

HISTORY OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

This document covers the history of Rome and its Republic, from the city's traditional founding in 753 BC to the death of Augustus (Octavian) in AD 14. Emphasis has been placed on political and military developments. Readers seeking deeper exploration of specific topics (cultural, religious, and economic) are encouraged to consult specialized works.

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1: A New Republic



SIDES:

- **RED** = **Rome** → (Tiber valley)
- **BLUE** = **Syracuse** → (eastern Sicily / Greek colonial power)
- **LIGHT BLUE** = **Italiotai** → (Greek colonial cities of southern Italy)
- **ORANGE** = **Apulian** → (Apulia / southeastern Italy)
- **MAROON** = **Lucanian** → (southern Italian highlands)
- **BLUE-GRAY** = **Umbri** → (central Italy / upper Tiber)
- **NAVY BLUE** = **Samnites** → (central-southern Apennines)
- **LIGHT GREEN** = **Gauls** → (Po Valley / northern Italy)
- **PURPLE** = **Nuragic** → (interior Sardinia)
- **BROWN** = **Etruscan** → (Etruria / north of the Tiber)
- **DARK GREEN** = **Carthage** → (North Africa / western Sicily / Sardinia)

OVERVIEW: To the north, the Celtic invasions collide with the decadent Etruscan dodecapolis. In the center, the Samnites, Umbrians, and Romans try to establish themselves as the predominant force in the area. In the south, the Greek colonists of Italy are attacked by the native Lucanians and Apulians. In Sicily, Carthage tries to oppress the prosperous Syracuse. In Sardinia, the Nuragic civilization has withdrawn into the internal mountains. **Which of these civilizations will be able to leave a mark on history?**

Detailed Information:

Tradition places the founding of Rome in 753 BC, a date the Romans themselves calculated centuries later. The archaeological record tells a slower story, with small villages perched on the hills above a Tiber crossing gradually coalescing into a town by the mid-eighth century BC. Rome's founding myth

reaches back to the Trojan War, furnishing the Romans with a glorious national heritage to stir civic pride, a legend crystallized by the poet **Virgil** with his **Aeneid**, written between 29 and 19 BC. Its central figure is **Aeneas**, a Dardanian prince and son of the goddess Venus, who led his aged father and young son out of the burning city of Troy. From Homer's prophecy that his line would rule onward, later writers made him the ancestor of **Romulus and Remus**, the mythical founders of Rome. Aeneas wandered the Mediterranean for years in a journey that paralleled that of **Odysseus** (whom the Romans called Ulixes, later anglicized to **Ulysses**). Eventually reaching Italy, his son Ascanius (Iulus) founded Alba Longa and began a long line of Alban kings. Generations later, the Alban king Numitor was overthrown by his brother Amulius, who forced Numitor's daughter Rhea Silvia into a vow of perpetual chastity so that she could bear no heirs to threaten his rule. The god of war **Mars** came to her nonetheless, and she gave birth to twin sons, Romulus and Remus. Fearing the boys would one day challenge him, Amulius ordered them drowned in the Tiber, but the basket carrying them washed ashore, and they were suckled by a she-wolf and later found and raised by a shepherd and his wife. Growing up as herdsmen, they soon learned their true identity, and they killed Amulius and restored their grandfather Numitor to the throne of Alba Longa. Rather than remain there, they set out to found a city of their own on the banks of the Tiber, near the spot where they had been saved. They soon quarrelled over

which hill should be its site, Remus favoring the Aventine and Romulus the Palatine. The dispute ended with Romulus slaying Remus and founding the city on the Palatine, giving Rome its name.

The settlement was made up almost entirely of fugitives and outcasts drawn by Romulus's promise of asylum. This meant the city was overwhelmingly male, with few women to bear the next generation. The Romans solved this by inviting the Sabines to a festival and, at a prearranged signal, carried off their women. This event is known as the **Rape of the Sabine Women**. The word "rape" here refers to abduction. The Sabines went to war, and fighting continued until the women themselves ran between the armies and begged them to stop. The two peoples then made peace and merged. The Sabine king Titus Tatius ruled jointly with Romulus.

Romulus was the **first king** of Rome. Six more legendary kings followed him, each credited with shaping Roman institutions. The **second king** was Numa Pompilius, credited with reforming the calendar. Rome's earliest calendar was lunar, built around the agricultural year, with just 10 months and an unnamed winter gap. Numa is credited with reforming this around 713 BC by adding January and February to the end of the year. It would be later in 153 BC, when a rebellion in Spain (the Second Celtiberian War) forced the Senate to install consuls earlier so they would have time to march to Hispania and start campaigning before the war season ended, moving the start of the year from March to January. That

shifted every month two places forward, which is why months like September, October, November, and December (from the Latin for 7, 8, 9, and 10) no longer match their position. A common misconception blames Julius Caesar for inserting a new month called July and pushing everything back, but July already existed as Quintilis (the fifth month in the old reckoning) and was simply renamed by the Senate in 44 BC to honor him after his assassination. The month of August was similarly renamed from Sextilis in 8 BC to honor the emperor Augustus. They had nothing to do with the numbering mismatch.

Rome's **third king**, Tullus Hostilius, was remembered as a warlike ruler who waged near-constant war on Rome's neighbors. His most famous act was the destruction of Alba Longa, Rome's mother city, after its leader betrayed him in battle. According to legend, their dispute was settled by a duel between two sets of triplets, the Roman Horatii and the Alban Curiatii, with the lone surviving Horatius winning the contest for Rome. When Alba Longa later broke faith, Tullus razed the city and resettled its people on the Caelian Hill, enlarging Rome's population. Tradition held that he neglected the gods until a plague struck, and he was eventually killed by a lightning bolt sent by Jupiter. The **fourth king**, Ancus Marcius, founded the port city of Ostia where the Tiber met the sea, opening Rome to maritime trade. The legendary **fifth king** of Rome, and first of its **Etruscan dynasty**, Tarquinius Priscus, built the *Circus Maximus* (large stadium used for

chariot races), built the *Cloaca Maxima* (sewer system), drained the Forum, and began the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline.

The **sixth king**, Servius Tullius, instituted Rome's first census and reorganized society into five wealth-based classes that determined how you would serve in the military. The first class, the wealthiest, was equipped as full hoplites with helmet, breastplate, greaves, shield, sword, and spear. The second class wore similar equipment but lacked the breastplate, the third class lacked greaves, and the fourth class carried only spear and javelin. The fifth class, the poorest property owners, served as slingers and skirmishers. Modern historians refer to these five classes collectively as the **Servian classes**, named after the king who created them. Outside the five classes sat the propertyless *proletarii*, named for their only contribution to the state being their offspring (*proles*). They were exempt from military service and would be lumped into a single voting unit in the later Centuriate Assembly.

The **seventh and final king** was **Tarquin the Proud** (Tarquinius Superbus). In **509 BC**, his tyranny brought an end to the monarchy system for Rome. The king's son Sextus Tarquinius raped Lucretia, the wife of Collatinus, a Roman nobleman. She told her father and husband what had happened, made them swear vengeance, and then killed herself with a dagger. Her body was carried into the Forum. The sight of it, together with the fiery speech of Lucius Junius **Brutus**,

provoked an uprising. The uprising expelled the Tarquins and abolished the monarchy.

The Romans replaced the king with two annually elected consuls. Each consul had the power to veto the other. This is the birth of the **Roman Republic**, its name derived from *res publica*, meaning “the public thing”. The government was organized through shared power and checks, with positions filled by election or appointment rather than inheritance. **Magistrates** served one-year terms and commanded armies, managed public finances, and oversaw infrastructure. A magistrate could climb a fixed ladder of offices called the *cursus honorum*, starting as **Quaestor**, advancing through **Aedile** and **Praetor** before being eligible for the highest position of **Consul**. Each step along the way was decided by assembly vote. The **Tribal Assembly** grouped citizens into 35 geographic tribes regardless of wealth, where the members of each tribe voted among themselves to decide its single collective vote, and it elected the lower magistrates of quaestors and aediles. The **Centuriate Assembly** elected the higher magistrates of praetors and consuls. Its citizens cast their ballots in 193 groups called centuries, organized by wealth, with each century casting a single collective vote determined by the majority within it. The richest citizens were divided into many small centuries and the poorest lumped into just a few large ones, meaning a wealthy man's vote carried far more weight than a poor man's. In theory, only a majority vote in the Centuriate

Assembly, called by a consul on the Senate's recommendation, could lawfully authorize a formal declaration of war. The procedure eroded in the late Republic as ambitious generals waged wars on their own authority, and it disappeared entirely under the Empire, when the emperor alone decided when Rome went to war. Regardless of future developments, the Republic's annual elections supported having short terms for elected officials, preventing any one person from gaining too much power. Later, a ten-year gap was required between holding the same office twice, as established by the *Lex Genucia* of 342 BC.

A Roman law (*lex*) followed a set process. A consul, praetor, or tribune drafted the bill and posted it publicly for about twenty-four days so citizens could read and debate it, often after the Senate gave its opinion in a *senatus consultum*. The magistrate then convened the assembly, where citizens voted by group and could only accept or reject the bill as written, with no amendments. Once the omens proved favorable and the assembly approved it, the measure became law, was cut into bronze and lodged in the treasury at the Temple of Saturn, and was named for the magistrate who proposed it.

Rome was deeply paranoid about the return of the monarchy, and several popular figures who built a following among the poor were accused of aiming at the throne and killed for it. In 485 BC, Spurius Cassius proposed distributing con-

quered land to the plebeians and was executed for allegedly using the reform as a stepping stone to kingship. In 439 BC, Spurius Maelius, a wealthy plebeian, bought grain during a famine and gave it to the starving, and was killed on the same suspicion. In 384 BC, Marcus Manlius Capitolinus was accused of courting the plebs to seize power and was hurled to his death from the Tarpeian Rock, the cliff on the Capitoline hill from which Rome executed traitors. The pattern was clear: any popular figure who built support outside the Senate's approved channels risked being branded a would-be tyrant and destroyed.

The early Republican period was fraught with long-term political struggle between the **patricians** (old aristocratic families) and the **plebeians** (common citizens), referred to by historians as the **Conflict of the Orders** (500-287 BC). The frustrated plebs staged a series of protests called the **Secessio Plebis**. In 494 BC, they withdrew to the Sacred Mount in a form of general strike, demanding greater rights. This action forced the patricians to create the office of the **Tribune of the Plebs** and recognize the *Concilium Plebis*, the plebeian assembly that elected them yearly. The Tribune of the Plebs was protected by their *sacrosanctity*, a sacred inviolability that made harming a tribune a religious offense punishable by death. Holding political right of *auxilium*, the Tribune could physically intervene and shield a plebeian citizen from unjust punishment. They also held the right of *intercessio* (veto), allowing them to block any action of a magistrate, the Senate, or

even another tribune, immediately halting the proposed law, election, or decree from taking effect. A veto was final and could not be overridden.

The Romans had a **myth** of these early struggles involving a general named Gnaeus Marcius, who earned the cognomen **Coriolanus** by leading the capture of the Volscian city of Corioli in 493 BC. He was a proud patrician who was strongly against the new plebeian rights. In 491 BC, during a grain shortage, he urged the government to withhold food unless the plebeians abolished the office of Tribune. The tribunes charged him with treason. Coriolanus fled the city and allied with the Volscians, leading their army against Rome. Under fierce condemnation from his own mother Veturia and a delegation of Roman women, Coriolanus relented and withdrew his army from the gates. For this betrayal of the Volscians, he was killed by them. Questions remain about the historical evidence for the happenings in the traditional tale. Modern historians view the narrative as largely legend.

Early Rome wove its values into a body of **patriotic legends**. In the **tale of Horatius**, the hero Horatius Cocles and two comrades held a bridge against King **Lars Porsena**'s Etruscan army until the Romans tore it down behind them, saving the city. At the **Battle of Lake Regillus**, Rome crushed the Latins and the exiled Tarquins, with the divine twins **Castor and Pollux** appearing on the field to secure the victory. The **story of Virginia** told of a centurion who stabbed his own daugh-

ter to spare her from the corrupt **Appius Claudius**, an outrage that toppled the tyrannical **Decemvirs**. And in the **Prophecy of Capys**, the blind seer foretold to Romulus the future glory and conquests awaiting his humble city.

A plebeian victory came in 451 BC with the **Twelve Tables**, Rome's first written law code. Until then, legal customs had been preserved orally and interpreted exclusively by patrician priests, who could shape rulings to favor their own class. The Twelve Tables, inscribed on bronze tablets and displayed in the Forum, made the law publicly accessible and remained the foundation of Roman jurisprudence for generations. A series of further reforms followed. Major ones include the *Lex Canuleia* (445 BC), that legalized marriage between patricians and plebeians, and the *Leges Liciniae Sextiae* (367 BC), which opened the consulship to plebeians, requiring that one of the two consuls be plebeian.

The government had a total of 44 magistrates: 20 Quaestors, 8 Praetors, 4 Aediles, 2 Consuls, and 10 Tribunes of the Plebs. In addition to this, two **Censors**, elected every five years by the Centuriate Assembly, conducted the census and reviewed the Senate's membership. The **Senate** itself was an advisory body of around 300 mostly former magistrates that controlled the treasury, guided foreign policy, and shaped military strategy. Senators were not directly elected by the people but were enrolled by the Censors, and held their seats for life unless removed

for misconduct. Senators couldn't directly command magistrates, but instead held several distinct powers to influence them. They could control the budget, issue formal advisory decrees, receive foreign ambassadors, grant **triumphs**, or assign provinces and commands. A triumph was the highest Roman military honor, a victory parade through the city granted to a general who had won a major battle against an enemy. As implied earlier, every legitimate general was a magistrate (only consuls and praetors). A private citizen could not legally lead a Roman army.

The origins of the triumph are obscure, and the Romans themselves placed the first one in the mythical past, often crediting Romulus after his defeat of King Acron. Its form probably came from Etruscan and Greek precedent. The naming for it originated from the Greek *thriambos* hymn, passing through Etruscan to Rome. The Greek hymn was sung in the festive processions of Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry, the kind of joyful victory chant that suited a triumphal parade.

Senate procedure was governed entirely by custom rather than written rules. A presiding magistrate, usually a consul or praetor, summoned the body, presented the matter, and called on senators to speak in order of seniority. Each senator could speak as long as he wanted on the matter, which is where the filibuster originated. Votes were then taken by physical division, with senators moving to different sides

of the chamber to indicate their position, and the presiding magistrate eyeballing the crowd to declare which side had the majority.

The Censors held office for only 18 months of their 5-year term to conduct the **census**, a formal registration of every Roman citizen recording his property, family, and tribal affiliation. This determined his tax obligations, military service, Servian class, and voting weight in the Centuriate Assembly. The Censors decided which class each citizen fell into based on his declared property, which century within that class he was assigned to, and which of the 35 tribes he belonged to, with discretion to move citizens between tribes as reward or punishment. Male citizens reported in person at the Campus Martius and declared their family and property value under oath.

Roman society was organized around hereditary networks of ancient familial clans called **gentes** (singular: gens). A person's full name reflected this: a personal name (**praenomen**), the clan name (**nomen**), and a family branch name (**cognomen**). To explain, take the later recognizable figure of Gaius Julius Caesar as example: **Gaius** was his praenomen, the personal name given at birth. His nomen **Julius** marked him as a member of the gens Julia, a patrician clan that claimed descent from Aeneas through his son Iulus. His cognomen **Caesar** identified his specific branch within the Julii, with the name's origin uncertain but postulated to

originate to an ancestor of his who killed an elephant during the Second Punic War (the Carthaginian word for elephant was 'caesai'). Other major patrician gentes included the Cornelii (the largest, producing Scipio Africanus), the Fabii, and the Claudii. Prominent plebeian gentes included the Licinii, the Sempronii, and the Marii. Roman women were generally not given a personal first name and instead took the feminine form of their father's family name, so every daughter of the gens Julia was called Julia and every daughter of the gens Cornelia was called Cornelia.

