

Readings on the Roman Republic

CLAS 1110, Prof. Yarrow

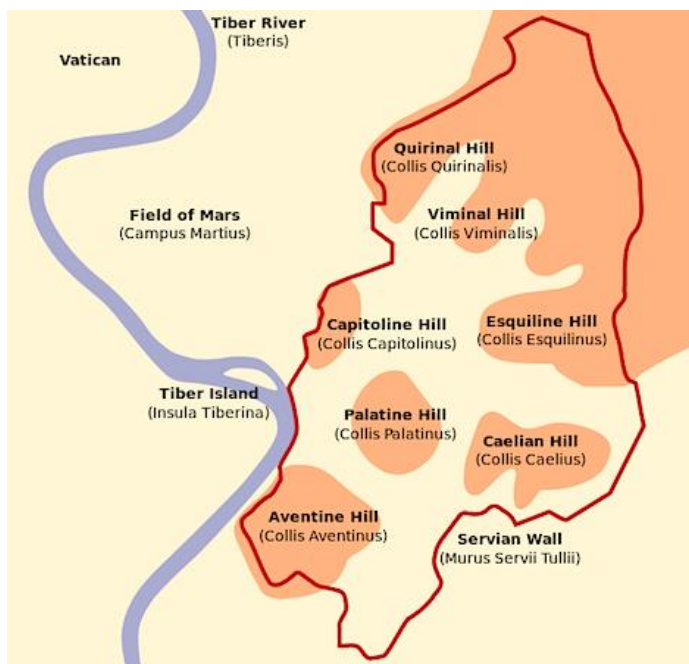
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Background

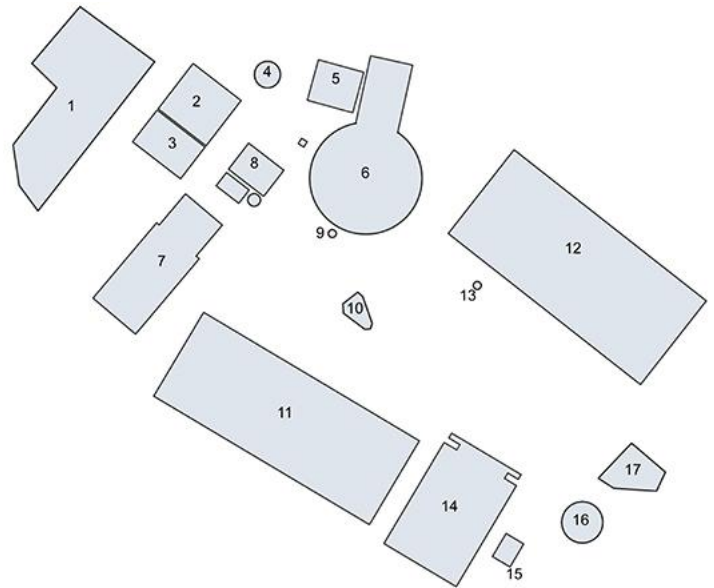
adapted from *Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World*

1. The origins of Rome

Although the legends surrounding the beginnings of Rome are ancient, they are broadly unhistorical, but certain details, like the location of early settlements, are consistent with the physical remains. The archaeology reveals hilltop settlements on the site of Rome from the end of the bronze age (c.1000 bce), such as those found throughout Latium Vetus. By 700 the Palatine settlement included the Forum valley and towards the end of the 7th cent. the Forum was laid out as a public meeting-place with monumental buildings marking the transformation into an organized city-state. Although heavily influenced by the outside world, Rome remained fundamentally a Latin city. According to the literary sources, the city was originally ruled by kings, which is likely enough, but no confidence can be placed in the complex dynastic history or the dating of the canonical seven.

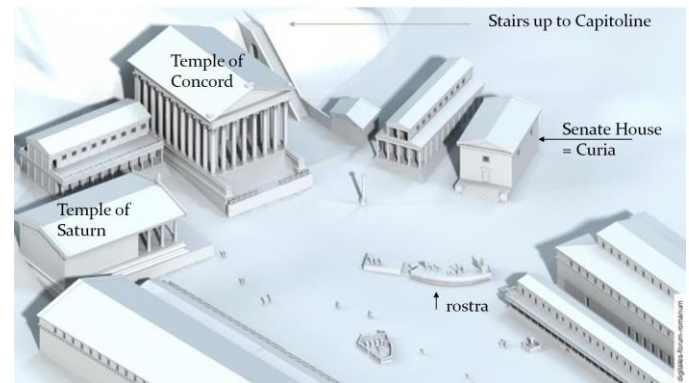


1 - basic regions of Rome - the forum is in valley between the Capitoline, Palatine and Esquiline hills



The Forum Romanum in the Late Republican period: 1) Tabularium; 2) Temple of Concord; 3) Basilica Opimia; 4) Tullianum; 5) Basilica Porcia; 6) Curia and Comitium; 7) Temple of Saturn; 8) Senaculum; 9) Vulcanal; 10) Lacus Curtius; 11) Basilica Sempronica; 12) Basilica Fulvia; 13) Shrine of Venus Cloacina; 14) Temple of the Castors; 15) Fountain of Juturna; 16) Temple of Vesta; 17) Regia (Source file, CC BY-SA 3.0)

2 - schematic forum plan: curia = senate house. The rostra was on the far side of comitium from the curia.



3 - reconstruction of the forum c. 100 BCE

2. The early republic and the 'Struggle of the Orders'

The received narrative of the last king, Tarquinius Superbus, says that he was expelled in an aristocratic coup, and replaced by a republic under two annually elected consuls. Given that the *Fasti* record consuls from c. 500, a late 6th-cent. date for the beginning of the republic is likely to be correct. During the early republic an aristocratic clique known as the patricians retained power. During military and economic difficulties, the poorer citizens suffered most, esp. without the protection of the kings who had relied on their support. In protest the aggrieved are said to have withdrawn from the city in 494. These *plebs* formed an assembly, elected

their own officers (tribunes and aediles), and set up their own religious cult (such as those to Liber Pater and Ceres). In the 4th cent. (if not earlier) richer plebeians began to use these organizations to break down the privileges of the patricians. With a series of legislation between 367 and c.287, plebeians gained access to the higher magistracies, entrance into the major priestly colleges, and finally their plebiscites became equivalent to laws. Other gains included the abolishment of debt-bondage in 326, access to public land, and allotments of conquered territory for the poorer citizens.

The alleviation of the burdens of the poor ended the plebeian struggle as a radical movement. The main result was the emergence of the nobility (*nōbilēs*), consisting of both patricians and plebeians, a new ruling class based on wealth, tenure of offices (*cursus honorum*), and descent from former office-holders. After the *lex Ovinia* in the later 4th cent. the Senate took an increasingly important role in governmental administration and policy formation; this arose from the increasing complexity of government and territorial expansion.

3. The Roman conquest of Italy

Despite the sack of the city by a Celtic war-band in 390 (or, more likely, 386), the period from the beginning of the republic down to 275 BC saw Rome gain control of peninsular Italy. The Latins resisted Roman leadership in the early 5th cent. and again in the mid-4th cent. However, the overall strength of the Latin alliance allowed for successful forays in both the north and south. Notable adversaries and spheres of action included Sabines, Aequi, Volsci, Etruscan Veii (captured in 396), Samnium, Campania, the territory of *Tarquinii and Caere. Rome completed the conquest of the peninsula by forcing all its peoples to become allies, either by defeating them in war or compelling them to surrender in advance, defeating an anti-Roman alliance of Samnites, Gauls, Etruscans, and Umbrians at Sentinum in 295. Final consolidation was marked by the defeat in 275 of Pyrrhus of Epirus (A Hellenistic king following the model of Alexander and the diadochi!) who had been summoned by the Tarentum to lead the war against Rome. This brought Rome to the attention of a wider world; the defeat of a powerful king by a hitherto unknown Italian republic created a sensation in the Hellenistic east. Roman success relied on the foundation of strategic colonies on a network of well-built military roads, the loyalty of the local aristocracies within the allied states who saw the oligarchic republic as their natural advocate, and the cohesiveness of the system of alliances which resulted from continuous and successful warfare.



4 - Language Groups of Ancient Italy

4. Roman imperialism and its consequences

Rome's first overseas war, the First Punic War (264–241), despite initial heavy losses, led to the establishment of the first province, Sicily. Twenty years later the Saguntum affair sparked the Second Punic War, but Hannibal's invasion of Italy (218) failed to win over Rome's Italian allies, in spite of spectacular victories, forcing his withdrawal from Italy in 204 and defeat at Zama in 202.

From this point onwards Rome hegemony expanded throughout the Mediterranean. By c.175 Rome overran the Po Valley, Liguria, and the Istrian peninsula, by 133 Lusitania and Celtiberia (down to 133), and finally Gallia Narbonensis by 121. The Romans ventured east of the Adriatic into Illyria in 229 and 219. Half-hearted engagements with the Macedonian king, Philip V began in 215 in response to his alliance with Hannibal, the so-called First Macedonian War (214–205). After Zama, Rome embarked in earnest on the Second Macedonian War (200), defeating Philip at Cynoscephalae (197). T. Quinctius Flaminius pronounced 'the freedom of the Greeks' (194). However, Roman efforts to control events in the Greek world by diplomacy and threats were unsuccessful. In 191–188 the Romans invaded Asia Minor, and the Third Macedonian War (171–167) removed the Antigonid throne. The revolts of the 140s in Macedonia and Greece were crushed and provinces established.

Dominance became equated with ruthlessness – Corinth and Carthage were razed in 146. Rome now took provinces in Africa, Asia (133), Cilicia (101), and Cyrene (96). The Romans are thus replacing the rule and influence of the Hellenistic kings.

This growth vastly increased the wealth of the elite, securing the dominance of the patrician-plebeian nobility. Through the influence of Greek culture rich Romans adopted the leisure style of the Hellenistic world. The *plebs* and the Italian allies acquiesced as long as they benefited from the proceeds of military conquest. But conquest had unforeseen effects on the economy and society of Italy. The peasant proprietors who formed the backbone of the Roman army could not maintain their farms due to prolonged military service and in the face of pressure from the land-hungry elite. The overseas conquests not only supplied the capital to purchase large estates, but also the slave labour needed to introduce new methods of farming, designed to provide absentee landlords with an income from cash crops. The new methods gave rise to further problems in the shape of a series of slave revolts, most notable in Sicily (132 and 103-101). Furthermore, the property qualification for army service made the impoverished peasants ineligible for recruitment. The result was a manpower crisis, as well as growing social tension, which increasingly threatened political consensus.

5. The Roman Revolution

In 133 a tribune, Ti. Sempronius Gracchus, proposed to enforce the long-neglected limit of 500 *iugera* on holdings of *ager publicus* (= public land), and to redistribute the surplus to the poor in plots of 30 *iugera* which would become private land.



5 - Map for scale, large box is approximately 500 *iugera*, small box is approximately 30 *iugera*

Furious opposition led to his murder. Ten years later his brother, C. Sempronius Gracchus suffered the same fate, when he attempted to bring in a wide-ranging series of

reforms, embracing provincial administration, the grain supply, judicial reform, and the status of the Italian allies. The use of violence in civil disputes became a destructive trend in republican politics.

In the following generation the oligarchy showed itself corrupt and incompetent in the face of military difficulties such as a war in Africa and an invasion of Italy by migrating German tribes. This allowed C. Marius, a 'new man', to hold an unprecedented succession of consulships, and to recruit a professional army from the proletariat. These measures solved the military problems, but had fatal consequences. Ambitious nobles were now able gain personal power through armed force by exploiting the desire of the poor to redress their grievances.

Matters erupted in the aftermath of the Social War (91–89), the revolt of the Italian allies who had taken up arms in protest to their exclusion from the Roman citizenship, and an invasion of the E. provinces by Mithradates VI of Pontus. The senatorial appointment of L. Cornelius Sulla to the command against Mithradates was overturned by the plebeian assembly in favour of Marius (88). Over the next seven years Sulla and Marius' supporters engaged in a series of bloody struggles for control of the city. As victor, Sulla took the dictatorship in 81, purged his opponents by means of proscriptions, and attempted to reform the constitution, strengthening the senate and abolishing most of the powers of the tribunes.

These efforts were ineffectual, however, and fresh military crises brought Pompey and Crassus to power. As consuls in 70 they repealed most of Sulla's laws. By tribunician plebiscite Pompey gained first unprecedented power to eradicate

pirates (67), and then the command against Mithradates (66) to replace L. Licinius Lucullus, the senate's commander. While Pompey completely reorganized the east, Cicero ruthlessly put down the conspiracy of Catiline (63). In 62 Pompey returned, a conquering hero, but the optimates, led by Lucullus and M. Porcius Cato, blocked the land allotments promised to his veterans. This led to an irresistible alliance between Pompey, Crassus and *Caesar, the so-called 'First Triumvirate', based on their

respective popular support, unlimited funds, and ingenuity. As consul in 59 Caesar enacted his partner's measures, and rewarded himself with a special command in Gaul (58–

50). After Crassus' death (53), fear of Caesar drove Pompey and the optimates closer together, as they attempted to frustrate Caesar's aim of passing directly from his Gallic command to a second consulship. Caesar refused to disarm, and in 49 he invaded Italy, sparking a civil war. Pompey was eventually beaten at Pharsalus (48).

As consul and dictator for life Caesar embarked on a series of visionary schemes, but his monarchical tendencies went against republican tradition of the nobles. On 15 March 44 a group of senators led by Brutus and Cassius stabbed him to death, but the conspirators failed to restore the republic. Mark Antony and M. Aemilius Lepidus, supported by Caesar's armies, joined with Caesar's heir, the 19-year-old Caesar Octavian, to form a Triumvirate, whereupon they divided the empire between them, and proscribing their opponents (including Cicero). Octavian and Antony squeezed out Lepidus and at the battle of Actium in 31 Octavian gained full control.

Extracts from Ancient Texts

Polybius, fragments from book 6

Polybius was a member of the ruling elite in mainland Greece. Just as he was coming to the height of his political and military career, the Romans defeated Macedonia and deported 1000 Greek leaders to Italy for indefinite detention (168 BCE). As a deportee he managed to ingratiate himself into the family of Rome's most powerful generals. He wrote his history during his detention.

As you read this ask yourself: What sounds familiar from before the midterm? Does anything seem familiar from the US constitution? What are Polybius' own ethics: what does he assume is good or bad?

From the Preface

2 1 I am aware that some will wonder why I have deferred until the present occasion my account of the Roman constitution, thus being obliged to interrupt the due course of my narrative. [=the last book ended with the disastrous defeat of the Roman by Hannibal at Cannae] 2 Now, that I have always regarded this account as one of the essential parts of my whole design, I have, I am sure, made evident in numerous passages and chiefly in the prefatory remarks dealing with the fundamental principles of this history, where I said that the best and most valuable result I aim at is that readers of my work may gain a knowledge how it was and by virtue of what peculiar political institutions that in less than in

fifty-three years nearly the whole world was overcome and fell under the single dominion of Rome, a thing the like of which had never happened before. 4 Having made up my mind to deal with the matter, I found no occasion more suitable than the present for turning my attention to the constitution and testing the truth of what I am about to say on the subject. 5 For just as those who pronounce in private on the characters of bad or good men, do not, when they really resolve to put their opinion to the test, choose for investigation those periods of their life which they passed in composure and repose, but seasons when they were afflicted by adversity or blessed with success, deeming the sole test of a perfect man to be the power of bearing high-mindedly and bravely the most complete reverses of fortune, so it should be in our judgement of states. Therefore, as I could not see any greater or more violent change in the fortunes of the Romans than this which has happened in our own times, I reserved my account of the constitution for the present occasion. . . .

8 What chiefly attracts and chiefly benefits students of history is just this — the study of causes and the consequent power of choosing what is best in each case. 9 Now the chief cause of success or the reverse in all matters is the form of a state's constitution; 10 for springing from this, as from a fountain-head, all designs and plans of action not only originate, but reach their consummation.

