Chapter 6 sec 1 The Roman World Takes Shape

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Geography – the Italian peninsula

centrally located in the Med

Rome in the middle – helps

Italy is not mountainous like Greece

easier to unify – people aren’t so physically isolated

broad fertile plains mean lots of capacity for agriculture and easy to feed a growing population

Who lives there?

the Latins arrive about 800 BC and settle along the Tiber River over the seven hills in small scattered villages – later the seven hills of Rome

other people are there too

the Greeks, throughout southern Italy

the Etruscans in central and northern Italy, including Rome

Roman learn from the Etruscans – their alphabet, (which they got from the Greeks, which they got from the Phoenicians) the use of the arch, ways to drain the marshes and swamps along the Tiber, their gods and goddesses blended with traditional Roman deities.

The Republic of Rome:

The Romans drove out their Etruscan ruler in 509BC – this is considered the founding of Rome.

The government they set up – where some officials were chosen by the people – was called a republic – or “thing of the people” – the idea was that a republic would prevent any one person from getting too much power.

Early republic –

the most powerful body was the Senate – 300 members, all patricians, (Landholding upper class)

two consuls were elected from this body every year by the senators to supervise the business of government, and command the armies. this was a one term job. They were expected to consult with the senate and their limited time in office was a way to keep a check on the power of government.

If a war broke out a dictator could be chosen, by the Senate, and given complete control over the government for six months at a time – then he had to give up his powers.

Cinncinnatus was the “model” dictator – he organized an army, led the Romans to victory, attended the victory celebrations and went back to his farm, all in 16 days.

Plebians – farmers, merchants, artisans and traders, were the bulk of the population, but they had little power in their government – they worked to gain political power for a long time and in 450BC when the government had the laws of the Republic inscribed on 12 tablets and set up in the Forum – the plebians had protested that no one could know the laws because they were not written down, the tablets were a response to this – it made it possible for plebians to appeal the decisions of patrician judges for the first time.

In time the plebians gained the right to elect their own officials – tribunes – to protect their interests. The tribunes could veto laws they felt were harmful to plebians.

the senate was forced to choose plebians for consuls, appoint plebians to high offices and eventually open the Senate to plebs.

The Senate remained in control of the government.

Common people had gained access to power without violence

Secured their rights without revolution

Becomes a model for the US Constitution 2000 years later.

Roman Society p. 130

Family is the basic unit of Roman society

father has absolute power in the family

customarily strict rules and structure for family life

Wives have no power – expected to be loving, dutiful, dignified and strong – but above all obedient

Roman women ran businesses, from small shops to major shipping businesses

supported the arts, paid for public festivals

mostly, though, stayed at home and ran the households – spinning and weaving, raising families

over time women have more freedom – Patrician women moved freely through society, the baths, the theater, dining out, travelling with their husbands. Some had public roles and exerted great political influence

EDUCATION – Boys and Girls were taught to read and write, even the lower class Romans (as a result lots of Graffiti in Pompeii..and all over Rome).

Wealthy romans hired private Greek tutors for their children – history, science and rhetoric were often concentrated on for the patrician children. Boys were expected to seek a political career and were taught public speaking at an early age.

Religion – the Eturscans, Greeks and Romans had a very similar religion. The gods of Greece got new names with the Italians but remained essentially the same, with the same functions and stories being told of them.

The Romans expand –

Don’t like to stay home – taking over Italy by 270bc

Success came from diplomacy and a well-trained army

legion – up to 5000 men

citizen soldiers fought without pay and supplied their own equipment

loyalty, courage, and respect valued in Roman culture helped to forge a strong effective army

Soldiers were well-rewarded for courage, harshly punished for cowardice

Salt – payment, salary today

Defeated lands were treated with justice (think Persia)

had to acknowledge Rome’s leadership, pay taxes, supply soldiers for the army

in return they kept their own governments, customs, money, society

Some conquered peoples became full Roman citizens, some only partial – could marry Romans, trade with Rome.

Most conquered lands were content with the situation and Rome had little trouble with rebellion or loyalty even when things got tough later.

To “Protect” and Unify conquests the Romans posted soldiers throughout the republic

Built a network of all weather roads for moving the military quickly throughout their

holdings

Trade and travel used these roads too. And soon people were all over the Roman world spreading culture through trade and influence.

