clear victor. In the north, various German tribes were breaking through the borders. He made peace with these tribes by bribing their leaders. This decision was very unpopular with the troops who would have rather used the money for themselves. In 235, the legion under **Maximinus the Thracian** (or Maximinus Thrax) mutinied and killed Severus Alexander.

Severus Alexander's death ended the Severan dynasty. The next fifty years would bring a crisis like the empire had never faced.

XXVI. THE CRISIS OF THE THIRD CENTURY

In the first 261 years of the Roman empire, there had been twenty-six emperors. In the next forty-nine years, between 235 and 284, there would be twenty emperors. Some of them were co-emperors serving together, but nevertheless, the years between 235 and 284 were some of the most dangerous and difficult years of the Roman empire.

We will not talk separately about each of these emperors, who are called the **Soldier Emperors** or the **Barracks Emperors**. A full list of all Roman emperors can be found in Appendix A.

The causes of the crisis of the third century were many. Although Septimius Severus had been a very capable emperor, his dynasty failed to produce another such emperor. As more and more emperors came from the provinces, the senators and others living in Italy opposed them out of principle. Meanwhile, the various regions of the empire began to regard each other with suspicion, thinking that an emperor who came from one region would not pay enough attention to the others; and any emperor who didn't look after the needs of the army very diligently was immediately in danger.

The defense of the borders, basically left unchanged since the reign of Hadrian, was showing signs of weakness. The German tribes in the north and the Persian empire on the east were both encroaching into Roman territory on a regular basis. This was made worse by the fact that it had become economically impossible to pay the number of soldiers needed to defend these long borders.

During this time, a new threat emerged: the Goths, an eastern German tribe that would continue to play an important role in European history into the middle ages. They overran much of the empire between Italy and Asia Minor, including for a time Greece. Dacia was lost to another German tribe, the Vandals.

At the end of this period of military anarchy, the emperor Carus came to power in 282. He did not even bother getting the approval of the Senate, and he quickly made his two sons, Carinus and Numerianus, Caesars. Carinus was left to administer Italy while Carus and Numerianus went to fight on the northern border. Carus was killed, according to ancient sources, by a bolt of lightning in 284, and Numerius was assassinated by the Praetorian Prefect.

A council of the armies met to choose a successor. Ignoring the claims of Carinus, they instead nominated one of their own officers, **Diocletain**. He would return the empire to a much more stable footing.

XXVII. Diocletian and the Tetrarchy

Figure 45. Head of Diocletian, National Archeological Museum, Istanbul[oo]

Diocletian embarked on massive reforms that were necessary to save the empire. At this point, the principate comes to an end. The emperors from this point forward are usually not referred to as *princeps,* but as *dominus* ("lord") – a symbol of the absolute monarchy the empire had become.

What Diocletian set out to do was establish an absolute, central power for the empire. His first act was to appoint **Maximian**, a former fellow soldier, to oversee the western half of the empire as Diocletian's Caesar.

Maximian, having secured Gaul by driving out the Germans, was then elevated to the office of Augustus. His authority was second only to Diocletian's. Meanwhile, Diocletain toured the eastern provinces, inspecting and restructuring defenses, winning many battles and scoring diplomatic victories.

The Tetrarchy

In 293, Diocletian became convinced that this arrangement of having two Augusti was not only beneficial but necessary to the survival of the empire. He thus divided the empire into four sections. In the west, Maximian selected **Constantius Chlorus** as his Caesar. In the east, Diocletian selected **Galerius**. These four were each assigned a section of the empire to rule, although the Augusti reigned supreme in each half of the empire. Each Caesar was adopted by his Augustus and also married the daughter of his Augustus, strengthening their bond.

Diocletian also hoped that this arrangement would make succession to the throne less controversial and violent. When an Augustus died, his Caesar would become Augustus and appoint a new Caesar of his choosing.

This new government also required the reorganization of the provinces. He wanted to avoid the problem of provincial governors getting too powerful and challenging for the throne, so divided the larger provinces into several smaller ones. The number of provinces increased from about 50 to 100. He also removed the military functions of the governors.