Rome's greatest early victory was the capture of Veii, the nearest and richest Etruscan city, only ten miles from Rome. The final war began around 405 BC and reportedly lasted ten years, in deliberate echo of the Trojan War. **Marcus Furius Camillus** took the city in 396 BC by tunneling under its walls and emerging inside the citadel during a religious ceremony. Camillus was appointed dictator five times by the Senate across his career and celebrated four triumphs, more than any other Roman of the early Republic. Later Romans would refer to him as the "Second Founder of Rome". A dictatorship itself was a temporary post invoked only in grave crises (like the Gallic invasions), lasting no more than six months and requiring the dictator to step down once the emergency had passed.

In the south, the Greeks faced their own conflicts. The Greeks arrived in Italy in the colonization wave of the eighth century BC. Corinth founded Syracuse

on the island of Sicily in 734 BC. From nearly the moment of their arrival, the Greeks collided with Carthage, the Phoenician empire holding Sicily's western end. Gelon of Syracuse crushed a Carthaginian invasion at Himera in 480 BC, but Carthage returned in 409 BC and sacked several Greek cities. These events are part of the greater **Greco-Punic Wars** (600-265 BC).

In around **390 BC**, a war band of **Senones Gauls** under Brennus crossed the Apennines into Etruria. Rome met them at the River Allia and was nearly annihilated, allowing them to continue forward. **Rome was sacked and burned.** The Romans eventually bought off the Gauls with gold. When the Romans protested that the Gallic measuring weights were rigged, Brennus threw his sword onto the scales and declared "Vae victis" ("woe to the conquered"). The trauma never left Roman memory. Survivors sheltered on the Capitoline Hill debated abandoning the ruins entirely to relocate to nearby Veii, but Camillus reportedly talked them out of it. Rome was rebuilt in such haste that the city's street plan remained notoriously narrow and irregular for centuries. During the same period, the Servian Wall was constructed for defense, and it was maintained through the end of the Republic.

Rome fought in the Greek-style hoplite phalanx, a dense formation of spearmen that demanded flat ground and rigid cohesion. This strategy is what failed them catastrophically against the Gauls. First appearing over the following

century, a sweeping set of military reforms transformed the Roman army from this rigid phalanx into the flexible manipular legion. Tradition credits Marcus Furius Camillus after of the Sack of Rome, thus called the **Camillian reforms**, but the link to Camillus is almost certainly legend. In reality the changes evolved gradually over generations rather than springing from one man. Regardless, the phalanx was broken into flexible units called **maniples**, arranged in three lines by experience: *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii*. The **hastati** were the youngest soldiers, in their late teens and twenties, who formed the front line. The **principes** were men in their prime, around thirty and seasoned by past campaigns, forming the second line. The **triarii** were the oldest veterans acting as the final reserve in the rear. All three lines carried a **gladius** (thrusting sword) and the **scutum**, a tall curved shield that protected the body. The first two lines threw the **pilum**, a heavy javelin designed to bend on impact so it could not be thrown back, while the third line had thrusting spears. A maniple typically contained about 120 men for the hastati and principes, and around 60 for the triarii, and each was divided into two centuries commanded by a **centurion**. A full **legion** was built from thirty maniples in total: ten maniples of hastati forming the front battle line, ten maniples of principes forming the second, and ten maniples of triarii forming the reserve. These three lines were arrayed in a checkerboard pattern so the rear lines could advance forward through the gaps in the front. Supporting these heavy infantry were the

velites, lightly armed skirmishers drawn from the poorest citizens who fought ahead of the main line with javelins and small shields before falling back through the gaps in the maniples. The **equites**, the wealthy citizen cavalry, pursued routed enemies, numbering about 300 per legion. The **accensi**, the lowest property class, accompanied the army as unarmed reservists, stepping in to replace fallen soldiers in the main lines and otherwise serving as messengers and aides to officers.

While Rome was rebuilding, the indigenous Nuragic people of Sardinia continued to resist foreign encroachment largely on their own terms. They were descendants of a Bronze Age civilization famous for its thousands of stone tower-fortresses called *nuraghes*. Carthage controlled Sardinia's ports and lowlands, but the Nuragic communities retreated into the interior highlands, where they maintained their identity, language, and traditions.

In the fourth century BC, Rome absorbed the Latin League. It crushed their revolt in the **Latin War** (340–338 BC) and reorganized the defeated cities into a graduated system. Some received full citizenship. Others received citizenship without voting rights. Still others became allies with specific military obligations. This flexible system of incorporation became the secret of Roman expansion. The Italic peoples Rome absorbed brought their own deities into the Roman religious system. The Sabines contributed Quirinus, a war god later identified with the deified Romulus. The Etruscans gave Rome much of its state religious framework,

including haruspicy (reading omens from animal entrails) and the Capitoline Triad of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, reshaped from the Etruscan Tinia, Uni, and Menrva. Roman religion expanded the same way Roman territory did: by incorporation rather than erasure.

Rome's greatest challenge came from the Samnites, an Oscan-speaking highland confederation of four tribes that dominated the central-southern Apennines. Their tough mountain infantry and control of the routes into Campania made conflict with Rome inevitable. The Samnite Wars were fought in three phases. The **First Samnite War** (343–341 BC) began when Capua appealed to Rome against Samnite raids. After contested fights at Mount Gaurus and Suessula, Rome withdrew to suppress a Latin mutiny, and the war ended inconclusively. The **Second Samnite War** (326–304 BC) erupted when Rome intervened at Neapolis, drawing both powers into a brutal struggle for control of central Italy. Disaster struck in 321 BC when the Samnite commander Gaius Pontius lured a Roman army into the Caudine Forks, sealing off both ends of the pass with timber and boulders. Trapped without food or water, the legions were forced to surrender. Stung by the disgrace, and following a brief truce, Rome returned to the offensive with renewed determination, breaking through Samnite territory. By 304 BC, the Samnites sued for peace.

The **Third Samnite War** (298–290 BC) proved decisive. The Samnites formed a grand coalition with the Etruscans, Umbrians, and Senones Gauls, hoping to crush Rome from multiple directions. At Sentinum in 295 BC, the largest battle yet fought in Italy, the consuls Publius Decius Mus and Quintus Fabius Maximus Rullianus commanded opposing wings. When his line buckled under a Gallic charge, Decius performed the ritual of *devotio*, dedicating himself and the enemy to the gods of the underworld before riding into the Gallic ranks to his death. His sacrifice rallied the left, Fabius broke the Samnite right, and the coalition collapsed. By 290 BC the Samnites accepted Roman hegemony, leaving Rome the dominant power in Italy.

By the 280s BC, the only significant independent powers left in Italy were the Greek cities of the south, known as *Magna Graecia*. Once wealthy and powerful, they were now in decline, and their armies depended on mercenaries. The most important was Tarentum, a Spartan colony with a large fleet. When a Roman naval squadron violated an old treaty in 282 BC by sailing into the Gulf of Tarentum, the Tarentines attacked it. They destroyed part of the Roman garrison at Thurii and insulted Roman ambassadors. Unable to fight Rome alone, they appealed to King Pyrrhus of Epirus.

2: Pyrrhic War



SIDES:**1. ANTI-PYRRHUS**

- **RED** = Roman Republic
- **BLUE** = Carthage

2. PYRRHIC ALLIANCE

- **OLIVE GREEN** = Epirus
- **PEARL GRAY** = Syracuse

OVERVIEW: The **Pyrrhic Wars** (281–275 BC), fought in separate Italian and Sicilian theatres, were the defining conflicts in which Rome first fought a major Hellenistic army. The costly victories of King Pyrrhus of Epirus inspired the term '**Pyrrhic victory.**'

Detailed Information:

In 282 BC, ten Roman warships violated a treaty by sailing into the Gulf of Tarentum. The Tarentines, in the middle of a religious festival and inflamed by a demagogue, attacked without warning, sinking four ships and killing the Roman admiral. They then marched on Thurii, a Greek colony under Roman protection, expelled its garrison, and plundered it. When Rome sent ambassadors to demand reparations, they were publicly insulted in the Tarentine assembly, where one reportedly had a chamber pot emptied over his toga. He held up the stained garment and promised the Tarentines would wash it clean with their blood, but they only laughed louder. Rome declared war the following spring.

The Tarentines called on King Pyrrhus of Epirus for military support. He was a second cousin of Alexander the Great and the finest living practitioner of Hellenistic warfare. He had spent his life fighting in the **Wars of the Diadochi**, between Alexander's successors. Pyrrhus was splendidly mercurial: a brilliant tactician who could never sit still with his victories, restlessly chasing the next campaign and abandoning each conquest to chase another. He had already lost and regained his own throne in Epirus twice, served as a hostage in Egypt, and briefly held the throne of Macedon before being driven out, all before the Tarentines invited him to Italy. He gladly agreed to lead the army against Rome.

Pyrrhus crossed to Italy in spring 280 BC with twenty-five thousand infantry, three thousand cavalry, and twenty war elephants. He found Tarentum's defenses in poor condition and its citizens more interested in the theatre and the baths than military drill. He closed the gymnasiums, conscripted the citizens, and prepared for the arrival of the Romans.

The first battle came at Heraclea in summer 280 BC. The Roman infantry held its own against the phalanx, and the cavalry engagements were indecisive. The battle was decided by Pyrrhus's elephants. The Romans retreated having lost seven thousand men. Pyrrhus had lost nearly four thousand, including many of his best officers. He reportedly walked the battlefield afterward, noting the Roman dead had fallen facing forward, and remarked that with such soldiers he could conquer

the world. His army was a professional force that could not be easily replaced. Rome could raise new legions from its Italian allies seemingly without limit.

Pyrrhus marched north toward Rome, hoping a show of force would bring defections. The allies of Rome did not defect. He got within fifty miles of Rome before turning back, having accomplished nothing. He then sent his chief minister Cineas, reputed the most persuasive speaker of his age, to Rome with lavish gifts. The Senate was reportedly inclined to accept his terms until the blind old senator Appius Claudius Caecus denounced any negotiation with a foreign king. The Senate rejected the terms.

The second battle came at Asculum in 279 BC and lasted two days. On the first, broken ground neutralized the phalanx and elephants, and the day ended in a draw. On the second, Pyrrhus moved his army onto open ground and committed his elephants decisively, breaking the Roman line. But his losses were again catastrophic, including many Epirote veterans he could not replace. It was after Asculum that Pyrrhus reportedly told his congratulating officers that if he won one more such victory against the Romans, he would be utterly ruined. The phrase “Pyrrhic victory” has meant the same thing ever since.

In Sicily, the Greek cities led by Syracuse were losing their long war with Carthage. They offered Pyrrhus command if he would drive the Carthaginians out.

He accepted, crossed in 278 BC, and abandoned his Italian allies. Carthage, alarmed, signed a treaty of alliance with Rome.

The Sicilian campaign began brilliantly. Within two years Pyrrhus had driven the Carthaginians from almost every position on the island and besieged Lilybaeum, their great fortress on the western tip. But he could not take it. Its walls were too strong, and its supplies came in freely by sea. As his frustration grew he became tyrannical toward the Sicilian Greeks, demanding money and soldiers they could not provide and executing local leaders he suspected of disloyalty. They turned against him. By 275 BC his position was untenable, and he sailed back to Italy, reportedly looking back and saying, "What a wrestling ground I am leaving for the Carthaginians and the Romans."

The situation of Italy he returned to was drastically different to where he left it. The Romans had used his three years in Sicily to reconquer most of the Greek cities. Pyrrhus fought his third and final battle at Beneventum in 275 BC. The Roman commander, **Manius Curius Dentatus**, had learned from the earlier battles (Fun fact: his agnomen *Dentatus* means "toothed," because, according to Pliny, he was born with teeth showing), choosing his ground carefully and had his men ready with torches to panic the elephants. The panicked animals trampled their own army. The phalanx was broken. Pyrrhus retreated to Tarentum and sailed home to Epirus with only a third of the army he had brought six years earlier.

Pyrrhus spent his remaining three years fighting in Greece. He died in 272 BC in a street fight in Argos in one of the strangest deaths in ancient history: an old woman on a rooftop, watching her son fight Pyrrhus below, threw a roof tile that struck the king on the back of the neck and stunned him, after which an enemy soldier cut off his head. He was forty-six. He had been one of the most gifted generals of his century and had written memoirs on warfare that Hannibal later studied. Rome emerged as the undisputed master of Italy south of the Po.

3: First Punic War



SIDES:**1. ROMAN REPUBLIC**

- **RED** = Roman Republic

2. CARTHAGINIAN EMPIRE

- **BLUE** = Carthage

OVERVIEW: The **First Punic War** (264–241 BC) was the 23-year conflict between Rome and Carthage fought primarily over Sicily. It was Rome's first war beyond the Italian mainland and featured their first major naval battles.

Detailed Information:

Carthage, a Phoenician colony founded from Tyre, grew into a commercial empire controlling the North African coast, southern Hispania, Sardinia, Corsica, and western Sicily. Its wealth came from trade, its power from a professional navy.

In 264 BC, the city of Messana, located at the northeastern tip of Sicily, was seized by Italian mercenaries called the Mamertines. They had been hired by Syracuse and then turned on their employers to take the city for themselves. In 265 BC, King Hiero II of Syracuse marched against them. Facing destruction, the Mamertines appealed simultaneously to Carthage and Rome.

This was awkward: Rome had just executed a similar band of mercenaries who had seized Rhegium across the strait. Carthage responded first and installed a garrison. One Mamertine faction, unhappy with Carthaginian protection, sent a second embassy to Rome.

The Senate could not decide and passed the question to the popular assembly, which voted for intervention, swayed by the consuls' promise of plunder. A Roman force crossed the strait in 264 BC, expelled the Carthaginian garrison without serious fighting, and found itself at war with both Carthage and Syracuse. The Roman commander defeated both in separate engagements, and by 263 BC had forced Hiero II of Syracuse to switch sides. Syracuse would remain a loyal Roman ally for the next fifty years.

The war on land went well for Rome. The Roman armies steadily pushed the Carthaginians back into their fortified coastal cities. The problem with besieging these coastal cities was that they could easily be supplied from the sea by Carthage's elite navy force. The Senate concluded in 260 BC that Rome had no choice but to build a navy of its own.

Ancient naval warfare was fought with oared galleys, dominated by the **quinquereme**, a ~45 meter warship of about 100 tons crewed by some 300 rowers, 120 marines, and 50 officers and deck hands. The "*quin*" (five) in its name referred to 5 rowers per vertical file, most likely arranged as three stacked oars per side with two men on each of the upper two and one on the lowest, repeated about 28 times down each flank. A **bronze ram** at the bow (front) of the ship was its main weapon, used either to ram an enemy ship's hull to sink it or shear off its oars in a glancing pass to disable it. The ships carried sails for cruising but relied on oars in

battle for the needed precise speed, power, and turning. Smaller galleys were also used: the **quadrireme** (“four,” referring to two banks of oars with two rowers per oar), the **trieme** (having “three” banks of oars with one rower each), the **bireme** (two banks of oars with one rower each), and the **liburna** (a small ship with a single bank of oars for speedy raids and reconnaissance).

According to tradition, the Romans used a wrecked Carthaginian quinquereme as a model and within sixty days built one hundred quinqueremes and twenty triemes, training their rowers on land using benches arranged in the shape of a ship's interior. The story is probably exaggerated, but highlights the Roman ambition of matching naval capabilities with the Carthaginians. Knowing their strengths with hand-to-hand combat, the Romans designed the **corvus**, a heavy boarding bridge mounted on the bow of a Roman warship, hinged so it could be oriented and dropped onto an enemy deck, allowing Roman marines to charge across and turn a naval engagement into a land battle.

At Mylae in 260 BC, the consul Gaius Duilius met a larger Carthaginian fleet off northern Sicily and destroyed it. Encouraged by Mylae, the Romans decided in 256 BC to take the war to Africa. A fleet of over three hundred ships under Marcus Atilius Regulus sailed for Carthage, defeated a Carthaginian fleet at Cape Ecnomus, and landed unopposed.

