

Knowledge of Europe also changed. The Greeks had had little interest

in the inhabitants of the inland areas of Iberia and middle Europe, despite long-standing patterns of trade with coastal areas. Massilia, for example, had not served as a channel for the communication of knowledge about the Celts to other Greeks. Pytheas' writings about his far-flung travels to Britain and further north did not include anything about the inland Celts. Roman conquests, in the aftermath of the Second Punic War, began to change this, much as the conquests of Alexander the Great had opened up new stretches of Asia to Greek enquiry. Polybius travelled twice to Iberia and to the sea beyond with his Roman patron, at least as far as southern France, and was given ships by his patron to explore the coast of North Africa. As a result, he was able to describe these regions in a way that no previous author had done, making geography an intrinsic part of history. Such exploration was made possible by Roman expansion, but knowledge thereby acquired also served to consolidate Roman power. Around 100 BC, a Greek scholar, Artemidorus of Ephesus (in western Asia Minor), wrote extensively on the coast, including the Atlantic coast, of Iberia as part of his geography of the world. A hundred or so years later the section on Iberia was illustrated with a very detailed map of at least part of Iberia, including considerable detail on the inland settlements (see Figure 24). In this map, Artemidorus' knowledge, derived as a result of Roman conquest, was complemented with further details of the new Roman world: large towns, roads and smaller settlements. Iberia was now in Roman hands. As we shall see in the next chapter, Roman expansion in middle Europe in the first century BC had similar consequences for the growth of knowledge.

The grand narrative of the period from 500 to 146 BC is clear: Rome's expansion within Italy south of the Arno by 264 BC; its wars with Carthage; and its conquest of most of the Greek world in Polybius' famous fifty-three years between 220 and 167 BC. The two story-lines of Rome's external expansion converge with the destructions of both Carthage and Corinth in 146 BC, events which serve as a neat sign of the supremacy of Rome in the Mediterranean world. Thereafter no state west of the Euphrates had the resources to offer sustained resistance to further Roman expansion. This grand narrative has to be seen in the context of the perspectives on the past held by Romans, Italians and Carthaginians. Beliefs and debates about early histories and traditions helped to shape how individual states developed and interacted.

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## Rome, Italy and Empire:

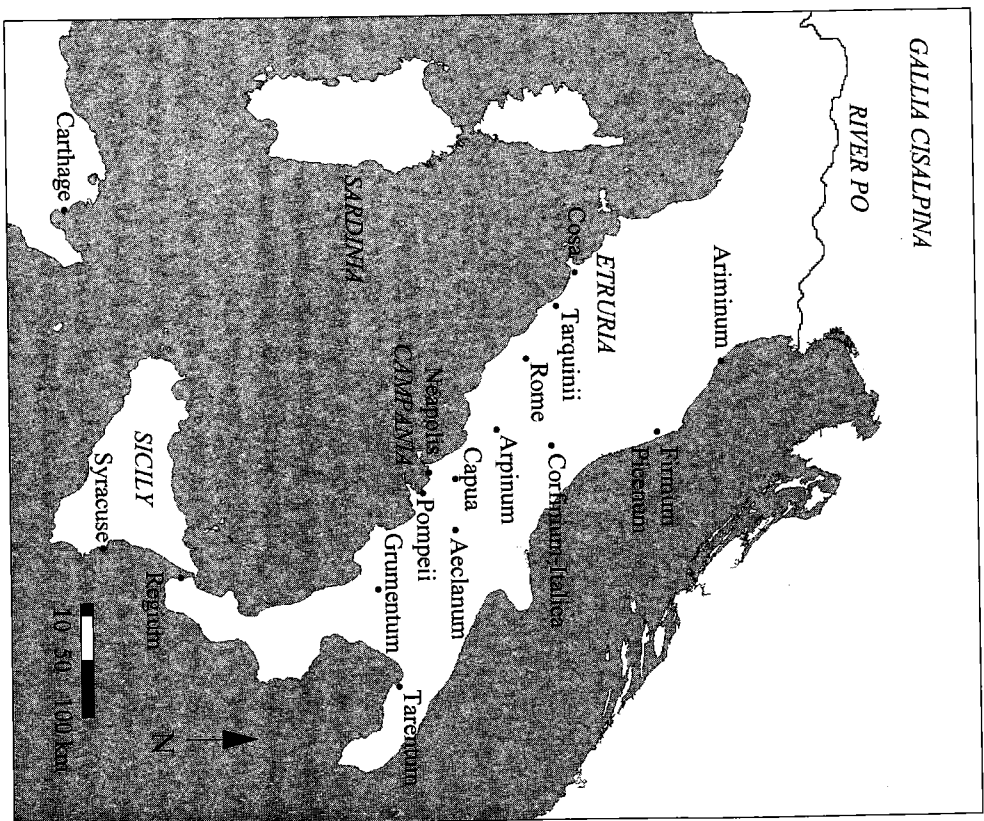
146 BC-AD 14

Most Gauls, even down to the present day, sleep on the ground, and eat their meals seated on beds of straw. Their food is very abundant, and includes milk and flesh of all sorts, but particularly the flesh of hogs, both fresh and salted. Their hogs actually live outdoors, and they are of exceptional height, strength and speed; it is certainly dangerous for a person unfamiliar with them to approach them, and likewise even for a wolf. As for the Gauls' houses, which are large and dome-shaped, they make them of planks and wattle, covering them with a thatched roof.

That is how the Greek geographer Strabo, writing early in the first century AD, describes the people of central Gaul. It is a striking picture of a primitive people, living an un-Mediterranean life in curiously shaped and constructed houses, their economy dominated by savage hogs, capable of killing even wolves. Strabo says explicitly that his account of the Gauls is drawn mainly from the time before they were conquered by Julius Caesar. At first sight, his account makes the Gauls seem like the inhabitants of Sobiejuchy in north-central Poland a millennium earlier. In fact, Strabo is very well aware of the changed world in which the Gauls are living. They supplied specially woven cloth from their flocks of sheep and salt meat from the hogs not only to Rome, but also to other parts of Italy. Unlike the inhabitants of Sobiejuchy, who had no long-distance connections at all, the Gauls were tied into a long-distance trading system.

This chapter moves from the mid-second century BC, when the Gauls were independent of Rome, to the organization of the Roman provinces towards the end of the first century BC. The area under Roman rule grew hugely over this period, both in the west and in the east. The growth of Roman territory had major consequences for how that territory was administered and conceptualized. But we begin by picking up the issue

## GALLIA CISALPINA



Map 26. The Italian peninsula in the second and first centuries BC.

of the impact of Roman rule on the Italian peninsula from what has gone before, and then move on to political changes within Rome. The period starts with the senatorial elite riding high, profiting from the expansion of the empire. It closes with the transformation of that elite, with the emergence of individual leaders, the civil wars, ending with Augustus' defeat of the forces of Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium in 31 BC, and the creation of an emperor, Augustus, who claimed to be just an ordinary citizen. The death of Augustus in AD 14 offers a convenient end to this story. It is usual to talk of these political changes in terms of

## ROME, ITALY AND EMPIRE

a change from 'Republic' to 'empire', but Rome already had an empire in the 'Republic'. As Augustus, like other politicians, represented himself in traditional terms, he would have been horrified to find us making the battle of Actium a break between two historical periods.

The extension of Roman power in the Italian peninsula began to pose major problems for Rome. We have already seen the number of colonies created by Rome in the third and second centuries; Roman ability to intervene in the affairs of allied and other states; and the emergence of Latin as the prestige language of the peninsula. As part of this process the state acquired more territory in Italy. Those cities in the south of the peninsula which had made the mistake of siding with the Carthaginians in the Second Punic War were savagely punished, with the confiscation of some or all of their territory. This newly acquired land became *ager publicus*, 'public land', owned by the state, and leased out to individual Roman citizens. There was notionally a limit, 125 hectares, on how much land any one person could lease, and a rent was payable to the state, but both the limit and the rents were often ignored. The conventional modern analysis is that many upper-class Romans acquired huge landholdings, which they farmed using slave labour, with a shift in some areas from arable to pastoral farming. The upper class thereby disposessed the local free peasantry, and created vast fortunes for themselves. This analysis depends in part on evidence tainted by the arguments mounted by those who sought to reform the situation. It also needs to be modified because of the great variation in landownership and agricultural practices within the Italian peninsula, and because population increase could have been partly responsible for the growth of the landless poor. The jury is still out as to whether the evidence of archaeological field surveys, which have been undertaken in many different parts of Italy, supports the conventional view. But whatever the causes, there was a strong case that land reform was needed.

The issues came to a head in Rome with the election of Tiberius Gracchus to the junior office of tribune of the people for 133 BC. Tiberius Gracchus came from a distinguished family, with many successful ancestors: he was the grandson of Scipio Africanus the Elder, who had won the Second Punic War, and brother-in-law of Scipio Africanus the Younger, who had sacked Carthage in 146 BC. He might therefore have been expected to compete for the highest senatorial offices and distinctions,

as outlined in the texts inscribed in the Tomb of the Scipios. Instead, Tiberius chose to make maximum use of the office of tribune, an office, according to Polybius, which focused on the wishes of the people. This was a novel way of exploiting the Roman political system, with major consequences. He got the people to pass legislation, contrary to the wishes of the Senate, to establish a land commission to sort out abuses of the *ager publicus*: those who had usurped *ager publicus* were to be allowed to keep the amount of land previously stipulated, with additions for up to two sons, and the rest of the land was to be assigned by the commissioners to the landless poor. His legislation was strongly supported by the people, but deeply resented by the upper class, which stood to lose massively from the legislation, but which also had reasonable objections to his political tactics.

Despite the killing of Tiberius Gracchus, to which we shall return, the commission set to work. Of the boundary stones put up in Italy by the commission, fourteen survive, mostly in the area to the south of Capua. They demonstrate an impressive level of detail in the recording of plots of land. A few miles from one of the areas surveyed by the commission, another prominent Roman, whose name does not survive, undertook a major road-building programme through this region, from Regium to Capua. He also claimed to be the first to ensure that shepherds gave way to arable farmers on *ager publicus*; he also built a forum and public buildings here, presumably for the newly settled farmers, in accordance with the aim of Tiberius' reforms to favour the landless poor.

In 123 BC Tiberius' brother, Gaius Gracchus, in his turn became tribune of the people. Tiberius had perhaps sought to make life better for landless Roman citizens in the first instance, but Gaius Gracchus took action that benefited non-Roman Italians, and hence also benefited Rome by securing a steady supply of men for the Roman army. He modified his brother's land reforms, so that an important type of *ager publicus* would not be distributed to Roman citizens but be available for renting by non-Romans. In addition, he subsequently proposed changes to the status of Latin allies, offering them full Roman citizenship, and offering some sort of rights also to other Italians, but the proposal failed. In 121 BC he led an insurrection in support of his legislation, but this too failed and he and many of his supporters were killed.

