

its power with the popular assembly. Actually, the senate became more and more entrenched as the government of the Roman state. The senate changed from a traditional informal advisory body to the formal legislative body of Rome. The popular assembly voted only on bills that were offered by the consuls, and the consuls offered only bills that had been approved by the senate.

To summarize, the Roman response to the invasion of 391 B.C., reflected in the constitutional developments of the fourth century B.C., was mixed. An attempt at democratization was made in land holding and in politics, but most radically in the army. The changes, however, did not constitute a revolution. The patricians tried to integrate enough of the population into the citizenry so that the army would be popular enough to defend Rome and increase her territory. But the patrician class retained its power. Roman expansion during the next centuries was its show. There was, though, always the implicit understanding that the plebeians would go on strike from military service if they were not satisfied with their role in politics. Such a strike in fact occurred in 287 B.C. Then the plebeians won an important concession: after they agreed to let the patrician-dominated popular assembly continue to decide matters of war and peace, their exclusively plebeian assemblies were given the authority to pass laws that had the same force as the laws of the popular assembly.

A ROMAN PEACE FOR ALL OF ITALY

From their defeat at the hands of the Gauls at the beginning of the fourth century B.C. to the middle of the third century B.C., the Romans conquered most of Italy. Though their conquests were not as defensive as they insisted (whose are?), the Romans were frequently viewed as the protectors of order and city life. They usually defended the more settled towns against the more nomadic and predatory tribes. Rome was the city to organize other Italian cities and populations in part because of its central location, but also because of its superior military.

Roman soldiers submitted themselves to more rigorous drill and stricter discipline than their neighbors. The power of the commander, which was called the *imperium*, was absolute during military campaigns. Soldiers who broke ranks or slept on sentry duty were executed. When a whole unit was guilty of serious misconduct the punishment of "decimation" (executing every tenth man) was sometimes employed. Warfare was not a sport, as it was for the aristocratic armies of other cities. It was for the Romans a business that tapped the resources of the entire society.

ROMAN EXPANSION

With each expansion of Roman boundaries came new neighbors, new defenses, and new potential enemies. Long before the actual empire under Augustus, Rome was a militarized society.

Long before the Romans conquered all of Italy they had adequately secured the defense of their city. The wars after 287 B.C. (when the plebeian strike ended, giving the patricians effective authority over war and peace for sharing legislative authority with the plebeians on other matters) were increasingly directed against other empires rather than nomadic tribes. Rome's conquest of Italy was completed from 281 to 272 B.C. with the victory over the allies of the Greek Hellenistic Empire in southern Italy. But the conquest of Naples and Tarentum in southern Italy brought the Romans face to face with the Carthaginians in North Africa. Rome inherited the rivalries of the cities it conquered along with the conflict of all of southern Italy with the Carthaginians. While the Roman frontier had been a few miles from the city, it was necessary to defend the city only from the Celts, Gauls, and other tribes of central Italy. When the Roman boundaries became the Alps and the Mediterranean Sea, it seemed necessary to defend itself from Greece, Carthage, and the tribes of northern Europe.

NEW FRONTIERS MAKE NEW ENEMIES: CARTHAGE AND GREECE

From 262 to 146 B.C. Rome became occupied in continual wars with the Carthaginian and Greek empires. Later Roman historians were fond of viewing the first of these wars outside of Italy as an inevitable burden of Roman responsibility and as an essentially defensive war. The historian Polybius saw all of Roman history as the inevitable expansion of the divinely ordained Roman Empire (much as Americans later invoked "manifest destiny"—another type of divine inevitability). But Polybius and other Romans wanted it both ways: they wanted to believe that their expansion had been inevitable so that the Romans were blameless; but they also wanted to believe that their Roman ancestors had been more than passive tools of destiny. Therefore, they argued that each act of expansion was the product of "hard decisions" as well as of fate. They pointed out that each expansion brought Rome into contact with new enemies. They assumed that these new enemies had the will and the ability to conquer Rome (or a Roman province). Consequently, it was necessary—for defensive reasons—to strike first, or when the time was most propitious to Rome. Thus, these "defensive wars" were always blameless, since they merely worked the "inevitable" to the best interests of Rome, which (every Roman knew) was to the best interests of civilization.

The first war with Carthage (called the First Punic War) began in 264 B.C. because Rome had recently conquered all of Italy and was in a position to be concerned with Carthage in North Africa, Spain, and part of Sicily. According to the historian Polybius, the Romans feared that the Carthaginians were encircling Rome by threatening Sicily and "all of the coasts of Italy." Few Romans noted that Carthage had been unable to conquer all of Sicily after two hundred years, so that the likelihood of Carthage's conquering all of Italy was rather slight. A few

imposed on the merchants. Those who violated the new laws were imprisoned. Rebellious noble families were slaughtered. State monopolies in salt, iron, and wine were established. Government bureaucrats were now selected from the lower ranks of society. A university was established to train candidates for the government entrance examinations. Finally, Emperor Wu attempted to decrease the military burden. He observed:

In the early years of the Han dynasty, there was an increasing number of incursions into China by the four kinds of barbarians. If I had not changed this, later generations would have been helpless. If I had not sent armies out on punitive expeditions, the empire would not now be at peace. But, if one does these things, one cannot avoid putting a heavy burden on the people. If later generations repeat what I have done, they will be following in the footsteps of the ruined dynasty of Qin.⁶

If Emperor Wu had been entirely successful, we would not hear of the need to repeat his efforts in later years. In fact, however, the dispossession of the peasantry and the need for land redistribution became a constant theme in the Han dynasty. These efforts culminated with Wang Mang, the usurper who ended the Former Han dynasty. An energetic revolutionary, much like Julius Caesar, he implemented a sweeping program that reunited the forces of the old aristocracy against him. Wang's program was described in the *Han History*. Under the Qin, he said, "the accumulation of property began. Greed and vice came into being. The powerful counted their fields in thousands, while the weak had not even the space to insert the point of an awl." The Han, he continued, reduced the land tax to one-thirtieth, but that had little meaning for the peasants who had become tenants and had to pay their landlord half of their crop. The dogs and horses of the rich ate better than poor peasants, he said. What would he do?