Latin spread as a language. Many areas adopted Roman customs, religion. The region begins to unite under the rule of the Romans.

Sec 2 – From Republic to Empire

Once the Italian peninsula was conquered Rome looks around the Med for new conquests. The expansion causes stress within Roman society as the rich get richer and the plebians continue to fight and die and not make much progress.

Territorial expansion eventually weakens and crushes the republic, causing the birth of the Roman empire.

The biggest rival for the Roman Republic was Carthage in North Africa – Phoenicians and North Africans had combined to create a thriving city-state that had also grown to take over much of North Africa and parts of Spain. The clash comes in 264BC – The Punic Wars (Punicus/Phoenician in latin) pit the Romans and Catheginians against each other – Rome wins, gets Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily.

in 218BC the Cartheginians are back led by Hannibal, his army – complete with war elephants goes through the Pyrenees, through France, over the Alps and into Italy -

loses half his army but surprises the Romans – and for 15 years they fight in the Italian peninsula. Hannibal wins most of the battles but can’t take Rome – in the end the Romans send an army to Carthage which causes Hannibal to head home to defend the home turf – The Romans win – Carthage gives up all its lands outside of Africa.

The Romans are mad about the destruction in Italy – want serious revenge. Cato “Carthage must be destroyed”

In the Third Punic War Rome obliterates Carthage – kills or enslaves the whole population of the city, and pours salt over the ground so nothing would ever grow there again.

Rome now the masters of the Med

Committed to world domination – a policy of imperialism – controlling foreign lands and peoples

Go east and start to engage Alexander’s heirs for the kingdoms there.

Macedonia, Greece, parts of Asia Minor surrendered and became Roman provinces – Egypt elected to “ally” with Rome to keep them out

By 133BC Rome refers to the Med as mare nostrum or “our sea” and they’re right, it is.

Social and Economic effects –

All this conquest makes Rome incredibly rich.

Trade, loot, taxes made Generals, officials and traders very very rich.

New class of Romans – mansions, lavish lifestyles,

latifundias – estates with slave labor – produce food hurt farmers who can’t compete (grain from outside, too)

farmers leave their lands and flock to Rome looking for work – many force to sell their land from debt and bankruptcy

restless unemployed people – mobs looking for work – rioting ensues

the new wealthy were greedy and corrupt.

gone are the virtues of hard work and simplicity and devotion to duty that were the core of life in the early republic.

Tribune Tiberius Gracchus and his brother called for the state to distribute land to poor farmers, bro Gaius also a tribune (10 years later) called for further reforms, such as using state funds to buy grain to feed the poor.

The senate isn’t buying it – felt threatened by the brothers power and and influence with the poor. The brothers and thousands of their followers were killed in the waves of violence set off by the senators and their hired thugs.

Decline of the Republic –

Internal struggles for power escalate – set off series of civil wars over who should hold power

senate wants to stay in charge

popular political leaders with new ideas want change

revolts of allies

slave uprisings

the old citizen-legions now convert to a professional fulltime paid army

loyal to their commanders, not to the state

generals march their armies into Rome to vie for political power.

Julius Caesar vs. Pompey

Both generals, both with political power

59 BC Caesar takes off to subdue Gaul/France

Pompey convinces the Senate to order Caesar to disband the army and

return to Rome

Caesar ignores this, and spirits his army to the Rubicon River in northern Italy – alea iacata est – the die is cast – crossing Rubicon means there’s no turning back. He marches into Italy and

crushes Pompey’s opposition forces and then sweeps around the Med the rebellions “Veni, vidi, vici”

Back in Rome he forces the Senate to name him dictator – total control of Rome

Reforms under Caesar – 48 – 44 BC Caesar is in charge

public works programs to employ people

gave public land to the poor

reorganizes the provinces and grants citizenship to more people

Julian calendar based on Egyptian astronomical observations – still used today

And then ….

his old friends lured him into the Senate and stabbed him to death. They believed that he was trying to make himself king.

Funny thing is…

at this point Casear’s general Mark Antony and Octavian his grand-nephew seek revenge against the murders, end up turning on each other and in the end Octavian becomes “first citizen” Augustus – the exalted one – a king in all but name, he names his own successor. 31BC to 14AD he is in charge – it is the end of the republic and the beginning of the Empire.

