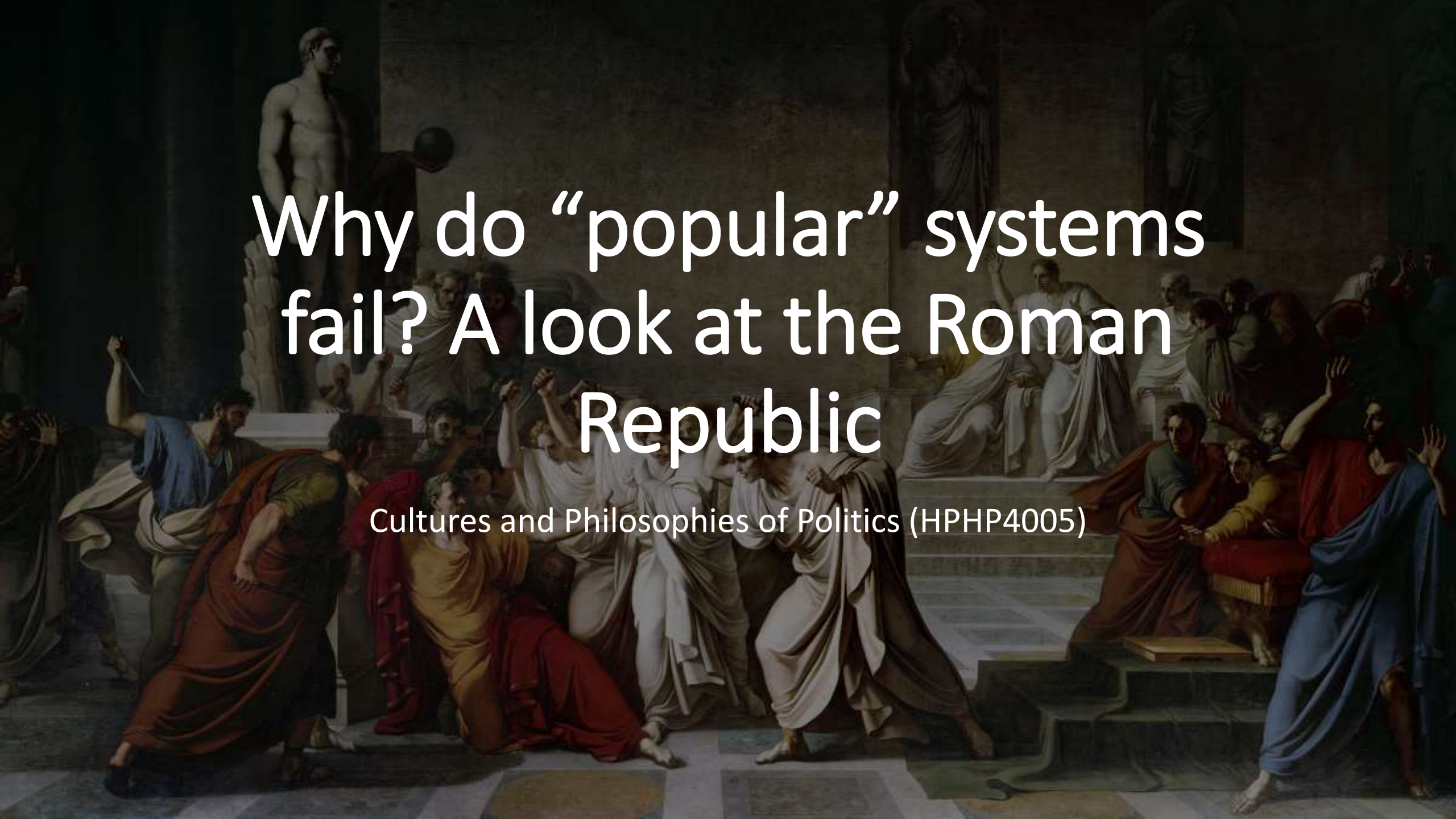


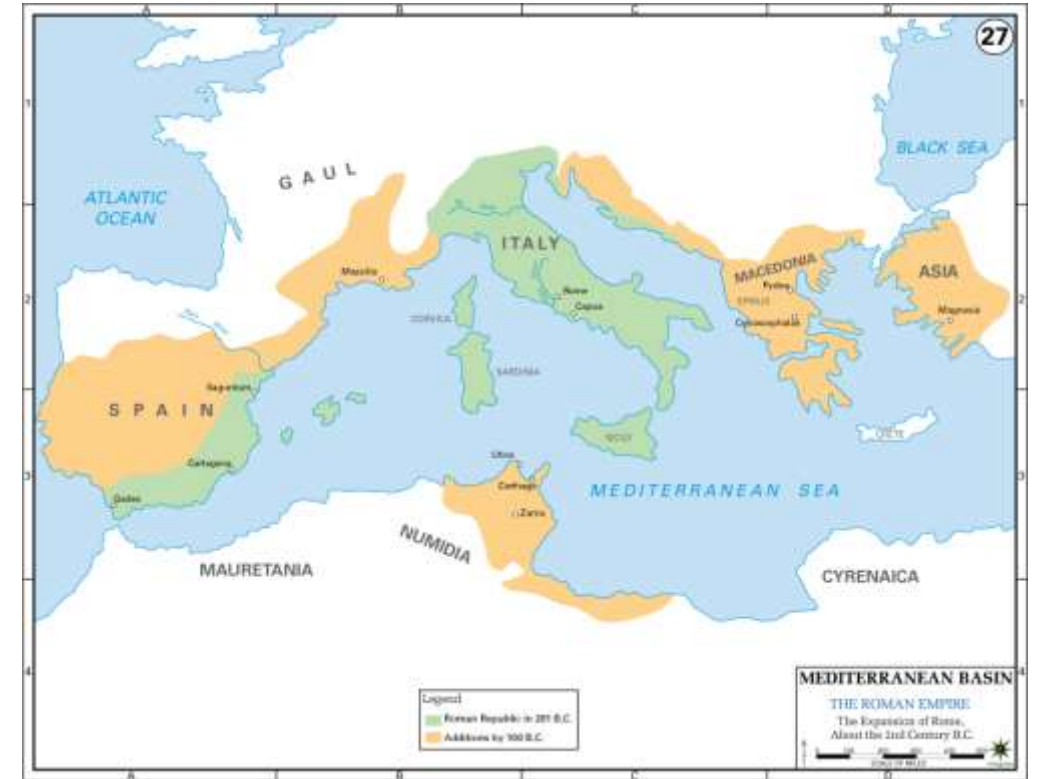


Why do “popular” systems fail? A look at the Roman Republic

Cultures and Philosophies of Politics (HPHP4005)

A state becomes or society becomes too successful?

- Military and economic success undermining popular governance?
- Wealth concentrated in hands of elite.
 - Booty, plunder, slaves.
- Long term campaigning and the citizen farmer.
 - Loss of land, creation of “latifundia”
- More complex administration, more corruption?





