

HPLA7019, 7020
Republican Prose

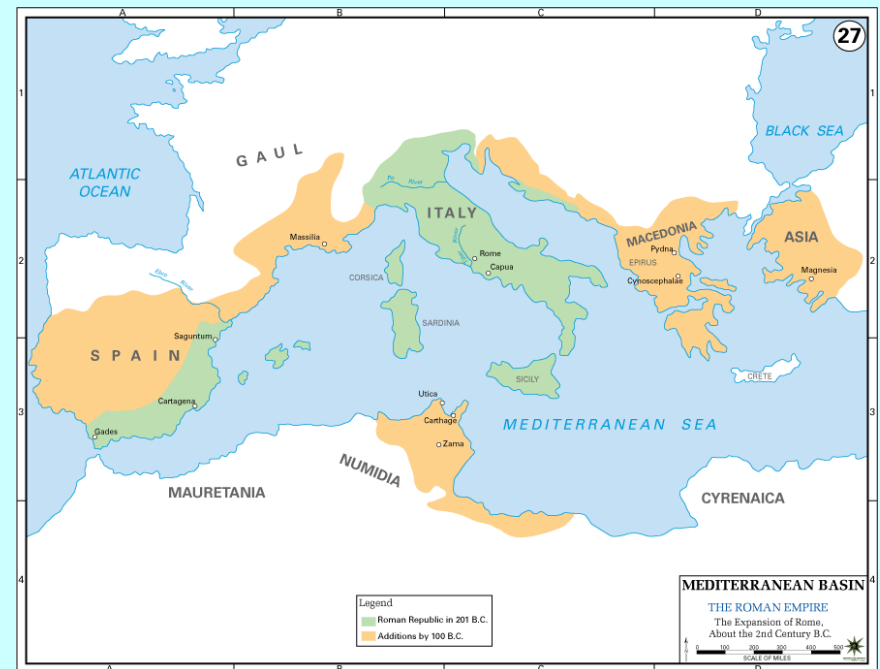
**Background to the Late
Republic**

The Beginning of the End?

- 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).
 - Dates for the Late Republic:
 - 132-44 BC / 132-31/30 BC?
 - 146 – 44/31-30 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." It would be difficult to mention an utterance more statesmanlike and more profound.’ – Polybius 38.21.1.

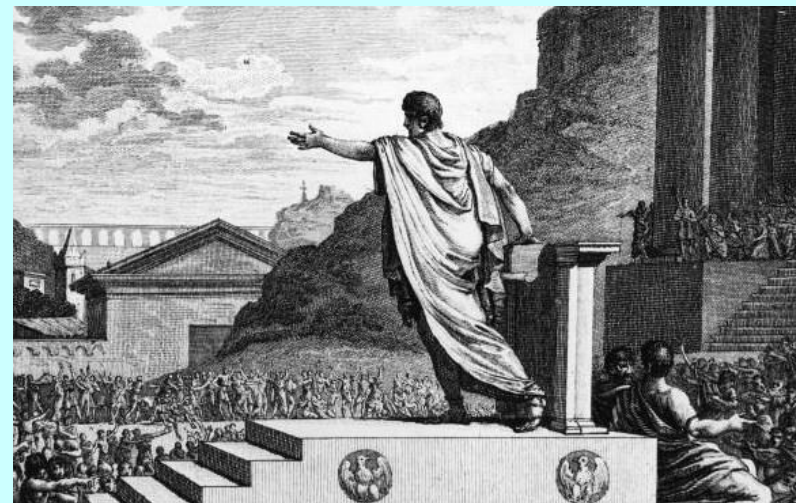
The second century Mediterranean world

- Increasing dominance in the Mediterranean:
 - most major powers humbled during the first half of the second century BC – Carthage, Macedon, the Seleucid Empire;
 - others as semi-client states, e.g. Pergamum, Ptolemaic Egypt, Rhodes, etc.
- Growing wealth, influx of slave labour, displaced poor, ever more complex administration of overseas affairs.



The collapse of consensus based politics?

- Notion of heyday of political consensus in the mid-Republic:
 - Polybius notion of the mixed constitution (book 6) – Roman apogee during the Second Punic War (218-201 BC).
- Senate's role in theory that of an advisory body:
 - Allocation of military commands for magistrates, foreign policy and state finances.
- Willingness to by-pass the Senate and appeal directly to the people.
- Increasingly more long-term sustained campaigns – greater reliance of soldiers on their generals to look after their interests.



Gaius Gracchus, Silvestre David Mirys, 1799

Mirage?