Regulus marched inland, defeated a Carthaginian field army, and captured Tunis. He then made a catastrophic mistake. Believing the war essentially won, he sent most of his fleet and army home for the winter and demanded terms so harsh the Carthaginian senate rejected them.

Over the winter, a Spartan mercenary named Xanthippus arrived in Carthage and was hired to reorganize the army. He trained the infantry to stand and fight, integrated cavalry and elephants, and in spring 255 BC destroyed Regulus at the Bagradas Valley. Regulus was captured and spent the rest of his life a prisoner. Rome sent another fleet to evacuate the survivors, which won a battle on the way home and then, loaded with prisoners and spoils, sailed directly into a summer storm off southern Sicily and was lost. Perhaps a hundred thousand men drowned, the worst naval disaster in recorded history to that point. Roman captains had ignored the advice of their Greek pilots, and the *corvus* had made the ships too top-heavy to ride out rough seas.

Rome rebuilt its fleet and kept fighting. The war settled into a grinding pattern of sieges on Sicily and inconclusive sea battles. A second disaster struck in 253 BC when another fleet was lost to a storm off Cape Palinurus, drowning another fifty thousand men. The *corvus* disappears from the record around this time and was probably abandoned.

By the late 250s BC both sides were exhausted. The war focused increasingly on two Carthaginian strongholds, Lilybaeum and Drepana. The Roman siege of Lilybaeum, begun in 250 BC, would continue almost without interruption for the rest of the war. In 249 BC, the consul Publius Claudius Pulcher attempted a surprise attack on the Carthaginian fleet at Drepana and was catastrophically defeated. Before the battle, when the sacred chickens refused to eat, Claudius reportedly threw them overboard, saying that if they would not eat, they could drink. Rome lost ninety-three ships, and Claudius was recalled and fined for impiety.

After Drepana, Rome could no longer afford a fleet. For seven years the war on Sicily continued as a land siege while the sea was left to Carthage. Hamilcar Barca, the father of Hannibal, took command of Carthaginian forces in 247 BC and conducted a brilliant guerrilla campaign from a mountain stronghold near Panormus, raiding Roman positions and keeping the war alive by sheer tactical skill despite receiving almost no support from home. He was never defeated in the field, but his campaign could not change the strategic situation. In 242 BC the Roman Senate, unable to fund a new navy from public revenue, asked the wealthiest private citizens to lend the state the money to build a fleet, to be repaid only if Rome won. The subsequent response was enough to build two hundred new quinqueremes.

In March 241 BC, the new fleet, under Gaius Lutatius Catulus, intercepted a Carthaginian relief convoy at the Aegates Islands, five small mountainous islands near the northwest coast of Sicily. The Carthaginian ships were loaded with supplies and manned by hastily assembled crews. The Romans destroyed them, sinking fifty and capturing seventy. With his supply line cut, Hamilcar was ordered to negotiate. The following peace treaty required Carthage to evacuate Sicily, release all Roman prisoners without ransom, and pay an indemnity.

The treaty was harsh but survivable. Carthage retained its fleet, African empire, and wealth. The real catastrophe came next, when Hamilcar's returning mercenaries, denied their back pay, revolted. This was the **Mercenary War** (241-238 BC), a conflict the 19th century French novelist Gustave Flaubert would dramatize in his 1862 novel *Salammbô*.

While Carthage fought their rebels, Rome seized Sardinia and Corsica in 238 BC in violation of the treaty. Hamilcar took his family to Hispania, began conquering the peninsula, and made his 9-year-old son **Hannibal** swear lifelong hatred of Rome.

4: Second Punic War



SIDES:**1. ROME AND ITS ALLIES**

- **RED**, **RED-ORANGE**, & **ORANGE** = Roman Republic
- **OLIVE GREEN** = East Numidia
- **PURPLE** = Aetolian League
- **MAROON** = Sparta
- **INDIGO** = Illyria

2. CARTHAGE AND ITS ALLIES

- **BLUE** & **BLUE-GREEN** = Carthage
- **LIGHT GREEN** = West Numidia
- **PEARL GRAY** = Achaean League
- **BLACK** = Kingdom of Macedon

OVERVIEW: The **Second Punic War** (218–201 BC) was the 17-year conflict between Rome and Carthage fought across the western Mediterranean. It featured related conflicts in Numidia and the Balkans. It was the closest Rome ever came to destruction and transformed the Republic into the dominant Mediterranean power.

Detailed Information:

The Phoenicians originated along the narrow coastal strip of the eastern Mediterranean in what is now Lebanon, where city-states like Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos rose to dominate seaborne trade by the second millennium BC. Their name originates from the Greeks calling them *Phoinikes*, meaning "purple people," due to their chief export of Tyrian purple, a dye extracted from murex sea snails that stained cloth a deep crimson-violet.

The city of Carthage was founded in what is today modern Tunisia by Phoenician settlers from Tyre around 814 BC. According to legend, the city

was established by Queen Dido, who fled her brother Pygmalion after he murdered her husband. Landing on the North African coast, she bargained with the local Berber king Iarbas for as much land as a single oxhide could cover. She outwitted him by cutting the hide into thin strips and stretching them end to end, enclosing a hilltop large enough to found an entire city.

Its people called themselves Punic and spoke a Semitic language. They wrote in the Phoenician alphabet, a 22-letter consonantal script that was the world's first true alphabet, replacing the thousands of symbols required by Egyptian hieroglyphs and Mesopotamian cuneiform with a system simple enough for ordinary merchants to learn. As Phoenician traders established colonies across the Mediterranean, they carried their gods with them. Chief among them were Baal Hammon, the supreme sky and fertility god, and his consort Tanit, the protective mother goddess of Carthage. Greek and Roman writers accused them of sacrificing infants to these gods. Truth or propaganda: its status remains contested. Archaeological excavations of tophets (open-air sanctuaries) at Carthage have uncovered urns containing the cremated remains of young children alongside dedications to Baal, but scholars continue to debate whether these sites represent ritual sacrifice or simply a dedicated cemetery for infants who died of natural causes (before modern medicine and sanitation, child mortality during ancient times was staggering).

Politically, Carthage was an oligarchic republic dominated by its wealthy merchant aristocracy. At the top sat two elected magistrates called **suffetes**, elected by a popular assembly. They are roughly equivalent to Roman consuls, though they lacked direct military command. Beneath them was a Senate of several hundred aristocrats who debated policy and controlled the treasury. The selection process for the Carthaginian senate is unknown, but members served for life. Operating alongside the senate and suffetes was a third body, the **Council of One Hundred and Four**, a powerful tribunal of judges. According to Aristotle, who likened it to the Spartan ephorate, the Council was composed of Carthage's senior aristocrats selected by smaller boards called pentarchies on the basis of merit, and its members held their seats for life. Its central function was judicial oversight of the city's military and political officials. Returning generals could be tried for treason or incompetence after a campaign with penalties ranging from fines and exile to crucifixion.

The Carthaginian general **Hamilcar Barca** began the conquest of Hispania for its abundant silver mines, whose wealth could help a reeling Carthage recover from the staggering costs of the First Punic War and the Mercenary War. His son, **Hannibal**, grew up in army camps. When his

brother-in-law Hasdrubal was assassinated in 221 BC, the army acclaimed the twenty-six-year-old Hannibal as its commander.

The **Second Punic War** started at Saguntum, an Iberian city under Roman protection. When Hannibal besieged and sacked it in 219 BC after an eight-month siege during which Rome sent no army to relieve the city, Rome demanded he stop. He refused. The Roman envoy **Quintus Fabius Maximus** gathered his toga into a fold and told the Carthaginian senate he carried in it both peace and war. They told him to give them whichever he pleased. He reportedly let the fold drop and said, "Then take war."

In spring 218 BC, Hannibal crossed the Ebro with roughly fifty thousand soldiers (a mix of Liby-Phoenicians & Spanish auxilia), nine thousand cavalry, and thirty-seven war elephants, gambling on a route no one expected. He would march overland through Gaul and descend on Italy from the north. He crossed the Rhône on rafts while evading a Roman army under **Publius Cornelius Scipio**. The Alps crossing cost him nearly half his army to cold, starvation, and hostile tribes, but the gamble worked: he reached the Po Valley where no Roman force prepared to meet him. The recently conquered Gallic tribes in the area flocked to his banner.

The consul Publius Scipio led his army to meet Hannibal at the Ticinus in November 218 BC. He was wounded in a cavalry skirmish and reportedly saved by his teenage son, also named Publius (the future Africanus). Weeks later at the

Trebia, Hannibal lured both consular armies across a freezing river before dawn and destroyed two-thirds of the Roman force with a hidden flanking attack. The following year the wounded consul was sent to Hispania to join his brother Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Calvus, whom he had earlier dispatched there to keep Carthaginian reinforcements from reaching Hannibal in Italy.

In spring 217 BC, the consul Gaius Flaminius pursued Hannibal into a fog-shrouded defile along Lake Trasimene, where the Carthaginians charged down from the heights and drove the legions into the water. Fifteen thousand Romans died, including Flaminius. Rome had no consular army left in the field. The Senate appointed Quintus Fabius Maximus dictator. Fabius pioneered what became known as **Fabian strategy**: shadowing the enemy army, cutting off its supplies, and denying him the decisive battle he needed. It worked, but it was politically intolerable. When his term expired, the consuls of 216 BC raised eighty thousand men, the largest army in Roman history, organized in the traditional **manipular system** of *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii* (organized by ascending wealth & seniority), and marched on Hannibal at Cannae.

Hannibal, with under fifty thousand, arranged his line in a crescent bowed toward the Romans, with his weakest troops in the center. As the Romans pressed forward, the center gave way in a controlled retreat, drawing them into a pocket.

The Carthaginian wings closed, the Numidian cavalry swept the rear, and the entire Roman army was surrounded. Perhaps fifty thousand Romans died in a single day.

The disaster at Cannae triggered mass defections. A significant portion of Southern Italy rebelled against Rome, including the Capuans, the Samnites, the Lucanians, and the Greek cities of Tarentum, Metapontum, Thurii, and Croton. Moreover, Philip V of Macedon allied with Hannibal in 215 BC. Philip's decision came after Rome had repeatedly intervened in the Illyrian coast on his doorstep. The **First Illyrian War** (229–228 BC) saw Rome crush the Illyrian queen Teuta after she sponsored piracy against Italian ships and murdered a Roman envoy, installing Demetrius of Pharos as a client ruler. Demetrius aligned himself with Macedon and chose to resume the piracy, prompting Rome to commence the **Second Illyrian War** (220–219 BC), which drove him into exile at Philip's court. This is where he urged the king to strike on Rome while it reeled from Hannibal. Unable to spare legions, Rome allied with the Aetolian League and the Illyrian chieftain Scerdilaidas to combat Macedon. This became the **First Macedonian War** (214–205 BC). In 215 BC, Syracuse switched sides to Hannibal under the new king Hieronymus, threatening Rome's grip on Sicily and opening a harbor to Carthaginian fleets to strike Italy. Despite this all, Rome did not surrender.

The Senate forbade public mourning, raised new legions from old men and boys, armed slaves and criminals, and returned to the Fabian strategy. The

survivors of Cannae were formed into "legions of shame" and exiled to Sicily.

Rome's refusal to negotiate was the single most important fact of the war. Hannibal lacked the siege equipment and manpower to take Rome with its defensive walls or its major cities, so his battlefield victories simply couldn't bring decisive victory.

The war then splintered across multiple fronts. In Sicily, Marcus Claudius Marcellus besieged Syracuse in 214 BC against the defensive engines of **Archimedes**, whose cranes plucked ships from the sea and catapults hurled massive stones. The city fell during a festival, and Archimedes was killed by a soldier who found him drawing figures in the sand.

In Hispania, the two **Scipio brothers** campaigned for seven years, winning battles across the peninsula and blocking Hannibal's reinforcements, until both were killed in separate engagements there in 211 BC. The elder Publius was killed near the Upper Baetis River when the Carthaginians caught and overwhelmed his divided army, and his brother Gnaeus died weeks later after his Spanish allies were bribed to desert him. With the Roman position in Hispania collapsing, the Senate handed the command to the dead consul Publius's **son**, nephew of Gnaeus, the twenty-five-year-old **Publius Cornelius Scipio**, who would later lead Rome to final victory and become known as **Scipio Africanus**.

Meanwhile Hannibal was slowly losing in Italy without ever losing a battle. Rome systematically recaptured the cities that had defected: Capua in 211 BC,

Tarentum in 209 BC. His brother Hasdrubal Barca led a relief army across the Alps in 207 BC, but a Roman force intercepted him at the Metaurus before the brothers could unite. Hasdrubal's head was thrown into Hannibal's camp, and looking at his brother's face, Hannibal reportedly said he saw at last the doom of Carthage.

In 204 BC, Scipio crossed to Africa with volunteers. Numidia, Carthage's powerful neighbor to the west, was divided between two rival kings, and Scipio had secured an alliance with Masinissa of the eastern Massylii against Syphax of the western Massaesyli, who had thrown in with Carthage. Scipio launched a night attack that burned two Carthaginian armies in their encampments, then won decisively at the Great Plains. Carthage recalled Hannibal from Italy after fifteen years in enemy territory.

On October 19, 202 BC, the two greatest generals of the age met at Zama. Scipio had trained his men to open lanes in their formation to let Hannibal's elephants pass through harmlessly. The battle hung in the balance until Masinissa's Numidian cavalry returned from pursuing the Carthaginian horse and charged into Hannibal's rear. The Carthaginian army was destroyed.

The following Treaty of 201 BC stripped Carthage of its fleet, its overseas empire, and its right to wage war without Roman permission. Masinissa received an expanded Numidian kingdom. Scipio returned in triumph and was granted the **agnomen** (additional honorific name) of Africanus.

After the war, Hannibal was elected suffete in 196 BC and used the office to break the aristocratic chokehold over Carthaginian politics. He restructured the city's finances by exposing the embezzlement of public revenues by the oligarchic elite and making the Council of 104 elected annually rather than held for life. The reforms worked so well that Carthage offered to pay off its entire war indemnity to Rome decades ahead of schedule. Hannibal's aristocratic political enemies denounced him to the Roman Senate, accusing him of plotting a new war. With Roman commissioners on their way to arrest him, Hannibal slipped out of Carthage in 195 BC and fled east, eventually taking refuge at the court of Antiochus III, ruler of the Seleucid Empire.

Rome had survived the worst catastrophe in its history and emerged as master of the western Mediterranean. Rome would now turn east to settle accounts with Philip V of Macedon.

5: Macedonian Wars



SIDES:**1. ROME & ALLIES**

- **RED** = Roman Republic
- **PEARL** = Achaean League
- **YELLOW** = Kingdom of Pergamon
- **BLUE** = Athens and Rhodes

2. HELLENIC LEAGUE & SELEUCIDS

- **BLACK** = Kingdom of Macedon
- **LIGHT BLUE** = Seleucid Empire
- **PURPLE** = Aetolian League
- **BROWN** = Sparta

OVERVIEW: Conflicts covered are: The **First Macedonian War** (214–205 BC), **Second Macedonian War** (200–197 BC), **Roman-Seleucid War** (192–188 BC), **Third Macedonian War** (171–168 BC), & **Fourth Macedonian War** (150–148 BC). The next written section also includes the **Third Punic War** (149–146 BC). The shifting alliances of the Macedonian Wars were simplified haphazardly into two strictly opposing sides to streamline this document.

Detailed Information:

The Macedonian Wars cannot be separated from the Punic Wars that bracketed them. Rome's first involvement in Greek affairs came in 214 BC, when Philip V of Macedon allied with Hannibal during the darkest days of the Second Punic War. Unable to fight two major wars at once, the Senate paid the Aetolian League and Pergamon to fight Philip on Rome's behalf. The **First Macedonian War** (214–205 BC) ended in a negotiated peace at Phoenice that changed almost

nothing on the ground but left the Aetolians feeling betrayed when Rome walked away the moment they were needed. After Carthage's defeat, Hannibal's aristocratic enemies denounced him to Rome, leading to his self-imposed exile. He fled to Antiochus III of the Seleucid Empire.