On the Forms of States

3 1 In the case of those Greek states which have often risen to greatness and have often experienced a complete change of fortune, it is an easy matter both to describe their past and to pronounce as to their future. 2 For there is no difficulty in reporting the known facts, and it is not hard to foretell the future by inference from the past. 3 But about the Roman state it is neither at all easy to explain the present situation owing to the complicated character of the constitution, nor to foretell the future owing to our ignorance of the peculiar features of public and private life at Rome in the past. 4 Particular attention and study are therefore required if one wishes to attain a clear general view of the distinctive qualities of their constitution.

5 Most of those whose object it has been to instruct us methodically concerning such matters, distinguish three kinds of constitutions, which they call kingship, aristocracy, and democracy. 6 Now we should, I think, be quite justified in asking them to enlighten us as to whether they represent these three to be the sole varieties or rather to be the best;

7 for in either case my opinion is that they are wrong. For it is evident that we must regard as the best constitution a combination of all these three varieties, since we have had proof of this not only theoretically but by actual experience, Lycurgus having been the first to draw up a constitution — that of Sparta — on this principle. 9 Nor on the other hand can we admit that these are the only three varieties; for we have witnessed monarchical and tyrannical governments, which while they differ very widely from kingship, yet bear a certain resemblance to it, 10 this being the reason why monarchs in general falsely assume and use, as far as they can, the regal title. 11 There have also been several oligarchical constitutions which seem to bear some likeness to aristocratic ones, though the divergence is, generally, as wide as possible. 12 The same holds good about democracies.

4 1 The truth of what I say is evident from the following considerations. 2 It is by no means every monarchy which we can call straight off a kingship, but only that which is voluntarily accepted by the subjects and where they are governed rather by an appeal to their reason than by fear and force. 3 Nor again can we style every oligarchy an aristocracy, but only that where the government is in the hands of a selected body of the justest and wisest men. 4 Similarly that is no true democracy in which the whole crowd of citizens is free to do whatever they wish or purpose, 5 but when, in a community where it is traditional and customary to reverence the gods, to honour our parents, to respect our elders, and to obey the laws, the will of the greater number prevails, this is to be called a democracy. 6 We should therefore assert that there are six kinds of governments, the three above mentioned which are in everyone's mouth and the three which are naturally allied to them, I mean monarchy, oligarchy, and mob-rule. 7 Now the first of these to come into being is monarchy, its growth being natural and unaided; and next arises kingship derived from monarchy by the aid of art and by the correction of defects. 8 Monarchy first changes into its vicious allied form, tyranny; and next, the abolishment of both gives birth to aristocracy. 9 Aristocracy by its very nature degenerates into oligarchy; and when the commons inflamed by anger take vengeance on this government for its unjust rule, democracy comes into being; and in due course the licence and lawlessness of this form of government produces mob-rule to complete the series. 11 The truth of what I have just said will be quite clear to anyone who pays due attention to such beginnings, origins, and changes as are in each case natural. 12 For he alone who has seen how each form naturally arises and develops, will be able to see when, how, and where the growth, perfection, change, and end of each are likely to occur again. 13 And it is to the Roman constitution above all that this method, I think, may be

successfully applied, since from the outset its formation and growth have been due to natural causes.

5 1 Perhaps this theory of the natural transformations into each other of the different forms of government is more elaborately set forth by Plato and certain other philosophers; but as the arguments are subtle and are stated at great length, they are beyond the reach of all but a few.

2 I therefore will attempt to give a short summary of the theory, as far as I consider it to apply to the actual history of facts and to appeal to the common intelligence of mankind.

3 For if there appear to be certain omissions in my general exposition of it, the detailed discussion which follows will afford the reader ample compensation for any difficulties now left unsolved.

4 What then are the beginnings I speak of and what is the first origin of political societies? 5 When owing to floods, famines, failure of crops or other such causes there occurs such a destruction of the human race as tradition tells us has more than once happened, and as we must believe will often happen again, 6 all arts and crafts perishing at the same time, then in the course of time, when springing from the survivors as from seeds men have again increased in numbers 7 and just like other animals form herds — it being a matter of course that they too should herd together with those of their kind owing to their natural weakness — it is a necessary consequence that the man who excels in bodily strength and in courage will lead and rule over the rest. 8 We observe and should regard as a most genuine work of nature this very phenomenon in the case of the other animals which act purely by instinct and among whom the strongest are always indisputably the masters — 9 I speak of bulls, boars, cocks, and the like. 9 It is probable then that at the beginning men lived thus, herding together like animals and following the lead of the strongest and bravest, the ruler's strength being here the sole limit to his power and the name we should give his rule being monarchy.

10 But when in time feelings of sociability and companionship begin to grow in such gatherings of men, than kingship has struck root; and the notions of goodness, justice, and their opposites begin to arise in men. 6 1 The manner in which these notions come into being is as follows. 2 Men being all naturally inclined to sexual intercourse, and the consequence of this being the birth of children, whenever one of those who have been reared does not on growing up show gratitude to those who reared him or defend them, but on the contrary takes to speaking ill of them or ill treating them, it is evident that he will displease and offend those who have

been familiar with his parents and have witnessed the care and pains they spent on attending to and feeding their children. 4 For seeing that men are distinguished from the other animals by possessing the faculty of reason, it is obviously improbable that such a difference of conduct should escape them, as it escapes the other animals: 5 they will notice the thing and be displeased at what is going on, looking to the future and reflecting that they may all meet with the same treatment. 6 Again when a man who has been helped or succoured when in danger by another does not show gratitude to his preserver, but even goes to the length of attempting to do him injury, it is clear that those who become aware of it will naturally be displeased and offended by such conduct, sharing the resentment of their injured neighbour and imagining themselves in the same situation. 7 From all this there arises in everyone a notion of the meaning and theory of duty, which is the beginning and end of justice. 8 Similarly, again, when any man is foremost in defending his fellows from danger, and braves and awaits the onslaught of the most powerful beasts, it is natural that he should receive marks of favour and honour from the people, while the man who acts in the opposite manner will meet with reprobation and dislike. 9 From this again some idea of what is base and what is noble and of what constitutes the difference is likely to arise among the people; and noble conduct will be admired and imitated because it is advantageous, while base conduct will be avoided. 10 Now when the leading and most powerful man among the people always throws the weight of his authority on the side of the notions on such matters which generally prevail, and when in the opinion of his subjects he apportions rewards and penalties according to desert, they yield obedience to him no longer because they fear his force, but rather because their judgement approves him; and they join in maintaining his rule even if he is quite enfeebled by age, defending him with one consent and battling against those who conspire to overthrow his rule. 12 Thus by insensible degrees the monarch becomes a king, ferocity and force having yielded the supremacy to reason.

7 1 Thus is formed naturally among men the first notion of goodness and justice, and their opposites; this is the beginning and birth of true kingship. 2 For the people maintain the supreme power not only in the hands of these men themselves, but in those of their descendants, from the conviction that those born from and reared by such men will also have principles like to theirs. 3 And if they ever are displeased with the descendants, they now choose their kings and rulers no longer for their bodily strength and brute courage, but for the excellency of their judgement and

reasoning powers, as they have gained experience from actual facts of the difference between the one class of qualities and the other. 4 In old times, then, those who had once been chosen to the royal office continued to hold it until they grew old, fortifying and enclosing fine strongholds with walls and acquiring lands, in the one case for the sake of the security of their subjects and in the other to provide them with abundance of the necessities of life. 5 And while pursuing these aims, they were exempt from all vituperation or jealousy, as neither in their dress nor in their food did they make any great distinction, they lived very much like everyone else, not keeping apart from the people. 6 But when they received the office by hereditary succession and found their safety now provided for, and more than sufficient provision of food, 7 they gave way to their appetites owing to this superabundance, and came to think that the rulers must be distinguished from their subjects by a peculiar dress, that there should be a peculiar luxury and variety in the dressing and serving of their viands, and that they should meet with no denial in the pursuit of their amours, however lawless. 8 These habits having given rise in the one case to envy and offence and in the other to an outburst of hatred and passionate resentment, the kingship changed into a tyranny; the first steps towards its overthrow were taken by the subjects, and conspiracies began to be formed. 9 These conspiracies were not the work of the worst men, but of the noblest, most high-spirited, and most courageous, because such men are least able to brook the insolence of princes. 8 1 The people now having got leaders, would combine with them against the ruling powers for the reasons I stated above; kingship and monarchy would be utterly abolished, and in their place aristocracy would begin to grow. 2 For the commons, as if bound to pay at once their debt of gratitude to the abolishers of monarchy, would make them their leaders and entrust their destinies to them. 3 At first these chiefs gladly assumed this charge and regarded nothing as of greater importance than the common interest, administering the private and public affairs of the people with paternal solicitude. 4 But here again when children inherited this position of authority from their fathers, having no experience of misfortune and none at all of civil equality and liberty of speech, and having been brought up from the cradle amid the evidences of the power and high position of their fathers, they abandoned themselves some to greed of gain and unscrupulous money-making, others to indulgence in wine and the convivial excess which accompanies it, and others again to the violation of women and the rape of boys; and thus converting the aristocracy into an oligarchy aroused in the people feelings similar to those of which I just spoke, and in consequence met with the same disastrous end as the

tyrant. 9 1 For whenever anyone who has noticed the jealousy and hatred with which you are regarded by the citizens, has the courage to speak or act against the chiefs of the state he has the whole mass of the people ready to back him. 2 Next, when they have either killed or banished the oligarchs, they no longer venture to set a king over them, as they still remember with terror the injustice they suffered from the former ones, nor can they entrust the government with confidence to a select few, with the evidence before them of their recent error in doing so. 3 Thus the only hope still surviving unimpaired is in themselves, and to this they resort, making the state a democracy instead of an oligarchy and assuming the responsibility for the conduct of affairs. 4 Then as long as some of those survive who experienced the evils of oligarchical dominion, they are well pleased with the present form of government, and set a high value on equality and freedom of speech. But when a new generation arises and the democracy falls into the hands of the grandchildren of its founders, they have become so accustomed to freedom and equality that they no longer value them, and begin to aim at pre-eminence; and it is chiefly those of ample fortune who fall into this error. 6 So when they begin to lust for power and cannot attain it through themselves or their own good qualities, they ruin their estates, tempting and corrupting the people in every possible way. 7 And hence when by their foolish thirst for reputation they have created among the masses an appetite for gifts and the habit of receiving them, democracy in its turn is abolished and changes into a rule of force and violence. 8 For the people, having grown accustomed to feed at the expense of others and to depend for their livelihood on the property of others, as soon as they find a leader who is enterprising but is excluded from the houses of office by his penury, institute the rule of violence; 9 and now uniting their forces massacre, banish, and plunder, until they degenerate again into perfect savages and find once more a master and monarch.

10 Such is the cycle of political revolution, the course appointed by nature in which constitutions change, disappear, and finally return to the point from which they started. 11 Anyone who clearly perceives this may indeed in speaking of the future of any state be wrong in his estimate of the time the process will take, but if his judgement is not tainted by animosity or jealousy, he will very seldom be mistaken as to the stage of growth or decline it has reached, and as to the form into which it will change. 12 And especially in the case of the Roman state will this method enable us to arrive at a knowledge of its formation, growth, and greatest perfection, and likewise of the change for the worse which is sure to follow some day. 13 For, as I said, this state, more

than any other, has been formed and has grown naturally, and will undergo a natural decline and change to its contrary. 14 The reader will be able to judge of the truth of this from the subsequent parts of this work.

10 1 At present I will give a brief account of the legislation of Lycurgus, a matter not alien to my present purpose. 2 Lycurgus had perfectly well understood that all the above changes take place necessarily and naturally, and had taken into consideration that every variety of constitution which is simple and formed on principle is precarious, as it is soon perverted into the corrupt form which is proper to it and naturally follows on it. 3 For just as rust in the case of iron and wood-worms and ship-worms in the case of timber are inbred pests, and these substances, even though they escape all external injury, fall a prey to the evils engendered in them, so each constitution has a vice engendered in it and inseparable from it. In kingship it is despotism, in aristocracy oligarchy, 5 and in democracy the savage rule of violence; and it is impossible, as I said above, that each of these should not in course of time change into this vicious form. 6 Lycurgus, then, foreseeing this, did not make his constitution simple and uniform, but united in it all the good and distinctive features of the best governments, so that none of the principles should grow unduly and be perverted into its allied evil, but that, the force of each being neutralized by that of the others, neither of them should prevail and outbalance another, but that the constitution should remain for long in a state of equilibrium like a well-trimmed boat, kingship being guarded from arrogance by the fear of the commons, who were given a sufficient share in the government, and the commons on the other hand not venturing to treat the kings with contempt from fear of the elders, who being selected from the best citizens would be sure all of them to be always on the side of justice; 10 so that that part of the state which was weakest owing to its subservience to traditional custom, acquired power and weight by the support and influence of the elders. 11 The consequence was that by drawing up his constitution thus he preserved liberty at Sparta for a longer period than is recorded elsewhere.

12 Lycurgus then, foreseeing, by a process of reasoning, whence and how events naturally happen, constructed his constitution untaught by adversity, 13 but the Romans while they have arrived at the same final result as regards their form of government, 14 have not reached it by any process of reasoning, but by the discipline of many struggles and troubles, and always choosing the best by the light of the experience gained in disaster have thus reached the same

result as Lycurgus, that is to say, the best of all existing constitutions.

On the Roman Constitution at its Prime

11 1 From the crossing of Xerxes to Greece . . . and for thirty years after this period, it was always one of those polities which was an object of special study, and it was at its best and nearest to perfection at the time of the Hannibalic war, the period at which I interrupted my narrative to deal with it. 2 Therefore now that I have described its growth, I will explain what were the conditions at the time when by their defeat at Cannae the Romans were brought face to face with disaster.

3 I am quite aware that to those who have been born and bred under the Roman Republic my account of it will seem somewhat imperfect owing to the omission of certain details.

4 For as they have complete knowledge of it and practical acquaintance with all its parts, having been familiar with these customs and institutions from childhood, they will not be struck by the extent of the information I give but will demand in addition all I have omitted: they will not think that the author has purposely omitted small peculiarities, but owing to ignorance he has been silent regarding the origins of many things and some points of capital importance. 6 Had I mentioned them, they would not have been impressed by my doing so, regarding them as small and trivial points, but as they are omitted they will demand their inclusion as if they were vital matters, through a desire themselves to appear better informed than the author. 7 Now a good critic should not judge authors by what they omit, but by what they relate, and if he finds any falsehood in this, he may conclude that the omissions are due to ignorance; 8 but if all the writer says is true, he should admit that he has been silent about these matters deliberately and not from ignorance.

9 These remarks are meant for those who find fault with authors in cavilling rather than just spirit. . . .

10 In so far as any view of matter we form applies to the right occasion, so far expressions of approval or blame are sound. When circumstances change, and when applied to these changed conditions, the most excellent and true reflections of authors seem often not only not acceptable, but utterly offensive. . . .

11 The three kinds of government that I spoke of above all shared in the control of the Roman state. And such fairness and propriety in all respects was shown in the use of these

three elements for drawing up the constitution and in its subsequent administration that it was impossible even for a native to pronounce with certainty whether the whole system was aristocratic, democratic, or monarchical. This was indeed only natural. 12 For if one fixed one's eyes on the power of the consuls, the constitution seemed completely monarchical and royal; if on that of the senate it seemed again to be aristocratic; and when one looked at the power of the masses, it seemed clearly to be a democracy. 13 The parts of the state falling under the control of each element were and with a few modifications still are as follows.

12 1 The consuls, previous to leading out their legions, exercise authority in Rome over all public affairs, 2 since all the other magistrates except the tribunes are under them and bound to obey them, and it is they who introduce embassies to the senate. 3 Besides this it is they who consult the senate on matters of urgency, they who carry out in detail the provisions of its decrees. Again as concerns all affairs of state administered by the people it is their duty to take these under their charge, to summon assemblies, to introduce measures, and to preside over the execution of the popular decrees. As for preparation for war and the general conduct of operations in the field, here their power is almost uncontrolled; for they are empowered to make what demands they choose on the allies, to appoint military tribunes, to levy soldiers and select those who are fittest for service. 7 They also have the right of inflicting, when on active service, punishment on anyone under their command; 8 and they are authorized to spend any sum they decide upon from the public funds, being accompanied by a quaestor who faithfully executes their instructions. 9 So that if one looks at this part of the administration alone, one may reasonably pronounce the constitution to be a pure monarchy or kingship. 10 I may remark that any changes in these matters or in others of which I am about to speak that may be made in present or future times do not in any way affect the truth of the views I here state.

