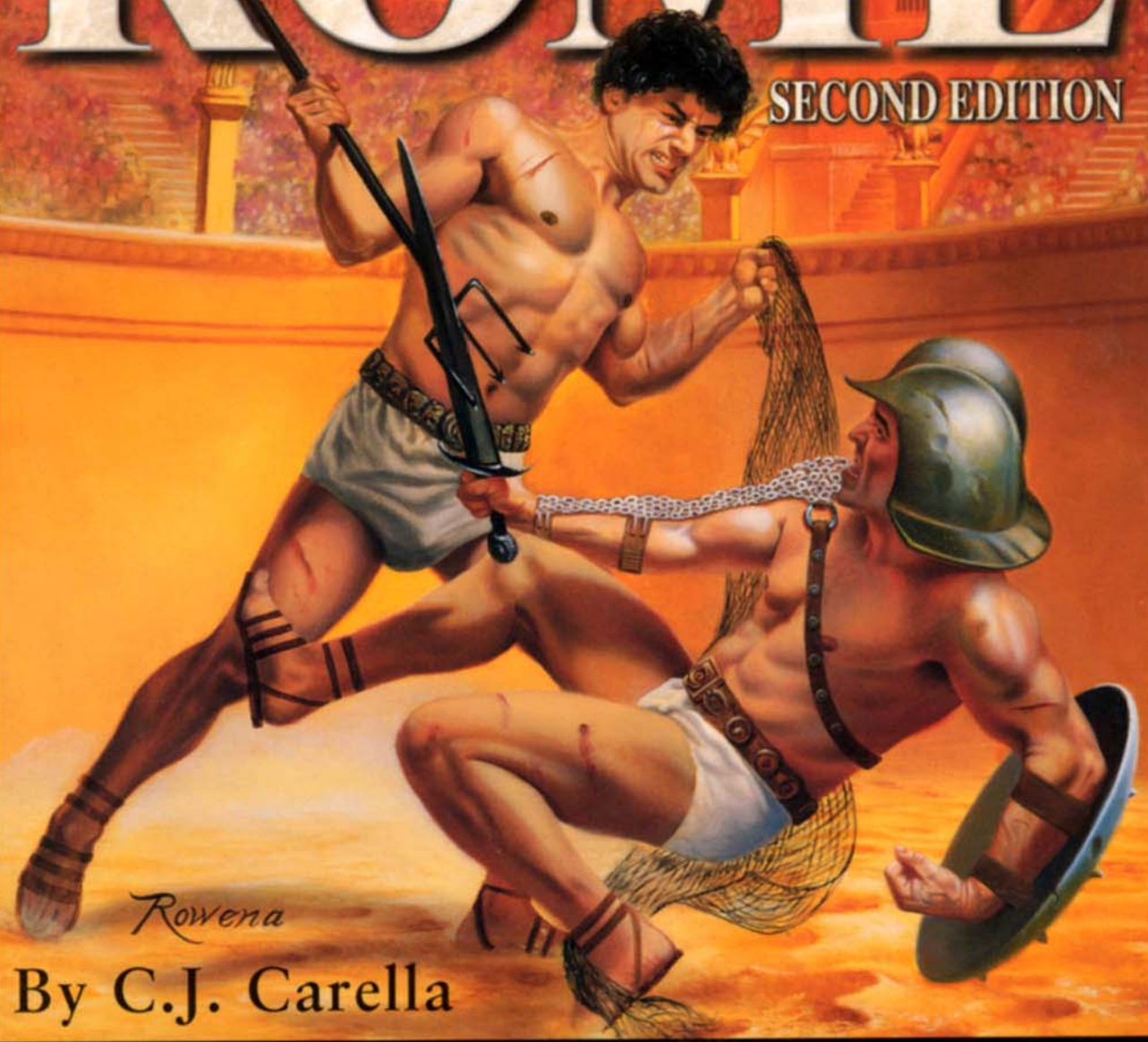


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# IMPERIAL ROME

SECOND EDITION



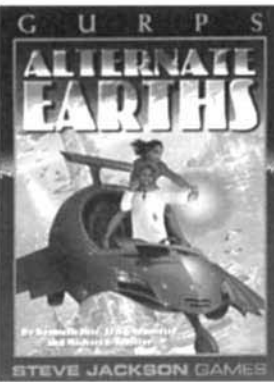
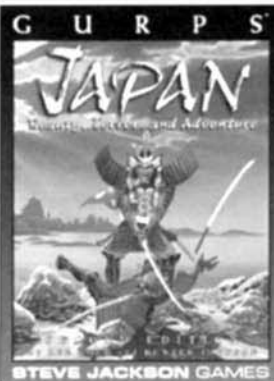
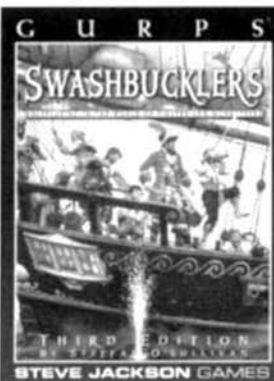
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# IMPERIAL ROME

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Additional material by  
Volker Bach and Gene Seabolt

Edited by Jeremy Zauder

First edition edited by Jeff Koke

Cover art by Rowena

Illustrated by David Day, John Green,  
and Ed Northcott

Additional illustrations by Ruth Thompson

Cartography by Mike Naylor

Playtesters: Graeme Davis, Timothy O. Driscoll, Jeffrey C. Gaines, Joseph Michael Hurst, The I-Men (Scott Coady, Joanne Fry, and George Stevens), Mark Johnson, Shea Judd-Hume, John Kono, Chris W. McCubbin, Tim McGaughy, Phil McGregor, S. John Ross, Brett Slocum, Daniel U. Thibault, Todd A. Woods, Stephen T. Zieger, and the Illuminati BBS.


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*GURPS* System Design  Steve Jackson

Managing Editor  Alain H. Dawson

*GURPS* Line Editor  Sean Punch

Design and Production  Jeremy Zauder

Cover Design and Production  Alex Fernandez

Print Buying  Russell Godwin

Art Direction  Philip Reed

*GURPS* Errata Coordinator  Michael Bowman

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# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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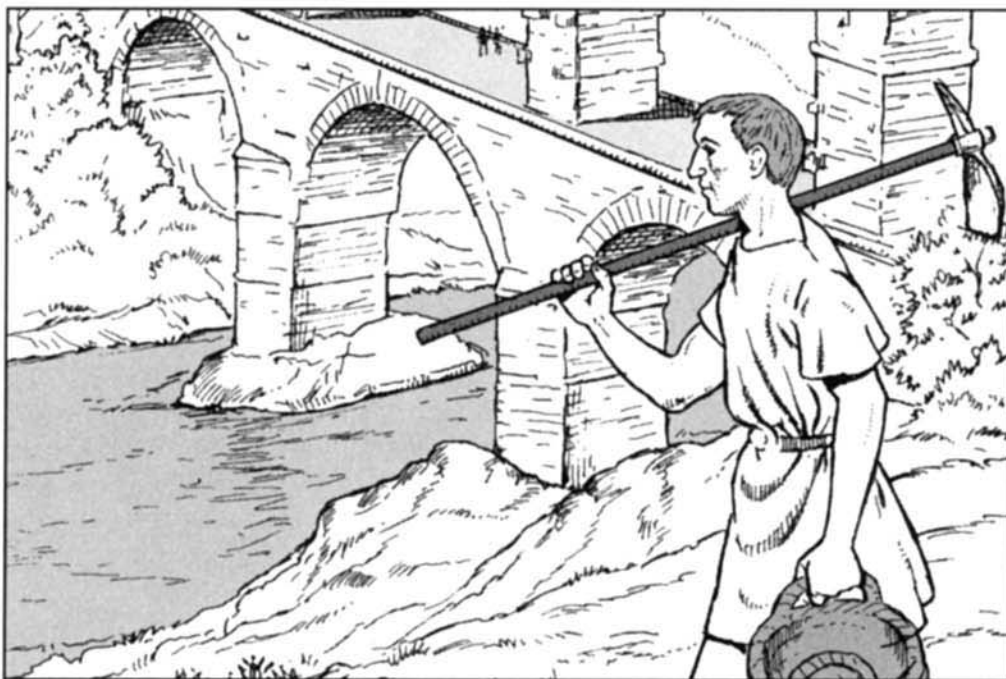
# INTRODUCTION

The Roman Empire was the most impressive civilization the Western World has ever seen. Never before – and never since – have so many different nations, peoples, and cultures been united under a single government. Rome is legendary for the might of its legions, its decadent nobility, and the barbaric blood sports that entertained its people. The Roman world is rich in adventure, intrigue, and history – elements from which nearly any type of campaign can spring.

Several science fiction and fantasy empires have been patterned after Rome – why not base a campaign on the *original* Evil Empire? Rome can be depicted as either a heroic nation where stoic citizens did their duty with the determination of Japanese samurai, or as a corrupt, destructive society to resist or from which protagonists must escape . . . or join if that's where their passions lie.

This book describes Rome from its humble beginnings through the Republican days, the rise of the Empire, and the days of its division and downfall. This book provides several character types, along with advantages, disadvantages, and skills appropriate to the Roman period. Also described in detail are the Imperial legions, the arena games, the city of Rome, and the many provinces united under the massive empire.

Great battles, courtly intrigue, cloak-and-dagger action, and deadly arena fights await as you enter the greatest Empire in the world.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

C.J. Carella's love affair with *GURPS* began with the publication of *Man to Man*, and he has never looked back. His fascination for Roman history dates back even further, and owes much to the works of David Drake and Harry Turtledove. C.J. has a B.A. in Medieval History from Yale University. His hobbies/obsessions include science fiction and fantasy, comic books, and gaming, all of which he laughingly calls "research material."

Born in New York, C.J. has lived in Peru, Venezuela, and Connecticut, in that order. His writing credits include *GURPS Martial Arts*, *GURPS Voodoo*, *Witchcraft*, *Armageddon*, *Nightspawn*, and many articles in *Roleplayer* and *White Wolf*.

## About GURPS

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## PAGE REFERENCES

See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles, or for the most recent list, visit our Web site at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html).

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* — e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *Basic Set*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. TI refers to *Timeline*.

# I LIFE IN ROME

Rome was the name of both the mighty Empire and of the city that spawned it. For most of its citizens, the two were the same. "All roads lead to Rome" was a literal truth; the innumerable paved highways that linked the Empire had the Imperial city as their ultimate destination.



At its peak, Rome had over one million inhabitants – a great city by the standards of any era, and one of awesome proportions at TL2. To keep that many people housed, fed, and provided with fresh water was a feat of engineering and civil planning that would not be matched for centuries. The inhabitants came from all parts of the Empire and beyond, making it as cosmopolitan as present-day New York. Their whims were carefully catered to first by the Senate and then the emperors, because the safety of the government depended on their goodwill. To insure that goodwill, the statesmen promised *panem et circenses* – bread and circuses, the two things that Romans most desired, and, it was said, the only things they required.

Rome is a perfect setting for almost any type of campaign. Anything could be sold and bought there; visitors and items from all parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa could be found there. Seeing a thin, dark-skinned Egyptian bargaining with a red-haired Gaul over the price of Chinese silk was an unsurprising sight. In some ways, a tour of Rome was a tour of the Empire; every foreign province had some representation in the city, and every town and city of the Empire tried in some way to imitate the capital.

## ROMAN SOCIETY

The citizens of Rome were divided into several social classes. Early in the city's history, those divisions were very rigid, but by the late Republic, the lines became blurred. Ex-slaves became powerful and rich enough to mingle with members of the patrician class, and their sons might aspire to join the aristocracy as *equites*. Cutting through all social classes was the informal institution of patronage, a series of personal relationships that kept Roman society together.

### THE FAMILY

Romans considered the family the most important component of their society. Most social and political relationships were based on the family pattern. The Caesar was the supreme father figure, *pater* of the whole Empire. Slaves and women were the social equivalent of children, requiring the control of a master to function in the world.

#### *The Pater Familias*

The *pater familias* was the oldest living male of the household. In a large family, this could mean a great-grandfather, with control over three generations. Most people did not live that long.

The *pater* had absolute power over all members of the family. Traditionally, he controlled all the property, and could sell his sons into slavery or kill them. This rarely happened in practice, but a man stayed under his *pater's* control, even if he had a job and family of his own, until the death of his elder.

#### *Marriage*

In Rome, marriage was usually arranged for social and economic reasons – romance had nothing to do with it. The *pater* chose the spouse for his offspring. At first, the marriage partners had little choice in the matter, but later on they had the right to refuse to marry someone they found unacceptable. Of course, since the patriarch controlled all other aspects of his children's lives, his wishes were hard to refuse.

Girls married very young, usually between 12 and 14 years old. A girl was supplied with a dowry, which remained her property even if the marriage ended. Men could marry from the age of 14, but this was rare since the man was supposed to be able to take care of his new wife. There often was a wide difference in age between husband and wife, although extremes (a 60-year-old man marrying a 16-year-old girl, for instance) usually inspired ridicule.

### Common Roman Greetings

When two Roman acquaintances met on the street, the typical greeting was "Ave!" and "Salve!" ("Hail," and "Hope you're well," respectively). Friends often followed this by a kiss on the cheek. People who *presumed* to be a prominent citizen's friends also kissed or tried to kiss them in public, much to the target's dismay. After an exchange of pleasantries, the Romans departed with "Vale" ("Good luck") as goodbye.

### Roman Virtues

There were certain qualities that exemplified being Roman. Most citizens, especially those of good birth, tried to live up to those ideals – and even those who did not, paid lip service to them.

Obedience, honor, and courage were valuable virtues to the Romans. Obedience to one's father, military or social superior, or the State was necessary, even in the face of unreasonable commands. Duty was an important concept. Romans were supposed to do their duty to their family, their clients, their patrons, and the Empire – or die trying.

Honor was based on doing one's duty, on living irreproachable lives, and on acquiring renown. All Romans dreamed about achieving fame. Those with the means built monuments, sponsored arena games, and endowed charities to gain notoriety. Soldiers tried to outperform each other for the same reason, from lowly privates climbing enemy ramparts to generals launching campaigns in exotic lands. A nobleman who reached middle age without performing a memorable deed was considered a failure.

Courage and fortitude were other Roman virtues. Roman men (and women as well) were expected to endure battle, privation, and fearsome odds without flinching. Taking wounds in one's back was a severe dishonor. An army unit that showed cowardice was decimated: one out of every ten men was executed. If a Roman was dishonored in some vital way, he could partially redeem himself by facing death with bravery – that is, committing suicide (see sidebar, next page).

## Suicide

Romans of high birth valued honor more than life. Suicide was a socially accepted way of coping with dishonor. If a disgraced Roman killed himself, he mitigated the harm that his actions had done to his family. Some citizens went as far as taking their own lives when accused of a crime they did *not* commit; the accusation alone was sometimes too much of a burden. (Some unscrupulous people launched false charges against prominent Romans with that purpose in mind.) Facing capture in war was another reason for suicide, both among Romans and non-Romans, because prisoners were often tortured to death.

Roman marriage was a legal, not religious, matter. If a man and a woman lived together for a year, they were declared officially married. The ceremony itself was a festive event; the bride, attired in a traditional white gown and orange veil, was presented to her future husband. A sacrifice was offered to check for omens (this became optional by late Republican times, and rare in Imperial times), followed by the signing of the marriage contract, which had to be witnessed by 10 people.

## The Role of Women

Women had the status of children in early Rome. They were considered unable to take care of themselves and were supposed to always have male guardians providing for them. A woman was under the control of the *pater familias* until she married, when she became the ward of her husband. Occasionally, a male relative was appointed as guardian to protect her from an abusive husband.

On the other hand, a married woman, or *matrona*, usually took care of all the household affairs, and in well-to-do families was in control of several servants and slaves. In many cases, she also took care of all financial matters, due to the traditional Roman distaste for business.



If a Roman with Status 2+ faces capture by the enemy, or has been convicted of a major crime (treason against the State, for instance), he may attempt suicide. This is most common if there is very little hope of rescue or redemption. Characters with Fanaticism or the Roman Code of Honor (see p. 36) may opt to commit suicide even if the charges are unjustified. Roll against Will to resist these impulses.

Continued on next page . . .

Roman women, at least those of the upper classes, also practiced contraception. This is known because of the measures several Emperors passed to increase birth rates among citizens. There were effective methods, although abstention may have been one of them. Freed from the burden and the danger of constantly bearing children, women lived longer and had more freedom for other pursuits.

## Children

From birth, children were at the mercy of the *pater familias*. The childbirth ritual emphasized this – the newborn was bathed and deposited at the feet of the father, who then took the child in his arms. By doing this, he claimed the child and accepted responsibility for it; otherwise the child was rejected and abandoned. During the early history



of Rome, and even throughout the Imperial period, unwanted children were left to die in the wilderness or by the side of a road. The practice of exposure dates back to the origins of Rome (the legendary founder, Romulus, had himself been abandoned). Exposure was prohibited during the Imperial period, but poor families often abandoned their babies nonetheless. Slave sellers often prowled neighborhoods where new "orphans" might be found, looking for babies that could turn a profit in the slave market.

Even discounting the practice of exposure, infant mortality was very high – medical conditions were still very primitive. This tended to make Romans cherish their surviving children. Rich families, however, left the care of children to slaves (usually of Greek ancestry). Wealthy children were given a slave who acted as a companion and teacher.

Childhood for a male ended officially at age 16, in a ceremony where he took off his childhood toga (marked with a red stripe) and wore a plain one, the *toga virilis*. He was then given a haircut and shaved, the hair saved in a small urn.

## ROMAN SOCIAL CLASSES

Roman society was divided into three main classes (not counting slaves). Class distinctions were at first very firm, but by Imperial times they had blurred, and men whose grandfathers had been plebeians or even slaves could join the Senate. Still, most noble Romans looked down on their social inferiors, and had little respect for the "new men" who had risen to their position. As in most societies, wealth was a major determinant of status. There were enormous discrepancies in wealth – men such as Crassus had estates worth hundreds of *millions* of sesterces, while a plebeian earned less than a thousand sesterces a year (see *Money*, p. 39).

### The Patricians

The patricians were, in theory, direct descendants of the families that helped found Rome. Most patricians could trace their ancestry into the annals of myth – the Iulii Caesars, for example, claimed to descend from the gods themselves!

Patricians were barred from commerce, which was considered degrading to true aristocrats. To invest in a business affair, a patrician had to hire an agent. The wealth of the patrician was in the land he owned, which was supposed to be his main source of income. To qualify as a member of the patrician class, a man had to own property worth 1,000,000 sesterces. Patricians wore a toga with a broad purple stripe.

The noble class had the responsibility to serve the state both in the army (as an officer) and in public service, as a senator, high government official, or priest. Patricians were a very select group within the Senate; only patricians could ratify laws from the popular assembly, even after other social classes were able to enter the Senate. To be allowed to join the Senate, a patrician had to first become a city magistrate (*Quaestor*), after which he automatically became a member until Imperial times (after that, membership was hereditary and by appointment only). Other positions, such as the tribuneships, were open to men of all classes. They were still controlled by the patricians because government posts did not have a salary; without pay, a functionary had to be wealthy to afford the position. (More on Roman offices can be found in the *History* chapter, p. 45.)

### The Equestrians

The equestrian class (also called *equites*) comprised members of noble birth one level below the patricians. Their name came from the fact that in early times members of this class, being able to afford a horse, fought mounted. Unlike the patricians, the members of the equestrian rank were not forbidden to participate in commerce, and several of its members became extremely wealthy. As they grew in power, some equestrians married into patrician families and joined the Senate. *Equites* could also join the Senate after *Quaestorship* and an election, or an appointment.

## Suicide (Continued)

Romans committed suicide by falling on their swords. This takes a lot of determination, even if someone has made up his mind; it requires a Will roll (Will+2 if the character has Fanaticism). If a DX roll is made, the sword stabs through the vitals, doing +2 normal damage, tripling after penetration. On a miss by 1 or 2, the would-be suicide stabs himself in the torso but not the vitals. Non-Romans such as Carthaginians and Persians preferred to ingest poison (see *Poisons*, p. 19).

### Roman News Services

Most Romans learned about the city's tidings through the *Acta Diurna*, or "Daily Gazette." This bulletin board, run by a government agency, was posted on the Old Forum (see p. 14) every morning. The *Acta* consisted of several white boards with written accounts of recent events. Every day, a host of people assembled at the Forum to read or copy the news. Wealthy Romans sent literate slaves to write down the *Acta* and bring it home. Professional copyists also sold copies throughout the city.

The *Gazette* was written in a terse fashion, not unlike the *New York Times*. Among other things, it gave the number of births recorded the previous day, and announced arrivals of shipments of grain, cattle, and other basic staples. Criminal executions were also announced. The events of wars in the frontiers were reported, although major defeats were glossed over (news of Roman reversals managed to get around nonetheless).

Besides those purely factual reports, a large section of the *Acta* dedicated itself to gossip about the doings of the nobility. (The bureau that ran the *Gazette* may have been part of the government, but most of the civil service was run by freedmen or plebeians with little liking for the upper classes, and these journalists took a perverse delight in announcing divorces, adultery cases, and other scandals.) Other features included a summary of the latest debates in the Senate and the result of major court cases. Obituaries and upcoming holidays, including upcoming races and gladiatorial events, were also part of the *Acta*.

Copies of this *Gazette* were sent to prominent Romans and Romanized provincials around the Empire, where the wealthy could get the news from the capital only a few weeks late.



## City Encounters

Some encounters may be a humorous distraction, while others may be life-threatening and even form the core of an adventure.

### THIEVES

Petty thieves were common at any time of the day in Rome, from shoplifters and burglars to confidence men. The example below is a young, jack-of-all-trades thief with several illicit skills. When two skills are separated by a slash, pick one for a particular NPC. A thief or two can team up with more dangerous thugs (see *Sicarius*, below).

Prosperous-looking individuals may find themselves accosted by several youths, some asking for money while others try to pick the victim's pocket. Pedestrians may witness a failed robbery attempt, with the thief running directly at them. Helping apprehend a criminal may earn the the gratitude of a merchant. Aiding the *thief* might make them a friend with underworld contacts, but is more likely to cause trouble.

### TYPICAL THIEF

ST 9 [-10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 11 [10]; HT 10 [0]  
Speed 5.5; Move 5 (6 running).  
Dodge 5; Parry 8 (Brawling).

**Advantages:** Either Combat Reflexes or Alertness +3.

**Disadvantages:** Dead Broke; Greed; Youth.

**Skills:** Brawling-12/Stealth-11; Climbing-12/Knife-12; Fast-Talk-13/Lockpicking-12; Pickpocket-13; Running-10; Streetwise-13.

**Equipment:** A small knife (1d-3 imp., 1d-4 cut) or thieving tools.

*Continued on next page . . .*

An equestrian had to own property worth at least 400,000 sesterces. At first this was a hereditary class, but by the Imperial period men could be admitted into the order by the Emperor. They wore a narrow purple stripe on their togas. The equestrians served as military tribunes in the army or as the prefects of an auxiliary corps. After military service they could be granted procuratorships, a high position in the civil service. The Emperor could also appoint a veteran *equite* to the Senate, if his career merited it.

## The Plebeians

The plebeians were non-noble, free Roman citizens. They ranged from rich traders and artisans to small farmers and businessmen to the unemployed men who survived on the grain dole and the charity of their patrons. The plebeians made up the bulk of Rome's armies and during the Republican times had some political power. Plebeians could occupy positions in the government, but since the highest posts were not paid, only the richest of the *plebs* were able to do so. Plebeians wore bleached togas.

## Foreigners

There were many non-Romans living in the city of Rome. Most non-citizens came from the Roman provinces that had not been granted full rights; there were very few citizens from non-Romanized areas. Those from the same areas tended to congregate in the city, turning their neighborhoods into colonies – there was a “Little Egypt,” a “Little Greece,” and so on. Foreigners did not have to pay certain taxes, but were barred from Roman public offices and the regular army (although they could serve as auxiliaries). They also could not appeal the decisions of provincial governors and other officials.

## Slaves

Slavery became common in Rome after the conquests of the Republic during the second century B.C. Captured peoples from the Greek and eastern lands, Gaul, and Africa were enslaved by the thousands. By the time of the Empire, Rome was a slave society. A large portion of all work was done by slaves, who made up almost a third of Rome's population. Rome's economy was based on the cheap labor produced by this system.

