

When the envoys approached Antiochus, the king stretched out his hand and greeted them; Popilius did not shake his hand and said nothing, only handing him the Senate's orders to leave Egypt alone. Antiochus read the decree and replied that he needed time to consult with his friends; at that point Popilius took his staff, drew a circle in the ground around the king, and said, "Before you leave this circle, give me an answer to take back to the Senate." Antiochus hesitated, shocked by Popilius' rudeness and directness. He then replied he would do what the Senate had decreed. Then Popilius stretched out his hand in friendship and treated the king like a friend (Livy XXXV.12.5).

OTHER WARS

All the time that Rome was fighting those wars against Philip and Perseus, Antiochus, and the Galatians, it was also fighting in Spain. Spain was by no means a unified country: Numerous tribes existed in the mountains, each ruled by its own chieftain. Rome fought constantly in Spain during the second century B.C., until its victory over Numantia in 133 (under the leadership of Scipio Aemilianus) ended Spain's organized opposition. Even after this victory the Romans still waged almost continuous warfare in Spain, for after a period of peace one tribe would revolt, followed by others; the reason for the revolts was frequently the Romans' unfair rule and taxation. It was in Spain in 62 B.C. that Julius Caesar himself first learned the art of military leadership, one hundred fifty years after Rome first brought its arms against the Spanish.

After gaining the provinces of Africa, Spain, and Greece by bitter fighting and bloodshed, the Romans were given Asia Minor, for in 133 B.C. Attalus III of Pergamum died without an heir. He bequeathed his kingdom instead to the Roman people, who declared it the Roman province Asia.

IMPERIUM ROMANUM

How did Rome manage its farflung territories? After all, the Romans did not have a full-time, professional government filled

with paper-pushing bureaucrats, armed with various stamps and forms to be filled out in triplicate—a civil service, in other words. Lacking a civil service, the Romans had neither the desire nor the manpower to extend the range of their government and their responsibilities. They avoided the extension of their government as long as possible.

Instead, the Romans allowed many allies simply to rule themselves. Being legally outside the system of provinces, three privileged types of allies enjoyed great freedom and autonomy as a reward for their faithful service to Rome. One type was what we call client kings and the Romans simply called friends (*amici*) of the Roman people. These were kings of territories that the Romans had not conquered, did not want to conquer, or had no reason to conquer; the Romans left these kings alone because the kings cooperated with them, maintained good relations with them, and helped Rome in its time of need. Similarly, Rome provided aid to the client kings when necessary, for "manus lavat manum" (one hand washes the other). These client kings paid no taxes to Rome, kept their own laws, and were not under the power of any Roman magistrates. Still, despite the appearance of equality in the relationship, the wise client kings recognized their lower status and adapted themselves to it. One client king, Prusias of Bithynia, wore a freedman's cap (the cap that freed slaves wore after being manumitted) when he addressed the Senate, just to show that he knew who was boss.

Other free allies were *civitates foederatae*, or "states allied by treaty." They too were technically outside the provincial system, for they paid no taxes to Rome and were independent of Roman magistrates. They had full judicial powers over their own citizens and perhaps over Roman citizens in their territory. They had to provide military assistance to Rome when it was requested, and they could ask the Romans for help when needed. They did not have to quarter Roman troops. Similar to *civitates foederatae* were *civitates sine foedere liberae*, "free states without a treaty," which enjoyed all the same privileges as those bound by a treaty with the exception of security: The free states without a treaty were granted their free status by a decree of the Senate, which (unlike a treaty) could be revoked at any time, for any reason.

The last class is what people usually think of when they think of a Roman province: Called *stipendiarii* (payers of a stipend) by the Romans, these peoples were ruled by a Roman governor stationed in their territory, who had the support of a force of Roman soldiers. They paid taxes or a stipend to Rome.

When the Romans decided to annex a territory as a province, the conquering general or a consul, in conjunction with a commission of ten, would write the *lex provinciae*, "the law of the province." This functioned as a charter of sorts, determining the level of taxation, boundaries, and laws, and served as a constitution. Then the Romans would install a governor. Since the governor would be in charge of a force of Roman and Italian soldiers (its size depending upon how peaceful the province was), he would have praetorian or consular status; therefore he was called a *proconsul* or *propraetor*, meaning that he was sent out with the authority of a consul or praetor. Eventually it became customary that one would go to a province as a governor the year after serving as a consul or praetor in Rome. The governor would have his staff, usually a group of his friends, and a quaestor to help him in his work. The governor would then manage the affairs of the province in accordance with the *lex provinciae*, edicts of the previous governors of the province, instructions from the Senate, and the custom not only of Roman government but also of the community. The Romans generally tried to work within the social framework that existed in the province before they took over.

The trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the province of Judaea (annexed in 59 B.C.) gives a good example of the Romans' attitude toward preexisting institutions. Jesus was put on trial by the Sanhedrin, the council of Jewish priests, for breaking Jewish law; he broke no Roman law, but had committed blasphemy against the Jewish religion. Pontius Pilate, the Roman magistrate overseeing the trial, "washed his hands" of the matter and allowed Jesus to be condemned by the Jewish court. The Romans tried to interfere in such matters as little as possible, both out of respect for other peoples, their institutions, and their religions, and also out of a sense of realism, knowing it would be futile and disruptive to try to force Roman ways on others. One exception to this was the case of the Druid religion in Gaul, which the Romans

sought to eradicate, since it used human sacrifice and symbolized Gallic resistance to Rome;

The governor had a great deal of power over his subjects, and his exercise of it was not closely scrutinized by the Roman Senate. If the governor was corrupt and evil, those in his province were in for a rough year, the usual term for a governor, though longer terms were not uncommon. The sad truth is that there were many such corrupt governors, who simply stole all that they could, making themselves filthy rich off the helpless provincials. The local people could not fight the governor, for he had an army and the backing of Rome, and they had no legal recourse except in far-off Rome, where the welfare of the provincial peoples was not high on the list of priorities. Their only recourse was to complain to the corrupt governor's political enemies in Rome, who might charge him with extortion in a special court set up for judging cases of extortion in the provinces (called a *quaestio de repetundis*, "court for recovering monies"). But the corrupt governor would be tried in Rome by men like himself: governors who had already enriched themselves at the expense of the provincials, or those who looked forward to enriching themselves while governor someday, or those who were susceptible to bribes. For example, the Roman writer Cicero tells how the corrupt governor Verres had earmarked the proceeds of his first year as governor for his estate, the second year's proceeds for his legal team, and the third year's proceeds for bribing the judges (*In Verrem* I.40). If convicted (and some were), the corrupt governor simply went into exile or paid restitution. Despite the appearance of a totally corrupt system, there were good, honest and fair governors; the bad ones (like Verres, convicted of extortion in Sicily) were more sensational, while nothing was written about the good ones.

The provincial peoples who paid taxes paid them either as a war indemnity, or as upkeep of the Roman army which guarded their borders, or as a percentage of the year's produce. The system that the Romans devised for collecting taxes in Sicily and Asia Minor was horrible. Since Rome lacked a civil service to perform official functions, such as collecting taxes, the censors would sell the right to collect the taxes to the *publicani*, or "publicans," middle-class businessmen (hated in the New Testament), who would pay the

taxes on the spot and then troop off to Asia Minor and Sicily to collect what they had paid, plus a profit. When the provincials could not pay their taxes, the *publicani* were happy to lend them the money—with a healthy interest charge, of course. The provincials were more likely than not to have no protection against the *publicani* from the governor, for the *publicani* whose rapacity was held in check by the governor would get their revenge on him in a Roman court when he returned from his province. Such was the fate of P. Rutilius Rufus, who was convicted for extortion, even though he had actually protected the provincials. This terrible system of collecting taxes in Asia was created in 133 B.C. and largely abolished almost a century later by Julius Caesar; Augustus created a new system that was fair to the provincials.

THE THREAT TO THE OLD WAYS

In the space of approximately 130 years Rome went from a position of leadership only in Italy to that of world power with dominion over many lands bordering on the Mediterranean. The Romans attributed their success to their adherence to *mos maiorum*, “the custom of our ancestors” or “the way our ancestors did things”—in short, the old ways. The Roman poet Ennius (239–169 B.C.) wrote, “*Moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque*” (the Roman state remains strong because of its men and its ancient customs). Some of the chief customs and virtues that had made Rome great and powerful were *virtus* (courage), *pietas* (dutifulness to gods, community, and family), *gravitas* (seriousness), *constantia* (perseverance), *continentia* (self-control), and *pudicitia* (sense of shame, mostly for women).