The **Second Macedonian War** (200–197 BC) began when Philip V allied with the Seleucids to carve up the Ptolemaic kingdom, and a threatened Egypt appealed to Rome. The decisive battle of the war came at Cynoscephalae in 197 BC, where Titus Quinctius Flamininus met Philip in heavy fog on broken ground. The Roman maniples exploited gaps in the Macedonian phalanx that the Greeks themselves had never noticed, and the battle ended in complete Roman victory. Philip kept his throne but lost his fleet, his elephants, and everything outside Macedon proper.

At the Isthmian Games of 196 BC, Flamininus proclaimed all the Greek cities free, autonomous, and exempt from tribute. The crowd's roar was reportedly so loud that birds fell dead from the sky. In truth, Rome had simply realized that a Greece full of small quarrelling cities was easier to manage.

The "freedom of the Greeks" was tested almost immediately. Sparta under the tyrant Nabis had spent the Second Macedonian War expanding in the Peloponnese, seizing Argos from Philip and instituting radical reforms (freeing helots, redistributing land, arming the poor) that alarmed the propertied classes

across Greece. In 195 BC the Achaean League, Pergamon, Rhodes, and Macedon all appealed to Flamininus, and a congress at Corinth voted for war. Flamininus marched south with fifty thousand troops in what became the **Laconian War** (195 BC). Nabis fought skillfully, but after his fleet was destroyed off Gytheium and Sparta itself was besieged, he sued for peace. The settlement stripped Sparta of its coastal towns, its navy, and Argos, but Flamininus deliberately left Nabis on the throne as a counterweight to the Achaean League. Nabis was assassinated by Aetolian agents three years later, and Sparta was absorbed into the Achaean League, ending eight centuries of Spartan independence.

Antiochus III, with Hannibal at his court, had spent two decades rebuilding the Seleucid Empire toward its old extent, marching east toward India in imitation of Alexander. The Aetolian League, still bitter over Phoenice, invited him into Greece in 192 BC, igniting the **Roman-Seleucid War** (192–188 BC), also called the **Syrian war** or **Antiochene war**. Antiochus crossed the Aegean with only ten thousand men, expecting a general Greek uprising that never came, and was crushed at Thermopylae in 191 BC by Manius Acilius Glabrio, who turned the Seleucid position by the same mountain path the Persians had used against Leonidas. The flanking march was led by **Cato the Elder**, serving as military tribune, who had earned a triumph four years earlier as consul in 195 BC for suppressing a major revolt in Hispania. Rome pursued Antiochus into Asia, with

the fleet under Gaius Livius and later Lucius Aemilius Regillus defeating the Seleucid navy (commanded in part by Hannibal himself) at Side and Myonessus, securing the Aegean crossing. At Magnesia in 190 BC, Scipio Africanus, serving as legate to his brother Lucius, broke the Seleucid army despite being outnumbered more than two to one, as Antiochus's cavalry charge succeeded on the right but rode off in pursuit while his phalanx was enveloped and destroyed. The Treaty of Apamea in 188 BC stripped Antiochus of all territory west of the Taurus Mountains, imposed an indemnity of fifteen thousand talents (the largest in ancient history), required him to surrender his elephants and war fleet, and demanded he hand over Hannibal. Most of the territory was given to Pergamon and Rhodes, swelling them into the major powers of the eastern Aegean as Roman clients.

Hannibal fled again, this time to Bithynia. When Roman agents tracked him down in 183 BC, the old general took poison rather than be captured, reportedly saying it was time to relieve the Romans of their long anxiety. Scipio Africanus died in the same year, embittered and in self-imposed exile. He had been hounded out of Rome by political enemies, led by Cato the Elder, who accused him and his brother of embezzling funds from the Seleucid indemnity. Both of the great men of the Second Punic War were now dead.

The Aetolian League, abandoned by Antiochus after Thermopylae, fought on alone in the **Aetolian War** (191–189 BC). Marcus Fulvius Nobilior besieged their

stronghold at Ambracia until the League sued for peace. The settlement reduced Aetolia to a Roman client, stripped of half its territory and forbidden an independent foreign policy, ending its century of influence in central Greece.

In 189 BC, Gnaeus Manlius Vulso marched the consular army from Magnesia deep into Anatolia to punish the Galatians, Celtic tribes who had supplied mercenaries to Antiochus. He defeated them at Mount Olympus and Mount Magaba, killing or enslaving forty thousand and extracting enormous plunder. Generations earlier, the **Galatians**, a host of Celtic tribes, pushed out of the Balkans into Greece, plundering as far as the sacred sanctuary of Delphi before being driven back at the **Battle of Thermopylae** in 279 BC. One large group then crossed into Asia Minor as mercenaries for a Bithynian king and carved out a homeland in the central Anatolian highlands that became known as Galatia. They remained a feared warrior people, raiding their Greek neighbors until Pergamon checked them, a triumph celebrated in the famous sculptures of dying Gauls. Now, Manlius Vulso's victory broke their power for good, and the once-fearsome raiders were left subjects of Pergamon. The campaign extended Roman reach into the Anatolian interior and made Pergamon the unchallenged power of Asia Minor.

Philip V died in 179 BC, leaving Perseus to rule. He cultivated Greek allies, married a Seleucid princess, and started looking like the kind of Hellenistic king Rome had spent two generations preventing. The **Third Macedonian War** (171–

168 BC) broke out and dragged on under mediocre commanders until the Senate sent Lucius Aemilius Paullus in 168 BC. At Pydna that June, the phalanx pushed the Roman line back in perfect order, but as it crossed broken ground its formation opened up, and Paullus ordered his maniples into the gaps. The enemy phalanx was shattered and twenty thousand Macedonians lay dead. Perseus was captured and paraded through Rome in Paullus's triumph, ending the Antigonid dynasty founded by one of Alexander's generals.

Roman dominance over the Hellenistic world was made undeniable that same summer. Antiochus IV of the Seleucids had invaded Egypt and was about to take Alexandria when the Roman envoy Gaius Popillius Laenas intercepted him in the suburb of Eleusis. Laenas handed him the Senate's demand to withdraw, and when Antiochus asked for time to consider, Laenas drew a circle in the sand around the king's feet and told him to answer before stepping out of it. Antiochus withdrew. As the encounter took place in the suburb of Eleusis, just outside Alexandria, it was thereafter known as the **Day of Eleusis** (168 BC), marking the moment where the Hellenistic kingdoms became subordinates accepting Roman orders rather than equals that could negotiate.

Forced to abandon his Egyptian conquests, Antiochus IV vented his frustration on Judea, looting the Jerusalem Temple, rededicating it to Zeus, and banning Jewish religious practices such as circumcision and Sabbath observance.

This sparked the **Maccabean Revolt** (167–160 BC), led by the priest Mattathias and his sons (most famously Judas Maccabeus), who waged a successful guerrilla war against Seleucid forces. The rebels recaptured Jerusalem in 164 BC, an event still commemorated today as Hanukkah, which celebrates the tradition that a single day's worth of consecrated oil miraculously kept the Temple's menorah burning for eight days. The Jews eventually won independence under the Hasmonean dynasty, which would rule Judea for the next century.

The Seleucid Empire was in terminal decline. Antiochus IV died in 164 BC on campaign in the east, and a series of dynastic civil wars between rival claimants tore the realm apart. The Parthians, a nomadic Iranian people who had broken from Seleucid rule in the mid-third century BC under Arsaces I, had been expanding steadily across the Iranian plateau ever since. Under Mithridates I they exploited the post-Antiochus chaos to seize Media in 148 BC and Babylonia in 141 BC, cutting the Seleucids off from their richest provinces. Antiochus VII attempted to recover the east in 129 BC but was killed in battle against the Parthians, after which Seleucid power collapsed to a rump state in northern Syria. The dynasty staggered on through more civil wars until Pompey the Great formally abolished it in 63 BC, annexing the remnants as the Roman province of Syria. It was in this eastern settlement that Pompey besieged in 63 BC during the Hasmonean civil war between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, supposedly entering the sacred portion of

the Second Temple. His victory gave power to Hyrcanus II and established Roman suzerainty over Judea. Hyrcanus II's granddaughter Mariamne later married Herod the Great, a man infamous in Christian tradition for his supposed Massacre of the Innocents.

Following their defeat in the Third Macedonian War, Macedon was split into four nominally independent republics forbidden to trade or intermarry, and Epirus, which had sided with Perseus, was punished with particular savagery: Paullus's army sacked seventy towns and enslaved one hundred and fifty thousand people in a single coordinated operation. The arrangement held until 150 BC, when an adventurer named Andriscus, claiming to be a lost son of Perseus, raised an army and briefly reunified Macedon, defeating a Roman legion in the process. This uprising became known as the **Fourth Macedonian War** (150–148 BC). Quintus Caecilius Metellus crushed him at the Second Battle of Pydna in 148 BC, and this time Rome annexed Macedon in its entirety, making it a Roman province.

As Rome was consolidating power over the Hellenic world, they still had Carthage on their minds. The Carthaginians had recovered economically over the span of fifty years, which Rome found intolerable. **Cato the Elder** ended every speech in the Senate, regardless of topic, with the phrase "Carthago delenda est" ("**Carthage must be destroyed**"). Cato was an elderly senator, being a veteran of the Second Punic War, having served under Scipio Africanus in Sicily and Africa.

He held strong conservative views and was devoted to *mos maiorum* (the ancestral way). He believed Greek culture would corrupt Roman life. He successfully lobbied the Senate to expel a Greek philosophical delegation in 155 BC. Despite his hostility toward Greek culture, in the coming decades Rome would absorb it thoroughly. The indigenous Italic gods were syncretized with their Greek counterparts (Jupiter & Zeus, Venus & Aphrodite, etc.)

In 149 BC, using Carthage's border dispute with Masinissa as pretext, Rome declared the **Third Punic War** (149–146 BC). The siege of the city of Carthage lasted three years until Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, the adopted grandson of Africanus and the biological son of Paullus, took command and stormed the city in spring 146 BC. The final assault began from the harbor and pushed up to the Byrsa citadel, with Carthage taken street by street over six days. The city was burned to the ground. From a pre-war population of several hundred thousand, only about fifty thousand survivors were left, and they were all sold into slavery. As was standard practice, they were rounded up by the legionaries, sold in bulk to the slave traders who followed Roman armies on campaign, and dispersed to markets across the Mediterranean. In the same year, the Achaean League picked the worst possible moment to fight Rome, igniting the **Achaean War** (146 BC). Lucius Mummius crushed them at Leucopetra and sacked Corinth brutally. Its art was shipped to

Italy, the population killed or enslaved, and the city burned to the ground as a warning to the rest of Greece.

Rome now stood alone as the sole supreme power of the Mediterranean. However, the spoils of conquest, the flood of slaves, and the enrichment of a narrow elite were producing social and political fracturing that was slowly rippling throughout Roman society.

6: Twilight of the Republic



SIDES:**1. POPULARES**

- **RED** = Marius
- **VIOLET** = Cinna
- **ORANGE-RED** = Sertorius

2. OPTIMATES

- **MAROON** = Sulla
- **PINK** = Pompey
- **PEARL GRAY** = Greek Clients

3. BARBARIANS

- **LIGHT BLUE** = Pontus
- **ORANGE** = Socii
- **OLIVE GREEN** = Numidia
- **BROWN** = Hispanic Tribes
- **BLACK** = Germanic Tribes

OVERVIEW: This chapter covers the decades where the Roman Republic was in crisis. It covers the **Roman subjugation of Hispania** (181–80 BC), **Cimbrian War** (113–101 BC), **Jugurthine War** (112–106 BC), **Social War** (91–87 BC), **First Mithridatic War** (89–85 BC), and **Sulla's Civil War** (83–82 BC).

Detailed Information:

Roman politics in the late Republic came to be defined by two rival approaches: the **Optimates** and the **Populares**. They were less political parties than two rival traditions of how to win and wield power. The *Optimates* (the "best men") worked through the Senate to defend the power of the traditional aristocracy. The *Populares* (the "men of the people") pursued their aims through the popular assemblies and the Tribunes of the Plebs.

The men who dominated the Roman politics of the 90s and 80s BC had been shaped by two earlier wars. The first was the **Jugurthine War** (112–106 BC), fought against a Numidian prince who had murdered his way to the throne of Rome's client kingdom. Jugurtha was a grandson of Masinissa, the king who had helped defeat Hannibal at Zama, and he had served with Rome's army in Hispania, where he learned Roman military tactics. After inheriting a share of Numidia, he killed one cousin and besieged another at Cirta, massacring the Italian traders there and provoking Roman intervention. For years he held Rome off through skillful guerrilla warfare and the bribing of one Roman commander after another. The war dragged on through humiliating failures until **Gaius Marius** took command in 107 BC. Born outside the aristocracy, Marius reformed the army by opening recruitment to the landless poor (the *capite censi*) who had been excluded for inability to afford their own equipment.

The **Marian reforms** created a professional soldiery by recruiting for the first time the landless poor. As soldiers now depended on their general to secure land for retirement, their loyalty shifted from the Roman state to whoever commanded them personally. The reforms standardized the legion structure around the **cohort**, replacing the older maniple system. Each legion was divided into ten cohorts, and each cohort into six **centuries**. Despite the name, a century contained eighty legionaries rather than a hundred, organized into ten *contubernia* of eight

men who shared a tent and a pack mule on campaign. The reforms also made the eagle (*aquila*) the universal standard of each legion, with the **first cohort**, a double strength unit composed of the legion's most experienced veterans, entrusted with carrying and protecting it. The hierarchy of command ran upward from the ordinary legionary to the centurion who commanded his century, to the legate who commanded the **legion** numbering sixty centuries, and ultimately to the general who commanded the entire army.

Jugurtha was finally captured in 105 BC when his own father-in-law, King Bocchus of Mauretania, was persuaded to hand him over. The Roman who arranged the betrayal was a young quaestor (treasurer) on Marius's staff named **Lucius Cornelius Sulla**, who would never let anyone forget that the credit for victory belonged to him rather than his commander.

The second formative war was the **Cimbrian War** (113–101 BC), in which a massive migration of Germanic peoples poured out of Jutland and crashed through Gaul into Roman territory. The war opened with disaster at **Noreia** in 113 BC, where the Cimbri destroyed the consul Gnaeus Papirius Carbo's army that tried to block them. They destroyed one Roman army after another, culminating at Arausio in 105 BC where two consular armies were annihilated and perhaps eighty thousand Roman soldiers killed. It was the worst defeat since Cannae. Marius, still in Africa, was elected consul in absentia and re-elected every year from 104 to 100

BC, an unprecedented five consecutive consulships justified only by the scale of the emergency. He destroyed the Cimbri at Vercellae in 101 BC, becoming the most celebrated Roman alive.

The crisis of the 90s BC had been building for many years. The **Gracchi brothers**, Tiberius and Gaius, had tried in the 130s and 120s BC to redistribute public land to landless citizens and extend rights to the Italian allies, and both had been murdered for it by senatorial mobs, establishing political assassination as a tool of Roman politics. Rome's Italian allies had fought in every Roman war since the Punic Wars, supplying more than half of Rome's manpower, and had received no political rights. When the tribune Marcus Livius Drusus the Younger revived the Gracchan citizenship program in 91 BC and was assassinated for it, the Italians concluded Rome would never grant by law what it had denied for a century. They rose in revolt, formed their own federal state called Italia with a capital at Corfinium, minted coins showing an Italian bull goring a Roman wolf, and fielded formidable armies.

