



**“Noble” Romans, those whose ancestors had been consuls, had the right to have masks representing them carried in funeral processions. This republican noble of about 30 B.C. shows the masks of two of his ancestors.**  
Scala/Art Resource, NY

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# Chapter Four

## THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY (TO 264 B.C.) •  
THE AGE OF MEDITERRANEAN CONQUEST (264–133 B.C.) •  
THE ROMAN REVOLUTION (133–27 B.C.) • THE END OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC •  
THE FOUNDING OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The Greeks flourished in small, intensely competitive communities, but the Romans formed a huge, long-lived empire. The Greek historian Polybius, who lived many years in Rome, has left us his analysis of Rome's successful policy. Drawing on theories of Aristotle, he praised Rome for its mixed constitution. He saw the element of monarchy in the two Roman consuls. The Roman Senate represented oligarchy, or the rule of a few. And the Roman common people supplied the element of democracy. The state, he thought, so long as it was balanced on these three supports, could not fail to prosper and expand.

The history of Rome brings to the fore another of the themes that run through the Western experience: the use of warfare as a deliberately chosen instrument of policy. Sometimes Rome got its way through diplomacy, but when this failed, the military machine did not. An army is not a democracy but a body governed by a few experienced men—in fact, an oligarchy.

The Romans exploited the family as a force, a weapon, in society. Political power was based on the strength of a man's family and on the alliances he formed with other families. The state united first the Italian peninsula, then the whole Mediterranean basin. Finally, the Romans came to know a culture that they recognized as superior to their own: that of Greece. The poet Horace said that "Greece, once captured, conquered its captor," as Greek literature and art inspired those of Rome.

In the process of domination, a series of warlords became so powerful that, through their rivalry, they destroyed the republic and the political freedom that Rome had achieved. The response was the formation of an even more powerful autocracy, from which Europe was to descend: the Roman Empire.



## THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY (TO 264 B.C.)

The inhabitants of Italy greatly outnumbered those of Greece in antiquity. Unlike the Greeks, they became unified under the leadership of a single city, Rome. This movement required centuries, and during this period Rome itself was transformed from a monarchy into a republic with a solid constitution. Families were not only the binding force of the household but became the building blocks of political power. Guided by the Roman Senate, the city expanded its territory until the whole peninsula of Italy was under Roman control.

### *The Geography of Italy*

Italy is not, like Greece, divided into many small valleys or islands. The main geographic feature is the Apennine range, which runs diagonally across Italy in the north and then turns southward to bisect the peninsula. North of the Apennines, the Po River flows through a large, fertile valley that was for centuries the home of Celtic peoples known as Gauls. The hills of Italy, unlike those of Greece, are gentle enough for pasturing. The landscape is of unsurpassed beauty; some of the best Roman poetry—by Virgil, Horace, and Catullus—hymns the delights of the land and the pleasure of farming. But the geography of Italy could also be a challenge. The mountains divide the land into sections and made the task of unifying Italy a long and arduous one.

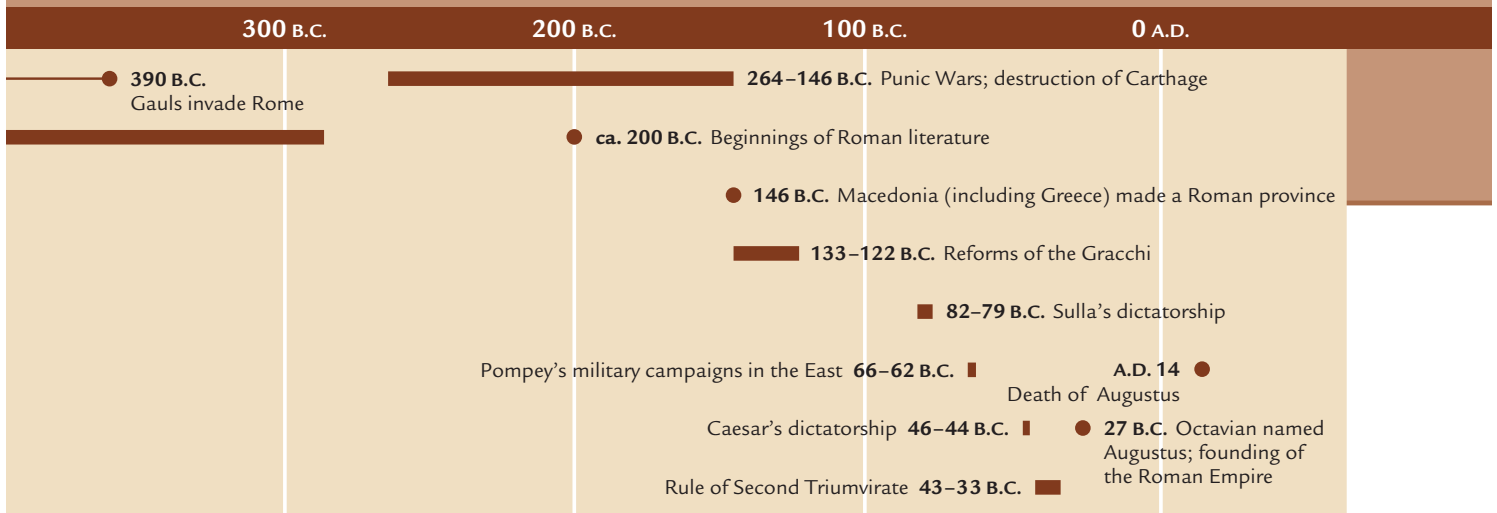
### *Early Rome*

The legends about the founding of Rome by Aeneas, a Trojan hero who reached Italy after the Trojan War, or by Romulus and Remus (two mythical sons of the war

god Mars) are myths, so we must depend on archaeology to recover early Roman history. Pottery finds suggest that the site of Rome, along the Tiber River in the plain of Latium, was inhabited as early as 1400 B.C. Ancient scholars relied on myths to date the “founding” of Rome in 753 B.C. We need not take this date seriously as the moment at which Rome came into existence, but there must have been considerable habitation in the area by that time, especially on the seven hills that surround the city. About 625 B.C. the settlers drained the marshes below the hills and built a central marketplace, the Forum. This area was to be forever the center of Roman history.

**Etruscan Origins** Besides the Romans themselves, two other peoples laid the basis for Roman history. The first were the Etruscans, who actually dominated early Rome from about 625 to 509 B.C. The name *Roma* is Etruscan, and at least some of the kings of Rome, as their names show, were Etruscans. The origin of the Etruscans themselves is obscure and has provoked a famous controversy. Some ancient sources say that they were a native European people, but the Greek historian Herodotus asserts that they arrived from Asia Minor. In any case, the Etruscans appeared in Italy soon after 800 B.C., in the region north of the Tiber River known as Etruria (their name is preserved in modern Tuscany). Their language is still mostly undeciphered even though thousands of short Etruscan inscriptions exist.

The Etruscans had a technologically advanced culture and traded with Greeks and Phoenicians; Greek vases, especially, have been found in Etruscan tombs, and Etruscan art largely imitates that of the Greeks. They also bequeathed to the Romans the technique of building temples, and they introduced the worship of a triad of gods (Juno, Minerva, Jupiter) and the custom of examining the innards of animals to foretell the future.



SARCOPHAGUS FROM A LATE-SIXTH-CENTURY ETRUSCAN TOMB

The reclining couple on the lid reflects the influence of Greek art on the style of the Etruscans.  
Alinari/Art Resource, NY

**Greek Influence** The second non-Roman people who helped shape Roman culture were the Greeks. Beginning about 750 B.C., they established some 50 poleis in southern Italy and on the island of Sicily. So numerous were the Greek cities in southern Italy that the Romans called this region *Magna Graecia* (“Great Greece”) and thus gave us the name *Greeks* for the people who have always called themselves Hellenes.<sup>1</sup>

Greek culture from these colonies influenced the Etruscans and, in turn, the Romans. For example, from the village of Cumae, the oldest Greek colony in Italy,

<sup>1</sup> The name *Graikoi* (*Graeci*, or Greeks) was sometimes used, according to Aristotle (*Meteorology* 352) and other sources, for the people generally called Hellenes. The name probably comes from one or more villages in central Greece called Graia; one such place is mentioned in Homer (*Iliad* 2.498).

the Etruscans learned the Western version of the Greek alphabet and passed it on to Rome; it became the basis for the alphabet used throughout the Western world. And virtually all Roman literature is inspired by Greek models.

### *The Early Roman Republic*

About 500 B.C. (the Romans reckoned the date as 509) Rome freed itself of its last Etruscan king and established a republic. Much of the history of the Roman Republic concerns the growth of its constitution; this was never a written document but a set of carefully observed procedures. The Roman system, like that of Sparta, had three major supports, which offset and balanced one another. First, the supreme civil and military officers were two men called **consuls**. From time to time the Romans appointed a man as **dictator**, whose authority surpassed that of the consuls, but he could not hold office longer than six months. Second, there was an advisory body of elder statesmen, the Senate. Third, there were assemblies that included all adult male citizens.

**The Consuls and the Assemblies** The consuls were elected annually by the Assembly of the Centuries (or Comitia Centuriata), which was made up of the entire army divided, in theory, into 193 groups of 100 men each (that is, “centuries”); in this assembly the wealthier citizens voted first and could determine the result if most of them voted the same way. This arrangement illustrates the hierarchical and conservative instincts of the Roman mind; so does the law providing that, in cases in which the two consuls disagreed, one could block the action of the other, and the consul advocating no action prevailed. Consuls possessed a right known as **imperium**, which gave them the power to command



The art of Etruscan tombs often showed dancing and banqueting in the afterlife. This fifth-century painting, from the Tomb of the Lionesses at Tarquinia, shows two dancers with jugs of wine. Scala/Art Resource, NY

troops and to execute any other assignments they might receive from the Senate.