He also created **dioceses**, which were groupings of twelve provinces. Each of these had a ***vicarius*** ("vicar"), who was a deputy of one of the four Praetorian Prefects, as each Augustus and Caesar had his own Praetorian Guard. The Prefect reported to their Augustus or Caesar. These vicars supervised all of the governors in their area.

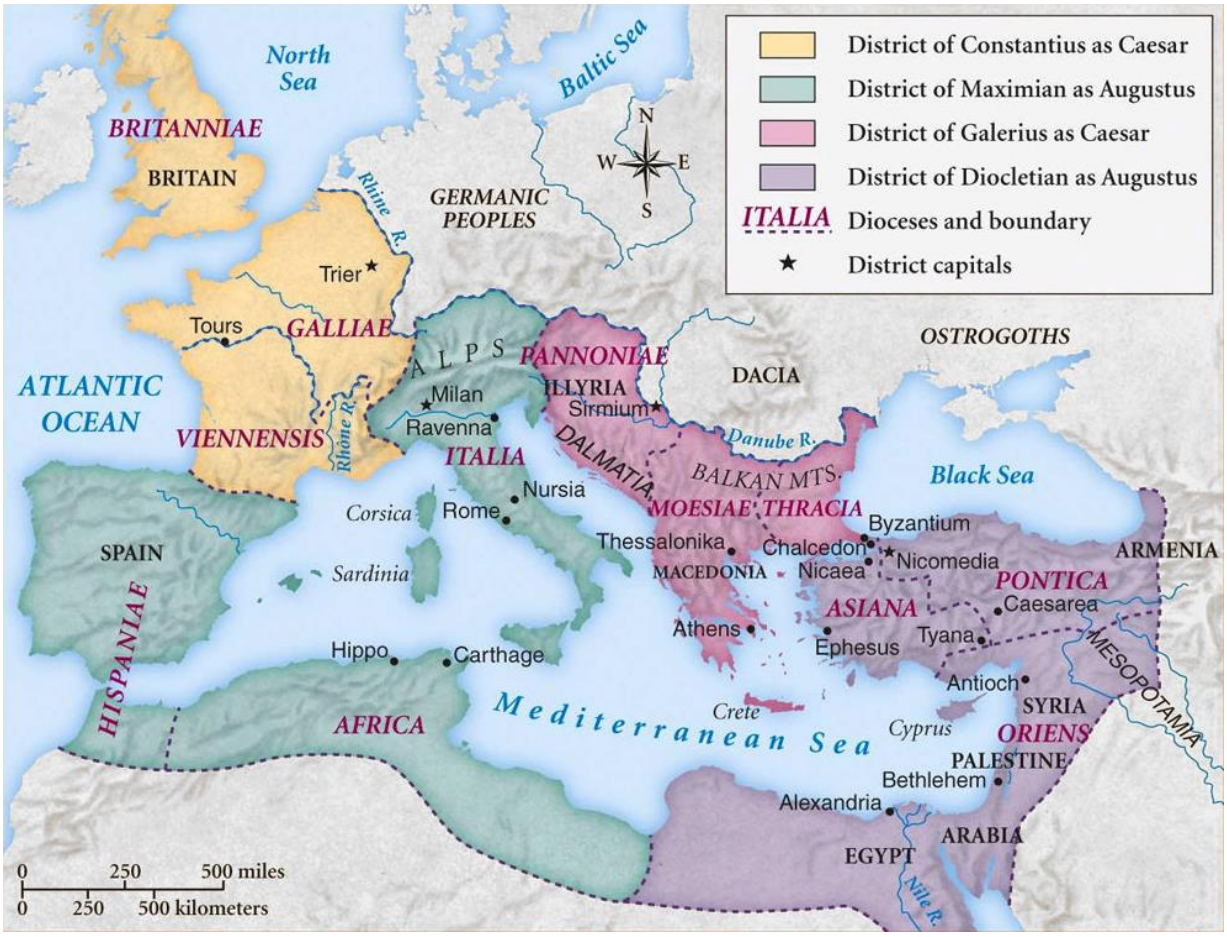


Figure 46. The Tetrarchy of Diocletian[pp]

The military functions taken from the governors were given to military professionals called ***duces***. However, these *duces* were dependent on the civilian governors for supplies.