The father of the Gracchi brothers, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, was the one who ended the **First Celtiberian War** (181–179 BC), consolidating the Roman presence in the Iberian Peninsula that had begun in 218 BC when the Scipio brothers landed to cut Hannibal's reinforcements. Peace collapsed in 155 BC, igniting the **Second Celtiberian War** (154–151 BC), in which the consul

Nobilior lost six thousand men to ambush before Marcellus brokered a settlement, and the parallel **Lusitanian War** (155–139 BC), which ended only when Roman bribes induced the guerrilla leader Viriathus's own companions to murder him in his sleep. The **Numantine War** (143–133 BC) became one of Rome's most drawn-out struggles in Hispania, as the Arevaci town of Numantia withstood repeated Roman assaults until Scipio Aemilianus enclosed it with siege works in 134 BC and forced its surrender. In the aftermath, Hispania was largely Roman, but the decades of brutal warfare produced many landless veterans with grievances.

The **Social War** (91–87 BC), also called the Italian or Marsic War, was the hardest war Rome had fought in Italy since Hannibal. The aging Marius came out of semi-retirement and fought competently but without his old brilliance, while the young Sulla distinguished himself with a string of victories in the south. In the north, the consul Gnaeus Pompeius Strabo, father of the future Pompey the Great, besieged and finally stormed the rebel stronghold of Asculum in November 89 BC, celebrating a triumph for it. Throughout the conflict, the mounting pressure of the war pushed Rome toward concessions. The *Lex Julia* of 90 BC granted citizenship to any Italian community that had not revolted, and the *Lex Plautia Papiria* of 89 BC extended the offer to individuals who laid down their arms. With their central grievance answered, most rebels gave up, and the war wound down through 88 BC, though scattered resistance lingered into 87 BC.

Before the Social War ended, a greater crisis erupted in the east. **Mithridates VI** of Pontus, a Hellenized king of Persian ancestry, had spent twenty years quietly expanding his territory. He was cultured, multilingual, paranoid, and reportedly immune to poison from years of taking small doses to build tolerance. In 89 BC, exploiting Rome's distraction, he invaded Roman-allied Bithynia. In 88 BC he ordered the **Asiatic Vespers**, the mass murder of Roman and Latin-speaking residents across western Anatolia. Around eighty thousand men, women, and children were killed. The massacres were carried out by ordinary Greek civilians in Anatolia, not by a standing Pontic army.

After such an atrocity, no negotiated peace was possible, and the war would have to be fought to a finish. Mithridates dispatched his general Archelaus into mainland Greece. Roman armies were needed urgently for this dire situation. The eastern command became a competitive, lucrative military assignment. The Senate gave it to Sulla, consul for 88 BC, but Marius, nearly seventy and desperate for one last campaign, allied with the radical tribune Publius Sulpicius Rufus, who pushed through legislation transferring the command by popular vote. Sulla reacted by marching on Rome with his army. His officers refused to follow and resigned, but his legions followed anyway. Sulla took the city of Rome in a short, ugly street fight, had Sulpicius murdered, declared Marius an outlaw, and reversed the

legislation. Marius fled to Africa. Sulla, having his authority secured, departed for the east as though nothing unusual had occurred.

Sulla's eastern campaign was a masterpiece under impossible conditions. He had no legal authority, no support from the government, and no access to the treasury. He funded the war by plundering the sacred treasuries of Delphi, Olympia, and Epidaurus. He besieged Athens through the winter of 87–86 BC in terrible hardship, with his men eating grass and the defenders eating each other, until the walls were breached in March 86 BC. He then defeated two successive Pontic armies at Chaeronea and Orchomenus in 86 BC, outnumbered each time.

Meanwhile, **Cinna**, who had seized control of Rome in Sulla's absence and was ruling as consul year after year without elections, sent his own army east under Lucius Valerius Flaccus to take over the war from Sulla. Flaccus was murdered by his own officer Gaius Flavius **Fimbria**, who carried on the campaign independently. By 85 BC, Mithridates was cornered. Sulla, desperate to return to Italy, offered surprisingly lenient terms at the Treaty of Dardanus: Mithridates surrendered his conquests and fleet but kept his kingdom and his throne. Then, Fimbria's own legions defected to Sulla. In despair, he committed suicide.

The Marian regime collapsed under its own incompetence. Cinna was murdered by mutinous soldiers in 84 BC. When Sulla landed at Brundisium in

spring 83 BC with forty thousand veterans, he found Italy politically exhausted and militarily disorganized. Young nobles flocked to his banner, including a twenty-three-year-old Gnaeus Pompeius and Marcus Licinius Crassus. The civil war was fought up and down the peninsula through 83 and 82 BC. The climax came at the Colline Gate of Rome itself on November 1, 82 BC, where Sulla faced a coalition of Marian remnants and their Samnite allies. Sulla's left was broken and he himself was nearly killed, saved only when Crassus's right crushed the enemy and rolled up the Samnite line. By morning Sulla held Rome. Six thousand Samnite prisoners were executed in the Circus Flaminius within earshot of the Senate, where Sulla addressed the senators over the screaming, telling them not to be distracted by “some criminals receiving their punishment.”

Sulla had himself appointed dictator, an office unused for over a century and traditionally limited to six months. He held it indefinitely and posted the first proscription lists in Roman history: wooden tablets in the Forum listing citizens whose lives were forfeit and whose property could be seized by anyone who brought in their heads. Thousands died, entire noble families were exterminated, and a young nephew of Marius by marriage named **Gaius Julius Caesar** was nearly added to the lists and saved only through his mother's relatives.

Sulla used the proscriptions to fund his veterans, reward supporters, and eliminate enemies. The **constitutional reforms of Sulla** (82–80 BC) (also known as “Sulla’s settlement”) doubled the size of the Senate from 300 members to 600. Now, a seat in the Senate became automatic and lifelong for anyone elected as Quaestor (the entry level magistrate role). This change stripped the Censors of their power to handpick senators based on merit and wealth. The reforms gutted plebeian power by stripping the Tribunes of the Plebs of their right to propose laws independently, restricting their veto so it could no longer block Senate decrees on military or foreign policy matters, and barring former Tribunes from holding higher office. Sulla resigned the dictatorship in 79 BC, retired to a villa in Campania, and died of natural causes the next year.

Although Sulla had secured power for the Optimates, the Populares were not yet defeated. In Hispania, the Marian general Quintus Sertorius had built an independent power base among the Iberian tribes. The Kingdom of Pontus was still an ever-present threat. And there was still resentment in the lowest classes of Roman society. The crisis of the Roman Republic was not over.

7: Rebellion



SIDES:**1. ROMAN REPUBLIC**

- **PINK** = Pompey
- **LIGHT ORANGE** = Crassus
- **BROWN** = Lucullus

2. ENEMIES OF ROME

- **LIGHT BLUE** = Pontus
- **ORANGE-RED** = Sertorian Hispania
- **PURPLE** = Spartacus' Rebels
- **GREEN** = Armenia
- **TAN** = Burebista's Kingdom

OVERVIEW: Topics covered: **Sertorian War** (80–72 BC), **Spartacus's slave revolt [Third Servile War]** (73–71 BC), **Third Mithridatic War** (73–63 BC), and the **Dacian raids of Burebista** (61–48 BC).

Detailed Information:

After his defeat in the First Mithridatic War in 85 BC, Mithridates VI of Pontus had been left in a strange position. Sulla, hurrying to deal with his enemies in Italy, imposed terms that were lenient by Roman standards. Mithridates surrendered his fleet and evacuated the territories he had seized in Asia Minor, but was allowed to keep his ancestral kingdom of Pontus. There was no formal treaty, only a verbal agreement at Dardanus, and Mithridates returned home with his army fully intact.

The brief **Second Mithridatic War** (83–81 BC) had broken out almost by accident while Sulla was still fighting his way back to Italy. Lucius Licinius Murena, the officer left to garrison Asia, used accusations that Mithridates was rearming as a pretext to invade Pontus without authorization. Mithridates fought back, defeated him, and drove him out. Sulla forced Murena to stand down, and the war ended in 81 BC with no territory changed and no treaty signed. Murena celebrated a triumph anyway. Mithridates remained on his throne, his army intact, now convinced Rome could not be trusted, and spent the next decade preparing for the next war.

In Sertorian Spain, the war had been dragging on since 80 BC. Quintus Sertorius, a Marian officer who fled after Sulla's victory, organized the Lusitanian and Celtiberian tribes into a disciplined army, established a rival Roman senate-in-exile at Osca, and kept a white fawn which he claimed was a gift from Diana that whispered battle advice to him. His soldiers believed it. He defeated every Roman commander sent against him, including Sulla's lieutenant Metellus Pius.

In 77 BC the Senate sent **Pompey**, only twenty-nine and holding no legal magistracy, with proconsular authority. Pompey was defeated at Lauron in 76 BC and nearly lost his army at Sucro the following year. The war turned only when

Sertorius's own officers, jealous of his success, assassinated him at a banquet in 73 BC. Pompey crushed his successor within weeks and the war ended in 72 BC.

While Pompey was still in Hispania, the **Spartacus slave rebellion** erupted, being the **Third Servile War**. Such a rebellion wasn't seen in over two generations. The **First Servile War** had come in 135 BC in Sicily, where a Syrian slave named Eunus led a revolt that grew to perhaps seventy thousand and held the island for nearly four years. Eunus crowned himself King Antiochus and minted his own coins. It took consular armies and a full siege of Enna and Tauromenium to end it in 132 BC. The **Second Servile War**, again in Sicily, broke out in 104 BC when a botched Roman effort to free illegally enslaved allies inflamed the slave population. Two leaders emerged, Salvius and Athenion, and their combined armies again numbered tens of thousands. It required years to suppress, ending in 100 BC. Both slave rebellions had ended in mass crucifixions, but were simply not a solution to the underlying issues.

Spartacus emerged from the gladiatorial school at Capua, run by a *lanista* named Lentulus Batiatus. Gladiatorial combat in this period was nothing like the imperial spectacles that would come later. The Colosseum did not exist yet and would not start construction until 70 AD. Games in the **late Republic** were held in temporary wooden structures. The fighters were a mix of war captives, condemned

criminals, or purchased slaves. They lived under brutal discipline in barracks like the one at Capua, chained at night, fed a barley and bean diet meant to fatten them so superficial wounds bled dramatically without disabling them. A successful gladiator could win his freedom by being awarded the *rudis*, a wooden sword, but most died young. The schools of Capua were the largest and most notorious in Italy.

Spartacus was a Thracian, and possibly a former auxiliary in the Roman army. The Thracians were an ancient Indo-European people of the eastern Balkans. They are not Slavs, who moved to that region in around 500 AD. Spartacus escaped his school with about 70 companions, armed with kitchen knives, and on the road, they intercepted a wagon carrying gladiatorial weapons and armed themselves properly. They fled to Mount Vesuvius and began raiding the Campanian countryside. Rome dismissed them as a nuisance and sent a praetor named Gaius Claudius Glaber with 3,000 hastily raised militia, who blockaded the only path up the mountain and waited to starve them out. Spartacus had his men weave ropes from the wild vines that grew on the slopes, descended a cliff face the Romans had left unwatched, and attacked the camp from behind. Glaber's force was annihilated. The next praetor sent against him fared no better. Slaves throughout the region flooded to join him, and within a year his army numbered perhaps seventy thousand. He defeated both consuls of 72 BC in open battle, something no foreign king had managed in living memory.

The Senate gave an extraordinary command to **Marcus Licinius Crassus**, the richest man in Rome, who raised eight legions at his own expense and revived the ancient punishment of decimation on a cohort that had fled. Decimation was a Roman military punishment in which a disgraced unit was split into tens, and the man who drew the losing lot in each group was beaten to death by the other nine. Crassus pursued Spartacus into the toe of Italy, where the slave army hoped to cross to Sicily with Cilician pirates who took the payment and sailed away. Then, Crassus built a wall across the peninsula to trap them, but Spartacus broke through during a snowstorm. The final battle came in 71 BC in Lucania. Spartacus died in the fighting, reportedly cutting toward Crassus himself before being surrounded. Six thousand captured slaves were **crucified** along the Appian Way from Capua to Rome. There would be no servile wars in the future. These past slave revolts happened due to the flooding of Italian and Sicilian estates with a large influx of war captives after the campaigns in Greece and Asia Minor. As conquest would slow, especially in the Imperial period, there were fewer foreign-born slaves.

Meanwhile, **Mithridates of Pontus** had spent multiple years reforming his army along Roman lines and allying with his son-in-law **Tigranes the Great** of Armenia. Tigranes had exploited the collapse of the Seleucid Empire to expand Armenia into a vast empire stretching from the Caucasus and the Caspian region southwest through Mesopotamia to Syria and the Mediterranean, taking the old

Persian title King of Kings and founding a new capital, Tigranocerta. In 74 BC, the king of Bithynia died and willed his kingdom to Rome. Mithridates refused to accept a Roman province on his border and invaded, triggering the **Third Mithridatic War**. Rome sent Lucius Licinius **Lucullus**, a former Sullan officer of rare ability. Lucullus drove Mithridates out of Bithynia, invaded Pontus, and by 71 BC had shattered the Pontic army and forced Mithridates to flee to Armenia.

When Tigranes refused to hand him over, Lucullus invaded Armenia and won a victory at Tigranocerta in 69 BC. Despite this, Lucullus's troops, exhausted and resentful of his strict discipline, began to mutiny, refusing to advance. This break allowed Mithridates to recover his kingdom, and the war dragged on.

Elsewhere, a Dacian king named **Burebista** had begun uniting the Thracian and Getic tribes of the Carpathian basin into a single kingdom, supported by a religious reformer named Deceneus. His armies raided deep across Rome's Danube frontier and threatened the Greek cities of the western Black Sea coast. The threat of the **Dacians** would continue for decades, being such an ever-present threat that **Julius Caesar** planned a campaign against them around the time just prior to his 44 BC assassination.

By 70 BC, Pompey and Crassus had returned to Rome at the head of their armies and demanded the consulship together, despite Pompey being legally too

young and never having held the lower magistracies required by Sulla's constitution. The Senate, with two armies camped outside the city, agreed. Their joint consulship dismantled much of Sulla's orders and restored powers to the Tribunes of the Plebs. Three years later, Pompey would receive an unprecedented command against the Cilician pirates, Mediterranean marauders from the southern coast of Anatolia. He would then take over Lucullus's eastern war, finally ending the Third Mithridatic War and driving Mithridates to suicide in 63 BC. Afterwards, Rome annexed Syria, Judea, and Pontus. These victories, from Hispania to the Caucasus, earned him the name Pompey the Great.

While Pompey was away, Roman politics was upended by the revelation of the **Catilinarian conspiracy**. Lucius Sergius **Catilina** was a patrician of ancient family, a former Sullan officer who had stood for the consulship repeatedly and been blocked each time, first by prosecution for provincial extortion and then by the election of Cicero in 64 BC. Defeated again for the consulship of 62 BC, he organized a rising of indebted veterans and Sullan colonists in Etruria under a former centurion named Manlius, while planning to murder **Cicero** in Rome and burn parts of the city. Cicero exposed the plot in a series of speeches before the Senate that became the most famous orations of his career. The conspirators in the city were arrested, and a Senate decree of emergency was made, executing them without trial in the Tullianum, a decision Cicero would regret for the rest of his life.

Catiline died fighting in early 62 BC at Pistoria, his body found among the foremost of the fallen. After his disgrace, a false story began to circulate of an earlier “First Catilinarian Conspiracy” that occurred in 65 BC. In there, Catiline and a fellow disappointed candidate named Autronius had supposedly plotted with the young Crassus and an even younger Caesar (a later embellishment to the tale) to murder the incoming consuls on January 1st, seize power, and install Crassus as dictator. There is no reliable proof of this “first conspiracy” and modern historians regard it as a political smear retroactively constructed.

Crassus would chase a military reputation to match Pompey's for the rest of his life, a hunger that would carry him to his death at Carrhae in 53 BC. And a younger man named **Julius Caesar**, who had spent the 70s BC as a minor magistrate and was once taken prisoner by Cilician pirates while crossing the Aegean, was watching carefully and taking notes.