There were two other assemblies, the more important being the Assembly of Tribes (*Comitia Tributa*), which was divided into thirty-five large voting blocs called tribes. Membership in a specific tribe was determined by a man's residence. This tribal assembly elected officers who did not command troops and therefore did not have imperium; and these magistrates, known as quaestors and aediles, looked after various financial matters and public works. The other assembly, actually the oldest of the three, was the Assembly of Curiae (*Comitia Curiata*), or wards of the city; this assembly met only to validate decisions taken elsewhere and gradually lost importance. In time, the Assembly of Tribes became the most active of the three assemblies and passed most of Rome's major laws.

**The Senate** The Senate, which existed in the period of the kings, was the nerve center of the whole state. It

did not, in the Republic, pass laws, but it did appoint commanders, assign funds, and generally set public policy. The letters *SPQR* (standing for "The Senate and the Roman People") were carried on the army's standards and showed the preeminent status of this body. The Roman Senate house, which still stands (rebuilt about A.D. 290) in the Forum, was thus the shrine of Roman power. The senators in the Republic (usually about 300) were men who had held elected offices, and membership was for life. Their solid conservatism acted to restrain hot-headed politicians, and more than once they provided the moral leadership that saw the state through a military crisis. Indeed, the word *patres* (fathers) was often used to refer to the Senate.

### ***The Struggle of the Orders (494–287 B.C.)***

**Patricians and Plebeians** Within the citizen body, the Romans established a distinction that had no parallel in any Greek state. The **patricians**, a small number of clans



This temple in central Rome, from the second century B.C., perhaps dedicated to Portunus, the god of harbors, is a typical Roman temple with a closed room for an image of the god. An altar stood in front. The columns are in the Greek Ionic order, and the temple has a deep basement, common in Etruscan building. Thus the temple unites the three cultures that went into the making of Rome.

Trée



Many names, written by professional painters in favor of this or that candidate in elections, have been found on the walls of Pompeii, the city buried in the eruption of A.D. 79.

Alinari/Art Resource, NY



MAP 4.1 THE CITY OF ROME IN REPUBLICAN TIMES

The original city of Rome was built along the left bank of the Tiber River, which flows down to the Adriatic Sea. There are many hills within the city, but seven of them became famous as the seven hills on which the city stood. Which are these hills? Where is the main Forum, called simply by that name?

◆ For an online version, go to [www.mhhe.com/chambers9](http://www.mhhe.com/chambers9) > chapter 4 > book maps

(about five to seven percent of the whole people), were recognized as being socially and legally superior to the vast majority, who were called **plebeians**. Ancient sources do not explain how the distinction arose; it was probably based on wealth gained from owning land and on the less easily defined criterion of social eminence.

Membership in the patrician class was based on birth (or, occasionally, adoption), and originally only patricians could belong to the Senate (the *patres*) and hold office.

The plebeians did win a number of privileges in a long process called the struggle of the orders (or classes). When the struggle ended, the plebeians could point to significant gains, but the great families were still secure in their domination. Indeed, one effect of the struggle of the orders was to make the state an even more efficient machine for conquest: The plebeians could now feel that they had a more favorable position within the system and were thus more willing to fight for their country.

**Concessions to the Plebeians** The plebeians' first victory in the struggle came in 494 B.C., when they evidently threatened to secede from the state.<sup>2</sup> They now obtained the right to elect annually two men, called **tribunes**, to represent them; the number eventually rose to ten. The powers of the tribunes reveal the Roman genius for political compromise in the interests of a united state. The patricians evidently recognized that spokesmen for the people were a necessary evil, and oaths were exchanged that made it a religious crime to violate or injure the body of a tribune. The "sacrosanctity" of the tribunes allowed them to interfere in any action, since no one could lay hands on them. Out of this protected status arose the famous veto power of the tribunes (sometimes called *intercession*); they could forbid any magistrate from acting and could even arrest consuls. Such power might have threatened to cause anarchy, but in fact, because it reassured the plebeians, it proved to be a stabilizing influence.

Other concessions to the plebeians included the publication of a code of laws, in 450 B.C., on the so-called twelve wooden tablets, and the right, in 445, to intermarry with patricians. Intermarriage created a patrician-plebeian aristocracy that replaced the original one restricted to patricians alone.

**The Licinian-Sextian Laws** The plebeians won their greatest victory in 367 B.C. Two tribunes, Licinius and Sextius, carried a bill that reserved one consulship every year to a plebeian (there were occasional exceptions, but the principle remained). Their bill also created another office—that of praetor, a kind of assistant consul who also held imperium. His main duty, probably taken away from the consuls, was to be the chief officer for cases at civil law. Eventually in the Republic eight praetors were elected every year, but there were never more than two consuls at a time.

<sup>2</sup> The sources give contradictory dates for, and accounts of, many events in Roman history down to about 280 B.C.; the order adopted here cannot always be proved right in every detail.


 CHRONOLOGY

*The Struggle of the Orders*

The main stages by which the Roman plebeians attained a measure of equality with the patricians are as follows:

- 494 B.C. First “secession” of plebeians; appointment of two tribunes (later rising to ten).
- 450 The Laws of the Twelve Tables, Rome’s first written law code, is published.
- 445 The Lex Canuleia permits marriage between patricians and plebeians.
- 367 Licinian-Sextian laws limiting amount of public land anyone could hold.
- 366 First plebeian consul.
- 287 Laws passed by plebeians are binding on the whole state; final victory of plebeians.

Therefore, as the road to the highest office narrowed, a praetor who wanted to become consul was well advised to observe the generally traditional ways of Roman politics.

The laws of Licinius and Sextius also restricted the amount of public land that any citizen could occupy (the precise acreage allowed is disputed). This measure was supposed to prevent the upper classes from occupying more than a fair share of public land for themselves; but over the years they did precisely this, and the lower orders were often denied their proper amount of farming territory.

**The End of the Struggle of the Orders** The plebeians of Rome had for a long time met in an assembly called the “council of the plebeians” (*concilium plebis*), which patricians could not attend. Resolutions formed in that assembly were called plebiscites (*plebiscita*). In 287 B.C. a law (the Lex Hortensia)<sup>3</sup> established that such decisions should be binding on the whole state. Thus the common people now had the absolute legal right to pass laws, and this assembly became the most important one of all in legislation; but in practice most proposals had the sponsorship of the Senate before they came to the assembly of the plebeians for passage. Another assembly, which all citizens could attend—patricians along with plebeians—developed out of the

*concilium plebis* and was called the Assembly of Tribes (or Comitia Tributa). But in fact patricians seldom attended this assembly because their votes would have been swamped by the far larger numbers of plebeians, and ancient authors usually ignored the distinction between these two assemblies.

The struggle of the orders was a bitter conflict, and only the need for Rome to remain united against outside enemies kept it from degenerating into civil war. It led to greater power for the plebeians; but the patrician-plebeian upper class managed to control the changes in the constitution before they could lead to actual direction of affairs by the masses. A brake against radical democracy was the fact that the assemblies could not initiate political action. They could meet only when summoned to do so by an elected officer and even then could vote only on motions placed before them.

### *Roman Society in the Republic*

**The Structure of the Roman Family** The forceful part played by the family in Roman politics was reflected in the organization of the family itself. The Romans accepted direction from the top in most areas of their society, and this kind of structure was built into the family of patricians and plebeians alike. The father of the family, the *paterfamilias*, was the absolute owner of the whole family, which included children, land, other property, animals, and slaves. So long as he lived, his sons, even if married with their own households, remained in his power. On the death of the father, each of his sons became a *paterfamilias* in his own family. Such a severe system differs from anything known in Greece but has parallels in Israelite society.

**Women in the Early Republic** The nature of the Roman state, an organization aimed at military defense and expansion, required a constant supply of soldiers. Therefore society designed a role for women that would guarantee the fulfillment of motherhood. Roman legend told that Romulus, the city’s mythical founder, led a raid against the Sabines, a neighboring tribe, in which the Romans seized thirty virtuous women to become their wives. This “rape of the Sabines,” as it became called, supposedly gave the infant city of Rome a class of strong, loyal women.

Other legends reaffirm the heroic role of women in the early Republic. For example, about 490 a Roman commander, Coriolanus, took sides with a neighboring people in attacking Rome itself. Only the pleas of his wife and his mother persuaded him to halt his troops and lead them away. The legend further says that the women asked the Senate only one reward for their service to the state, namely, to recognize Female Fortune (Fortuna Muliebris) as a goddess and dedicate a temple to her.

<sup>3</sup>All Roman laws were named for their proposers, in this case a dictator, Hortensius. Because *lex* (law) is a feminine noun in Latin, the adjective naming it must end in *-a*.



**A LATE REPUBLICAN GRAVESTONE SHOWING ONE LUCIUS VIBIUS AND HIS WIFE AND CHILD**

Roman realism is evident in the portraiture. The face of the man suggests the determined conservatism that shaped the Republican period.

Scala/Art Resource, NY



**Customs in Marriage** Despite these tributes to the virtues of Roman women in legend, the early Republic generally kept women in the position of second-class citizens. A young woman normally married at about age fifteen, as in Greece, and was transferred to her new family and lost her right to her native family's property. Her husband was sometimes considerably older and might have been married before, perhaps having lost a wife in childbirth. Wives were legally within the power of their fathers or husbands (again as in ancient Israel), and their chief virtues were considered to be silence and obedience. The sources tell stories about women legally executed by their families for adultery or other offenses.

**Women in the Later Republic** But this system could not last forever. As Rome became wealthier, the narrow framework of women's lives was loosened, and they began to own significant property. Marriage less often involved the placing of a woman under the absolute power of her husband. The reason for this change was not necessarily a wish to respect women's rights; rather, it was that wealthy families with well-off daughters did not wish to lose control over their property by transferring their wealth out of the family.

Marriages now became less stable, and we find women of prominent families, especially in Rome itself, moving in society and even from husband to husband, with a freedom impossible in Greece. In apparent alarm at the emancipation of women, Marcus Cato, a prominent conservative, spoke in favor of an existing

law that forbade women to possess jewelry and wear colored dresses; but his opposition to this luxury tells us that women were doing so in the second century B.C. Despite Cato's dislike of such women's liberation, we do not find in Rome that undercurrent of fear of the mysterious powers of women that can be seen in Greek myth and literature.