The new and changing conditions of Roman life put great stress on the Romans’ adherence to *mos maiorum*; in the view of many ancient historians this time period, the second century B.C., marked the beginning of the decline of Rome’s morality, which resulted in the fall of the republic. The ancient historian Sallust (86–35 B.C.) wrote,

But once the republic had become great because of work and fair dealing, great kings were conquered in war, wild nations and vast populations

were subjugated by force, and Carthage, the threat to the Roman power, was destroyed to its very foundations; all seas and lands lay open, but Fortune grew angry and began to throw things into confusion. Those who had easily suffered labors, dangers, and matters of great stress and uncertainty, were hamstrung by peace and quiet and wealth, things usually hoped for. Therefore, for the first time in Rome there grew the longing for money and then power; from this developed all the troubles. For greed perverted trustworthiness, propriety, and other honorable ways, and instead taught arrogance, cruelty, neglect of the gods, and the habit of considering all things for sale. Ambition compelled many men to lie, and to have one thing secret in their hearts, while saying something different, to judge friendships and hatreds not according to the facts but according to expediency, and to put forth a good appearance more than a good character. (Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae* X)

Allowing for some exaggeration on the part of historians such as Sallust, we can safely say that prodigious amounts of money from loot, tributes and taxes from the provinces, proceeds from the sale of slaves captured in war, and bribery flowed into Roman hands; some Romans, who by now had seen in Syracuse and Asia the amenities and luxuries that money could buy, used their newfound wealth with abandon. The censors enacted legislation to curb the love of wealth and luxury, but to no avail. Cato remarked that people in his day were spending on a jar of pickled fish what they once paid for a pair of oxen (the reason was not inflation, but simple extravagance). The cook, says another ancient historian, at one time the least valuable of the domestic slaves, now became the most highly prized.

The number of slaves in Rome and Italy also increased dramatically. Rome captured approximately seventy-five thousand slaves during the First Punic War and approximately two hundred fifty thousand more from 200 to 150 B.C. (Scullard, *History of the Roman World*, p. 358). As a point of comparison, the census of 164 B.C. counted 337,452 adult male citizens in Rome. The slaves now were Spaniards, Greeks, Gauls, and Asiatics, whose foreign ways inevitably threatened traditional Roman ways. They also posed an internal threat to the security of Rome and the Italian countryside, for runaway slaves resorted to crime, simply to live. The avail-

ability of slaves also decreased employment for freemen and citizens alike. The slaves from Greece and Greek Asia Minor were frequently better educated than their Roman masters, and thus became the tutors and teachers of their masters' children; this meant that the children were less likely to receive an education in the traditional Roman virtues from their mother and father.

Another area to suffer was religion. In one famous incident in 186 B.C., a Bacchic cult was discovered in Rome, with Roman citizens as inductees. We do not know exactly what happened in the Bacchic get-togethers, but it was sufficiently shocking for the consuls to convene an emergency meeting of the Senate to discuss what should be done. Seven thousand people in Rome are said to have been involved in the Bacchic cult; many of them were executed and some detained. Nonetheless, foreign religions continued to enter Rome. Astrologers also began appearing in Rome. In 139 the consuls expelled the astrologers from the city, but they returned; later, although they were periodically deported, they always returned.

"GRAECIA CAPTA FERUM VICTOREM CEPIT"

This time period also saw the beginnings of Latin literature. While conquering the Greeks of mainland Greece and Sicily, the Romans also encountered the glories of Greek civilization. They were rightly overawed by the immense literary and artistic achievements of the Greeks; this occasioned the famous statement of the Roman poet Horace, "Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit" (Greece, although captured, took its wild conqueror captive). The Romans were not slow to learn from the Greeks and to adapt Greek ways to fit their needs.

The first Roman poet of record is Livius Andronicus (mid-third century B.C.), a Greek slave from Tarentum, who translated the *Odyssey* into Latin in a rough poetic meter called the Saturnian, and adapted the content to Roman ways. His *Odyssia* became a textbook for Roman schoolboys. Other epic poets followed; one was Ennius, who first used the Greek poetic meter called the dactylic hexameter for Latin verse. Ennius' most famous poem (fragments of which survive) was the *Annales*, a history of Rome