- Problems: lack of contemporary sources for earlier periods (mostly first century BC and later); lack of reliable dating system.
- Conflict a long-running feature of Roman politics.
 - Appointment of the decemvirs (451 BC).
 - Struggle of the Orders (c. 5th c. – 287 BC)
 - Reform of Hortensius (287 BC) – freeing tribunician legislation from the need for Senatorial approval.
 - Loss of books 10 to 19 of Livy's *Ab urbe condita* (lack of information about Roman domestic politics for much of third century BC).
 - Internal conflict during the Second Punic War – 212 BC, class between tribunes and equestrian businessmen; attempted prosecution of Africanus in 204 BC.
 - Conflict over the awarding of triumphs (199, 192, 191 BC); 180 BC, introduction of law regulating the minimum age and time-gap between holding offices.
 - 151 BC – arresting of consuls by tribunes during military recruitment.

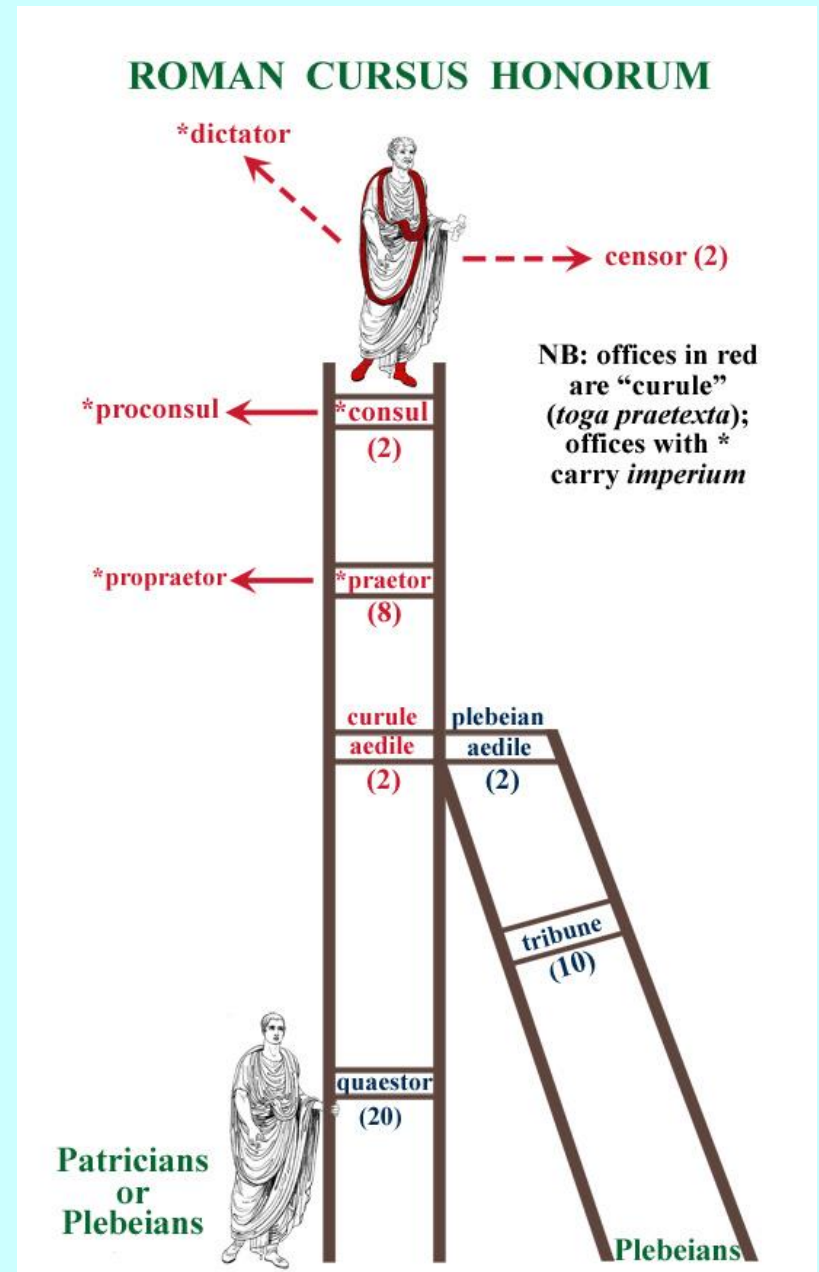
Why did the conflict become more extreme in the Late Republic?

- Unwillingness to engage in compromise.
- Breakdown of the *mos maiorum* (ancestral custom) and recourse to violence (*senatus consultum ultimum*).
- Expanding remit of the power of the tribunes, e.g. Marius using the tribunate to gain specific military commands.
- Ignoring or refusing to deal with real problems, e.g. issue of Italian citizenship and land-reform.



Death of Gaius Gracchus, by François Topino-Lebrun, 1792

- Careers of Caesar and Cicero.
- Fierce competition for offices and honours – increased numbers of senators (from Sulla).
- Debt and electoral bribery
- Corruption and abuses in the provinces, judicial bribery
- Politics of the so-called *populares* and *optimates*.
- A socio-political change in culture: a willingness to use underhand and violent means to achieve one's ends and attack one's enemies
 - e.g. Sulla, Marius, Catiline, etc.



Bibliography

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