**Women and Family Politics** As in Greece, Roman women could not hold office or vote, but they greatly surpassed Greek women as influences behind the scenes. One especially eminent woman was Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio Africanus, the victorious general in the second Punic War. On the death of her husband she refused all offers of marriage, including one from a king of Egypt, and devoted herself to the education of her twelve children, among whom were the tribunes Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. She was a woman of high education who maintained a salon and whose letters were praised for their elegant style; indeed, she had a position and prominence unparalleled by that of any woman in classical Greece.

Other women in the Republic also became important as links between powerful families in marriage alliances, which were arranged by fathers, often for the political advantages they could bring with them. One notable such marriage made Julius Caesar the father-in-law of Pompey and cemented the alliance of the two men during Caesar's rise to supreme power. Julia, the daughter of the first emperor, Augustus, was also married to men favored by this emperor in order to con-

tinue his family line. The influence of women in politics continued to grow enormously during the Roman Empire, when the long periods of an emperor's reign allowed wives and mothers of rulers to learn and control the levers of power in the imperial court. Yet we must not exaggerate the degree to which Roman women were liberated. In all periods, as in Greece, sarcophagi and tomb reliefs portray men with their wives in conventional poses, and one gravestone for a woman praises her for her domestic virtues: "She was chaste, she was thrifty, she remained at home, she spun wool."

**Religion and Roman Values** Roman religion consisted largely of forms of worship that upheld Roman tradition. Within the household, the father acted as the priest and led the family in its worship of household gods—for example, Janus, the god protecting the doorway; Vesta, the spirit of the hearth; and household spirits known as Lares and Penates.

Public religion, on the other hand, was closely connected with the interest of the state. Priesthoods were mainly political offices, held only by men. Women were, however, responsible for one of the most important religious duties: It fell to six virgins to maintain the sacred fire of Vesta that guarded the hearth of the state. These Vestal Virgins were held in high honor and lived in a spacious, elegant villa in the Forum; by a remarkable exception, these women were freed of the power of their father.

Roman religion, unlike Greek, often served to maintain conservative old Roman values, such as *pietas* (proper devotion), *dignitas* (the respect that was owed to a good citizen), and *gravitas* (the wish to take things seriously). As to Roman rites, they seem to have been designed mainly to placate the gods, almost to keep them at arm's length, through sacrifices. The Romans believed that their gods would protect them if the gods were shown proper devotion, or *pietas*. The Romans also went to elaborate lengths before declaring war, seeking reasons to believe that the war was just and holy. Eventually some rites hardened into patterns whose original meaning had been forgotten; but so long as the priests did not deviate from routine, the Romans assumed that the gods were satisfied and would not frustrate their enterprises.

**Roman Mythology** Nearly all of Roman mythology was an adaptation of Greek legend, and Roman gods were often Greek deities with Roman names. The Greek father-god, Zeus, became Iuppiter, or Jupiter; his wife, Hera, became Juno; Athena became Minerva; Hermes became Mercury; and so on. Romans worshiped these gods officially in public and also in the home along with the household deities, these latter being minor gods with no connection to the Greek

pantheon. Perhaps because Greek myths often show gods behaving spitefully or immorally, the Romans also created certain uplifting ideals—such as *Virtus* (manly conduct), *Pax* (peace), *Fides* (loyalty), and *Pudor* (modesty)—and transformed them into gods.

### **Early Roman Literature**

It may seem surprising that it took the Romans centuries to develop a literature. Homeric epic is older than the Greek city-states themselves, but Rome had been independent of the Etruscans for the better part of three centuries before a significant literature emerged. Evidently the Romans needed contact with Greek civilization, which came about during the age of conquest, to stimulate their own literary efforts. After the first Punic War, one Naevius wrote an epic poem about Rome's victory (thus imitating Homer), but it has not survived.

**Comedy** The earliest preserved Latin literature is the comedies, influenced by the Greeks, of Plautus (ca. 250–ca. 184 B.C.) and Terence (ca. 190–ca. 159 B.C.). These playwrights imitated Greek New Comedy, as it is called, in which the plays were entirely fiction. The Romans did not approve of Old Comedy, such as the plays of Aristophanes, which savagely lampooned active politicians.

Plautus filled his comedies with stock situations and characters, such as mistaken identities, lecherous old men, and frustrated romances. One of his plays about mistaken identities, the *Menaechmi*, gave Shakespeare the model for his *Comedy of Errors*. Terence wrote comedy in a more refined and delicate style than Plautus. His characters are less earthy, and the humor emerges from more subtle situations or such human foibles as greed.

**Roman Historians: Polybius** Historical writing, too, began rather late in Rome, around 200 B.C., and the writings of the earliest Roman historians are all lost, surviving only through quotations in other writers. The earliest preserved historical narrative on Rome is from the Greek writer Polybius (ca. 200–ca. 118 B.C.). He was deported from Greece as a hostage to Rome in the 160s, where he met many Roman statesmen and became an expert in Roman history. He wrote a general history of the Greco-Roman world from the first Punic War down to his own times, largely to demonstrate the inevitable domination of the Mediterranean by the Romans.

Polybius believed that much of Rome's success in government was due to its well-designed constitution—a commendable mixed form of state that would long maintain Rome's power. He traveled widely and insisted on the need to visit sites in order to grasp the

importance of geography to history. His work is analytic and methodical and attempts to revive the high standards of historical writing that Herodotus and Thucydides had established. He is both the most important historian of the Hellenistic Age and the most reliable guide to earlier Roman history.

### **Early Expansion of Rome**

**Rome's First Conquests** While the Romans were developing their form of government, they were also expanding their holdings on the Italian peninsula. Sometimes they could use peaceful diplomacy, for example, by making a treaty with neighboring peoples in the plain of Latium. More often they turned to outright military conquest in wars that were clearly long and strenuous. They gained one important victory over the last remaining Etruscan stronghold, the town of Veii, just across the Tiber River, which they took and destroyed in 396 B.C.

**The Invasion by the Gauls** The period of conquest was not uniformly successful and in fact included one major disaster. In 390 B.C. a marauding tribe of Gauls left their stronghold in the Po valley and captured the city of Rome. The event led to an action that Roman tradition remembered as a heroic deed performed by wealthy Roman women. Rome negotiated a ransom with the Gauls to secure their withdrawal, but only a contribution from women brought the funds up to the full amount demanded. The state honored the women by proclaiming that laudatory orations could be spoken at their funerals. Rome then renewed its policy of expansion, showing the resilience that made it, in the words of the historian Edward Gibbon, "sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war."<sup>4</sup> By the 290s Rome dominated the Italian peninsula as far south as the Greek city-states of Magna Graecia.

**The Roman Army** No small element in Rome's military victories was the new formation of its army. The Greek phalanx gave way to the system of maniples, or groups of either 60 or 120 men, each commanded by a centurion (roughly a lieutenant in a modern army). The advantage of this system was that the army had both power and versatility, because the maniples could maneuver independently and could hold together even if the main unit, the **legion** (6,000 men), lost its formation. About 100 B.C. the maniple was replaced by the cohort (*cohors*), usually a group of 600, but this change was not one of principle, and the cohorts maintained the flexibility of the maniples.

**Pyrrhus Invades Italy** In the 280s some of the Greek cities of southern Italy, threatened by the growing imperialism of Rome, enlisted Pyrrhus, the king of Epirus (near modern Albania), to save their independence with a campaign against Rome. He brought a large force that included 20 war elephants, a weapon that the Romans had never before confronted. Pyrrhus fought two successful battles in 280 B.C., but at a heavy cost in casualties to his own men (hence the phrase "a Pyrrhic victory"). The Romans again rebounded from defeat, and Pyrrhus abandoned his allies in 275 B.C., leaving the Romans free to pursue their conquests. By 265 B.C. Rome controlled the entire Italian peninsula but had not yet mastered the Po valley.

**The Roman Federation** Rome showed great administrative skill in organizing the conquered communities by establishing different degrees of privilege and responsibility among them. Residents of a few favored communities received the most highly prized status, full Roman citizenship. This status meant that they were on the same legal footing as the Romans; they had the protection of Roman law, they could make legal wills to pass on their property, and they could even hold office in Rome. Members of some other communities became citizens who could not vote but had the right of intermarriage with Romans. At a lower level of privilege were the allied states (*socii*). They enjoyed Rome's protection from other peoples and were also liable to provide troops.

This carefully designed system of confederation enabled the Romans to solve an administrative problem that had frustrated the Greek poleis: how to control a large territory without having to demolish or transform the conqueror's own institutions. Even more important, the creation of this chain of alliances greatly expanded the manpower available to Rome in its progressive domination of the Mediterranean. And as the various communities under Rome's control came more and more to resemble Rome in social structure, they could climb the rungs up to full Roman citizenship: a powerful stimulus to loyalty that served Rome well in all its conquests.

## **THE AGE OF MEDITERRANEAN CONQUEST (264–133 B.C.)**

Rome had now established its control over the whole Italian peninsula. There followed a period of imperialistic expansion that many historians consider partly involuntary, as Rome became embroiled with other Mediterranean powers. One result, important for the future history of Europe, was the inevitable forming of a system of administering Rome's new territories.

<sup>4</sup> *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. 38.



**MAP 4.2 ITALY IN 265 B.C., ON THE EVE OF THE PUNIC WARS**  
By 265 B.C., Rome had united the entire peninsula of Italy, but not everyone living under Rome's domain was a Roman citizen. The last territory to be conquered was Apulia, in southeastern Italy (312 B.C.). Where was the area irrigated by the Po River, not yet under Rome's control?

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## The Punic Wars

Rome—by which we now mean not only the ancient city but also the group of peoples in Italy allied with the city—at last had the strength in population to become a world power. The Romans achieved that goal in three wars with Carthage, a city that had been founded by Phoenicians about 700 B.C. and over the next century had established its own Mediterranean empire. By the time Rome had unified the Italian peninsula, Carthage controlled cities in northern Africa, parts of Spain, the islands of Corsica and Sardinia, and much of Sicily. It was beyond comparison the leading naval power in the western Mediterranean and could live off the tribute paid by its possessions. With good reason a German historian called Carthage “the London of antiquity.”

