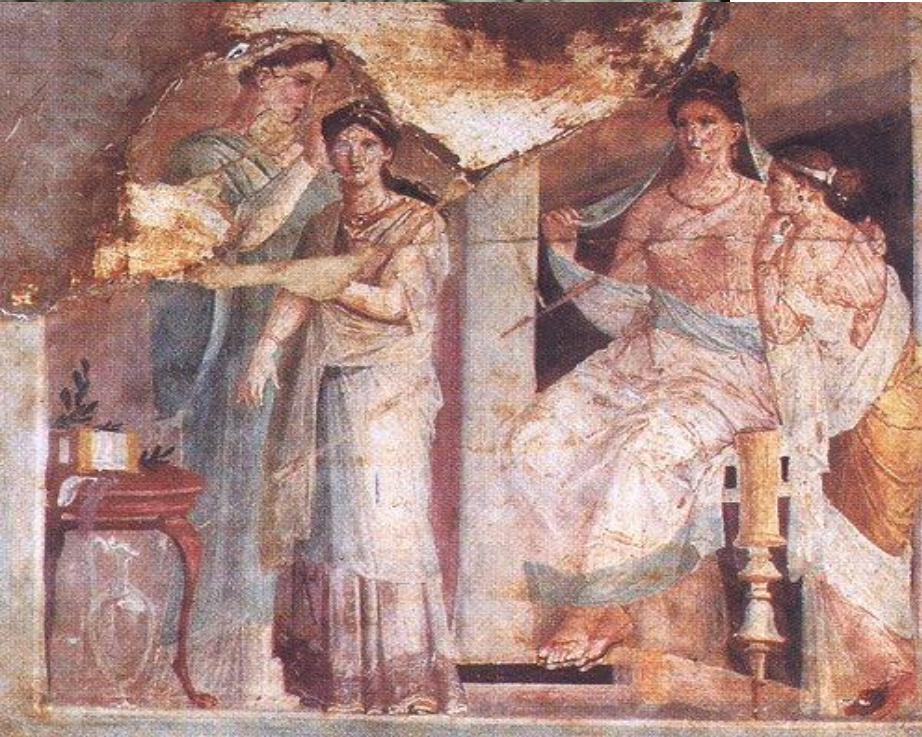




Lecture 6: Social Structures

What is social history?

“The subject matter of social history resides in the **social structures** of society, thus in those **enduring features** which determine its particular nature. These figure in the bases and criteria for the division of society into particular parts, in its very system of organization with particular **strata, orders or classes***, and, finally, in the **interrelationships** between particular parts of society, embodied in **social bonds, tensions and conflicts**, and in **mobility** within the **stratification** as well as in common political framework and system reference.”

What is social status?

- The **relative position, rank or standing** in a hierarchy of prestige.
- The hierarchy of prestige is determined by different factors, varying from society to society. Membership of an elite group (also political) may be determined by birth, education, life's style, wealth and other factors.
- Nevertheless, there are no categorical distinctions on status.
- We should distinguish between **legal and social status**

Gaius on the status of persons

Institutes, Book I, 3

- (9) The principal division of the ius of persons is the following, namely, that all men are either free or slaves.
- (10) Again, men who are free are either freeborn or freedmen.
- (11) Freeborn are those who are free by birth, freedmen are those who have been manumitted from legal slavery.
- (12) Again, there are three types of freedmen: they are either classified as Roman citizens, Latins, or 'surrendered foreigners'

Ancient Slavery

- Aristotle, Politics: slaves as tools
- The slave's work is the most striking symbol of his submission.
- Work was in the antiquity regarded as a service and a social relationship rather than an individual and autonomous action as happens in the modern world.
- Slaves were present in all sectors of economic life. This is perhaps the major difference with other slave systems, such as those of the New World, between the XVII and the XIX century. In Greece and Rome slaves are everywhere.

Slavery in Rome

Romans established two categories of slaves:

- those of the city, the *familia urbana*
- and those serving in rural properties, the *familia rustica*.