Diocletian instituted many other reforms, including a new reformed army, new coins, and a new system of taxation. In 302, he issued the **Edict of Maximum Prices**, which set a ceiling on the prices for thousands of different goods. He also reinstituted the persecution of Christians.

Diocletian and Maximian Abdicate Their Thrones

On May 1, 305, Diocletian abdicated his throne. He required Maximian to resign as well. Constantius Chlorus and Galerius became the new Augusti. Galerius chose his nephew **Maximinus** as Caesar, and Constantius Chlorus chose **Flavius Valerius Severus**. Maximian, however, was unhappy about his forced resignation. He began to look for ways to get back in power.

Constantius Cholus had a son named **Constantine**, whose mother he had divorced to marry Theodora, Maximian's daughter. He grew up in Diocletian's court in Nicomedia, where Galerius was now in power. In 306, there was an uprising of the Scottish Picts in Britain, and Constantius

Chlorus requested Constantine to join him battle. Galerius, possibly suspecting that Chlorus intended to overthrow him, delayed sending Constantine to Britain as long as possible. Constantine ended up sneaking out one night, fearing Galerius might change his mind. Constantine joined his father in Britain, but his father passed away in 306 in Eboarcum (York), where Septimius Severus had died earlier. The army proclaimed Constantine Augustus. Galerius asked Constantine to accept the lower title of Caesar, which Constantine did out of respect for both Galerius and Diocletian. Valerius Severus was elevated to Augustus.

Constantine's appointment as Caesar greatly angered Maximian's son, **Maxentius**, who believed that he should have been next in line. In 306, he invaded and took Rome from Valerius Severus (who was enormously unpopular). Galerius still refused to make him Augustus, so Maximinus assumed the title without permission. The next year, his father, the former Augustus Maximian, declared himself as Augustus and aimed to take down Galerius.

Galerius invaded Italy in 307, but he was quickly defeated and had to retreat in order not to lose too many soldiers. Meanwhile, Maximian became tired of being second-in-command to his son Maxentius and tried to get the soldiers to elevate him above his son. The soldiers, however, favored the younger man, and Maximian fled to Constantine's court in Treves (modern Trier, France).

Conference at Carnuntum

Fearing that the tetrarchy was falling apart, Galerius called a meeting of all Caesars and Augusti at **Carnuntum** (modern Altenburg, Germany). He also invited the two former Augusti, Maximian and Diocletian. At this meeting, **Licinius**, an ally of Galerius, became Augustus in the west, replacing Maxentius. Maxentius, who had taken the throne illegally, was declared a public enemy. Constantine and Maximinus remained as Caesars, but both were angry that Licinius had been elevated over them. By 310, Galerius was forced to make Constantine and Maximinus Augusti as well. There were now four official Augusti, plus Maxentius, the self-proclaimed Augustus.

Maximian went back to the court of Constantine, who received him as a guest, but would not give him a position in his government. In 310, while Constantine was out of the city battling the Franks, Maximian proclaimed himself Augustus. Constantine immediately returned and defeated Maximian, who later committed suicide. Maxentius, still at large in Italy, accused Constantine of murder and prepared for war.

The Death of Galerius

Events in the eastern part of the empire would delay their inevitable conflict. In 311, Galerius issued the **Edict of Religious Tolerance**, which allowed Christians in the empire freedom of worship, saying that it was better for the empire if people practiced some kind of religion rather than no religion at all. He died a few days later.

Maximinus, the Caesar of the east, immediately seized the territory Galerius had controlled, and was threatening to take Licinius' territory as well. Constantine allied himself with Licinius against Maximinus, and Maximinus secretly agreed to work with Maxentius.