## CHRONOLOGY

### The Roman Provinces

The dates when some of the major Roman provinces were legally established. (The actual conquests were sometimes earlier.)

- 241 B.C.** Most of Sicily (completed in 211).
- 227** Corsica and Sardinia, administered as one.
- 197** Nearer and Farther Spain.
- 146** Macedonia; Africa (former territory of Carthage).
- 129** Asia (former territory of Pergamum).
- ca. 120** Transalpine Gaul.
- ca. 81** Cisalpine Gaul.
- 62** Syria.
- 16–13** Three Gauls (northern France, formerly conquered by Julius Caesar).

**The First Punic War** The wars between Rome and Carthage are called Punic Wars (from *Poeni*, the Latin name for the Phoenicians who had founded Carthage). The first opened in 264 B.C. when the Romans sent a force to assist the town of Messana (modern Messina) in Sicily, which was under siege from Carthage. The quarrel soon escalated into a battle for control of the whole island of Sicily. In the war, the Romans showed the virtues of which they were most proud—above all the refusal to accept defeat no matter how heavy the casualties. Rome won the war in 241. Carthage abandoned Sicily entirely, large parts of the island passed to Rome, and it became the first Roman “province” (a territory outside Italy under Roman control).

In 238 B.C. the Carthaginian garrison on the island of Sardinia rebelled, and the Romans unscrupulously took the opportunity to seize the island and also its neighbor, the island of Corsica. The two islands, administered together, formed the second Roman province. Carthage was furious over this humiliation, which made a second war with Rome all but inevitable.

**The Second Punic War and Hannibal** The second of the three wars (219–202 B.C.) was the most critical of all. Carthage, still angry over Rome's seizure of Sardinia and Corsica, sought to build up an empire in southern Spain as some compensation for its losses. In 219 B.C. a quarrel arose over Saguntum, a town in Spain to which Rome had promised protection. The great figure on the Carthaginian side was Hannibal. In 219 he seized Saguntum, thus in effect opening war with

Rome. A brilliant and daring strategist, second to almost none in history, he determined to carry the war to the enemy. In autumn 218 he led his army from Spain through the snow across the Alps and down into Italy. He brought with him 37 elephants, the irresistible weapon in ancient war (all but one of them soon died).

Once in Italy Hannibal hoped to arouse the tribes of Gauls in the Po valley and end the alliances of the various peoples with Rome, following which he would conquer Rome itself. Despite his energy, his twofold strategy failed. In 216 B.C. he won a stupendous victory over the Romans at Cannae, in southeastern Italy, which has remained a classic study for strategists ever since; but not even then could he bring about a revolt of the allies. At least half of them remained faithful to Rome, and without their help Hannibal's manpower was no match for that of Rome.

**Publius Cornelius Scipio** While Hannibal was in Italy, the Roman commander Publius Cornelius Scipio, only 26 years old, carried the war into Spain. Scipio was the first man given such a command without having held higher office. He apparently had absolute faith in the favor of the gods and could inspire his men with this conviction. In 209 B.C. he captured the important Spanish city of New Carthage and by 206 he controlled most of Spain. In 204 B.C. he landed in Africa, near Carthage itself, where his victories brought about the recall of Hannibal from Italy and set the stage for a final clash between these two great generals and their forces. Scipio won the decisive battle in 202 B.C., at Zama in North Africa. In honor of the victory, Scipio received the name *Africanus* and proudly added it to his traditional Roman name. Besides paying Rome a huge indemnity, Carthage had to give up all its territory except its immediate surroundings in Africa and was forbidden to raise an army without Roman permission.

Thus the second war ended in a hard-earned victory for Roman perseverance and skill; but a large bill would later have to be paid. Hannibal had laid waste large tracts of farming land in southern Italy and had driven many farmers off their soil. In casualties, too, the cost to Rome had been severe: It is estimated that Roman military manpower fell from about 285,000 in 218 to about 235,000 in 203.

**The Third Punic War** After the second war, Rome made an alliance with Masinissa, the king of Numidia, just west of Carthage. Over the years Masinissa began to plunder Carthaginian territory and drove Carthage to the point of armed resistance against him. In Rome a bitterly anti-Carthaginian group was led by Marcus Cato, whose name has become symbolic of narrow intolerance. He and his group argued that Carthage was still dangerous; he constantly urged that it be de-

stroyed. Finally he succeeded in persuading Rome to declare war against Carthage and in making it a campaign of punishment (149–146 B.C.).

Another Scipio, known as Scipio Aemilianus, captured Carthage in 146. The Romans utterly destroyed the city and formally cursed the site (the tale that they poured salt into the soil is only a modern fiction), and the territory became the Roman province called simply Africa. The conquest of the territory formerly held by Carthage in Europe was made complete when Rome conquered almost all of Spain by 133 B.C.

### **Expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean**

**Wars with Macedonia and Syria** In the following decades the Romans continued their conquests until they had mastered the whole Mediterranean basin. Historians have long debated whether this policy represented deliberate imperialism or was at least partly accidental. Certainly the first stage was forced on Rome by the king of Macedonia, Philip V (r. 221–179 B.C.). He drew Rome into war by forming an alliance with Hannibal in 215 B.C. and thus opened the gate through which, over centuries, Roman troops and administrators poured as far east as Armenia and changed the course of European history.

During this era Rome also became involved in war with Antiochus III, the Macedonian ruler of Syria, the kingdom founded by Seleucus after the death of Alexander. Roman forces defeated his army at Magnesia in Asia Minor in 190 B.C.—another significant moment in Rome's expansion, as Roman legions left Europe and fought in Asia Minor for the first time.

**Annexation of Greece** For a time, the Romans tried to stay out of Greek affairs and proclaimed that they were allowing the Greeks freedom. To the Greeks, freedom meant the liberty to do as they liked, but for the Romans it meant behaving as obedient Roman clients. After further quarrels and battles, the Roman Senate realized that outright annexation of the Greek mainland was the only way to secure Rome's interests.

Therefore, in 146 B.C., Macedonia and Greece were combined into a province. This decision brought the Romans into permanent contact with Greek culture, which they passed on over the centuries to Europe. They had already destroyed Carthage, and as they took over Greece their dominance in the Mediterranean could not be denied or reversed. But this domination came at a price. Without the need for unity against outside enemies, Roman society began to lose its cohesiveness; this in turn led to the decline of the Republic.

**The Province of Asia** Some experienced rulers in the region were shrewd enough to perceive what had



**MAP 4.3 THE EXPANSION OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC, 241–44 B.C.**

After the first Punic War (264–241 B.C.), Rome ruled over Italy itself and the island of Sicily. Rome then extended its rule through the conquest of other areas in the Mediterranean which were called provinces. This map shows the growth of the Roman dominion to 44 B.C. When was the province of northern Gaul added?

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happened and began a process of accommodation to Rome. For example, in 133 B.C., the last king of Pergamum died without leaving a successor and the Romans found that he had willed his kingdom to Rome—surely because he had seen that the kingdom of Pergamum could not long survive without Roman protection. Four years later Rome created the province of Asia, based on the territory of Pergamum (see map 4.3). This province possessed great wealth and offered tempting opportunities for a governor of Asia to enrich himself through corruption; the post became highly desirable for ambitious politicians and also brought with it a posting to the pleasant climate of the beautifully built Greek cities.

### *The Nature of Roman Expansion*

**Organization and Force** Rome's success in its domination of the Mediterranean rested on certain unique historical conditions. Early in its history, events had

forced the city to seek defensive alliances. After the expulsion of the Etruscan monarchs, for example, Rome had to unite militarily with its neighbors in the plain of Latium against a possible Etruscan counterattack. Constant wars in the fourth and third centuries, such as the invasion by the Gauls in 390 B.C., further emphasized the need for common security.

The result was a commitment to, and mastery of, military force that proved to be unsurpassed, and this military force soon developed into a highly effective and (when necessary) utterly ruthless policy of conquest. Scipio Aemilianus, for example, forced the people of Numantia, in Spain, to surrender in 133 B.C., by reducing them to cannibalism and even cut off the hands of four hundred young men in a neighboring city who had advocated aiding their Spanish brethren. The Senate at home considered Aemilianus' achievements worthy of a triumphal parade, the highest military honor that Romans could bestow on a successful commander.

**Provincial Administration** The Latin word *provincia* means “a duty assigned to a magistrate,” and the Romans extended the meaning to denote the various regions that they acquired through conquest. The Senate chose the governors for the various provinces, often giving them the title *proconsul* (“in place of a consul”). These governors ruled their provinces with absolute power, though they could not violate Roman law or act illegally against Roman citizens. Some provincial governors ruled fairly, but others were notorious for their corruption. From the Roman view, the advantage of the system was its efficiency: Rebellions were not common, and troops stationed in the provinces could maintain control without resorting to massacres.

**Tax Collectors, or Publicani** The provinces furnished financial support for the Roman Republic. Some had to pay tribute in various forms, usually food, while others were assigned a fixed sum of money. In order to obtain these taxes, the state devised a convenient but corruptible system of tax collection. Companies of tax collectors, known as *publicani*, bid for the contracts to collect the taxes of certain provinces, especially Asia. The collectors paid the state a fixed sum in advance and then made their profit by collecting taxes in excess of what they had paid. The governor of the province was supposed to see that the *publicani* did not collect more than a specified sum. Unfortunately, however, the collectors could use their funds as bribes to persuade the governor to overlook their rapacity.<sup>5</sup>

**The Equestrians** The tax collectors came from a class known as **equestrians**. The *equites* originally formed the cavalry in Rome’s military forces, but over the years the equestrians stopped fighting on horseback and became a social class, roughly the businessmen of Rome. Equestrians did not serve in the Senate. They had to be of high financial standing, and some of them could far outstrip senators in wealth. They held no political offices but formed companies to build roads and aqueducts and to conduct businesses of all kinds.