Slave work



Slave work



Slave work



Strabo, Delos and the Slave Trade

- **Strabo, *Geography* 14, 5, 2:** “The exportation of slaves induced them (the Cilicians) most of all to engage in their evil business, since it proved most profitable; for not only were they easily captured, but the market, which was large and rich in property, was not extremely far away, I mean Delos, which could both admit and send away ten thousand slaves on the same day; whence arose the proverb, ‘Merchant, sail in, unload your ship, everything has been sold.’ The cause of this was the fact that the Romans, having become rich after the destruction of Carthage and Corinth, used many slaves; and pirates, seeing the easy profit therein, bloomed forth in great numbers, themselves not only going in quest

Slave trade

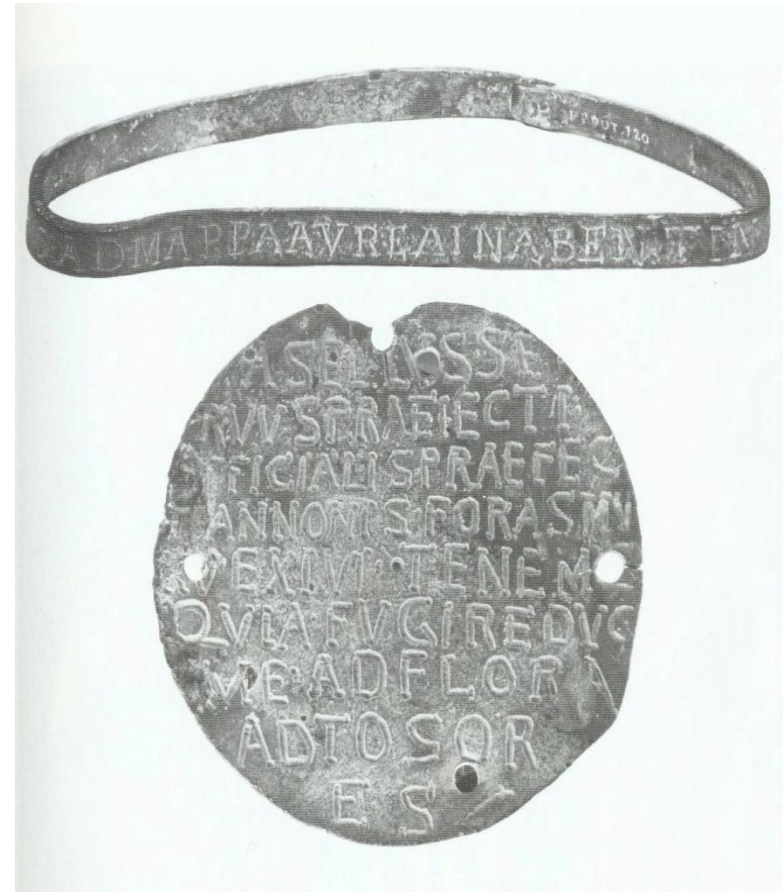


Fugitive Slaves

- CIL XV 7195 *teneme quia fugio et revoca me in S(a)eptis*

„Grab me, I'm a runaway, and return me to the Saepta“

- Saepta Iulia on the Camp of Mars



Fugitive slaves

- **Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 51.3617** (Egypt, 3rd century): [A reward is available if anyone finds X] an Egyptian from the *nome* of Athreibites, who does not know Greek, [and is] tall, thin, bald-headed, with a scar on the left side of his head, of olive complexion, jaundiced, thinly bearded and having no hair at all on his chin, smooth-skinned, narrow-jawed, with a long nose, a weaver by trade, who walks around like he's somebody, rambling on in a high-pitched voice. He is about 32 year old. He is wearing a brightly coloured cloak.”

Status of slaves: the *peculium*

- In Rome, slaves were allowed to possess working capital (either money or property). This was called *peculium*.
- The *peculium* gave certain independency to some slaves.
- The *peculium* would revert to the owner on the slave's death, but might be used earlier to 'purchase' freedom

Status of slaves: the *peculium*

- **Digest 33,8,19, 40,1,4-5: 33.8.9:**
“Papinian, Replies, Book 7: When a master wishes to free a slave, he orders him to give an account of his *peculium* and after this the slave receives his freedom. It is clear that anything in the *peculium* that has not been listed in the account does not appear to have been tacitly granted to the freed slave.”

Social structures and political developments under the Principate

- The early principate was an epoch of consolidation of important social transformations already visible in the last century of the Republic.
- How did the establishment of the principate affect social developments?
- Social groups were an essential feature of the Roman world. They determined also the participation of citizens in the political life, and the level integration in everyday life.