Diocletian's vision for the tetrarchy was falling apart.

XXVIII. CONSTANTINE THE GREAT

Figure 47. Head of the Colossus of Constantine, Capitoline Museum, Rome[qq]

In 312, Constantine invaded Italy to defeat Maxentius. From Gaul, he crossed the Alps and entered northern Italy. He met Maxentius' forces just north of Rome.

The Battle of the Milvian Bridge

In 312, Maxentius crossed the Tiber on the **Milvian Bridge**. He found himself blocked by Constantine's troops, all of whom had a new emblem painted on their shields – the monogram called the "Chi-Rho." Constantine flanked Maxentius' forces, who had their backs to the river. In the battle that followed, thousands of Maxentius' troops and Maxentius himself died. Constantine entered Rome the next day (October 29, 312). Maxentius' head was carried on a pike in front of the army to prove that he was actually dead.

Constantine and Christianity

This Chi-Rho was a symbol of Christianity, created by combining the Greek letter chi (X) and the Greek letter rho (P), which are the first two letters in the Greek spelling of "Christ", "ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ." Constantine would later tell the story of a vision he had before the battle, in which he saw a cross appear in front of the sun and heard a voice say, "*in hoc signo vinces*" ("in this sign you will conquer"). Constantine was already a worshipper of Sol Invictus, the unconquered sun, and seeing the image set against the sun possibly had special meaning for him. Whatever the reason, the fact that Constantine attributed his victory to the God of the Christians changed the face of western religion for centuries to come.

Figure 48. The Chi-Rho[rr]

Constantine and Licinius

His victory at the Milvian Bridge put Constantine in control of the entire western half of the empire. He met with Licinius, still Augustus in the east, at Milan in 313. Licinius agreed to recognize Constantine as senior Augustus and end any persecution of Christians. In return, Constantine agreed not to interfere with Licinius' command of the east. Maxentius, the Caesar of the east, moved to overthrow Licinius, but he was defeated and killed. Thus, of the four (or five) Augusti that ruled in 310, only Constantine and Licinius remained as co-rulers.

Christianity, now with legal status and the support of at least the western emperor, began to suffer internal problems. Various bishops of the church were split by competing views over

theological issues. In particular, a priest named Arius preached that Christ was not "of the same being" as God but rather "of a different substance," and therefore not eternal, like God. This caused a major split in the church, because other priests and bishops insisted that Christ was eternal and of the same substance as God. This was a central issue to both sides, and the debate raged fiercely across the empire, especially in the eastern part.

Licinius lost his patience with the Christians, whom he had never really liked. He saw their fighting as a long-term danger to the empire and renewed his persecution of Christians in 320.

The Fall of Licinius

If Constantine already had in mind to eventually defeat Licinius and rule the empire alone, the renewed persecution of Christians provided him with a reason to do battle. But an even more pressing reason appeared: an invasion of the Goths in Moesia and Thrace. To get his armies to the frontier, Constantine had to cross part of Licinius' territory, which made Licinius very angry.

In 324, Constantine defeated Licinius at the **Battle of Chrysopolis**. Licinius was exiled. Six months later, Constanine had him executed for treason.

The Council of Nicaea

The squabbles between Christians continued to be a problem for Constantine, who wanted his empire united under one emperor and one religion. In 325, he called a meeting of about 300 bishops at Nicaea, which we call **The Council of Nicaea**. He did not particularly care which doctrine prevailed – that of Arius or that of Arius' opponents – but he wanted the church united. The Council of Nicaea declared Arius a heretic and wrote a statement of faith (the Nicene Creed) that confirmed the view that God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit were "of one being," a doctrine that is now called "the Trinity." Arius' books were burned.[11]

Other Reforms of Constantine

Constantine reformed the military, eliminating the Praetorian Guard and replacing them with his own personal bodyguard, mostly men of German origin. He reorganized the high command of the army by creating two supreme commanders, one for the infantry (*magister peditum*) and one for the cavalry (*magister equitum*).