13 1 To pass to the senate. In the first place it has the control of the treasury, all revenue and expenditure being regulated by it. 2 For with the exception of payments made to the consuls, the quaestors are not allowed to disburse for any particular object without a decree of the senate. 3 And even the item of expenditure which is far heavier and more important than any other — the outlay every five years by the censors on public works, whether constructions or repairs — is under the control of the senate, which makes a grant to the censors for the purpose. 4 Similarly crimes committed in Italy which require a public investigation, such as treason,

conspiracy, poisoning, and assassination, are under the jurisdiction of the senate. 5 Also if any private person or community in Italy is in need of arbitration or indeed claims damages or requires succour or protection, the senate attends to all such matters. It also occupies itself with the dispatch of all embassies sent to countries outside of Italy for the purpose either of settling differences, or of offering friendly advice, or indeed of imposing demands, or of receiving submission, or of declaring war; 7 and in like manner with respect to embassies arriving in Rome it decides what reception and what answer should be given to them. All these matters are in the hands of the senate, nor have the people anything whatever to do with them. 8 So that again to one residing in Rome during the absence of the consuls the constitution appears to be entirely aristocratic; 9 and this is the conviction of many Greek states and many of the kings, as the senate manages all business connected with them.

14 1 After this we are naturally inclined to ask what part in the constitution is left for the people, considering that the senate controls all the particular matters I mentioned, and, what is most important, manages all matters of revenue and expenditure, and considering that the consuls again have uncontrolled authority as regards armaments and operations in the field. 3 But nevertheless there is a part and a very important part left for the people. 4 For it is the people which alone has the right to confer honours and inflict punishment, the only bonds by which kingdoms and states and in a word human society in general are held together. 5 For where the distinction between these is overlooked or is observed but ill applied, no affairs can be properly administered. How indeed is this possible when good and evil men are held in equal estimation? 6 It is by the people, then, in many cases the offences punishable by a fine are tried when the accused have held the highest office; and they are the only court which may try on capital charges. 7 As regards the latter they have a practice which is praiseworthy and should be mentioned. Their usage allows those on trial for their lives when found guilty liberty to depart openly, thus inflicting voluntary exile on themselves, if even only one of the tribes that pronounce the verdict has not yet voted. 8 Such exiles enjoy safety in the territories of Naples, Praeneste, Tibur, and other civitates foederatae. 9 Again it is the people who bestow office on the deserving, the noblest regard of virtue in a state; 9 the people have the power of approving or rejecting laws, and what is most important of all, they deliberate on the question of war and peace. 11 Further in the case of alliances, terms of peace, and treaties, it is the people who ratify all these or the reverse. 12 Thus here again one might plausibly say that the people's share in the

government is the greatest, and that the constitution is a democratic one.

15 1 Having stated how political power is distributed among the different parts of the state, I will now explain how each of the three parts is enabled, if they wish, to counteract or cooperate with the others. 2 The consul, when he leaves with his army invested with the powers I mentioned, appears indeed to have absolute authority in all matters necessary for carrying out his purpose; but in fact he requires the support of the people and the senate, and is not able to bring his operations to a conclusion without them. 4 For it is obvious that the legions require constant supplies, and without the consent of the senate, neither corn, clothing, nor pay can be provided; 5 so that the commander's plans come to nothing, if the senate chooses to be deliberately negligent and obstructive. 6 It also depends on the senate whether or not a general can carry out completely his conceptions and designs, since it has the right of either superseding him when his year's term of office has expired or of retaining him in command. 7 Again it is in its power to celebrate with pomp and to magnify the successes of a general or on the other hand to obscure and belittle them. 8 For the processions they call triumphs, in which the generals bring the actual spectacle of their achievements before the eyes of their fellow-citizens, cannot be properly organized and sometimes even cannot be held at all, unless the senate consents and provides the requisite funds. 9 As for the people it is most indispensable for the consuls to conciliate them, however far away from home they may be; for, as I said, it is the people which ratifies or annuls terms of peace and treaties, 10 and what is most important, on laying down office the consuls are obliged to account for their actions to the people. 11 So that in no respect is it safe for the consuls to neglect keeping in favour with both the senate and the people.

16 1 The senate again, which possesses such great power, is obliged in the first place to pay attention to the commons in public affairs and respect the wishes of the people, 2 and it cannot carry out inquiries into the most grave and important offences against the state, punishable with death, and their correction, unless the [senatus consultum \(= a resolution of the senate\)](#) is confirmed by the people. 3 The same is the case in matters which directly affect the senate itself. For if anyone introduces a law meant to deprive the senate of some of its traditional authority, or to abolish the precedence and other distinctions of the senators or even to curtail them or their private fortunes, it is the people alone which has the power of passing or rejecting any such measure. 4 And what is most important is that if a single one of the tribunes

interposes, the senate is unable to decide finally about any matter, and cannot even meet and hold sittings; 5 and here it is to be observed that the tribunes are always obliged to act as the people decree and to pay every attention to their wishes. Therefore for all these reasons the senate is afraid of the masses and must pay due attention to the popular will.

17 1 Similarly, again, the people must be submissive to the senate and respect its members both in public and in private. 2 Through the whole of Italy a vast number of contracts, which it would not be easy to enumerate, are given out by the censors for the construction and repair of public buildings, and besides this there are many things which are farmed, such as navigable rivers, harbours, gardens, mines, lands, in fact everything that forms part of the Roman dominion. 3 Now all these matters are undertaken by the people, and one may almost say that everyone is interested in these contracts and the work they involved. 4 For certain people are the actual purchasers from the censors of the contracts, others are the partners of these first, others stand surety for them, others pledge their own fortunes to the state for this purpose. 5 Now in all these matters the senate is supreme. It can grant extension of time; it can relieve the contractor if any accident occurs; and if the work proves to be absolutely impossible to carry out it can liberate him from his contract. 6 There are in fact many ways in which the senate can either benefit or indicate those who manage public property, as all these matters are referred to it. 7 What is even most important is that the judges in most civil trials, whether public or private, are appointed from its members, where the action involves large interests. 8 So that all citizens being at the mercy of the senate, and looking forward with alarm to the uncertainty of litigation, are very shy of obstructing or resisting its decisions. 9 Similarly everyone is reluctant to oppose the projects of the consuls as all are generally and individually under their authority when in the field.

18 1 Such being the power that each part has of hampering the others or co-operating with them, their union is adequate to all emergencies, so that it is impossible to find a better political system than this. 2 For whenever the menace of some common danger from abroad compels them to act in concord and support each other, so great does the strength of the state become, that nothing which is requisite can be neglected, as all are zealously competing in devising means of meeting the need of the hour, 3 nor can any decision arrived at fail to be executed promptly, as all are co-operating both in public and in private to the accomplishment of the task which they have set themselves; 4 and consequently this peculiar

form of constitution possesses an irresistible power of attaining every object upon which it is resolved. 5 When again they are freed from external menace, and reap the harvest of good fortune and affluence which is the result of their success, and in the enjoyment of this prosperity are corrupted by flattery and idleness and wax insolent and overbearing, as indeed happens often enough, 6 it is then especially that we see the state providing itself a remedy for the evil from which it suffers. 7 For when one part having grown out of proportion to the others aims at supremacy and tends to become too predominant, it is evident that, as for the reasons above given none of the three is absolute, but the purpose of the one can be counterworked and thwarted by the others, none of them will excessively outgrow the others or treat them with contempt. 8 All in fact remains *in statu quo*, on the one hand, because any aggressive impulse is sure to be checked and from the outset each estate stands in dread of being interfered with by the others. . . .

{LONG Description of The Roman Military System Removed}

The Roman Republic compared with others

43 1 One may say that nearly all authors have handed down to us the reputation for excellence enjoyed by the constitutions of Sparta, Crete, Mantinea, and Carthage. Some make mention also of those of Athens and Thebes. 2 I leave these last two aside; for I am myself convinced that the constitutions of Athens and Thebes need not be dealt with at length, considering that these states neither grew by a normal process, nor did they remain for long in their most flourishing state, nor were the changes they underwent immaterial; 3 but after a sudden effulgence so to speak, the work of chance and circumstance, while still apparently prosperous and with every prospect of a bright future, they experienced a complete reverse of fortune. 4 For the Thebans, striking at the Lacedaemonians through their mistaken policy and the hatred their allies bore them, owing to the admirable qualities of one or at most two men, who had detected these weaknesses, gained in Greece a reputation for superiority. 5 Indeed, that the successes of the Thebans at that time were due not to the form of their constitution, but to the high qualities of their leading men, was made manifest to all by Fortune immediately afterwards. 6 For the success of Thebes grew, attained its height, and ceased with the lives of Epaminondas and Pelopidas; 7 and therefore we must regard the temporary splendour of that state as due not to its constitution, but to its men. 44 1 We must hold very much the same opinion about the Athenian constitution. 2 For Athens also, though she perhaps enjoyed

more frequent periods of success, after her most glorious one of all which was coeval with the excellent administration of Themistocles, rapidly experienced a complete reverse of fortune owing to the inconstancy of her nature. 3 For the Athenian populace always more or less resembles a ship without a commander. 4 In such a ship when fear of the billows or the danger of a storm induces the mariners to be sensible and attend to the orders of the skipper, they do their duty admirably. 5 But when they grow over-confident and begin to entertain contempt for their superiors and to quarrel with each other, as they are no longer all of the same way of thinking, then with some of them determined to continue the voyage, and others putting pressure on the skipper to anchor, with some letting out the sheets and others preventing them and ordering the sails to be taken in, not only does the spectacle strike anyone who watches it as disgraceful owing to their disagreement and contention, but the position of affairs is a source of actual danger to the rest of those on board; 7 so that often after escaping from the perils of the widest seas and fiercest storms they are shipwrecked in harbour and when close to the shore. 8 This is what has more than once befallen the Athenian state. After having averted the greatest and most terrible dangers owing to the high qualities of the people and their leaders, it has come to grief at times by sheer heedlessness and unreasonableness in seasons of unclouded tranquillity. 9 Therefore I need say no more about this constitution or that of Thebes, states in which everything is managed by the uncurbed impulse of a mob in the one case exceptionally headstrong and ill-tempered and in the other brought up in an atmosphere of violence and passion.

45 1 To pass to the constitution of Crete, two points here demand our attention. How was it that the most learned of the ancient writers — Ephorus, Xenophon, Callisthenes, and Plato — state in the first place that it is one and the same with that of Lacedaemon and in the second place pronounce it worthy of commendation? 2 In my own opinion neither of these assertions is true. 3 Whether or not I am right the following observations will show. And first as to its dissimilarity with the constitution of Sparta. The peculiar features of the Spartan state are said to be first the land laws by which no citizen may own more than another, but all must possess an equal share of the public land; 4 secondly their view of money-making; for, money being esteemed of no value at all among them, the jealous contention due to the possession of more or less is utterly done away with; 5 and thirdly the fact that of the magistrates by whom or by whose co-operation the whole administration is conducted, the kings hold a hereditary office and the members of the

Gerousia (=council of elders) are elected for life. 46 1 In all these respects the Cretan practice is exactly the opposite. 2 Their laws go as far as possible in letting them acquire land to the extent of their power, as the saying is, and money is held in such high honour among them that its acquisition is not only regarded as necessary, but as most honourable. 3 So much in fact do sordid love of gain and lust for wealth prevail among them, that the Cretans are the only people in the world in whose eyes no gain is disgraceful. 4 Again their magistracies are annual and elected on a democratic system. 5 So that it often causes surprise how these authors proclaim to us, that two political systems the nature of which is so opposed, are allied and akin to each other. 6 Besides overlooking such differences, these writers go out of their way to give us their general views, saying that Lycurgus was the only man who ever saw the points of vital importance for good government. 7 For, there being two things to which a state owes its preservation, bravery against the enemy and concord among the citizens, Lycurgus by doing away with the lust for wealth did away also with all civil discord and broils. 8 In consequence of which the Lacedaemonians, being free from these evils, excel all the Greeks in the conduct of their internal affairs and in their spirit of union. 9 After asserting this, although they witness that the Cretans, on the other hand, owing to their ingrained lust of wealth are involved in constant broils both public and private, and in murders and civil wars, they regard this as immaterial, and have the audacity to say that the two political systems are similar. 10 Ephorus actually, apart from the names, uses the same phrases in explaining the nature of the two states; so that if one did not attend to the proper names it would be impossible to tell of which he is speaking.

11 Such are the points in which I consider these two political systems to differ, and I will now give my reasons for not regarding that of Crete as worthy of praise or imitation. 47 1 In my opinion there are two fundamental things in every state, by virtue of which its principle and constitution is either desirable or the reverse. 2 I mean customs and laws. What is desirable in these makes men's private lives righteous and well ordered and the general character of the state gentle and just, while what is to be avoided has the opposite effect. 3 So just as when we observe the laws and customs of a people to be good, we have no hesitation in pronouncing that the citizens and the state will consequently be good also, thus when we notice that men are covetous in their private lives and that their public actions are unjust, we are plainly justified in saying that their laws, their particular customs, and the state as a whole are bad. 5 Now it would be impossible to find except in some rare instances personal

conduct more treacherous or a public policy more unjust than in Crete. 6 Holding then the Cretan constitution to be neither similar to that of Sparta nor in any way deserving of praise and imitation, I dismiss it from the comparison which I have proposed to make.

7 Nor again is it fair to introduce Plato's republic which also is much praised by some philosophers. 8 For just as we do not admit to athletic contests artists or athletes who are not duly entered and have not been in training, so we have no right to admit this constitution to the competition for the prize of merit, unless it first give an exhibition of its actual working. 9 Up to the present it would be just the same thing to discuss it with a view to comparison with the constitutions of Sparta, Rome, and Carthage, as to take some statue and compare it with living and breathing men. 10 For even if the workmanship of the statue were altogether praiseworthy, the comparison of a lifeless thing with a living being would strike spectators as entirely imperfect and incongruous.

48 1 Dismissing, therefore, these constitutions, we will return to that of Sparta. 2 To me it seems as far as regards the maintenance of concord among the citizens, the security of the Laconian territory and the preservation of the freedom of Sparta, the legislation of Lycurgus and the foresight he exhibited were so admirable that one is forced to regard his institutions as of divine rather than human origin. 3 For the equal division of landed property and the simple and common diet were calculated to produce temperance in the private lives of the citizens and to secure the commonwealth as a whole from civil strife, as was the training in the endurance of hardships and dangers to form brave and valorous men. 4 Now when both these virtues, fortitude and temperance, are combined in one soul or in one city, evil will not readily originate within such men or such peoples, nor will they be easily overmastered by their neighbours. 5 By constructing, therefore, his constitution in this manner and out of these elements, Lycurgus secured the absolute safety of the whole territory of Laconia, and left to the Spartans themselves a lasting heritage of freedom. 6 But as regards the annexation of neighbouring territories, supremacy in Greece, and, generally speaking, an ambitious policy, he seems to me to have made absolutely no provision for such contingencies, either in particular enactments or in the general constitution of the state. 7 What he left undone, therefore, was to bring to bear on the citizens some force or principle, by which, just as he had made them simple and contented in their private lives, he might make the spirit of the city as a whole likewise contented and moderate. 8 But now, while he made them most unambitious and sensible people as regards their

private lives and the institutions of their city, he left them most ambitious, domineering, and aggressive towards the rest of the Greeks.