The extension of Roman citizenship to new categories of people was an issue that did not die with Gaius Gracchus. Italian allies were obliged

by their separate alliances to supply troops each year to Rome, but they became increasingly unhappy about their treatment by Rome. Gaius Gracchus had already protested at the outrageous behaviour of a young Roman ambassador towards a humble citizen of a Latin colony and of a Roman consul towards the magistrate of an allied city-state. The disparity of treatment of the Italian allies was especially marked in comparison with the Roman colonies dispersed throughout the Italian peninsula, whose inhabitants, all Roman citizens, were not obliged to serve in the Roman army, and were in principle protected from the abuse of power by Roman magistrates. In addition, the Italian allies desired to share in political and legal decision-making at Rome, including decision-making about the running of empire. Italian allies, therefore, sought to end their unequal relationship with Rome, and to possess Roman citizenship. But their aspirations were frustrated. The final straw was the assassination of a Roman politician, Livius Drusus, who had unsuccessfully proposed the extension of the franchise to the Italians. In 91 BC war broke out between Rome and its Italian allies (Latin: *socii*, hence the modern name 'Social War'). Allies throughout central and southern Italy, from Firmum in the north to Grumentum in the south, took up arms against Rome. According to the historian Velleius Paterculus, whose ancestor had fought in the war, some 300,000 young men died during the three years of fighting. The figure may be an exaggeration, but the conflict was certainly momentous.

By the time the war broke out, the aspirations of the allies had moved on from a desire for Roman citizenship to something quite different: their own state. The allies established a senate of 500 men and their own magistrates, based at Corfinium, which they renamed Italica. Lead slingshot for use against the Romans was labelled with the names of their magistrates and the word 'Itali', Italians, suggesting that the troops saw themselves as fighting as a single force. The silver coinage issued by the rebels reveals especially clearly the rebels' view of themselves. This was a large coinage, comparable in scale to Rome's coinage only ten or twenty years before. It was based on Roman standards, and sometimes copied Roman imagery, but it was strikingly separatist. The writing on the coins was in both Latin and Oscan, the Italic language that was common throughout central Italy. The use of Oscan here is a first sign of a desire to stand apart from Rome. The actual words are more explicit, in that the minting authority was clearly labelled in Latin as 'Italia' and in its

Oscan equivalent 'vītelīū' or 'vītellīū' (Plate 31c). In other words, the rebels saw themselves as forming a new state of Italy, for the first and last time until the modern Italian state was formed under King Victor Emmanuel II in 1861. The imagery on the coins proclaimed a specifically Italian identity. Heads of Italia appear, but especially interesting is the close connection between the legends 'Italia' or 'vītelīū' and representations of a bull. It looks as though the rebels were drawing on the ancient association between Italic word for calf (Latin: *vitulus*) and the name of the peninsula (p. 180). Especially dramatic are the coins depicting a bull going a wolf with one of its horns. According to Velleius Paterculus, an Italian commander at the head of a force of 40,000 men outside Rome, exhorted his troops to battle: 'These wolves that have so ravaged Italian freedom will never disappear until we have cut down the forest that shelters them.' The coins show the Italian bull taking retribution on the predatory Roman wolf.

Rome won the military conflict, offering Roman citizenship first to those men who had not revolted, and then in 88 and 87 BC to men in all communities south of the Po. By 70 BC Rome could issue a coin depicting Roma and Italia shaking hands, and the separatist aims of the allies came to be suppressed. Both sides concurred that the aims of the rebels had been simply Roman citizenship, which had now been magnanimously granted by Rome. Emblematic of the consequences of the Social War (and of views of it) is the family of Velleius Paterculus (c. 20 BC–after AD 31). Velleius, writing 120 years after the war's end, presents his ancestors as uniformly pro-Roman. He claimed to be descended from Decius Magius, the leader of those few Capuans who had remained loyal to Rome at the time of the Second Punic War. Velleius' great-great-grandfather, Minatius Magius of Aeclanum (east of Capua), raised forces to fight on behalf of Rome during the Social War, helping Sulla in his siege of Pompeii. He received a personal grant of Roman citizenship, and his two sons became Roman senators, though the distinction of this branch of the family seems to have petered out at this point. Velleius' grandfather was a leading soldier, serving Pompey the Great, but in the civil war Velleius' uncle and father were on the winning side of Julius Caesar. Velleius himself served in the Roman army, and then joined the Senate, rising to be praetor in AD 14. His history of Rome, published in AD 30, embodies a loyalist Italian view of the past, presenting the aim of the Social War as simply to obtain Roman citizenship, and also illustrates

the new opportunities for members of local civic elites in the service of Rome.

The increased geographic spread of Roman citizenship as a result of the Social War, first to loyalists like Velleius' ancestor, and then even to rebels, resulted in a huge increase in the number of Roman citizens in Italy. Censuses of the mid-second century BC had recorded a number of adult male citizens that ranged between 313,000 and 337,000, numbers which should probably be increased by 20 per cent to allow for citizens serving overseas and under-registration. The most reliable census figure for soon after the Social War is 910,000, which should probably also be increased by 20 per cent. In other words, the enfranchisement of the Italian allies trebled the number of Roman citizens, to a number never previously reached by any ancient state. Not that this increase was unproblematic. After 70 BC, the *censores*, magistrates responsible for conducting censuses, repeatedly failed to complete their work, probably because of the controversial nature of the extension of citizenship.

The spread of domiciles of Roman citizens also affected membership of the Roman Senate. Up to the Social War, senators had been drawn mainly from Rome and Latium, but afterwards senators came from a much wider area. Some, like Velleius' ancestors, did not rise to the consulship, but others did. The most famous case is none other than Marcus Tullius Cicero, of Arpinum, whose inhabitants had possessed full Roman citizenship for the previous hundred years. Cicero, like Velleius' ancestor, had fought as a young man for Sulla in the Social War. On the basis of a loyalist background and proven distinction in legal oratory, he was elected quaestor in 75 BC, thereby joining the Senate. Such people faced considerable opposition from the old guard in Rome. Cicero was disparaged as being merely an 'immigrant citizen of the city of Rome', but he became consul in 63 BC. Cicero turned to his advantage the fact that he was a *novus homo*, a 'new man' with no previous senatorial ancestry. As a *novus homo*, he was not tainted by the corruption that had infected the old guard. Cicero's rhetoric, and fame for other reasons, should not blind us to the fact that the Senate had always taken on new members. What was new after the Social War was the gradual emergence of a Senate with a higher proportion of members drawn from all over Italy. Not that the change was easy, but they did gradually enter the Senate. A certain Quintus Varius Geminus, who entered the Senate under Augustus (becoming praetor), proudly boasted that 'he was the

first of all the Pacligni to be made a senator'. As Corfinium in the territory of the Pacligni had been the rebels' capital, Varius' achievement was indeed notable.

After the Social War and the ensuing civil war, the victorious commander Sulla settled huge numbers of ex-soldiers in colonies, especially in Etruria and Campania. One of these colonies was Pompeii, where Sulla settled at least a couple of thousand ex-soldiers. Pompeii was an old town, with city walls dating back to the sixth century BC. Some even claimed that its name was derived from the *pompa*, triumphal procession, of Hercules, pursuing his missing calf down through the Italian peninsula. Pompeii had fought on the side of the Samnites against Rome, but became a Roman ally by the early third century BC, though remaining mainly Oscan-speaking. Its troops helped in the Roman sack of Corinth in 146 BC, and in turn the town received a present of a statue or of luxury metalwork from Mummius, the Roman commander, one of numerous such gifts. This donation is a token of the huge wealth flowing into the town from eastern conquests. Around the middle of the second century BC the temple of Apollo in the forum was restructured, with the Mummius gift being built into the colonnade, marked by an inscription in Oscan; a basilica was constructed for public administration, and the façades of houses along the main streets were rebuilt in stone, presumably at public expense. One local family gained extraordinary wealth from serving Rome in the east. The 'House of the Faun', as it is known today, was rebuilt in the second half of the second century BC to cover an entire city block. The house was, as can still be seen, extraordinarily lavish, including a wonderful mosaic depicting Alexander the Great's defeat of the Persian King Darius. This family sought to elevate itself above the rest of the population, much as the Roman nobility was doing in Rome at the same time, with a house that rivalled a Hellenistic palace, and imagery that presented contemporary eastern conquests in the same mould as those of Alexander the Great.

Despite the communal and individual wealth that flowed into Pompeii, the city sided with the rebels during the Social War, and was besieged by Sulla in 89 BC. Numerous lead bullets and stone balls fired from ballistas into the town survive; we can even read the mustering instructions for the defenders, painted on walls, in Oscan. A decade afterwards, in 80 BC, with Sulla's settlement of ex-soldiers, Pompeii became a Roman *colonia*, with a new name and a new constitution (like Cosa and other

colonies discussed in the previous chapter). However, the old municipal constitution operated in parallel to the constitution of the *colonia* for the next generation. Relations between the existing inhabitants and the newcomers were tense for some time; we hear of disputes between the two groups over rights of access to public space, and over electoral procedures, until by the 50s BC members of the original elite were able to join the town council of the *colonia*. Latin became the official language of the community, with Oscan going into decline. The incoming ex-soldiers may have lived mainly on farms outside the town, though the very richest of the newcomers built lavish houses on top of the old city walls, which were no longer needed for defence. In the east of the town, houses were demolished to build an amphitheatre, the earliest known stone amphitheatre, which was dedicated 'to the colonists'.

The linguistic and cultural changes seen at Pompeii are emblematic of changes throughout Italy. For central and southern Italy, the Social War was a turning point. In the northern part of the Italian peninsula, the province of Gallia Cisalpina, 'Gaul this side of the Alps', was granted Roman citizenship by Julius Caesar in 49 BC, and was subsequently known as Italia Transpadana, 'Italy across the Po'. Roman Italy was now the whole peninsula south of the Alps, though unlike modern Italy it did not include Sicily or Sardinia. The Latin language and Roman institutions became increasingly common throughout the peninsula.

There was no official policy to stamp out local languages, or local cultural diversity, in Italy. Latin language and Roman institutions had been dominant since the second century BC, but both were compatible with a bilingualism that could be both linguistic and cultural. At Pompeii, Oscan continued to be used for two generations after the creation of the Roman colony. In Etruria, Latin began to make headway against Etruscan only after the Social War. By the middle of the first century BC, bilingual Etruscan-Latin inscriptions were common, and by the end of the first century BC, Etruscan became increasingly rare. Greek remained the public language of the ancient cities of the south, especially Neapolis and Tarentum, but none of the other languages of Italy had a public use much past the first century BC, though some may have continued to be spoken privately. Within Italy, Latin carried the day. Though there was no state policy to promote Latin, the growing dominance of Latin was in part a consequence of state practices. The ethnic units of the Roman army, which had helped to preserve local languages, disappeared soon after the

Social War, and Latin became the sole official language of the army. The municipal charters of the newly enfranchised communities of Italy, with their rules for local magistrates and local finances, were also all in Latin: this was true even of the Greek-speaking town of Tarentum. The changes also need to be set against the background of severe dislocation in Italy: the violent conflict of the Social War, and the settlement overseas of Italian veterans in colonies outside the peninsula.

There was also a move on the part of the Roman elite to define, and hence preserve, a pure form of Latin, untainted by the polluted language of the flood of immigrants to Rome. From the early first century BC exponents of Latin grammar sought to define proper usage, based not on current practice, which was in flux, but on logical consistency. This concern was not the preserve of educational theorists. Julius Caesar himself wrote a treatise, of which Cicero approved, arguing in support of definitions based on logical consistency, with clear rules about how to decline nouns and which words to preface with an 'h'. It is striking that Caesar found the time to write the treatise while on campaign in Gaul. The newly formulated language became, in the hands of the professional grammarians, the backbone of an educational system throughout Italy and the west.