in verse. Soon followed, among others, Plautus (254–?184 B.C.), who wrote comedies (another Greek genre) for the stage; he took as his models the writers of Attic New Comedy, and an ancient critic said that if the Muses spoke Latin, they would speak Plautine Latin. Twenty of his plays survive. Plautus' younger contemporary was Terence (195–?159), who had come to Rome as a slave from Africa; Terence may have been the first known black writer, as he is described as having a dark complexion (*fuscus* is the Latin adjective, which in other contexts is used to describe a crow, the wings of night, or the cloak of sleep). Six of his plays survive; Julius Caesar, himself famous for his simple and elegant writing style, praised the purity of Terence's Latin. Terence's plays were more genteel and Greek in manners than those of Plautus, which were rougher and more boisterous, and therefore more popular with the Roman spectators. Rome also had composers of tragedy (another Greek genre); the most famous were Naevius, Pacuvius, and Accius. Only fragments of their works survive. Scipio Aemilianus and his friend Laelius may have formed a group with other intellectuals interested in Greek literature and thought, and they may have become the patrons of poets. Modern scholars call the group the Scipionic Circle and believe that Polybius and Terence, among others, may have been associated with it.

The Romans also started writing history during this time; while they had always recorded the year's events on linen sheets stored in the *aerarium*, now they began to write history as a literary genre, again following a Greek model. The first Roman historian, Q. Fabius Pictor (fl. 225), actually wrote in Greek, supposedly to justify Roman policy to the Greek world. During this time period a purely Roman type of literature arose, called satire. Satire fit Rome perfectly, for in it the poet could poke fun at faults and vices and thereby spur people to moral improvement. The first Roman satirist we know of is Lucilius (d. 102/1).

The Romans were not yet writing philosophy, but they were reading it, for the Romans by this time were receiving a Greek education in philosophy, logic, and rhetoric. The Roman mind was not much given to the kind of abstract thought that forms a large part of philosophy. The philosophy the Romans liked most was Stoicism, which emphasized values and a strong sense of duty to

community, family, and gods. Romans tended to be suspicious of other schools of philosophy. For example, Epicureanism, which advocated that one withdraw from society to lead the quiet, stress-free life of contemplation, conflicted with a Roman's love of Rome and pursuit of glory. But it was a Roman poet, Lucretius (94–55 B.C.) who wrote the longest surviving document on Epicureanism, a poem entitled *De rerum natura* (On the Nature of Things). The Greek philosophy called Cynicism, which held that governments and norms were evil, was simply incomprehensible to Romans.

Perhaps the Roman fear and distrust of philosophers can best be seen in the case of the second-century philosopher Carneades. In 155 B.C. he made a series of speeches in Rome, and all the Roman young men in attendance were deeply impressed by them. To the traditional Roman ways of thinking, however, Carneades must have embodied all that was evil about Greek philosophy: On one day Carneades spoke on behalf of an issue, and on the next day, to show his dexterity, he spoke against the very same issue, with equal effect. To traditional Romans this was undoubtedly very dangerous cleverness, allowing one to "make the worse cause appear the better"—which could only lead to agnosticism or atheism, dishonesty, and moral confusion.

CATO VS. SCIPIO

The social turmoil of the times can be summed up in the dispute between M. Porcius Cato and Scipio Africanus. Cato (234–149 B.C.) was born of peasant background in Tusculum, a city long allied to Rome that had been the first Latin city granted Roman citizenship. Despite his lack of training in rhetoric, Cato was very gifted at public speaking, and represented in court whoever needed his services (he did this for free, since Roman advocates were prohibited by law from receiving pay for legal services). He was also a formidable soldier, seeing his first action in 217. He later fought at Metaurus and served as consul in 195, governor in Spain in 194 (where he won many battles and later celebrated a triumph), and censor in 184.

Early on Cato dedicated himself to a life of simplicity and self-discipline. He worked among his slaves in the fields, ate the same

bread and drank the same wine, and lived in a simple cottage. He wore simple clothes; once he was bequeathed an embroidered Babylonian robe, but immediately sold it. When governor in Sardinia, he did not milk his expense account (which was paid for by the provincial peoples) for all that he could, but imposed an unheard-of economy on his staff. When his army won loot from the enemy, Cato says he never took any of it for himself, but let his soldiers have it all. A good summary of his way of thinking is this: The Romans had won their territory by means of virtue and self-restraint, not self-indulgence and vice, which tended to destroy empires. Which path should one then take?

Cato worried, seeing the Romans being swept up in wealth, luxury, and the rush of all things Greek. It all threatened *mos maiorum* and the moral simplicity of earlier times. So while other Romans employed Greek slaves to tutor their children and sent their young men to learn Greek rhetoric and philosophy, Cato himself undertook the education of his son, teaching him to read and to understand Roman law, to throw the javelin, to fight in armor, to ride a horse, box, and swim. Seeing a lack of good literature in Latin that dealt with Roman topics, Cato wrote his *Origines* (Beginnings), a history of Rome, including its various myths and legends.