49 1 For who is not aware that they were almost the first of the Greeks to cast longing eyes on the territory of their neighbours, making war on the Messenians out of covetousness and for the purpose of enslaving them? 2 And is it not narrated by all historians how out of sheer obstinacy they bound themselves by an oath not to desist from the siege before they had taken Messene? 3 It is no less universally known that owing to their desire of domination in Greece they were obliged to execute the behests of the very people they had conquered in battle. 4 For they conquered the Persians when they invaded Greece, fighting for her freedom; 5 but when the invaders had withdrawn and fled they betrayed the Greek cities to them by the peace of Antalcidas, in order to procure money for establishing their sovereignty over the Greeks; 6 and here a conspicuous defect in their constitution revealed itself. 7 For as long as they aspired to rule over their neighbours or over the Peloponnesians alone, they found the supplies and resources furnished by Laconia itself adequate, as they had all they required ready to hand, and quickly returned home whether by land or sea. 8 But once they began to undertake naval expeditions and to make military campaigns outside the Peloponnese, it was evident that neither their iron currency nor the exchange of their crops for commodities which they lacked, as permitted by the legislation of Lycurgus, would suffice for their needs, 9 since these enterprises demanded a currency in universal circulation and supplies drawn from abroad; 10 and so they were compelled to be beggars from the Persians, to impose tribute on the islanders, and exact contributions from all the Greeks, as they recognized that under the legislation of Lycurgus it was impossible to aspire, I will not say to supremacy in Greece, but to any position of influence.

50 1 But what is the purpose of this digression? It is to show from the actual evidence of facts, that for the purpose of remaining in secure possession of their own territory and maintaining their freedom the legislation of Lycurgus is amply sufficient, 2 and to those who maintain this to be the object of political constitutions we must admit that there is not and never was any system or constitution superior to that of Lycurgus. 3 But if anyone is ambitious of greater things, and esteems it finer and more glorious than that to be the leader of many men and to rule and lord it over many and have the eyes of all the world turned to him, 4 it must be admitted that from this point of view the Laconian constitution is

defective, while that of Rome is superior and better framed for the attainment of power, 5 as is indeed evident from the actual course of events. For when the Lacedaemonians endeavoured to obtain supremacy in Greece, they very soon ran the risk of losing their own liberty; 6 whereas the Romans, who had aimed merely at the subjection of Italy, in a short time brought the whole world under their sway, the abundant supplies they had at their command conducing in no small measure to this result.

51 1 The constitution of Carthage seems to me to have been originally well contrived as regards its most distinctive points. 2 For there were kings, and the house of Elders was an aristocratical force, and the people were supreme in matters proper to them, the entire frame of the state much resembling that of Rome and Sparta. 3 But at the time when they entered on the Hannibalic War, the Carthaginian constitution had degenerated, and that of Rome was better. 4 For as every body or state or action has its natural periods first of growth, then of prime, and finally of decay, and as everything in them is at its best when they are in their prime, it was for this reason that the difference between the two states manifested itself at this time. 5 For by as much as the power and prosperity of Carthage had been earlier than that of Rome, by so much had Carthage already begun to decline; while Rome was exactly at her prime, as far as at least as her system of government was concerned. 6 Consequently the multitude at Carthage had already acquired the chief voice in deliberations; while at Rome the senate still retained this; 7 and hence, as in one case the masses deliberated and in the other the most eminent men, the Roman decisions on public affairs were superior, 8 so that although they met with complete disaster, they were finally by the wisdom of their counsels victorious over the Carthaginians in the war.

52 1 But to pass to differences of detail, such as, to begin with, the conduct of war, the Carthaginians naturally are superior at sea both in efficiency and equipment, because seamanship has long been their national craft, and they busy themselves with the sea more than any other people; 2 but as regards military service on land the Romans are much more efficient. 3 They indeed devote their whole energies to this matter, whereas the Carthaginians entirely neglect their infantry, though they do pay some slight attention to their cavalry. 4 The reason of this is that the troops they employ are foreign and mercenary, whereas those of the Romans are natives of the soil and citizens. 5 So that in this respect also we must pronounce the political system of Rome to be superior to that of Carthage, the Carthaginians continuing to depend for the maintenance of their freedom on the courage

of a mercenary force but the Romans on their own valour and on the aid of their allies. 6 Consequently even if they happen to be worsted at the outset, the Romans redeem defeat by final success, while it is the contrary with the Carthaginians. 7 For the Romans, fighting as they are for their country and their children, never can abate their fury but continue to throw their whole hearts into the struggle until they get the better of their enemies. 8 It follows that though the Romans are, as I said, much less skilled in naval matters, they are on the whole successful at sea owing to the gallantry of their men; 9 for although skill in seamanship is of no small importance in naval battles, it is chiefly the courage of the marines that turns the scale in favour of victory. 10 Now not only do Italians in general naturally excel Phoenicians and Africans in bodily strength and personal courage, but by their institutions also they do much to foster a spirit of bravery in the young men. 11 A single instance will suffice to indicate the pains taken by the state to turn out men who will be ready to endure everything in order to gain a reputation in their country for valour.

53 1 Whenever any illustrious man dies, he is carried at his funeral into the forum to the so-called [rostra](#), (= speaking platform) sometimes conspicuous in an upright posture and more rarely reclined. 2 Here with all the people standing round, a grown-up son, if he has left one who happens to be present, or if not some other relative mounts the rostra and discourses on the virtues and successful achievements of the dead. 3 As a consequence the multitude and not only those who had a part in these achievements, but those also who had none, when the facts are recalled to their minds and brought before their eyes, are moved to such sympathy that the loss seems to be not confined to the mourners, but a public one affecting the whole people. 4 Next after the interment and the performance of the usual ceremonies, they place the image of the departed in the most conspicuous position in the house, enclosed in a wooden shrine. 5 This image is a mask reproducing with remarkable fidelity both the features and complexion of the deceased. 6 On the occasion of public sacrifices they display these images, and decorate them with much care, and when any distinguished member of the family dies they take them to the funeral, putting them on men who seem to them to bear the closest resemblance to the original in stature and carriage. 7 These representatives wear togas, with a purple border if the deceased was a consul or praetor, whole purple if he was a censor, and embroidered with gold if he had celebrated a triumph or achieved anything similar. 8 They all ride in chariots preceded by the [fascies](#), axes, and other insignia by which the different magistrates are wont to be accompanied

according to the respective dignity of the offices of state held by each during his life; 9 and when they arrive at the rostra they all seat themselves in a row on ivory chairs. There could not easily be a more ennobling spectacle for a young man who aspires to fame and virtue. 10 For who would not be inspired by the sight of the images of men renowned for their excellence, all together and as if alive and breathing? What spectacle could be more glorious than this? 54 1 Besides, he who makes the oration over the man about to be buried, when he has finished speaking of him recounts the successes and exploits of the rest whose images are present, beginning with the most ancient. 2 By this means, by this constant renewal of the good report of brave men, the celebrity of those who performed noble deeds is rendered immortal, while at the same time the fame of those who did good service to their country becomes known to the people and a heritage for future generations. 3 But the most important result is that young men are thus inspired to endure every suffering for public welfare in the hope of winning the glory that attends on brave men. 4 What I say is confirmed by the facts. For many Romans have voluntarily engaged in single combat in order to decide a battle, not a few have faced certain death, some in war to save the lives of the rest, and others in peace to save the republic. 5 Some even when in office have put their own sons to death contrary to every law or custom, setting a higher value on the interest of their country than on the ties of nature that bound them to their nearest and dearest.

6 Many such stories about many men are related in Roman history, but one told of a certain person will suffice for the present as an example and as a confirmation of what I say. 55 1 It is narrated that when Horatius Cocles was engaged in combat with two of the enemy at the far end of the bridge over the Tiber that lies in the front of the town, he saw large reinforcements coming up to help the enemy, and fearing lest they should force the passage and get into town, he turned round and called to those behind him to retire and cut the bridge with all speed. 2 His order was obeyed, and while they were cutting the bridge, he stood to his ground receiving many wounds, and arrested the attack of the enemy who were less astonished at his physical strength than at his endurance and courage. 3 The bridge once cut, the enemy were prevented from attacking; and Cocles, plunging into the river in full armour as he was, deliberately sacrificed his life,² regarding the safety of his country and the glory which in future would attach to his name as of more importance than his present existence and the years of life which remained to him. 4 Such, if I am not wrong, is the eager emulation of

achieving noble deeds engendered in the Roman youth by their institutions.

56 1 Again, the laws and customs relating to the acquisition of wealth are better in Rome than at Carthage. 2 At Carthage nothing which results in profit is regarded as disgraceful; at Rome nothing is considered more so than to accept bribes and seek gain from improper channels. 3 For no less strong than their approval of money-making is their condemnation of unscrupulous gain from forbidden sources. 4 A proof of this is that at Carthage candidates for office practise open bribery, whereas at Rome death is the penalty for it. 5 Therefore as the rewards offered to merit are the opposite in the two cases, it is natural that the steps taken to gain them should also be dissimilar.

6 But the quality in which the Roman commonwealth is most distinctly superior is in my opinion the nature of their religious convictions. 7 I believe that it is the very thing which among other peoples is an object of reproach, I mean superstition, which maintains the cohesion of the Roman State. 8 These matters are clothed in such pomp and introduced to such an extent into their public and private life that nothing could exceed it, a fact which will surprise many. 9 My own opinion at least is that they have adopted this course for the sake of the common people. 10 It is a course which perhaps would not have been necessary had it been possible to form a state composed of wise men, 11 but as every multitude is fickle, full of lawless desires, unreasoned passion, and violent anger, the multitude must be held in by invisible terrors and suchlike pageantry. 12 For this reason I think, not that the ancients acted rashly and at haphazard in introducing among the people notions concerning the gods and beliefs in the terrors of hell, but that the moderns are most rash and foolish in banishing such beliefs. 13 The consequence is that among the Greeks, apart from other things, members of the government, if they are entrusted with no more than a talent, though they have ten copyists and as many seals and twice as many witnesses, cannot keep their faith; 14 whereas among the Romans those who as magistrates and legates are dealing with large sums of money maintain correct conduct just because they have pledged their faith by oath. 15 Whereas elsewhere it is a rare thing to find a man who keeps his hands off public money, and whose record is clean in this respect, among the Romans one rarely comes across a man who has been detected in such conduct. . . .

Conclusion of the Treatise on the Roman Republic

57 1 That all existing things are subject to decay and change is a truth that scarcely needs proof; for the course of nature is sufficient to force this conviction on us. 2 There being two agencies by which every kind of state is liable to decay, the one external and the other a growth of the state itself, we can lay down no fixed rule about the former, but the latter is a regular process. 3 I have already stated what kind of state is the first to come into being, and what the next, and how the one is transformed into the other; so that those who are capable of connecting the opening propositions of this inquiry with its conclusion will now be able to foretell the future unaided. And what will happen is, I think, evident. 5 When a state has weathered many great perils and subsequently attains to supremacy and uncontested sovereignty, it is evident that under the influence of long established prosperity, life will become more extravagant and the citizens more fierce in their rivalry regarding office and other objects than they ought to be. 6 As these defects go on increasing, the beginning of the change for the worse will be due to love of office and the disgrace entailed by obscurity, as well as to extravagance and purse-proud display; 7 and for this change the populace will be responsible when on the one hand they think they have a grievance against certain people who have shown themselves grasping, and when, on the other hand, they are puffed up by the flattery of others who aspire to office. 8 For now, stirred to fury and swayed by passion in all their counsels, they will no longer consent to obey or even to be the equals of the ruling caste, but will demand the lion's share for themselves. 9 When this happens, the state will change its name to the finest sounding of all, freedom and democracy, but will change its nature to the worst thing of all, mob-rule.

10 Having dealt with the origin and growth of the Roman republic, and with its prime and its present condition, and also with the differences for better or worse between it and others, I may now close this discourse more or less so.

58 1 But, drawing now upon the period immediately subsequent to the date at which I abandoned my narrative to enter on this digression, I will make brief and summary mention of one occurrence; so that, as if exhibiting a single specimen of a good artist's work, I may make manifest not by words only but by actual fact the perfection and strength of principle of the Republic such as it then was. 2 Hannibal, when, after his victory over the Romans at Cannae, the eight thousand who garrisoned the camp fell into his hands, after making them all prisoners, allowed them to send a deputation to those at home on the subject of their ransom and release. 3 Upon their naming ten of their most

distinguished members, he sent them off after making them swear that they would return to him. 4 One of those nominated just as he was going out of the camp said he had forgotten something and went back, and after recovering the thing he had left behind again took his departure, thinking that by his return he had kept his faith and absolved himself of his oath. 5 Upon their arrival in Rome they begged and entreated the senate not to grudge the prisoners their release, but to allow each of them to pay three minae and return to his people; for Hannibal, they said, had made this concession. 6 The men deserved to be released, for they had neither been guilty of cowardice in the battle nor had they done anything unworthy of Rome; but having been left behind to guard the camp, they had, when all the rest had perished in the battle, been forced to yield to circumstances and surrender to the enemy. 7 But the Romans, though they had met with severe reverses in the war, and had now, roughly speaking, lost all their allies and were in momentary expectation of Rome itself being placed in peril, 8 after listening to this plea, neither disregarded their dignity under the pressure of calamity, nor neglected to take into consideration every proper step; 9 but seeing that Hannibal's object in acting thus was both to obtain funds and to deprive the troops opposed to him of their high spirit, by showing that, even if defeated, they might hope for safety, 10 they were so far from acceding to this request, that they did not allow their pity for their kinsmen, or the consideration of the service the men would render them, to prevail, 11 but defeated Hannibal's calculation and the hopes he had based on them by refusing to ransom the men, and at the same time imposed by law on their own troops the duty of either conquering or dying in the field, as there was no hope of safety for them if defeated. 12 Therefore after coming to this decision they dismissed the nine delegates who returned of their own free will, as bound by their oath, while as for the man who had thought to free himself from the oath by a ruse they put him in irons and returned him to the enemy; 13 so that Hannibal's joy at his victory in the battle was not so great as his dejection, when he saw with amazement how steadfast and high-spirited were the Romans in their deliberations.

Polybius in the above writing is answering the question: why even in the face of military disasters did Rome succeed as a great imperial power? The authors in the passages below are writing about the consequences Rome of having become an imperial power.

[Plutarch, Life of Cato the Elder, 21](#)

Plutarch was Greek living under Roman rule on mainland Greece in the second century CE. He was a local intellectual and politician. He wrote historical biographies of Greeks and Romans comparing one to the other. Cato was a Roman politician from the late second century BCE who was famous for his conservatism. Plutarch's source here is likely Cato's own writings. One of Cato's writings to survive is a handbook on how to run a 200 iugera farm with slave labor. Cato lived at about the same time as Polybius.

He owned many slaves, and usually bought those prisoners of war who were young and still capable of being reared and trained like whelps or colts. Not one of his slaves ever entered another man's house unless sent thither by Cato or his wife, and when such an one was asked what Cato was doing, he always answered that he did not know. A slave of his was expected either to be busy about the house, or to be asleep, and he was very partial to the sleepy ones. He thought these gentler than the wakeful ones, and that those who had enjoyed the gift of sleep were better for any kind of service than those who lacked it. In the belief that his slaves were led into most mischief by their sexual passions, he stipulated that the males should consort with the females at a fixed price, but should never approach any other woman.

At the outset, when he was still poor and in military service, he found no fault at all with what was served up to him, declaring that it was shameful for a man to quarrel with a slave over food and drink. But afterwards, when his circumstances were improved and he used to entertain his friends and colleagues at table, no sooner was the dinner over than he would flog those slaves who had been remiss at all in preparing or serving it. He was always contriving that his slaves should have feuds and dissensions among themselves; harmony among them made him suspicious and fearful of them. He had those who were suspected of some capital offence brought to trial before all their fellow servants, and, if convicted, put to death.

However, as he applied himself more strenuously to money-getting, he came to regard agriculture as more entertaining than profitable, and invested his capital in business that was safe and sure. He bought ponds, hot springs, districts given over to fullers, all of which brought him in large profits, and "could not," to use his own phrase, "be ruined by Jupiter." He used to loan money also in the most disreputable of all ways, namely, on ships, and his method was as follows. He required his borrowers to form a large company, and when there were fifty partners and as many ships for his security, he took one share in the company

himself, and was represented by Quintio, a freedman (= freed former slave) of his, who accompanied his clients in all their ventures. In this way his entire security was not imperilled, but only a small part of it, and his profits were large.