Some local and regional identities within Italy remained strong. The people of Etruscan Tarquinii in the first century AD were proud of the achievements of their ancestors before the growth of Roman power (p. 202). Not that being Etruscan at this period was straightforward. Maecenas, a powerful cultural figure in Rome under Augustus, was notorious for his luxurious lifestyle, which was attributed to his Etruscan roots. On the other hand, the Sabine area north-east of Rome was seen as the residual home of austere virtues now lost in the corrupt metropolis of Rome itself. The Elder Cato had perhaps associated these Sabine virtues with the origins that local traditions ascribed to the Sabines, namely the famously austere Spartans. The poet Horace, writing under Augustus, set great store by his Sabine farm, which served for him as an image of rustic purity.

The Roman political system in the second century BC could be seen as having three key elements: the Senate, people and magistrates. In Polybius' analysis (p. 189 above), those three elements were kept successfully in balance down to his time. But the values and institutions that prevented

individuals from gaining too much power broke down. Aspiring politicians used all the tools available to them to enhance their positions, including appeals to the past. Senators had claimed Trojan descent since at least the fourth century BC, but this type of claim became especially important in the first century BC. Julius Caesar at an early stage of his career, in 69 BC, gave the public funeral eulogy for his aunt Julia: on her mother's side, the Marcii Reges, she was descended from one of the kings, Ancus Marcius, and on her father's side, the Julii, she was descended from the gods. This was because the Julii claimed descent from Aeneas, son of Venus, via his son Iulus. 'Our family therefore has both the sanctity of kings, whose power is supreme among mortal men, and also the claim to reverence which attaches to the gods, who hold sway over kings themselves.' Caesar's rhetorical appeal to the past was typical of the period: claims to Trojan origin were so common that two scholars each wrote a book 'On the Trojan Families'. The fact that Julia had a public funeral itself marks a new level of elite competition. The competition between members of the elite for power and status had become so intense that the female members of their families were now co-opted into the struggles. Whereas the women of the Scipios in the third and second centuries BC had had no individual public prominence (pp. 188-9), women of senatorial families in the first century BC could be deemed to add lustre to their families. The young Julius Caesar was, of course, hoping to gain politically by drawing public attention to the extraordinary ancestry of his aunt.

By the end of the first century BC, Rome was ruled by one family, that of Augustus. It is easy to see the shift in terms of increasingly successful individual leaders, Pompey, Caesar, Antony and Augustus, who in turn broke away from the pack, and it is easy also to analyse their success in terms of naked power politics: ambition, greed, factions and so on. Thinking like this, though it may seem to be hard-nosed and hence reliable, fails to take account of other issues. Focusing on the individual leaders ignores the extent to which they were dependent on the support of their soldiers. At the end of their years of service, these men, mostly drawn from the Italian countryside, demanded land for themselves, forcing their leaders to satisfy their demands. And seemingly hard-nosed analysis does not take account of how individual politicians justified their own actions, or the terms in which they were supported or opposed. Debates about political leadership were moulded in part in terms of



the past. The outcome of such debates was that nothing was abolished, and the old forms remained decisively important for the successful leaders.

The importance of the past is especially clear in connection with Tiberius Gracchus. He was elected in 133 BC to a relatively minor magistracy, tribune of the people, but used the latent powers of this office to get the people to pass radical measures concerning the allocation of land in Italy, contrary to the wishes of the Senate. Various historical analogies to his behaviour were drawn at the time, both by Tiberius Gracchus himself and by his opponents. Parallels were drawn with two Spartan kings of a hundred years previously, Agis IV and Cleomenes III. They too had undertaken major reforms of land tenure, and were seen either as noble restorers of the ancestral system, or as populist tyrants. There was the same polarity of views concerning Tiberius Gracchus. His enemies alleged that he had received a royal purple robe and diadem from the Attalid kingdom of Pergamum in western Asia Minor, and was seeking to become king at Rome. It had been legitimate to depose the last king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus, and a tribune who had misbehaved had lost the authority of the office that notionally protected his person. So people argued that Tiberius Gracchus too could be deposed.

The telling argument was that Tiberius was aiming to become a tyrant; the key evidence was his unprecedented deposition of a fellow tribune, who had been opposing his legislation. Tyranny was a term for sole power wielded unconstitutionally, as against monarchy or supreme magistracies, which had constitutional bases; it was always a term used by the opponents of the individual concerned: no ruler ever termed himself a tyrant. Tyranny was a phenomenon, or an allegation, which recurred throughout Greek history, and was a potent allegation at Rome in the late Republic. Stories were told about three populist leaders in the first century or so of the Republic, Spurius Cassius, Spurius Maelius and Marcus Manlius, who had allegedly aspired to tyranny, and who had been executed. Tiberius' opponents agreed that it was desirable to kill the tyrannical Tiberius, but hesitated to do so. Matters came to a head when Scipio Nasica, the *pontifex maximus*, head of one of the major priestly colleges of Rome, appeared on the steps of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol behind Tiberius Gracchus, who was trying to hold a meeting of the people. What happened next is obscure, but it may be that Nasica, believing that the Senate had already condemned Tiberius,

exploited an ancient formula, and consecrated Tiberius to Jupiter, on the grounds that he was about to seize power as a tyrant. Tiberius, thus stripped of the sacrosanctity of the office of tribune, was struck down by one of the other tribunes. His body and those of many of his supporters were thrown into the river Tiber. Not everyone accepted Nasica's defence of the killing of a tribune. He was forced to leave Rome, as ambassador to Pergamum, despite the fact that the *pontifex maximus* was not supposed to depart from Italy. But the deadly power of arguments based on the past was clear. The killing of Tiberius Gracchus, the first act of political bloodshed at Rome for three hundred and fifty years, itself established a precedent.

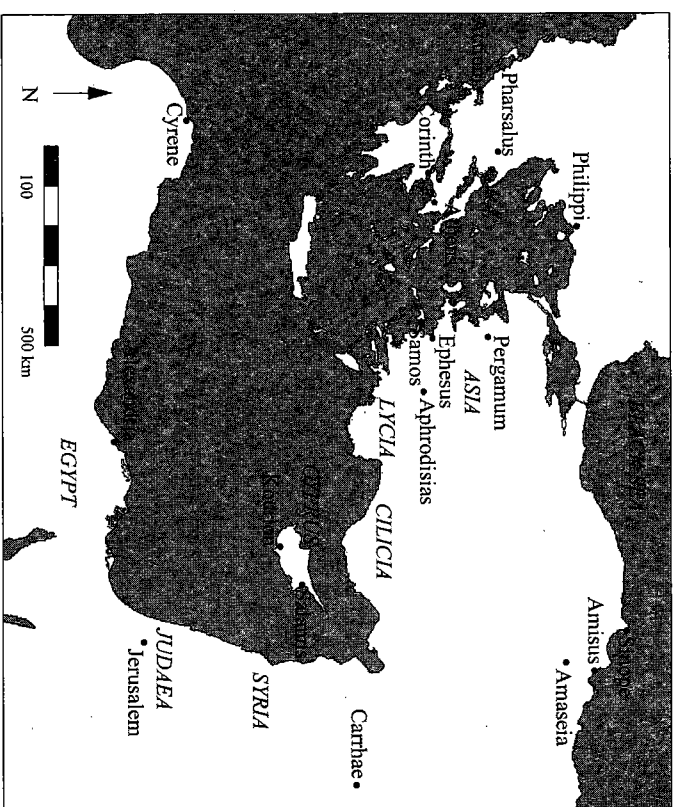
### Machiavelli and Rome

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) drew deeply on Roman history and political thought to develop his own, original theories. His two principal works seen at first sight to espouse contradictory positions. *The Prince*, written in 1513, focuses on the rule of one man: the prince needs *virtù* in order to overcome the power of Fortune; he should not behave morally, if necessity counsels otherwise, but he should pretend to do so, so as to appear virtuous. This deliberately shocking doctrine (which made his name notorious) was developed in a dialogue with ancient Rome: Hannibal, having conceded victory to Scipio, spoke of the power of Fortune in human affairs; Cicero was wrong to say that fear was a poor basis for lasting power; the emperor Septimius Severus possessed great *virtù*, having the qualities of 'a very fierce lion and a very cunning fox'. The long *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy*, perhaps written in the late 1510s, initially seem completely different. Here Machiavelli focused on the early years of the Roman Republic, making use of the copy of Livy which his father had bought forty years previously. He was primarily interested in explaining why Rome rose to such a dominant position, with an eye to lessons for his own day. Like Polybius, he thought that the mixed constitution was crucial, though not for its harmony, but because the tensions within it constrained otherwise violent factions. The two works in fact share common positions. The tough-minded view of human nature underlying *The Prince* is basic also to the *Discourses*. And in the *Discourses*, Machiavelli rejects Cicero's criticism of Romulus' killing of Remus: no sensible person should ever

'censure anyone for any unlawful action used in organizing a kingdom or setting up a republic'. Roman history offered models both for republicanism and for autocracy. Machiavelli explored both, which were extremely pertinent to the fluctuations between principalities and republics in contemporary Italy, as happened notably in his native Florence. Machiavelli regarded autocracy as necessary in his time, because of corruption, but republicanism as the ideal. The lessons to be drawn from history were rooted in Roman debates about how the state should be organized and run. Machiavelli stated explicitly that those lessons in political organization had been neglected in his day, and that he wanted to spell them out, just as others had expounded lessons from antiquity for other branches of knowledge. He therefore set out rules that in principle had general validity, leading to the idea of his being the first political scientist.

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The allegation that Tiberius Gracchus had accepted an Attalid royal robe and crown was made when the Attalid kingdom was bequeathed to Rome



Map 27. The eastern Mediterranean in the second and first centuries BC.

on the death of its last king in 133 BC, and became the province of Asia. This new acquisition was followed by further expansion of Rome's eastern dominion in the later second and first centuries BC. Roman interests extended out from the core formed by the new province of Asia: by 101 BC action started to be taken against 'pirates' based in Cilicia on the south coast of Asia Minor, who were allegedly impeding the passage of Roman goods in the eastern Mediterranean; and in 90 BC expansionist moves by Mithradates Eupator to the north-east of the province of Asia were curbed.

Mithradates' own kingdom was based on the north coast of Asia Minor, with capitals at Sinope (modern Sinop) and Amisus (modern Samsun). Coming to the throne in 120 BC aged only 12, he gradually built up a power base that formed a major threat to Roman dominance in the east. Mithradates, like the contemporary Italian rebels, had an especially negative take on the Roman past, and present. He is supposed to have said that the Romans boasted that their founders were brought up on the milk of a she-wolf; as a result, the entire race had the spirits of wolves, insatiably greedy for blood, power and wealth. In 89 BC he overran the province of Asia, and in 88 he ordered his governors and overseers of individual cities to kill all resident Romans and Italians, men, women, children and even Italian freedmen. Eighty thousand, or maybe even more, were massacred on a single day. Subsequently he wrote to one of his governors to track down a leading refugee from the massacre, who was still in communication with the Romans, 'the common enemies', which was a neat reversal of the common Greek eulogy of the Romans as 'common benefactors' of the human race (above, p. 172).

