

The Roman Mediterranean

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- Setting:
 - Hellenistic era: Alexander and 3 successor dynasties, about 336-100's BCE
 - rest of Europe was agricultural chiefdoms
 - not very urban
 - but with many towns, impressive bronze and other craft work
 - we know them as “barbarians” because the conquering Romans wrote the history...
- Roman mythohistory or propaganda about origins
 - Aeneas fled Troy when it was attacked by Greeks (~1200 BCE)
 - Twin descendants, Romulus and Remus, left as babies to die by the Tiber river, saved and raised by a female wolf
 - Romulus founded Rome in 753 BCE with himself as first king
- More historically acceptable origins
 - Rome was a small settlement as early as maybe 2000 BCE
 - **Etruscans** develop independent, walled city-states 700s-400s BCE
 - a culture of independent city states, not an empire
 - centered on Tuscany (around Florence) especially from Po River to Naples (see map)
 - note that Romulus supposed founded Rome about the time the Etruscans were getting well established
 - actual origins of Etruscans are debated
 - may have been just another local culture, neighboring to early Romans
 - most Etruscan sites are earlier than Roman ones
 - strongly influenced Rome, numerous Etruscan kings of early Roman kingdom
 - maritime traders
 - initially allied with Carthage in opposition to Greek interests
 - Roman kingdom or city-state established and growing in 600s-500s BCE
 - early on, an Etruscan quarter in Rome itself
 - prime location
 - on Tiber river, giving good sea access for trading
 - but inland, so safer from attack
 - centrally located for trade in Italy and Western Mediterranean
- 509 BC: Roman aristocrats deposed the Etruscan king, established the **Roman Republic**
 - 2 consuls elected by Patricians (aristocrats by birth and/or landholding wealth)
 - one-year terms
 - Senate comprised of patrician politicians
 - tension between rich patricians and poor plebians
 - in just a few decades, plebians gained the right to elect Tribunes
 - first 2, eventually 10
 - represented their interests, could veto decisions

- by 300s, plebians could hold most offices, including one consul
- by early 200's, plebian assemblies had law-making power
- temporary crisis position: “dictator”, elected for just 6 months
- 400s-300s: conflicts, Rome emerging victorious
 - plebian unrest
 - Etruscan conflicts
 - invasions by Gauls (France)
 - “barbarian” chiefdoms
 - result: Rome established as a large Italian state by early 300s
 - result: Rome controls most of Italy by late 300s
 - by leaving military garrisons in conquered regions
 - by “indirect rule”, co-opting existing local leaders to rule for them
 - granting them high status in local Roman government
 - Roman citizenship
 - but could not make independent military alliances
 - Conquered lands given to Roman aristocrats as “latifundia”
 - often complete with slave laborers
 - very much like Spanish model of conquest of the New World
- 300s-100s: Rome expands to become a large empire, ruled by the urban elite of Rome
 - rival: Carthage
 - 300s-200s, dominated Western Mediterranean by sea
 - neighbors, but more distant and less threatening: the 3 Hellenistic empires
 - Antigonid Macedon
 - Seleucid Anatolia and Middle East
 - Ptolemaic Egypt
 - Punic Wars with Carthage: 264-146 BCE (118 years!)
 - 3 separate wars
 - initially over control of grain production of Sicily
 - Romans finally defeated Carthage
 - burned it
 - “salted the earth”
 - made 50,000 inhabitants slaves
 - took its distant holdings as well
 - At the same time, other conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean
 - with the weak Hellenistic empires
 - over piracy and regional instability that threatened trade and Roman citizens doing business there (sound familiar?)
 - Rome fought Antigonids in Macedon and Seleucids in Anatolia
 - but did not annex the territories, leaving local allies in control
- Conversion of Roman Republic to Roman Empire: 100 BCE to 100 CE
- 200-1 BCE: class tensions and civil war

- “bread and circuses”
- Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus (the Gracchi), populist reformers
 - tried to limit size of conquered land an aristocrat could hold
 - the rest would be redistributed
 - assassinated in 132 and 121 BCE, respectively
- Generals began recruiting private armies from the landless plebians
 - Gaius Marius: reformer who wanted to redistribute land
 - Lucius Cornelius Sulla: conservative, supported aristocrats
- civil war breaks out
- 87 BCE: Gaius Marius took Rome, killed many of his opponents, and quickly died himself
- 83 BCE: Lucius Sulla took Rome, posted enemies lists, 5-year reign of terror
 - people encouraged to kill named enemies and take their property
 - 10,000 people were caused to be killed
 - Sulla died 78 BCE, leaving a government heavily slanted towards the patricians
 - Gaius Julius Caesar escaped by traveling to Greece and eastern Mediterranean, and by seeming young and unimportant
 - reformer sympathetic to plebians
- 60s BCE: Julius Caesar a prominent politician in Rome
 - sponsored public spectacles
- 50s BCE: Julius Caesar leads the Roman army to conquer Gaul
 - now very popular
 - conservatives tried to sideline him
 - 49 BCE: Julius Caesar begins marching his army towards Rome
 - 46 BCE: Julius Caesar takes Rome, names himself dictator
 - but for life, not the usual 6 month term
 - took land from conservatives and gave it to supporters
 - started big building projects in Rome to provide employment for the poor (sound familiar?)
 - gave Roman citizenship to provincial subjects
 - appointed Gauls to Roman Senate
- 44 BCE: Julius Caesar assassinated
 - civil war breaks out again
- 31 BCE: Octavian defeats his main rival, Mark Antony and his ally, Cleopatra, in the sea battle of Actium (Greece)
 - Giving Rome control of Egypt, the last of the 3 Hellenistic empires remaining to be conquered
- 27 BCE: Octavian named “Augustus” (semi-divine) by the Roman Senate
 - ruled 45 years, set up Roman imperial government
 - nominally a Republic, really a monarchy
 - military commanders responsible to him personally
 - died 14 CE
- 1-200 CE: Roman empire continues to expand
 - see maximum map at 117 CE

- stimulating urbanization, trade, development in Europe
 - production of cash crops for trade
 - production of metals, especially tin
- 1-250 CE: *Pax Romana*
 - the enforced Roman Peace
 - Roads
 - paved, milestones, postal system with waystations
 - Roman law
 - massive trade throughout the Mediterranean
 - huge profits to Rome, lots of public architecture, statues, arches, fountains...
 - huge immigration, urban growth
 - also at other cities
 - aqueducts, plumbing, drainage, sewage, public baths...
 - class conflicts with rising urban poor
 - riots following 1 CE
 - controlled with “bread and circuses”
 - slaves: 1/3 of the imperial population by 100s BCE!
 - in latifundia (also mines, quarries, etc.), very harsh life
 - 73 BCE: Spartacus, an escaped slave, leads a massive revolt with an army of 70,000 escaped slaves
 - put down by 40,000 Roman soldiers
 - urban slaves much better off
 - manumission usually around age 30
- Greek philosophy
- Religions of Salvation
 - Mithraism
 - Cult of Isis
 - Christianity
 - Paul (from Anatolia)