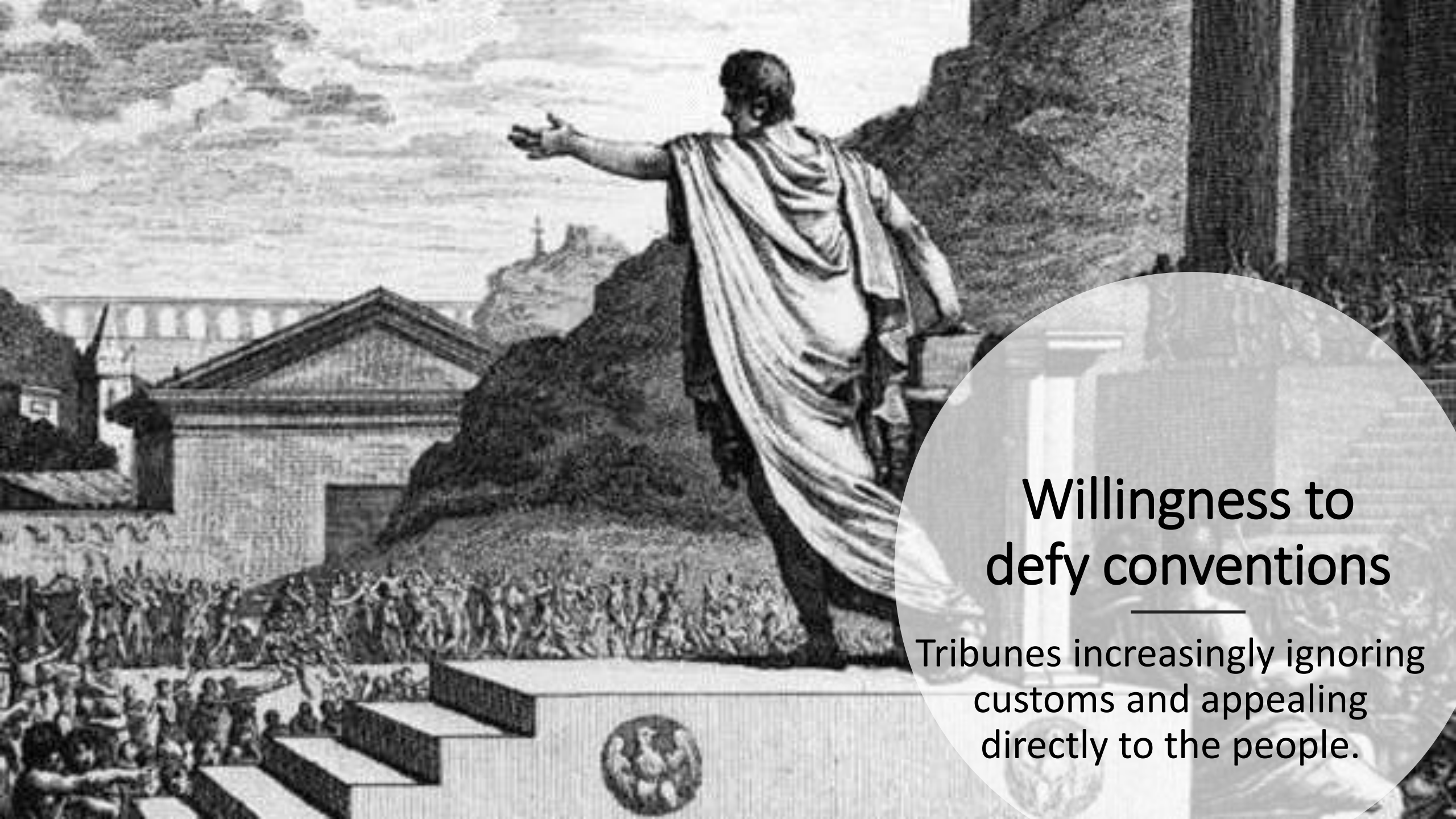
Roman moralists

- Wealth, decadence and *luxuria* frequently highlighted by Roman moralists.
 - Sallust – sack of Carthage (146 BC)
 - Livy, destruction of Carthage, but also return of booty from the East:
 - Cn. Manlius Vulso's return in 187 BC – fight against the Galatians).

Sack of Carthage (146 BC)

‘Turning round to me at once and grasping my hand Scipio said, "A glorious moment, Polybius; but I have a dread foreboding that some day the same doom will be pronounced on my own country."’ – **Polybius 38.21.1.**