Henceforth, the land of the empire shall be designated 'The King's Land'. Slaves shall be styled 'private dependents'. Neither may be bought or sold. Families with less than eight male members, but with more than twelve acres of farmland each, shall divide up the surplus and give it to rural groups of nine neighboring families. Thus, in accordance with this system, those without land are now to receive it.⁷

Wang Mang's short-lived Xin [Hsin] dynasty (A.D. 9-23) was no more successful than Caesar's triumvirate. His land redistribution measure was abandoned two years after it was passed. Nor was he able to reduce the military presence on the frontiers. He waged an aggressive campaign against the Huns on the frontier with an army of over three hundred thousand men. But the diversion of manpower from the farms to the frontier was partially responsible, along with the disastrous change in

Tenny Frank in *Roman Imperialism* (up to the second century B.C.) and by E. Badian in *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic* (for the later period). M. I. Finley has challenged his anti-Soviet agenda in *Aspects of Antiquity*. Finley's *The Ancient Economy* is also a useful introduction, as is *The Economic Decline of Empires*, edited by Carlo Cipolla.

On the Roman army we have the recent *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire* by Lawrence Keppie and (for the later period) *The Roman Imperial Army* by Graham Webster. G. R. Watson's *The Roman Soldier* is also valuable. More general studies of Roman social history are P. A. Brunt's *Social Conflicts in the Roman Republic* and Ramsay MacMullen's *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284*.

The student who wishes to go beyond some of the issues raised in this chapter in Roman history should also be aware of the multivolume *The Cambridge Ancient History* and the earlier multivolume classics T. Mommsen's *The History of Rome* and Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. There are also some good shorter, specialized studies of Roman history: H. H. Scullard's *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 B.C. to A.D. 68*, Michael Grant's *The World of Rome*, Lily Ross Taylor's *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar*, Ronald Syme's *The Roman Revolution*, and the highly interpretive *The Romans* by R. H. Barrow.

On China, we have found Mark Elvin's *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* extremely valuable. Herrlee G. Creel's *The Origins of Statecraft in China*, vol. 1, concentrates on the Western Zhou [Chou] but has interesting things to say about later periods, including comparisons of Roman and Chinese attitudes toward the military. *Chinese Civilization and Bureaucracy* by Etienne Balazs has a number of essays relevant to this subject. A good general history is Jacques Gernet's *A History of Chinese Civilization*.

Other valuable studies that deal with the subject of this chapter are Cho-yun Hsu's *Han Agriculture: The Formation of Early Chinese Agrarian Economy*, the same author's *Ancient China in Transition*, Ying-shih Yu's *Trade and Expansion in Han China*, and N. L. Swann's *Food and Money in Ancient China*. More specialized are Pan Ku's *History of the Former Han Dynasty* and the same author's *Wang Mang: A Translation of the Official Account of His Rise to Power*. The former is also available in an abridged form as *Courtier & Commoner in Ancient China: Selections from the History of Former Han by Pan Ku*, translated by Burton Watson. Students should also be familiar with the work of the great historian of Han China Sima Qian [Ssu-ma Chien], *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, two volumes, also available as Burton Watson's *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China*.

NOTES

1. The *Zao Zhuan* is a fourth-century B.C. account based, in part, on the earlier *Spring and Summer Annals*, traditionally attributed to Confucius. These selections are from the discussion of the military in Herrlee G. Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 258-259.
2. Cited in Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), p. 28.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 29, quoting *Han History*.

Chronological Table of The Classical World

1000 B.C.-A.D. 500

Greece and Rome	Middle East and Africa	India	China
Trojan War c. 1200 B.C.	<i>Genesis</i> 850-500 B.C.		Zhou dynasty 1027-256 B.C.
Homer c. 700 B.C.	Zoroaster and Hebrew Prophets 650-550 B.C.	<i>Mahabharata</i> c. 600-300 B.C.	Lao Zi c. 600 B.C.
	Persian Empire of Cyrus and Darius 550-486 B.C.	Buddha c. 500 B.C.	Confucius 551-479 B.C.
Socrates 469-399 B.C.			Warring States Period c. 463-222 B.C.
Plato 427-347 B.C.			
Rome sacked by Gauls 391 B.C.			
Aristotle 384-322 B.C.			Mencius 372-298 B.C.
Alexander 356-323 B.C.	Alexandria f. 331 B.C.	Mauryan dynasty 321-183 B.C.	
First Punic War 264-241 B.C.	Parthian Empire of Persia 248 B.C.-A.D. 224	Ashoka 269-232 B.C.	Rise of Chinese state and first Chinese Empire:
Second Punic War 218-201 B.C.		Political fragmentation c. 184 B.C.-A.D. 320 and development of salvation (Mahayana) Buddhism	Qin dynasty 221-206 B.C.
			Former Han dynasty 202 B.C.-A.D. 8
Third Punic War 149-146 B.C.			

c. = circa (about) *d.* = died *f.* = founded *r.* = ruled