Rome and Augustus

He’s a pretty good ruler – lots of reforms

stable government

Senate is still around

civil service jobs to enforce laws

High level offices that run the government open to anyone who’s capable regardless of class

Guarantees the loyalty of conquered peoples by allowing mostly self-government – with some Roman oversight and control, but not much

Economic reforms – census to allow for fair taxation of regions

Standardized currency simplifies trade

Postal service throughout the empire

road building, jobs programs, sent farmers back to the land

Things go well for about 200 years – but there’s a catch – no real way exists to determine succession of emperors – so mischief is afoot whenever there’s a change

Some good, some bad emperors –

Caligula and Nero – among the worst

Good guys – Hadrian codified Roman law for all the provinces (built a wall across Britain to contain the Scots)

Marcus Aurelius – close to Plato’s philosopher king – read philosophy on military campaigns, had an honest commitment to the Stoic way of life and a keen sense of duty. His “Meditations” still inspire people today.

**The Pax Romana** – 200 years beginning with Augustus and ending with Marcus Aurelius where the orderly rule of Rome assured its people of peace, unity and prosperity from the Euphrates river to Britain – an area approx equal to the U.S.

Legions maintained the roads and assured safe passage

Trade flowed freely through the Empire

Grain from Egypt

wild animals from further south

ivory and gold

Spices from India

Trade along the Silk Road to China

Travel is safe and common, ideas and knowledge spread through the Empire from the farthest corners

**Bread and Circuses –** Spectacular entertainments gave the public something to occupy themselves about, kept the “rabble” busy

Chariot races at the Circus Maximus, Gladiator contests at the Colosseum

Emperors paid for these entertainments and the poor were given free grain by the government – some were critical of these policies but it seemed to keep everyone busy and fairly happy, or at least out of the streets and not rioting.

“Bread and circuses” only works to hold things together and maintain the Pax Romana in Rome for a time, but it is not a policy that was effective over time.

Section 3 The Roman Achievement p. 137

Rome was greatly influenced by the culture of the southern Greek colonies and later from Greece itself after Rome absorbed it into the Empire. Rome adopted the achievements of Greece and Hellenistic culture for its own creating what we call **Greco-Roman culture** – and spread it everywhere the Roman Empire went.

**Literature, Philosophy and History**

Poetry – Virgil’s Aenied tried to link Rome to Greece by having a guy escape from Troy and found Rome

Satire – very popular – pokes fun at Roman Society Horace, Juvenal, Martial. some gentle fun, other stuff so harsh that it had to by published under fictitious names to protect the author from the people he poked fun at.

History – Livy and Tacitus tracked the rise and fall of Roman power. They emphasized the heroic aspects of Rome’s past, and were often critical of the actions of the rulers. Tacitus, especially, admired the simple culture of the Germanic tribes to the north – and these are the guys who later invade and conquer Rome…..

Philosophy – from the Greeks. Aristotle, but mostly the Stoics -- simple lives, accepting your fate, and your duty, with a concern for the well-being of all people

**art and architecture**

Realism, actual portraits of actual people the way they really looked. Smug, proud, angry, all portrayed in a way that the Greeks would not have done, but modeled on the Greek style. – Sculptures of important people might be more idealistic to emphasize their power and importance….

Roman houses were full of art, murals and frescoes, mosaic floors – Pompeii AD79

Vesuvius eruption buried, and Herculanum

Architecture – the arch and the column are used to create huge, grand structures, concrete is used, makes domes possible – the Pantheon.

**technology and science –** Romans excelled at engineering – using science and math in ways not seen before to create buildings, and machines – bridges, harbors, roads throughout the Empire, immense aqueducts for fresh water for public baths. The center for scientific research remained in Alexandria – astronomy, medicine, geography is applied to practical purposes: geography – maps, medicine – public health. Compiled encyclopedias of knowledge based on the work of researchers and scientists to record knowledge in a central place. The Greek physician Galen becomes the first to apply scientific method to medical research tracking the effects of experiments to gain knowledge.

**Roman Law-** “Let justice be done though the heavens fall”

The commitment to justice and law meant that there was peace and unity in Rome – this becomes the basis for legal systems in Europe later.