## THE ROMAN REVOLUTION (133–27 B.C.)

The year 133 B.C. saw the final conquest of most of Spain, in the west, and the acquisition of the province of Asia, in the east. This was also the beginning of the Roman revolution, a long political transformation that ended the Roman Republic. Imperialism demanded

<sup>5</sup> Cicero, a firm supporter of the *publicani*, called them “the flower of the Roman equestrians, the ornament of the state, and the foundation of the Republic.”

### CHRONOLOGY

## The Roman Revolution

The main landmarks in the Roman revolution were as follows:

- 133 B.C. Tiberius Gracchus elected tribune; is killed in riot.
- 123–121 Gaius Gracchus tribune; equestrians gain control of extortion court; Gaius killed.
- 107 First consulship of Marius.
- 91–88 War with Italian allies.
- 81–79 Sulla’s dictatorship.
- 70 First consulship of Pompey and Crassus.
- 66 Pompey given command against Mithridates in Asia.
- 59 Julius Caesar consul, receives command in Gaul.
- 58–50 Caesar’s conquest of Gaul.
- 49 Caesar invades Italy, opening of civil war.
- 44 Caesar murdered.
- 31 Battle of Actium, defeat of Mark Antony.
- 27 Supremacy of Octavian, later called Augustus; beginning of Roman Empire.

powerful military commanders, and the selfish rivalry among them burst the bounds of the constitution.

### Social Change and the Gracchi

**The Changing World of Italy** The breakdown of the Roman Republic has been called Hannibal’s legacy, for the ravages of years of fighting up and down Italy had brought many farmers to the point of ruin. On the other hand, wealthy citizens had enriched themselves with booty and the spoils of war. The less fortunate had often lost their land or were willing to sell it to these newly wealthy men. There had also been a great increase in the slave population on Italian soil from prisoners of war, and these slaves depressed the wages paid to private workers.

Often the displaced farmers had little choice but to join the ranks of the permanently unemployed. Their poverty threatened to impede the recruitment of soldiers into the Roman army, for Rome had nothing like a modern war treasury, and only men who had enough money to buy their own armor could be drafted into the legions. Without sufficient recruits, the gains from the conquests might be lost. Moreover, those who

could no longer find work lost the spirit of cohesion and loyalty to their society. They became prey to demagogues and many became supporters of this or that warlord. The Senate, which might have provided moral leadership to the state, also showed itself unable to stand firm as the long revolution rolled on.

**Tiberius Gracchus** Two ambitious young Roman statesmen, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, moved to solve the problems of those who had lost their land. Their mother, Cornelia, was a well-known daughter of a great family; her father was Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, who had won the war against Hannibal. She had married a prominent plebeian politician, Tiberius Gracchus. Because patrician or plebeian status came down through the male line, her sons were plebeian, though descended from the loftiest aristocracy.

Tiberius, the older brother (162–133 B.C.), became tribune in 133 and proposed a bill to the Assembly of Tribes that would assign parcels of publicly owned land to dispossessed farmers. The state would obtain and redistribute such land by enforcing a long-ignored law that limited the amount of public land that anyone could occupy. To serve in the Roman army, a man had to have at least a modest amount of wealth, and Tiberius' aim, a moderate one, was to create prosperous farmers and thus increase the supply of potential recruits for the army. He made the mistake of not submitting his bill for the approval of the Senate before proposing it. Angered at this slight, some senators found another tribune willing to oppose the bill with his veto. Tiberius then persuaded the people to remove that tribune from office. This action was both illegal and dangerous. Once such a step had been taken, what tribune would be safe in the future from an identical threat? But the people followed Tiberius and passed the bill.

**Tiberius Murdered** The distribution of land was in progress when Tiberius decided to run for reelection. This move was a breach of custom, for tribunes held office for only one year. Some of his opponents feared that he might seize permanent leadership of the propertyless and lead them into social revolution. A group of senators, late in 133, took the law into their own hands and provoked a riot in which Tiberius was clubbed to death—an event that gave grim warning of a new intensity in Rome's political struggles. Above all, this action violated the taboo against assassination of a tribune, and this first step, once taken, became easier to repeat. Despite Tiberius' death, the distribution of land continued, and his enemies even took credit for the success of the project.

**Gaius Gracchus** Tiberius' younger brother, Gaius, became tribune ten years later, in 123 B.C. He was the

harsher and less compromising of the two plebeians. He remembered that some senators had inspired the murder of his brother, and he wanted to reply with several measures that sought to limit the powers of senators. He proposed, and the people accepted, that the Senate's freedom in assigning governors to provinces should be restricted. One of the most important powers of the Senate was membership in the extortion court, which investigated cases of alleged extortion by provincial governors and tax collectors. The jurors, all senators, were usually not severe in judging governors, who were fellow members of the Senate. Gaius had a bill passed that assigned the seats on this jury to members of the equestrian class. Thus the courts became the prize of political victory.

All tax collectors were equestrians, and it was now they who had the potential to favor members of their group who might be accused and brought to trial for extortion. Gaius' arrangements were later revised, but he was the first to make the extortion court the subject of a bitter political quarrel.

**The Fall and Death of Gaius Gracchus** Gaius had also followed his brother Tiberius in authoring a bill that continued the distribution of public land. It included provisions for the founding of colonies where more citizens could be settled. But he committed a major blunder in proposing to found a colony of Roman citizens on the site of Carthage, the hated enemy in the three Punic wars. This ill-judged action aroused widespread criticism.

Like his brother, Gaius Gracchus came to a violent end. He failed to be elected to a third year as tribune, and his enemies asserted that he and his followers were planning a revolution. The Senate then ordered one of the consuls for the year 121 B.C. to "see to it that the state suffered no harm," thus inviting the consul to use force to suppress the younger Gracchus. This resolution, which was later passed against others whom the Senate wanted to eliminate, was known in Roman politics as the "**last decree**" (*Senatus consultum ultimum*). It was in effect the declaration of martial law. When the consul raised up a mob to hunt Gaius down, he had one of his own slaves kill him.

**The Gracchi and History** The Gracchi had unleashed a whirlwind when they invited the Assembly of Tribes to take a more activist role. It is true that the people had long possessed the right to legislate in this assembly, but they had not always had the will; nor had ambitious tribunes always dared to use such a weapon. But now demagogues began to turn more and more to this assembly to pass bills in favor of their military patrons. From this moment began the slow but sure Roman revolution.



### **The Years of the Warlords**

The Gracchi could not protect themselves from the violence of the Senate because they had no army. But as Roman conquests brought the state into further wars, powerful generals appeared who did have the support of their armies and used it to seize power. Their struggles against one another undermined the republican constitution and the state finally collapsed into dictatorship.

**Marius and a Changed Roman Army** The first general to play this game was Gaius Marius (ca. 157–86 B.C.), from the countryside near Rome. In Roman terminology, he was a “new man,” or *novus homo*, that is, a man none of whose ancestors had been consul. He was a roughneck, of little education, but stalwart and fearless. He is a crucial figure because he changed, radically and forever, the membership of the Roman army and the direction of its loyalty. He gained high prestige by winning a war (111–106 B.C.) against Jugurtha, the king of Numidia in North Africa. Marius had obtained this command after the generals who had been sent out by the Senate had proved incompetent; and Marius showed his hatred for the feeble aristocrats who had thoroughly bungled the campaign.

Marius’ reputation grew even more after he drove back an attempted invasion (105–101 B.C.) by some Germanic tribes moving toward northern Italy. Such was his stature in this period that he was consul for five consecutive years and dominated politics from 107 to 100 B.C.

In order to raise large numbers of men for his army, Marius abolished the old requirement that a soldier had to own at least a modest amount of property, and he also accepted volunteers instead of just drafting men for service (the men so enrolled were known as *capite censi*, “enrolled by head count”). As a result, the army came to be composed largely of poor men who served their commander, received booty from him, relied on him as their main patron, and expected him to obtain for them a grant of land that they could farm after they were discharged. Thus Marius converted the army into an instrument for ambitious commanders during the remaining years of the Republic and even throughout the Roman Empire.

**The War with the Italians** The Italian peoples who were Rome’s allies had never been granted Roman citizenship, and in 91 B.C. another reform-minded tribune, Marcus Livius Drusus, tried to carry a bill that would have made them citizens. The Senate declared his law null and void, and Drusus, like the Gracchi, was murdered. At this outrage some of the allies proclaimed themselves independent and opened a war that continued until 88. In the end the Romans negotiated with

the Italians and allowed them to acquire citizenship. But the fact that it required a war to obtain this concession shows that both the Roman upper classes—the senators and equestrians—and the Roman masses were still ready to fight for their privileges.

**Sulla the Dictator** The Italian War made the reputation of another powerful general, Lucius Cornelius Sulla (ca. 138–78 B.C.). He was a man without any scruples, a glutton and sensualist who helped himself to whatever women he liked. In the 80s civil war broke out in Rome over who should obtain the command in a war against Mithridates, the king of Pontus in Asia Minor (r. 120–63 B.C.). One group rallied behind Sulla and his legions, seeing in him the best vehicle for their own ambitions. In 88 B.C. he invaded the city of Rome with his supporters—the first but not the last time that Romans themselves marched on and seized the ancient city.

Mithridates had extended his kingdom until it included the Roman province of Asia and even large parts of the Greek mainland. In 88 B.C. he gave orders for the massacre of at least 80,000 Romans and Italians residing in Asia Minor—a testimony to the unpopularity of Roman rule in this province. This massacre could not go unanswered, and Sulla received the command against Mithridates.

Sulla departed for his campaign in 87 B.C., and during his absence Marius and his supporters seized Rome in turn. They conducted a reign of terror, publishing lists (“proscriptions”) of those to be killed either with or without “trials” and exhibiting their maimed bodies and even their heads in the streets. But as soon as Sulla was free of his Eastern war, he returned to Italy and once more occupied Rome (November 82). Our sources tell us that he had thousands of his opponents executed and had himself named dictator without limit of time, thus breaking the customary six-month limit for holding that office.