Mithradates presented himself not simply as the foe of the Roman wolf, but as a ruler with local pasts. In part, he drew on a Persian heritage: on his father's side, he was sixteenth in line from Darius, the last Persian King, and proclaimed himself in Persian style as 'King of Kings'. He also saw himself in relation to a Greek past: on his mother's side, he was related to Alexander the Great and the first of the Seleucid kings. The Greek image became dominant when he decided to invade Asia: he was an old-fashioned liberator, fighting for the freedom of the Greeks of Asia, a slogan that went back to the fourth century BC. Until that point, the back of his coins featured Pegasus, the winged horse of Perseus, the ancestor of the Persian royal line. Thereafter the backs featured a stag, an image which would make Greeks think of the sacred animal of Artemis

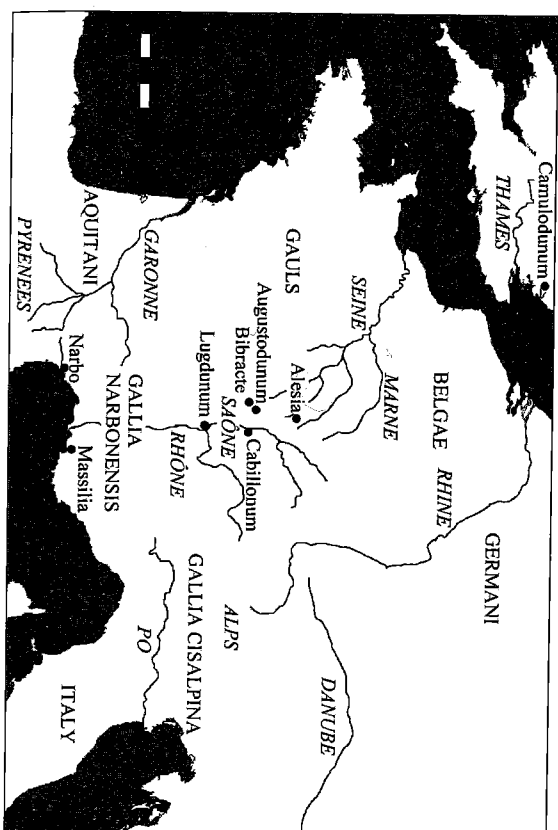


of Ephesus, the leading sanctuary in the province of Asia. The portraits of Mithradates, even on the Pegasus issues, were already strongly Hellenic, wearing the diadem as the symbol of kingship; on the stag issues the portrait became more idealized and impassioned (Plate 31d). On the coinages of some cities that supported him, his portrait even became merged with that of Alexander the Great, a tactic not employed by any other Hellenistic king. It is striking how potent the image of Alexander was in the east, 230 years after his death, and forty years after the creation of the Roman province of Asia.

Rome fought successfully against Mithradates and against the pirates. The Roman general Gnaeus Pompeius, known as Pompey, went on to annex what remained of the Hellenistic kingdom of the Seleucids, which became the province of Syria, and the state of Judaea. The victorious generals were thanked by the Greeks in familiar terms. Pompey was honoured by a city in Cilicia as being god-like, just as Hellenistic kings had been honoured by other Greek cities, and Sulla, who had captured Athens from a pro-Mithradatic faction, was, it seems, honoured in Rome by the Athenians. A copy was made of a famous statue group in the Athenian *agora*, of Harmodius and Aristogeiton who had killed the alleged tyrant of Athens in the sixth century BC (Plate 11). The copy was dedicated in Rome on the slopes of the Capitol, near the sanctuary of Fides Publica, the cult of the reliability of the Roman state. Rome could be thanked for the overthrow of the tyranny of Mithradates with reference to a historic moment in Athenian history.

Simultaneously, Roman power was expanding hugely in middle Europe. In 125 BC Rome responded to a request for military assistance from loyal Massilia, and within a decade much of southern France (the areas of Provence and the Languedoc) was conquered and converted into a Roman province (Gallia Narbonensis). The building of a Roman road secured the land route between Italy and Iberia, itself in process of being conquered; the Roman name for the road, Via Domitia, is commemorated in signs along the modern motorway that follows the same route.

The Celts in what became the new province lived in a series of nucleated hilltop settlements, modest in size (up to 15–20 hectares), and protected by stone ramparts. The settlements included roads laid out in grid patterns, and monumental stone temples. The inhabitants seem to have learned much about urban life from the Greek town of Massilia and its



Map 28. Middle Europe c. 60 BC.

subsidiary settlements. This relatively urbanized region adapted readily to the new Roman order. A Roman colony was created at Narbo (modern Narbonne) in 118 BC, and the existing nucleated settlements mostly continued through into the period of Roman rule.

The Celts to the north of Gallia Narbonensis lived very differently (above, p. 217). From the third century BC the La Tène Celts had open settlements on level ground, with scattered houses and some industrial activity. From the second century BC onwards, the open settlements were abandoned in favour of hilltop settlements. Some 150 sites of this type are known, from central Gaul to Slovakia. They were large sites, up to 380 hectares, or even 600 hectares east of the Rhine. The modern name for this type of site, *oppidum*, the Latin for 'town' (plural: *oppida*), points to their urban nature. Bibracte (modern Mont Beuvray) in central France is a good example of an *oppidum* (Plate 14). Founded around 120 BC on a hill rising 250–300 metres above the plain, the site was defended by two fortification walls, of local design; the shorter, later wall enclosed some 135 hectares (see Figure 27). Within the walls, there were distinct areas for religious activity, housing, industrial production and a market, but these developed without the aid of a grid pattern of roads. The houses, with their wattle-and-daub walls and thatched roofs, remind us of the

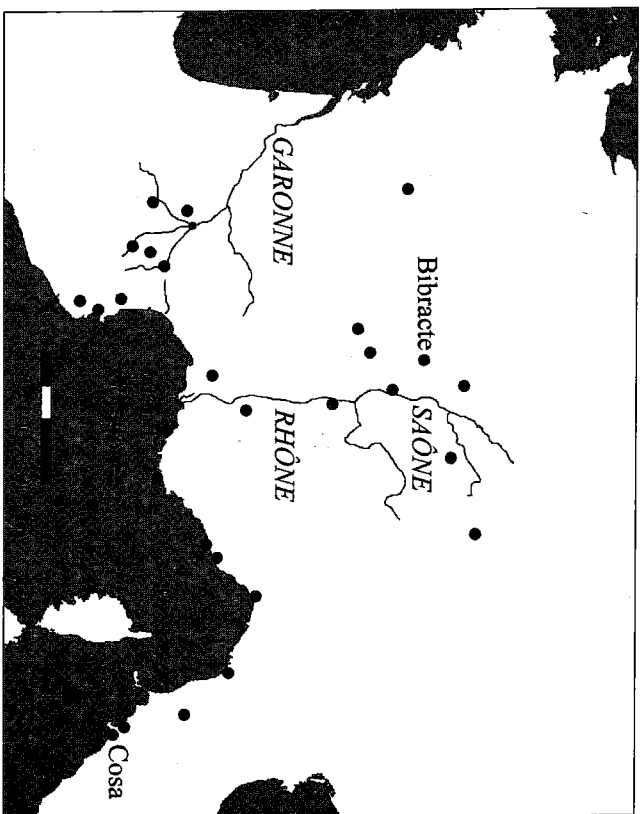
un-Mediterranean houses described by Strabo. Bibracte was the central place of the territory of the Aedui, one of sixty Celtic tribes in Gaul at this time. Its territory was huge, covering some 20,000 square kilometres, far larger than that of any normal Greek city-state, and not far short of the extent of Roman territory in 264 BC.

Bibracte, like the other *oppida* in middle Europe, developed for various reasons. Agriculture had become more intensive, and industrial production had increased, both preconditions for further development. The growth of Roman power in the Mediterranean in the third century BC had ended the possibilities for major raids and for mercenary service by the Celts. The mercenaries returned home, and deployed their new-found wealth to build up huge personal retinues, and engaged in rivalry with each other. Extra wealth came from the intensification of local production, and in trade with Rome. A good index of economic complexity is the development of local Celtic coinages. Initially, the coinages were in high denominations (gold and silver), imitating Macedonian coinage. From the mid-second century, with increased contact with Rome, silver coinages started to imitate Roman types, and by the end of the second century small change, in bronze, was being minted, which suggests increased levels of economic activity. In contrast to the spread of urbanization in middle Europe and in Iberia, in the rest of northern Europe there were very few urban sites in this period. In Britain, there were hardly any, and in the north-east European plain, the region of the earlier site of Sobiejuchy, there were none. Here there was no agricultural and technological progress of the sort seen in the regions where *oppida* later developed, and no input from returning mercenaries.

Trade between the *oppidum* regions and the Mediterranean was an important reason for the success of the *oppida*. Such trade was of course not new. Back in the sixth century BC local chieftains could import luxury goods from the Greek world, as in the case of Vix (above, p. 97). The extent of these imports was limited, in that they did not penetrate below the level of chieftains. But from around 130 or 120 BC, when the province of Gallia Narbonensis was created, imports north into central Gaul increased enormously, and for a time there was a symbiotic economic relationship between central Gaul and the Mediterranean. Bibracte had a major river-port 60 kilometres away at Cabillonum (modern Châlon-sur-Saône). Cabillonum could be reached easily from the Mediterranean via the Rhône and the Saône. Hundreds

of thousands of wine-jars were imported to Bibracte during the century or so from 130/120 BC, and their contents played an important part in ceremonial feasting.

The wine imported to central Gaul in this period all came from the western side of the Italian peninsula as far down as Campania. One particularly successful wine-exporter was the Sestius family, whose estate was in the territory of the Roman colony of Cosa (above, pp. 199–201). Horace, in a poem on the return of spring, warned Lucius Sestius, appointed consul in 23 BC, about the shortness of human life; once dead, he would not be able to be president of the drinking party, 'lord of the wine', an elegant hint at the basis of the family's wealth. Wine-jars with stamps such as 'sest' are found along the coast west of Cosa as far as Iberia. They were also imported inland up the Rhône and Saône to sites in central Gaul, including Bibracte, and also inland across the Gallic isthmus as far as Toulouse (Map 29). The importance of the trade is seen very vividly in a shipwreck found near Massilia, which dates to the early first century BC (see also Plate 21). The ship, known as Grand-Congloué 2, contained



Map 29. The distribution of Sestius wine-jars from Cosa. Notice how different the pattern is from that we saw for the sixth century BC (Map 14).

1,200-1,500 wine-jars, mostly from the Sestius family estate. Ships carrying such cargoes in this period were far larger than any previous ships, but typical of what was required by the new scale of Roman trade.

The Aedui from Bibracte were conscious of Rome not just because of wine imports, but also because the northern frontier of the new province was only 50 kilometres or so from the southern border of Aeduan territory. At an early date they realized that the growth of Roman power offered them an opportunity to consolidate their position in relation to other Gallic tribes, much as Massilia did in the same period. In the second century BC the Aedui claimed kinship with the Romans, and had this claim accepted on many occasions by the Senate. Though we do not know the details, this kinship must have rested on a claim that the Aedui, like the Romans, were of Trojan origin, a type of claim to which we shall return (below, pp. 276-7).