Willingness to defy conventions

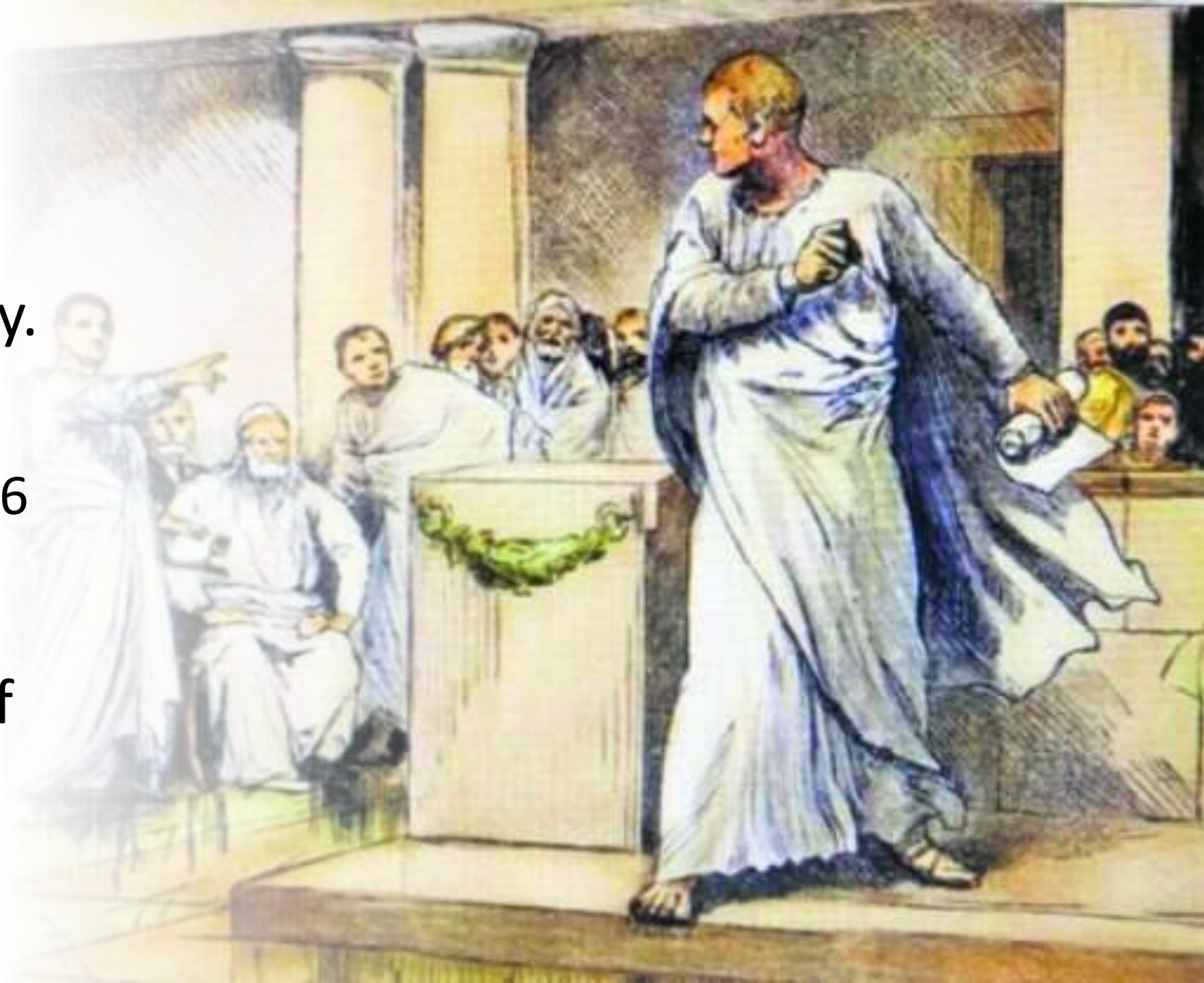
Tribunes increasingly ignoring customs and appealing directly to the people.



Power of tribunes

- Agents of the people or acting in their own right?
- Could propose:
 - laws,
 - special commands,
 - new colonies,
 - extension of citizenship,
 - wheat subsidies,
 - composition of jury courts,
 - use of imperial revenues, etc.