**Sulla’s Reforms** For all Sulla’s brutality and self-indulgence, he did have a political program: to reshape the state on strictly authoritarian and conservative lines. Two forces, he thought, had menaced the rigid control over Rome that the Senate should enjoy: the tribunes of the people, who had made the Assembly of Tribes more conscious of its power, and the generals who had used the loyalty of their armies to gain political leverage. To deal with the first of these threats, Sulla forced through a law that blocked tribunes from holding any other office; they also had to wait ten years to be reelected. These measures were meant to discourage any ambitious politicians from seeking this office.

Sulla handled the army commanders through a law that forbade them to leave their provinces or make war



This idealized statue of the first century B.C. shows the ruthless tyrant Cornelius Sulla in the dignified pose of a classical orator.

Giraudon/Art Resource, NY

outside their borders without instructions from the Senate; thus, no ambitious commander could blunder into a war or make himself into a conqueror. Sulla further established minimum ages at which a man might hold the various offices in a political career (a consul, for example, had to be 42 or older). He also canceled the work of Gaius Gracchus on the jury system; as one might expect from this strict traditionalist, he gave all the seats on the juries back to senators.

Sulla resigned the dictatorship in 79 B.C., a rare act in any supreme ruler, but he evidently thought he had put the Senate so firmly in control that he was no longer needed; he died in 78. To his enemies he was pitiless, and his executions of Roman citizens were horrifying, but he was also a political strategist. He had done his part for the conservative cause by putting the Senate in charge, but this body proved unable to manage the next generation of warlords.

***The Rise of Pompey*** Sulla had used the tool forged by Marius—an army loyal to a commander—and another warlord soon followed his example, namely Gnaeus Pompeius (106–48 B.C.), usually called Pompey. He first gained a reputation in 77 B.C., when he was sent to Spain to end a revolt there. After completing this task, and while his army was still intact, he helped suppress a rebellion of slaves in Italy led by a Thracian slave named Spartacus. This campaign was already under the command of another ambitious Roman, Marcus Licinius Crassus, the richest man of his time. Pompey and Crassus were rivals, but they worked together in suppressing the revolt. No sooner did the slave revolt collapse in 71 B.C. than the joint commanders, Pompey and Crassus, marched their armies to the gates of Rome and demanded both consulships for the year 70. Pompey was legally unqualified for this office, for he was only 36 and had held no previous magistracy. If Crassus, Pompey's rival, had refused to join in this bargain, he might have preserved the Sullan system. But, like him, the Senate also lacked the will to enforce the constitution and resist the two men, and they won election as consuls. This was little short of a coup d'état.

During their consulship Pompey and Crassus canceled several of Sulla's arrangements. They restored to the tribunes their right to propose legislation, and they mixed senators and equestrians in the always controversial juries. At the end of their year in office, both consuls retired without demanding any further appointment—an action that, though at first surprising, was really consistent with Pompey's ambitions. He wanted to be the first man in the state, but he disliked committing himself to open revolution. A modern historian has compared him to Shakespeare's Macbeth: He would not play false and yet would wrongly win.

**Pompey's Military Commands** In 67 B.C. Pompey obtained the command to deal with pirates operating in the Mediterranean who were interfering with the grain supply for Rome—a critical matter since the city had to live on grain shipped to its harbor. Pompey fulfilled his orders and cleared the seas in a swift campaign. He also recognized the economic roots of piracy and settled many of the captured pirates on land that they could cultivate in Asia Minor and Greece. Then in 66 B.C. he received through the Tribal Assembly an even more important command in Asia Minor, where Rome was involved in war with Mithridates, Sulla's old enemy, who was still on his throne.

Another Roman general, Lucullus, had practically wiped out Mithridates' forces, so Pompey's campaign was essentially a mopping-up operation. But Pompey took action that had permanent results; he set up a system of client kings, rulers of smaller states whose loyalty to Rome was ensured by the device of "friendship" (*amicitia*). Through this bargain Rome would protect local rulers, who paid no taxes to Rome but were expected to assist with manpower and resources when needed. He also captured Syria in 64 B.C.; it became a Roman province in 62 B.C. In 63 B.C. he captured Judaea and Jerusalem.

**Cicero: Nonmilitary Statesman** During Pompey's absence overseas, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.) became the chief nonmilitary statesman in Rome. Like Marius, he was a "new man" from the countryside, but unlike Marius, Cicero chose a career in law and administration rather than in the military. His administrative skill won for him each successive political office at the earliest possible legal age. His polished prose style became the model for clarity and elegance. He was genuinely dedicated to compromise and political negotiation and thought that such procedures would establish the combined rule of the two upper classes, the senatorial and equestrian.

Cicero was elected consul for 63 B.C. One of his defeated rivals for the office, Catiline (Lucius Sergius Catilina), formed a conspiracy to take over the city by force. Cicero learned details of this plan and denounced Catiline in four famous speeches (the "Catilinarian" orations). He obtained the Senate's support to execute some of the captured conspirators without trial (a wholly illegal act); Catiline himself died in battle against an army of the state.

**Pompey Returns to Rome** Pompey returned to Rome in 62 B.C. from his Eastern victories with two political aims. He wanted the Senate to ratify the arrangements he had made in Asia Minor, and he requested a grant of land for his men. This latter request, as we have seen, was nothing unusual. It reflected the relationship between a general and his troops, which was that of pa-



MAP 4.4 GAUL IN THE TIME OF CAESAR

In a famous sentence, Julius Caesar said, "Gaul as a whole is divided into three parts." This map shows these parts (Gallia Aquitania, Lugdunensis, and Belgica) with the dates when they were subdued. Gallia Narbonensis, named from the town of Narbo (modern Narbonne) was already a Roman province. Germania was controlled later. Which part of Gaul was closest to Britain, which Caesar also attacked?

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tron and client—one of the oldest traditions in Rome. But some senators, either jealous or fearful of his prestige, combined to frustrate his wishes. This short-term victory practically doomed the Senate and the Republic, for it drove Pompey into a political alliance with Julius Caesar, who proved to have the revolutionary will that Pompey lacked.

## The First Triumvirate

**The Partners and Their Desires** Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.), a descendant of an old patrician family, returned to Rome in 60 B.C. from his post as governor of Spain. Intellectually, he was a brilliant man who wrote elegant, lean Latin. Politically, he is an example of the aristocrat who bases his power on the common people. In this respect he resembles Pericles in Athenian history. Caesar had enemies within the Senate, where many looked on him as a brash upstart or a potential tyrant. They refused his request to be allowed to run for the consulship of 59 in absence and then lead a triumphal parade through the city. Faced with this direct affront to his dignity, Caesar made a political bargain with Pompey. Crassus joined them because he was at odds with some powerful senators over a financial matter. The three



Perhaps the most spectacular classical monument in Europe, the Pont du Gard was built in the first century A.D. to carry water to Nîmes (ancient Nemausus) in France. The water ran through a trough above the top layer of arches. The aqueduct is an example of the Romans' mastery of hydraulic technology and construction in arches.

Michael Holford Photographs

formed a coalition known to historians as the First **Triumvirate** ("body of three men"; it had no official mandate or status). Their united influence at the polls over their clients elected Caesar as one of the consuls for 59. To confirm the bargain in a manner customary in Roman politics, Pompey married Caesar's daughter, Julia.

**Caesar's Consulship and the Gallic War** Caesar's influence secured allotments of land for Pompey's army and the approval of his arrangements in the East. Crassus' financial quarrel was also settled to his satisfaction. Caesar then secured for himself the command over Cisalpine Gaul (the Po valley) and the coast of Illyria for a guaranteed period of five years beginning on March 1,

59 B.C. About this time the governor of Transalpine Gaul (Provence, in the south of France) died, and the Senate added this province as well to Caesar's command.

Caesar intervened in the politics of the Gallic tribes and opened a series of campaigns that finally brought the whole area of modern France and Belgium under Roman rule. The Romans implanted in Gaul the Latin language (the origin of modern French), Roman architecture and technology, and Roman ways in general. Caesar narrated and defended his actions in his *Commentaries on the Gallic War*, which to this day remains a superb textbook in political-military decision making.

The Gallic War lasted from 58 to 50 B.C. Caesar's two partners in the triumvirate, Pompey and Crassus, were

always suspicious of each other, but they maintained fairly good relations and even held a second consulship together in 55. They also had Caesar's command in Gaul renewed for another five years, so that it would not expire until March 1, 49 B.C., and they obtained commands for themselves. Crassus went out to Syria, from which he launched a disastrous campaign against the kingdom of Parthia, across the Euphrates River. Here he lost his life in 53 B.C. Pompey was given command over the two provinces of Spain, which he governed through assistants, preferring to remain at the center of power near Rome.

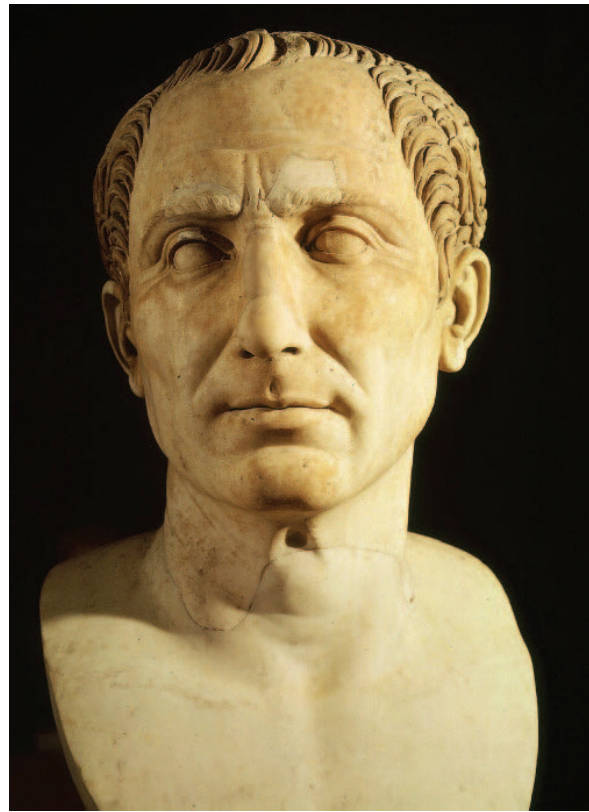
### ***The Supremacy of Julius Caesar***

***The Break between Caesar and the Senate*** Caesar's conquest of Gaul greatly enriched the state, but to his enemies it was a cause of dismay. They feared that he might use his victories and his popularity among the people to become another, and perhaps a permanent, Sulla. As protection against Caesar, his enemies in the Senate began to draw Pompey into their camp. Some of them had quarreled with him in the past, but they were willing to gamble that they could eliminate him when they no longer needed him.