Two kinds of law: Civil law for Romans, Law of Nations for those under Roman rule. Once citizenship was extended across the empire these two systems were merged into one.

Common Principles:

1. the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty
2. the accused can face an accuser and mount a defense
3. standard of proof must be met – Roman “clearer than daylight” ours “beyond a reasonable doubt”

Roman judges were allowed to interpret the laws and expected to make fair judgments.

Section 4 – The Rise of Christianity p. 141

Religious diversity is the norm in the early empire – Roman gods are traditional but people expand their devotions with other kinds of faith.

Mystery religions – secret rituals and special rewards:

Isis from Egypt – the goddess promises women equality with men

Mithras from Persia – good over evil, life after death – big with Roman soldiers

Tolerance is the rule – as long as loyalty to the Roman gods and acknowledgment of the divine spirit of the Emperor – most people are polytheistic anyway, so this is no big deal

63 BC Romans conquer Judea and the Jews, alter their policy and excuse the Jews from worshiping Roman gods because of their monotheistic faith.

That’s great except the Jews are pretty busy fighting among themselves – some have adopted Greek customs and ideas in the Hellenistic age – others have become very conservative in an attempt to preserve their traditions from outside influences.

some Jews are fine with the Roman rule, others were not – Zealots called for revolt against the Romans to establish an independent state.

the Messianic movement at the time meant that some Jews believed that the appearance of a messiah was imminent to rescue them and restore their freedom.

66AD rebellion by the Jews – Romans crushed the rebels, took Jerusalem and destroyed the Jewish temple, and later, in further revolts, they leveled Jerusalem. Of those that weren’t killed or enslaved very few stayed in Judea, most left the area if they could – scattered around the Mediterranean. Their strong Rabbinical traditions and commitment to their laws and traditions allowed them to survive as a community over many centuries and separation from one another.

Jesus and His Message

Born about 4 BC in Bethlehem near Jerusalem, a descendant of King David according to tradition – raised in Nazareth, a carpenter by trade.

At 30 he began preaching near the Sea of Galilee, and recruited a core of followers known as apostles (a person sent forth).

Jesus’ cousin, John known as “the Baptist”, was a member of the Essene sect of Judaism, there is some belief that his whole family was part of that sect, and that he was raised in that community.

Rooted in Jewish tradition his teachings were inspirational to many. Justice, morality and service to others, redemption from sin through repentance and good works, love for God, for your neighbors, even your enemies – nothing was to be gained through violence but the service of evil.

Things go pretty well until he and the apostles get to Jerusalem for Passover. Jesus and the apostles attract a lot of attention in a town full of tourists there for the holiday. This worries the Romans who are having issues with rebels and are afraid Jesus is there to cause trouble. The local Jewish authorities also see the group as a threat. In the end Jesus is arrested and eventually crucified (a pretty common punishment in Rome at the time) and killed. Tradition says that he returned from the dead for a time and continued his teachings, giving the apostles instructions on spreading his teachings, and then ascended to heaven.

Spread of Christianity

The apostles are pretty disorganized after Jesus is executed. They hang around Judea, and for a time Christianity is mostly another Jewish sect. Then they begin to move out into other Jewish communities around the Roman Empire, even to the city of Rome itself where apostle Peter establishes a community.

Others who had never met Jesus become converts – Paul of Tarsus in particular spreads the teachings all around the Med and founds churches in Mesopotamia and Rome

Rome’s tolerant attitude about religion is not extended to the Christians.

They aren’t Jews, so they aren’t excused from honoring the Roman gods, and they refuse to, and they won’t make proper sacrifices to honor the emperor. The authorities persecute them, and they are driven underground and persecuted wherever they are found. The authorities accuse them of every evil and use them as scapegoats for the troubles Rome is experiencing. A lot of executions are conducted, creating many martyrs – tradition has it that both Peter and Paul were killed in Rome during the time of Nero. (Who it is said torched a poor part of Rome and then played his lyre while the city burned, and blamed it all on the rioting caused by Christians).

In 313AD the emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan granting freedom of worship to all citizens of the Roman Empire. (His mom, a practicing Christian and a major league nag may have had some influence on him…) Theodosius makes Christianity the official religion of the Empire 80 years later.

section 5 The Long Decline p. 147

After the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 the golden age of Pax Romana also began to end. Political and economic troubles rocked the empire.