The world changed for the Gauls with the arrival of Julius Caesar. Caesar, who had claimed regal and divine descent at the funeral of his aunt, went on to be consul in 59 BC, and managed to engineer the grant of a five-year overseas command (57-52 BC), covering both Illyricum (part of the modern Balkans) and Gaul. During this period he conquered all of Gaul north of the existing province as far as the Rhine; he even twice invaded Britain. Though Caesar did not make Britain tributary, his Gallic campaigns were phenomenally successful. The incorporation of Gaul, the first Roman provinces remote from the Mediterranean or Black Sea, marked a fundamental shift northwards in the balance of the Roman empire, a shift which would be continued under Augustus.

Understanding the geography and societies of middle Europe developed rapidly in the first century BC. Whereas earlier Greek authors had failed to engage with the Celts, the growth of Roman power provided a new incentive. Polybius and Artemidorus of Ephesus had made significant progress in the second century BC in writing about the geography of the western Mediterranean lands. Posidonius, a Greek intellectual originally from Syria, continued their work. His *Histories*, which began in 146 BC, where Polybius had ended, took the story of Roman expansion down to the conflicts with Mithradates of Pontus. Sadly, the work is known to us only at second hand, but it is clear that he included ethnographic sections on people with whom the Romans came into contact. In order to write the work, Posidonius travelled extensively in the first half of the first

century BC, from Iberia in the west, to North Africa and to the Levant. In Gaul he went not only to the province of Gallia Narbonensis, but also into the Gallic lands to the north.

On the basis of this personal investigation, Posidonius wrote an extensive ethnography of the Gauls. He noted the un-Mediterranean houses of the Gauls (the account quoted at the start of this chapter was probably derived from his work). Posidonius was initially shocked by the widespread custom of nailing the heads of defeated enemies to their houses, but noted rather honestly that he gradually became accustomed to it. He also described how their feasting practices expressed their highly hierarchical society: the guest most distinguished in war, birth or wealth sat in the middle of a circle; next to him was the host, and on either side the rest according to their distinction; shield-bearers stood behind them; and spear-bearers sat opposite in another circle, like their masters. The drink was carried round in vessels like spouted cups, made of pottery or silver; the platters for the food might also be of the same materials, or of bronze, wood or wicker. The drink among the wealthy was wine, imported from Italy and Massilia (as already noted), usually consumed unmixed, unlike in Greece, where wine was always heavily diluted with water. For the poor there was an alcoholic drink made from wheat, with honey added, called 'korma', what we call mead.

Posidonius' ethnography was extended and developed, in rather different circumstances, by Julius Caesar. Caesar's *Gallic War*, probably published in 52 or 51 BC, was based on annual reports to the Senate about his progress. Though written in a seemingly artless style, whose alleged simplicity once made it a favourite teaching tool for English schoolchildren, the *Gallic War* was an artful presentation of his achievements. Embedded in the text was a series of claims about the natives whom Caesar encountered. The famous opening ('Gaul as a whole is divided into three parts') set up both the subject of the campaigns ('Gaul') and the major divisions facing Caesar: the Belgae in the north, the Aquitani in the west, and the Gauls in the centre (see Map 28). The three parts were divided from each other by major rivers: the Gauls from the Aquitani by the Garonne, and from the Belgae by the Marne and the Seine. The Rhine formed the boundary with the Germans, and the Ocean with what lay beyond. Each part was made up of many tribes, with different languages, institutions and laws. But despite the differences, Gaul as a whole was depicted, in standard imperialist terms, as an area clearly

defined by major rivers, and as an area worth conquering, with stable populations and clearly defined social hierarchies.

A notable peculiarity of the Gauls was the Druids. Caesar depicted them as one of the two leading orders of Gallic society, the other being the knights. The institution apparently originated in Britain, but was now firmly established in Gaul. The Druids were in charge of all religious matters and arbitrated private disputes, and were headed by one supreme Druid. They learned by heart secret religious verses, espoused doctrines on the transmigration of souls, and instructed the young in astronomy and the nature and greatness of the gods. Caesar's picture of the Druids stressed the differences from Roman norms: at Rome most priesthoods were monopolized by the senatorial order, and lacked an overall head at this period. But his depiction is at the same time quite sympathetic to the Druids.

It is hard to decide how much truth there is in Caesar's portrait of the Druids. Gallic archaeology does not help us, but a British cemetery at Stanway outside Camulodunum (modern Colchester) includes an intriguing burial, dated to around AD 40-50. The cremated remains, probably of a man, were accompanied by fine pottery, a set of medical tools, a jet bead, a copper-alloy pan and strainer, a gaming board and eight metal rings with eight metal rods. The final publication labelled the burial simply as 'The Doctor': the medical tools were of local craftsmanship, but with parallels from earlier Celtic Europe; in the strainer was a lump of artemisia (mugwort or wormwood), sweetened with honey, which has known medicinal properties. But there is more to the burial than the 'Doctor' label would suggest. The style of burial and the range of grave goods show that this was a person of considerable importance: the gaming board, of indigenous type, is known from later Celtic traditions as a marker of high status. He was not a warrior, unlike the other major contemporary burial in this cemetery, a man buried with shield and spear, but he was not simply a doctor: the metal rings and rods and the jet bead were probably used for divination. The medical aspects of the burial are remote from the picture of Druids given by Caesar, but the sharp disjunction between 'The Warrior' and our burial conforms to Caesar's picture of a bipartite elite. Given the absence of other control evidence, it is not possible to say if he was actually a Druid, but it is clear that he belonged to the high status group that included Druids, diviners and healers.

Caesar established a sharp distinction between the Gauls and the Germans, across the northern boundary of Gaul, the Rhine. He was proud of his exploits in crossing the Rhine, being the first Roman commander to do so, but made clear that the Germans were not suitable for Roman conquest: their populations were too mobile, their political customs too remote from those of Mediterranean peoples. Even the landscape was too unfamiliar: Caesar described at considerable length the Hercynian forest, indefinable and vast, stretching for sixty days' journey east of the Rhine, populated with bizarre animals: as the elk could not bend their legs, they slept leaning against trees; hunters would secretly weaken the trees in advance, wait for the resting elk to push over the tree, and then capture the fallen animal. Caesar defined Britain as the third part of the north, after the Gauls and Germans. He offered abstract measurements of the whole island, also noting on the basis of a water-clock that the nights were shorter than those in Gaul. Pytheas had already offered measurements of the circumference of the island, and had made a similar measurement of British nights, but Caesar also included an ethnography of the island. Rather like Gaul, Britain was barbarous in some respects: the inland peoples did not practise agriculture, but lived off milk and meat, and wore skins, and all the men dyed themselves with woad. But Britain was also rich in natural resources and suitable for Roman conquest, an implication that would be followed up a hundred years later by the emperor Claudius.

Caesar's political prestige was so enhanced by his conquest of Gaul that his enemies feared for the balance of power at Rome. In early 49 BC Caesar led his army across the Rubicon, a river just north of Ariminum (modern Rimini) that marked the boundary between the province of Gallia Cisalpina and Italy proper. This was not a surprise move, but a deliberate raising of the stakes. 'Let the die be cast', he is supposed to have said, quoting a Greek comedy by Menander, and with good reason: no general could legitimately command troops in Italy proper. Pompey, with the prestige of eastern conquests behind him, claimed the high moral ground of supporting the Senate against the illegal actions of Caesar. Caesar then waged a civil war against Pompey and others, with victory for Caesar at Pharsalus in northern Greece in August 48 BC. From there Caesar went to the eastern Aegean, where in the autumn he bolstered his position by forming agreements with various Greek communities. The league of Lycian communities, friendly to Rome for over a hundred years,

had struck a formal treaty with Rome under Sulla, and had made a dedication in Rome on the slopes of the Capitol, near the statues of the Athenian tyrant-slayers put up at the same time. In 48 BC the Lycians managed to negotiate another favourable agreement with Caesar. When the agreement was formalized as a treaty, in 46 BC, before Caesar had returned to Rome, it was described as being between the Roman people and the Lycian league, but the wording made clear that the initial decision was that of Caesar alone, in accordance with a Roman law granting him treaty-making powers. Such supreme power was unprecedented at Rome, but Caesar was canny enough to make use of subsequent ratification by senatorial decree, and to present his search for personal support in the east as a benefit for the Roman people.

In 46 BC Caesar finally returned to Rome, where he no longer had any obvious rivals. The old principles of the balance of power between Senate and people, and of the rotation of office within the senatorial order, had vanished, as a result of increased profits from empire and increased competition within the elite. The problem for all sides was how Caesar's position was to be conceptualized. After the civil war, in 46 BC, Caesar was appointed as *dictator* for ten years, and just before 15 February 44 BC he accepted the office of *dictator* for life (though this turned out to be just one more month). The office of *dictator* conferred on the holder powers greater than those of any other magistrate at Rome. Before the time of Sulla (82-81 BC), the office had last been used in 202 BC, during the crisis of the Second Punic War, and only for six months at a time. In one sense, Caesar's inflation of the office was realistic, but in another it insisted on the fact of his dominance. Was Caesar to be king of Rome? If he was, did memories of the regal period at Rome mean that a Caesarian kingship would be construed positively or negatively?

These issues came to the fore in a piece of public theatre during the festival of the Lupercalia on 15 February 44 BC. We hear of a thrice-repeated offering of a crown by Mark Antony to Caesar, and much puzzlement as to what was going on. The festival itself was one of Rome's most ancient. It originated with a race between Romulus and Remus and their respective supporters, a race won paradoxically by Remus, the slower twin, who did not found Rome. In the late Republic, two teams began the race at the Lupercal, the cave on the Palatine hill where the she-wolf had suckled the twins. They ran naked through the streets of Rome, whipping spectators, especially young women, with strips of

goatskin, in a carnivalesque celebration of fertility and communal identity. The innovation of 44 BC was that a third team, the Juliani, headed by Mark Antony, had been created in honour of Julius Caesar, implicitly comparing him to Romulus and Remus. This was one of a series of completely extraordinary honours voted for Caesar in early 44 BC. On this occasion, Caesar was near the terminus of the race, on the speakers' platform in the Forum, seated on a golden chair. Antony, winning the race for the new team, then handed Caesar the crown. As the whole event had been so carefully stage-managed, its controversial culmination must also have been planned by Caesar and Antony. Caesar was to decline the offer of a crown, the symbol of monarchy, in an attempt to make clear that while he had accepted supreme powers for life and honours that compared him to Romulus and Remus, he was not to be seen as a king of Rome. This attempt to make things clear did not work. Contemporaries were baffled as to what had actually happened with the crown: did Caesar send it to the Capitol, saying that the only king was Jupiter? Did he throw it into the crowd, with Antony then ordering that it be placed on the statue of Caesar? Did he place it on a throne, thus implicitly accepting it, with perhaps an implication of divine monarchy? But the whole episode illustrates very clearly how attempts to define political power were bound up with rituals and ideas about Rome's remote past.