As 49 B.C. opened, the Senate met in a state near hysteria. A small band of implacable senators forced through a motion ordering Caesar to lay down his command, even though he was then taking no action beyond remaining in his province of Cisalpine Gaul. The Senate passed a decree establishing martial law (that is, the "last decree," which had been invented for use against Gaius Gracchus) and ordered Pompey to command the armies of Rome against Caesar. The ill-advised Pompey accepted the command; but in doing so he signed his own death warrant and condemned the Republic to extinction in yet another civil war.

***The Attack on the Tribunes of the People*** Finally, the Senate defied the oldest of Roman traditions by threatening the lives of any tribunes who opposed these extreme measures. They thus handed Caesar a superb theme for his own propaganda: He could proclaim that he was defending the rights of the tribunes, of the common people of Rome who had elected them, and of the men in his army who had loyally served in the Gallic wars.

***Caesar's Invasion of Italy*** Caesar saw that his enemies were in effect challenging him to war and decided that he had no course but to fight for his dignity and, as he could now assert, for the people and their sacred tribunes. On about January 11, 49 B.C., he spoke the words "Let the die be cast" in Greek, and crossed the boundary of his province, the small Rubicon River north of



**MARBLE BUST OF JULIUS CAESAR**  
Archaeological Museum Naples/Dagli Orti/The Art Archive

Ravenna, thus invading his own country at the head of Roman legions. Yet perhaps his conscience was not wholly clear: The biographer Plutarch records the tale that, on the night before the crossing, he dreamt that he was having sexual relations with his own mother.

Caesar advanced swiftly, and Pompey and his followers had to retreat to Greece; Caesar pursued them and won a decisive battle in 48 B.C. at the town of Pharsalus, in Thessaly. Pompey sought refuge in Egypt, but advisers to the pharaoh realized that Caesar had won the victory and that it was not safe for them to give Pompey protection. As Pompey approached the shore, he was stabbed to death by a former Roman officer of his. His head was cut off and his body thrown into the sea. Caesar followed to Egypt in October 48 B.C. and found that Pompey was dead. He now intervened in a civil war between the young king, Ptolemy XIII, and his sister, the famous Macedonian ruler Cleopatra VII. Caesar arranged that Ptolemy and Cleopatra should share the rule and proceeded to have a long affair with the queen. A boy, called Caesarion



**ARENA IN EL-DJEM, TUNISIA, IMITATING THE COLOSSEUM IN ROME**

Built in the second/third century A.D., this arena could seat 50,000 spectators. Wild animals were housed in the long rectangular pit in the center. Roman buildings were widely copied throughout the Empire as other cities sought to identify themselves with the great capital.

Photo Researchers, Inc.

(the Little Caesar), was born.<sup>6</sup> Politics played as much a role as love, because Cleopatra's affection guaranteed Roman control over the rich resources of Egypt; Caesar did not follow the usual practice of making Egypt a province but left it as a kingdom to be ruled by Cleopatra and Ptolemy. After other victories Caesar returned to Rome in 46 B.C.

**Caesar's Rule to 44 B.C.** Caesar now decided to make his rule impregnable and assumed the positions of both dictator and consul. On the model of Sulla, he extended

<sup>6</sup> Scholars have always been uncertain whether Caesar was really the father of this boy.

his dictatorship beyond the legal six-month limit; then, in 44, he had himself named dictator for life. He swept aside all restraints on his power that Roman tradition might have imposed and took complete authority to pass laws, declare war, and appoint men to office.

As dictator, Caesar saw to a series of rapid reforms in many areas of Roman life. He raised the membership of the Senate to about nine hundred, packing it with many of his veteran officers. From this time onward the Senate lost its former authority as the bulwark of the state. He scaled down his large army by settling many of his soldiers in newly founded colonies and extended Roman citizenship into some of the provinces. His most lasting reform was one by



## THE MURDER OF JULIUS CAESAR

*The biographer Plutarch, who wrote about A.D. 120, looked back to describe the scene when Caesar was killed, 44 B.C.*

“The place chosen for this murder, where the Senate met on that day, contained a statue of Pompey, one of the adornments for the theater he had built; this made it clear to all that some divine power had guided the deed and summoned it to just that spot. As Caesar entered, the Senate rose as a sign of respect, while those in Brutus’ faction came down and stood around his chair. Tillius Cimber seized Caesar’s toga with both hands and pulled it down from his neck, which was the signal for the assassination. Casca was the first to strike him in the neck with his sword, but the wound was neither deep nor fatal, and Caesar turned around, grasping and holding the weapon. Those who knew nothing of the plot were terrified and did not dare run away or help Caesar or even utter a sound. But those who came prepared for the murder whipped out their daggers, and Caesar was encircled, so that wherever he turned he met with blows and was surrounded by daggers leveled at his

face and eyes and he was grappling with all their hands at once. Everyone was supposed to strike him and have a taste of the murder; even Brutus stabbed him once in the groin. Some say that, as he fought off all the rest, turning his body this way and that and shouting for help, he saw Brutus draw his dagger and pulled his toga down over his head and let himself fall at the base of Pompey’s statue, whether by chance or because he was pushed by the assassins. There was blood all around the statue, so that it seemed that Pompey was presiding over the vengeance taken against his enemy, who now lay at his feet and breathed out his life through his wounds. They say he was struck 23 times, and many of the assassins were wounded by one another as they all directed their blows at his body.”

Plutarch, *The Life of Caesar*, chap. 66, M. H. Chambers (tr.).

which we still regulate our lives—the establishment of a calendar year based on the old Egyptian reckoning of 365 days, with one day added every fourth year.<sup>7</sup> This “Julian” calendar lasted until 1582, when it was revised by Pope Gregory XIII to our present Gregorian calendar.

**The Death of Caesar** The full effect of Caesar’s plans was not to be realized, for on March 15, 44 B.C. (the date known as the Ides of March), after four years of supremacy, he fell to the daggers of conspirators led by two of his lieutenants, Marcus Brutus and Gaius Cassius. His autocracy had been a grave affront to the upper class; because he had undermined their dignity as members of the governing class, they united against him and carried out the most famous political murder in all history. It is said that Caesar was warned that morning of an imminent conspiracy and that he brushed the warning aside. As the Senate met near a theater built by Pompey, the killers plunged on him; when he recognized his protégé Marcus Brutus in the group, he said in Greek, “You, too, my boy?” and covered his head with his toga as he fell. His body was carried to the Forum and burned on a rock that still stands in a small temple built to his memory (see “The Murder of Julius Caesar,” above).

Caesar’s character is baffling and controversial, even as it was to his contemporaries. He was pitiless toward

Gauls and Germans, and he enriched himself by selling prisoners of war as slaves; but indifference toward captured foreigners was common in the ancient world. In Rome he showed too little respect for the Senate and republican forms once he became dictator, and for this mistake he paid with his life. On the other hand, in the civil war he was generous enough to dismiss opposing generals whom he had captured, and they lived to fight him another day. Such actions may have rested on cool calculation of their value as propaganda, but they may also show genuine gallantry. No one can question Caesar’s fiery leadership. He was wiry and tough, he ignored heat and rain, he swam unfordable rivers, and his troops followed him into Italy with enthusiasm and fought with amazing discipline.

Caesar clearly thought that the old institutions of the Senate and the assemblies were obsolete. “The Republic,” he is said to have remarked, “is only a name without body or face, and Sulla did not know the ABCs of politics in resigning his dictatorship.”<sup>8</sup> The political weakness of the late Republic largely confirms this harsh evaluation. But in the end Caesar’s arrogance was too much for the experienced politicians whom he needed for his administration. His career thus blends triumph and tragedy. He rose to the absolute summit of Roman politics, but in doing so he destroyed both the Roman Republic and himself.

<sup>7</sup>The added day was inserted between Feb. 23 and 24 in leap year. The date “Feb. 29” is a modern error.

<sup>8</sup>Suetonius, *Life of Caesar*, chap. 77.

## THE END OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

Julius Caesar's dictatorship had all but killed the Roman Republic, but after his death the question still remained whether the republican constitution could be revived. Some politicians tried to restore the republic, and the issue hung in the balance for thirteen years, until Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, eliminated his rival, Mark Antony, and gained supreme control.

### *The Second Triumvirate*

**Antony and Octavian** Brutus, Cassius, and the other assassins imagined that republican government could be restored with Caesar out of the way. Yet partisans of Caesar commanded armies throughout the Roman world, and they were not men who would meekly surrender their powers to the Senate. One survivor was Marcus Antonius, or Mark Antony, a follower of Caesar and consul for the year 44 B.C. Antony tried to seize for himself the provincial command in Cisalpine Gaul, even though the Senate had already assigned it to another governor for the year 43. The Senate turned on him, with Cicero, now a senior statesman, leading the attack. The state sent an army out to bring Antony to justice, and it must have seemed to many that the old institutions of the Republic had indeed come back to life.

Among the commanders whom the Senate put in action against Antony was a young man of 19—Caesar's grandnephew, whom Caesar adopted in his will. His name, originally Gaius Octavius, became Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus upon his adoption; modern historians call him Octavian, but he called himself Caesar. He used his name skillfully to win a following among Caesar's former soldiers, but he also played the part of a discreet young supporter of the Senate in its battle against Antony. Cicero, the chief supporter of the old constitution, naively wrote of Octavian after their first meeting, "The young man is completely devoted to me."<sup>9</sup>

**Formation of the Second Triumvirate** Octavian had been assigned the duty of capturing Antony, but they both recognized that the Senate was really seeking the destruction of the Caesarian faction from which they both derived their political support. If either man were overthrown, the Senate would soon discard the other. Octavian thus calculated his own advantage and turned his back on the duty of attacking Antony. The two Caesarians formed an alliance near Bologna in 43 B.C. They brought into their partnership a lesser commander, Marcus Lepidus; then, following the example of Sulla

and others, they invaded Rome and made themselves the military rulers of the ancient capital.