He used to lend money also to those of his slaves who wished it, and they would buy boys with it, and after training and teaching them for a year, at Cato's expense, would sell them again. Many of these boys Cato would retain for himself, reckoning to the credit of the slave the highest price bid for his boy.

He tried to incite his son also to such economies, by saying that it was not the part of a man, but of a widow woman, to lessen his substance. But that surely was too vehement a speech of Cato's, when he went so far as to say that a man was to be admired and glorified like a god if the final inventory of his property showed that he had added to it more than he had inherited.

[Pliny, *Natural Histories* 18.2-4](#)

This is Pliny the Elder. He was a senator in the early empire (1st century CE) and this is from an encyclopedia of sorts trying to catalogue the nature of the whole known world. He died going to investigate the eruption of Vesuvius (79 CE).

II. Romulus [Rome's legendary first king] at the outset instituted the Priests of the Fields, and nominated himself as the twelfth brother among them, the others being the sons of his foster-mother Acca Larentia; it was to this priesthood that was assigned as a most sacred emblem the first crown ever worn at Rome, a wreath of ears of grain tied together with a white fillet; and this dignity only ends with life, and accompanies its holders even into exile or captivity.

In those days two *iugera* of land [about a football field] each was enough for the Roman people, who assigned to no one a larger amount—which of the persons who but a little time before were the slaves of the Emperor Nero would have been satisfied with an ornamental garden of that extent? They like to have fishponds larger than that, and it is a thing to be thankful for if someone does not insist on kitchens covering a greater area.

Numa [Rome's legendary second king] established worship of the gods with an offering of grain and winning their favour with a salted cake...

[Cut: Further religious activity associated grain and the harvest associated with this king.]

III. An area of land that one yoke of oxen could plough in a day used to be called an *iugerum* ... The most lavish gifts bestowed on generals and valorous citizens were the largest area of land that a person could plough round in one day, and also a contribution from the whole people of one or two quarter measures of emmer wheat a head.

Moreover the earliest surnames were derived from agriculture: the name 'Pilumnus' belonged to the inventor of the 'pestle' for corn-mills, 'Piso' came from 'pounding' corn, and again families were named Fabius (*farro*) or Lentulus (lentils) or Cicero (chickpeas) according as someone was the best grower of some particular crop. One of the Junius family received the name of Bubulcus because he was very good at managing oxen.

Moreover among religious rites none was invested with more sanctity than that of Communion in Wheat, and newly married brides used to carry in their hands an offering of wheat. Bad husbandry was judged an offence within the jurisdiction of the censors, and, as Cato tells us, to praise a man by saying he was a good tiller of the soil and a good tender of farm animals and man was thought to be the highest form of commendation. That is the source of the word *locuples*, meaning 'wealthy', 'full of room', *i.e.* of land. Our word for money itself was derived from *pecus*, 'cattle', and even now in the censor's accounts all the sources of national revenue are termed 'pastures', because rent of pasture-land was for a long time the only source of public income. Moreover fees were only specified in terms of payment of sheep and oxen; nor must we omit the benevolent spirit of the law of early times, in that a judge imposing a fine was prohibited from specifying an ox before he had previously fined the offender a sheep. [2 sentences cut]

Indeed the Twelve Tables made pasturing animals by stealth at night on crops grown under the plough, or cutting it, a capital offence for an adult, and enacted that a person found guilty of it should be executed by hanging, in reparation to Ceres, a heavier punishment than in a conviction for homicide; while a minor was to be flogged at the discretion of the praetor or sentenced to pay the amount of the damage or twice that amount.

In fact the system of class and office in the state itself was derived from no other source. The rural tribes were the most

esteemed, consisting of those who owned farms, whereas the city tribes were tribes into which it was a disgrace to be transferred, this stigmatizing lack of activity. Consequently the city tribes were only four, named from the parts of the city in which their members resided, the Suburan, Palatine, Colline and Esquiline. They used to resort to the city on market-days and consequently elections were not allowed to be held on market-days, so that the common people of the country might not be called away from their homes.

[A few sentences cut]

IV. Accordingly these being the customs not only were the harvests sufficient for them without any of the provinces providing food for Italy, but even the market price of grain was unbelievably low. Manius Marcius when aedile of the plebs for the first time provided the people with grain at the price of an *as* a *modius*.

[An *as* was originally a pound of bronze; it comes to be the smallest denomination of the coinage. A skilled laborer might earn 5-8 asses a day. A *modius* would be just shy of 15 pounds, or enough to bake about 13 dense loaves of bread.]

Lucius Minucius Augurinus, who had procured the conviction of Spurius Maelius, when he was tribune of the people reduced the price of emmer to an *as* for a fortnight, and consequently had his statue erected outside the Triplets' Gate, the cost being met by public subscription. [Cut: 4 more examples of cheap grain in the past]

Nor were these prices the result of the large estates of individuals who ousted their neighbours, inasmuch as by the law of Licinius Stolo the limit was restricted to 500 *iugera*, and Stolo himself was convicted under his own law because he held a larger amount of land, held under his son's name instead of his own. Such was the scale of prices when the state had already some luxury.

At any rate there is a famous utterance of Manius Curius, who after celebrating triumphs and making a vast addition of territory to 290 B.C. the empire, said that a man not satisfied with seven *iugera* must be deemed a dangerous citizen; for that was the acreage assigned for commoners after the expulsion of the kings.

What therefore was the cause of such great fertility?

The fields were tilled in those days by the hands of generals themselves, and we may well believe that the earth rejoiced

in a laurel-decked ploughshare and a ploughman who had celebrated a triumph, whether it was that those farmers treated the seed with the same care as they managed their wars and marked out their fields with the same diligence as they arranged a camp, or whether everything prospers better under honourable hands because the work is done with greater attention. The honours bestowed on Serranus found him sowing seed, which was actually the origin of his surname. A herald brought to Cincinnatus his commission as dictator when he was ploughing his four-acre property on the Vatican, the land now called the Quintian Meadows, and indeed it is said that he had stripped for the work, and the messenger as he continued to linger said, 'Put on your clothes, so that I may deliver the mandates of the Senate and People of Rome'. That was what heralds were like even at that time, and their name itself was given to them as summoning the senate and the leaders to put in an immediate appearance from their farms.

But nowadays those agricultural operations are performed by slaves with fettered ankles and by the hands of malefactors with branded faces! although the Earth who is addressed as our mother and whose cultivation is spoken of as worship is not so dull that when we obtain even our farm-work from these persons one can believe that this is not done against her will and to her indignation. And we forsooth are surprised that we do not get the same profits from the labour of slave-gangs as used to be obtained from that of generals!

[Diodorus, The Library, fragments from books 34/35](#)

Diodorus was writing between the 60s and the 30s BCE. He was a Greek from Sicily, but he lived for some time in Rome and even visited Egypt. His project was to write a history of all time and all places. He read a lot of Polybius and thought of himself as writing in the same tradition.

First Sicilian Slave Revolt

You will notice the number of the paragraphs are out of order. This is no mistake. Two different Byzantine sources preserve parts of Diodorus' account of this revolt. I've integrated these two accounts chronologically and thematically to make reading easier and less confusing. The numbers can help you see where I've rearranged the accounts.

1 When the affairs of Sicily, after the overthrow of Carthage, had remained successful and prosperous for the space of sixty years, at length war with the slaves broke out for the

following reasons. The Sicilians, through the enjoyment of a long peace, grew very rich, and bought up an abundance of slaves; who being driven in droves like so many herds of cattle from the different places where they were bred and brought up, were branded with certain marks burnt on their bodies. 2 Those that were young, they used for shepherds, others for such services as they had occasion. But their masters were very strict and severe with them, and took no care to provide either necessary food or clothing for them, so that most of them were forced to rob and steal, to get these necessities: so that all places were full of slaughters and murders, as if an army of thieves and robbers had been dispersed all over the island. 3 The governors of the provinces, to tell the truth, did what they could to suppress them; but they did not dare punish them, because the masters, who possessed the slaves, were rich and powerful. Therefore every governor was forced to connive at the thefts and rapines that were committed in the province. For many of the landowners were Roman *equites* (= rich citizens who don't seek political office), and because they judged the accusations brought against the governors for their conduct in the provinces, they were a terror to the governors themselves.

27 In like manner the men who had large possessions in Sicily bought up whole slave markets to till their lands. Some they shackled, others they exhausted with hard labour, and branded and marked every one of them. So great a multitude



6 - map of locations of major Roman slave rebellions

of slaves overflowed all of Sicily, like a deluge, that the excessive number seemed incredible to all who heard it. The rich men of Sicily rivalled the Italians in pride, greed, and wickedness; for many of the Italians who had great numbers of slaves had driven their shepherds to such a degree of villainy, that they allowed them to rob and steal, rather than provide them with any necessary subsistence. 28 Once this license had been permitted to those men who had strength of body, together with time and leisure, sufficient to enable them readily to execute any outrage, and who had been reduced by lack of subsistence to the extremity of attempting anything to supply their needs; in a short time this lawlessness began to spread.

At first they used to murder travellers upon the highway, when only one or two were together; afterwards they would in groups enter into little villages by night, and pillage poor men's houses, and forcibly carry away whatever they found and kill anyone who opposed them. 29 At length, as they grew everyday more and more audacious, there was neither security in the roads in Sicily for travellers in the night, nor safety in their houses for those who dwelt in the country, but all places were full of rapine, robberies, and murders. And because the shepherds and herdsmen were supplied with weapons, and inured to stay in the open fields through night and day, they every day grew more bold and daring; carrying clubs and lances and long staves, and covered with the skins of wolves and wild boars, they had a most frightful and terrible appearance, almost like they were going to war.

30 Besides, everyone had a guard of great mastiff dogs to attend them; and as they guzzled down milk, and glutted themselves with meat, and all other sorts of food, they resembled beasts both in souls and bodies. As a result, the whole island seemed as if it was full of soldiers roving up and down in every place, since all the daring slaves were let loose by their masters to act the part of madmen. 31 It is true indeed that the Roman praetors did what they could to suppress the violence of the slaves, but because they did not dare to punish them, on account of the power and influence of their masters, they were forced to suffer the country to be infested with robberies. For most of their masters were Roman *equites*, who had judicial authority at Rome, and might act as judges in the cases of the praetors, who were summoned to appear before them on charges relating to their administration of the province; and therefore the magistrates were for good reasons afraid of them.

32 The Italians, who had large estates in Sicily, bought many slaves, every one of whom they branded with marks on their

cheeks, and oppressed them with hard labour, and yet failed to give them sufficient subsistence.

33 Not only in political life should the powerful behave humanely towards those who are of humble condition, but also in private life the right-minded should not be too harsh on their slaves. For as in states arrogant behaviour leads to civil dissension amongst the citizens, so in each private home, such behaviour provokes the slaves against their masters, and gives rise to terrible disorders in the cities. For when those in power act cruelly and wickedly, the character of their subjects is inflamed to reckless action. Those whom fate has placed in a lowly position will gladly yield to their superiors in honour and glory, but if they are denied the kindness which they deserve, they revolt against the men who act like cruel despots.

4 The slaves therefore being in this distress, and vilely beaten and scourged beyond all reason, were now resolved not to bear it any longer. Therefore, meeting together from time to time as they had opportunity, they consulted how to free themselves from the yoke of servitude they lay under, until at length they really accomplished what they had previously agreed upon. 5 There was a Syrian, born in the city of Apameia, who was a slave of Antigenes of Enna, and he was a magician and conjuror; he pretended to foretell future events, revealed to him (as he said) by the gods in his dreams, and deceived many by this kind of practice. Then he proceeded further, and not only foretold things to come, revealed to him in dreams, but pretended that he saw the gods when he was awake, and they declared to him what was to come to pass. 6 And though these were tricks that he played, yet by chance many of the things afterwards proved true. The predictions that were not fulfilled were ignored, but those which did come to pass were everywhere applauded, so that he grew more and more celebrated. By some artifice or other, he used to breath flames of fire out of his mouth as from a burning lamp, and so would prophesy as though he had been at that time inspired by Apollo. 7 For he put fire with some combustible matter to feed it, into a nut-shell or some such thing bored through on both sides; then putting it into his mouth and forcing his breath upon it, there would issue out both sparks and flames of fire. Before the revolt of *the slaves* this man boasted that the Syrian goddess had appeared to him, and told him that he should reign, and this he declared not only to others but often to his own master.

8 As this became a common subject of laughter, Antigenes was so taken with the jest and the ridiculous conceit of the man, that he took Eunos (for such was his name) with him to

feasts and dinners, and several questions being put to him concerning his *future* kingdom, he was asked how he would treat each person who was there present at the table. He readily went on with his story, and told them that he would be very kind to his masters and like a conjuror using many monstrous magical terms and expressions, he made all the guests laugh, upon which some of them as a reward gave him large helpings from the table, and asked him to remember their kindness when he came to be king. 9 But all this jesting at length really did end in his advancement to be king; and all those who at the feasts by way of ridicule had been kind to him, he rewarded in earnest. But the beginning of the revolt was in this manner.

34 There was one Damophilus of Enna, who was wealthy, but very proud and arrogant; this man cultivated a large area of land, had a vast stock of cattle, and imitated the luxury and cruelty of the Italians towards their slaves. He traversed the country up and down, travelling in a coach drawn by stately horses, and guarded by a company of armed slaves; he likewise always carried about with him many beautiful boys, flatterers and parasites. 35 In the city and in the villages he had finely engraved silver vessels, and all sorts of purple carpets of very great value; and he held magnificent feasts and entertainments, rivalling the state and grandeur of a king; in pomp and expense he far surpassed the luxury of the Persians, and his pride and arrogance were excessive. He was uncouth, and brought up without learning, or any liberal education; and having heaped up a great deal of wealth, he abandoned himself to self-indulgent licentiousness. At first this fullness and plenty made him insolent; and at length he was a plague to himself, and the occasion of bringing many miseries and calamities upon his country. 36 For having bought many slaves, he abused them in the highest degree; and those that were free born in their own country, and taken captives in war, he branded on their cheeks with the sharp points of iron pins. Some of these he bound in fetters and put in slave pens; and to others that were ordered to look after the cattle in the fields, he allowed neither clothing nor food sufficient to satisfy nature.

37 The barbarity and cruelty of this Damophilus was such, that never a day passed without him scourging his slaves, without the least cause or occasion. And his wife Megallis was as cruel as himself, towards the maid servants, and other slaves that fell into her hands. Therefore his slaves, being provoked by this cruelty of their master and mistress, concluded that nothing could bring them into a worse condition than they already were;

38 Some naked slaves once went to Damophilus of Enna and complained that they did not have clothes; but he did not listen to their complaints. "What then," he said to them, "do the travellers in the countryside walk naked along the roads, so that you can not take the clothes off them?" He then attached them to pillars, beat them cruelly, and haughtily dismissed them.

The slaves, who had been so cruelly used, were enraged by this like wild beasts, and plotted together to rise in arms and cut the throats of their masters. To this end they consulted Eunus, and asked him whether the gods would give them success in their designs. He encouraged them and declared that they would prosper in their enterprise. He uttered conjuring words and expressions, as was his usual manner, and told them to be speedy in their execution. 11 Therefore, after they had raised a body of four hundred slaves, at the first opportunity they suddenly armed themselves and broke into the city of Enna, led by their captain Eunus, who used his juggling tricks to breathe fire out of his mouth. Then entering the houses, they made such a great a slaughter, that they did not even spare even the suckling children, 12 but plucked them violently from their mother's breasts and dashed them against the ground. It cannot be expressed how vilely and filthily, for the satisfying of their lusts, they used men's wives in the very presence of their husbands. These villains were joined by a multitude of the slaves who were in the city. They first executed their rage and cruelty upon their own masters, and then fell to murdering others.