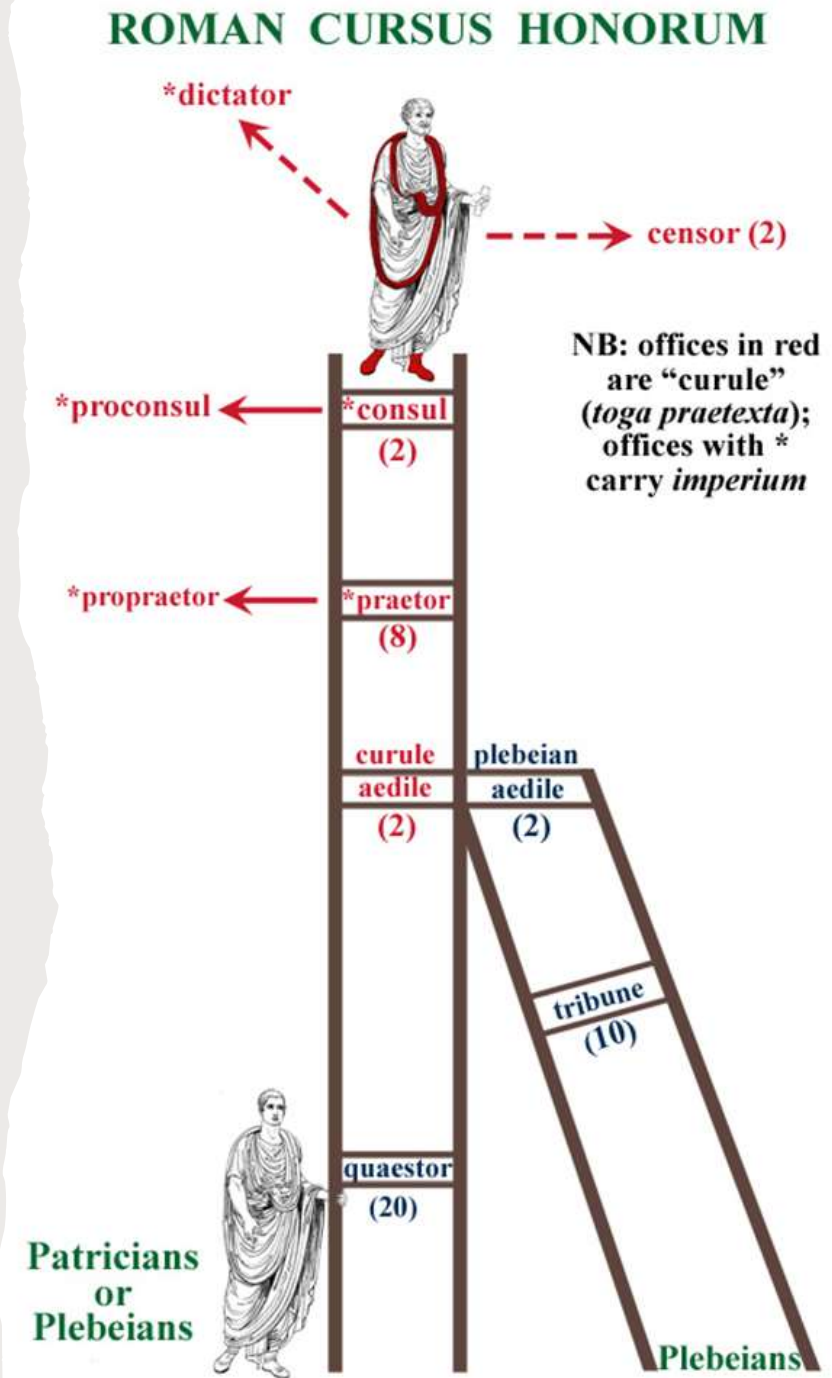
- Bypassing traditional mechanisms – a challenging senatorial authority.
 - e.g. command for Pompey the Great (e.g. lex Manilia, 66 BC).
- Tribunes as threat to the “equality” of the elite?
 - Murder of the Gracchi.





Fierce political competition

- Everyone wants to be top dog!
- Debt, bribery and corruption trails.
- Corruption and abuses in provinces.



Generals and their soldiers

- More long-term, sustained campaigns.
- Greater reliance of soldiers on their generals
 - Booty.
 - Recruitment bonuses or land.
 - Sometimes even pay!



Could the Republican system have been saved?



- Unwillingness to engage in compromise.
- Breakdown of the *mos maiorum* (ancestral custom).
- Recourse to violence (*senatus consultum ultimum*).
- Expanding power of the tribunes, e.g. Marius using the tribunate to gain specific military commands.