He increased the size of the imperial court, surrounding himself with various personal attendants, secretaries, and other officials. At this point, nearly all power had been drained from the Senate, which now functioned only as the city council of Rome.

[11] St. Nicholas of Myra (the namesake of Santa Claus) got so angry during the Council of Nicaea that he punched Arius in the face. Nicholas was jailed for attacking another priest, but later released.

He rebuilt he Greek city of Byzantium, which stood in Asia Minor near the Black Sea, where Europe and Asia meet. This city he renamed **Constantinople** (modern Istanbul, Turkey), and he moved the capital of the empire from Rome to his new city.

The Death of Constantine

In 337, as Constantine prepared to lead an army against Persia, he became ill. He sent for a bishop, Eusebius of Nicomedia, who baptized him. (It was not uncommon at this time for people to delay baptism until the end of life, hoping to die in a sinless state.) Constantine died the next day.

XXIX. The Fall of the Western Empire

After the death of Constantine, civil war erupted between his three sons, his two half-brothers, and a few other members of his family. In the next 140 years, Rome would experience increased turmoil and gradual decline, ending in the fall of the western empire in 476. As with the crisis of the third century, we will not cover all of the emperors between Constantine and Romulus Augustulus, the last western emperor.

Julian the Apostate and Paganism

Julian, who became emperor in 360, had been raised as a Christian. However, he became interested in the literature of ancient Greece, and found their philosophy preferable to that of the Christians – especially as it had been a Christian emperor, Constantius II, who had murdered much of his family and sent him into exile as a child. As emperor, Julian proclaimed religious toleration for all and repealed the laws that prohibited pagan worship. (Paganism in this context refers to the worship of multiple gods in the classic Greek and Roman tradition.) He is thus known as **Julian the Apostate**, "apostate" meaning "someone who had abandoned a religious belief."

Julian died in a war against Persia in 363. His reign represents the last strong stance for paganism in the empire.

Theodosius the Great

Theodosius became emperor in 379, as a co-ruler with Gratian. He dealt with an invasion of the Visigoths (a part of the tribe of Goths) by allowing them to settle within the empire as a client kingdom, provided that the Visigoths would supply troops for Rome. After Gratian's death, Theodosius was co-emperor with Valentinian II. Valentinian was murdered in 392, at which point Theodosius became the sole emperor of Rome. His death in 395 marked the last time the empire was united under one emperor. From this point on, the empire was divided into east and west permanently.

Barbarian Invasions

Many foreign tribes began to invade Roman territory. The Visigoths, under their leader **Alaric**, besieged Rome in 410 and eventually had to be bribed into leaving, a stunning event that reminded Romans of Brennus' sack of Rome in 390 BC (see. p. 23). German and Gallic tribes such as the Vandals, Alans, and Suevi invaded Roman Gaul, and the Vandals even invaded Roman Africa. These were followed by even more invasions: Burgundians, Franks, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and the Mongolian Huns all at some time invaded Roman territory.

Romulus Augustulus

The last western Roman emperor was ironically named after Rome's first king and Rome's first emperor. He became emperor in 476, the same year in which the Germans, led by **Odoacer** (or

Odovacer) killed his father and sent him into exile. Odoacer became the first so-called "King of Italy," and his reign marks the end of the western Roman empire.

Why Rome Fell

The question of why such a great empire eventually failed has been debated by scholars for centuries. Politicians and political writers often reference the fall of Rome when they believe the ideals of a nation (or the politicians own version of those ideals) have been violated, predicting that if the nation does not change, it will suffer the same fate as Rome.

In America particularly, any changes in what is considered "moral" can cause people to start comparing America to Rome. The idea that immorality caused the fall of Rome is based largely on the picture painted of the Roman emperors in fiction and movies. Of course, Romans (and other ancient people) engaged in many things we might consider "immoral." The Romans might have some criticism of the way we live our lives, too. But to say that immorality caused the fall of Rome is quite a stretch, since Rome was never more like the US in terms of religion than it was in its last days.