Originally, slaves were acquired as war captives, but after the Empire expanded to its limits, the supply was reduced. Occasionally, a rebellion in a province would result in a temporary glut in the market, as thousands of prisoners were shipped to the slave markets, but this was rare. The sons of slave women were also considered slaves. Poor families often abandoned their children (see p. 6), which then were snapped up by slave traders. Some crimes were punished by slave labor, usually in the worst places, such as mines.

Slaves had no rights – they were property, to be disposed of as their master wished. They could be sold, mutilated, or killed. Slaves in private houses were regularly beaten when they did not perform their duties well. In the mines or in farming work-gangs, living conditions were brutal.

Slaves endured punishment that was equally severe. The penalties for running away included branding with a hot iron or being forced to wear a heavy metal collar at all times. For other crimes, penalties could include death by crucifixion or being sent to the arena. If any slave murdered his master, all the slaves in the household could be put to death.

These laws were intended to prevent slave rebellions; Romans were terrified of a potential uprising. For instance, a proposal that all slaves should wear a special garment so they could be recognized was repealed on the grounds that then the slaves would discover how numerous they were, which might lead to a rebellion. Spartacus' uprising (see sidebar, p. 94) was remembered with fear. But the laws must have worked, because there were no major slave revolts during the Imperial period.

The treatment of slaves was not consistently bad, however. Household slaves, especially those who were born and raised in the house with their masters' children, were often treated well and became close friends and confidants of their owners. During the Imperial period, laws were passed to better the lot of slaves. Casual killing of slaves became murder during the reign of Emperor Claudius. Slaves were not allowed to marry but eventually they could live as husband and wife. Although they were not paid for their work, slaves could receive tips or earn money in their free time, and if they saved enough money, they could buy their freedom and that of their children. When a *pater familias* died, several of the older or more deserving slaves could be freed, as determined by the dead man's will. Many slaves were freed during the Imperial period (probably because it was cheaper to keep them as clients than to pay for their room and board). A freedman held a client-patron relationship with his former master (see below). The ex-slave did not have the rights of a full Roman citizen – but his sons did. By the end of the second century A.D., it is believed that most Roman citizens were the descendants of slaves.

## PATRONS AND CLIENTS

Since before the Republic, the practice of patronage had been an important part of Roman life. By the time of the Empire, it had become the way of doing business for everything from family matters to foreign policy. The Emperor was the ultimate patron; from the Caesar to the last free citizen, almost every man in the city was somebody's patron and in turn someone else's client.

There was an informal but binding set of duties and rights between a patron and a client. Clients were supposed to see their patron, usually once a day, to pay their respects. They were also expected to help their patron, pass along any information that might affect him, and in general show their support. Patrons usually rewarded the daily appearance of their clients with a small amount of money. Powerful patrons reciprocated in more important ways. For instance, a city magistrate would usually award building contracts to his clients; the clients would be expected to obey any reasonable request for assistance in return.

In some ways, this system was like "the old boys' network" that exists in England and the United States. In others, it worked like the Sicilian Mafia as depicted in *The Godfather*. Clients were sometimes more loyal to their patrons than to the government. Whole armies became their generals' clients, and marched against Rome itself time after time.



## City Encounters

(Continued)

### MUGGER (SICARIUS)

Violent muggings occur most often at night, except in the poorest and less frequented streets. The *sicarii* are not fools: they will not attack a large or heavily-armed party. When they make their move, the robbers will try to close off all avenues of escape by coming from both ends of a narrow street. There will be between two and six *sicarii*.

This can be an occasional threat to throw against the PCs, or can be used to mask darker motives. Maybe the thugs were hired specifically to ambush the party. In that case, they may be better-trained and more determined.

#### TYPICAL SICARIUS

ST 12 [20]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 9 [-10]; HT 10 [0]  
Speed 5; Move 5.  
Dodge 5; Parry 6 (Knife).

**Advantages:** Toughness +1 or High Pain Threshold.

**Disadvantages:** Bloodlust; Greed; Sadism.

**Skills:** Brawling-11; Broadsword-11 (for club); Knife-12; Stealth-10; Streetwise-11.

**Equipment:** Large knife (1d-1 imp., 1d cut) or cudgel (1d+3 crush).

Continued on next page . . .

## City Encounters

(Continued)

### CITY POLICE

The *vigiles* (see p. 16) are firemen-watchmen; they usually patrol in groups of two to six. A fire will bring at least one squad of 10 to the scene. They will not bother Roman citizens unless they are openly committing a crime. Foreigners, slaves, and children will be handled more roughly.

Roman constables can be a help or nuisance depending on their timing and the nature of the activity they encounter. In an action-oriented campaign, they can provide some extra muscle; a PC with enough Status or Military Rank can take temporary command of a patrol. On the other hand, the *vigiles* can be the worst thing to happen to anyone engaged in illegal activities. The GM can depict the city police as hard-working peacekeepers or as corrupt, inept thugs; both kinds existed in Rome.

#### TYPICAL WATCHMAN

ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 10 [0]  
Speed 5.25; Move 5.  
Dodge 5; Parry 6 (Shortsword).

**Advantages:** Legal Enforcement Powers; one combat-related advantage or Alertness+2.

**Disadvantages:** Any one Mental disadvantage.

**Skills:** Firefighting-12; Shield-12; Shortsword-12; Spear-11.

**Equipment:** Firefighting hook (can be used as a club: 1d+3 crushing); *gladius* (1d impaling, 1d+1 cut); leather cuirass or mail shirt; metal pot-helm; medium shield; in case of a fire, they will carry ladders and buckets. Historically, they probably did not wear armor except in emergencies.

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Patronage was a combination of traditional ritual and an exchange of favors. For example, a wine shop owner might have as a patron a large wine seller. Once a day, the shop owner went and paid his respects, exchanged some pleasantries, and left. Then suppose a riot broke out in the city and a mob swarmed into the wine shop and destroyed the inventory; the shop owner would ask the patron for some credit to keep the business going. The wine seller would not do this for just anybody, but this was a client – he would send the shop owner several *amphorae* of wine to be paid when the shop recovered. By the same token, if a rival wine seller offered the same wine for a cheaper price, the shop owner was expected to refuse and buy only from his patron.

This was how patronage worked in theory. Clients would act in the best interest of their patron, and he would in turn take care of them. An enemy of the patron was an enemy of all his clients. In practice, the relationship was often abused by one side or the other . . . most often by the patrons. Some enjoyed humiliating their clients by having them parade with the patrons for the whole day, or by feeding them low-quality foods when the clients were invited over for dinner.

A common patron-client relationship was that between the voters of one district and their magistrates. The magistrate protected his clients, who in turn always voted for him. This system was very similar to the “machine politics” of some cities in 19th-century America.



A much grander version was the relationship between whole cities and famous generals or provincial governors. And several noble families kept close ties with subdued or allied *nations*. The Scipiones (one of whom was General Scipio Africanus; see sidebar, p. 76), for instance, were the patrons of several Spanish cities and tribes. The Romans advised their clients on how to deal with their new government, and would “lobby” for them in the Senate. The clients returned this consideration by sending money and gifts, and, more important, by giving the patron family recognition and prestige. Some client nations fought for their patrons during the internal struggles that beset Rome at the end of the Republic.

Julius Caesar, for instance, used his position as consul to give citizenship to some regions of Italy from which he recruited several legions, who in turn were loyal to him personally rather than to the Roman government. It was patronage like this that allowed Caesar to march against Rome (see p. 51). Later in the Empire, several German tribes were allowed into Roman lands as *foederati* (allies); the Empire acted as a patron, giving the Germans land, while the Germans were entrusted with protecting the borders against other German tribes. The system worked for a while, but eventually the German “clients” turned against their patron.

## THE LEGAL SYSTEM

The Roman codes of law were the basis for most legal systems in the Western world. Even in the United States, many legal terms are in Latin and are descended from the laws of the Empire.

### Roman Law

Originally, when a person committed a crime against another, the victim's family took care of justice by exacting revenge from the criminal or his family. This situation did not last long. Romans were legalists even in their religion (see *The Imperial Cult*, p. 114), and during the monarchy they had developed sets of rules for contracts. By 450 B.C., the first Roman code was published. In addition to those codes, a body of precedents (previous rulings on earlier cases) was developed to expand the original laws. Lawsuits were based on a formula – that is, a logical hypothesis. For instance, the formula for a case of unpaid debt was “If it is true that the defendant owed the money to the plaintiff, he should be forced to pay the debt; if this is not true, he should be acquitted.” The job of the lawyers, the court, and the witnesses was to determine whether the allegation made in the formula was true or false.

Roman law also made a social distinction between the men it judged. Romans were divided into two classes in the eyes of the law, *honestiores* (honorable) and *humiliores* (dishonorable). The distinction was not defined, but most courts placed noblemen and the wealthy in the first category and the poor or uneducated in the second.

### Lawyers and Judges

By the Imperial period, law was a well-respected career. Roman education put great emphasis on rhetoric and public speaking, and the law became the only profession outside the Senate where those skills could be used after the Empire eliminated the political races of the Republican period. Would-be barristers studied in special schools or by working under famous lawyers. Legal fees were not big, but rich clients usually gave their lawyers expensive presents and sometimes left them inheritances. Furthermore, a lawyer starting an action against a criminal was rewarded with a percentage of any fine or confiscation that resulted from the case. Speaking for someone in court was traditionally an act of friendship, not a profession; in theory, everyone should have spoken for themselves. By the time of Diocletian, lawyer fees were officially recognized at fixed rates.

Cases were at first tried by a jury chosen from prominent citizens, many of whom had been or were lawyers. Jurors considered the evidence and then wrote on a wax tablet their verdict. The verdict consisted of an initial: A (*Absolvo*, or non-guilty), C (*Condemno*, guilty), or NL (*Non Liquet*, no verdict). If a majority of jurors decided for a verdict, it became the decision of the court; otherwise the case was deadlocked, but could be taken to court again.

Later in the Imperial period, professional judges (*judices*, singular *judex*) started presiding over cases. Single judges were more easily bribed, so the quality of Roman law declined accordingly.

### Trials

Trials were almost a spectator sport in Rome. Prominent citizens went to the courts to admire the rhetoric of lawyers. The common people attended in the hope of witnessing a new scandal, as well as to see the drama of the trial itself. Lawyers used their skills to attack the defendants or plaintiffs in any way possible, trying to find fault with everything from personal habits to the company they kept. A case could drag on for years before a verdict was reached.

## City Encounters

(Continued)

### PRAETORIAN GUARDS

These are the Emperor's personal bodyguards. They didn't swagger through the streets in full armor unless the GM wants a cinematic adventure; in fact, they were unarmored on guard duty, following an ancient injunction against wearing military accoutrements within the sacred city boundary.

Anybody they encounter who seems to have Status 0 or below will not be given much consideration. Even Roman noblemen were mistreated during the periods when the Guard controlled the government (see p. 16). Squads of 10 guards are sometimes sent by the Emperor or a favorite to carry out missions, including the arrest of people suspected of treason.

#### TYPICAL GUARDSMAN

ST 13 [30]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20]  
Speed 6; Move 6.  
Dodge 7; Parry 8; Block 8.

**Advantages:** Rank +1 over other soldiers; Legal Enforcement Powers; Combat Reflexes; another combat advantage or Alertness +2.

**Disadvantages:** Bully; Overconfident.  
**Skills:** Shield-14; Shortsword-14; Spear-12; Spear-Throwing-13; other military skills.

**Equipment:** *Gladius* (1d+1 imp., 2d-2 cut); segmented armor; large shield; legionary helmet.

### SLAVES

Slaves can be found on the streets at any time in the city, either carrying out their masters' orders or idling during their free time. If off-duty, they can be hired for minor tasks (taking messages around the city, for instance) for \$1-6.

#### TYPICAL SLAVE

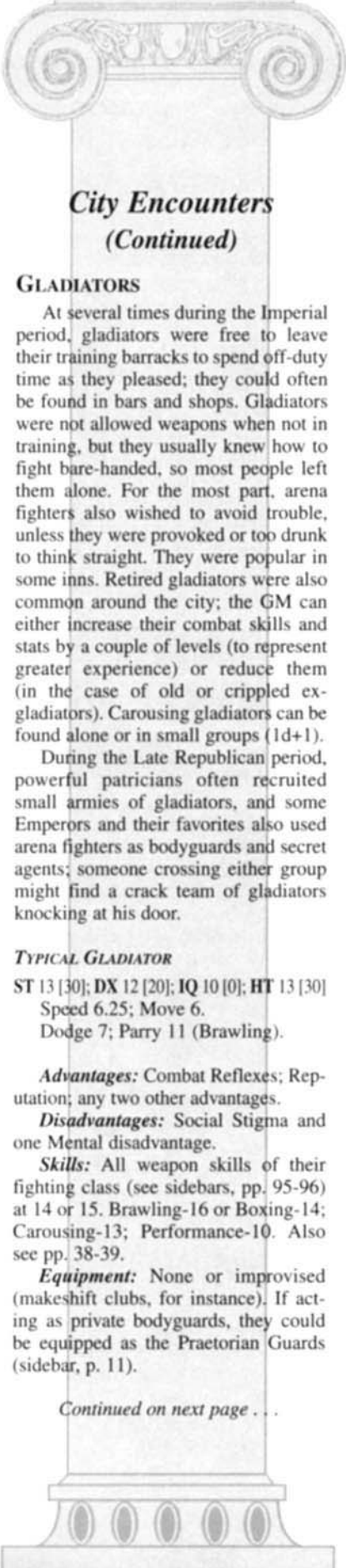
ST (1d+9); DX (1d+8); IQ (1d+8); HT 10  
Move: variable.

**Advantages:** None.

**Disadvantages:** Social Stigma; Low Status; any Mental disadvantage.

**Skills:** Fast-Talk at IQ+1; one Professional skill at IQ or DX; Savoir-Faire at IQ.

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## City Encounters (Continued)

### GLADIATORS

At several times during the Imperial period, gladiators were free to leave their training barracks to spend off-duty time as they pleased; they could often be found in bars and shops. Gladiators were not allowed weapons when not in training, but they usually knew how to fight bare-handed, so most people left them alone. For the most part, arena fighters also wished to avoid trouble, unless they were provoked or too drunk to think straight. They were popular in some inns. Retired gladiators were also common around the city; the GM can either increase their combat skills and stats by a couple of levels (to represent greater experience) or reduce them (in the case of old or crippled ex-gladiators). Carousing gladiators can be found alone or in small groups (1d+1).

During the Late Republican period, powerful patricians often recruited small armies of gladiators, and some Emperors and their favorites also used arena fighters as bodyguards and secret agents; someone crossing either group might find a crack team of gladiators knocking at his door.

### TYPICAL GLADIATOR

ST 13 [30]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 13 [30]  
Speed 6.25; Move 6.  
Dodge 7; Parry 11 (Brawling).

**Advantages:** Combat Reflexes; Reputation; any two other advantages.

**Disadvantages:** Social Stigma and one Mental disadvantage.

**Skills:** All weapon skills of their fighting class (see sidebars, pp. 95-96) at 14 or 15. Brawling-16 or Boxing-14; Carousing-13; Performance-10. Also see pp. 38-39.

**Equipment:** None or improvised (makeshift clubs, for instance). If acting as private bodyguards, they could be equipped as the Praetorian Guards (sidebar, p. 11).

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An important part of any case was the use of evidence and witnesses. Evidence in the form of written records was greatly respected. A testimony's weight was rated according to the social standing of the witness. The word of a Roman citizen was taken more seriously than that of a foreigner (Greeks and Syrians were traditionally considered to be notorious liars). Slaves could testify, but only if they were first tortured by flogging or being stretched on the rack; this was to make sure they were not just following their masters' orders.

### Crime and Punishment

Crimes included theft, extortion (including large-scale extortion by corrupt provincial governors), adultery, murder, and treason. The penalties depended on the classification of the condemned person (see above). If the criminal belonged to the *honestiores* his punishment was usually limited to banishment, confiscation of property, or fines (unless the charge was treason, which in Imperial times was almost always a capital crime). *Humiliores* could be condemned to death by crucifixion or in the arena, or to slave labor.

## CITY LIFE

Rome was a vital, bubbling city, with a teeming population that spent its days working, playing, and scheming. The city was the place to find, buy, make, or steal anything that could be had in the ancient world. Most other cities built by Romans tried to imitate the capital, so what was true of Rome was generally true on a smaller scale of other cities in the Empire.

## CITY ADMINISTRATION

At first, the city of Rome was run by *aediles*, a position occupied by up-and-coming noblemen. But the city eventually grew too large for these commissioners, so at the time of the Empire, new administrative levels were added to the system.

### The City Prefect

The *praefectus* was an official nominated by the Emperor himself. He combined the positions of mayor, consumer protection agency, police commissioner, military commander, and even judge in cases concerning the city and family matters. The city prefect had usually served in the Senate and as a provincial governor.

### The Curatores

The *curatores* were superintendents and commissioners in charge of specific areas of the city. They included Public Works, Grain Supply (Rome had to import most of the food it needed), Sewers, and Water Supply. The *aediles* acted in a supervisory capacity and reported to the *curatores*.

## THE STREETS

Roman streets were cleaner and better maintained than those of any city before the 19th century. All roads were well-paved with rock bricks, which were constantly repaired, at least in the better areas. Slopes were made easier to climb by building staircases over the steeper elevations. On the other hand, the need to pack so many people into the limited space available made the streets narrower than their modern counterparts. Most main streets in Rome were 15-20 feet wide; side streets could have a width of less than 10 feet. Buildings were built so closely together (see below) that some areas of the city were shadowed during most of the day.

Wheeled traffic was forbidden during daylight hours, so most of the traffic was pedestrian. To get around in Rome, a person had to walk unless he was wealthy enough to own or rent a slave-borne litter. The streets were cleaned periodically, but in the poorer sections, people still threw their refuse out the window. Most were considerate enough to do this at night – an additional risk to those who ventured into the streets after dark.



## SHOPS

Almost all ground floors of lower-class buildings were occupied by shops. There were many shops in the city because it was hard to travel far from one place to another, so people made most of their purchases right next to their houses. Besides general stores where food and farm products could be purchased, there were more specialized establishments: cloth sellers, offering either fabrics or ready-to-wear garments; pottery shops; jewelers that sold anything from cheap trinkets (in low-class neighborhoods) to expensive imported pieces; bookstores, with a list of new releases written on the walls; and wine shops where the lower classes drank and mingled.

The shopkeeper usually lived behind or above the shop, in a small apartment; “born above a shop” was a term of contempt among the well-to-do. Most shops consisted of a counter facing the street behind which the storekeeper sat. Clients stood by the counter and made their purchases while standing on the street. For the most part, customers did not enter the shop. Shutters made of wood or canvas covered the shop at night.

The shops that catered to the rich were much larger, and customers walked in to admire the inventory. Slave clerks attended to their needs. Most shops made the products they sold (so a shoemaker would be working on more boots between sales). Food was purchased from markets outside the city and brought in by carts late at night (see *Night Life*, p. 19).

## IMPORTANT BUILDINGS

Rome had several important structures that attracted provincial gawkers. Everyone in the city knew how to find these landmarks; Area Knowledge rolls are at +4 to find one’s way from a known location to one of these public buildings.

### *The Palatine*

The Palatine was one of the seven hills of Rome. According to legend, this was the first place Romulus (see p. 106) settled with his followers. The Palatine hill had one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city until Emperor Augustus set the Imperial residence (the *Palatium*) there. (The word “palace” comes from this monument.) By 100 A.D., the whole hill was taken over by Imperial buildings.

## City Encounters (Continued)

### SHOP OWNER

A keeper of one of the many shops found in Rome might be the owner, a salaried freedman or plebeian, or even a slave (eliminate Wealth advantage). Many shop owners are foreigners; Greek, Punic, and Semitic merchants lived in Rome. Their proficiency in Latin may be very low (skill of 9 or lower), and they may speak a crude version of Greek (-2 to language rolls).

### TYPICAL SHOP OWNER

ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 9 [-10]  
Speed 4.75; Move 4.  
Dodge 4.

**Advantages:** Comfortable Wealth.

**Disadvantages:** One of Bad Temper, Cowardice, or Greed.

**Skills:** Broadsword-9 (for club); one Craft skill at 13+; Language (Latin)-11; Merchant-13. Foreigners will have one native language at 11 and either Latin or Greek at 10.

**Equipment:** Club under the counter (1d+1 crushing); working tools; small inventory worth 2d×\$25.

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## City Encounters (Continued)

### GAMBLERS

Many wine shops and inns are frequented by dice players or racing fanatics who gather to drink and gamble. Accusations of cheating, the merits of one gladiator over another, or the different racing teams (see p. 22) often spark fights. Some gamblers are well-informed about the real news of the city, but most will simply repeat whatever rumors are in vogue.

Anyone living in a city may be involved in gambling, if only to bet on the chariot races. Gamblers' bars are good places to find clues or trouble.

#### TYPICAL GAMBLER

ST 11 [10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 10 [0]  
Speed 5; Move 5.  
Dodge 5; Parry 7 (Brawling).

**Advantages:** None.

**Disadvantages:** One or two of Alcoholism, Compulsive Gambling, Greed, or Laziness.

**Skills:** Brawling-11; Fast-Talk-12; Gambling-12; Streetwise-11.

**Equipment:** None.

### NOBLEMAN GANG

An occasional danger at night are these young, swaggering noblemen who assault passersby. They are usually not armed with anything heavier than clubs, but may have military or unarmed combat training. Nobleman gangs range from 6 to 12 individuals. Roll one die for each gang member; on a 1-3, he is drunk (-3 to DX and IQ). Hurting or killing one of these youths may cause serious trouble.

#### TYPICAL GANG MEMBER

ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10]  
Speed 5.5; Move 5.  
Dodge 5; Parry 5 (Shortsword).

**Advantages:** Status 3+; Wealth.

**Disadvantages:** Bully; Sadism.

**Skills:** Carousing-12; Shortsword-11; and one of Brawling-12, Boxing-12, or Wrestling-11.

**Equipment:** Cudgels (1d+2 crush).

The *Palatium* was an immense structure, with multiple levels and domes. Gilded tiles and statues shone every day over the rest of the city. Several Emperors added new wings or rooms to the palace. The Emperor, his relatives, and his favorites all lived in the luxurious houses at the top of the hill. The buildings covered over 10,000 square feet.

The Palatine was also the hub of the civil service. Offices for thousands of employees and the headquarters of several important public officials were found there.

### The Forum

The Roman *fora* were the public buildings, the equivalent of town meeting halls. The original Old Forum of Rome proved to be too small, so several more were built, until a chain of public buildings and temples was created. A forum had one or two temples, a *basilica* (courthouse), and a *curia* (assembly meeting hall). These buildings were arranged around a wide plaza decorated with statues and fountains. Shops lined the rest of the plaza. The entrance to a forum was usually a triumphal arch, decorated with depictions of the victories of a general or Emperor.

### The Colosseum and Circus Maximus

The two largest entertainment spots in Rome were the Colosseum, an amphitheater that could seat 50,000 people, and the *Circus Maximus*, which had a capacity of 250,000. Almost any dweller of Rome will be able to find his way to either of those buildings (Area Knowledge +6 roll). See sidebar, p. 90.



### The Baths

Huge bath houses were a combination of shopping mall, health spa, and country club. There were several baths (*thermae*) in Rome. Most were constructed along the same general lines: a large garden with the main bath chambers at its center surrounded by smaller rooms where people gathered to talk, listen to poetry, etc. In the larger baths, these rooms included clothing and gift shops, in addition to libraries and auditoriums where famous thinkers debated publicly.

The main bath had four predominant rooms: the *frigidarium* (cold room), *tepidarium* (warm room), *caldarium* (hot room), and *sudatorium* (steam room). The first three rooms had water pools, which were heated or cooled to match the room. A visitor usually exercised for a while in the courtyard, and then entered all the

rooms in succession (it is not clear in what order, but it is believed that the *frigidarium* was the last one). Slaves cleaned the guests by using oil and a scraper (*strigilis*) to remove dirt.



Hot, warm, and icy cold water were provided through a complex set of subterranean pipes. Also underground was a complex network of service corridors used by slaves to go from one area of the bath to the other without disturbing the guests (these tunnels would also be helpful to anyone planning mischief in the baths).

### **The Pantheon**

This was the temple dedicated to several gods and, most important, to the deified Emperors. The Pantheon was an important center of ritual and worship for the Roman state religion. It was notable for having the largest dome in the ancient world. It was originally built in 27 B.C., and then rebuilt by Emperor Hadrian in 118 A.D.

## **ROMAN HOMES**

Where and how a Roman lived were determined by his social standing and his wealth. The city poor had to make do with small, cramped apartments, while patricians owned several large homes.