The past also hung heavily over the Ides of March 44 BC, the assassination of Caesar just a month after the Lupercalia. The consensus of the various philosophical schools was that it was legitimate to kill a tyrant. This is a chilling consensus, given that tyranny lies in the eye of the beholder, but one with major consequences for Rome. Both Brutus and Cassius, heroes of Shakespeare's play, and fellow-conspirators against Caesar, were seriously committed to philosophy, Brutus to a politicized version of Platonism, and Cassius to Epicureanism. Brutus was clear that it was legitimate to kill an 'unlawful monarch' or tyrant; Cassius, who had converted to Epicureanism in 48 BC at the time of his withdrawal from the political struggle against Caesar, now accepted the argument that circumstances overrode the Epicurean principle of seeking tranquillity. Caesar had to go. The death of Caesar was, however, as controversial as his life. At the time, there was also controversy about the death of Romulus. Some held that Romulus had died peacefully, a revered king of Rome, had ascended to heaven, and was worshipped as a god under the name Quirinus. Others claimed that he became such a cruel and

despotic tyrant that the senators killed him, tearing his body limb from limb; this and not apotheosis was why his body disappeared. This polarized view of Rome's past paralleled exactly the views about Caesar: Was he a fine ruler of Rome, worthy of the divine honours voted for him in early 44 BC? Or was he an arbitrary tyrant, who could be stopped only by assassination? The latter was the view taken by Cicero, who was very clear that Caesar had been justly killed as a tyrant. The civil war following Caesar's death ended in 42 BC with the victory of Antony and Caesar's heir, the young Octavius, later known as Augustus, at Philippi. Even before Philippi, Caesar's divine honours had been formalized by a decree of the Senate: he was now 'the deified Julius' (*divus Julius*), with a temple in the Forum, and a special priest. These divine honours became the standard package for emperors on the death of Augustus in AD 14.

### Shakespeare's Roman plays

Shakespeare was reproved by Ben Jonson for his 'small Latine, and lesse Greeke', but this snooty put-down of a person who did not go to university ignores Shakespeare's extraordinary ability to absorb ideas, including those from a wide range of works both ancient and modern. A few years after writing *Julius Caesar* (1599), Shakespeare returned to the first century BC with his *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606–1607). These two plays handled topics that were obvious in the later part of the Elizabethan age. Three other works had deeply eccentric settings: the earlier play *Titus Andronicus* (1589–92; set in various periods) and the later plays *Coriolanus* (1608; set in the early Republic) and *Cymbeline* (1610; set in Roman Britain). Some themes recur in the five plays: the tragedy of heroic individuals; tensions between private ties and public responsibilities; the unstable distinctions between rebel and tyrant. What holds the five plays together, perhaps even *Cymbeline*, is the city of Rome, which provides a common context for the plays' political, social and moral themes.

Rome had the advantage for Shakespeare of being acceptably classical, permitting republican ideas to be explored under the radar of the Elizabethan censor. Rome also was not the fixed symbol of any particular virtue or vice, which gave Shakespeare further freedom in relation to political issues. As Lucy Bailey, director of *Julius Caesar* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2009, says: 'The questions the play poses are clearly ones that

obsessed Elizabethan society: at what point does monarchy become tyranny? Is it possible to rule without resorting to violence and suppression? Is assassination ever justified and does it produce change for the better?'

Shakespeare depicts Cassius urging on Brutus to act against Julius Caesar in emulation of his ancestor Junius Brutus, who had driven the last king out of Rome. Rome is equated with the Republic, the touchstone of liberty, and incompatible with the rule of one man, but this Republican political ideology, defined in very masculine terms, is undermined throughout the play. Political virtue depends upon intense rivalry, and so can become un-virtuous. Brutus is challenged by his wife Portia, who claims constancy equal to that of a man. The people, despised by the conspirators, become political players, as when Antony offers Caesar the crown. And just before Caesar is killed, he makes a fine Republican speech about his constancy in the face of mere personal appeals. His sense of superiority to other Romans is both intrinsically Roman and also what leads to his assassination. Shakespeare well understood the political contradictions of the late Republic.

The alliance between Antony and Augustus turned into a fresh civil war, which threw Augustus, based in Rome, and his western forces, against Antony and his eastern forces. Cleopatra, the Ptolemaic queen of Egypt, had offered her support, and more, to Caesar, who went from the eastern Aegean to Alexandria in 48 BC. She repeated the move in relation to Antony in 41 BC. The 1963 Hollywood film *Cleopatra* (starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton) neatly and correctly presents her as the descendant of Macedonian kings, living in an Alexandria whose public architecture was Greek, and ruling over a country that was mainly Egyptian. Sadly for Cleopatra, at the decisive naval battle of Actium in 31 BC her forces and those of Antony were defeated. Augustus was now without competitors, the most powerful person in the Roman world.

This civil war left Augustus with blood on his hands, notably the blood of those citizens who were 'proscribed', that is put to death for their money. How were historians in the ensuing time of peace to handle the immediate past? Asinius Pollio retired from public life after celebrating a triumph in 39 BC and devoted himself to literature. He then wrote a famous history of Rome from 60 BC onwards, but ended it with the death of Republican hopes at the battle of Philippi in 42 BC. Even so, Pollio



was said by a contemporary poet, Horace, to be courting disaster with his history. Livy, rather remarkably, did not stop in 42 BC, but continued his history of Rome down to 9 BC and the death of one of Augustus' heirs, though he might have intended to take it to a more obvious stopping point. He favoured the Republican Pompey against Caesar, which did not upset Augustus, but it seems that his narrative of the civil wars and the Augustan period can only concentrate on wars against foreign foes, omitting most of the internal political history of Rome. In addition, he held back the publication of the books that dealt with Augustus' rise to power and sole rule until after the emperor's death. There was too much that could not be said under Augustus.

Augustus himself did not abolish anything. All the political and religious institutions that had existed from the foundation of the Republic continued to operate, if in modified fashions. Augustus avoided Caesar's disastrous experimentation with the office of *dictator*, and instead chose a more modest combination of consulship, or later consular power, and tribunician power to define his position. Augustus also combined, for the first time, the holding of all the major priesthoods of Rome. The cumulation of priestly office came to be seen as the basis for imperial control of the religious life of Rome. But Augustus avoided being given the name 'Romulus', with all its ambiguous connotations, and instead played the role of being just a citizen. Playing this role, with a full awareness that it was just a role, granted both the senatorial order and the Roman people a sense of dignity. It accounts for the forty-five-year duration of Augustus' reign, and established the model of the 'good emperor' from which his successors deviated at their peril (Plate 23).

Like other leading senators, Augustus presented himself as the leading member of a family. In normal senatorial fashion, he used adoption to add new male heirs to the family. His relatives, especially his wife Livia, came to possess great public prominence. In 35 BC she received the right to administer her own affairs without a legal guardian, sacrosanctity equivalent to that possessed by tribunes of the people, and the erection of statues of her in Rome. In the 20s BC Livia was the first woman to have her own official portrait type for statues, which were erected throughout the empire; eschewing showy jewellery and opulent clothing, she was shown as the ideal of Roman womanhood. Livia also built on the religious role of women, who were traditionally involved with festivals associated female virtues of chastity and domestic harmony, by being the

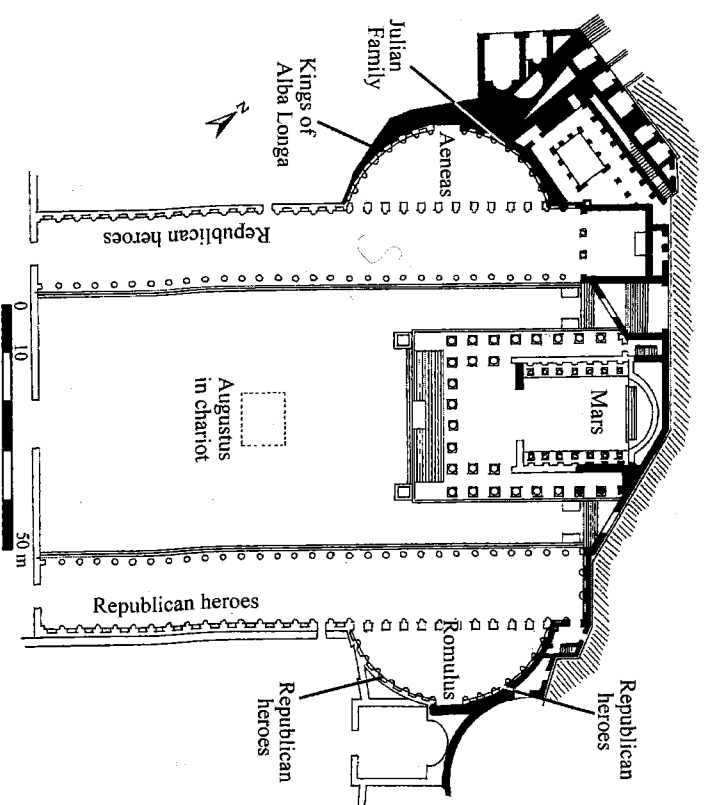


Figure 25. Plan of the Forum Augustum, Rome (2 BC).

first individual woman to build or restore shrines to those cults. Politically, she was always at her husband's side, which has led to much speculation about her nefarious actions on behalf of her blood relatives, as epitomized in Robert Graves's novel *I, Claudius*. Sometimes, Augustus even acknowledged her influence publicly. When turning down the request by the people of Samos for a particular privileged status, Augustus admitted that he was personally well disposed to the Samians, and that he regretted turning them down as he would have liked to have done a favour to his wife, who had been active on their behalf.

Augustus engaged in extensive public building activity in Rome, in his own name and in that of members of his family. As only those who celebrated triumphs were entitled to build in Rome, and as in effect only emperors and members of the imperial family were qualified to celebrate triumphs, other senators lost their entitlement to build, and instead began to monumentalize their home towns in Italy and elsewhere. The Forum

Augustum, built by Augustus in the centre of Rome, nicely embodies the emperor's sense of the past (see Figure 2.5). The temple in the centre of the Forum was dedicated to Mars the Avenger, with reference to Augustus' 'vengeance' on the Parthian kingdom, east of the Euphrates, which had defeated Rome at Carrhae in 53 BC (Plate 3.1c), and also on the murderers of Caesar. Mars also had a second level of Augustan reference: he and Venus, who were represented together on the temple pediment, were parents respectively of Romulus and of Aeneas. The colonnades on either side of the temple took these points further. In each colonnade was a series of statues of Republican heroes, each with an inscribed summary of his achievements. In the inset semicircle on the left were statues of the Julian family, focused on Aeneas, and on the right further Republican heroes, focused on Romulus. As not only Aeneas but also Romulus were presented as being ancestors of Augustus, the whole monumental complex presented Augustus as the culmination of Roman history.

There was a strong move to stress the political unity of all of Italy, and to downplay the Social War of two generations previously. Augustus himself, building on the rhetoric of Cicero, claimed that in the civil war 'the whole of Italy (*tota Italia*) swore allegiance to me of its own accord, and demanded me as its leader in the war which I won at Actium'. This was a useful point to make, given that both consuls and a third of the Senate had gone over to Antony's side. Shortly after Actium, Virgil published his *Georgics*, notionally a didactic poem on farming. It included a section known later as the 'praise of Italy', a recognized category of writing at the time: Italy surpassed all other regions of the world in its fertility, and charm; its noble cities, perched on precipitous rocks or with rivers gliding beneath ancient walls; the variety of its major peoples. Virgil's appreciation of Italy was rooted in recent history: the northern limits are given as lakes Como and Garda, in the former province of Gallia Cisalpina, which had been converted into a region of Italy by Julius Caesar only in 49 BC. And Virgil boldly ended the section with reference to himself, as singing didactic poetry from Greece 'through Roman towns', implicitly uniting the city of Rome and the towns of Italy.