Certainly the massive territory Rome had to defend is a contributing factor. As we have seen, they had difficulty recruiting enough soldiers and maintaining the defenses. Toward the end, inept emperors started to outnumber capable ones. But the roots of the eventual Dominate, the monarchy that allowed such terrible emperors to come to power, were firmly planted by Sulla, Marius, Caesar, Pompey, Octavian, and Antonius in the first century BC. The economic decline that came with such awful rulers was a major factor, as well. And, of course, there are the "barbarians" – those numerous tribes waiting on the borders of the empire, seeing the riches and power of Rome and wanting those for themselves.

The truth is that there is no simple way to answer that question. If you want to answer that question, you must study it for yourself and make up your own mind.

In a certain sense, though, Rome never fell. The city still stands today, a mix of the modern and the ancient, a thriving metropolis at the heart of Italy. Their language lives on in Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, and Romanian – and in the vocabulary of English. Their literature is read around the world, and the myths they shared with the Greeks have become the themes for every form of entertainment and art, from Shakespeare's plays to modern American movies. Their system of laws became the foundation for modern legal scholarship, and their ideas about government (at least during the Republic) were expanded on by philosophers, kings, and rebels like those that fought for American independence.

For all of these reasons and more, Rome is nicknamed "the Eternal City." And in many ways, it is.

Appendix A: List of Roman Emperors

31 BC – 476 AD

Augustus	31 BC - 14
Tiberius	14–37
Caligula	37–41
Claudius	41–54
Nero	54–68
Galba	68–69
Otho	69
Vitellius	69
Vespasian	69–79
Titus	79–81
Domitian	81–96
Nerva	96–98
Trajan	98–117
Hadrian	117–138
Antoninus Pius	138–161
Marcus Aurelius	161–180
Lucius Verus	161–169
Commodus	177–192
Pertinax	193
Didius Julianus	193
Septimius Severus	193–211
Caracalla	211–217
Geta	211–212
Macrinus	217–218
Elagabalus	218–222
Severus Alexander	222–235
Maximinus	235–238
Gordian I	238
Gordian II	238
Pupienus	238
Balbinus	238
Gordian III	238–244
Philip	244–249
Decius	249–251
Trebonius	251–253
Aemilianus	253
Valerianus	253–260
Gallienus	253–268
Claudius Gothicus	268–270
Aurelian	270–275

Tacitus	275–276
Florianus	276
Probus	276–282
Carus	282–283
Numerianus	283–284
Carinus	283–285
Diocletian	284–305
Maximian	west, 286–305
Constantius Cholrus	west, 292–306
Galerius	east, 293–311
Licinius	east, 311–323
Constantine I	306-337
Constantine II	337–340
Constantius II	337–361
Constans I	337–350
Gallus Caesar	351–354
Julian	361–363
Jovian	363–364
Valentinian I	west, 364–375
Valens	east, 364–378
Gratian	west, 367–383
Valentinian II	375–392
Theodosius I	379–395
Arcadius	east, 383–402
Magnus Maximus	west, 383–388
Honorius	west, 393–423
Theodosius II	east, 408–450
Constantius III	west, 421
Valentinian III	west, 425–455
Marcian	east, 450–457
Petronius Maximus	west, 455
Avitus	west, 455–456
Majorian	west, 457–461
Libius Severus	west, 461–465
Anthemius	west, 467–472
Olybrius	west, 472
Glycerius	west, 473–474
Julius Nepos	west, 474–475
Romulus Augustulus	west, 475–476