### **Apartment Buildings**

Apartment buildings (called *insulae*) were the solution to Rome's overpopulation. Landlords tried to build dwellings with as many floors as possible. By Augustus' time, the height of buildings could not exceed 70 feet (six or seven stories). At TL2, buildings that tall were a constant risk; after a few years, they often fell apart, with dire consequences to the occupants. The quality of the *insulae* varied widely, depending on the neighborhood where they were set. The buildings erected in the slums were little more than death-traps.

Apartments were usually built around a central open court. Balconies opened either onto the central court or toward the street outside. Sometimes two buildings on opposite sides of the street were so close that you could step from one balcony to the other across the street. The buildings were made of concrete and wood; usually the higher levels were made of wood to reduce their weight (also reducing their quality).

The price and the social class of a building apartment varied according to the height of the apartment. Since there were no elevators, the higher an apartment was, the harder the climb to reach it. Additionally, the higher levels used lighter materials which were prone to breakage, drafts, and leaks. The lower levels contained shops or the highest-quality apartments. The best quarters were decorated and well-aired in an attempt to imitate the coveted Roman villa (see p. 23). Each additional floor saw a decrease in size, decoration, and comfort. The worst area was always the attic, a leaky, flimsy-walled crawlspace that was miserably hot in the summer (the sun heated the brick roof, turning the attic into an oven) and cold and drafty in the winter. But even the attics were rented at outrageous prices.

Access to the building was through different stairways. The best ground-floor apartments sometimes had private doorways to the street. Renters of higher levels had to go into the building and climb one of the staircases. The windows of the lower levels were usually covered with metal bars to deter burglars.

### **The Domus**

Roman city mansions were very large and housed a staff of dozens or even hundreds of slaves and attendants. Like most Roman dwellings, it was built around a central open court (the *atrium*). The entrance was through a corridor. A door was usually placed some distance within the corridor; the exterior part of this hallway was the vestibule, where guests announced themselves to a doorman.



## **Graffiti**

The walls of Roman buildings were often covered with the scribbles of pedestrians, lodging guests, or even the building owners themselves. These scribbles were made with charcoal, knife, or stylus (see p. 42). Some of them, found in Roman ruins in Pompeii and elsewhere, provide an interesting picture of Roman life. GMs can include graffiti phrases in their description of most Roman public establishments. Listed below are a few typical markings.

"(Roman or foreign name) was here." Found written or carved on or near famous buildings.

*Insults:* Many curses or insults were written on the walls of the buildings where the targets lived. A Roman who has antagonized someone should be confronted with such phrases as "Drop dead," "May you be crucified," "Vile Wretch," and more graphic phrases describing impossible sexual acts, all written or painted on the doorway of his *insula*.

*Poems and Limericks:* City dwellers with artistic pretensions would write poems to their loved ones, dirty limericks, and humorous verses. PCs might acquire the Quirk or even the Odious Personal Habit of writing verses that begin with "There once was a man from Londinium . . ." or similar phrase, on every possible surface.

*Declarations of Love:* Romantic Romans announced to the world their love fortunes or mishaps. Some were verses: "I write at Love's dictation and Cupid's instruction; But damn it! I don't want to be a god without you." Others were simple phrases like, "Lucia, please love me back!"

*Political slogans:* During the Republican days, candidates were praised or reviled in wall scribbles. In Imperial times, anti-governmental graffiti was sometimes painted, but people discovered doing this could face serious charges. Even in Imperial times, some elected offices inspired such slogans as, "If upright living is considered any recommendation, Lucretius Fronto is well worthy of the office." Sometimes the support for a candidate came from unlikely sources: "The petty thieves support Vatia for the aedileship."

*Continued on next page . . .*

## Graffiti (Continued)

**Game Announcements:** Professional sign writers wrote or painted on the walls of taverns and wine shops a description of upcoming events, including the names of the racers or gladiators who would participate.

**Advertisements:** Shops, artisans, and other professionals used wall writings to promote themselves. Even members of the oldest profession used this system. A sign on a wall in Pompeii promotes a prostitute's services: "I am yours for 2 asses cash." The word "pornography" originates from the Greek words for "prostitute" (*porne*) and "to write" (*graphein*).



The bedrooms were positioned around the court. Beyond the *atrium* and separated by a wall, was a second court, the *peristylum*, which often had a garden and a fountain. Other rooms included a small chapel (*cella*), one or two dining rooms (*triclinium*), lavatories, and slave quarters.

Sometimes small shops and apartments were built around the *domus*. The rent for those smaller rooms helped to pay for the upkeep of the house. A slave or servant from the main house acted as the landlord of those rentals.

## THE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Before the reign of Augustus, Rome had been vulnerable to crime, street riots, and fires. There were no official police and fire-fighting agencies. Noblemen had armed retinues of slaves or ex-gladiators for protection, and private fire-fighting agencies (like the one used by Crassus; see p. 49) were organized for profit, not public safety. The Imperial government changed all this, creating a large force that served as both policemen and firemen. For administrative purposes, Rome was divided into seven districts, each with a station and two substations.

### The Vigiles

The *vigiles* ("watchmen") were 7,000 in number, and were divided into a 1,000-man cohort for each district. Each cohort was organized along military lines, led by a tribune and divided into centuries with a commanding centurion. The *Praefectus Vigilum* was in charge of the police department; he was an equestrian with administrative and military experience.

The *vigiles* walked the streets in pairs or patrols of four to six men. During the day, there were many *vigiles* on patrol. At night, watch patrols with lanterns walked around some of the better streets to provide a modicum of security; they avoided the poorer areas after dark. A major emergency or fire during the evening would draw them out of their headquarters in great numbers.

Many citizens had a low view of the *vigiles* and gave them the nickname "Bucketmen" because of the buckets made of coiled rope and pitch that they carried with them. Beside fire-fighting gear, which included ladders, water pumps, and axes, the watch was armed with hooked poles (see sidebar, p. 10), which they would use to club criminals or move debris in a burning building.

### The City Cohorts

The *cohortes urbanae* were under the direct command of the City Prefect, and consisted of four 1,000-man cohorts. They were not used as a police force except during times of emergency, such as a large-scale riot, but sometimes assisted the *vigiles* in their operations. In general, they were the city's garrison.

### The Praetorian Guard

The Praetorians were the bodyguards of the Emperor. At first there were only three 1,000-man cohorts in Rome, but the number was soon raised to nine, making the Praetorians the largest armed force in the city. The Praetorians were recruited from Italians chosen for their military abilities and courage, and were trained as an elite unit. The quality of the Guards tended to decline as they got used to the luxury of the capital. They always received the best training and equipment available, however. Their pay was about twice as high as that of normal soldiers.

A separate officer, the Praetorian Prefect, was in charge of the Guards; this Prefect was not under the command of the City Prefect, but responded to the Emperor himself. One cohort was stationed at the Imperial palace (see p. 13); the other eight were in a

huge camp north-northeast of the Palatine, near the Viminal hill (see the map on p. 25). This camp was a citadel-fortress, the last line of defense for the city if it was invaded. Its defenses were never tested, however.

Units of Praetorians often marched through the city, usually in squads of 10. The guards could be used to help suppress major riots. They also cut the most impressive figure in parades, marching in gilded armor of the finest quality.

## CITY HAZARDS

Rome was as safe to live in as any city of the ancient world. Still, like any urban area throughout history, it offered dangers for the unwary, the unlucky, and particularly the poor. Wealthy noblemen shuttered in their houses had little to fear unless a raging fire reached their neighborhood. Even so, most well-to-do Romans avoided living in the city when possible, preferring villas in the outlying districts.

### Crime

Crime in Rome ranged from petty theft to armed robbery. Pickpockets and cutpurses were a common hazard in the congested streets. At night, *sicarii* ("knife-men") prowled around looking for lone travelers. Apartment dwellers and shop-owners lived in fear of burglars. Most windows in the first two floors of a building were crossed with iron bars or boarded up. Shop owners lived behind or on top of their shops, usually with a cudgel or axe at hand in case of a break-in.

During the day, a person needing help had a good chance of being within earshot of a Watch patrol (see sidebar, p. 10). If someone screams for the guard during the day, roll 3d; on a 9 or less, a squad of guardsmen will arrive at the scene in 2d seconds. Reduce the chance to 6 or less if in a small side-street, and any chance by 1 if in a poor section. Further attempts can be made every other turn. A large crowd will give a +1 to the chance if the reason the Watch is being called seems sensible to the people around them, because the cry will be taken up by several people. Even if the *vigiles* were not in the area, the streets were often crowded, making violent crimes much rarer.

It was much harder to summon help at night; the Watch only patrolled some areas, and most people were locked in for the evening, unlikely to assist victims. Rolls to summon the Watch are at -3 at night; there is no chance at all to summon help in a poor district.

### Riots

During the Late Republic, riots were common. Political leaders and street gangs could incite mobs to violence, and the lack of a police force made it easy for the riot to spread beyond anyone's control. Even after the Empire restored order, outbreaks of violence were not unknown. Rome held over a million people; all the city forces, including the Praetorians, the City Cohorts, and the *vigiles*, amounted to 20,000 men or less, not nearly enough to suppress a massive riot.

Most riots were rather minor, however. A fight starting outside the circus or the amphitheater sometimes degenerated into an extended brawl in the streets. Angry (and greedy) mobs would target shops for looting – fighting sometimes escalated into torching the stores! At the first sign of a disturbance, shop owners pulled down the shutters and prayed the wood and canvas defenses would hold.

Bystanders caught in a riot can get hurt. Unwilling participants should roll against the better of ST or DX; on a failure, they take 1d-1 crushing damage from trampling. If they are the target of the riot, they will be in trouble; rolls are at -2, and damage is 1d+1, every other turn, until they make three straight successes (indicating they extricated themselves from the mob) or the riot is suppressed. If they *initiated* the riot, they take no damage but may become the targets of the Watch.



### Crucifixion

This punishment was reserved for slaves or non-citizens found guilty of treason or crimes against "humankind." The victim was bound or nailed to a wooden cross, which was then raised to a vertical position. There has been considerable debate on whether the victims were nailed through the hands and feet or the wrists and ankles. Physically, it is impossible for a nail through the hand to support the weight of a human body; it would just tear out between the fingers. So if the victim were nailed through the hands, he would also have to be tied around the wrists. Either way, he takes 1d-3 impaling damage to the affected body part.

Crucifixion victims died by suffocation; exhaustion forced the victim to lean forward, preventing the lungs from fully expanding. This was a long, lingering death. A crucified prisoner must make ST rolls every 30 minutes; on a failed roll, the unfortunate individual sags down for a while. Every hour he sags forward costs him 1 Fatigue point. (This fatigue loss also counts against further ST rolls.) When Fatigue reaches 0, the victim loses consciousness and starts losing 1 HT every 30 minutes. A strong man could last a very long time on a cross, so his legs were often broken after several hours; after that, the victim starts losing 1 Fatigue and then 1 HT every 15 minutes.

A condemned man might try to break free (crucifixion victims were often watched by guards until they were dead, although guards could always take a nap or wander off for awhile, at the GM's discretion). If bound, an Escape-2 roll is necessary to slip from the bonds (this defaults to DX-8 if the Escape skill is not known). Alternatively, he may try to break free. Crucified men were usually tied with stout leather thongs (ST-6 rolls are necessary to pull loose; a critical failure does *thrust-2* damage to the arm). If the victim was nailed to the cross, the Escape skill is useless; ST-5 rolls for each limb are necessary. This is very painful, so a Will-4 roll (Will-2 if the victim has High Pain Threshold) must be made before the ST roll is attempted. Pulling free will do an additional 1d-3 damage to each arm and leg.





## The Roman Calendar

Romans measured time beginning with the mythical founding of the city of Rome, which was Year 1 A.U.C. (*Ab Urbe Condita* – After the Foundation of the City). To convert a year from our calendar to its Roman equivalent, simply add 753 to the year (so 25 A.D. would become 778 A.U.C.). For dates before the beginning of our calendar (B.C.), subtract the year from 754 (220 B.C. would become 534 A.U.C., for instance).

The Roman year was first divided into 10 months (they started with the third month, *Martius*), which were later increased to 12. There were some changes during the Imperial period, with two months being renamed after Julius Caesar and Octavius Augustus.

The Roman months were *Januarius*, *Februarius*, *Martius*, *Aprilis*, *Maius*, *Iunius*, *Quinctilis* (*Iulius*), *Sextilis* (*Augustus*), *September*, *October*, *November*, *December*. After Caesar's time, years were divided into 365 days, with a 366-day leap year every four years.

When a disturbance lasted more than a few minutes, a unit of watchmen would usually arrive and try to suppress it. But sometimes the mob numbered in the hundreds, in which case a large unit of guardsmen would wade in, swinging clubs. PCs may be targets of the guards (see the stats for the *vigiles* on p. 10) or might be trampled if the crowd panics and tries to escape. A victim failing a DX or ST roll by 3 or more will fall down and take 1d-2 trampling damage *every turn* until he manages to get up (ST-2 roll).

## Disease

Rome was cleaner than most cities of the time, and a much healthier place than any city of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. People in the poorer areas still threw their wastes onto the streets, however, and outbreaks of smallpox and plague were not uncommon. GMs with a penchant for realism should make otherwise healthy characters roll for contagion (see sidebar, p. B133) once a month or so, or once a day during a plague outbreak. Smallpox is very infectious; all HT rolls while in an affected area are at -3.

## Fires

Fire was a constant danger in Rome. Although most structures were built of mortar and concrete, they were supported by wooden pillars and had wooden roofs. Also, many households had a fireplace for cooking, even in small apartments that had no provisions for chimneys. A poor family trying to warm itself in winter could start a blaze. A rioting crowd could also set off accidental or intentional fires.

Fire as a hazard is described on p. B129. Smoke can also choke victims – use the tear gas stats on the sidebar on p. B132 and the asphyxiation rules on p. B91. People can also suffocate in smoke (see sidebar, p. B91). A large fire will start a panic, and the crowd can become as dangerous as a rioting mob. Finally, burning buildings will collapse and rain debris on anybody close to or in the building.

## A TYPICAL DAY IN ROME

For most Romans, the day started at the crack of dawn, and ended at 4:00 p.m., as the sun started to set. The upper classes frowned on physical labor and trade, where most Romans made their living (except for those who survived on the grain dole and their patrons' handouts).

### Morning Labors

As dawn approached, shopkeepers rolled up the shutters of their stores and laborers started walking toward their workplaces. Mingled with them were men clad in togas of dubious quality. These were the lowest clients rushing to pay their respects to their patrons. An enterprising unemployed citizen could have several patrons, whom he would visit in quick succession. The clients would mill around their patron's house until the porter let them in and they could salute their patron. A very servile client might call his patron *dominus*, which is the traditional form of address used by slaves towards their masters. In return, they were given a handful of coins or some food. Later in the morning, the patron would march to see *his* patron to receive a more substantial gift, and so on.

Slaves were sent around the city bearing messages, getting the daily news from the Forum or doing the household shopping. Lawyers and their witnesses or employers crowded the courtrooms. Children went to school, which was usually held in a public area such as the steps of the forum.

### **Noontime and the Afternoon**

Most shops closed at noon; the owners headed for the baths (see p. 14) to relax for an hour or two. Other Romans had a light lunch and sometimes a nap. Work then resumed until the late afternoon, although most affluent Romans usually called it a day by 1:00 p.m. and headed for the baths.

### **Free Time**

Many Romans, freed or enslaved, had a lot of spare time. Those who lived off their patrons were usually done in the morning, unless they were forced to accompany their patron during the day as part of his retinue (see p. 9). Also, many slaves had few chores during the day. These people spent their time involved in the pastimes, legal or not, described on pp. 21-22.

## **NIGHT LIFE**

After 4:00 p.m., life in the city began to slow down. Darkness signalled that the business day was over, so people hurried to their homes to enjoy their dinners. Most people in Rome stayed inside during the night. The city had no public illumination system; the cost of lighting the streets with oil lamps would have been staggering. Furthermore, placing oil lamps in a city already wracked by chronic fires would have been madness.

The only common activity that occurred late at night was transportation. Wheeled carts, barred from the city during daylight hours, made their way through the streets, usually at twilight. The unlucky people who lived near major thoroughfares had to suffer from the noise of squeaking wheels, animal noises, and the curses of their drivers.

### **Dinner**

Dinner was a social occasion at the homes of the well-to-do and anyone else who could afford the expense. During dinner, a Roman met and chatted with his close associates and his clients, exchanged gossip, cemented deals, and enjoyed both the meal and the entertainment that followed. In a wealthy house, each guest lay on a couch and was attended by a slave who brought him food and drink and helped him wash his hands between courses.

The diners gathered in the *triclinium*, in which three to nine guests could be served at a time. Couches were arranged in a horseshoe pattern around the table where the food was served. Larger parties required more than one *triclinium*; some Roman houses were big enough to accommodate up to 27 guests. After three courses had been served, guests often stayed for the *comissatio*, a social gathering. The diners took a short bath and returned to the dining room. Wine was served, and dancers or even a theater company would perform for the guests. The whole affair was over before 8:00 p.m.

### **Going Out**

Unless pressing business made it necessary to go out at night, the average Roman citizen stayed home. Walking in the dark was dangerous by itself; a misstep could hurt or even kill you. Those venturing at night should make Vision rolls ranging from -3 to -10 (the narrower streets created total darkness). On a failure, they stumble and may take falling damage if a DX roll is not made (DX-6 if the victim was running). Also, the city police did the sensible thing and withdrew from the streets after dark. Criminals prowled the streets, waiting for the unwary.

## **Roman Medicine**

Roman medicine combined scientific observations with superstition. Medical care ranged from TL1 to TL4, depending on the doctors and techniques. Military hospitals were kept fairly clean (rolls against infection are at +1); good surgeons had instruments and skills that were not matched until TL5. On the other hand, there were many charlatans with dubious skills (except in Fast-Talk) who as often as not worsened the conditions of their patients. The doctors with the best reputations were Greek or Jewish.

Most doctors followed the teachings of Hippocrates, the traditional founder of the medical profession. Hippocrates held that most disease was the result of chemical imbalance in the body's four basic "humors." The famous Roman doctor Galen was a follower of Hippocrates. Another school, founded by Aesclepiades, held that illness was caused by disruptions in the movement of the atoms making up the patient's body, and treatment aimed to eliminate the disruption.

Several effective drugs were known by Greek doctors, including narcotics like juice of mandragora, salves of grease and honey for burns and blisters, and a number of poisons (see the following sidebar).

## **Roman Poisons**

The Romans did not contribute much to the field of toxicology, but they used many poisons commonly known in the ancient world. Poisons played an important part in succession matters; many Emperors and future Emperors used them on relatives and friends.

All the poisons described below are digestive. As a rule of thumb, assume that the effects take at least 1 hour to appear.

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## Roman Poisons (Continued)

### ARSENIC

This was actually arsenious oxide, a compound of arsenic. This poison is tasteless and colorless (-6 to Poison rolls to detect it in food). If a large dose is ingested, the victim will feel burning pain in his mouth and throat, as well as abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting (if a HT-4 roll is not made, the victim takes 1d damage and is at -4 ST and DX; on a successful roll, he takes no damage but is still at -2 ST and DX due to nausea). On a critical failure, the victim dies in HT-8 hours.

It is possible to develop an immunity to arsenic by ingesting small doses. Every week after small, non-lethal doses are taken daily, roll against HT. A successful roll confers a +1 HT against the effects of the poison (maximum bonus is +6); on a failure, the poison has no effect. A critical failure reduces ST, HT, and DX by 1; roll against HT for each stat once each following week to recover them.

### HEMLOCK

This poison was used in the execution of Greek philosopher Socrates, and was common in the ancient world. Upon ingestion, paralysis and weakness set in. Make a HT roll; if you make it, you are at -2 DX and ST. On a failed roll, lose 2d DX and ST. After HT-8 hours, make another HT roll to avoid blindness. A final HT roll, at -2, is made 1d hours later. If the roll is made, the victim takes 1d damage; if it is failed, he takes 3d damage. A critical failure means death. All lost stats are recovered during normal healing rolls (see p. B128), recovering 1 point per day per stat on a HT roll.

### ACONITE

This plant poison affects the nervous system HT-5 hours after ingesting it. The victim first feels a tingling sensation on his skin, tongue, and throat, followed by loss of muscle coordination (reduce DX by 2d) and difficulty in breathing. The subject must make a HT+1 roll. A successful roll results in no damage, with DX loss recovered at the rate of 1 point per hour. On a failure, he takes 2d damage, and on a critical failure he dies.

When a dining guest had to travel at night, he usually had a slave (of his own or hired) walk ahead with a lamp to light the way and guide him through the city. Citizens rarely traveled alone in the city, and were usually armed with a staff or a cudgel. Even those precautions were sometimes not enough; the guide could be working with a team of thieves or could get lost. Occasionally, gangs of young noblemen or imperial favorites ran through the streets and assaulted anyone in their way (see sidebar, p. 14). An additional inconvenience affected areas without constant-flow toilets: potfuls of refuse thrown from a window.



## EDUCATION

Romans of all classes put great emphasis on education. From nobles to middle-class plebeians, citizens sent their children to school. Literacy was more common than at any time before the 19th century. Traditionally, the parents were in charge of their children's education, but as Rome absorbed Greek culture and learning, it became necessary to use teachers.

Most Roman children were taught to speak Greek as well as Latin, either by their parents or by Greek slaves. At the age of seven, children were sent to elementary schools. There they were taught reading, writing, and some mathematics; the cheaper schools only taught Latin, but most schools tried to teach literacy in Greek as well. The lower-class teachers gave lessons from a former storeroom or even in the open. Others were often slaves of rich families who taught the household children and took extra pupils for a fee that could go toward purchasing their freedom; they sometimes taught from the houses of their masters in lavishly decorated rooms. In all schools, students were often beaten; harsh discipline was believed to be necessary for proper learning. This was the extent of most Romans' education.

At the age of 12 or 13, high-class Romans went to the *grammaticus*, where they were taught literature, history, elocution, and some geometry. Passages from the classics were read out loud, and students were supposed to memorize all or part of several literary works.

After the *grammaticus*, the students could move on to the rhetoric schools (*rhetor*). There they were taught the finer points of public speaking and arguing cases. Students practiced by staging mock trials or appeals. A popular speech assignment was a plea to Hannibal not to cross the Alps. Trials often had ludicrous themes and dealt with convoluted issues. For instance, "The Crime of Disobedience" considered the issue of a father ordering one of his sons to kill another; the young man refuses to kill his brother, and the question is whether a father's mandate is more important than avoiding the sin of fratricide.

The *rhetor* was usually the last step in a Roman's education. The more scholarly types also studied philosophy. Stoicism was the most popular philosophy school in Rome, but there were students of Plato and Aristotle as well. The richer Roman students would travel to Athens and learn from the famous teachers who lived there. This was the Roman equivalent of post-graduate work.

Women were also taught reading and writing as well as poetry and music, in separate schools from the boys. Some slaves were also taught the basics, although Greek slaves were often better educated than their masters, and were teachers rather than students.

## LEISURE

City dwellers had more free time than their counterparts in the country. Most business ended during the late afternoon. Additionally, there were over 70 holidays a year, some of which lasted several days. As the Empire became wealthier, its citizens expected more sophisticated entertainment.

### Holidays

The Roman calendar was full of religious festivals and Imperial celebrations. At some point, these celebrations covered over 100 days of the year. Not all shops closed during the holidays, of course; on the contrary, many establishments did most of their business during those times.

A popular festival was the Saturnalia, which lasted from the 17th to the 24th of December. During that week, the whole city turned upside down: masters waited on their slaves, practical jokers victimized each other, and all types of parties and celebrations ensued. The Saturnalia was a good time to engage in covert operations; it was hard to notice something unusual when the whole city was engaged in bizarre activities.

Holidays were characterized by religious ceremonies, parades, and street celebrations. People took the chance to go to the theater, the chariot races, or gladiatorial contests.

### Theater

Roman theater ranged in quality from high dramatic production conducted by Greek companies to light entertainment of little artistic value. The Roman theater had its origins in Etruscan funeral rituals, where performances were given to appease the gods. By Imperial times, theater imitated the Greek style, with Roman authors writing comedies, tragedies, and dramas with Roman subjects.

Comedies and mime acts were the most popular plays. Romans wanted action and high drama, including mock battles. Mime acts were not silent, but included gestures and dancing as well as performances. Mimes could be male or female (in formal theater production, all parts were played by males). Actors and actresses were popular and would often be invited to the houses of the wealthy (affairs between young patricians and actresses were a common source of scandal).