Over the next decade Virgil worked on an epic poem, the *Aeneid*. This poem too was rooted in the present: the battle of Actium is described not as part of the civil war, but as a clash between west and east, the ancient gods not just of Rome but of Italy versus the bizarre animal-headed gods

of Egypt. This view of Egypt was part of the current political orthodoxy, but the *Aeneid* is not a eulogy of Augustus, the descendant of Aeneas. Drawing on earlier Roman epics, including Naevius, Virgil set the first part of the epic at Carthage, including the great love affair between Aeneas and Dido. Aeneas has to break off the affair in order to fulfil his historic destiny of proceeding to Italy, and he does not emerge well from the Dido episode (Plate 2.8). When Aeneas reaches Italy, he is told the story of Hercules and Cacus by the humble King Evander (above, p. 180), and given a guided tour by him, seeing for example the Lupercal cave and the Capitol, already numinous with divine power. This is a wonderfully knowing account, as Evander, the 'founder of the Roman citadel', and Aeneas, who we know will found the Roman race, look at the present modest site, but intuit the future city of Rome.

The *Aeneid* was instantly recognized as a classic. A contemporary poet, Propertius, hailed the epic, even in advance of publication, as greater than Homer's *Iliad*, and the poem was immediately adopted as part of the school curriculum, displacing Naevius and Ennius. Virgil came to be taught throughout the Latin-speaking parts of the empire. Thirty-six graffiti in Pompeii are quotations from the *Aeneid*: as the educational system focused on the teaching of writing and grammar, twenty-six of the graffiti are quotations of the first lines of Books 1 and 2. Even in remote Britain, Virgil was known. At Vindolanda, a Roman military base near Hadrian's Wall, two writing tablets include lines from the *Aeneid*, suggesting that the commanding officer employed a tutor to teach the poem to his children. Elsewhere, in Egypt and Judaea, soldiers in the army practised their Latin language skills by writing out parts of the *Georgics* and *Aeneid*. But knowledge of Virgil was not limited to the army, and was not always merely mechanical: very strikingly, in a cave in south-east Iberia someone painted a number of verse texts which are free adaptations of various parts of the *Aeneid*.

After antiquity, Virgil remained on the curriculum, and his works were copied out in extraordinary numbers (below, pp. 317–18). He and Homer were regarded as the greatest poets of antiquity; Virgil became of particular interest for passages which seemed to prefigure Christianity. Dante, whom we met in the context of the choice of language for his *Divine Comedy*, was perhaps the most original reader of Virgil in the Middle Ages. He had long seen Virgil as someone who expounded Italian consciousness, 'our greatest poet', as he calls him. In the *Divine Comedy*,

Virgil serves as his initial guide to hell, a sombre figure, weighed down by his inability to have been a Christian because he had lived in the time of the false and lying gods.<sup>1</sup> In the popular tradition in Italy, Virgil became a very different figure. Virgil had been buried just outside Naples, but by the twelfth century it was believed that Virgil had been governor of Naples, and had been responsible for a number of talismanic objects which protected the city from capture, would not allow even flies to enter the city, or prevented the eruption of Vesuvius. Such stories spread rapidly to other parts of Europe, and generated further tales. In France, Virgil was presented by some troubadours as a magician, who possessed a garden in which it never rained, and who created a bell-tower, which moved in time to the bells. After the sixteenth century, these Virgil legends dropped out of popular consciousness, but to this day tourists are shown the 'Tomb of Virgil', in reality an entirely anonymous memorial.

The city of Rome under Augustus took on much of the future greatness intimated by King Evander. Virgil depicted Aeneas, newly arrived at Carthage, gazing in wonder at the energetic building of walls, citadel and theatre, replacing the primitive huts (*magalia*, a Punic word): 'O happy ones, whose walls already rise.' Carthage here reminds Aeneas of the city which he is destined, ultimately, to found, and which Augustus would enhance. According to Augustus' biographer, Suetonius, writing with more than 100 years of hindsight, Augustus was right to boast that he had found the city built of brick and left it in marble. The contrast is exaggerated. The relative modesty of its public buildings in the early second century BC had come to be unacceptable by the end of that century. Leaders earlier in the first century BC, especially Pompey and Caesar, continued to monumentalize the centre of Rome, but Augustus did take things further, as with the Forum Augustum. Suetonius' statement of Augustus' reasoning is especially interesting: he beautified the city 'because it was not adorned as befitting the dignity of the empire...'. Suetonius here picks up a point already made by the great architect Vitruvius, writing under Augustus. Vitruvius began with praise of Augustus for bringing peace after the civil war, for augmenting the state with new provinces and for strongly underpinning the majesty of empire with public buildings. In the course of the first century BC and first century AD, Rome ceased to be the centre of an empire of conquest and became the capital of a different sort of empire, an empire of incorporation, in which the provinces stopped being areas simply to be exploited by

members of the Roman elite, and became instead beneficiaries of Roman rule. In turn, Rome saw itself, not as the backdrop for unbridled competition between individual politicians, but as the capital city, whose design and monuments needed to be worthy of the empire.

### Mussolini and Rome

*Romanià*, an idealization of Roman values, was popular with the new Italian state in the second half of the nineteenth century, and was taken up enthusiastically by the Italian Fascists. The nature of the appeal to the Roman past changed over time. From 1922 to 1925, *romanià* served as an ideal for revolutionary action. Mussolini, who came from a village near the Rubicon, modelled himself on Julius Caesar, the saviour of Rome from corruption, though, while Mussolini's men marched on Rome, he himself came down by night sleeper. From 1925 to 1936, Rome offered justifications for territorial expansionism. As Mussolini said to the 1925 Fascist Congress, held in the Mausoleum of Augustus, then a public meeting hall, 'The only city on the shores of the Mediterranean, fateful and fared, that has created an empire is Rome.' Augustus, as the creator of a stable imperial system, became the new model. Then from 1936 onwards, *romanià* was used as one of the justifications for racism, with only pure Italians being the true descendants of the Romans. The lavish 1937 film *Scipio l'Africano* depicted the final conflict between Rome and Carthage as that between order and authority against chaos and democracy, with the Carthaginians seen as uncivilized and Semitic.

Bimillenaries of the births of Virgil (1930) and Augustus (1937) were major events. Some poets drew parallels between Virgil's 'praise of Italy' in the *Georgics* and contemporary celebration of honest peasantry against despicable bourgeoisie. In 1934 Mussolini personally inaugurated a project to clear the shoddy houses clustering round the Mausoleum of Augustus, and to remove the meeting hall from it. The piazza round the Mausoleum was lined with new buildings, decorated with reliefs embodying Fascist ideals; at one side a restoration of Augustus' Altar of Peace, originally located elsewhere in Rome, was erected. The project, one of several at Rome, was finished on schedule, in time for Augustus' bimillennium. Augustus' birth was also celebrated with a huge exhibition, 'The Augustan Exhibition of *romanià*', which received over a million visitors. The

exhibition was scholarly, accompanied by a catalogue which is still useful, but also deeply political. The message was spelled out in a quotation from Mussolini himself in the entrance hall: 'Italians, ensure that the glories of the past are surpassed by the glories of the future.' *Romaniità* and modernity went hand in hand, justifying a dynamic Fascist empire.

Rome was in the time of Augustus a massive city. According to a treatise on electioneering ascribed to Cicero's brother Quintus, Rome was 'a state formed from the concourse of the peoples of the world', which recalls Romulus' asylum (above, p. 182). Modern estimates of the population of Rome in the early empire often approach one million people. In 5 BC Roman citizens with a legal domicile at Rome received a cash handout from Augustus; they numbered no fewer than 320,000. To figures such as this have to be added citizens' wives and children, resident slaves and freedmen, and visitors to Rome, both citizen and non-citizen, from all over the empire. Rome was a vast city, characterized and supported by much mobility between empire and city. Precise estimates of the area of Rome in this period are difficult. Unfortunately, we do not know the precise geographical limits of Roman legal domicile. By the AD 270s, when Rome had again to be fortified, the new walls enclosed no less than 1,373 hectares, and beyond them were extensive suburbs, extending perhaps 15 kilometres from Rome. But even if we cannot quite quantify numbers or inhabited area, Rome in the early empire was by far the largest city in the Roman empire, twice the size of Alexandria in Egypt, the next largest city. And it was comparable to the capitals of other pre-industrial states. Depending on whether some or all of the urban sprawl round Rome is included, then imperial Rome was as large as or larger than Ch'ang-an in China, the eighth-ninth century AD capital of the T'ang dynasty, or Edo, the capital of Japan in the seventeenth-nineteenth centuries AD.

### Freud and Rome

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), one of the founders of modern attitudes to the self, was a keen student of Latin and Greek at school in Vienna; aged 58, he wrote that there he had seen 'my first glimpses of an extinct

civilization (which in my case was to bring me as much consolation as anything else in the struggles of life).'

When first developing his ideas of the unconscious, he had a curious relation to the city of Rome. Between 1895 and 1898, while on holiday in Italy, he tried to visit Rome five times, but was prevented by a strong inhibition. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud interpreted this strange phenomenon in terms of his Jewishness, and the endemic anti-Semitism of the day: as a schoolboy he had identified with the Semitic Hannibal, and as an adult he saw the conflict between Hannibal and Rome as parallel to that between the tenacity of Jewry and the organization of the Catholic Church; like Hannibal he was fated not to enter Rome. In fact, after the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud managed to break the inhibition, and became a regular intellectual pilgrim to Rome.

When developing his ideas of the unconscious, Freud returned repeatedly to the excavation of antiquity for analogies. He amassed a collection of some 3,000 antiquities, for which he had a great passion. The collection, displayed not in his private quarters, but in his consulting room and study, was an important part of his professional persona. Athena was a significant symbol of wisdom and rationality for him: in 1938 Freud selected a figurine of Athena as the sole piece to be smuggled out of Austria to England, in case the Nazi authorities confiscated the rest of the collection. Aged 75, he wrote to an admirer that 'despite my much vaunted frugality I have sacrificed a great deal for my collection of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian antiquities, [and] have actually read more archaeology than psychology'. In *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), Freud, in arguing that memories are never lost but can be brought back to light, outlined the ancient history of the Eternal City, drawing on a 1928 volume of *The Cambridge Ancient History*: a properly informed visitor is, in principle, able to find traces of each period, even if the ruins are in part later restorations, and are dovetailed into the jumble of the modern metropolis. The archaeology of Rome was an analogy for Freud's project of excavating layers of the human mind.