Social structures and political developments under the Principate

- New element at the top of the social structure: the emperor and his family
- Vanishing of the old Republican factions
- Creation of a new senatorial aristocracy
- The **Roman Senate and the equestrian order** were the upper classes; all them were however submitted to the authority of the *princeps*

Social structures and political developments under the Principate

- Senatorial ***cursus***: *censor, consul, praetor, quaestor, etc..*
- Integration of the provincials and development of local elites
- The provinces were ruled by governors that might be senators: **proconsul** or equestrians: **praefectus**, **procurator**, or a **legatus Augusti pro praetore** (an officer directly designated by the Emperor himself).

Social structures and political developments under the Principate

- In the provinces and towns outside Rome: the upper classes corresponded to the local magistrates: they were called **decuriones**.
- Underneath Roman magistrates, there was a group of public servants known as **apparitores** (secretaries, heralds, messengers, etc)

On the power of senators during the Principate

- Paul, *Sententiae*, Leiden fragment 2:
“Senators or their parents who still have legal power over them are prohibited from bidding for tax collection contracts, from possessing ships for financial gain, or from providing racehorses. That is punished under the law of extortion.”

Social developments

- Important changes in the vertical social structure: social dissonance.
- Increasing influence and presence of freedmen in economic and social life.
- Increasing importance of the imperial household, the *familia Caesaris* (*servi* and *liberti*) in the management of bureaucracy, both for internal and external politics.
- Development of patronage networks in the public and private sphere.

Tacitus on Claudius and the power of his freedmen

- Tacitus, Annals 13, 1: “Messalina’s death convulsed the imperial household. Claudius was impatient of Celibacy and easily controlled by his wives, and the freedmen quarrelled about who should choose his next one. Rivalry among the women was equally fierce. Each cited her own high birth, beauty and wealth as qualifications for this exalted marriage. The chief competitors were Lollia Paulina, daughter of the former consul Marcus Lollius, and Germanicus’s daughter Agrippina. Their backers were Callistus and Pallas respectively. Narcissus supported Aelia Paetina, who was of the family of the Aelii Tuberones. The emperor continually changed his mind according to whatever advice he heard last.”

Social mobility: Pompeii, Temple of Isis



Temple of Isis restored. CIL 10, 846

N(VMERIVS) POPIDIVS N(VMERII) F(ILIVS) CELSINVS
AED(EM) ISIDIS TERRAE MOTV CONLAPSAM A
FVNDAMENTO P(ECVNIA) S(VA) RESTITVIT HVNC
DECVRIONES OB LIBERALITATEM CVM ESSET
ANNORVM SEXS ORDINI SVO GRATIS ADLEGERVNT

„Numerius Popidius Celsinus, son of Numerius, rebuilt at his own expense from its foundations the temple of Isis, which had collapsed in an earthquake; because of his generosity, although he was only 6 years old, the town councillors nominated him into their number free of charge“.

Social Mobility: Natural History

35, 58

“There is also the most inferior kind of chalk; which was used by the Ancients for tracing the line of victory in the Circus, and for marking The feet of slaves on sale, that were brought from beyond sea. Such, for instance, were Publilius Lochius, the founder of our mimic scenes; his cousin, Manilius Antiochus, the first cultivator of astronomy; and Staberius Eros, our first grammarian; all three of whom our ancestors saw brought over in the same Ship. But why mention these names, recommended as they are by the literary honours which they acquired?

Other instances too, Rome has beheld of persons rising to high positions from the slave market; Chrysogonus, for example, the freedman of Sylla; Amphion, the freedman of Q. Catulus; the man who was the keeper of Lucullus; Demetrius, the freedman of Pompeius, and Auge, the freedwoman of Demetrius, or else of Pompeius himself, as some have supposed;

Social Mobility: Natural History

35, 58

Hipparchus, the freedman of M. Antonius; as also, Menas and Menecrates, freedmen of Sextus Pompeius, and many others as well, whom it would be superfluous to enumerate, and who have Enriched themselves at the cost of Roman blood, and the licence that results from proscription. Such is the mark that is set upon those droves of slaves which we see on sale, such the opprobrium thrown upon them by a capricious fortune ! And yet, some of these very men have we beheld in the enjoyment of such power and influence, that the senate itself has decreed them--at the command of Agrippina, wife of the Emperor Claudius—the decorations even of the prætorship: all but honoured with the fasces and their laurels, in fact, and sent back in state to the very place from which they originally came, with their feet whitened with the slave-dealer's chalk!