When Cato was a candidate for the censorship in 184, most of the nobles were frightened and vehemently opposed his candidature. He promised them that he would be a harsh doctor to their sickness of vice and luxury. Not only did they see the austerity and asceticism of his personal life; they also remembered that as consul in 195 he had spoken against the repeal of the Lex Oppia, which forbade women to own more than a half-ounce of gold, to wear multicolored dresses, and to ride in two-horse carriages (the law had been passed during the war with Hannibal). What would he do as censor?

The Roman populace, with the exception of the corrupt nobles, gladly elected Cato, thinking that they needed a harsh physician. Once elected censor, he put heavy taxes on luxury items, expelled Lucius Scipio (brother of Africanus) from the knights, and expelled another man for embracing his wife during the day in the presence of their daughter. He also concerned himself with Rome's

infrastructure, by reconstructing sewers, destroying the pipes that some had illegally connected to the aqueducts to bring water into their houses, tearing down houses that had been built illegally on public land, and raising the rent on public land. Consequently he became very unpopular with some Romans, but others erected a statue of him in the Temple of Salus, for he had tried to restore Rome's health.

Unlike Cato, Scipio Africanus was fond of Greek culture and ways. In 204 B.C., while he was in Sicily preparing for the invasion of Africa (see chapter 14), he was under attack by his political enemies in the Senate. Cato had been Scipio's quaestor, and he reported to the Senate that Scipio was wasting money on theater amusements for his men and on athletic contests. We also hear that "the general's style of living was not only not characteristically Roman, it was not even real army. He would hold his parades in the exercise area, wearing a Greek cloak and Greek slippers, and he spent his time and energy on books and Greek wrestling. His whole staff also just as indolently and lazily was enjoying the pleasantries of Syracuse, having totally forgotten about Carthage and Hannibal. He had let the whole army be corrupted by all that indulgence" (Livy XXIX.19.11).

Scipio was exonerated of charges of wasting money, being extravagant, and sacrificing Rome's better interests to secure the safety of his son (whom Antiochus had captured and returned without ransom). However, in disgust at Rome's treatment of him, he retired in self-imposed exile to his estate in Liternum, ordering in his will that his body not be buried in ungrateful Rome. His brother Lucius fared worse: He refused even to give an account of the finances of the campaign against Antiochus and thus fell under suspicion of receiving bribes; for this he was expelled from the knights.

Yet despite his victory over the Scipios, Cato lost the war against Hellenism. The next two centuries saw a Golden Age of Latin literature, which became an amalgam of Greek, Roman, and Italian elements. This Greco-Roman literature shaped the intellectual development of western Europe.

CHAPTER 16

The Gracchi

The Beginning of the End of the *Res Publica*

The period of the brothers Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, who held tribunates in 133 and 123–122 B.C. respectively, inaugurates a century of incessant civil strife in Rome, with occasional outbursts of civil war. The struggle culminates in the civil wars of 49–31 B.C. and in the final destruction of the republican form of government. A century after the Gracchi, Rome was governed by the principate, a type of monarchy, created by Octavian (Augustus).

Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus came from a plebeian family that was well known and respected; their father had twice been a consul and once a censor, and their mother Cornelia, who personally supervised the education of her sons, was a daughter of Scipio Africanus. Tiberius, the elder of the two brothers, had a past that he and his family could be proud of. As a very young man, he had been honored with an augurship. Accompanying P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus (adopted son of Scipio Africanus) to Carthage in 149 B.C., Tiberius had won the *corona muralis*, a crown awarded a soldier for being the first to climb over the walls of a besieged city. When he was a quaestor in Spain, his personal influence and reputation for fair dealing had helped save the lives of twenty thousand fellow Roman soldiers trapped by enemy troops; for that he should have been awarded the *corona civica*, a crown of oak leaves awarded to a soldier for saving the life of a fellow soldier. His early accomplishments presaged an illustrious career in service to Rome. Yet Tiberius was murdered in political strife, and his body dumped into the Tiber; his name to some Romans came to symbolize attempts at tyranny frustrated by patriots.

History Terms, Paul Zoch 130-140

Roman Civil Service

Amici populorum Romanorum

Civitates Foederatae

Stipendiarii (provinces)

Corruption in the provinces

Publicani

Mos Maiorum



Effects of slavery on Roman culture and economics

Literary flourishing



Marcus Porcius Cato

Scipio Africanus