In some dramatic plays, the Romans surpassed all others in cruelty. When a play called for a character to be killed in a gruesome way, some theater companies purchased a slave or condemned criminal, to replace the real actor onstage and die as the script dictated.

## Fashion

The average Roman was, most of all, a traditionalist. This was even true in the matter of fashion – once a style of clothing or hair was established, it remained almost unchanged for centuries.

### CLOTHING

The traditional Roman vestment was the toga, a long piece of cloth that draped around the body. The way this was accomplished was an art in itself, and the left hand had to hold the garment together at all times. Assistance was usually needed to wear the toga properly. It was so cumbersome that by the time of the Empire, it was used primarily during formal occasions, the equivalent of a tuxedo. Eventually, the toga was reduced in size until it looked more like an oversized scarf than the huge sheet of cloth it originally was. The first togas were made of wool but linen was used later on. They usually kept the natural color of wool, white. The word "candidate" comes from the Latin term *candidati*, which means "extra-white men": people who ran for office often bleached their togas with a urine derivative so they would get a shinier color.

Outside formal occasions, the average Roman wore a tunic (*tunica*). In its simplest form, the tunic consisted of one sheet of cloth, with a hole for the head, tied at the waist by a girdle. Later, it was made up of two squares sewn together, with holes for the arms and the head. Sleeves were either short or non-existent. Tunics were worn under a toga or by themselves. A cape, usually with a hood, was draped over the toga or tunic.

Women were not allowed to wear togas. Instead, they dressed in a long tunic over which they wore the *stola*, a long dress usually held by clasps. Over this was worn a shawl called a *palla*, which was usually richly decorated and embroidered.

Although most clothes were made of wool or linen, silk (*serica*) was imported from China. Silk was expensive but desirable for making semi-transparent dresses. It was mixed with other fabrics such as linen and byssus to create slightly cheaper "semiserica" and "subserica."

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## Fashion (Continued)

Footgear ranged from sandals, usually worn at home, to boots bound with leather thongs. Most were of black or red leather, but expensive boots were dyed in different colors and had silver or ivory adornments.

## HAIRSTYLES AND SHAVING

Roman men went through three main fashions in hair style. During the time of the Republic, hair was closely cropped. By Imperial times, short hair competed with curly hair combed in rows; some men had their hair burned with curling irons to achieve this effect. After the time of Hadrian, hair was worn longer and even curlier.

Almost all Roman men were clean-shaven, despite the fact that iron razors were not very sharp and even the most skilled barber could not help inflicting pain. The clumsier ones were accused of skinning instead of shaving their customers. After the reign of Emperor Hadrian, beards came into vogue and remained common until Emperor Constantine led Roman men to the barber shops once more.

Women's hairstyles were at first simple, with curls being the most sophisticated style, but soon hairdressing became a complicated and expensive affair. Coiffures piled the curls high above some matrons' heads.



## Food

Romans were sophisticated diners. In variety, the cuisine of Rome was the match of that of any modern city. Early in its history, the city's inhabitants had enjoyed a simple diet, but by the time of the Empire, gluttony was common with members of all social classes. Some wealthy Romans went bankrupt by financing exotic dinners.

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## Gambling

Most Romans were fond of games of chance. Men from the lower classes went to wine shops to drink and play dice. Sometimes dice games were held on the streets, blocking passersby. After dice, the most common form of gambling was betting on the chariot races or the arena games. Men from all positions, from the humblest freedmen to the highest patrician houses, engaged in this type of gambling. Bets on all types of results were made, from straightforward wagers on who would win the next race to bets on the chance that all charioteers would get killed during the race, with a greater payment for the most outrageous predictions. Superstitious Romans tried to hedge their bets with magic. Inscriptions of curses on a charioteer have been found in the ruins of Pompeii.

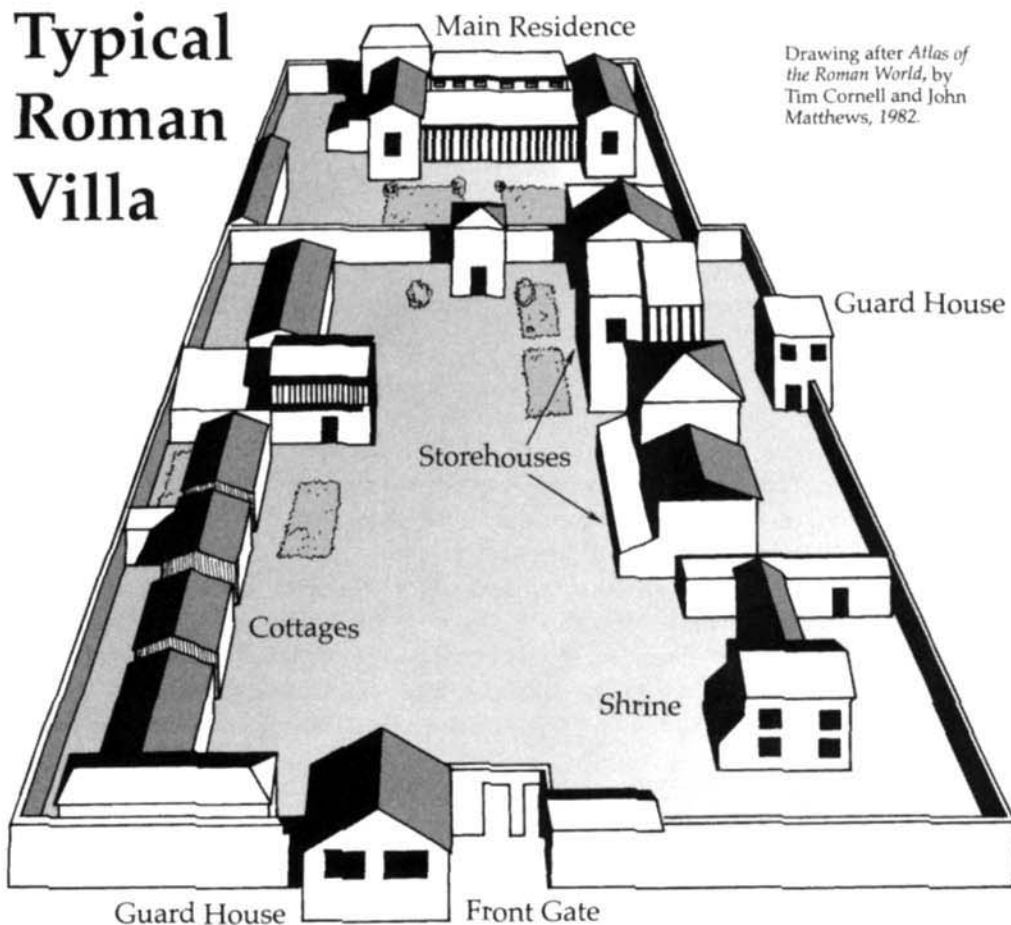
## The Games

Chariot racing and arena fights were the most popular spectator events in Rome. They are fully described on pp. 89-103.

# LIFE OUTSIDE THE CITY

Outside the great cities, life was not as fast-paced – or prosperous. Most citizens of the Empire lived in small villages and worked in agriculture. Also, many Romans traveled far and wide throughout the land; tourism, education, and business trips were common among those who could afford them. Wealthy citizens had country villas where they could take vacations from the agitated city life. Some eventually stayed there and never returned.

## Typical Roman Villa



*Drawing after Atlas of the Roman World, by Tim Cornell and John Matthews, 1982.*



## THE ROMAN ROADS

The Empire was connected by a huge network of paved roads (*viae*), some of which endure to this day. These roads were designed for the quick passage of infantry troops, but were also very useful for trade and communications. The *viae* could be used to travel all year, unlike most ancient roads, which turned into muddy swamps during rainy season.

Roman roads were 3 to 12 yards wide, depending on their importance. They were built by digging a ditch, filling it with several layers of compressed gravel, chalk, and other solid materials, and covering this with a pavement made of bricks or pebbles. Slave work-gangs were often used in the construction of these roads, but Roman soldiers on the frontiers also extended the network of *viae*.

Side roads were usually narrower and constructed in a poorer fashion; in the farthest reaches of the Empire, only the main roads were paved. Still, all the most important cities of Rome were connected by the road network. There were over 87,000 miles of roads at the heyday of the Empire, an unparalleled feat in Europe before TL5.

## TRAVELING

There were many reasons for Romans to go from province to province. Government officials often had to make reports, in person or through underlings. Traveling traders were very common. Young students went to Greek cities like Athens to complete their education. Tourists and scientists explored exotic areas. Other frequent travelers included religious pilgrims, soldiers, and hunters who captured beasts for the arena (see p. 27). Confidential messages were carried by couriers (see *The Public Post*, p. 24).

Most traveling was done on foot, although the rich traveled by horseback or inside comfortable carriages. Ships were always available, but they were usually merchant ships that could accommodate only a few passengers for a high price.

## INNS

Travelers with government authorization could use the postal service's station houses (see below) but the rest had to make do in small, sleazy inns. (There were no large hotels or wealthy inns in the Roman world, because notable Romans were usually able to make private arrangements for lodging.) The inns had a dining room and bar, and small, dingy rooms for guests. These inns were frequented by thieves and other undesirables; lone travelers were in constant danger. The rooms were cramped and dirty, and were magnets for fires.

Trading caravans often made camps in vacant pastures, perhaps making some payment to the landowner. Noble Romans belonged to an informal "hospitality network" in which a traveler would stay at the villas of friends and acquaintances; the kindness would be returned if his host traveled through the guest's lands. This arrangement worked in most Romanized areas, since the upper classes in such places as Gaul, Spain, and Africa were as Roman as any Italian nobleman. In more remote areas, a wealthy traveler sometimes relied on the hospitality of villages and local magnates. This was repaid with gifts or money, or even the establishment of new patron-client relationships.

## THE VILLAS

Every Roman of noble birth owned at least one villa outside the city. Some of these country houses were placed within the great agricultural estates most Roman noblemen owned. The *villa urbana* was built like the mansions of the city (see p. 15), but much larger, with huge gardens and open courts. Beyond lay the *villa rustica*, where the slave gangs that worked on the fields were housed. Other villas were built for recreational purposes, sometimes on coastal mountains and hills for the view of the sea they provided. A good villa would have its own bath, library, and even theaters. Villas were often walled, especially during the more turbulent periods of the Empire.

## Food

(Continued)

The basic foods of the ancient world were bread and wheat porridge. Bread was usually baked in flat notched loaves, and varied in quality from coarse black bread (*panis plebeius*) to a finer type (*panis secundarius*) to the expensive pure white bread (*panis candidus*). Common vegetables included lettuce, cabbage, turnips, onions, garlic, and lentils. Fruits such as apples, pears, and plums were produced locally, while apricots, cherries, and peaches were imported. The most common sweetener was honey, which was also used as a preservative. Potatoes, citrus fruits, rice, coffee, tea, chocolate, and tomatoes were unknown. So was corn – while the word "corn" appears in many history books about Rome, it actually refers to wheat and other cereals.

The most common meat was pork, which was used for sausages, bacon, and ham. Goat was eaten mainly by those who could not afford better meat, and beef was rarely eaten and not much liked. Chickens, ducks, and geese were the most common poultry. Fish was perhaps the most common non-vegetarian food. Exotic foods such as oysters, jellyfish, sea urchins, and peacock were eaten by the rich. Cheese was a common side dish or ingredient in many recipes.

Roman taste was very different from today's – the sauces and spices Romans used on their quality dishes would not appeal to (or would actually nauseate) 20th-century Americans. The favorite sauce was *garum*, made by letting several different types of fish rot and ferment in the sun. The fish was then crushed and the extract used for the sauce. Another sauce contained pepper, mint, vinegar, and honey all mixed together.

Olive oil served not only as salad dressing but as butter, cooking fuel, soap, and illumination – traders in oil were in the food, cosmetic, and fuel business at the same time.

Wine was the universal drink; it was the Roman equivalent of soda, beer, and coffee, as well as an important cooking ingredient. Most Romans watered their wine (only drunkards took it straight). Low-quality wine often was mixed with resin or honey to prevent spoilage, which did nothing for its taste.

Continued on next page . . .

## Food (Continued)

Breakfast was often skipped, or was a very light meal – usually some bread soaked in wine or oil, with cheese, dates, or hard-boiled eggs. Lunch was also light, consisting of cold food, sometimes the leftovers from the previous night's dinner. Dinner was the biggest meal of the day. In a wealthy or well-to-do house, dinner had three courses: the appetizers, a main course that had several different dishes, and dessert. Few utensils were used, except for soups, which were eaten with spoons. Food was eaten by hand, and the diners washed their hands between courses. It was common for guests to take leftovers home with them. Some did so without their host's knowledge – there are many tales about rapacious diners surreptitiously stuffing their clothes with food. A dinner guest with the Gluttony disadvantage should role-play this behavior.

## THE PUBLIC POST

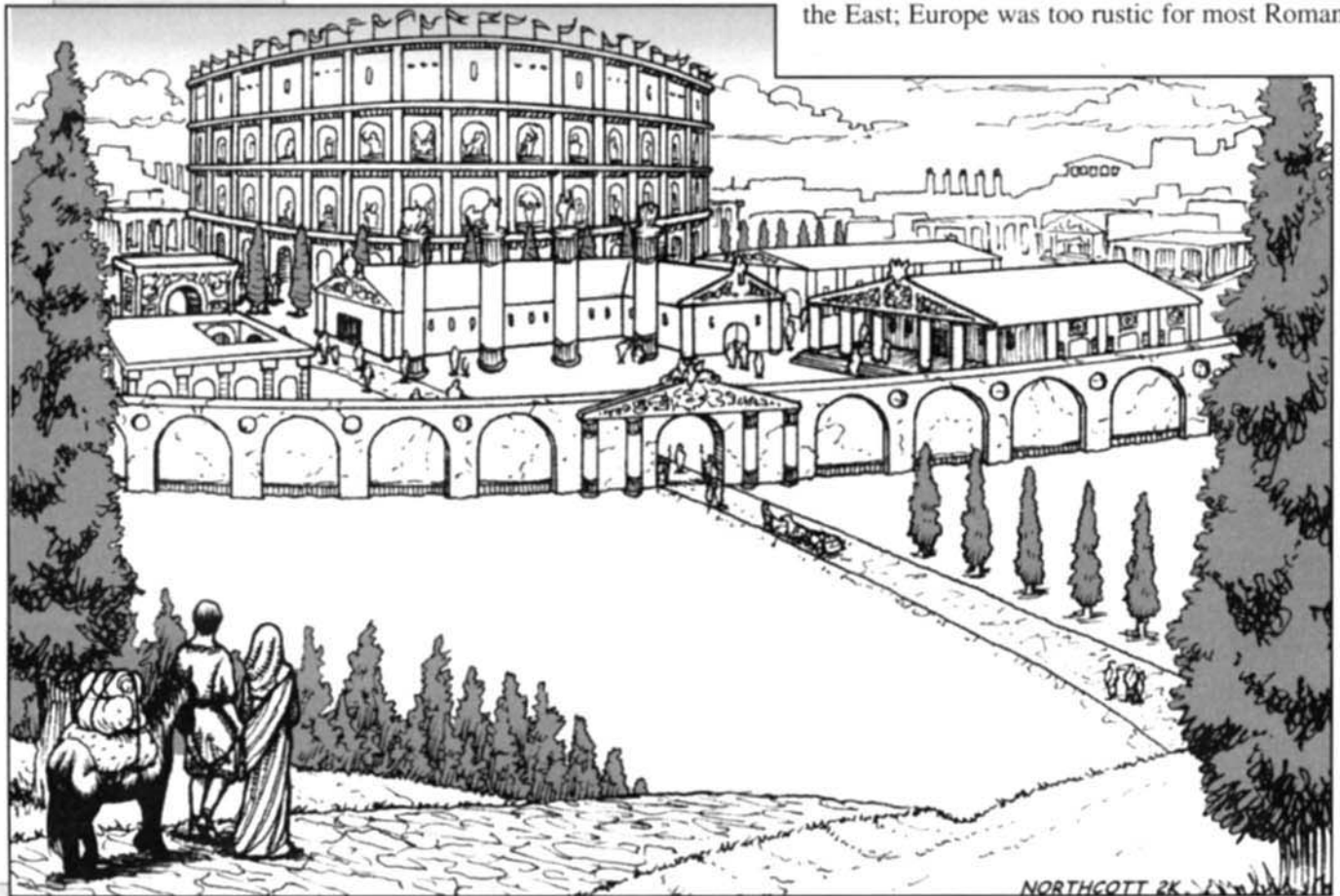
Rome's official business prompted thousands of people to travel to and from the capital and between the provinces. Messengers, military officers, ambassadors, and government agents all needed to travel quickly through the Empire. To provide for them, and to establish a reliable messenger service, the public post (*cursus publicus*) was established by Augustus. This was a daily service; by the time of Hadrian, it covered the whole Empire. A body of couriers was formed along semi-military lines. They rode as fast as they could, changing horses in relay houses spaced every seven miles on the major roads.

There were also staging posts (*mansio*) where messengers could lodge for the night, if only to get a few hours of sleep. They served as rest areas for any traveler on government business as well. Anyone working for the Empire will be able to avoid the low-quality inns reserved for civilians . . . unless the mission is secret.

## TOURISM

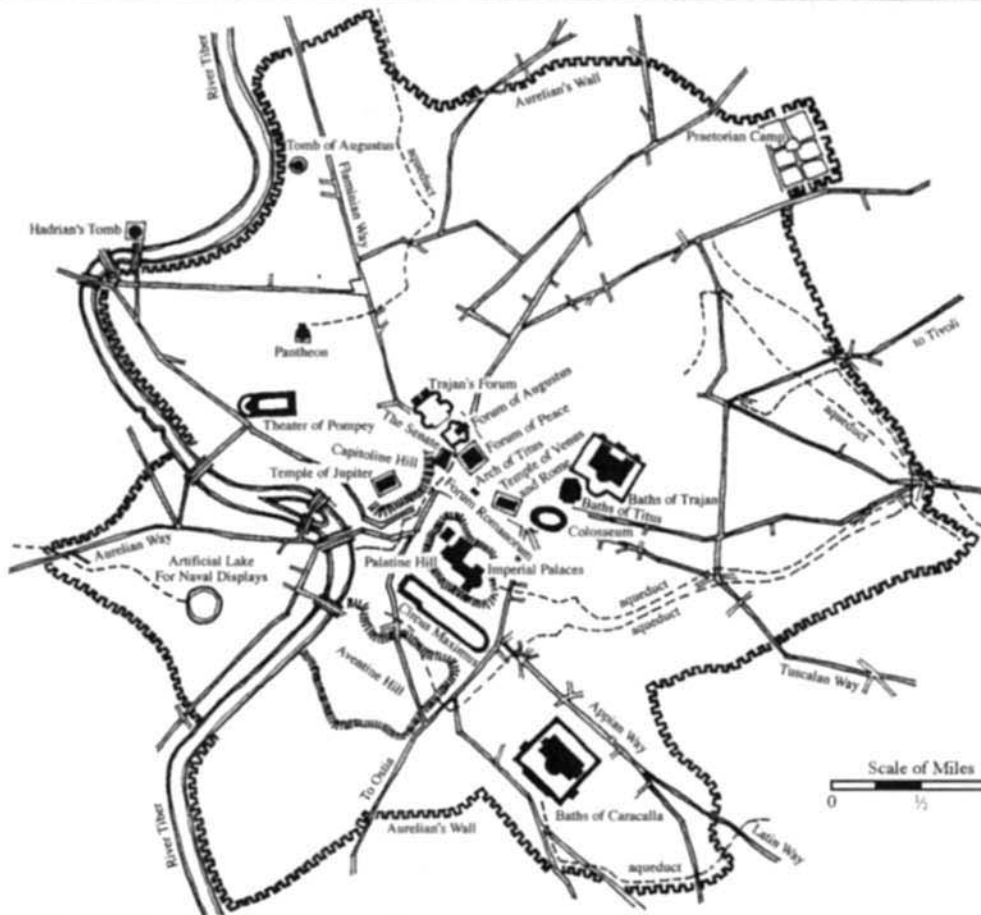
There was a brisk tourist business in the ancient world. The number of tourists was not large, but their wealth made up for it. The business of the Empire gave Romans a taste of the world beyond Italy. Young noblemen often served overseas during their terms in the army; civil servants ranging from minor bureaucrats to provincial governors had to live in exotic lands for decades; and patricians might either own properties or have social contacts in several provinces. Many Romans took long trips to the provinces to admire new sights.

Greece was a favorite spot for travelers. Romans greatly admired Greek culture and liked to see the ancient buildings and art of Athens, Rhodes, and Corinth. Others came to see the alleged site of Troy, in the region of Ilion; guides described the events of the *Iliad* on the supposed actual sites of the mythical siege. In Egypt, the pyramids were another wonder. Most popular tourist areas were in the East; Europe was too rustic for most Romans.



# The Roman Empire

At its greatest extent, circa 150 A.D.



## The City of Rome

Circa 275 A.D.



# II CHARACTERS

Roman history is peopled with characters from a myriad of races, backgrounds, and professions. GMs and players have a wide array of choices.



## POINT COST

In a historical campaign, characters should be built using 100 points, with a maximum of 40 points in disadvantages and 5 in quirks. In a campaign where the PCs are “movers and shakers” of the Roman world (senators, consuls, or military leaders), a higher point total (150 to 200 points) is allowable. Most of the extra points should go toward Status, Rank, Wealth, Allies, and Contacts.

A “heroic” or cinematic campaign for characters built with 200+ points is also possible. This is appropriate for small parties adventuring in remote and dangerous parts of the Empire, where outside help is scarce and the natives are likely to be unfriendly. Alternatively, if the PCs are “barbarians” taking on mighty

## CHARACTER TYPES

### Artist

At the height of Roman glory, the wealthy developed an insatiable thirst for Classical art. Sculptures, frescoes, and mosaics were commonly commissioned for private residences and public buildings. Playwrights and actors were also very popular. Large numbers of artists, most of them Greek (or trying to pass for Greek) served this demand. Fortunate artists were able to secure permanent employment with a powerful nobleman, or founded a school for the sons of the rich. Others had to travel from city to city, looking for new projects. These “wandering artists” make good adventuring PCs.

*Advantages:* Very successful artists will be Comfortable or wealthier. A rich Patron is a long-sought goal. Charisma may help secure a contract where actual talent may be lacking.

*Disadvantages:* Beginning artists will be Struggling or Poor. Diverse Addictions, Odious Personal Habits, and Compulsive Behaviors are common among this temperamental group. Many artists are also Impulsive, Stubborn, or Bad-Tempered.

*Skills:* Artist, Acting, Bard, Performance, or Sculpting are common. Almost all respectable artists will know the Greek language, and the more they sound like a native Greek the better the reaction of prospective clients will be. Fast-Talk can come in handy. Traveling artists may have picked a Survival skill or two, and may have some weapon proficiency for self-defense.

### Arena Hunter

To provide the arenas of Rome and other cities with exotic beasts, professional hunters traveled to remote areas of Africa, Asia, and Europe. Their expeditions can match safaris from any other era in terms of adventure and danger, especially since they had to bring their quarry back alive and in good condition – not an easy feat.

Large hunts were sometimes conducted like military expeditions, with huge contingents of men surrounding herds and packs of beasts and capturing them by the score. The hunting parties included adventurous Romans and natives of exotic lands. A party of hunters should include adventurers with a variety of skills and advantages.

Rome, they need to be as skilled as possible. The arena can also serve as a cinematic setting, where the games provide a hazardous path to glory . . . or an intriguing background from which to escape.

### Health and Disease

Rome, like all pre-technological societies, had little to offer in the way of disease control and health care. *Realistically*, people with low HT scores (9 or less) did not live long, killed by infected wounds, the plague, or smallpox – even the common cold! GMs should recommend that players design characters with a HT of 11 or higher, or the Immunity to Disease advantage, or both. Otherwise, they may not last long.

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes will help hunters deal with dangerous beasts.

*Disadvantages:* Bad experiences in the bush could cause hunters to develop Phobias or Alcoholism. Some hunters may have Greed or even Sadism.

*Skills:* Animal Handling, Net, Stealth, and Tracking. Survival (Jungle and Forest) and the appropriate Area Knowledges and Languages are helpful.