The relations between Rome and its provinces changed between the late Republic and early empire. In the Republic, Roman governors engaged in arbitration between subject peoples, which sometimes brought increased stability to a region. Honesty was expected from governors

and their staff, and sometimes even met with, but when in 60 BC Cicero wrote to his brother, who was governor of the province of Asia, he thought it incredible that his brother should spend three years in Asia without being tempted by offers of material goods, of sexual services or of financial reward to deviate from the path of strict integrity and sobriety of conduct. Human nature being what it is, and with the added need of politicians to recoup election expenses in Rome, governors often failed to regulate their own behaviour. In addition, they abused their positions. Cyprus, annexed in 58 BC and added to the province of Cilicia (southern Asia Minor), found itself at the mercy of Roman officials. The noble Brutus, later famed for his part in the conspiracy against Caesar, lent money to the city of Salamis on Cyprus at an extortionate rate of 48 per cent per annum; Brutus then obtained a supportive senatorial decree; in order to recover the money, one of his operatives borrowed cavalry from the provincial governor, and besieged the town councillors in their council house, where five of them starved to death. Such exploitative behaviour on the part of the Roman elite was outrageous. The pressures of the civil wars sometimes made things worse. In 49 BC Massilia was besieged by Julius Caesar, because the city had earlier taken the side of Pompey, and in punishment was stripped of much of its territory. In 43 BC Lycia, encouraged by one of the envoys who had just formalized the Caesarian treaty at Rome, offered military resistance to Brutus and Cassius, who were collecting troops there for a final campaign against Antony and Augustus. But from Augustus onwards, the provinces were generally at peace, and emperors helped to ensure reasonably effective safeguards in Rome against excesses by Roman officials in the provinces.

Roman rule also affected the internal political structures of ancient cities. At Kourion on Cyprus, members of the town council, once elected annually, came to be elected for life. This change was typical of what happened in cities throughout the Greek east under Roman rule. Councils were transformed so that they became more like the Roman Senate. In turn, Greek cities responded to Rome in terms that helped to negotiate between the Greek and Roman worlds. In AD 14, on the death of Augustus, Cyprus took an oath of loyalty to the new emperor, Tiberius; this oath was part of a new pattern of oaths, which extended to the provinces the oath taken by *tota Italia* in 32 BC. The Cypriots swore by a long series of 'our' gods, Aphrodite, born on Cyprus, Korē, Apollo and so on, 'all the ancestral gods and goddesses of our island'. To this list of deities they

added two more: 'the descendant of Aphrodite', Augustus God Caesar, and Eternal Rome; Augustus' claim to descent from Aphrodite, the Greek Venus, was especially telling on this island. By these gods, the Cypriots swore allegiance and worship to Tiberius and his family, correctly understanding that the empire was a family show, and also promised to establish new cults to Roma, Tiberius and the sons of his blood. The phrase 'sons of his blood' is striking. The Cypriots knew that Augustus had claimed descent from Aphrodite, but they did not realize that adoption was the normal way at Rome of guaranteeing male heirs, and that therefore limiting cult to 'the sons of his blood' was politically unacceptable.

By the time that Augustus died, the growing collection of Roman provinces had become a single empire. He was able to leave behind him a summary statement, alas lost to us, about the whole empire: the number and locations of soldiers under arms, the financial balances of the treasuries and the indirect taxes in arrears. Under the Republic, detailed military and financial information did exist in Rome, but individual senators did not normally seek to master it, even if Cicero had regarded such mastery as ideal. No individual in Rome before Augustus had such a grip on military and financial affairs.

Augustus' knowledge was enhanced by improved procedures for censuses, both of citizens and of provincials. In 28 BC, at the start of his reign, he carried out a census, which registered no fewer than 4,063,000 Roman citizens. The census system had failed to cope with the consequences of the enfranchisement of the Italians, and this was the first census for no less than forty-two years. He performed two other general censuses, in 8 BC and AD 14, which returned increasing numbers: 4,233,000 and 4,937,000 citizens. These huge numbers include the perhaps 300,000 adult males of the former province of Gallia Cisalpina, who were given Roman citizenship in 49 BC when this area was converted into a region of Italy, and also the Roman citizens resident in overseas colonies and elsewhere, but the figures are so huge, four times as large as the likely citizen population of Italy in 70 BC, that the Augustan figures probably included at least some women and children. In addition, Augustus instituted a new practice of provincial censuses, which counted both Roman citizens and the rest of the population, and also recorded their property. In Egypt, the censuses were held every fourteen years, in other provinces perhaps not as regularly, but the expectation of repetition



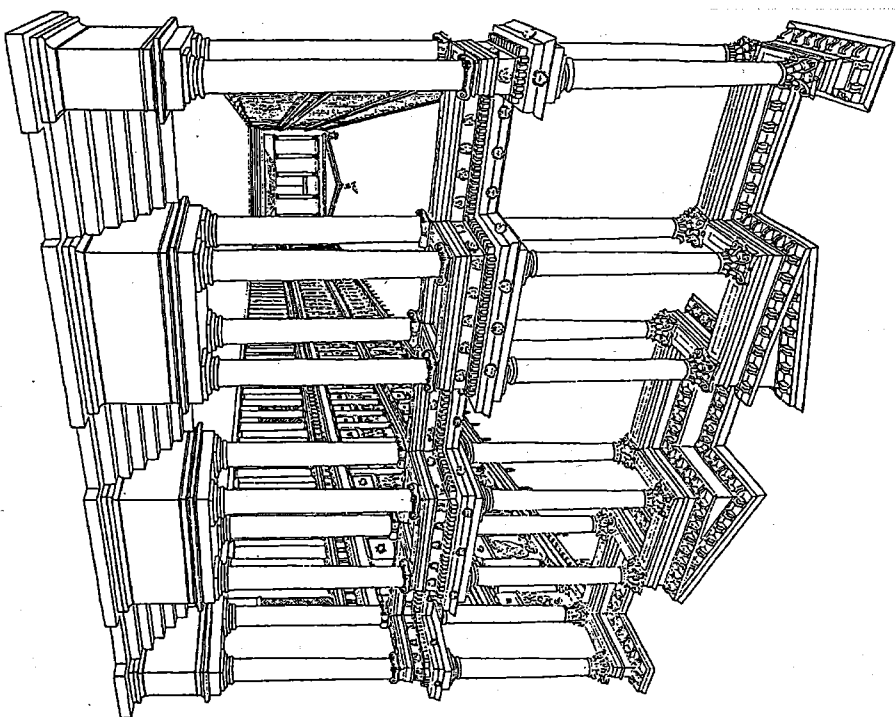


Figure 26. A view through the grand gateway up the monumental approach to the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias. The porticoes on either side displayed a total of 190 sculpted panels, on the Roman empire, the Greek world and the imperial family. The right-hand (south) portico had on its middle storey figures from the remote Greek past (such as Leda and the Swan, Pegasus and Bellerophon, Dionysus and Heracles), and on its upper storey imperial victories, the divine emperors and the gods.

was clear. So was the fact that the censuses were held throughout the empire. This helps to explain the statement of the evangelist Luke: 'It came to pass in those days that an edict went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration, when Quirinius was governor of Syria.' There was certainly no simultaneous registration of the whole world, but Luke, writing two or three

generations later, understandably conflated the universal practice of provincial censuses with the particular census of Syria and its newly added region of Judaea conducted by Quirinius in AD 6 (see further p. 265); Luke also believed that this census was held when Herod was king of Judaea (37–4 BC), and that it included Galilee, but in both these beliefs he is certainly mistaken. The new institution of provincial censuses meant that the Roman state for the first time had detailed information about the numbers and wealth of its entire population.

The extent of the Roman empire under Augustus was vast, stretching from Iberia in the west to Syria in the east, and from Africa in the south to the English Channel in the north (see Maps 30 and 31). Its extent was made manageable, not only through administration, censuses and the like, but also through images. Augustus' right-hand man, Agrippa, collected material for a great map, which was displayed publicly in a portico at Rome after his death in 12 BC. The map showed to Rome the whole world, and the dominant position of the Roman empire within it. Unlike the old round maps of the Ionians, Agrippa's map was rectangular, going from Iberia in the west to India in the east; it was accompanied by a brief text giving statistics on the dimensions of regions, seas and perhaps rivers; a similar map was to be found in Gaul around AD 300. In addition, at Rome under Augustus another portico displayed selected images of peoples added to the empire by him. Starting under Tiberius, the people of the city of Aphrodisias (in western Asia Minor) drew upon the Roman portico in designing a monumental approach way leading up to a grand temple dedicated to Augustus, known as the Sebasteion, Sebastos being the Greek version of Augustus (see Figure 26; Plate 25). The portico forming the north side of the approach way featured in its middle storey fifty high-relief images of peoples and places added to the empire, or recovered for the empire, by Augustus, from Arabia and Egypt to peoples bordering the Danube and on to north-west Iberia. There were many ways of physically representing the scope of the Roman empire, but they all helped to make the immensity of the empire intelligible.

The empire was also made intelligible in words. Strabo, writing his *Geography* late in the reign of Augustus and under Tiberius, had a view of the world centred on Rome. Strabo himself came from Amaseia (modern Amasya in Turkey), and stood in the tradition of Greek geographical writing represented by Polybius, Artemidorus and Posidonius. His work was structured in traditional fashion, starting in Iberia, moving via Gaul



and Britain, to Italy, Greece and Asia Minor, continuing east to Persia and India, and ending the circuit with Egypt and Libya. But his vision of the world was novel. In describing Rome, he emphasizes how the sight of the great monuments of Rome might make one forget instantly everything elsewhere, and he ends his work on 'our inhabited world' with a summary account of how the Romans came to conquer and organize the finest and best-known parts of the world. Though concerned primarily with geography and peoples, Strabo took note of the changes brought about by the Romans. For example, in Gaul he talks about the creation in 43 BC of the Roman colony at Lugdunum (modern Lyons), sited where the rivers Rhône and Saône join and in the centre of the country. It was from here, he says, that Agrippa planned, in the 30s BC, the system of Roman roads that fanned out to unite the whole of Gaul in a single network. For Strabo, the old division of the world into Europe and Asia, or into Europe, Africa and Asia, was superseded by a vision of the Roman empire, centred on Rome.

## 8

## The Roman Empire, AD 14-284

In AD 48 a small delegation arrived at Rome from the distant plains of northern Gaul. The leading nobles of the north Gallic provinces were seeking the right to hold office in Rome itself, in particular the right to apply for membership of the Senate. The Senate was, unsurprisingly, not especially keen on the idea. The issue was decided by a lengthy speech of the emperor Claudius to the Senate in support of the Gauls' petition.

Do not shudder at the thought of some dangerous novelty being introduced. Reflect, instead, on how many innovations our state has seen; think how many different changes our constitution has undergone, starting right from the very foundation of our city itself. Once, the city was ruled by kings; yet they failed to pass it on to native heirs. Instead, it was other men, foreigners, who took their place. Romulus was succeeded by Numa, a native of the Sabine country – a neighbour, for sure, but a foreigner nonetheless . . . it was a wholly novel policy, too, when my great-uncle the deified Augustus and my uncle Tiberius Caesar wished to bring into this Senate house the flower of the colonies and municipalities, wherever it was to be found, so long as they were sound and wealthy men.

As we saw in the last two chapters, the question of the incorporation of non-Romans into the Roman state had a long history. Nonetheless, in this speech to the Senate, Claudius was deliberately overturning centuries of received wisdom. The deep conservatism of Roman political thought has been emphasized again and again in the last two chapters. But Claudius now argued that the history of Rome had been characterized by political innovation right from the outset. The main lesson that the past had to offer was the value of political change and novelty. Not only had new men always been freely absorbed into the Roman body politic,