APPENDIX B: TABLE OF FIGURES

IMAGE CREDITS

[a] By Andrei nacu at English Wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia to Commons., Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3274724
[b] By Generic Mapping Tools - created by user, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=656066
[c] Map by Stolichanin - Europe_plain_rivers.png - The map is made according to:"World Atlas", part 3: Europe in Middle Ages, Larrouse, Paris, 2002, O. RenieAtlas "History of Bulgaria", Sofia, 1988, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, V. Kamburova"World Atlas", N. Ostrovski, Rome, 1992, p.55Атлас "История на средните векове", Sofia, 1982, G. Gavrilov"History in maps", Johannes Herder, Berlin, 1999, p. 20 "European Historical Globus", R. Rusev, 2006, p.117, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37384682
[d] Image by Benutzer:Wolpertinger on WP de - Own book scan from Emmanuel Müller-Baden (dir.), Bibliothek des allgemeinen und praktischen Wissens, I, Deutsches Verlaghaus Bong & Co, Berlin-Leipzig-Wien-Stuttgart, 1904. Image copied from de:Bild:Kapitolinische-woelfin 1b-640x480.jpg, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=190611
[e] Image by Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. http://www.cngcoins.com, CC BY-SA 2.5, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19729458
[f] Image by Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. http://www.cngcoins.com, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29050354
[g] taken from http://klio.uoregon.edu/maps/kelly/EmpireMap2.jpg, although no claim is made as to authorship
[h] By Renata3 - Self-made using Inkscape. Based on a map by Orangeowl from German Wikipedia (File:Die sieben Hügel Roms de.png)., GFDL, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3909635
[i] Public domain image
[j] By F l a n k e r - Own work, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3198631
[k] By Javierfv1212 - Own work (Original caption: “I created this work entirely by myself. Src: Historical Atlas of Ancient Rome, Nick Constable & Penguin Atlas of Ancient Rome.”), Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17018104
[l] By Maclemo - File:39 Cincinnatus.JPG (cropped), CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28821498
[m] Adapted from https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=666267, CC BY-SA 3.0
[n] By Jon Platek, Besvo - This file was derived from: First Punic War 264 BC.png, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50308986
[o] CC BY-SA 2.5, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1683017
[p] CC BY-SA 1.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=724112
[q] By Rome_carthage_218.jpg: William Robert Shepherd derivative work: Grandiose - This file was derived from Rome carthage 218.jpg:, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19256993
[r] Adapted from images by The Department of History, United States Military Academy - http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlases/map%20home.htm, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=34909385
[s] Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1810083
[t] Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1669127
[u] By Asdadsads - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=42133273
[v] By José Luiz Bernardes Ribeiro /, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=53959809
[w] By Gautier Poupeau from Paris, France - César, CC BY 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=35036729
[x] By The Department of History, United States Military Academy - http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlases/map%20home.htm, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=621367

[y] By M_Antonius.jpg: Amadscientist derivative work: DanieleDF1995 (talk) - M_Antonius.jpg, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9999226
[z] By Till Niermann - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=388210
[aa] By Marco Verch - Pantheon in Rom, CC BY 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=38590875
[bb] By Cristiano64 - Lavoro proprio, self-made, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2452303 (key translated from Italian)
[cc] By cgb - http://www.cgb.fr/tibere-aureus,v34_0421,a.html, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=30630108
[dd] By Louis le Grand - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2484300
[ee] By Marie-Lan Nguyen (2011), CC BY 2.5, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=23198004
[ff] By cjh1452000 - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6983878
[gg] By Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. http://www.cngcoins.com, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2264120
[hh] By Jerzy Strzelecki - Own work, Jerzy Strzelecki; adjusted from original, see below by User:Amandajm., CC BY 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3233581
[ii] By Rabax63 (Diskussion) - Own work (Original text: Eigene Aufnahme), CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31309658
[jj] By Unknown - Photo by Szilas in the Museo Ostiense, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=36807721
[kk] By Marie-Lan Nguyen - Own work, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=46565672
[ll] By Zanner - Own work, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3232821
[mm] By Adrian Pingstone (Arpingstone) - Own work, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2323492
[nn] By Unknown - antmoose (4 June 2005) at http://flickr.com/photos/antmoose/17433741/, CC BY 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=390233
[oo] By G.dallorto - Own work, Attribution, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1336844
[pp] By Coppermine Photo Gallery - Coppermine Photo Gallery, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4574473
[qq] By I, Jean-Christophe BENOIST, CC BY 2.5, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2535488
[rr] By Dylan Lake - Vectorisation of Simple Labarum.gif, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2206268