### Bandit/Thief

Crime and criminals were not unknown in the Empire even during the most peaceful times. In the cities, muggers and burglars prowled the streets after dark. In the countryside, the more remote roads were harried by gangs of highwaymen. Bandits are not likely to be very successful (or long-lived!), but sophisticated thieves can plan and execute complex schemes to rob the wealthy.

*Advantages:* Alertness, Acute Senses, and Night Vision are all useful. Common Sense, Danger Sense, and Intuition might keep the outlaw out of trouble.

*Disadvantages:* Low Wealth levels and Social Stigma are common. Any “negative” Mental Disadvantage would fit. Some thieves will have a Code of Honor and a Sense of Duty to their friends.

*Skills:* Depending on his area of expertise, a thief will have some or all of the following skills: Climbing, Lockpicking, Pickpocket, Stealth, Streetwise, and Weapon Skills. Fast-Talk can also help.

### Barbarian

To the average Roman citizen, the term “barbarian” included everyone from Ireland’s savage Celts to the sophisticated city-dwelling Parthians. In general, anyone who does not dress or behave like a Greek or Roman citizen will be seen as a barbarian. See *Social Stigma*, p. 36.

The stereotypical barbarian is the Germanic tribesman, legendary for his bravery and ferocity. The Goths (*Gutones* in Latin) were a German tribe; they became the greatest threat to the Empire, eventually infiltrating and overrunning it.

Germanic barbarians can interact with Roman characters in different ways. They can be war slaves, serving as anything from common laborers to gladiators. They can also be auxiliary troops, working with the regular Roman army – and by the time of the Late Empire, barbarians *are* the Roman army. Alternatively, all the PCs can be barbarians, battling against the Empire.

Other barbarians include the Gauls, the first barbarians who captured Rome; the Scythians, mounted archers that preceded the Huns and Mongols; the Picts and Scots, who fought with primitive weapons and ferocity; and the warriors of African tribes.

*Advantages:* Chieftains could have Ally Groups. All combat-oriented advantages are possible in the archetypical barbarian.

*Disadvantages:* In a Roman setting, Social Stigma (-10 or -15 points) or Primitive are appropriate. Rival tribes make good Enemies (Rome itself could be an enemy, but the tribesman should have inflicted significant harm to the Empire's interests, and the forces arrayed against him would be impressive!).

*Skills:* Survival skills appropriate to the barbarian's habitat. Most males of primitive tribes will be proficient in their traditional weapons.

### **Bounty Hunter**

This occupation appeared during the 5th century, at the height of the barbarian invasions into Rome. Several Romans, including Emperor Valens, started offering rewards for barbarian heads, in an effort to encourage private citizens and other barbarians to hunt the Gothic invaders down. One of the most famous bounty hunters was the German warrior Charietto (see sidebar, p. 118).

Bounty hunters were either barbarians lured by the hope of rewards, or Roman citizens motivated by greed or seeking revenge. Some might have lost friends or family to the barbarians; now they had an excuse to even the score, and a chance to make a profit at the same time!

*Advantages:* All combat-oriented advantages are useful. A good or fearsome Reputation will be helpful to collect the rewards.

*Disadvantages:* Bloodlust is very appropriate, considering the reward was paid for barbarian *heads*. Many bounty hunters will have a Social Stigma. Gothic bands, or even whole tribes, may become Enemies.

*Skills:* Stealth and Area Knowledge will be helpful to stay one step ahead of the target.

### **Bureaucrat**

The members of the Roman civil service held great power behind the scenes. They knew how the government was *really* run, and accumulated wealth and power behind the backs of aristocratic superiors who considered working with numbers and papers to be below them. Roman bureaucrats came from several different walks of life. Many of them were former slaves, typically Greeks (some of them were still slaves). Others were former Roman officers of the centurion rank, using their talents on the home front. Later on, members of the equestrian and patrician classes took over the higher positions. In Imperial times, many

active-duty soldiers were used in provincial governance as police, tax collectors, market and customs administrators, scribes, and assistants to the governors and judicial court servants.

Even the humblest civil servants enjoyed an impressive standard of living. Musicus, a slave who served as a minor public servant in Gaul, had a staff of 15, including a personal physician, secretaries, footmen, accountants, and a young woman with no apparent duties.

Bureaucrats might occasionally leave their offices to conduct investigations. Former military men, for instance, often like to see things for themselves. Some civil servants were charged with supervising and policing the rest, making sure that collected taxes and government funds were not stolen. An investigating functionary and his staff could make an engaging group, dealing with courtly intrigue from the bottom up.

*Advantages:* Comfortable or higher Wealth is common. A Patron, usually someone higher in the service, is helpful.

*Disadvantages:* Slaves and freedmen will have a low Status and Social Stigma, even when they are wealthy and powerful. Cowardice and Greed would fit the stereotype.

*Skills:* Administration, Fast-Talk, Mathematics, and Politics are all useful.

### **Chariot Driver**

Chariot racing (see p. 101) was perhaps the most popular sport in the Roman world. The *aurigae* (charioteers) were often slaves or freedmen; their status could only rise if they proved to be talented riders. They could become national heroes and retire rich. On the other hand, this was a very dangerous sport, not only inside the *Circus Maximus*, but before the races. The wagering on the events was so intense that attempts were made on the lives of favorite contestants.

Charioteers were the ancient world's equivalent of modern jockeys and race car drivers. They had to have keen reflexes and nerves of steel. They are best played as reckless "top gun" types.

*Advantages:* A good charioteer will soon earn a widespread Reputation. Toughness might help survive a bad crash.

*Disadvantages:* All charioteers start with a low Status and Social Stigma. Some drivers get Greedy.

*Skills:* Teamster (Horse), Whip, and Animal Handling.

### **Christian**

Adherents of the Christian religion (see p. 113) became widespread throughout the Empire, despite the fact that Christianity was outlawed for over 200 years. Christians were sometimes arrested, exiled, and executed in the arena. In other instances, Christians, Jews, and other Eastern religions sometimes attacked each other, igniting riots. After 300 A.D., Christianity became more legitimate, and was adopted as the official religion of the Empire by the end of the century.

Christians could belong to any profession, social class, and ethnic group. Originally, the religion was mainly practiced by former Jews and other Semitic groups, but it spread through North Africa and the Mediterranean. Towards the 4th century, it became popular with soldiers.

*Advantages:* As appropriate to the Christian's profession or social class.

*Disadvantages:* All Christians had a Secret, ranging in value from -5 to -30 points, depending on the severity of the persecutions at the time. See p. 36.

*Skills:* Theology (Christian). Many Christians were also trained in public speaking (Bard and Performance).

### **Courier**

The Imperial couriers were the messengers of the Empire. They carried military dispatches, official proclamations, and bureaucratic reports. Usually they rode horses, changing mounts at every relay station. Sometimes the contents of their pouches were very valuable or embarrassing, and couriers might be ambushed. Also, a lone traveler was always at risk in the more remote parts of the Empire.

Couriers are ideal for a solo adventure or campaign. They are among the first people to know about events along the borders. Completing the task at hand is just part of the adventure – messengers come into contact with people from all walks of life, even foreigners, and the news they deliver can stir up local plots. Trusted couriers may be sent on secret missions, sometimes accompanied by other Imperial agents.

*Advantages:* Danger Sense may keep the lone messenger alive.

*Disadvantages:* Duty to the post service. Some couriers are Overconfident.

*Skills:* Riding (Horse), some Survival skills; combat skills are important.

### **Diviner/Magician**

The Roman people were notoriously superstitious. From store owners to Emperors, they sought the advice of astrologers and other diviners to determine if future actions were to be successful. Some diviners were members of the priest classes, while others set up shop on their own. Weather mages, healers, and spirit appeasers were also common throughout the Empire. See pp. 108-110 for more about divining and omens.

Depending on the campaign, GMs can decide that diviners and magicians are self-deluded or greedy abusers of others' gullibility – or true fortune tellers with mysterious powers. Or maybe both kinds coexist, and adventurers will be hard-pressed to tell them apart. See pp. 114-116 for magical campaigns.

*Advantages:* Magical Aptitude or Clerical Investment for the true diviners. Successful ones may be Wealthy.

*Disadvantages:* Greed and Laziness may motivate charlatans.

*Skills:* Bard is useful for both the real and fake diviner, to impress crowds. Fast-Talk, Running, and Stealth may save diviners who make grossly inaccurate predictions.

### **Gang Member**

The city of Rome was plagued by street warfare for most of its history, even before the downfall of the Empire. Many gangs were not too different from the urban gangs of today, with similar concepts of "turf."

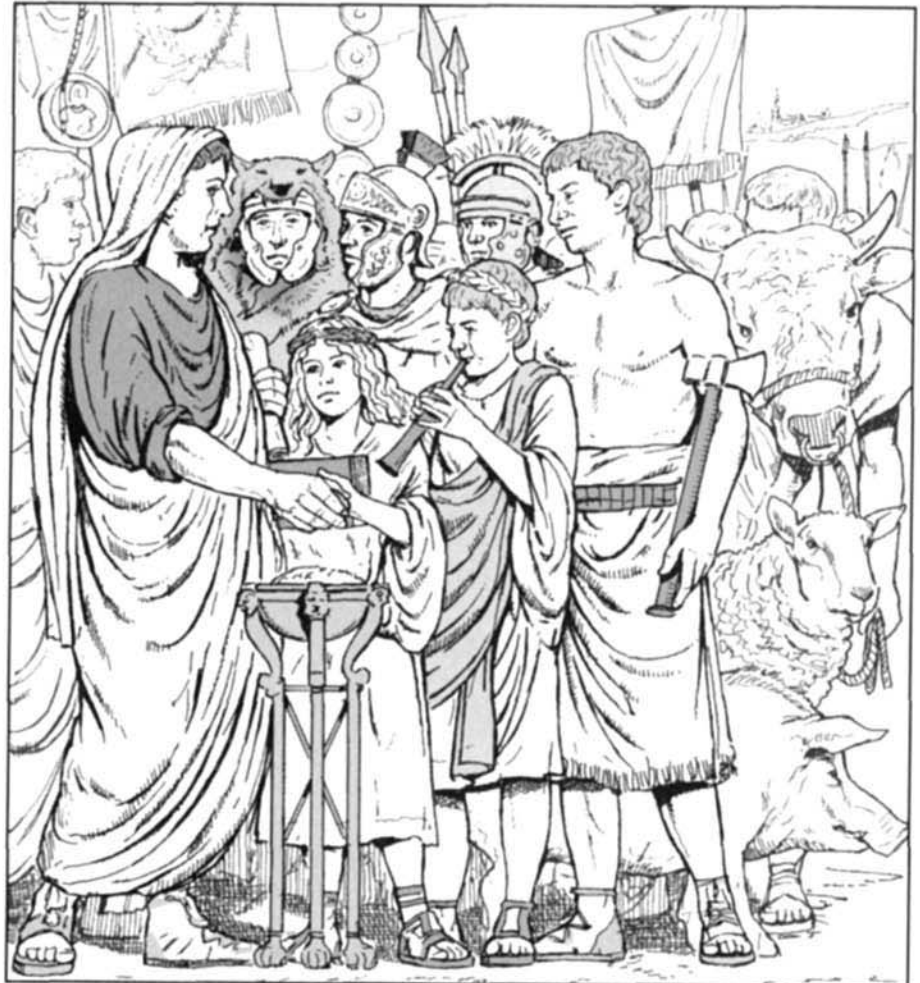
Other gangs served the interests of political factions of Rome. Senators, tribunes, and wealthy merchants all had small groups of "clients" that were not above committing acts of violence against rivals. The street war between Clodius and Milo during 53 B.C. is a famous example of gang violence.

Gang members can be played as street-bred toughs with only a smattering of loyalty to their employers. Many were ex-gladiators delivered from slavery by the powerful men they served. Some were former soldiers, still serving their generals in a more confusing urban battleground.

*Advantages:* All combat-oriented advantages are appropriate. Danger Sense and Luck are helpful. Gang bosses or their powerful sponsors make appropriate Patrons. Leader PCs can have their whole gang as an Ally Group!

*Disadvantages:* Most gang members are Struggling or Poor (except young nobles – see sidebar, p. 14). Greed is therefore common among them. Political gangs have a Duty to their employers.

*Skills:* Any weapon skills, Streetwise, Fast-Talk, and Stealth. Running might come in handy to elude rivals or the city guard.





## Gladiator

Gladiators were slave entertainers who fought each other and (occasionally, although this was more often left to condemned criminals) wild beasts. Many led short, brutal lives, though a successful one would be able to purchase his freedom and leave the arena. For more on gladiatorial combat and life, see pp. 38-39 and *The Games*, starting on p. 89.

*Advantages:* Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, and Toughness. Most gladiators will have some level of Reputation after surviving enough encounters. A good Voice can impress the audience.

*Disadvantages:* Gladiators are slaves, but have less of a stigma than others of their kind: the Social Stigma from being a gladiator is worth -10 points. Poverty or Dead Broke are common at first, but success is likely to change that. Greed, Bloodlust, and Sadism are common (and just as appropriate for the audience!).

*Skills:* Any melee weapon, Brawling, Boxing, and Wrestling. Bard and Performance are useful in winning the favor of crowds.

*Maneuvers:* Off-Hand Weapon Training (p. CII70) was common among gladiators, especially those who fought with two weapons at once (see Chapter 6).

## Lawyer

Lawyers were almost as numerous in Rome as they are in today's world. As the Empire grew, more and more litigation made its way to the courts. The Roman lawyer was well-versed in law and public speaking. He usually was from a noble or wealthy background, but there were lawyers from poor backgrounds who had earned their positions.

PC lawyers can go beyond trying cases; they can search for witnesses or launch their own investigations. Criminal lawyers could start the prosecution of a criminal; in some ways they were a combination of detective and district attorney. Rome had its share of "ambulance chasers" – struggling lawyers trying to provoke lawsuits after any disaster or accident.

See *The Legal System*, pp. 11-12, for an overview of law in Roman society.

*Advantages:* Successful lawyers can have high levels of Wealth. Voice and Charisma are very useful. Criminal lawyers could have street Contacts.

*Disadvantages:* Greed and Overconfidence are often found among Roman lawyers. Lawyers from humble origins are often Struggling or even Poor.

*Skills:* Bard, Law, and Politics. Prosecutors would also have Criminology and perhaps Streetwise.



## Patrician

As the only citizens to claim membership into the Senate by birthright (see p. 7), the patricians had the most privileges and (at least in theory) the hardest duties of Rome's citizens. A patrician was expected to serve in several military and administrative offices, to be good at all of them, and also to be a highly educated, moral, and exemplary man.

By the late Republican and Imperial times, many patrician families were wracked by corruption and vice. Young noblemen spent their time in orgies and mindless pursuits (or gangs, p. 14) while their fathers debated exhaustively in the Senate. Upstanding citizens and spoiled thrill-seekers both add spice to any adventuring party.

**Advantages:** Wealth and Status. Younger patricians might have a Patron in their fathers instead of Wealth. All patricians are Literate.

**Disadvantages:** "Model citizen" patricians could have Sense of Duty (Nation), Honesty, and Strong Will. Their decadent counterparts, on the other hand, would have several Addictions, Lecherousness, Compulsive Gambling, and Compulsive Carousing (see sidebar, pp. 55-56).

**Skills:** A patrician is expected to learn Administration, Bard, History, Literature, Philosophy, Politics, Riding (Horse), Strategy, Shortsword, and Tactics during his career. Most patricians will have almost all those skills (though some will have them at default level). Decadent aristocrats and their brats will have Carousing, Gambling, and Fast-Talk.



## Police/Fireman

During the Imperial period, the city of Rome employed *vigiles* to patrol the streets (see p. 16). These public servants had a challenging job, dealing with crime, riots, and the constant fires that plagued the capital. A centurion or tribune in the *vigiles* was the equivalent of a SWAT-team commander, a police lieutenant, and a fire commissioner – perfect for cinematic or *Special Ops* campaigns.

**Advantages:** Military Rank, Legal Enforcement Powers. Common Sense, Intuition, and Danger Sense would all be useful.

**Disadvantages:** The rank-and-file soldiers will probably have low levels of Wealth and even Status (freedmen could serve in the *vigiles*). A zealous policeman could acquire Enemies in the underworld.

**Skills:** All the skills of a soldier (see p. 32), plus Firefighting (M/A). Criminology and Streetwise are soon acquired by enterprising Roman patrolmen.

## Priest

The time period of the campaign has a large role in determining viable character types and appropriate challenges. Priests or priestesses of the Roman pantheon were in charge of religious ceremonies, some charities, and even divination; the upper ranks of the Roman priesthood wielded great power (those positions being filled, in earlier periods, by patricians alone).

Later, Christian priests were often singled out for persecution, particularly those of high rank in the Church. They may spend much of their time denouncing heretical offshoots of their religion (see pp. 113-114).

**Advantages:** Besides Clerical Investment, some priests will have Charisma, Common Sense, and Empathy. Noblemen holding a priestly office will have high levels of Status and Wealth. The priest's cult or church can be a Patron.

**Disadvantages:** Diverse Duties and Vows.

**Skills:** Theology. Also, some priests will have Bard, Fast-Talk, and Savoir-Faire. Priests who come from patrician families will likely know aristocratic skills such as Savoir-Faire.

## Sailor/Pirate

The Romans called the Mediterranean *Mare Nostrum* (Our Sea). Despite this pronouncement, the Romans were not for the most part a seafaring people. Most sailors were Greek or Phoenician (an offshoot of the latter, the Carthaginians, were Rome's chief rival for a long time; see p. 87).

The difference between common sailors and pirates was often blurred; sometimes it was a matter of a larger merchant ship happening upon a smaller one. Organized piracy was also widespread. The so-called "pirate kings" of Cilicia and Crete made alliances with other nations against Rome. Pompey (see p. 49) destroyed those pirate kingdoms and resettled the prisoners in desolated provinces of the Empire. An ex-pirate with a few tricks up his sleeve (and possibly a grudge) could be found almost anywhere.

**Advantages:** Ally Group, Reputation, and Wealth belong to successful sailors and pirates. In the merciless sea, Luck can be a bonus.

**Disadvantages:** After a few years of sailing or pirating, accidents and combat may leave their mark: One-Armed or One-Handed, One-Eyed, and Lamé sailors are common.

**Skills:** Swimming and Seamanship are almost universal. Greek and Punic are the most common languages among sailors.

## Secret Agent

Both the Roman government and private individuals used agents for espionage, assassination, and other "covert" operations. Some were recruited from the army, while others may have risen from the violent slums (see *Gang Member*, p. 29). They also included paid informants working undercover for rival governments (or noble houses, or political parties). Both male and female agents existed, opening this character type to the usually sheltered Roman women.

**Advantages:** Most agents have a Patron, although his frequency of appearance will vary widely. Charisma, Combat Reflexes, and Alertness are useful. Luck always helps.

**Disadvantages:** Duty to the agent's employer. Some agents have Fanaticism as a motivator, while others are Greedy.

**Skills:** Acting, Disguise, Fast-Talk, and as many languages as possible. Area Knowledge of various regions allows agents to act in diverse parts of the Empire.

## Slave

Much of the population of Rome was made up of slaves. Their condition and treatment varied widely – some were used as little more than beasts of burden, while others all but ran their masters' estates. Still, slave-owners always had the power of life and death over their "property." Slaves who saved enough money were able to buy their freedom; the alternative was to run away, a very risky proposition.

Slaves can be found in any walk of Roman life. In a military campaign, slaves will be the personal servants of high-ranking officers (even common soldiers sometimes purchased slaves). Many slaves became spies for their owner's enemies, either for the promise of enough money to earn their freedom or to pay back abuse from their master. Some slaves were warriors captured in battle, and occasionally rebelled violently.

Ex-slaves (*liberti*) were common throughout the Empire. They usually belonged to the lower middle class, but some became very rich. Regardless, the children of freedmen were full Roman citizens. A campaign could focus on the party's rise from slavery to freedom, and even power.

**Advantages:** High Pain Threshold and Toughness will help endure the hardships of slave life.

**Disadvantages:** Slaves have a Social Stigma ranging from -10 to -20 points, depending on their situation. Their Status is -1 or lower. Poverty and Dead Broke are almost universal at first.

**Skills:** Diverse Professional Skills, depending on the slave's function. Fast-Talk, Savoir-Faire, and Acting are very common, as are thieving skills. Petty theft and lying were sometimes the only weapons slaves had against their owners. Former warriors will have skills as the Barbarian character (see p. 27).

## Soldier

The troopers of the Roman legions defended and expanded the Empire for 500 years. The legionaries were trained, disciplined soldiers, very similar to the members of a modern army. Auxiliary troops were less organized, and some hired Barbarians to fill their ranks (see p. 27).

Most archetypal characters from old WWII movies could be found in the legions – the naive country boy seeing strange new lands; the tough, cynical sergeant; the idealistic officer . . . or GMs and players could draw on the different experience of the Viet Nam war and transplant it to the dark side of Roman warfare. For more information on Roman soldiers and their enemies, see *The Legions*, starting on p. 72.

**Advantages:** Rank, Status, and Wealth usually go hand in hand in Rome. Experienced troopers will have picked up Combat Reflexes.

**Disadvantages:** Duty is universal. Sense of Duty (to country, friends, or underlings), Intolerance, and Fanaticism are common. Young privates may be Honest and Gullible, while more hardened veterans may have Bad Temper, Bloodlust, and Bully.

**Skills:** Besides the skills described in Chapter 5, some legionaries will have Scrounging, diverse Survivals, and often a language other than Latin.

## Trader

Commerce was more active during the Imperial period than at any other time until the 16th century. Goods from Britain made their way to markets in Egypt and Syria, and vice versa. A man who was not afraid of the rigors of travel could make his fortune by purchasing merchandise and transporting it to provinces where it was scarce. Traders were also explorers, seeking new markets and trade routes to break other merchants' monopolies. Enterprising traders were probably the first to visit China and other remote parts of Asia. Roman provincial officers often used traders for diplomatic and intelligence-gathering purposes; a well-known merchant had more connections in some remote areas than anyone else.

Roman-born characters are not very likely to be traders. Roman noblemen were barred from trade, and the Romans who became merchants tended to stay in Italy and the most civilized Imperial provinces. Most traveling merchants were of Greek or Semitic extraction. Some foreign traders became very Romanized, however, adopting the culture and language of the Empire, and eventually becoming citizens (although this last brought the inconvenience of extra taxation).

**Advantages:** Wealth is common. Charisma and Voice facilitate transactions. Beginning merchants will have a Patron providing the funds, sometimes a Roman patrician. Contacts are helpful.

**Disadvantages:** Greed and Miserly are the stereotypical disadvantages. Other traders could be Enemies if the competition were fierce.

**Skills:** Besides Administration, Fast-Talk, and Merchant, a trader will know several languages. Traveling traders will have a wide range of Area Knowledge skills. Sea merchants will have the skills of a Sailor/Pirate (see p. 31).

## Traveling Thinker

The Hellenistic tradition created a class of multi-skilled scholars who dedicated themselves to studying the world. They combined philosophy, history, and the infant sciences in their books. Some of them wanted to make their observations firsthand, and traveled throughout the Empire and beyond. A few attached themselves to military units to report their feats. Others launched their own expeditions into far-flung lands. And after making their discoveries, more travels awaited them on the lecture circuit.

**Advantages:** Eidetic Memory, Literacy, and Mathematical Ability. Wealth or a Patron will help pay the philosopher's way.

**Disadvantages:** Absent-Mindedness, Bad Temper, and Stubbornness are common among ill-humored thinkers.



# ROMAN NAMES

Male Romans from a good family (Status 1+) had up to three different names, plus a nickname that changed with time. The first name was the *praenomen*, identical to the modern first name, used during informal occasions between friends or acquaintances. The middle name, or *nomen gentile*, was the most important one, since it identified the clan to which that person belonged. The last name was the *cognomen*, which indicated the family branch of the main clan. For instance, Gaius Julius Caesar belonged to the Iulii clan and the Caesares family.

Many first names also became second and last names, because by custom the name of the *pater familias* (see p. 5) was adopted as a family name.

Women were given two names until they married. Her first name was the feminine form of her father's *nomen* (i.e., the daughter of Octavius would be named Octavia); this was followed by a *cognomen* to indicate the order of her birth, such as *Maior* (oldest), *Minor* (youngest), *Secunda* (second-born), and so on. After marriage, the woman got a modified form of her husband's *cognomen*. Several male names were also originally meant to show the order of birth; they included Quintus (the Fifth), Decimus (the Tenth) and so on, although by the Republican period they were not given in numerical order and were just names.