8: Gallic Wars



SIDES:**1. ROMAN REPUBLIC**

- **RED** = Roman Republic (Caesar)
- **DARK GREEN** = Roman Gauls

2. ANTI-ROMAN

- **LIGHT GREEN** = Free Gauls
- **BLUE** = Belgae
- **BLACK** = Suebi

OVERVIEW: This chapter covers the **Gallic Wars** (58–50 BC). Caesar would defeat the Germanic Suebi and Belgae, be the first Roman to cross the Rhine, embark on expeditions in Britain, and pacify all of Gaul.

Detailed Information:

Gaul at this time was not a single unified country but a patchwork of roughly 200 independent Celtic tribes. Emerging in Central Europe during the Iron Age, the Celts were distinct peoples that shared a family of Indo-European languages. The Celts are known for the *La Tène* art style, with its flowing spirals, as well as for their elaborate funerary customs of chariot burial. Deeply divided, the Gallic tribes warred with each other as much as they did with outsiders.

Caesar's Gallic command in 59 BC came out of the deal that had formed the **First Triumvirate** the previous year. He received an unusually long proconsular command over the two Gallic provinces and Illyricum, initially five years and later extended to ten, with four legions and legal immunity. He had also held the office

of *Pontifex Maximus*, the **chief priest** of the Roman state religion, since 63 BC. This lifetime post gave him authority over sacred law, the calendar, and the other priests, including the flamines (priests of specific deities) and the Vestal Virgins. The title gave him enormous prestige as well as an official residence in the Forum. The **Vestal Virgins** were a priesthood of six women chosen as girls between the ages of six and ten to guard the sacred fire of Vesta and uphold strict vows of chastity for thirty years. Breaking the vow was punished by being buried alive.

Roman religion was woven into every fiber of daily life, and nowhere more tightly than inside the walls of the family home. The *paterfamilias*, the eldest male of the family, held absolute legal authority over his wife, children, and slaves, including in theory the right of life and death. Each home had a shrine called a *lararium* where the family worshipped the *Lares*, protective spirits of the household and ancestors, and the *Penates*, gods of the storeroom, while a flame burned to *Vesta* on the hearth. They buried their dead along the roads outside the city, and families would gather at the tombs on certain festivals to share a meal with the ancestral spirits, the *di manes*. The entry to the home was protected by *Janus*, god of doorways and transitions. If a family member died in the home, their body would be carried out the front door, leaving feet first. They did this so that the deceased's spirit could not find its way back and reenter the house. That's why today some call dying "going out feet first."

The Roman calendar had a steady cycle of religious festivals. *Saturnalia* in December honored Saturn with feasting, gift-giving, and gambling. *Lupercalia* in February was a fertility rite in which priests ran through the city striking bystanders with goat-hide thongs. *Liberalia* in March marked the feast of Liber, when young men received the *toga virilis* of adulthood, while festivals like the *Quinquatria* for Minerva (goddess of wisdom) and *Megalesia* for Magna Mater (Anatolian mother goddess) rounded out the year.

Despite holding lucrative offices over Roman life, Caesar needed a successful war to pay his enormous debts, and to match his ego to the reputations of Pompey and Crassus. He had already shown promise as propraetor of Hispania Ulterior in 61 BC, where he campaigned against the Callaici and Lusitani tribes in the northwest. The opportunity of war arrived almost immediately. In 58 BC, a mass migration westward across Gaul was undertaken by the Helvetii, a Celtic confederation from what is now Switzerland, alongside four allied tribes (the Tulingi, Latovici, Rauraci, and Boii). Their proposed route passed through the Roman province, and they sent ambassadors requesting peaceful passage. Caesar refused, not because they threatened the province but because he saw the opportunity. He stalled the ambassadors with false negotiations while marching additional legions north and destroying the bridge across the Rhône at Geneva. The Helvetii took a longer northern route through the territory of the Aedui, a tribe allied to Rome, and

found Caesar waiting. At Bibracte in summer 58 BC he defeated them and ordered the survivors back to rebuild their burned towns as a buffer against the Germans.

The same year brought the second campaign. A Suebi chieftain named **Ariovistus** had crossed the Rhine years earlier and gradually come to dominate eastern Gaul. The Aedui appealed to Caesar for help. He demanded Ariovistus withdraw across the Rhine, and when Ariovistus refused, Caesar marched his army rapidly and defeated him in a pitched battle near modern Mulhouse, driving the surviving Suebi back across the river.

In 57 BC, Caesar turned north against the Belgae, who had formed a coalition alarmed by his rapid conquests. Several tribes surrendered without a fight, but the Nervii, the most warlike, prepared an ambush along the Sabis River. Caesar's army was caught while building its camp, and the Nervii charged the half-finished lines while the legionaries were still unarmed. Caesar himself seized a shield, pushed to the front, and rallied his men by name. The timely arrival of the Tenth Legion turned the battle. Of sixty thousand Nervii warriors, Caesar later claimed only five hundred survived. Nearly all the Belgic tribes submitted.

56 BC brought the campaign against the Veneti, a confederation in Brittany whose Atlantic sailing ships outclassed Roman galleys. Caesar built a fleet on the Loire and fitted his ships with curved blades on poles to cut the enemy's rigging,

leaving them dead in the water to be boarded. The Veneti fleet was destroyed, and Caesar executed the tribal council and sold the population into slavery.

With the Belgae crushed and the coast to the English Channel reached, Caesar turned his attention beyond the borders of Gaul itself. He needed fresh victories to keep his name in the headlines back in Rome. In 55 BC, Caesar's engineers built a wooden bridge across the Rhine in ten days, crossed into Germanic territory, burned some villages, and withdrew, destroying the bridge behind him. The Rhine was no longer a barrier Rome could not cross. Later that year he crossed the Channel with two legions and became the first Roman general to set foot in Britain. Winning some skirmishes, he accomplished little before bad weather forced him back. In 54 BC he returned with five legions, crossed the Thames, and received the nominal submission of a chieftain named Cassivellaunus before withdrawing again. Neither expedition resulted in any significant results, but Caesar's reports of the mysterious island and its blue-painted inhabitants in his *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* captivated the Roman public. The Britons practiced other customs the Romans found strange, such as **excarnation**, the removal of flesh from a corpse before final burial, often done on wooden platforms where scavenging birds would strip the remains.

The winter of 54 to 53 BC brought the first serious crisis. A Belgic tribe called the Eburones under a chieftain named **Ambiorix** revolted and destroyed an entire Roman legion and five cohorts, roughly fifteen thousand men, in a coordinated ambush at Atuatuca. It was the worst Roman defeat of the war. The revolt spread when **Indutiomarus**, a chief of the Treveri, raised his own tribe against Rome, until Labienus killed him in a cavalry engagement. Caesar spent 53 BC hunting the Eburones through their forests, destroying villages and crops, and offering rewards for their heads. Ambiorix escaped, but his tribe was annihilated as a political entity.

In the winter of 53 to 52 BC, a young Arvernian noble named **Vercingetorix** emerged as the leader of a coordinated pan-Gallic revolt, something Gaul had never produced before. Knowing the Gauls could not defeat the legions in open battle, he adopted a scorched-earth strategy, burning towns and crops to starve the Romans. The strategy was sound but politically unsustainable, because the town of Avaricum begged to be spared. Vercingetorix reluctantly agreed, and Caesar besieged and stormed it in spring 52 BC, massacring nearly its entire population of forty thousand in revenge for the lost legion. Only eight hundred survived.

Vercingetorix retreated to the hilltop fortress of Gergovia, where he repulsed a Roman assault in one of Caesar's few outright defeats. The previously loyal Ae-

dui defected, and for a moment it seemed Caesar might lose Gaul entirely. He withdrew north to regroup, pursued by Vercingetorix, who concentrated his forces at the hilltop town of Alesia to wait for the rest of Gaul to rally. Caesar arrived in late summer 52 BC with perhaps fifty thousand men and found eighty thousand Gauls inside the walls. Rather than besiege conventionally, he built a double ring of fortifications: an inner ring eleven miles long to prevent breakout, and an outer ring fourteen miles long to defend against the coming relief army, complete with ditches, ramparts, and watchtowers. When a Gallic relief army of perhaps two hundred and fifty thousand arrived, Caesar's legions were attacked from both sides simultaneously. One of the relief commanders was **Commius** of the Atrebates, once Caesar's own ally who had aided the British expeditions before turning against him. The battle lasted days. At the critical moment, with his lines breaking, Caesar personally led a cavalry charge and struck the relief army in the rear. It broke and fled. The next day, Vercingetorix surrendered, riding out alone and throwing his weapons at Caesar's feet. Shackled in chains, he was taken to Rome to await his execution.

Mopping-up operations continued through 51 and 50 BC. At Uxellodunum in 51 BC, the last serious holdout, Caesar ordered the hands of every surviving defender cut off and the mutilated men released to spread the warning that Rome's patience was finished. By the end of 50 BC, Gaul was pacified. Caesar had added a

territory larger than Italy itself, containing around five million people. He claimed to have killed a million Gauls and enslaved another million, figures almost certainly exaggerated but suggesting the scale of the devastation. The campaigns had given him ten battle-hardened legions loyal to him personally, a fortune built on Gallic plunder, and a reputation that now rivaled Pompey's.

The bond between Caesar and Pompey had been unravelling for years. Their alliance had rested on familial ties, as Pompey was married to Caesar's daughter Julia. Her death in childbirth in 54 BC severed that bond, and when Crassus was killed at Carrhae the following year, Caesar and Pompey were left as rivals with no one to mediate between them. Caesar's command was due to expire at the end of 50 BC, and he had many enemies in the Senate...

9: Caesar's Civil War



SIDES:

1. CAESARIAN FACTION (POPULARES)

- **RED** = Julius Caesar → (Mainland Italy)
- **MAROON** = Mark Antony → (Gaul area & support)
- **ORANGE-RED** = Gaius Asinius Pollio → (Hispania Ulterior)

2. POMPEIAN FACTION (OPTIMATES)

- **VIOLET** = Pompey the Great → (Greece and Asia Minor)
- **ORANGE** = Cato the Younger → (North Africa / Tunisia)
- **PEARL GRAY** = Titus Labienus → (Hispania)

OVERVIEW: Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 BC to challenge the Senate's authority. This caused a **civil war** spanning the period of 49–45 BC. It would end in his political consolidation as dictator for life. This would be the beginning of the end of the Republic. Closely tied to this conflict were the **Alexandrine War** (48–

47 BC), in which Caesar intervened in Egypt's dynastic struggle and installed Cleopatra VII on the throne, and the **Pontic War** (47 BC), in which Caesar swiftly crushed Pharnaces II at the Battle of Zela, famously declaring "Veni, vidi, vici."

Detailed Information:

Caesar's command in Gaul was set to expire at the end of 50 BC, and his Senate enemies, supported by **Pompey**, were waiting for that moment. The instant Caesar laid down his proconsular authority, he would lose the legal immunity that came with it, and then they could prosecute him.

They wanted to prosecute Caesar for multiple reasons. During his consulship of 59 BC, Caesar pushed his land bill through the popular assembly after the Senate refused to pass it, bypassing his co-consul Bibulus and stationing Pompey's veterans around the Forum to intimidate opposition into silence. The bill redistributed public land in Italy to roughly twenty thousand of Pompey's veterans and the urban poor, breaking up large estates held by the wealthy and giving Caesar a massive base of grateful clients. Convictions were certain, and the penalties would be financial ruin and permanent exile. Caesar proposed that he be allowed to stand for the consulship of 48 BC in absentia while still holding his command. The Senate refused. In early January of 49 BC, the tribunes **Mark Antony** (Marcus Antonius)

and **Quintus Cassius** vetoed the Senate's final ultimatum demanding Caesar disband his army, and were driven from the city under threat of violence.

On January 10th of 49 BC, Caesar led the Thirteenth Legion to the Rubicon, the small river that marked the legal boundary between his province of Cisalpine Gaul and Italy proper. To bring an army across it without Senate authorization was treason and an act of war. He paused on the bank, weighing what biographers later described as the gravity of the moment, then crossed with the words *alea iacta est*, "the die is cast." The Senate and Pompey, stunned by the speed of his advance and unable to raise legions in time, evacuated Rome, then Italy entirely, fleeing to Greece to draw on Pompey's vast network of eastern clients. Caesar took the capital without a battle. In his first major action of the war, Caesar besieged Corfinium in February 49 BC and captured its Pompeian garrison, but rather than punish them he released the senators and equestrians unharmed and even pardoned their commander, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. This mercy, which Caesar called his *clementia*, was both real policy and calculation, sparing Romans the bloodshed of Sulla while casting Caesar as a healer rather than a tyrant and turning beaten enemies into grateful dependents.

Before pursuing Pompey east, Caesar turned west to deal with the seven Pompeian legions stationed in Hispania under the legates Afranius and Petreius. At

Ilerda in the summer of 49 BC he outmaneuvered them in a campaign of marches and supply cuts rather than pitched battle, and the Pompeian army surrendered without a major engagement. With his rear secured, Caesar crossed the Adriatic in the winter of 49 to 48 BC with an undersupplied force and attempted to trap Pompey's larger army behind a line of fortifications at Dyrrhachium. Pompey broke through on July 10 of 48 BC, costing Caesar a thousand veteran legionaries and forcing a retreat. It was Caesar's worst defeat of the war. But Pompey, suspecting a trap and unwilling to believe his own success, refused to pursue.

The two armies maneuvered south into Thessaly, where on August 9 of 48 BC they met at Pharsalus. Caesar lured Pompey off a defensible slope and onto the plain, and during the battle he secretly held back six cohorts as a hidden fourth line behind his right flank, anticipating Pompey's massed cavalry charge. When the cavalry struck, the hidden cohorts emerged and drove their *pila* not at the horses but at the riders' faces, and Pompey's horsemen, many of them young aristocrats, broke and fled. The exposed flank collapsed. Pompey's army suffered around fifteen thousand casualties, and twenty-four thousand surrendered. Pompey himself rode from the field, took ship, and fled toward Egypt.

Egypt was in the middle of its own civil war between the young **Ptolemy XIII** and his older sister **Cleopatra VII**. Their father **Auletes** (Ptolemy XII) had

died of illness in 51 BC, leaving the kingdom jointly to them, but the siblings quickly fell out and Cleopatra was driven into exile in 48 BC. Ptolemy XIII was only thirteen years old and ruled in name only, with real power belonging to a palace clique led by the eunuch **Pothinus**. Fearing that sheltering Pompey would drag Egypt into the Roman conflict, the clique decided to murder him. **Theodotus of Chios**, a Greek rhetorician and tutor to the young king, reportedly justified the killing orders with the remark that "dead men don't bite." Pompey was killed as soon as he came ashore at Pelusium.

When Caesar arrived in Alexandria days later, Ptolemy's ministers presented him with Pompey's severed head and signet ring. Caesar was reportedly horrified and wept. Whether the tears were genuine or performed for the watching Alexandrians, the gesture cost Ptolemy his Roman backing, and Caesar took up residence in the royal palace to arbitrate the succession. Cleopatra, unable to reach him openly, had herself smuggled into the palace wrapped in a carpet or a sleeping-bag, and emerged at Caesar's feet. Charmed and politically convinced, Caesar declared for her cause, and by morning they were lovers. When Caesar moved to enforce Ptolemy XII's will, which named the Roman people as guarantors and required Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra to rule jointly, Pothinus saw a direct threat to his control and began undermining the Romans openly. He served Caesar's soldiers spoiled grain from the royal stores, replaced the palace plate with cheap wooden

and earthenware vessels, and spread rumors through the Alexandrian mob that Caesar intended to annex Egypt outright. At the same time he sent secret orders to Achilles, stationed outside the city, to march on Alexandria with the full Egyptian army of roughly 20,000 men. Caesar, with only 4,000 of his own, suddenly found himself besieged in the palace quarter.