Struggle for power – with no clear rule of succession intrigue became the way to power – emperors would be overthrown with the support of generals or senators who would seize power in their place for a year or two, or less. In one 50 year period there were 26 emperors and only one died of natural causes.

Gone is the efficiency, order and peace that was so important in the early Empire. Violence and instability are the norm.

Taxes are high to support the military and the government bureaucracy crippling businesses and farmers. Farmland was losing its fertility, or had been built over by villas and urban sprawl. Farmers left the land and worked for wealthy landowners – technically they were still free men, but weren’t allowed to leave the land.

In 284 the Emperor Diocletian wanted to restore order, so to simplify things he divided the empire into an eastern and a western part. He appointed a co-emperor to rule the east, who answered to him. He kept absolute power over the whole. Diocletian also took on many fancy trappings and ceremonies to accentuate his importance. (Purple robes, a jeweled crown, kneeling and kissing his robe hem).

He tried to stop the economic decay of Rome by fixing prices for goods and services. Farmers were forced to stay on their land. Sons in the cities were required to take up their father’s occupations. All of this was to insure a steady flow of food and other goods.

in 312 Constantine becomes emperor and moves the capital to Constantinople on the Bosporus (the strait between the Med and Black Seas). He continues a lot of Diocletian’s “reforms”, and the Edict of Milan in 313 means that religious tolerance is extended to everyone – including the Christians who are out of the catacombs and spreading like wildfire.

The western empire goes into decline, the eastern empire with more people and more resources prospers for centuries to come.

Foreign Invaders

Germanic tribes to the north of the Danube and east of the Rhine rivers were easily contained in the days when Rome was strong by the legions. Some Germanic people near the Empire adopted Roman customs and language and became allies.

200 AD the wars in East Asia scatter the Huns who head west and eventually end up in Europe by 350 AD uprooting the Goths, the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths and other Germanic people in their path. These fled towards Rome looking for safety and hoping to settle on Roman lands. Eventually the Romans gave up Britain, Spain and France to these refugees, and eventually they came to the city of Rome itself.

in 378 the Romans lose a critical battle at Adrianople, by 410 Alaric the Visigoth overran Italy and plundered Rome (there was a drought, he was looking for food, the Romans didn’t have any either, so they pretty much left…).

in 434 Attila the Hun blasts across Europe and sends yet more Germanic people scattering ahead of his invaders towards Rome.

finally in 476 Odoacer the Visigoth ousts the emperor in Rome. The western empire is at an end.

509BC to 476AD – the Roman Empire as we knew it…. about a thousand years.

What causes the fall of Rome?

Military causes: The Roman legions were less and less Roman – mercenaries were hired to fight Rome’s battles, mostly Germanic warriors who weren’t so dedicated to Rome. Made the Germanic invasions a lot less attractive for “Roman” soldiers to fight.

Political causes: The more oppressive and authoritarian the government became the less it was supported by the people. Corrupt officials, frequent civil wars over succession, armies fighting to put their generals in power. Finally dividing the empire when it was weakest in the west meant the resources and greater population in the east, who did very little to help the west.

Economic causes: As the empire grew heavier and heavier taxes were needed to support the military and government. Slave labor availability meant that Romans lost their interest in innovation and new technology. Climate shifts meant that farmers were not as productive and more and more middle class people sank into poverty. War and epidemic diseases meant a reduction in population.

Social causes: All along some Romans pointed to the lack of values like discipline, devotion to duty and patriotism that seemed to be on the rise. The upper classes devoted themselves to luxury and self-interest, and no longer were interested in providing leadership in society. There were not enough citizen-soldiers so mercenaries needed to be hired to fill the gaps in the armies. Expensive the policy of bread and circuses may have undermined the ability of the poor to become motivated and self-reliant.

Did Rome Fall?

The western empire is lost. But the eastern empire (know as the Byzantine empire) continues on for another 1000 years.

Back in the city of Rome roman civilization continues after 476 under new rulers. Over the next centuries German customs and languages replace much of roman culture in Europe. Roman cities crumble, Roman roads disappear. Elements of the traditions and civilizations of Rome are preserved, in the rituals and teachings of its old enemy, the Christian Church and become the basis for medieval civilization in western Europe.