Romans of humble birth sometimes made do with only their *nomen*, although more usually they had a *nomen* and *cognomen*. In addition, titles and nicknames were sometimes attached to the first name, and the combination was then used for most occasions. For instance, Roman general and consul Lucius Cornelius Sulla (see p. 49) called himself "Sulla the Lucky" (Sulla Felix), and was known that way for most of his latter career. Other nicknames were less flattering; dictator Fabius was named Fabius Cunctator (Fabius the Delayer) when he tried to avoid direct confrontation with Hannibal. Other nicknames refer to the person's native land. Some examples are on the following page. A simple way to come up with a nickname is to check the character's advantages and disadvantages and to look up the Latin word for them, picking the most appropriate adjective.

By Imperial times, names became even more complicated. Adoption was common in Rome. The adopted child (or man – adoption of adults was practiced to secure noble family lineages) received the name of the adopting family, and a *praenomen* of the adopter's choice (usually a traditional one; most families had traditional first names). However, his old *nomen gentile* (middle or clan name), modified by *-ianus*, would be added to refer to the adoption. Thus, a *Furius Camillus* adopted by *Decius Caecilius Metellus* would become *Lucius Caecilius Metellus Camillianus*. *Gaius Octavius*, adopted by *Gaius Iulius Caesar*, became *Gaius Iulius Caesar Octavianus*.

Slaves had one name only, and that usually a "slave name." On being freed and becoming Roman citizens (only those freedmen gaining Roman citizenship could legally do this) they took on their former master's first name (*praenomen*) and family or clan name (*nomen gentile*), keeping their slave name as a *cognomen*. For example, the slave *Syrus*, freed by *Gaius Marius Apella*, would become *Gaius Marius Syrus* – in effect founding a new family of the *Marii* clan. Others were given the names of Greek heroes and gods; there were slaves named *Ares*, *Ulysses*, *Hercules*, and *Achilles*, for instance.

## COMMON ROMAN NAMES

Latin had only a very limited range of traditional first names (*praenomina*). More first names turn up in the late Empire. Following are lists of possible names that can be put together to make full names. All of the male names below have a female form: drop the last two letters of the name and replace them with the letter A. *Claudius* becomes *Claudia*, and so on.

### Traditional praenomina:

Appius, Aulus, Gaius, Gnaeus, Decimus, Flavius, Iulius, Lucius, Marcus, Manius, Mucius, Publius, Quintus, Rufus, Sergius, Servius, Sextus, Spurius, Salvius, Tiberius, Titus, Vibius.

### Possible nomina gentile (clan names):

Aemilius, Albius, Annaeus, Annius, Appius, Aurelius, Caecilius, Caeculus, Caelius, Catullus, Claudius, Clodius, Collatinus, Cornelius, Crispus, Curtius, Diulius, Drusus, Ennius, Fabius, Falernus, Faustus, Flaminius, Furius, Gellius, Herminius, Hirtius, Horatius, Hostus, Icilius, Iulius, Iunius, Laelius, Licinius, Livius, Lucanus, Lucretius, Maelius, Maccius, Mancinus, Manilius, Manlius, Memmius, Menenius, Mettius, Minucius, Naevius, Octavius, Ovidius, Papinius, Paterculus, Petronius, Pinarius, Plautus, Plinius, Pompeius, Pomponius, Pontius,

Porcius, Proculus, Publius, Sallustius, Septimus, Sestius, Statius, Suetonius, Tarpeius, Tattius, Terentius, Tibullus, Tullius, Valerius, Velleius, Vergilius, Verginius, Virbius, Vitruvius.

### Possible cognomina (byname/family names):

Afer, Agrippa, Atticus, Caesar, Calvus, Cato, Celsus, Flaccus, Lentulus, Lepidus, Maro, Martialis, Maximus, Metellus, Nasica, Nepos, Nero, Otho, Persius, Pertinax, Pilatus, Pollio, Postumus, Pulcher, Scaevola, Severus, Varro.



## ROMAN NICKNAMES

These are some common Roman nicknames. By the end of the Republican period, many of these nicknames had become proper names, handed down over generations, and had nothing to do with the actual qualities of the person. Nicknames that became proper names are marked by an asterisk (\*).

Achaeus (the Greek)	Maiores (the Elder)
Achilleus (heroic, brave, and handsome man)	Mareoticus (the Egyptian, or from the Egyptian city of Marea)
Afer* (from Africa)	Nauticus (sailor)
Africanus (from Africa)	Parthicus (the Parthian; also one who defeated the Parthians)
Calvus* (the Bald)	Pernix (the swift)
Felix (lucky)	Persicus (the Persian)
Flaccus* (weak, flabby)	Pertinax* (tenacious)
Graecus (the Greek)	Piscator (fisherman)
Graeculus ("little Greek," used as an insult)	Pilatus* (spearman)
Invictus (invincible, unconquerable; this nickname was rarely given seriously)	Poenus (the Phoenician or the Carthaginian)
Italus (the Italian)	Postumus* (the last-born)
Lentulus* (the slow)	Scaevola* (left-handed)
Lepidus* (pleasant, elegant)	
Libys (the Lybian)	



## APPEARANCE

The average Roman had dark curly hair, and averaged 5'4" in height. Subtract 5 inches from the normal Height/Weight Table in the *Basic Set*. This was due to the lack of protein in their diet, particularly during childhood. The same was true of most other Mediterraneans. Gauls and Germans were famed for their size. For Gauls, Germans, and other Western Europeans, use the normal -3" modifier for pre-19th-century characters. See *Fashion*, pp. 21-22.

The most common hair color was black or dark brown. Blond hair was most common in the North, due to Celtic influence. Red hair was all but unknown until contact with the Germans became more common. Most Romans kept their hair short and shaved, at least until the late Imperial period, when beards became fashionable. Roman women wore their hair long and curly. Occasionally, blonde hair came into vogue and some women would wear wigs made of the hair of Gallic slave girls.

## ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS

Many of the existing *GURPS* advantages, disadvantages, and skills can be interpreted in a different manner when applied to a campaign in *Ancient Rome*. In addition, several new martial arts abilities are appropriate for this campaign setting.

character sheet) but GMs have the option of creatively penalizing diplomats who alienate or betray their allies.

### ADVANTAGES

#### Allies

see p. B23

The Roman Empire is an ideal background for political intrigue. Allies can be gained, lost, or even turned into Enemies. Players will learn the meaning of "Machiavellian" if they are kept in the dark about schemes and factions. Powerful enemies can be countered by new associates (balancing points on the

#### Ally Group

see p. C119

Some Roman characters have loyal groups of followers (clients), each of whom is weaker than the PC, but who collectively form a support group for the character. Noblemen had groups of loyal men under their control. By the Imperial time, armies were more often loyal to their commanders than to the Empire; the commander could have part or all of his army as an Ally Group. See pp. C119-20 for point costs, group size, and frequency. A Roman cohort or a cadre of highly-trained gladiators would count as a 30-point group.

## Clerical Investment

see p. B19

In a historical non-magical campaign, clerical investment works as described on the *Basic Set*. If Roman priests have divination powers, increase the cost to 10 points. This allows the priest to learn one appropriate Divination spell (see p. 115).

## Destiny

see p. C135

The sidebars on pp. 105 and 108-110 discuss omens and their interpretation; *The Etruscan Art* (p. 115) reviews magic divination rites. Here are some sample destinies for Roman heroes:

**Great Advantage:** 15 points. The character is fated to achieve greatness in his lifetime – he may become a victorious general, an important part of the government, maybe even Emperor! Sooner or later a fortunate event will fulfill the character's fate. The timing and precise details of the event are not determined, but it will happen, even if he is on his deathbed at the time.

**Major Advantage:** 10 points. The character may be doomed to die in a particular place, or in a particular fashion: at sea, by the hand of an Emperor, underground, or whatever. Fate can throw in a few surprises: the sea may flood his home while he sleeps, the general against whom he marches is the future Emperor, or he may live at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius, where his house will be buried under tons of ash, effectively putting him below the ground.

**Minor Advantage:** 5 points. The character may be on hand to avenge the death of a prominent Roman, or to save the life of a man who will go on to greater things.

**Minor disadvantage:** -5 points. He may accidentally cause the death of an important Roman, or may save the future Emperor's life by getting in the way of the deathblow.

**Major disadvantage:** -10 points. The fated person might be late with a message for the Emperor, a message that warned him of assassins, and which might have saved his life. Or he might have executed the only competent general in a threatened province, causing its loss to barbarian invaders.

**Great Disadvantage:** -15 points. He might be fated to be killed by German barbarians while leading a Roman army against them. His death weakens the frontier, and the Germans run unchecked through the Empire, destroying whole cities as they rampage. (A Destiny this serious can be detected by magic, and will be surrounded by evil omens, such as flocks of owls, falling eagles and so on.)

## Literacy

see p. B21

A large proportion of the Roman population knew how to read and write. Literacy is a free advantage (0 points) in *GURPS Imperial Rome*. Historically, those at Status 0 or less – and those from outside Rome – were usually illiterate. Historically accurate PCs from these social groups should take Illiteracy for -10 points in this setting, but this -10 points does *not* count against any disadvantage limit set by the GM. However, PCs do not *have* to be historically accurate; they can be Literate gladiators captured in Germania, if they really want.

Players may choose to roleplay semi-literate characters (see p. C129). Semi-Literacy is worth -5 points in this setting. Roman writers, especially toward the late Imperial period, loved to use obscure terms and phrases, and to pile metaphors into their writings, making them incomprehensible to most normal Latin speakers. Legal documents and literary texts (like poetry) will require a semi-literate person to roll IQ-6 for comprehension.

## Military Rank

see p. B22

The Roman Army has an organized system of military rank; some of the offices also mark a civilian administrative post, however. Consuls and Dictators, for instance, are both in command of the army and, to some degree, of the civilian government.

Rank 8: Consul; Dictator; Emperor

Rank 7: Provincial Governor; Praetorian Prefect;  
Italian Fleet Prefect

Rank 6: Legionary Legate; Prefect of a provincial fleet

Rank 5: Laticlave (Senior) Tribune; Primus Pilus;  
Prefect of the Camp

Rank 4: Prefect of an *ala* or cohort; Angusticlave (Junior)  
Tribune; Centurion of the First Cohort

Rank 3: Centurion; Fleet Captain

Rank 2: Auxiliary Decurio; Optio

Rank 1: Principalis; Signifer

Rank 0: Common soldier



## Patrons

see p. B24

The idea of patronage was a fundamental concept of Roman culture. Almost every free man in Rome owed some sort of informal loyalty to a powerful individual or family, and received help in return. The relationship between patron and client is described in Chapter 2. Thus, this advantage is more common in a Roman campaign than in other game worlds. Some suggested base values for Patrons are given below; they must be modified by the Frequency of Appearance. Remember that the Duty owed to a Patron will

usually be proportional to his frequency of appearance.

A gang leader, rich merchant, centurion, or young member of a senatorial family is worth 10 points. Frequency of appearance is usually 12 or less: these Patrons will have fewer clients and will tend to take more care of them.

An older senator, army commander, or tribune would be worth 15 to 20 points, depending on his actual rank. His frequency of appearance is 9 or 6 for the most part, unless the particular client is very important to him.

A senatorial leader, a consul, or a dictator is worth 20 to 25 points. Commonly, frequency of appearance is 6 or less.

The Emperor as a Patron is worth 30 points; he *is* Rome, after all. The client would have to be an extraordinary or powerful individual on his own right to merit such attention. And having an Emperor as a patron can be dangerous as well; intrigue and conspiracies can suddenly turn him into a tremendously powerful Enemy!

## Wealth

see p. B23

As the Roman Republic and Empire grew in power, enterprising or lucky individuals amassed enormous fortunes, even by 20th-century standards. GMs may find that the Wealth levels described on p. B16 are not adequate to simulate a character like Crassus (p. 49), who owned property worth over 200 million *sesterces* (\$50,000,000!). In his case, the Multimillionaire advantage (p. C127) is appropriate.

## DISADVANTAGES

### Code of Honor

see p. B31

*Roman Code of Honor:* Better death than dishonor. Always respect your father, or your family elders. Never show fear or behave in a cowardly manner. -10 points.

*Christian Code of Honor:* Honor God and His holy days. Respect your elders. Practice charity towards your fellows. Never cheat or steal from others, or even think about doing so. -15 points.

Not all Christians will follow all of these precepts, but most Christians would practice one or more, for -5 to -10 points (the GM must decide how many of the above precepts constitute an appropriate Code of Honor).



### Compulsive Carousing

see p. C187

### Compulsive Gambling

see p. C188

### Glory Hound

see p. C190

This disadvantage is very appropriate not only for gladiators and chariot racers, but for many Roman leaders. Julius Caesar

and Pompey both suffered from this disadvantage (Caesar's invasion of Britain is a typical symptom). -15 points.

### Secret

see p. C178

Common Secrets during the Roman period include cowardice on the battlefield (if discovered, will seriously undermine the reputation of a member of the patrician or equestrian classes), being a member of an illegal cult (ranging from the Bacchanals to Christianity), and plotting against the Emperor or the Senate.

### Semi-Literacy

see p. 35

### Social Stigma

see p. B27

*Second-Class Citizens:* Women, freedmen, and provincials without citizenship. -5 points.

*Valuable Property:* All slaves. -10 points.

*Outsider, outlaw, or barbarian:* All non-provincial foreigners, escaped slaves, and deserters, -15 points.

## SKILLS

### Bard

see p. B47

This skill is very common among the Roman upper classes. Almost every male Roman with Status of 2 or higher should have ½ point in the skill, as a result of a classical education.

### Boxing

see p. B242

Pugilism, a scientific form of bare-hand fighting, was developed by the Greeks, and was widespread in the Roman world.

### Engineering (Military)

see p. B60

This covers the ability to dig ditches and minor fortifications, and to follow the orders of combat engineers. The Roman legions drilled their soldiers in the craft of fort-building to the point that they could erect a fort in a matter of hours.

### Hiking

see p. B244

*Groups and Hiking:* Hiking skill works differently for military units and other well-drilled groups of hikers. To use these rules, the group must train together regularly. The group must also include one man with Leadership 12+ per 20 men, to "ride herd" on stragglers (in the army, this is usually a NCO). Under these circumstances, a single roll against the group's average Hiking skill is made for the whole group. (Groups which neither train together nor have designated pace-setters – like most parties of PCs – should use the usual rules on p. B244.)

Success lets the entire group march 20% farther. On a failure, multiply the margin of failure by 10%; this is the percentage of the group left behind (they may catch up at day's end, but this costs an extra 2 fatigue). Critical failure indicates that the whole group was stalled; the GM should describe why – washed-out bridge, enemy soldiers blocking the advance, etc.

This roll is optional. The group's overall leader may opt not to "force the march" in order to avoid negative consequences.

## Intimidation

see p. B246

This skill is frequently used in the Roman world by rent and tax collectors, corrupt officials, and noblemen to get their way. Note that an Imperial favorite would have almost literal life or death power over most people, which would give him a +3 on most Intimidation rolls.

## Languages

see p. B54

Latin was a Mental/Average language, and was the native language of most Italian Roman citizens; all provincial citizens in the West had Latin as a second language. In addition, all native Romans could speak at least a few phrases in Greek, and almost all had some fluency in the language. All Romans of Status 1+ should have at least ½ point invested in Greek. It was the common language of the eastern part of the Empire.

Elsewhere in the Empire, adventurers may encounter Punic, the language of Phoenician and Carthaginian traders; Aramaic, the tongue of the Middle East; and Ancient German, which had a score of dialects defaulting from -2 to -8 from each other. For other regional languages, see Chapter 4.

A person who could speak Latin, Greek, and either Punic or Aramaic could travel to any corner of the Empire and make himself understood.



## Philosophy

see p. B245

The Roman world had several philosophical schools, such as Stoicism and Epicureanism (see p. 112). Many educated Romans adopted one such system of belief and tried to pattern their lives according to its tenets.

## Riding (Stirrupless)

see p. B46

Stirrups were not introduced in Europe until the end of the Imperial era, and did not become commonplace until the early Middle Ages. Mounted warriors are much less effective without

stirrups, as they cannot anchor themselves in the saddle to deliver blows. All combat and Riding rolls while fighting stirrupless are at -2 DX. All Riding rolls are at an additional -1, and rolls to stay seated (see p. B137) are at an additional -4!

## Savoir-Faire (Military)

see p. B64

Savoir-Faire for a soldier includes a knowledge of the customs, traditions, and regulations of his own service. It also includes a knowledge of the unwritten rules: what is acceptable even if not regulation, and what is forbidden though there is nothing in writing against it.

In a Roman campaign, this skill exists only among soldiers of an organized army, such as the Roman, Macedonian, or (to a degree) Carthaginian army. Warriors from Gaul, Germany, or the East would replace that skill with normal Savoir-Faire, since the behavior of warriors was part of normal social behavior.

## Shortsword

see p. B52

The Roman Army trained its soldiers to use the shortsword primarily for thrusting attacks. To represent this (as an optional rule), legionaries can get a +1 bonus when thrusting with their *gladius*, and a -1 penalty when slashing (GM's decision).

## Wrestling

see p. B243

Scientific wrestling is another Greek invention that caught hold in the Roman empire. Wrestling teaches how to take down and pin opponents, and to apply some holds and locks. While not as effective as Judo, this skill gives an edge in Close Combat.

You can use your Wrestling skill to replace DX in Close Combat, just as for Judo. You also add ½ of your skill to your effective ST to attempt a Takedown or a Pin, or to Break Free (see p. B112).

Characters with Wrestling can also perform arm locks on their enemies. First, a Grapple must be successfully attempted. *On the same turn*, roll a Quick Contest (Wrestling vs. his DX or Wrestling skill, whichever is higher). If you win, you have trapped his arm in a lock. Your foe may try to break free: use Wrestling or modified ST against his ST in another Quick Contest. If you win, you have immobilized the arm; the victim can try to break free in subsequent turns, but at a cumulative -1 penalty.

On the next turn you may choose to inflict pain or damage to the trapped limb. A third Quick Contest (Wrestling or ST vs. HT, or HT+3 if the victim has High Pain Threshold) is required. If you win, you inflict one point of damage or pain (DX and IQ penalties without causing actual damage) for every point by which you make the roll.

If you do crippling damage, you break the arm or hand you were holding. The arm-lock counts as torture on an Interrogation roll (see p. B66). The victim must make a Will roll minus the damage inflicted, or drop any weapon he is holding. Of course, if the hand or arm is crippled, any weapon held by it is automatically dropped.

# MARTIAL STYLES

The following martial-arts styles are based on what evidence we have of Roman martial training, and extrapolation therefrom. The GM should feel free to modify them to fit his own campaign.

## NEW MANEUVER

### *Naval Fighting (Hard) Defaults to any combat skill*

This maneuver reduces the combat penalties due to the motion of a boat or ship. It must be learned separately for each Combat/Weapon skill. One does not roll against Naval Fighting to use it. Instead, it gives a bonus which offsets the penalties for fighting aboard ship: +1 if the maneuver is known at skill+1, +2 at skill+2, etc. This bonus can only be used to negate the bad-footing penalties for the rocking of a watercraft or other tilting platform (GM's decision); it can never give a net bonus to hit.

Naval Fighting can also be learned for ranged-weapon skills. If used, this maneuver replaces the rule on p. SW120, which allows a Seamanship roll to reduce the penalty to missile fire by 2. GMs who would rather not use maneuvers in their campaign should continue to use that rule.

Penalties for shipboard combat range from -2 for the deck of a galley in calm waters to -10 for the most extreme conditions (a slippery deck in a hurricane, or fighting while standing on a floating log). A fighter may improve Naval Fighting to whatever level he wishes; however, levels above skill+5 are unlikely to be useful, since combat rarely takes place in conditions severe enough to justify a penalty larger than -5.

Given the relatively high percentage of naval simulations that took place in the games, gladiatorial schools routinely taught this maneuver.

## LEGIONARY COMBAT TRAINING

### *Armatura 8 points/see text*

*Primary Skills:* Broadsword (for auxiliaries) or Shortsword (for legions); Hiking; Shield; Spear; Spear Throwing.

*Secondary Skills:* Boxing or Brawling; Knife; Savoir-Faire (Military).

*Optional Skills:* Axe/Mace; Bow; Riding (Horse); Sling; Swimming; Wrestling.

*Maneuvers:* Feint (Broadsword or Shortsword); Hit Location (Broadsword or Shortsword); Retain Weapon (Broadsword or Shortsword). Some legions were trained for use as marines and thus would have the Naval Fighting maneuver (see above) as well.

*Combinations:* None are known, but Block-Stab, Feint (Shield)-Stab, or Shield Bash-Stab is likely.

*Cinematic Skills and Maneuvers:* There is no body of legend surrounding any cinematic abilities of Roman soldiers. However, the emphasis that ancient authors put on their great stamina and bravery could justify allowing players to buy Extra Fatigue and high levels of Fearlessness, and give their characters the Immovable Stance skill. A highly cinematic campaign could also accommodate Extra Hit Points, Power Blow (Sword), and Kiai (Roman troops used the *barritus* battle cry to frighten and disorient their enemies).

## GLADIATOR TRAINING

The following styles illustrate some of the more common gladiatorial training undertaken in Imperial Rome. See Chapter 6, *The Games*, for more information on these and other gladiatorial classes and on gladiator campaigns. As with the legions, little cinematic ability is attributed to gladiators. GMs should feel free to fill out or disallow the cinematic portions of these styles as they see fit.

### *Bestiarius Training 7 points/23 points*

Equipment and techniques varied wildly for these beast-fighters. They usually, but not always, wore no armor. Their weapons often included whips and spears. Note that – despite its many benefits in combat – Animal Empathy would make it impossible to display the cruelty required of a *bestiarius*.

*Primary Skills:* Animal Handling; Knife; Spear; Whip.

*Secondary Skills:* Shield; Shortsword.

*Optional Skills:* Acrobatics; Riding; Running.

*Maneuvers:* Close Combat (Spear); Feint (any); Ground Fighting (any).

*Cinematic Skills:* Kiai.

*Cinematic Maneuvers:* Enhanced Dodge.

### *Thracian Training 7 points/15 points*

These gladiators wore helm and greaves and carried a small shield and curved shortsword.

*Primary Skills:* Shield; Shortsword.

*Secondary Skills:* Buckler.

*Optional Skills:* Brawling; Knife; Wrestling.

*Maneuvers (all for Shortsword):* Close Combat; Ground Fighting; Hit Location; Naval Fighting; Retain Weapon.

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting; Immovable Stance.

*Cinematic Maneuvers:* Enhanced Parry (Sword).

### *Samnite/Mirmillo Training 7 points/14 points*

The Samnite wore a visored helm and a greave on his left leg. He carried a large shield and a shortsword or broadsword. He sometimes wore heavier armor; see p. 44. A later version of this class, the *secutor*, was named especially for his habit of chasing around the *retiarius* (see below). The *secutor* sometimes substituted a dagger for the shortsword. The *mirmillo* used practically the same equipment, but wore a distinctive fish-crested helmet.

*Primary Skills:* Running; Shield; and one of Broadsword (Samnite or *mirmillo*), Knife (*secutor*), or Shortsword (any, but rare for *mirmillo*).

*Secondary Skills:* Whichever of Broadsword, Knife, or Shortsword were not taken as a primary skill.

*Optional Skills:* Brawling.

*Maneuvers (for primary weapon):* Ground Fighting; Hit Location; Naval Fighting; Retain Weapon.

*Cinematic Skills:* Blind Fighting.

*Cinematic Maneuvers:* Enhanced Block.



## Retiarius Training

12 points/30 points

The net-and-trident men wore practically no armor, at most on one arm and shoulder. They carried a net, a trident, and a dagger, fighting two-handed. A late offshoot of the *retiarius* was the *laquearii*, who used a lasso in place of the net.

The *retiarius* depended on being faster than his foe – high DX and even one or two levels of Increased Speed would be excellent investments.

**Primary Skills:** Knife; Lasso (for *laquearii*) or Net (for *retiarius*); Running; Spear.

**Secondary Skills:** Acrobatics.

**Optional Skills:** Lasso or Net (whichever isn't primary).

**Maneuvers:** Disarming (Spear); Feint (any) [2 points]; Ground Fighting (Spear or Knife); Hit Location (Spear); Naval Fighting (any); Off-Hand Weapon Training (Net) [2 points].