The siege Caesar now faced was not a simple affair of Egyptians against Romans. Egypt's army included the **Gabiniani**, Roman soldiers who no longer answered to Rome. Years earlier, in 55 BC, the proconsul Aulus Gabinius had marched into Egypt to restore Auletes to the throne after a popular revolt had driven him into exile. The revolt had been triggered by Rome's annexation of Cyprus in 58 BC, carried out by Cato the Younger, which Auletes failed to oppose. When Gabinius left, he stationed 2,000 legionaries and 500 cavalry behind to guard the king. Over the following years these Gabiniani married Egyptian women, abandoned Roman discipline, and became loyal instruments of the Ptolemaic court. **Lucius Septimius**, an officer of the Gabiniani, was the one who had stabbed Pompey to death when he stepped ashore at Pelusium.

Julius Caesar fought a desperate urban war with limited troops for months until reinforcements under Mithridates of Pergamon broke the siege, and at the Battle of the Nile in early 47 BC the Egyptian army was destroyed. Ptolemy XIII

drowned attempting to flee across the river when his overloaded boat capsized. Caesar installed Cleopatra as ruler of Egypt, alongside her younger brother Ptolemy XIV as nominal co-ruler.

To the north, **Pharnaces II** saw Caesar's entanglement in Egypt as the perfect opportunity to rebuild his father's empire. He was the son of Mithridates VI, Rome's great enemy, and had led the revolt that drove his father to suicide in 63 BC, sending the body to Pompey as a gesture of goodwill. Pompey rewarded him by recognizing him as king of the Bosporan Kingdom (modern-day Crimea). He and Pompey had a formal client-king arrangement rather than a genuine friendship. With Pompey dead and Caesar occupied in Egypt, Pharnaces overran Roman-allied kingdoms in Anatolia (Colchis, Armenia, and Cappadocia), leaving his general **Asander** to hold the Bosporan Kingdom in Crimea. Asander revolted in his absence and seized the throne. While Pharnaces routed the Roman general Gnaeus Domitius Calvinus at Nicopolis in 48 BC and pushed deeper into Anatolia, Asander turned on his absent king and seized the throne for himself.

Julius Caesar, victorious in Egypt, marched north through Syria and met Pharnaces II and his army at Zela in August of 47 BC. The battle lasted just four hours. The victory was so swift and so complete that Caesar summed it up in a dispatch to Rome in three words: *veni, vidi, vici*. ["**I came, I saw, I conquered.**"] As

a result of his defeat, Pharnaces II fled back to the Bosphorus to reclaim his kingdom but was cut down by Asander's forces, ending the dynasty of Mithridates. Caesar refused to recognize Asander's usurpation and awarded the Bosporan throne to his ally Mithridates of Pergamon, who was soon defeated by Asander, leaving him to rule the Bosphorus for the next three decades. Pontus itself was reduced to a Roman client state under puppet rulers before being formally annexed as a Roman province under Nero in 62 AD.

Even with Caesar's victories and the reality of Pompey's death, the civil war didn't end. The Optimate cause was still in Africa, where **Cato the Younger**, **Metellus Scipio**, and **King Juba I of Numidia** commanded a substantial army. They were joined by **Marcus Petreius**, the legate who had killed Catiline at Pistoria in 62 BC, dealing the final blow to end the Catilinarian conspiracy. King Juba I had backed Pompey early in the war out of practical strategic concerns as well as personal enmity toward Caesar. Years earlier, while serving as defense counsel against Juba's father in a Roman court, Caesar had grown so heated during the proceedings that he publicly humiliated Juba by yanking his beard. Moreover, Caesar's ally, the tribune Gaius Scribonius Curio, tried to propose an annexation of Numidia as a Roman province in 50 BC, infuriating Juba.

Julius Caesar crossed to Africa in early 46 BC and was nearly destroyed at Ruspina, where a larger force of Numidian cavalry and light infantry surrounded him in open ground. Caesar extricated his army through tactical discipline and sheer experience but took heavy losses. He called up reinforcements, and at Thapsus on April 6 of 46 BC he routed Scipio's army and destroyed the Numidian war elephants. Scipio fled by sea and was killed when his ship was intercepted. Juba and Petreius escaped the battlefield together but, finding all routes cut off, ended their lives in a suicide pact, reportedly dueling each other to the death. Cato, holding Utica, refused to accept Caesar's pardon and committed suicide. The defeat at Thapsus would cost Numidia its independence. Caesar annexed the kingdom and turned it into a new Roman province called Africa Nova, while Juba I's infant son, Juba II, was carried to Rome and raised in Caesar's household. The boy grew up Romanized, and Augustus later made him a client king of Mauretania, a different Berber kingdom to the west of his ancestral Numidia that includes what is now western Algeria and Morocco.

Upon his return to Rome, Caesar celebrated a **quadruple triumph** spread over four days, commemorating his victories in Gaul, Egypt, Pontus, and Africa. No Roman before him had ever held more than one triumph at a time. The Gallic triumph came first and was the most elaborate. It was packed with masses of plunder consisting of massive amounts of gold, captured Gallic weapons and armor,

and long columns of Gallic prisoners. The centerpiece was Vercingetorix himself, who had been held in the Tullianum prison for 6 years. After being paraded through the streets, he was taken back to the prison and executed by strangulation, a ritual done with rope to avoid the taboo of spilling blood within the city. That day, as Caesar rode through the Velabrum, the valley between the Capitoline and Palatine hills, the axle of his chariot broke and nearly threw him out, and he later ascended the Capitoline by torchlight flanked by forty elephants bearing lamps. The Egyptian triumph followed, displaying Arsinoe IV, the younger sister of Cleopatra, led in chains before the crowds, though Caesar broke with custom by sparing her life and exiling her to Ephesus rather than executing her, in part because the sight of a young royal woman in chains had stirred unexpected sympathy from the Roman crowd. The Pontic triumph came next and featured painted scenes depicting the campaign, as well as a large placard bearing the words *veni, vidi, vici*, used to boast about how swiftly Caesar had crushed Pharnaces at Zela. The African triumph came last and centered on King Juba I of Numidia rather than the Roman Pompeians who had stood with him, since publicly parading a victory over fellow Romans was considered deeply improper. Caesar followed the processions with celebrations on a scale Rome had never seen. He distributed massive cash bonuses to his soldiers and grain, oil, and money to the urban populace, staged gladiatorial contests, theatrical performances, wild animal hunts that included Rome's first

sight of a giraffe, and public banquets seating thousands. The centerpiece was the first naumachia in Roman history, a mock naval battle fought between fleets of biremes, triremes, and quinqueremes in an artificial basin dug near the Tiber, manned by 2,000 prisoner-of-war combatants and 4,000 rowers. The whole spectacle cemented his image as the unrivaled master of Rome.

Even as Caesar celebrated in Rome, Pompey's two sons **Gnaeus** and **Sextus**, joined by **Titus Labienus**, were rallying the last Pompeian resistance in Hispania, having fled Africa after the defeat at Thapsus. Labienus was Caesar's former second-in-command in Gaul, having defected to Pompey at the start of the civil war. Caesar marched west in late 46 BC, and the final battle of the civil war came at Munda in southern Hispania on March 17 of 45 BC. The Pompeians fought with the desperation of the doomed, and at one point Caesar's line nearly broke until he rallied it by walking to the front and fighting in the line himself, with the Tenth Legion finally driving them back. Around thirty thousand Pompeians died. Labienus was killed, Gnaeus Pompey was hunted down and executed days later, and only Sextus escaped to continue a piratical resistance in the western Mediterranean. Caesar later told his officers that he had often fought for victory, but at Munda he had fought for his life.

Gaius Asinius Pollio, one of Caesar's officers who crossed the Rubicon with him, led troops in Spain during the campaigns against the Pompeians and fought at Pharsalus and Thapsus. After the civil war ended, he would found Rome's first public library on the Aventine. He became one of the great literary patrons of the age, supporting both the poets **Virgil** (Publius Vergilius Maro) and **Horace** (Quintus Horatius Flaccus). A generation earlier, the poet Gaius Valerius **Catullus** had brought a new intensity to Latin verse with poetry of love and hatred, some savagely mocking Caesar himself.

Following his victory at Munda, Caesar returned to Rome and held a triumph for the Spanish campaign, proving unpopular because he was celebrating destroying the family of a fellow Roman rather than a foreign enemy. His total victory in the civil war led the Senate to appoint him *Dictator Perpetuo* (permanent dictator) in February 44 BC. The title of **dictator** was an ancient emergency office granted by the Senate that gave one man supreme military and civil authority, with the power to issue laws and edicts immune to the tribunes' veto that normally constrained the consuls. They were to have that emergency role for a maximum of six months to manage a specific crisis, after which the dictator was expected to resign and restore normal governance. Sulla held the dictatorship in the 80s BC without a fixed time limit but eventually did step down voluntarily.

With his newfound power, Julius Caesar did many things. He planned campaigns against Parthia and Dacia, reformed the calendar into a solar year of 365.25 days, banned wheeled traffic from the streets of Rome during daylight hours to ease congestion, and became the first living Roman to put his own face on coins, a privilege previously reserved for gods and dead heroes (an unprecedented break with Republican tradition that offended his remaining enemies). At the festival of the Lupercalia in February 44 BC, his co-consul Mark Antony publicly offered him a **diadem** (a crown), the symbol of kingship, and despite Caesar refusing it before the crowd, it fueled fears of his increasing power. Julius Caesar expanded the Senate to 900 members, increasing it from Sulla's own expansion of 300 to 600 a generation earlier. The reforms to the Senate were done for a mix of practical and political reasons. The civil wars had thinned the Senate's ranks through battlefield deaths and exiles, so some replenishment was really needed. But Caesar's actions went far beyond simple replenishment. He filled the new seats with his own loyalists: military officers who had served under him, wealthy equestrians, and provincial elites from Gaul and elsewhere. His appointments rewarded supporters, broadened his political base, and ensured a Senate increasingly stocked with men who owed their position directly to him. For the old Roman aristocracy, this accumulation of unchallengeable power was intolerable.

The conspiracy against Julius Caesar formed in the early months of 44 BC and eventually drew in more than sixty senators. Its leaders were Marcus Junius Brutus, a respected praetor whose ancestor had reputedly expelled the last king of Rome five centuries earlier, and Gaius Cassius Longinus, a hardened veteran and former Pompeian whom Caesar had pardoned after Pharsalus. Cassius drove the plot forward, while Brutus, married to Cato's daughter Porcia, lent it the moral authority to recruit hesitant senators. They moved quickly because Caesar was preparing to leave Rome on March 18 for a three-year campaign against Parthia. Rumor also held that the Senate would soon hear a **Sibylline prophecy** (that came from a legendary prophetess consulted only in times of crisis) declaring that only a king could defeat the Parthians. The conspirators feared this omen.

On March 15, 44 BC, the Senate meeting took place in the Curia of Pompey, a hall attached to the Theater of Pompey in the Campus Martius. Dedicated by Pompey in 55 BC, it was Rome's first permanent stone theater and the largest in the city, a massive work of Roman concrete faced in stone. March 15 is referred to as the **Ides of March**, as the Romans had three named reference points in the calendar month: the Kalends (the 1st), the Nones (the 5th or 7th), and the Ides (the 13th or 15th). The Ides always came 8 days after the Nones on the calendar and the months with 31 days (March, May, July, & October) were considered “full”, marking that the Ides fell on the 15th and the Nones on the 7th. The conspirators

were led by Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus, both of whom had fought against Caesar in the civil war but were pardoned by him afterwards.

As Caesar took his seat, the conspirators crowded around him on the pretext of presenting a petition. At the signal, Tillius Cimber seized Caesar's toga and Casca struck the first blow, a nervous stab to the neck. The rest then drew their concealed daggers and fell on him, and by the end he had been stabbed 23 times, left to die at the base of a statue of Pompey, the rival he had defeated less than five years earlier.

10: Liberators' Civil War



SIDES:

1. SECOND TRIUMVIRATE

- **RED** = Octavian → (Mainland Italy)
- **MAROON** = Mark Antony → (Gaul area & support)
- **ORANGE-RED** = Lepidus → (Hispania)

2. LIBERATORES (CAESAR'S ASSASSINS)

- **VIOLET** = Marcus Brutus → (Greece)
- **ORANGE** = Cassius → (Asia Minor & The East)

3. BARBARIANS

- **BLUE** = Parthian Empire (+ Quintus Labienus)
- **PEARL GRAY** = Sextus Pompeius → (Sicily + Naval Supremacy)
- **BROWN** = Cantabrian Tribes (North Hispania)

OVERVIEW: The assassination of Julius Caesar caused the **Liberators' Civil War**

(43–42 BC). This power struggle pitted Caesar's heirs against his assassins who

had fled to the East. Outside of this, Rome faced the Parthian-backed expedition of

Quintus Labienus. Other conflicts also covered: **Sicilian War** (42–36 BC), **Perusine War** (41–40 BC), the **Parthian War of Mark Antony** [Antony's Atropatene campaign] (40–33 BC), and the **Cantabrian Wars** (29–19 BC).

Detailed Information:

In the chaos after the assassination, Mark Antony delivered a funeral oration that stirred the crowd, turning the mob against the conspirators and driving them from Rome. Antony read out Caesar's will to the people, which left 300 sesterces to every freeborn citizen in Rome, some 200,000 to 250,000 people. The **sesterce** was a small silver Roman coin, though later periods would mint it in brass. A laborer earned only 1–4 sesterces for a day's work, so 300 was a meaningful gift to an ordinary citizen.

Caesar's eighteen-year-old great-nephew was born Gaius Octavius, a member of the Octavia family. He learned that Caesar had posthumously adopted him as son and heir in his will. Following Roman adoption custom, an adopted son took the full name of the man who adopted him, so he became Gaius Julius Caesar. By the same custom he could also add a modified form of his birth family name, Octavius becoming Octavianus, to mark where he originally came from. From this comes the English name **Octavian**, which historians use for this period of his life to avoid confusing him with Julius Caesar. He traveled to Rome to claim his

inheritance, where he immediately clashed with Antony, who controlled Caesar's papers and funds and dismissed the young heir as a boy. When Antony stalled on the 300 sesterces owed to each citizen specified under Caesar's will, Octavian paid the sum from his own pocket and presented himself as the true legacy of Caesar. Octavian would further use his inheritance to buy the loyalty of Caesar's veterans, whom he needed for his army.

Meanwhile, Antony had marched north in late 44 BC to seize Cisalpine Gaul from Decimus Brutus, a conspirator, and besieged him at **Mutina** (modern Modena) that December. The Senate, led by Cicero, declared Antony a public enemy and sent the two consuls of 43 BC, Hirtius and Pansa, along with Octavian to break the siege. The fighting climaxed in April 43 BC, when Antony was defeated and forced to retreat into Gaul, but both consuls died, leaving Octavian in sole command of their armies. Rather than surrender them to the Senate, he used this leverage to demand the consulship, then turned to reconcile with Antony and Lepidus.

In November 43 BC, the **Second Triumvirate** was legally established by the *Lex Titia*, granting Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus absolute dictatorial power for five years to restore order in Rome. Their first act was a wave of proscriptions. Each triumvir gave up someone close to him to seal the pact, with Lepidus

surrendering his brother Lucius Aemilius Lepidus Paullus, Antony his uncle Lucius Julius Caesar, and Octavian his father-in-law Gaius Claudius Marcellus (though Paullus and the uncle both escaped into exile and survived). In total, perhaps two thousand wealthy Romans and three hundred senators were killed, with property confiscations funding their planned military campaign against Brutus. During the terror, **Cicero** was hunted down and killed on December 7, 43 BC, near his villa at Formiae. Antony had his head and hands nailed to the rostra, the elevated platform in the Roman Forum used by politicians to deliver public speeches. Obviously, this was a grisly revenge for the fourteen *Philippics*, the blistering orations Cicero had delivered against Antony between September 44 BC and April 43 BC. Cicero's orations were in turn inspired by Demosthenes's speeches against Philip of Macedon three hundred years prior. Concurrently, Brutus and Cassius gathered nineteen legions from the East. Cassius had loyal support in Syria, where he was remembered for his defense of Antioch against the Parthian invasion of 51 BC, just two years after the disaster at Carrhae.