13 In the mean time Eunus heard that Damophilus and his wife were in an orchard near the city. Therefore he sent some of his rabble there, who brought them back with their hands tied behind their backs, taunting them as they passed along with much ill-treatment; but they declared that they would be kind in every respect to their daughter, because of her pity and compassion towards the slaves, and her readiness always to be helpful to them. This showed that the *savage* behaviour of the slaves towards others arose, not from their own cruel nature, but from a desire to have revenge for the wrongs they had suffered previously. 14 The men that were sent for Damophilus and Megallis his wife brought them to the city and into the theatre, where all the rebellious rabble was assembled. There Damophilus pleaded earnestly for his life and moved many with what he said. But Hermeias and Zeuxis denounced him with many bitter accusations and called him a cheat and dissembler. Then without waiting to hear the decision of the people concerning him, the one ran him through with a sword and the other cut off his head with an axe.

Then they made Eunus king, not for his valour or skill in warfare, but on account of his extraordinary tricks, and because he was the leader and author of the defection; and his name seemed to portend and to be a good omen, that he would be kind {eunous} to his subjects. 15 When he had therefore been made general, with absolute power to order and dispose of all things as he pleased, an assembly was called, and he put all the prisoners from Enna to death except those that were skilful in making of weapons, whom he fettered and set to work. As for Megallis, he delivered her up to the will of the women slaves, to take their revenge on her as they thought fit. After they had whipped and tormented her, they threw her down a steep precipice. 16 And Eunus himself killed his own master Antigones and Python. At length, putting a diadem upon his head and graced with all the emblems of royalty, he caused his wife, who was a Syrian from the same city, to be called queen, and chose such as he judged to be most prudent to be his councillors. Amongst these was one Achaeus by name, and an Achaean by birth, a wise man and a good soldier.

42 Achaeus, an advisor to King Antiochus {Eunus}, disapproving the actions of fugitive slaves, censured their excesses, and predicted that they would soon be punished. But Eunus, far from being angry at this frankness, and putting Achaeus to death, gave him instead the house of his masters, and appointed him his advisor.

Within the space of three days Eunus got together above six thousand men, armed with what they could by any way or means lay their hands upon; and he was joined by others, who were all furnished either with axes, hatches, slings, bills, or stakes sharpened and burnt at one end, or with spits. With these he ravaged and made spoil all over the country. At length, after he had been joined by an infinite number of slaves, he grew to such power and boldness as to engage in a war with the Roman generals, and often defeated them in battle, by overpowering them with the number of his men; for he now had with him above ten thousand men.

41 After Eunus was declared king, he put many *rich citizens* to death, and spared only those who had commended him for his prophecies at their feasts, to which his master {Antigones} used to bring him as a jest; those likewise that had been so kind as to give him some of their food, he preserved; so that the strange turn of fortune was truly astonishing, that a kindness shown to such a poor and humble person should result in a great favour, when it was most needed.

39 It said that Damophilus had a young daughter of a very gentle and courteous disposition, who made it her business to relieve and heal those slaves that had been abused and scourged by her parents, and to bring sustenance to those who were shackled; so that she was wonderfully beloved by all the slaves. In remembrance of her former kindness, they all had pity on her, and were so far from offering any violence or injury to the young maid, that every one of them made it their business to preserve her chastity unviolated; and chose the most suitable men from their own company, of whom Hermeias was the most eager, to conduct her to Catania to some of her family.

40 The rebel slaves, venting their fury against the entire household of their masters, committed many terrible outrages. This revenge was not a mark of their cruel disposition, but the outcome of the unfair treatment that they had experienced, which made them turn angrily to punishing those who had wronged them in the past.

Nature itself teaches slaves to give a just response of gratitude or revenge.

45 It did not need a revelation from god to understand how easy it was to capture the city. It was obvious, even to the simplest observer, that since the walls were in disrepair due to the long time of peace, and many of the garrison had been killed, the city could not hold out for long against a siege.

46 Eunus, keeping his army out of the range of weapons, shouted insults at the Romans, saying that it was not his men, but the Romans who were runaways from danger. He put on mimes for those inside, in which the slaves depicted how they had revolted from their own masters, mocking their *masters'* arrogance and the excessive cruelty that led to their overthrow.

47 Although some men may be convinced that the gods are not concerned about the extraordinary misfortunes that afflict men, yet it is beneficial to the community for the fear of the gods to be instilled in the hearts of the masses. Few men act justly solely as a result of their own virtue; the majority of men will be stopped from crime only because of the punishments inflicted by the laws and the retribution of the gods.

48 The common people, far from feeling pity for the immense misfortunes that were suffered by the Sicilians, on the contrary were delighted because they were jealous of the inequality that existed in wealth and living conditions. This

jealousy, which used to cause them grief, was now turned to joy, because they saw that those who once enjoyed a brilliant fortune had now fallen into the most miserable condition. But the cruellest thing was that, although the rebels, as a sensible precaution, did not burn their houses, or destroy their property and crops, and indeed wholly avoided harming any of the men engaged in agriculture; yet the populace, using the runaway slaves as a pretext, but in reality motivated by jealousy against the rich, ran out into the countryside, and not only looted the properties but also set fire to the rural dwellings.

17 In the meantime, a Cilician called Cleon instigated another defection of the slaves, and now all were hoping that this unruly rabble would come to blows one with another, and so Sicily would be rid of them through their mutual slaughters and destruction of each other. But contrary to all men's hopes and expectations, they joined forces together. Cleon followed the commands of Eunus in every respect, and served his prince as general, having five thousand of his own soldiers. Thirty days had now passed since the first beginning of this rebellion:

18 and presently the slaves fought a battle with Lucius Hypsaesus, who had come from Rome and commanded eight thousand Sicilians. In this fight the rebels won the day; they were then twenty thousand in number, and very soon afterwards their army increased to two hundred thousand men. And although they fought against the Romans themselves, yet they often came off as conquerors, and were very seldom defeated.

19 When news of this spread abroad, a revolt was started at Rome by one hundred and fifty slaves, who conspired against the government; similarly in Attica by one thousand slaves; and likewise at Delos, and many other places. But the magistrates of the various communities, to prevent the mischief from going further, made a quick response, and promptly fell upon the slaves, and put them all to death. So those that remained and were ready to break out into rebellion, were reduced to more sound and sober thoughts.

20 But in Sicily the disorders increased more and more; for cities were taken, and their inhabitants made slaves, and many armies were routed by the rebels, until such time as Rupilius the Roman general recovered Tauromenium. The besieged had been reduced to such an extremity of famine by a sharp and close siege, that they began to eat their own children, and the men their wives; and at length they butchered one another for food. There *Rupilius* captured

Comanus the brother of Cleon, who was endeavouring to escape out of the city while it was besieged.

21 At last Sarapion, a Syrian, betrayed the citadel, and all the fugitives fell into his hands. Rupilius had them scourged and thrown over a cliff. He marched from there to Enna, and by a long siege reduced it to such straits, that there was no hope left for anyone to escape. After slaying Cleon their general, who had made a sally from the city and fought like a hero, he exposed his body to open view; and soon afterwards the city likewise was betrayed into his hands, which otherwise could never have been taken by force because of the natural strength of the place.

22 As for Eunus, he fled like a coward with (?) six hundred of his guards to the top of certain high cliffs, where those that were with him, foreseeing their inevitable ruin (for Rupilius pursued then closely), cut one another's throats. But Eunus the conjuring king out of fear hid himself in some caves, which he had discovered for that purpose; he was dragged out of there with four others of his gang – his cook, his barber, the man who rubbed him in the bath and the jester at his banquets. 23 Finally he was thrown into prison, and there consumed by lice, and so ended his days at Morgantina by a death worthy of the former wickedness of his life. Rupilius afterwards with a small body of men marched all over Sicily, and presently cleared the country of thieves and robbers.

24 This Eunus king of the robbers called himself Antiochus and all his followers Syrians.

...

And the same thing happened in Asia, almost about the same time. For when Aristonicus without any proper rights sought to gain the kingdom of Asia, all the slaves, by reason of the cruelty of their masters, joined with him, and filled many towns and cities with bloodshed and slaughter.

...

[Fragments on the capture of slaves in war](#)

[4] Most of the barbarian prisoners either committed suicide or killed each other while they were being transported, because they were unwilling to bear the disgrace of slavery. A young man, still immature, who was accompanying his three sisters, slaughtered them in their sleep. He was arrested before he had time to kill himself, and was asked why he had murdered his sisters. He said that he had killed them because

they had nothing worth living for; then, by refusing all food, he killed himself through starvation.

2 The same prisoners, when they arrived at the borders of their country, fell down and kissed the ground, moaning and filling the folds of their clothes with dust, so that the whole army was touched with pity. Each of the soldiers felt a divine awe when he saw the emotions of his fellow humans, and observed that even the most savage barbarians, when fate separates them from the bond of their homeland, do not forget their love for the land that reared them.

Further fragments from the Sicilian Slave Revolt

[8] The Syrian slaves cut off the hands of those they took prisoners, not at the wrists, but hands and arms together.

[9] Those {slaves} who ate the sacred fish endured great suffering. For the divinity, as if making a clear example of them for others, left all these madmen *to die* without help. So they received both a just punishment from the gods, and severe censure from *writers of history*.

[10] The senate, dreading the anger of the gods, consulted the Sibylline books, and sent ambassadors into Sicily, who visited the altars dedicated to Aetnaean Zeus throughout the whole island, and offered solemn sacrifices to him. *The ambassadors* enclosed the altars within walls, to exclude all except those of the several cities who, according to the customs of their own country, used to offer sacrifices to him.

[11] Gorgus of Morgantina, surnamed Cambalus, was one of the chief men of wealth and authority in the city. Going out to hunt and encountering a band of robbers, he took to his heels to escape back to the city. He happened to be met by his father, also called Gorgus, who was on horseback. The father forthwith leaped off his horse, and told his son to mount the horse, and make away with all speed into the city. But the son was not willing to put his own preservation above that of his father, nor could the father bear to cause the death of his son by avoiding the danger himself. And so while they were with tears entreating one another, and competing in pious affection, with the love of the father rivalling the love of the son, they were overtaken by the thieves, and both killed on the spot.

...

A fragment about contemporary Roman practices in war

[23] When Sextius had captured the city of the Gauls, and was selling the inhabitants as slaves, one Crato who was led in chains with the rest, came up to the consul, as he sat upon the tribunal, and told him he had always been a friend to the Romans, and for that reason had received many injuries, and had suffered many beatings from his fellow citizens. Sextius immediately released him from his bonds, along with all his family, and restored all his possessions; and for his good will to the Romans, gave him power to set free nine hundred of the citizens, such as he himself thought fit. For the consul was more generous and bountiful to Crato than he expected, so that the Gauls could easily see how exactly just the Romans were, both in their punishments and in their rewards.

...

[Appian, Civil Wars, 1.7-27](#)

A second century CE Roman from Egypt who wrote monographs on each of Rome's major wars. This is from the beginning of his monograph on the civil wars that destroyed the republic and led to the principate (= Roman Empire or Imperial Period, that is Augustus onwards).

As you read this try to answer the following questions: According to the author: What motivates poor Roman citizens? What motivates Rome's Italian allies? What motivates Roman Senators? What motivates Roman Equites (= rich citizens who don't seek political office)? What motivates each of the Gracchi? What motivates the Scipios? Do you believe the author?

7 The Romans, as they subdued the Italian peoples successively in war, used to seize a part of their lands and build towns there, or enroll colonists of their own to occupy those already existing, and their idea was to use these as outposts; but of the land acquired by war they assigned the cultivated part forthwith to the colonists, or sold or leased it. Since they had no leisure as yet to allot the part which then lay desolated by war (this was generally the greater part), they made proclamation that in the meantime those who were willing to work it might do so for a toll of the yearly crops, a tenth of the grain and a fifth of the fruit. From those who kept flocks was required a toll of the animals, both oxen and small cattle. They did these things in order to multiply the Italian race, which they considered the most laborious of peoples, so that they might have plenty of allies at home. But the very opposite thing happened; for the rich, getting

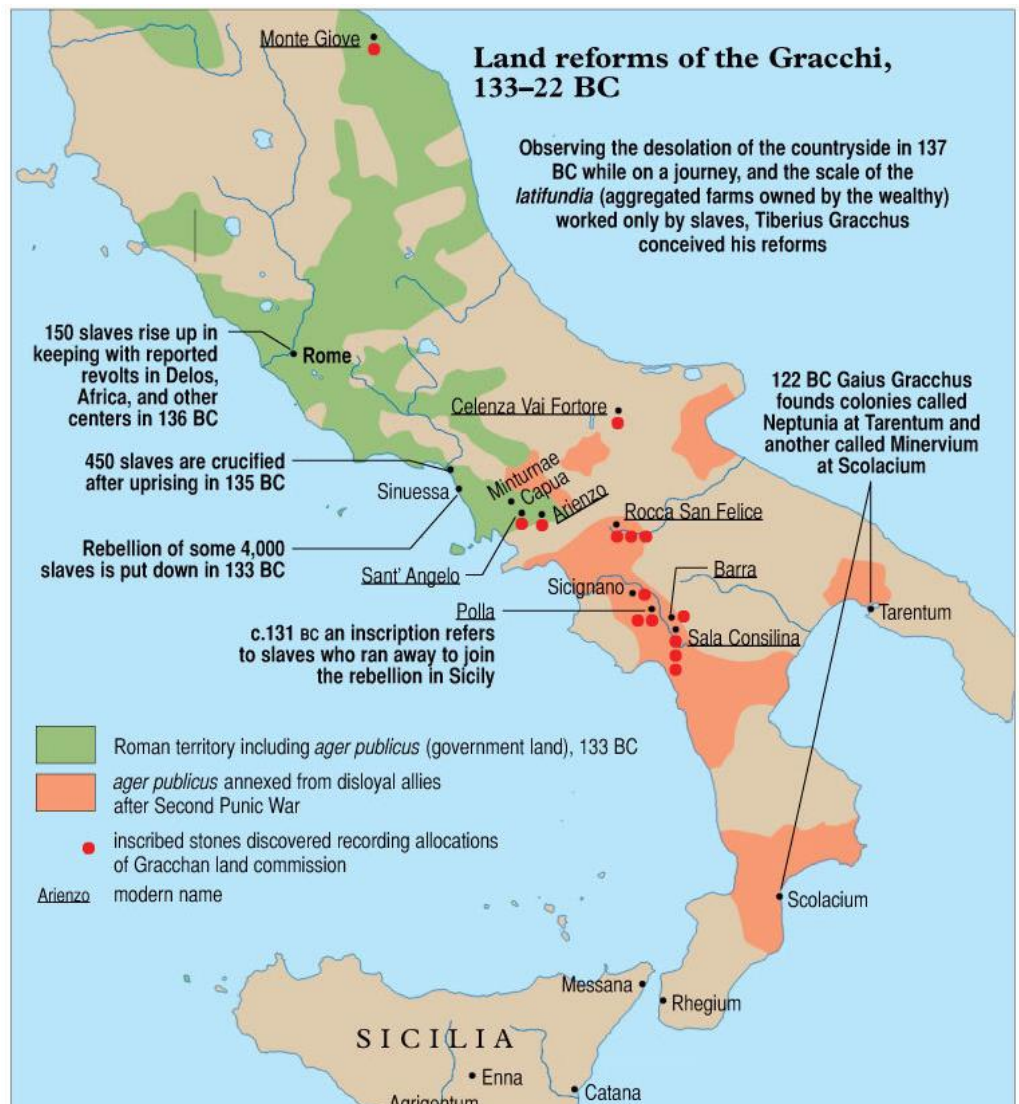
possession of the greater part of the undistributed lands, and being emboldened by the lapse of time to believe that they would never be dispossessed, absorbing any adjacent strips and their poor neighbours' allotments, partly by purchase under persuasion and partly by force, came to cultivate vast tracts instead of single estates, using slaves as labourers and herdsmen, lest free labourers should be drawn from agriculture into the army. At the same time the ownership of slaves brought them great gain from the multitude of their progeny, who increased because they were exempt from military service. Thus certain powerful men became extremely rich and the race of slaves multiplied throughout the country, while the Italian people dwindled in numbers and strength, being oppressed by penury, taxes, and military service. If they had any respite from these evils they passed their time in idleness, because the land was held by the rich, who employed slaves instead of freemen as cultivators.