**Cinematic Skills:** Pressure Points.

**Cinematic Maneuvers:** Binding; Dual-Weapon Attack (any); Enhanced Dodge.

# ECONOMICS, JOBS, AND WEALTH

## STATUS AND COST OF LIVING

Level	Rank	Monthly Cost of Living
8	Emperor	\$50,000+
7	Junior Emperor (Caesar, Dictator)	\$30,000+
6	Consul, Provincial Governor, General	\$25,000
5	Senator	\$20,000
4	Minor (or Junior) Senator	\$15,000
5	Important Equestrian	\$10,000
4	Patrician's son	\$5,000
3	Equestrian	\$3,000
2	Minor Equestrian, Powerful Civil Servant	\$1,500
1	Businessman or Banker	\$1,250
0	Plebeian, Freeman Businessman	\$300
-1	Provincial	\$100
-2	Freedman	\$50
-3	Poor Plebeian or Freedman	\$30
-4	Slave	no cost of living

## STARTING WEALTH

Starting wealth in a Roman campaign will vary widely. There were incredible wealth differences between each social class. A patrician, for instance, owned at least \$250,000 to \$1,000,000 in property; an equestrian, between \$100,000 and \$400,000. Men like Crassus owned property worth 200 million sesterces (about \$50 million by Roman standards). By comparison, a Roman legionary earned between \$300 and \$500 a year, and was given a land grant worth \$750 after 20 years of service! See the Wealth advantage on p. 36 for more information.

Starting Wealth includes all possessions, including land. Only bandits, refugee slaves, barbarians, and similar characters would qualify as "wanderers" and be able to use all their wealth on movable goods (their Wealth level is likely to be below average, however).

## MONEY

Rome had a well-organized currency system throughout most of its history. Coins of copper, silver, and gold (lead and zinc were introduced during rough times) were minted continually, and were used to commemorate the rise of Emperors, victories, and other events besides their exchange value. In the countryside, remote provinces, and among the poor, barter was still an important part of economic life.

Two types of silver coin were the base unit of currency for most of Roman history. The sesterce (Latin: *sestertius*, pl. *sestertii*) and the *denarius* were the most widely used coins. At first, the sesterce was the base unit of currency (the equivalent of \$1), but inflation pushed the *denarius* into that position. For the early Imperial period, the *denarius* is worth \$1. Devaluation and inflation later on made the *denarius* worthless; by 300 A.D., there were small copper coins worth 1,000 *denarii* or more!

Other coins included the golden *aureus* and the copper *as*. The first table below gives the exchange rates for those coins; the second has their purchasing value (represented in \$) at different times in Roman history. The first \$ value is for the Republic and the Early Empire (before 100 A.D.); the second value is for 100-250 A.D.; the last one is for 250-300 A.D. The third table indicates the reforms of Constantine during the early 4th century. The last two coins, the drachma and the obol, were not Roman but were in wide circulation in the East through the Imperial period.

## Republican and Early Imperial Currency

*Aurei Denarii Sestertii Asses Quadrantes Dollars*

1 Aureus	1	25	100	400	1,600	\$96/24/6
1 Denarius		1	4	16	64	\$4/1/.25
1 Sertertii			1	4	16	\$1/.25/.06
1 As				1	4	\$.25/.06/.01
1 Quadran					1	\$.06/.01/0

## Purchasing Power

*Pre-100 A.D. 100-250 A.D. 250-300 A.D.*

1 Aureus	\$96	\$24	\$6
1 Denarius	\$4	\$1	\$.25
1 Sertertii	\$1	\$.25	\$.06
1 As	\$.25	\$.06	\$.01
1 Quadran	\$.06	\$.01	worthless

## Late Imperial Currency

*Solidii Siliquii Coppers Dollars*

1 Solidus	1	24	96	\$12
1 Siliqua		1	4	\$.5
1 Copper			1	\$.12

## Eastern Currency

*Drachmas Obols Dollars*

1 Drachma	1	6	\$1.00
1 Obol		1	\$.17



# JOB TABLE

Rome was a slave society, so many of the jobs listed below were done by slaves who were not paid a salary. Instead, the income listed below is obtained from tips or even petty theft. Besides the prerequisite skills, slaves will have Fast-Talk-10+ and Savoir-Faire-10+, or any income listed is halved!

Also, some public officers were not paid a salary. The income is actually acquired from "freelance" work (i.e., extorting money from the provinces).

## Poor Jobs

Beggar* (no qualifications), \$120	10	-1i/3d
Client* (Savoir-Faire 10+), \$60 per client	PR-1 per client	-1i/LJ
Dole Recipient (no qualifications), \$100	10	-1i/LJ
Litter Bearer*† (ST 12+, Savoir-Faire 10+), \$20	Best PR	1d/3d
Low-Income Teacher (Literate, Teaching 10+), \$4/student	PR	-1i/-2i
Miner*† (Mining 10+), \$20	PR	2d/5d
Street Guide* (Area Knowledge (City)-12+), \$180	PR	1d,-1i/3d
Street Thief* (Pickpocket or Stealth 10+, Move 6+), \$160	Best PR	2d/3d
Street Vendor* (Merchant 9+), \$180	PR	-1i/2d
Streetwalker* (Streetwise 10, Sex-Appeal 10+), \$120	Worst PR	-1i/2d
Tenant Farmer (Agronomy 12+, ST 10+), \$160	12	-1i
Work Gang Farmer*† (Agronomy 8+, ST 11+), \$20	11	2d/3d, SM

## Struggling Jobs

Auxiliary Soldier§ (Combat Skills 12+, Survival (Military) 10+), \$120	Best PR	1d/3d
Barber* (Professional Skill: Hair cutting 12+), \$300	PR	-1i/-1i, 1d
Cart Driver (Teamster 11+), \$260	PR	-1i/-1i, 2d
Cook (Cooking 11+), \$240	PR	-1i/1d, LJ
Sign Writer* (Area Knowledge(City) 11+, Calligraphy 10+, Literacy), \$300	Worst PR	-1i/-2i, 1d
Slave Cook*† (Cooking 11+, Savoir-Faire 10+), \$80	Worst PR	-1i,1d/2d, S
Small Store Owner* (\$500+ investment, Merchant 10+), (Investment×Skill)/40	PR	-1i/lost \$1d×100
Street Magician* (Fast-Talk 14 or Magery and one Divination Spell 12+), Skill×\$20	PR	-2i/2d
Street Porter*† (Savoir-Faire 11+), \$40	PR	-1i/2d

## Average Jobs

Astrologer* (Astrology 12+, Magery, or Fast-Talk 13+), \$480	Worst PR	-1i/-2i
Bath Masseur*† (Massage (P/A skill) 12+), \$100	PR	-1i/S
Bodyguard*† (ST 11+, Weapon Skills 12+), \$160	PR	-1i/SA
Cheap Lawyer* (Law 10+), Skill×\$32	PR	-1i/-2i
Elementary Teacher (Greek and Latin 13+, Teaching 12+), \$48 per student	Worst PR	-1i/-2i
Gladiator*† (Combat Skills 13+), \$300	PR	2d/4d
Legionary§ (Roman citizen, all legionary skills (see p. 38) 10+), \$200	PR	1d/3d
Minor Civil Servant (Administration 12+, Accounting and Politics 11+, Law 10+), \$500	Best PR	-1i/LJ
Minor Priest (Theology 11+), \$320	PR	-1i/LJ
Personal Attendant*† (Savoir-Faire 13+, Fast-Talk 12+), Lowest Skill×\$40	Worst PR	S/SM
Sailor (Seamanship 11+), \$160 plus room and board	PR	2d/3d
Scribe (Calligraphy 12+), \$600	PR	-1i/LJ
Shop Owner* (\$1,000+ investment, Merchant 12+), (Investment/20)×Skill	PR	-1i/-1i, lost \$2d×100
Skilled Craftsman* (Craft Skill 13+), Skill×\$80	PR	-1i/-2i
Slave Administrator*† (Administration 13+, Accounting 12+), Combined Skills×\$20	Worst PR	-2i/SM
Slave Entertainer*† (Acting, Dancing or Acrobatics 11+, Performance 10+, Average or Better Appearance), \$120	Worst PR	-1i/-1i, 2d
Small Farm Owner* (\$750+ in land, Agronomy 11), \$400	PR	-1i/-2i

## Comfortable Jobs

Artist* (Sculpture, Artist, or Mosaic Design 14+), \$60×skill	PR	-1i/-3i
Augur* (Clerical Investment, Reputation+1, Theology 13, Divination Spell 13 (optional)), \$800	Worst PR	-1i/Lost Clerical Investment
Bank Secretary*† (Accounting 13+, Literate), \$320	PR	-1i/S
Building Administrator (Administration and Intimidation 12+), \$1200	Worst PR	-1i/LJ
Charioteer* (Teamster (Horse) 14+), \$400×Skill×Reputation	PR	-1i,2d/5d
Civil Servant (Administration 14+, Accounting or Law 12+, Politics-13+), \$1400	Best PR	-1i/LJ
Corrupt Civil Servant* (As above, but Accounting 14+), \$300 + Skill×\$80	PR	-2i/LJ, ½ Wealth confiscated
Doctor* (Physician 13+) \$400×Skill×Reputation	PR	-1i/-2i, Reputation reduced by 1
Lanista (Gladiator Manager) (Administration 10+, Teaching 12+, Leadership 11+), \$1300	Best PR	-1i/LJ
Lawyer* (Law 13+, Status 1+, Reputation +1 or higher), \$200×(Skill+Reputation)	PR	-1i/-1i, Reputation reduced by 1
Legionary Officer§ (Rank 2+, Strategy and Tactics 11+), \$200 (\$400 for a Praetorian Officer)×Rank	PR	2d/4d
Merchant* (Merchant 13+, \$1,000+ investment), (Investment/10)×Skill	PR	-1i/-1i, lost \$2d×200
Praetorian Guard§ (one Combat Skill 14+), \$400	PR	1d/3d, demoted to regular legionary
Provincial Tax Collector* (Accounting and Law 13+, Intimidation 12+, hired help to extract payments), \$2000	Worst PR	-1i/3d
Rhetoric Teacher (Literature 13+, Teaching, and Bard 14+), \$200 per student	Best PR	-1i/-2i

## Wealthy Jobs

Banker* (Administration and Accounting 13+, Economics 14+, Investment of \$100,000+), 60% of investment	Best PR	-1i/lost 2d×10,000
Building Owner (Administration 13+, \$10,000+ investment), (Investment/25)×Skill	PR	-1i/lost \$2d×1,000
Imperial Favorite* (Status 5+, Intimidation 11+), \$8,000×Skill	PR	-1i/Lost Favor, gain 1d×10 points worth of Enemies
Large Land Owner (\$50,000+ investment), 12% of investment	12	-1i/lost \$3d×1,000
Provincial Governor* (Administration and Intimidation 12+, Status 5+), \$4,000×Skill	PR	-1i/convicted of corruption, lose ½ Wealth.



\* Freelance occupation; see p. B193.

† Slave occupation. The income is given to the slave in the form of tips and presents, and can be used to purchase manumission. Slaves have no living expenses. Most slave jobs are "freelance" in that the income is gotten through ability and ingenuity, and is not fixed.

§ Soldier of Rome: monthly income does not include room and board, which is provided separately (room and board account for ⅓ Cost of Living).

PR = prerequisite; S = sold off to a slave occupation one level lower than the previous one; SM = sold to the mines; SA = sold to the arena (for a slave with combat skills, a new job; for one without, a death sentence); LJ = lost job; "d" equals dice damage from an accident or punishment (the GM may opt to play this out as an adventure); "i" equals a certain number of months' income lost.

# EQUIPMENT

Use the prices from the Medieval/Fantasy table (p. B212) for any equipment not described below.

## Inflation

After the 3rd century A.D., scarcity and coin devaluation resulted in frequent bouts of inflation, especially among goods that were not locally grown. During the Late Imperial period, the GM should roll 3d-3 and multiply the result, if positive, by 10. This is the inflation percentage at that given time (from 0 to 100%); apply it to most goods purchased.

## COMMON ITEMS

**Books:** Books in Rome were actually scrolls – a long strip of parchment or papyrus, rolled around a wooden or bone stick. Reading was done by unrolling the scroll. A new book cost between \$2 to \$100, depending on length and popularity. There were also rare books, mostly Greek and early Roman volumes, some of which were hundreds of years old. Prices started at \$500 and went up (and of course, an ancient Egyptian writing of even more ancient formulas could be priceless, and extremely costly if they dealt with Things Man Was Not Meant to Know).

**Clothing:** Togas (see p. 21) could range in price from \$20 to \$500+, depending on materials and decorations. Tunics could cost about half as much as a toga of similar quality, but they were more highly decorated, and made with more diverse materials. An imported tunic could cost as much as \$1,000. Cloaks, *stolas* (see p. 21), and capes could be hideously expensive; prices started at \$20 and go up to \$2,000+.

**Silk:** Imported from China. 1 bolt of silk, \$1,200+, 1 lb.

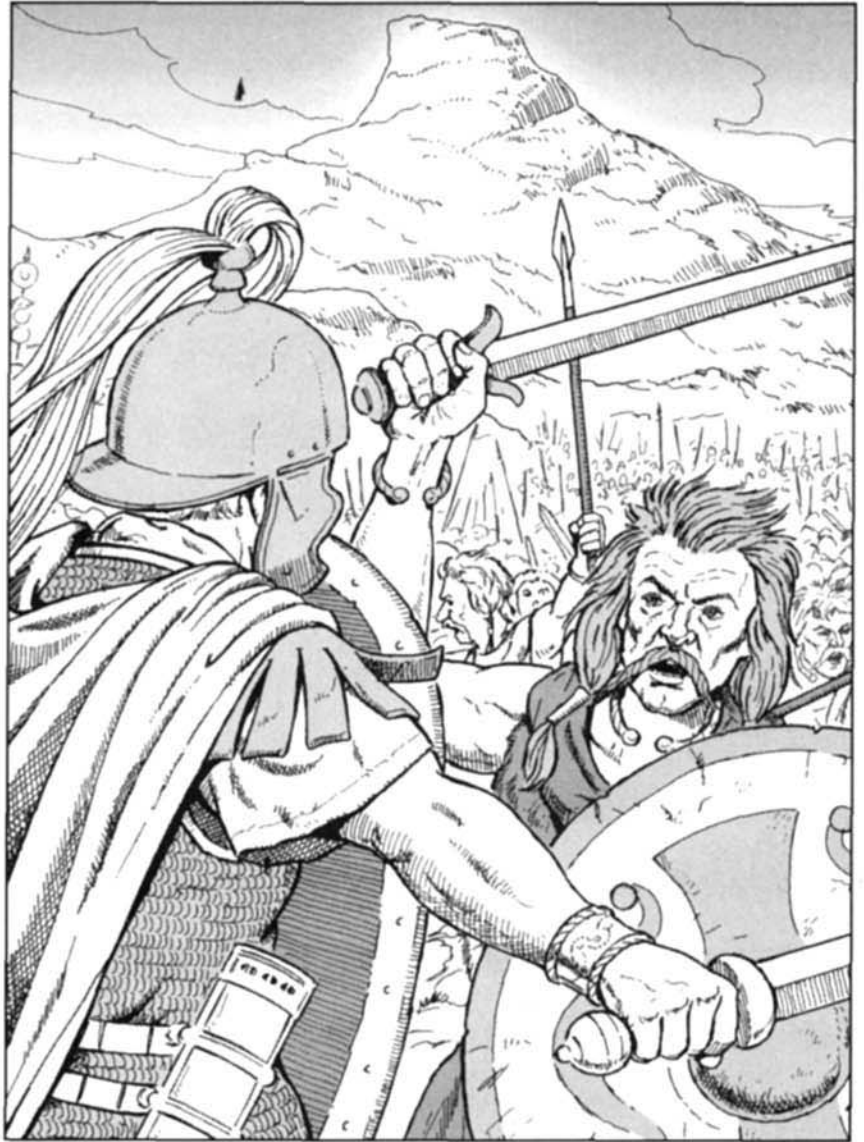
**Surgeon's Tools:** Include scalpel, arrow-removing spoon, saw, and other tools. Use of these tools gives a +1 to Physician rolls. \$100, 5 lbs.

**Writing Implements:** Romans took notes on wax tablets, a wood surface with a thin layer of wax. Writing was done with a metal or ivory sharpened rod called the *stylus*. In a pinch, a stylus could be used as a weapon (thrust-3 impaling, maximum damage 1d-3); Julius Caesar defended himself (unsuccessfully) with a stylus when he was attacked by his murderers. For permanent writings, ink (made of the juices of cuttlefish, pitch, ash, and wine) (\$1-3), a quill or wooden rod (\$1), and parchment or papyrus were used (\$0.25 per roll). A wax tablet cost between \$1 and \$10, depending on the ornaments on the outside. A stylus ranged from \$2 to \$15.

## HOUSING

The cost of living in the cities was very high. Many people spent over half their income on rental expenses in Rome. Roman villas were also expensive. In the country, prices were much lower, but so were living conditions.

**Apartment Rent:** Prices ranged widely depending on the quality. A luxury first-floor apartment had a monthly rent of \$200-\$300 a month. A middle-class one, on the second or third floor, went for \$75-60 a month. One on the upper floors cost \$30-\$50. Attic rooms (if they could be called rooms) cost \$10 to \$20 a month.



**Houses and Villas:** A good house in the city or a villa in the country was worth anything between \$50,000 and \$4 million. Wealthy Romans always owned *at least* one house in the city and one or two villas.

# WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Roman weapons were TL2, and were made of iron. Against other iron weapons, treat them as weapons of normal quality. If used against steel weapons, treat the iron blades as "cheap" weapons for breaking purposes. Steel swords were available during the Imperial period (Spanish armorers were famous for their blades) but they were very expensive; steel weapons cost the same as fine quality iron weapons.

## LEGIONARY WEAPONS AND ARMOR

During the early Republican period, each soldier provided his own gear; a soldier PC will have to purchase his weapons. By the time of Marius, gear was issued to new recruits by their general. In Imperial times, the government provided it.

### Weapons

**Pilum:** An iron-headed javelin; legionaries carried two, sometimes one heavier than the other. The *pilum* had a long metal shaft embedded in a wooden one. When thrown, the relatively soft metal shaft bent on impact; if it had missed, the enemy could not throw it back. If it hit an enemy shield, the point was designed to penetrate and foul the shield, making it useless.

In game terms, use the *Damage to Shields* rules in p. B120. If the javelin inflicts half the damage to penetrate the shield, it has become embedded there. The *pilum* usually bent after penetrating the shield; attempts to remove it take three turns and a ST roll. The shield now trailed several feet of wood, becoming more of a hindrance than a help. Reduce the DX of the wearer by 2, and his effective Block by 3; this is cumulative if multiple *pila* hit the shield. Most enemies would discard the encumbered shield. The *pilum* fell into disuse in the 4th century A.D.

**Gladius:** A stabbing shortsword, issued to all legionaries. Used with Shortsword skill. Optionally, legionary training gives +1 for thrusting attacks and -1 to skill for swinging attacks.

**Hasta:** A heavy spear used by the early Roman legions and the rear ranks of the Early Republican army. It was abandoned by the time of Marius (see p. 74), but was again issued to the frontier troops by the early 4th century A.D.

**Spatha:** A thrusting broadsword used by cavalry troopers.

### Armor

Roman armor went through several changes in the course of history. Listed below are the different types of armor, and the periods during which they were in use. Archaic armor may be found in the hands of barbarians at any given time, often rusted or in poor repair (-1 to PD and DR).

**Bronze Cuirass:** A bronze corselet with PD 4, DR 4 for the front, used by the better class of Roman soldiers during the Monarchy and Early Republic (up to 300 B.C.). During the Imperial era, the back of the armor may have leather (PD 2, DR 2). Officers' breastplates were richly decorated; tribunes continued to wear them through the Imperial period, even though better armor was available. Protects areas 9-11, 17, and 18. \$550, 23 lbs.

**Bronze Greaves:** These covered the leg from knee to ankle (areas 12-14), with PD 3, DR 3. When a leg hit is determined, roll 1d; on a 1-2, the attack hits the unprotected area of the leg. Protection is from the front only; attacks from behind are unimpeded by armor. Greaves were used until 300 B.C. \$270, 17 lbs.



**Bronze Helmet:** A pot-helm with PD 3, DR 3, protecting areas 3-4. Used by officers and as part of ceremonial dress through most of Roman history; abandoned by common soldiers by 300 B.C.

**Chainmail:** Use the stats on p. B210. Chainmail had no sleeves, and reached to the waist. It was first used by soldiers during the late 4th century B.C., and was common by the time of the late Republic. It continued to be used for the rest of the Imperial period. Centurions kept using it even after common soldiers were issued segmented armor.

**Studded Leather Skirts:** Attached to either the chainmail suit or the *lorica segmentata* (see below) to protect the upper legs. The skirt consisted of several strips of leather backed with metal pieces, covering Area 11. Against cutting attacks, it provided adequate protection, but impaling attacks could penetrate more easily. It provided PD 2 (1 vs. impaling), DR 3 (1 vs. impaling).



**Segmented Armor:** This type of metal armor (*lorica segmentata*) consisted of metal plates linked together around the body to permit articulation. Segmented armor provided excellent protection against cutting

and crushing attacks, but piercing thrusts could punch between the plates more easily. PD 3 (2 vs. impaling), DR 5 (3 vs. impaling). \$650, 35 lbs. Used by legionaries from the end of the Republic to 350 A.D.

Leather *segmentata* probably did not exist, and legionaries almost certainly did not wear leather armor, but GMs may allow it in alternate settings or to equip non-Roman fighters. It has PD 2, DR 3 (2 vs. impaling), weighs 12 lbs., and costs \$520.

**Legionary's Helmet:** This was a pot-helm with face guards. The helmet had PD 3, DR 4 for areas 3-4, and PD 2, DR 3 for area 5. Thrusting attacks can ignore this protection at a -7 penalty to hit. Common soldiers' helmets had a crest running from front to back; centurions sported a traverse crest. This helmet lasted through the 4th century A.D. \$150, 6 lbs. Non-legionary fighters may use a leather version: PD 2, DR 2 for areas 3-4, PD 1, DR 1 for area 5. \$25, 1 lb.

**Scale Armor:** Use the stats on p. B210. This armor was used by Roman or Romanized cavalymen from 100 A.D. to the end of the Empire, and by Byzantine cavalry afterwards.

**Scutum:** The large shield of the legions was either square or oval in shape, and was made of multiple layers of wood and leather. It was used by the legions throughout most of their history. It provides PD 4.

### Heavy Weapons

These weapons were used mainly in sieges or aboard ship. Romans occasionally used light artillery on the battlefield, however. The terminology of Roman heavy weapons is very confusing: the word *catapult* has been used to describe giant crossbows as well as the traditional trebuchet, and the Roman word *ballista* sometimes described either catapults or bow-type weapons. For convenience, the word *ballista* will be used to describe bow-type weapons, and *catapult* for stone-throwers.

**Ballistae:** These were crossbows of diverse sizes. The smallest, the "scorpion," was a heavy crossbow that would be carried by one man, although it usually required a crew of two. It did 4d impaling damage. Medium *ballistae* were sometimes carried on horseback and set on the battlefield for long-distance fire, but for the most part were used in fortifications, sieges, and on Roman ships. Damage was 6d impaling. When used on the battlefield, they were usually fired at massed groups of men, to devastating effect. Large *ballistae* fired huge darts and were only built during sieges. They did 8d impaling. All *ballistae* have the following stats: Acc 4, 1/2 Damage 400, Max 500, RoF 1/120, TL3.

**Catapults:** These weapons usually fired rocks weighing from 10 to 600 pounds. They were crewed by at least 6 men. Damage is 6d×9 for a 10-pound stone. For every 14 pounds over 10 (maximum 600), add 1 to the multiplier.

Acc 1, 1/2 Damage 300, Max 500, RoF 1/300, TL2.

**Battering Rams:** Wooden beams used to knock down walls and barricades. The simplest ones were trimmed tree trunks and were used against gates. Others rested on a sling, had a huge iron head, and required 200 men to swing. A simple wooden ram does thrust damage equivalent to one-quarter the ST of the men wielding it (1/2 ST if the ram has an iron head; wooden rams cannot be used against stone walls without a metal head). The sling ram uses 2/3 of the ST of the men using it (the 200-man sling ram did 14d crushing damage every time it struck).

## GLADIATORIAL WEAPONS AND ARMOR

The arms of the gladiator varied depending on the type of fighter (see pp. 95-96). The list below describes the most common weapons and armor, but remember that the games sought variety; any TL2-3 weapon that can be imagined could have been issued to gladiators at some point.