The opposing armies met at Philippi in northern Greece in October 42 BC, on a plain crossed by the *Via Egnatia*, the great highway linking east and west. Brutus and Cassius held the high ground and fortified their camps, planning to starve the triumvirs out through naval superiority rather than risk a pitched battle. Grief shadowed Brutus at Philippi, for his wife Porcia, Cato's daughter, had died

earlier in 43 BC. The famous story has her swallowing burning coals in despair at her husband's downfall, but the surviving accounts, among them a letter of Cicero, suggest she died of an illness during his absence. Antony, unwilling to wait out a siege, forced the issue. In the first engagement he stormed Cassius's wing and overran his camp, while Brutus simultaneously broke Octavian's wing on the other end of the field. Blinded by dust and unable to see Brutus's victory, Cassius sent the officer Titinius to learn whether the horsemen riding toward his camp were friend or foe. When Titinius was surrounded by the riders, who were in fact Brutus's men come to celebrate, Cassius mistook the sight for a capture, believed all was lost, and ordered a freedman to kill him. Titinius, returning to find Cassius dead, took his own life beside him. Three weeks later the armies fought again, and this time the Republican line collapsed entirely. With his army shattered and no escape left, Brutus took his own life.

After Philippi, Octavian returned to Italy to settle tens of thousands of veterans on confiscated land, displacing Italian farmers and stirring widespread resentment. Mark Antony's wife Fulvia and his brother Lucius Antonius exploited this anger and raised eight legions against Octavian, sparking the **Perusine War** (41–40 BC). Lucius briefly occupied Rome before Agrippa drove him out and besieged him in the hilltop city of Perusia, starving the defenders into surrender over the winter. Octavian spared Lucius but sacked the city and reportedly

executed hundreds of its notables. Fulvia fled to Greece and died soon after at Sicyon, conveniently clearing the way for reconciliation. Antony, who had given his brother and wife no real support, met Octavian at Brundisium and sealed a new pact dividing the Roman world: Antony took the East, Octavian the West, and Lepidus kept Africa, with the agreement cemented by Antony's marriage to Octavia, Octavian's sister.

Octavian's next enemy was Sextus Pompeius, the surviving son of Pompey the Great, who controlled Sicily and quickly captured Sardinia. Sextus had a powerful fleet, strangling Rome's grain supply and sheltering every refugee and outlaw who opposed the triumvirate. The **Sicilian War** (42–36 BC) was a grinding naval conflict that cost Octavian enormous effort before his admiral Marcus Agrippa finally broke Sextus at the Battle of Naulochus (36 BC). When Lepidus opportunistically tried to seize Sicily in the aftermath, Octavian confronted him personally, and his veterans defected. Lepidus was stripped of power and exiled to Circeii, a coastal town 100km southeast of Rome. The triumvirate was now a partnership of two between Octavian and Mark Antony. Lepidus lived under house arrest until his death in either late 13 BC or early 12 BC. Notably, Octavian let him keep his title of *Pontifex Maximus* for the rest of his life, only assuming it himself after Lepidus died.

Hispania also demanded attention during these years. From 39 to 36 BC, Octavian's governor Gnaeus Domitius Calvinus campaigned against the Cerretani and other restive tribes in northeastern Spain, a province prized for its silver mines and veteran recruiting grounds, earning a triumph on his return in July 36 BC. These operations foreshadowed the larger **Cantabrian Wars** (29–19 BC), which would mark the final stage of Rome's two-century conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. In the east, Rome's greatest enemy, the Parthian Empire, stretched from modern Iraq across Iran into Central Asia, ruled by the Arsacid dynasty as a loose feudal monarchy in which a *shahanshah* ("King of Kings") presided over semi-independent vassal kings and powerful noble houses who supplied their own troops. Its armies relied on cavalry, and in 53 BC Parthia annihilated a Roman invasion under Marcus Licinius Crassus at Carrhae in modern southeastern Turkey, where the Parthian general Surena's horse archers and heavily armored cataphracts encircled seven legions on the open Mesopotamian plains, killing roughly twenty thousand legionaries, capturing ten thousand more, and seizing the eagle standards, while Crassus himself was killed during failed surrender negotiations.

In 41 BC, Mark Antony summoned Cleopatra VII to Tarsus to demand funds for a planned Parthian campaign. She arrived on a gilded barge with purple sails and silver oars, dressed as Aphrodite, and within weeks the political meeting had turned into a romantic affair. In 40 BC, the Roman general **Quintus Labienus**,

who had defected to Parthia after Philippi, led a joint Parthian-Roman force that swept through Asia Minor and Syria, overrunning the eastern territories. Antony's general Publius Ventidius Bassus reversed the invasion, defeating and killing Labienus in 38 BC.

In 36 BC, Antony launched the long-promised **invasion of Parthia** himself, leading roughly 100,000 men through Armenia into Media Atropatene to avoid the Mesopotamian route that had doomed Crassus. The campaign collapsed when he pushed ahead too quickly and left his siege train behind under a weaker guard, allowing Parthian and Median cavalry to destroy the equipment and the two legions escorting it. Unable to take the Median capital of Phraaspa without siege engines, and abandoned by his Armenian ally King Artavasdes II, Antony was forced into a brutal twenty-seven-day winter retreat through the mountains, harassed by horse archers and ravaged by starvation and disease. He preserved the core of his army but lost between 20,000 and 35,000 men, a catastrophe rivaling Carrhae. In 34 BC, he returned to seize Artavasdes by deception and annex Armenia, then staged a triumph-like procession in Alexandria rather than Rome.

When peace came, Mark Antony wielded legal authority over the Roman East while Cleopatra's Egyptian treasury helped fund his legions. In 34 BC, a series of formal decrees by Antony referred to as the "**Donations of Alexandria**"

distributed Roman-held eastern provinces and kingdoms to Cleopatra VII and her children, declaring **Caesarion** (the biological son of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra) as the true heir of the entire Roman Empire.

These provocative acts gave Octavian the political ammunition he needed. To sidestep the stigma of civil war, Octavian formally declared war on Cleopatra alone in 32 BC, framing the conflict as a defensive one against a foreign threat.

By the summer of 31 BC, Antony and Cleopatra had mobilized legions and produced a formidable naval fleet. They sailed their army and set up camp on land near the Gulf of Ambracia in modern-day western Greece. As they gathered their resources and fortified the coastline, the goal was to launch a cross-sea invasion that would topple Octavian in mainland Italy. Octavian would soon meet this threat with his own military force...

11: Actium



SIDES:

- **RED** = Octavian
- **BLUE** = Mark Antony & Cleopatra VII

OVERVIEW: The **War of Actium** (32–30 BC) was the final civil war of the Roman Republic. In the end, it left Octavian with total military and political power over Rome.

Detailed Information:

By the early 30s BC the triumvirate had effectively collapsed. Lepidus was forced into political retirement in 36 BC after a failed attempt to assert himself in Sicily, leaving Octavian and Antony as the only serious players. Antony's

prolonged residence in Alexandria, his public acknowledgement of his children by Cleopatra, and the Donations of Alexandria in 34 BC, in which he distributed Roman territories and royal titles to Cleopatra and her offspring, alienated Rome.

In 32 BC Octavian obtained, by methods of dubious legality, a copy of Antony's will from the temple of Vesta and read its contents publicly, emphasizing provisions that confirmed Antony's loyalty to Cleopatra and his wish to be buried in Alexandria. Public outrage allowed Octavian to engineer a formal declaration of war, framed cleverly not against Antony, a Roman citizen and consul, but against Cleopatra and Egypt as a foreign threat.

The decisive engagement came on the second of September in 31 BC, off the western coast of Greece near the promontory of Actium. Antony and Cleopatra had concentrated their fleet and army in the region, but a long blockade by Octavian's brilliant admiral **Marcus Agrippa** had cut their supply lines, spread disease through their camp, and prompted significant defections to Octavian's side, including the senator Quintus Dellius who carried Antony's battle plans to the enemy. Fighting under Octavian at Actium was Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus, elected consul beside him in 31 BC, a man who had once stood with Brutus and Cassius at Philippi before joining the victors. He left a written account

of these campaigns that later historians drew on, and in time became a patron of the poets Tibullus and the young Ovid.

Agrippa's lighter Liburnian ships carried the **harpax**, a ballista-launched grappling iron of his own devising that hooked Antony's heavier quinqueremes from a distance and winched them in for boarding. The naval battle was a disaster for Antony. In the midst of the engagement Cleopatra's squadron of sixty Egyptian ships broke through the line and fled south toward Egypt, and Antony abandoned the fight to follow her, leaving the bulk of his fleet and his land army to surrender in the days that followed.

Almost a year separated the victory at Actium from the invasion of Egypt, a delay forced on Octavian when his veterans mutinied over the land and money they had been promised, compelling him to sail back to Italy over the winter to pacify them before he could resume the war. Antony attempted a final defense at Alexandria but was deserted by his remaining forces, and on the first of August he took his own life by falling on his sword, dying in Cleopatra's arms according to the dramatic tradition preserved by Plutarch. Cleopatra, refusing to be paraded through Rome in Octavian's triumph, killed herself shortly afterward, traditionally by the bite of an asp smuggled to her in a basket of figs. Her son Caesarion, whom

she had borne to Julius Caesar and who represented a potential rival claimant to Octavian's inheritance, was hunted down and executed on Octavian's orders.

The consequences of the War of Actium were immediate. Egypt was annexed and its enormous treasury allowed Octavian to pay off his veterans, settle his debts, and finance the building programs that would transform Rome into a city of marble. With no surviving rivals, Octavian returned to Italy in 29 BC and celebrated a triple triumph.

12: Transition to Empire



Detailed Information:

In January of 27 BC, Octavian appeared before the Senate and theatrically renounced all his extraordinary powers, claiming to restore the Republic to the Senate and people of Rome. This carefully choreographed performance was met, as he surely anticipated, with pleas from the senators that he resume his authority for the good of the state. In response to their entreaties, he accepted a ten-year proconsular command over the provinces that contained the bulk of the Roman legions, namely Gaul, Spain, and Syria, while the Senate received the older, more peaceful provinces such as Africa, Asia, and Greece. A few days later the Senate granted him the new honorific name **Augustus**, a word laden with religious

connotations of sacred authority. Combined with his family name of Caesar, his full official style became Imperator **Caesar Augustus**. This name would mark him as the first Emperor. Some historians invert the naming order to Augustus Caesar.

The settlement of 27 BC proved insufficient. A single proconsular command, even an enlarged one, gave Augustus no clear constitutional basis for his dominance of Roman politics. A second settlement in 23 BC gave Augustus two new grants of power. The first was *imperium proconsulare maius*, a superior proconsular authority that let him override any provincial governor and intervene anywhere in the empire, and which, crucially, did not lapse when he crossed the sacred boundary of the city. The second was *tribunicia potestas*, held for life, which gave him the right to convene the Senate, propose legislation, and veto any magistrate. By holding tribunician power without being a tribune, Augustus claimed the populist symbolism of the office, traditionally tied to defending the common people against the aristocracy, while sidestepping the rule that barred patricians from the tribunate itself.

Augustus accumulated other offices and honors over the following decades that thickened the religious and moral aura around his person. In 12 BC, upon the death of his former colleague Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, he assumed the office of *Pontifex Maximus*, the chief priesthood of Roman state religion. In 2 BC the Senate

and people conferred upon him the title *pater patriae*, father of the country, which he treasured above all his other distinctions.

The administrative division of the empire into imperial and senatorial provinces had profound long-term consequences for how Rome was governed. The senatorial provinces, generally pacified and lying away from the frontiers, continued to be administered by *proconsuls* and *propraetors* selected by lot from among former consuls and praetors in the traditional manner. The imperial provinces, by contrast, were governed by the loyal legates of Augustus, men whom he personally appointed, with their revenues flowing into a separate military treasury, the *aerarium militare*, which he established in 6 AD to fund the legions and pay discharge bonuses to veterans. Egypt occupied a unique status as a personal possession of the emperor, governed by a prefect of equestrian rank rather than a senator, and senators were forbidden to set foot there without imperial permission. This dual system meant that while the Senate was visibly retained, the emperor controlled the whole apparatus. Further, generals were no longer elected. The legions of the imperial provinces were led by *legati Augusti*, senators of praetorian or consular rank appointed directly by the emperor.

During the 41-year reign (27 BC–14 AD) of Caesar Augustus, various military expeditions were launched. In 26–25 BC, Aelius Gallus, the prefect of

Egypt, led an expedition into Arabia Felix (modern-day Yemen), hoping to seize control of the lucrative spice trade or to reduce the Arabian kingdoms to tributary status. The campaign ended in failure, with the army wasting away from disease, exhausting marches through waterless terrain, and the treachery of a Nabataean guide named Syllaeus who deliberately led the Romans astray. Later, in 20 BC, Cornelius Balbus, proconsul of Africa, marched south against the Garamantes, a Saharan Berber people based in the Fezzan region of modern Libya, capturing their capital Garama and a string of oasis towns. For this Balbus was awarded a triumph in 19 BC, the last triumph ever celebrated by a Roman who was not a member of the imperial family.

Ordinary legionaries swore the *sacramentum*, a military oath, to Augustus personally and to his successors, transforming what had once been a loyalty owed to a magistrate during his term of office into a permanent personal allegiance to the emperor and his house. Augustus standardized the term of legionary service, fixed the rates of pay, and most importantly guaranteed retirement bonuses in the form of land grants funded by the military treasury. He also created the **Praetorian Guard**, serving as his elite personal bodyguard.

In 6 AD, Augustus created the Vigiles (Town Watch), seven cohorts of freedmen recruited for night watch and firefighting. This was the first time in

Rome's history that an organized group was made specifically to combat public fires. Before this, aristocratic families would use their own slaves or money to fund their own private fire brigade, while the commoner was left to their own devices.

Despite the quality of life improvements, there still was no formal police force, no public prosecutor, nor the type of judicial system we enjoy today. The victim of a crime was burdened with gathering their own witnesses and evidence with no formal assistance, and would need to present their accusation before a magistrate, who would decide if the matter warranted a formal trial. In some cases, the victim was even expected to physically drag the accused before the magistrate themselves. The trial consisted of being held before a jury of citizens, where both sides argued their case and a verdict was reached by vote.

When it came to the inner workings of the state, the actual day-to-day governance of the empire increasingly devolved upon Augustus's household staff. Freedmen and slaves of the Emperor's household took on duties that no formal Roman magistracy had ever performed: managing correspondence, finances, petitions, and provincial accounts from offices within the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill. In the generations after Augustus, this household administration would expand into an elaborate imperial bureaucracy. The emperor would also rely on a council of advisors known as the *consilium principis*, consisting of

magistrates, senators, legal experts, and even the emperor's personal friends. This informal inner council was essential for shaping policy regarding political matters.

The **Principate** (derived from *princeps*; "first citizen") political system Augustus established was officially not a monarchy, so no formal succession rule existed for passing power from one ruler to the next. Augustus worked around this by sharing his powers with a chosen heir that would eventually succeed him. This heir was granted tribunician power and proconsular **imperium**, the supreme executive authority to command armies, enforce laws, and administer justice. So, when the emperor died, there was someone who already held the constitutional authority to govern. Finding such an heir could have its own complications. Augustus outlived his nephew Marcellus, his son-in-law Agrippa, and his grandsons Gaius and Lucius Caesar. He reluctantly turned to his stepson Tiberius, Livia's son by her first marriage. Tiberius was adopted, granted tribunician power, and proved his competence on the frontiers by suppressing the Illyrian Revolt and stabilizing the German front after the disaster at the Teutoburg Forest.

When Augustus died in August of AD 14, the Senate confirmed Tiberius and the legions renewed their oath. The Republic was now unmistakably finished. The Roman Empire would endure for hundreds of years to come.