8 1 For these reasons the people became troubled lest they should no longer have sufficient allies of the Italian stock, and lest the government itself should be endangered by such a vast number of slaves. As they did not perceive any remedy, for it was not easy, nor in any way just, to deprive men of so many possessions they had held so long, including their own trees, buildings, and fixtures, a law was at last passed with difficulty at the instance of the tribunes, that nobody should hold more than 500 jugera of this land, or pasture on it more than 100 cattle or 500 sheep. To ensure the observance of this law it was provided also that there should be a certain number of freemen employed on the farms, whose business it should be to watch and report what was going on.

Having thus comprehended all this in a law, they took an oath over and above the law, and fixed penalties for violating it, and it was supposed that the remaining land would soon be divided among the poor in small parcels. But there was not the smallest consideration shown for the law or the oaths. The few who seemed to pay some respect to them conveyed their

lands to their relations fraudulently, but the greater part disregarded it altogether.

9 1 Until at last Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, an illustrious man, eager for glory, a most powerful speaker, and for these reasons well known to all, delivered an eloquent discourse, while serving as tribune, concerning the Italian race, lamenting that a people so valiant in war, and related in blood to the Romans, were declining little by little into pauperism and paucity of numbers without any hope of remedy. He inveighed against the multitude of slaves as useless in war and never faithful to their masters, and adduced the recent calamity brought upon the masters by their slaves in Sicily, where the demands of agriculture had greatly increased the number of the latter; recalling also the war waged against them by the Romans, which was neither easy nor short, but long-protracted and full of vicissitudes and dangers. After speaking thus he again brought forward the law, providing that nobody should hold more than the



7 - map helping to connect slave revolts to land reform

500 jugera of the public domain. But he added a provision to the former law, that the sons of the occupiers might each hold one-half of that amount, and that the remainder should be divided among the poor by three elected commissioners, who should be changed annually.

10 1 This was extremely disturbing to the rich because, on account of the triumvirs, they could no longer disregard the law as they had done before; nor could they buy the allotments of others, because Gracchus had provided against this by forbidding sales. They collected together in groups, and made lamentation, and accused the poor of appropriating the results of their tillage, their vineyards, and their dwellings. Some said that they had paid the price of the land to their neighbours. Were they to lose the money with their land? Others said that the graves of their ancestors were in the ground, which had been allotted to them in the division of their fathers' estates. Others said that their wives' dowries had been expended on the estates, or that the land had been given to their own daughters as dowry. Money-lenders could show loans made on this security. All kinds of wailing and expressions of indignation were heard at once. On the other side were heard the lamentations of the poor — that they were being reduced from competence to extreme penury, and from that to childlessness, because they were unable to rear their offspring. They recounted the military services they had rendered, by which this very land had been acquired, and were angry that they should be robbed of their share of the common property. They reproached the rich for employing slaves, who were always faithless and ill-disposed and for that reason unserviceable in war, instead of freemen, citizens, and soldiers. While these classes were thus lamenting and indulging in mutual accusations, a great number of others, composed of colonists, or inhabitants of the free towns, or persons otherwise interested in the lands and who were under like apprehensions, flocked in and took sides with their respective factions. Emboldened by numbers and exasperated against each other they kindled considerable disturbances, and waited eagerly for the voting on the new law, some intending to prevent its enactment by all means, and others to enact it at all costs. In addition to personal interest the spirit of rivalry spurred both sides in the preparations they were making against each other for the appointed day.

11 1 What Gracchus had in his mind in proposing the measure was not money, but men. Inspired greatly by the usefulness of the work, and believing that nothing more advantageous or admirable could ever happen to Italy, he took no account of the difficulties surrounding it. When the

time for voting came he advanced many other arguments at considerable length and also asked them whether it was not just to let the commons divide the common property; whether a citizen was not worthy of more consideration at all times than a slave; whether a man who served in the army was not more useful than one who did not; and whether one who had a share in the country was not more likely to be devoted to the public interests. He did not dwell long on this comparison between freemen and slaves, which he considered degrading, but proceeded at once to a review of their hopes and fears for the country, saying that the Romans possessed most of their territory by conquest, and that they had hopes of occupying the rest of the habitable world; but now the question of greatest hazard was, whether they should gain the rest by having plenty of brave men, or whether, through their weakness and mutual jealousy, their enemies should take away what they already possessed. After exaggerating the glory and riches on the one side and the danger and fear on the other, he admonished the rich to take heed, and said that for the realization of these hopes they ought to bestow this very land as a free gift, if necessary, on men who would rear children, and not, by contending about small things, overlook larger ones; especially since for any labour they had spent they were receiving ample compensation in the undisputed title to 500 jugera each of free land, in a high state of cultivation, without cost, and half as much more for each son in the case of those who had sons. After saying much more to the same purport and exciting the poor, as well as others who were moved by reason rather than by the desire for gain, he ordered the clerk to read the proposed law.

12 1 Marcus Octavius, however, another tribune, who had been induced by those in possession of the lands to interpose his veto (for among the Romans the negative veto always defeats an affirmative proposal), ordered the clerk to keep silence. Thereupon Gracchus reproached him severely and adjourned the comitia (= citizens gathered into an assembly for the purpose of voting) to the following day. Then he stationed near himself a sufficient guard, as if to force Octavius against his will, and ordered the clerk with threats to read the proposed law to the multitude. He began to read, but when Octavius again forbade he stopped. Then the tribunes fell to wrangling with each other, and a considerable tumult arose among the people. The leading citizens besought the tribunes to submit their controversy to the Senate for decision. Gracchus seized on the suggestion, believing that the law was acceptable to all well-disposed persons, and hastened to the senate-house. But, as he had only a few followers there and was upbraided by the rich, he

ran back to the forum and said that he would take the vote at the comitia of the following day, both on the law and on the official rights of Octavius, to determine whether a tribune who was acting contrary to the people's interest could continue to hold office. And this Gracchus did; for when Octavius, nothing daunted, again interposed, Gracchus proposed to take the vote on him first.

When the first tribe voted to abrogate the magistracy of Octavius, Gracchus turned to him and begged him to desist from his veto. As he would not yield, he took the votes of the other tribes. There were thirty-five tribes at that time. The seventeen that voted first passionately supported the motion. If the eighteenth should do the same it would make a majority. Again did Gracchus, in the sight of the people, urgently importune Octavius in his present extreme danger not to prevent a work which was most righteous and useful to all Italy, and not to frustrate the wishes so earnestly entertained by the people, whose desires he ought rather to share in his character of tribune, and not to risk the loss of his office by public condemnation. After speaking thus he called the gods to witness that he did not willingly do any despite to his colleague. As Octavius was still unyielding he went on taking the vote. Octavius was forthwith reduced to the rank of a private citizen and slunk away unobserved. Quintus Mummius was chosen tribune in his place, and the agrarian law was enacted.

13 1 The first triumvirs appointed to divide the land were Gracchus himself, the proposer of the law, his brother of the same name, and his father-in-law, Appius Claudius, since the people still feared that the law might fail of execution unless Gracchus should take the lead with his whole family. Gracchus became immensely popular by reason of the law and was escorted home by the multitude as though he were the founder, not of a single city or race, but of all the nations of Italy. After this the victorious party returned to the fields from which they had come to attend to this business. The defeated ones remained in the city and talked the matter over, feeling aggrieved, and saying that as soon as Gracchus should become a private citizen he would be sorry that he had done despite to the sacred and inviolable office of tribune, and had sown in Italy so many seeds of future strife.

14 1 It was now summer, and the election of tribunes was imminent. As the day for voting approached it was very evident that the rich had earnestly promoted the election of those most inimical to Gracchus. The latter, fearing that evil would befall if he should not be re-elected for the following year, summoned his friends from the fields to attend the

election, but as they were occupied with harvest he was obliged, when the day fixed for the voting drew near, to have recourse to the plebeians of the city. So he went around asking each one separately to elect him tribune for the ensuing year, on account of the danger he was incurring for them. When the voting took place the first two tribes pronounced for Gracchus. The rich objected that it was not lawful for the same man to hold the office twice in succession. The tribune Rubrius, who had been chosen by lot to preside over the comitia, was in doubt about it, and Mummius, who had been chosen in place of Octavius, urged him to hand over the comitia to his charge. This he did, but the remaining tribunes contended that the presidency should be decided by lot, saying that when Rubrius, who had been chosen in that way, resigned, the casting of lots ought to be done over again by all. As there was much strife over this question, Gracchus, who was getting the worst of it, adjourned the voting to the following day. In utter despair he went about in black, though still in office, and led his son around the forum and introduced him to each man and committed him to their charge, as if he himself felt that death, at the hands of his enemies, were at hand.

15 1 The poor when they had time to think were moved with deep sorrow, both on their own account (for they believed that they were no longer to live in a free estate under equal laws, but would be reduced to servitude by the rich), and on account of Gracchus himself, who was in such fear and torment in their behalf. So they all accompanied him with tears to his house in the evening, and bade him be of good courage for the morrow. Gracchus cheered up, assembled his partisans before daybreak, and communicated to them a signal to be displayed if there were need for fighting. He then took possession of the temple on the Capitoline hill, where the voting was to take place, and occupied the middle of the assembly. As he was obstructed by the other tribunes and by the rich, who would not allow the votes to be taken on this question, he gave the signal. There was a sudden shout from those who knew of it, and violence followed. Some of the p33 partisans of Gracchus took position around him like body-guards. Others, having girded up their clothes, seized the fasces and staves in the hands of the lictors and broke them in pieces. They drove the rich out of the assembly with such disorder and wounds that the tribunes fled from their places in terror, and the priests closed the doors of the temple. Many ran away pell-mell and scattered wild rumours. Some said that Gracchus had deposed all the other tribunes, and this was believed because none of them could be seen. Others said that he had declared himself tribune for the ensuing year without an election.

16 1 In these circumstances the Senate assembled at the [temple of Fides](#) [*Fides = Loyalty, Faith*]. It is astonishing to me that they never thought of appointing a dictator in this emergency, although they had often been protected by the government of a single ruler in such times of peril; but a resource which had been found most useful in former times was never even recollected by the people, either then or later. After reaching such decision as they did reach, they marched up to the Capitol, Cornelius Scipio Nasica, the pontifex maximus, leading the way and calling out with a loud voice, "Let those who would save our country follow me." He wound the border of his toga about his head either to induce a greater number to go with him by the singularity of his appearance, or to make for himself, as it were, a helmet as a sign of battle for those who saw it, or in order to conceal himself from the gods on account of what he was about to do. When he arrived at the temple and advanced against the partisans of Gracchus they yielded out of regard for so excellent a citizen, and because they observed the Senators following with him. The latter wresting their clubs out of the hands of the Gracchans themselves, or breaking up benches and other furniture that had been brought for the use of the assembly, began beating them, and pursued them, and drove them over the precipice. In the tumult many of the Gracchans perished, and Gracchus himself, vainly circling round the temple, was slain at the door close by the statues of the kings. All the bodies were thrown by night into the Tiber.

17 1 So perished on the Capitol, and while still tribune, Gracchus, the son of that Gracchus who was twice consul, and of Cornelia, daughter of that Scipio who robbed Carthage of her supremacy. He lost his life in consequence of a most excellent design too violently pursued; and this abominable crime, the first that was perpetrated in the public assembly, was seldom without parallels thereafter from time to time. On the subject of the murder of Gracchus the city was divided between sorrow and joy. Some mourned for themselves and for him, and deplored the present condition of things, believing that the commonwealth no longer existed, but had been supplanted by force and violence. Others considered that their dearest wishes were accomplished.

18 1 These things took place at the time with Aristonicus was contending with the Romans for the government of Asia; but after Gracchus was slain and Appius Claudius died, Fulvius Flaccus and Papirius Carbo were appointed, in conjunction with the younger Gracchus, to divide the land. As the persons in possession neglected to hand in lists of their holdings, a proclamation was issued that informers should furnish testimony against them. Immediately a great number of

embarrassing lawsuits sprang up. Wherever a new field adjoining an old one had been bought, or divided among the allies, the whole district had to be carefully inquired into on account of the measurement of this one field, to discover how it had been sold and how divided. Not all owners had preserved their contracts, or their allotment titles, and even those that were found were often ambiguous. When the land was resurveyed some owners were obliged to give up their fruit-trees and farm-buildings in exchange for naked ground. Others were transferred from cultivated to uncultivated lands, or to swamps, or pools. In fact, the land having originally been so much looted, the survey had never been carefully done. As the original proclamation authorized anybody to work the undistributed land who wished to do so, many had been prompted to cultivate the parts immediately adjoining their own, till the line of demarcation between public and private had faded from view. The progress of time also made many changes. Thus the injustice done by the rich, although great, was not easy to ascertain. So there was nothing but a general turn-about, all parties being moved out of their own places and settling down in other people's.

19 1 The Italian allies who complained of these disturbances, and especially of the lawsuits hastily brought against them, chose Cornelius Scipio, the destroyer of Carthage, to defend them against these grievances. As he had availed himself of their very zealous support in war he was reluctant to disregard their request. So he came into the Senate, and although, out of regard for the plebeians, he did not openly find fault with the law of Gracchus, he expatiated on its difficulties and urged that these causes should not be⁹ decided by the triumvirs, because they did not possess the confidence of the litigants, but should be assigned to other courts. As his view seemed reasonable, they yielded to his persuasion, and the consul Tuditanus was appointed to give judgment in these cases. But when he took up the work he saw the difficulties of it, and marched against the Illyrians as a pretext for not acting as judge, and since nobody brought cases for trial before the triumvirs they remained idle. From this cause hatred and indignation arose among the people against Scipio because they saw a man, in whose favour they had often opposed the aristocracy and incurred their enmity, electing him consul twice contrary to law, now taking the side of the Italian allies against themselves. When Scipio's enemies observed this, they cried out that he was determined to abolish the law of Gracchus utterly and for that end was about to inaugurate armed strife and bloodshed.

20 1 When the people heard these charges they were in a state of alarm until Scipio, after placing near his couch at home one evening a tablet on which to write during the night the speech he intended to deliver before the people, was found dead in his bed without a wound. Whether this was done by Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi (aided by her daughter, Sempronia, who though married to Scipio was both unloved and unloving because she was deformed and childless), lest the law of Gracchus should be abolished, or whether, as some think, he committed suicide because he saw plainly that he could not accomplish what he had promised, is not known. Some say that slaves under torture testified that unknown persons were introduced through the rear of the house by night who suffocated him, and that those who knew about it hesitated to tell because the people were angry with him still and rejoiced at his death.

So died Scipio, and although he had been of extreme service to the Roman power he was not even honoured with a public funeral [cf. description of public funerals in Polybius!]; so much does the anger of the present moment outweigh the gratitude for the past. And this event, sufficiently important in itself, took place as a mere incident of the sedition of Gracchus.

21 1 Even after these events those who were in possession of the lands postponed the division on various pretexts for a very long time. Some proposed that all the Italian allies, who made the greatest resistance to it, should be admitted to Roman citizenship so that, out of gratitude for the greater favour, they might no longer quarrel about the land. The Italians were ready to accept this, because they preferred Roman citizenship to possession of the fields. Fulvius Flaccus, who was then both consul and triumvir, exerted himself to the utmost to bring it about, but the senators were angry at the thought of making their subjects equal citizens with themselves.

For this reason the attempt was abandoned, and the populace, who had been so long in the hope of acquiring land, became disheartened. While they were in this mood Gaius Gracchus, who had made himself agreeable to them as a triumvir, offered himself for the tribuneship. He was the younger brother of Tiberius Gracchus, the promoter of the law, and had been quiet for some time after his brother's death, but since many of the senators treated him scornfully he announced himself as a candidate for the office of tribune. Being elected with flying colours he began to lay plots against the Senate, and made the unprecedented suggestion that a monthly distribution of grain should be made to each citizen

at the public expense. Thus he quickly got the leadership of the people by one political measure, in which he had the cooperation of Fulvius Flaccus. Directly after that he was chosen tribune for the following year, for in cases where there was not a sufficient number of candidates the law authorized the people to choose further tribunes from the whole body of citizens.