Faced with their armies, the Senate had to acknowledge their leadership, and a tribune proposed a law that turned the state over to their control for a period of five years; their official title was *Triumviri* (body of three men) "to provide order for the state"—a charge broad enough to supply a legal basis for nearly any action they might wish to take. Thus was formed the Second Triumvirate. In due course they had their collective power renewed for another five years.

Brutus and Cassius, seeing that they did not have popular support, left for the East and in 43 B.C. were given control over all the eastern provinces. But in 42 B.C. the triumvirs eliminated these enemies at the Battle of Philippi in northern Greece. To reward their troops with land, the rulers had already marked out the territory of no fewer than eighteen prosperous towns in Italy. The rule of the Second Triumvirate (43–33 B.C.) was thus made secure by the seizure and redistribution of property. A series of "trials" mounted against those who had had the bad luck to be on the losing side provided further security. As in the time of Marius and Sulla, the autocrats brushed aside the traditional guarantees of Roman law as they coldly purged their enemies. The number of the slain was said to be the largest ever. Cicero had placed himself in special danger through a series of orations denouncing Antony (the "Philippics," a term recalling Demosthenes' attacks on Philip II of Macedonia; see p. 77). He paid the price and was murdered on Antony's orders in 43 B.C.

### *Octavian Triumphant*

**Antony and Cleopatra** Suspicion now began to grow between the two major partners, Antony and Octavian (Lepidus had been forced into retirement when he tried to take control of Sicily away from Octavian). They now both lusted for supreme power, and Antony did his own cause grave harm by remaining in the East for long periods. On the one hand, he fought a disastrous war against the Parthian Kingdom, which had taken certain Roman territories after the death of Crassus in 53. On the other, he carried on a long affair with Cleopatra VII of Egypt. Octavian stayed in Rome and skillfully exploited the rumors that surrounded this romance with Cleopatra. In particular, Octavian falsely asserted that Antony was planning to place this Eastern queen in command of the state.

**Octavian's Victory over Antony** The final break between the two men came in 32 B.C. Octavian raised a large force from Italy and the western provinces; led by his skillful general Marcus Agrippa, this force defeated Antony in 31 B.C. at Actium, a promontory on the western coast of Greece. Antony shamefully abandoned his

<sup>9</sup> Letters to Atticus, 14.11 (April 25, 44 B.C.).





The Ara Pacis (Altar of Peace) was built in Rome in 13 B.C. to celebrate the establishment of peace by Augustus. Relatives of the imperial family are portrayed in idealizations of their stations in life rather than in strict Roman realism.

C. M. Dixon

men and sailed back to Egypt with Cleopatra, and his army surrendered to Octavian.

The next year Octavian unhurriedly advanced on Alexandria for the reckoning with Antony and Cleopatra. Antony took his own life, and Cleopatra soon did the same—according to the version immortalized in Shakespeare, by letting a poisonous snake bite her. With Cleopatra's death ended the last Macedonian kingdom and, therefore, the Hellenistic Age, which had begun with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.

## THE FOUNDING OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Those Romans, like Cicero, who had hoped for the restoration of the Republic lost their hopes or their lives. Only one warlord from the Republic, Octavian, had survived the confused years after Julius Caesar. By a supreme political charade, he combined his own autocracy with the restoration of the forms of the Republic. This skillful compromise in effect created the Roman Empire, which he ruled until his death in A.D. 14.

### *Augustus and the Principate*

**Octavian Becomes Augustus** On January 1, 27 B.C., Octavian appeared in the Roman Senate and announced

that the state had returned to peace and that he needed no more extraordinary authority. He resigned his commands and took credit for restoring the Republic. But he arranged that the Senate, full of his loyal creatures, should “voluntarily” give him an enormous provincial command, consisting of Spain, Gaul, and Syria. Most of the legions were concentrated in these provinces; thus Octavian was the legal commander of most of the Roman army. Egypt was handled in a special manner. It was treated as a private possession of Octavian's and managed by his own appointee; therefore it was strictly not one of the Roman provinces.

The older, more pacified provinces (Asia, Africa, Greece, and others) were ruled by governors appointed by the Senate; thus historians speak of “imperial” (governed by the emperor) and “senatorial” provinces. Through this arrangement, Octavian showed respect to the Senate, which Caesar had largely ignored. This is another element in the statesmanship that Octavian was careful to display.

A few days later the Senate met again and conferred on Octavian the name **Augustus**, meaning “most honored” or “revered.” This title brought with it no powers, but its semidivine overtones were useful to Augustus (as we shall now call him) in establishing his supremacy. To this date we may fix the beginning of the Roman Empire. In 23 B.C. he resigned the consulship but received two additional powers from the Senate. His imperium



MAP 4.5 THE ROMAN PROVINCES, 44 B.C.–A.D. 14

This map shows the Roman provinces at the death of the emperor Augustus. The more pacified provinces, governed by the Senate, are outlined in green; those governed by the emperor through his legates are outlined in yellow. Which was the last province added before A.D. 14?

◆ For an online version, go to [www.mhhe.com/chambers9](http://www.mhhe.com/chambers9) > chapter 4 > book maps

was extended to cover not only his provinces but the whole Roman world. He also obtained the authority of a tribune (*tribunicia potestas*). As a patrician (by his adoption into Caesar's family), Augustus could not actually be a tribune. Yet his having the "power" of a tribune suggested that he was the patron and defender of the common people of Rome. This power also gave him the legal right to veto any actions and to offer legislation. He was usually called the *princeps*, an old republican word meaning roughly "first citizen," but not an official title. This was another of his skillful pretensions to have restored the Republic. Modern writers often refer to the system that Augustus established as the **Principate**.

### *Augustus, the First Roman Emperor*

**The Administration** The long reign of Augustus from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14 laid down many abiding features of the Roman Empire. He provided a cash payment from the public treasury to soldiers who had served for twenty years, thus securing the loyalty of the legions to

the state, not to their generals. To collect the money, he had to establish a reliable civil service and reform the taxation system, enrolling in effect the whole Roman world. He made the Empire more secure by extending and solidifying the northern frontier (see map 4.5) to reach the Rhine and Danube rivers. His control was all but absolute, but most people were relieved at the ending of the long period of civil war.

He created a permanent fire department and a postal service. He formed a body of soldiers in Rome, the Praetorian Guard. This force of some nine thousand men served as the city's police force and as Augustus' personal bodyguard, but after a few decades it came to play a decisive and violent role in the designation of new emperors.

**The Manipulation of Religion** Augustus also assumed the office of Pontifex Maximus, or high priest, and made attempts to revive the old Roman religion, probably as a device to promote political stability. He also grasped the possibilities of a ruler-cult. First, he assigned Julius

Caesar a place among the Roman gods and built a Temple to the Deified Julius. He also called himself *Divi Filiius*, or son of the divine Julius, though he was only the adopted son of Caesar. This verbal trick invited people to imagine that Augustus might some day become divine like Caesar. The poets Virgil and Horace, who wrote at his court, discreetly referred to Augustus as a future deity; and, in fact, Augustus was deified on his death, a political action that was imitated on the deaths of several later emperors who were thought to have ruled well. He also sponsored the building of temples to “Rome and Augustus”—a further suggestion, though not an offensive demand, that the emperor should be worshiped. It also became customary to make an offering to the Genius (protecting spirit) of the emperor.

Part of the religious revival was the rebuilding of scores of temples, but temples were by no means the only Augustan buildings; a famous saying was that “he found Rome made of brick and left it made of marble.” The prosperity of the later years of Augustus’ rule reflects the general peace that he brought to the Roman world. Freed of the expense of wars, Rome enjoyed a confidence that expressed itself in artistic and literary creativity.

**Legislation, Women, and the Family** Part of Augustus’ program was the revival and maintenance of traditional Roman values. In this effort religion naturally

played its part, but he also intervened in the areas of marriage and the family. His proclaimed intention was to restore the old Roman values of chastity and stability within the family, and the historian has little reason to doubt his sincerity. But a more realistic purpose was surely to rebuild the population of Italy after the losses in the civil wars. He therefore awarded special privileges to fathers of three or more children. The Augustan laws even penalized both men and women who did not marry or have children: for example, unmarried persons could not inherit a trust, and childless persons forfeited half their inheritances.

The legal rights of women also advanced under his legislation. Augustus issued strong laws against adultery, and women could now accuse a husband of adultery through a witness. Moreover, freedwomen (that is, former slaves) could now marry any man in Rome with the exception of senators, and their children held the rank of citizens. A beautiful monument from the Augustan period, the Altar of Peace (*Ara Pacis*), prominently displayed women of Augustus’ family—the first time that women were shown alongside men in public monumental art. Augustus was probably not working for what we would see as women’s liberation, nor did he have the fixed purpose of bringing women’s rights up to the level of those enjoyed by men; but these actions were at least a partial result of his work toward the repopulation of Italy.

## Summary

The Roman Republic never gave so much power to the people as the Athenian democracy did. The dominant forces were the great political families, allied through strategic marriages. As success in war created powerful commanders, their rivalry shattered the republican constitution. Augustus was Caesar’s adopted son and also his final successor, the last warlord of the Republic. He rose to power in shameless disloyalty and bloodshed. Through his careful control of the army and magistrates, he then gave Rome three decades of healing after the civil wars, and the success of his work is shown by the fact that the state did not relapse into civil war after his death. His personality seems to lack the panache of Caesar, who was invincible in the field and a talented man of letters, but his greatness before history is that he formed the structure from which modern Europe has descended—the Roman Empire.

### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. What features and conditions of life in Rome were especially conducive to the constant expansion of Rome’s territorial holdings?
2. The Roman Republic had a constitution that resembled that of a Greek city-state in many ways, but it collapsed and gave way to one-man rule. How might Roman statesmen and the Senate have preserved the republican constitution?

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