22 1 Thus Gaius Gracchus was tribune a second time. Having bought the plebeians, as it were, he began, by another like political manoeuvre, to court the equestrian order, who hold the middle place between the Senate and the plebeians. He transferred the courts of justice, which had become discredited by reason of bribery, from the senators to the equites, reproaching the former especially with the recent examples of Aurelius Cotta, Salinator, and, third in the list, Manius Aquilius (the subduer of Asia), all notorious bribe-takers, who had been acquitted by the judges, although ambassadors sent to complain of their conduct were still present, going around uttering bitter accusations against them. The Senate was extremely ashamed of these things and yielded to the law, and the people ratified it. In this way were the courts of justice transferred from the Senate to the equites. It is said that soon after the passage of this law Gracchus remarked that he had broken the power of the Senate once for all, and the saying of Gracchus received a deeper and deeper significance by the course of events. For this power of sitting in judgment on all Romans and Italians, including the senators themselves, in all matters as to property, civil rights, and banishment, exalted the equites to be rulers over them, and put senators on the level of subjects. Moreover, as the equites voted in the election to sustain the power of the tribunes, and obtained from them whatever they wanted in return, they became more and more formidable to the senators. So it shortly came about that the political mastery was turned upside down, the power being in the hands of the equites, and the honour only remaining with the Senate. The equites indeed went so far that they not only held power over the senators, but they openly flouted them beyond their right. They also became addicted to bribe-taking, and when they too had tasted these enormous gains, they indulged in them even more basely and immoderately than the senators had done. They suborned accusers against the rich and did away with prosecutions for bribe-taking altogether, partly by agreement among themselves and partly by open violence, so that the practice of this kind of investigation became entirely obsolete. Thus the judiciary law gave rise to another struggle of factions, which lasted a long time and was not less baneful than the former ones.

23 1 Gracchus also made long roads throughout Italy and thus put a multitude of contractors and artisans under obligations to him and made them ready to do whatever he wished. He proposed the founding of numerous colonies. He also called on the Latin allies to demand the full rights of Roman citizenship, since the Senate could not with decency refuse this privilege to men who were of the same race. To the other allies, who were not allowed to vote in Roman elections, he sought to give the right of suffrage, in order to have their help in the enactment of laws which he had in contemplation. The Senate was very much alarmed at this, and it ordered the consuls to give the following public notice, "Nobody who does not possess the right of suffrage shall stay in the city or approach within forty stades of it while voting is going on concerning these laws." The Senate also persuaded Livius Drusus, another tribune, to interpose his veto against the laws proposed by Gracchus, but not to tell the people his reasons for doing so; for a tribune was not required to give reasons for his veto. In order to conciliate the people they gave Drusus the privilege of founding twelve colonies, and the plebeians were so much pleased with this that they scoffed at the laws proposed by Gracchus.

24 1 Having lost the favour of the rabble, Gracchus sailed for Africa in company with Fulvius Flaccus, who, after his consulship, had been chosen tribune for the same reasons as Gracchus himself. It had been decided to send a colony to Africa on account of its reputed fertility, and these men had been expressly chosen the founders of it in order to get them out of the way for a while, so that the Senate might have a respite from demagogism. They marked out the city for the colony on the place where Carthage had formerly stood, disregarding the fact that Scipio, when he destroyed it, had devoted it with solemn imprecations to sheep-pasture for ever. They assigned 6000 colonists to this place, instead of the smaller number fixed by law, in order further to curry favour with the people thereby. When they returned to Rome they invited the 6000 from the whole of Italy. The functionaries who were still in Africa laying out the city wrote home that wolves had pulled up and scattered the boundary marks made by Gracchus and Fulvius, and the soothsayers considered this an ill omen for the colony. So the Senate summoned the *comitia*, in which it was proposed to repeal the law concerning this colony. When Gracchus and Fulvius saw their failure in this matter they were furious, and declared that the Senate had lied about the wolves. The boldest of the plebeians joined them, carrying daggers, and proceeded to the Capitol, where the assembly was to be held in reference to the colony.

25 1 Now the people had come together already, and Fulvius had begun speaking about the business in hand, when Gracchus arrived at the Capitol attended by a body-guard of his partisans. Conscience-stricken by what he knew about the extraordinary plans on foot he turned aside from the meeting-place of the assembly, passed into the portico, and walked about waiting to see what would happen. Just then a plebeian named Antyllus, who was sacrificing in the portico, saw him in this disturbed state, laid his hand upon him, either because he had heard or suspected something, or was moved to speak to him for some other reason, and begged him to spare his country. Gracchus, still more disturbed, and startled like one detected in a crime, gave the man a sharp look. Then one of his party, although no signal had been displayed or order given, inferred merely from the angry glance that Gracchus cast upon Antyllus that the time for action had come, and thought that he should do a favour to Gracchus by striking the first blow. So he drew his dagger and slew Antyllus. A cry was raised, the dead body was seen in the midst of the crowd, and all who were outside fled from the temple in fear of a like fate.

Gracchus went into the assembly desiring to exculpate himself of the deed, but nobody would so much as listen to him. All turned away from him as from one stained with blood. So both he and Flaccus were at their wits' end and, having lost through this hasty act the chance of accomplishing what they wished, they hastened to their homes, and their partisans with them. The rest of the crowd occupied the forum after midnight as though some calamity were impending, and Opimius the consul who was staying in the city, ordered an armed force to gather in the Capitol at daybreak, and sent heralds to convoke the Senate. He took his own station in the temple of Castor and Pollux in the centre of the city and there awaited events.

26 1 When these arrangements had been made the Senate summoned Gracchus and Flaccus from their homes to the senate-house to defend themselves. But they ran out armed toward the Aventine hill, hoping that if they could seize it first the Senate would agree to some terms with them. As they ran through the city they offered freedom to the slaves, but none listened to them. With such forces as they had, however, they occupied and fortified the temple of Diana, and sent Quintus, the son of Flaccus, to the Senate seeking to come to an arrangement and to live in harmony. The Senate replied that they should lay down their arms, come to the senate-house, and tell them what they wanted, or else send no more messengers. When they sent Quintus a second time the consul Opimius arrested him, as being no longer an

ambassador after he had been warned, and at the same time sent his armed men against the Gracchans.

Gracchus fled across the river by the wooden bridge with one slave to a grove, and there, being on the point of arrest, he presented his throat to the slave. Flaccus took refuge in the workshop of an acquaintance. As his pursuers did not know which house he was in they threatened to burn the whole row. The man who had given shelter to the suppliant hesitated to point him out, but directed another man to do so. Flaccus was seized and put to death. The heads of Gracchus and Flaccus were carried to Opimius, and he gave their weight in gold to those who brought them, but the people plundered their houses. Opimius then arrested their fellow-conspirators, cast them into prison, and ordered that they should be strangled; but he allowed Quintus, the son of Flaccus, to choose his own mode of death. After this a lustration [=ritual purification] of the city was performed for the bloodshed, and the Senate ordered the building of a temple to Concord in the forum. [see reconstruction of forum above for location!]

27 1 Thus the sedition of the younger Gracchus came to an end. Not long afterward a law was enacted to permit the holders to sell the land about which they had quarrelled; for even this had been forbidden by the law of the elder Gracchus. At once the rich began to buy the allotments of the poor, or found pretexts for seizing them by force. ...

Diodorus, *The Library*, fragments from books 34/35 (AGAIN!)

Same author and book(s) we read above on the Sicilian Slave Revolts

[Fragments on the Gracchi](#)

[5] Tiberius Gracchus was the son of the Tiberius who had twice been consul, a man very famous for both his military and his political achievements. He was also, through his mother, the grandchild of that Publius Scipio who conquered Hannibal and the Carthaginians. As well as being nobly born on both sides, he excelled all his contemporaries in judgement and power of speech, and indeed in all manner of learning, so that he was not afraid to debate freely with the powerful men who opposed him.

[6] The people flocked to Rome, like rivers flowing into the all-receptive ocean. They were determined to support their own cause, with the law as their leader and ally. Their defender {Gracchus} was a magistrate who was untouched by

corruption or fear; he had decided to undergo every toil and danger until the last breath of his life, in order to acquire land for the people . . . 2 He {Octavius?} had around him, not an ill-organised mob, but the strongest and most prosperous part of the people. Therefore the power of both sides was evenly balanced, and victory was long uncertain, swinging first one way, then the other. Many thousands of men had gathered together, and they supported their side with violence. The assemblies of these people had the appearance of stormy waves on the sea.

[7] After he was deprived of his office, Octavius did not want to admit that he was a private individual, but he did not dare to act as tribune, and so he kept quiet. Yet at the time when Gracchus proposed a decree to dismiss Octavius from his position as magistrate, *Octavius could have proposed* a similar decree depriving Gracchus of his position as tribune. For if the two decrees had been legally adopted, both would have returned to private life; or else they would have kept their powers, if the hostile proposals had been deemed unlawful.

2 Heading relentlessly to his doom, *Gracchus* soon obtained his deserved punishment. Scipio seized a club that was close to hand, because anger can often overcome obstacles . . .

3 When news of the death of Gracchus reached the army, Scipio Africanus exclaimed: "So may all those perish who attempt such crimes" {Homer, *Od*_1'47}.

[More fragments on Tiberius Gracchus and the man responsible for his death](#)

[24 The people showed favour to him {Gracchus}, not only when he took up office, but when he was a candidate, and even before then. Upon his return from Sardinia, the people went out to meet him, and his landing from the boat was greeted with blessings and applause. Such was the extreme affection that people had for him.

[25] Gracchus in his speeches to the people urged them to overthrow the aristocracy and establish a democratic government; and after winning the favour of all classes, he had them not only as supporters, but even as instigators of his bold objectives. For every citizen, lured by the hope that the proposed laws would be in his own interests, was ready to risk any danger to ensure that they were adopted. By taking control of the courts away from the senators and setting up the *equites* as judges, *Gracchus* gave the lower classes power over the nobles, and by breaking the harmony that existed previously between the senate and the *equites*,

he made the populace a serious rival to both those classes. By setting all the classes at variance, he built up personal power for himself; and by using funds from the public treasury for shameful and inopportune expenses, which however bought him favour with others, he made himself the centre of everyone's attention. By leaving the provinces open to the greed and rapacity of the tax-farmers, he made their subjects rightly resentful of *Roman* rule; and by reducing the traditional severity of military discipline through his laws, as a favour to the soldiers, he introduced insubordination and anarchy into the state. Contempt for their leaders causes men to disobey the laws, and finally leads to fatal disorders and the overthrow of the state.

2 Gracchus had reached such a degree of power and arrogance, that he released Octavius, even though the people had voted to send him into exile. He told the people that he did this as a favour to his mother, who had interceded with him.

...

[27] Seventeen tribes voted against the law, which was approved by an equal number of tribes; when the votes of the eighteenth tribe were counted, there was a majority of one vote in favour of approval. While the judgment of the people was so finely balanced, Gracchus was terribly alarmed, as if his life was in danger; but when he heard that he had won by a margin of just one vote, he cried out in elation, "The sword is hanging over the heads of our enemies, and for the rest, we will be pleased with whatever fortune will grant us."

...

[28a] Gracchus opposed them with many supporters; but as his situation became steadily worse, and he met with unexpected failure, he fell into a depression and a manic mood. He gathered his fellow conspirators at his own house, and after consulting with Flaccus, he decided that it was necessary to overcome his opponents by force, and to use violence against the magistrates and the senate. Therefore he urged them all to carry swords under their togas, and to follow him, awaiting his orders. While Opimius was deliberating on the Capitol about a suitable course of action, Gracchus rushed there with his disaffected followers; but when he found that the temple had already been occupied and that a crowd of nobles had gathered there, he went away to the portico behind the temple, in a despondent and tormented mood. An acquaintance of his called Quintus fell at his knees, while he was raging in this way, and begged him

not to take any violent or desperate action against his fatherland. But *Gracchus*, who was already starting to behave like a tyrant, threw him face down onto the ground, and ordered his followers to slay him, making this the start of their revenge against their enemies. The consul was shocked, and he informed the senate about the murder and the *intended* attack on them.

[29] After Gracchus had been killed by his own slave, Lucius Vitellius, who had been one of his friends, was the first to come across his body; and was so far from being troubled at his death, that he cut off his head, and carried it to his own house, thereby giving a remarkable instance of his cruelty and covetousness. For when the consul {Opimius} by proclamation promised to reward anyone that should bring him the head {of Gracchus}, with its weight in gold, Vitellius bored a hole in the neck, and drawing out the brain, poured in molten lead in its place. Then he brought the head to Opimius, and returned with the promised reward; but he was hated by everyone for the rest of his life, because he had betrayed his friend. The Flacci were likewise put to death.

...

[33] Publius Scipio Nasica, the consul, {in 138 BCE} was a man renowned for both his virtue and his nobleness of birth; for he was descended from the same family as Africanus, Asiaticus and Hispanus; of whom the first conquered Africa, the second Asia, and the third Spain; and each of them earned their surname through their achievements. In addition to the glory attached to the whole family, his father and his grandfather had been the most eminent men of the city; for both of them were leaders of the senate – the first to express their opinions in all debates – up to the time of their deaths. His grandfather upon one occasion was judged by the senate the best man of all the Roman citizens. 2 For it was found written in the Sibylline oracles that the Romans should build a temple in honour of the great mother of the gods {Magna Mater}, and should bring her sacred images from Pessinus in Asia; and that all the people should go out of the city to meet them; and that the best man should lead the men, and the best woman be at the head of the women, when they received the images of the goddess. The senate performed all that was prescribed in the oracles; they judged Publius Nasica to be the best man, and Valeria the best woman.

3 He was not only eminent for his piety towards the gods, but also a good statesman, who expressed his views intelligently. For Marcus Cato, who was given the name Demosthenes,

whenever he delivered his opinion in the senate always repeated that Carthage must be destroyed, even if the senate was debating some other, unrelated matter; but Publius Nasica was ever of the opposite opinion, that Carthage should be preserved, 4 Both of these opinions seemed to the senate to be worthy of consideration; but the most acute thinkers amongst them preferred the opinion of Nasica. For they conceived that the power and grandeur of the Romans should be judged, not by comparison with the feebleness of others, but rather by their superiority over even the strongest states. 5 Besides, while Carthage stood, the fear of that city would force the Romans to remain in peace and concord among themselves, and they would govern their subjects with more moderation and clemency; these are the things which usually strengthen and enlarge empires. But if the rival city {Carthage} was destroyed, what could they expect but civil wars amongst the Romans themselves, and hatred of their leadership amongst the allies, who would suffer from the greed and insolence of the Roman magistrates.

6 All of this accordingly happened to the Romans after the destruction of Carthage. For turbulent demagogues, redistribution of land, grievous revolts of allies, continual and destructive civil wars, and all the other *misfortunes* which Publius Scipio foretold, came to pass. His son Nasica afterwards, when he was well advanced in years, acted as leader of the senate and with his own hands killed Tiberius

Gracchus, who was aiming at tyrannical power. 7 This caused uproar amongst the common people, who were provoked to rage against those responsible for the death of *Gracchus*. The tribunes of the people, bringing all the senators one by one to the rostra, asked them who had killed him; every one of them, fearing violence from the people, denied the facts, and gave vague answers. But when it came to Nasica, he admitted that he had killed him with his own hand; and further declared, that the ambition of Gracchus to seize absolute power had not been obvious to others, but it was very well known to him and the senate. Whereupon the people, though they were much troubled at what had happened, yet were moved by the boldness and authority of the man; and so they refrained from further action. 8 This Scipio Nasica likewise, the son of the former Nasica, who died in this year, maintained an incorruptible character throughout his life; he took part in public affairs, and showed himself to be a philosopher, not only in words, but genuinely in the way he lived; so that he inherited a reputation for virtue in keeping with his ancestors.