### Weapons

Shortswords, broadswords, large knives, spears, and javelins were common. Use normal shortsword stats, or those of the *gladius* (see p. 43). The Samnite-class gladiators used a thrusting broadsword.

**Sica:** The *sica* was issued to the Thracian-class gladiators (see p. 96). These were heavy chopping blades that did swing+1 cutting damage.

**Iaculum:** Gladiatorial net. Use the stats for a small net on p. B51.

**Fuxina:** This was a trident wielded by the *retiarius* (see p. 95). It is used with Spear skill at no penalty. Those who are unfamiliar with it (see sidebar, p. B43) have a -2 to use it until they have sparred for 8 hours. The three points and extra weight give it some properties different from a spear: opponents are at -1 to Dodge a *fuxina* but +1 to Parry or Block (the Dodge penalty can facilitate catching fish with this weapon!). It does thrust+3 damage one-handed and thrust+4 two-handed. Armor DR is doubled against the *fuxina*, and it cannot be hurled. Weight is 5 lbs.

### Armor

Some gladiators fought half-naked; in general, few wore body armor. All the military armor types mentioned above had a gladiatorial equivalent except *segmentata*. Greaves (see p. 43) were very common. The *scutum* was used by some gladiators; others were issued the *parma*, a small shield or target.

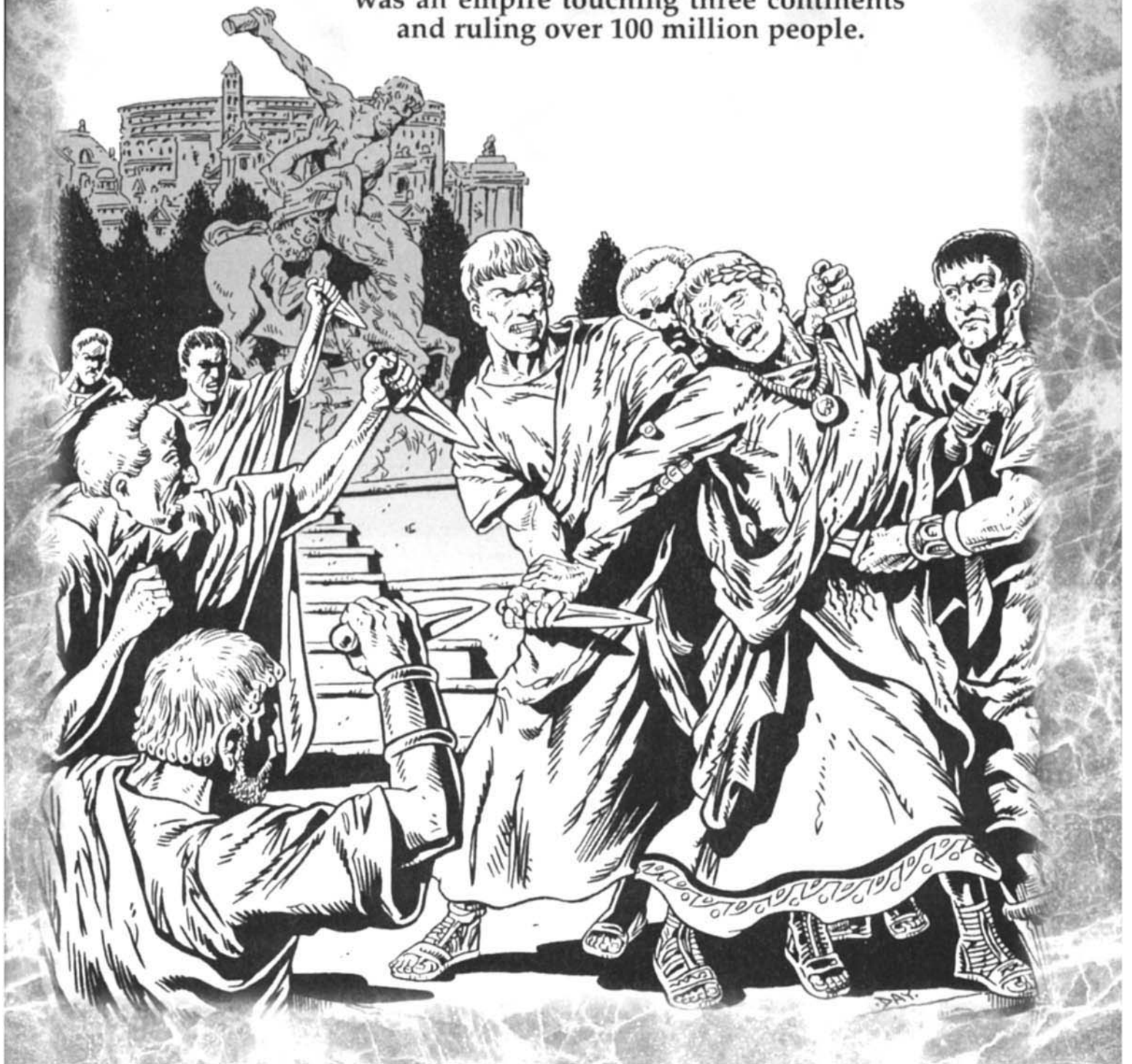
**Galerus:** A leather and bronze armband that protected the arm from wrist to shoulder. It sometimes included a gauntlet as well. It provided PD 3, DR 4 to the arm; PD helps only against attacks on the arm. If parrying with that arm, add PD 2 to the parry, but if the defense roll is made by less than 2, the attack hits the arm; DR protects normally.

**Gladiator's Helmet:** This was the most common helmet, usually worn by heavily-armed fighters like the *mirmillo* (see p. 95). It was a heavy bronze helm with a net of bronze wire protecting the face. The helmet provides PD 3, DR 4 over the head (areas 3-4) and PD 1, DR 3 (1 vs. impaling) over area 5.

**Blind Helmet:** This helmet had no visor (see *Blind Fighters*, p. 100). The wearer is effectively blind (-10 to all combat rolls); hearing rolls are at -4. Provides PD 3, DR 4 on all locations.

# III HISTORY

From its mythic origins to the traditional downfall date of 476 A.D., Roman history spans over 1,000 years. Rome rose from a primitive tribal settlement to a powerful city in two centuries, and to a continental power in three. Seven hundred years after the hero Romulus or his historical equivalent consecrated the site of the city surrounded by seven hills, Rome was an empire touching three continents and ruling over 100 million people.





## The Greek World (200 B.C.)

The Greek city-states of old were seen as the source of civilization by all nations of the Mediterranean, including Rome. When Rome started to rise in power, however, the old cities, like Athens, Sparta, and Thebes had little political or military strength. Instead, the Alexandrian kingdoms of Syria, Egypt, and Macedon controlled directly or indirectly most of the other nations of the Mediterranean.

The Kingdom of Macedon was the most powerful militarily. It had the most proficient army of the ancient world (before the Romans, that is). The direct heirs of Alexander the Great, the Macedonians controlled a large part of Eastern Europe and most of Greece. In territory it was smaller than the two other great kingdoms.



The Seleucid, or Syrian, Empire was the largest Hellenistic kingdom. It included Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization, and Persia, now controlled by a Greek people. The Empire extended east to the Indian borders and north to Asia Minor. Unlike the Macedonians, however, its army was not made up of citizens but relied on mercenaries. The Seleucid Empire had built a series of Greek-populated cities around its land, but by and large most of the country remained un-Hellenized, which explains the rise of Parthia and Persia in those territories centuries later.

Egypt, once a great empire, was now a Hellenized kingdom ruled by a Macedonian-born minority. This was the wealthiest kingdom, and remained one of the richest lands of the ancient world even after the Romans conquered it. It was ruled by the Greek-speaking Ptolemy dynasty. Their army mainly consisted of Greek and Macedonian mercenaries.

Continued on next page . . .



The mythic origin of Rome (see Chapter 7) claims that Rome was founded by refugees from the legendary city of Troy and the Latin inhabitants of the peninsula. According to archaeological research, Rome the city-state came into being somewhere between 800 and 700 B.C. (making the traditional date of 753 B.C. surprisingly accurate), when the herdsmen and peasant tribes living on the hills united under a monarchy.

## THE EARLY DAYS: THE MONARCHY

Three ethnic and cultural groups were involved in the origins of the Roman monarchy: the Sabines, the Etruscans, and the Latins. The Sabines were a farming people whose culture had some Greek influence. The Etruscans were the most advanced, and it was under them that the city of Rome was built. Their culture still remains a mystery because archaeologists have not been able to translate their writing. Written Etruscan is a lost language. Their art and architecture is very similar to Greek works. They were also fascinated by magic and divination (see pp. 114-116). The last group, the Latins, were originally herdsmen and peasants, in some ways the most primitive of the three founders of Rome.

The early Roman city-state was ruled by a *rex* (king) who served as high priest, lawmaker, and military commander. The powers of the king were not absolute, however. An advisory body made up by the heads of the most prominent families shared power with him. This assembly of noblemen was the predecessor of the Roman Senate.

Most of these kings were of Etruscan extraction. According to tradition, the era of the kings ended when King Tarquinius Superbus raped a Latin woman, Lucretia. The enraged Latins rose up and overthrew their Etruscan rulers, traditionally in 509 B.C. The new government abolished the monarchy altogether, and was set up as a representative republic.

## THE REPUBLIC

As the Latins organized themselves, the first thing they did was to eradicate the monarchical system. The word *rex* became synonymous with tyranny and despotism, and as a negative term was powerful enough to cause Caesar's death almost 500 years later. It was the charge that Caesar was trying to become *rex* that impelled most conspirators against him. Instead, the Latins established a republican oligarchy (see sidebar, p. 49).

## EARLY ROMAN EXPANSION (500-270 B.C.)

Italy was a fragmented land, where tribes and city-states competed for dominion. In that situation, a city had to expand its influence or be dominated by a stronger neighbor. Rome chose the former path. In less than 300 years the Republic had unified most of the peninsula under its rule, either directly or as a senior ally.

The Etruscans were conquered after their city of Veii was captured. Not long afterwards, however, Rome had to defend itself against a new threat. A large army of Gauls marched south, and in 390 B.C., it stormed and captured Rome itself, the first time the city had been conquered by a foreign invader, and the last time for almost 800 years. The Gallic army did not stay, however; they withdrew after a ransom was paid for the city.

The Republic recovered quickly. First, it challenged the Latin League, the loose federation of which Rome was a leading partner. Rome then battled the Samnite tribes. By 290 B.C., after three wars, the Samnites became part of Rome and were granted partial citizenship. The Greek cities in Southern Italy were next. One of them, Tarentum, called for outside help. It came in the form of the Greek general and king, Pyrrhus. The Greek phalanx and Roman legion met for the first time in combat in the battles that followed



between 280 and 275 B.C. The first two encounters were won by Pyrrhus, but at such cost that he said "another such victory and I will be ruined," giving origin to the expression "Pyrrhic victory." He tried twice more, and was defeated on the fourth attempt. Pyrrhus gave up the cause and all the Greek cities in Italy were under Roman control by 272 B.C.

## THE PUNIC WARS (264-146 B.C.)

This expansion eventually led to conflict with another major power of the Mediterranean. The city of Carthage (see picture, p. 48) was a Phoenician colony in North Africa which had grown to become the wealthiest city of the Mediterranean.

The first conflict happened on the island of Sicily. Two Sicilian cities, Syracuse and Messina, were at war. Messina was controlled by a band of Italian mercenaries known as the Mamertines, or "Sons of Mars." The Mamertines first appealed to Carthage for aid, and a Carthaginian army was sent to their city. After the Roman popular assembly decided to intervene, however, the Mamertines tricked the Carthaginians out of their city and welcomed the Roman expedition. War followed shortly.

The Roman legions expelled the Carthaginians from Northern Sicily. To proceed further, Rome had to build a war fleet from scratch. Legend has it that a beached Carthaginian wreck was found by the Romans, who used it as a model to build their own. With their brand-new fleet, Rome defeated the Carthaginians in several maritime battles. A treaty was signed in 241 B.C., when both sides were too exhausted to fight on. Carthage lost Sicily and had to pay a large indemnity.

Having lost Sicily and the adjacent islands, Carthage looked elsewhere for expansion. Hamilcar Barca, one of the foremost generals produced by the First Punic War, headed expeditions into what is now Spain. Soon the general, his son-in-law Hasdrubal and his son Hannibal had conquered a large portion of the Spanish peninsula. Rome watched this new expansion with apprehension, and eventually both sides started looking for an excuse for another war.

The excuse was provided when Hannibal invaded the Spanish city of Saguntum, a Roman ally. War was declared. Hannibal quickly took the initiative. Instead of defending Carthaginian positions as his predecessors had done during the First Punic War, he invaded Italy itself! With a large mercenary army, Hannibal crossed the Alps (a heroic undertaking) into Italian lands in 218 B.C. Several Roman legions scrambled to meet him, but they were no match for his generalship. Hannibal won every battle he fought on Italian soil. He annihilated several Roman armies. Consul Quintus Fabius Maximus decided not to face Hannibal in the field. Instead, he had the Roman army harass the invaders and deny them supplies. Hotter heads prevailed, however; Fabius was replaced and the legions marched against Hannibal once more. At the battle of Cannae, a Roman army and one consul were massacred; the death toll was over 25,000.

Several Roman cities fell to the Carthaginians. The wisdom of Fabius was recognized, and delaying stratagems (originating the term "Fabian tactics") were used to contain Hannibal's army. At the same time, Roman armies marched into Spain. The delaying tactics were necessary as long as no general of Hannibal's caliber was found. The Romans finally located such a general in Publius Cornelius Scipio.

Scipio did to Spain what Hannibal had been doing to Italy. He destroyed the Carthaginian armies in Spain, also destroying any hopes of reinforcements for Hannibal. The former Carthaginian possessions in Spain became Roman provinces. A desperate attempt to reinforce Hannibal was made by the general's brother, Hasdrubal, but another Roman army headed him off. The Carthaginians were annihilated; Hasdrubal's severed head was tossed into Hannibal's camp ten days after the battle.

## The Greek World (200 B.C.) (Continued)

The Greek city-states had discovered that they could not resist large nations by themselves. Alexander the Great had conquered them one by one. To prevent this from happening again, they formed military alliances. The Aetolian League was made up of small cities on the northern side of the Gulf of Corinth, which felt threatened by the power of the Hellenistic kingdoms (see above). The Achaean League was on the southern part of the Gulf and had similar goals. They had become subordinate to the Macedonians, and wished independence. There were a few independent city-states. The ancient city of Athens had freed itself from the Macedonians in 229 B.C. It was little more than a "college town," respected for its tradition of learning and with enough of an army to hold the city, but little more. Sparta, the most warlike city of the Greek world, was only a shadow of its former self.



## Hellenization

"Hellenization" refers to the adoption of Greek (Hellenistic) culture. By the time of the Roman republic, most of the Mediterranean world was thoroughly Hellenized, thanks mainly to the conquests of Alexander the Great during the 4th century B.C.

Alexander was a Macedonian general, educated in Greek fashion by several of Greece's greatest thinkers, including Aristotle himself. A master military strategist, Alexander conquered most of the Greek city-states and the Persian Empire, and pushed east as far as India before disease struck him down, killing him at the age of 33, in 323 B.C.

As part of his conquest policies, Alexander built temples and schools in the Greek style, ordered his soldiers to marry native women and settle down, and set up governments following Hellenic patterns. At the same time, Greek culture and art were carried to such diverse regions as France, Egypt, and Palestine, where they overshadowed local traditions.

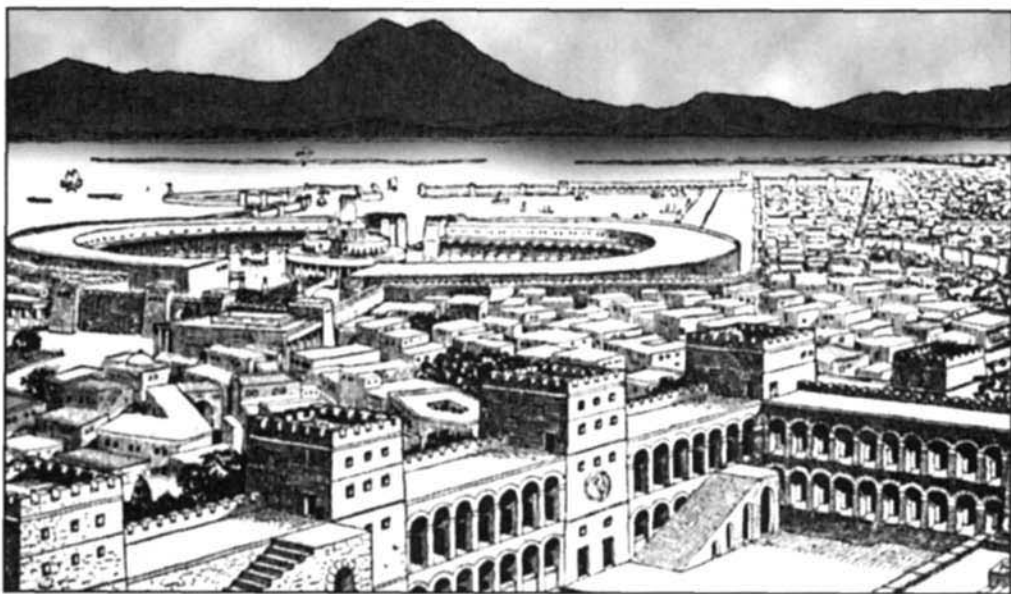
When the Roman republic started its conquests, the Mediterranean world was already culturally unified. Greek was spoken everywhere as the language of traders, poets, and rulers. The Romans themselves, even as they conquered the Hellenistic world, were overrun in turn by Greek culture. Its art, literature, philosophy, theater, and educational system were all adopted by the Romans.

This had two effects. It helped Rome in unifying the Mediterranean, Northern Africa, and Syria. All those areas already had a complex bureaucracy which the Romans simply took over. On the other hand, the Hellenized areas retained a separate cultural identity. Most Greeks viewed the Romans as uncultured would-be Hellenes, and looked down on them even while envying their military power. By the time of the Late Empire, the split between the Romanized areas and the Hellenized ones led to the creation of the Western Empire, which would fall by 476 A.D., and the Eastern Empire, which would last for another millennium.

After breaking Carthage's power in Spain, Scipio's army invaded North Africa and threatened Carthage itself. The Carthaginian Senate was terrified, and sued for peace. Scipio met with Carthaginian delegates and set up terms to which the Carthaginians agreed. Then, after a decade and a half of battling in Italy, Hannibal and a fraction of his army arrived in Carthage. Heartened by the return of their legendary general, Carthage repudiated the agreement. In 202 B.C., Hannibal and Scipio met on the battlefield, in Zama. Hannibal and Scipio spoke face to face before the battle. Hannibal offered peace under better terms than the earlier proposal, but Scipio was not to be deterred. Scipio faced the former master and defeated him (see sidebar, pp. 76-77).

After the battle, Hannibal returned to his city and convinced the government to surrender. Peace between Rome and Carthage lasted for 30 years until a faction of the Roman Senate pushed for the total destruction of Carthage, and a Roman army was sent to northern Africa.

The siege of Carthage lasted three years; although a shadow of its former self, the city was still a powerful one. It was finally taken by storm in 146 B.C. The city's gods were officially removed from it, its buildings were razed to the ground, and its land was sown with salt. This is what is now meant by a "Carthaginian peace" – the total destruction of the enemy. The lands of Carthage became the Roman province of Africa.



## THE WRECK OF THE REPUBLIC

After the end of the Second Punic War, Rome had become the strongest nation in the Hellenistic world. Almost by accident, Rome gained control of several cities and lands around the Mediterranean. The way in which Rome absorbed these conquered lands created an Empire even before the Republic fell. One of the first steps the victorious Romans undertook was to punish the Greek and Macedonian kingdoms that had backed Carthage during the war. By 129 B.C., Rome had conquered most Greek nations and turned them into provinces under Roman administration.

These victories brought new lands and revenues to the Republic, but for the most part this only helped the noble class. At the same time, the Italian cities, who had fought alongside Rome, started demanding equal rights.

The Senate found its authority challenged even as it started to split into two factions. The *optimates* were conservatives who tried to preserve the powers of the nobility. Their rivals, the *populares*, were trying to give more rights to the equestrian and plebeian classes, and were also interested in land reform.

Two brothers were at the center of this internal conflict: Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. The Gracchii were noblemen who supported popular reforms. The Senate acted violently. Both brothers were killed in the space of a decade, victims of Senate-instigated riots. By using violence, the Senate had opened the door to more violence.

In 107 B.C., a candidate from the *populares* was elected: Gaius Marius, who was of the equestrian class. He reformed the army (see p. 74). For the first time, Romans without property were allowed to join the legions, and their equipment was bought by Marius himself.

After holding four successive consulships, Marius left public life for a while, and the Senate regained control. When another liberal, the tribune Drusus, tried to pass a law granting citizenship to the Italian citizens, the Senate had him murdered (91 B.C.). The enraged Italian cities declared war. The Social War lasted three years, from 91 to 88 B.C., and Rome was forced to grant citizenship to most of the cities of the peninsula.

Marius returned to public life when Rome prepared an expedition against King Mithridates VI of the city of Pontus, who had led a rebellion of the eastern provinces. Command of the Roman army had been given to a conservative named Lucius Cornelius Sulla. When Sulla was about to embark with his army, Marius had the Popular Assembly remove command from Sulla to give it to the old general. Sulla did not accept the Assembly's decision; instead, he led his army against Rome itself! For the first time in Roman history, a general had marched against his city – and had been obeyed by his army. Marius fled to Africa, and Sulla had several members of the *populares* executed. The conservatives were firmly entrenched in power when the general left to fight the war.

While Sulla was away in his campaigns, Marius returned to Rome and started his own massacres. He readied an army to meet Sulla, but died before he could leave. Sulla returned to Italy in 83 B.C. There he fought a battle under the very gates of Rome against the Samnites, an Italian tribe who had remained in rebellion against Rome even after the end of the Social War. Sulla destroyed the Samnites, and entered Rome triumphant.

Sulla's first step was to have himself declared dictator, a title that had not been used since Hannibal's invasion a century before. He responded to Marius' purges with his own, killing thousands of people. Many of those victims had engaged in little or no political activity, and were killed so Sulla's henchmen could steal their property. A condemned man's property was sold at a fraction of its worth. Several Roman entrepreneurs who had won Sulla's favor enriched themselves in this way. One of them, Crassus, would play an important role in the political upheaval that followed.

Satisfied, Sulla voluntarily retired in 79 B.C., and spent the rest of his life in the pursuit of pleasure. He died a year later, believing that he had saved the Republic by his actions. His reforms did not last long.

### ***Pompey and Crassus***

Gnaeus Pompeius had been a lieutenant of Sulla during his African campaigns. Before Sulla's death, Pompey had already been named "the Great" (Pompeius Magnus) for his military skill.

Crassus was famous for his fortune and the way he had acquired it. He had become wealthy during Sulla's dictatorship, and he increased his money with shrewd and rather shady investments. Among them was a private fire-fighting outfit. During one of the fires that were common in Rome, the firefighters would surround the building; one of Crassus' henchmen would then make an offer for the burning building and the ones around it, usually for a fraction of their true value. If the owner accepted, the fire was put out; otherwise, they let it burn. Sometimes it was Crassus' men who started the fires.



### ***Italy During the Monarchy***

The Italian peninsula was a divided land, controlled by a myriad of independent city-states and warring tribes. Since the times before the cities, it had been traditional for growing tribes to send out warring parties to acquire new territories. Over the centuries, this developed into a constant state of warfare and conspiracy, as each city plotted to control or influence its neighbors.

To the north were the Gauls. Regarded as barbarians by most of the other Italian peoples, they had an advanced, if less urbanized, culture and were fierce warriors, managing to conquer Rome for the first time in its history (see p. 46). The Gauls were a frightening enemy of Rome until Julius Caesar's time.

The Latin League made up most of the central peninsula. Originally, it was a religious alliance for the worship of the god Jupiter. This evolved into a military federation for self-defense. It was formed of Latin cities not unlike Rome, but Rome soon became the "first among equals."

Non-Latin central and western Italy were primarily Etruscan. The Etruscan city-states had a loose confederation (the Etruscan League) that served as a balance against the Latin League to which the Romans belonged. The cities were ruled by kings or noble oligarchies. South of the Etruscan cities lay Rome and the Latin League cities.

Southern Italy and the island of Sicily had been colonized by the Greeks. Their cities were wealthy and powerful, but constant rivalry between them made them vulnerable to a unified enemy – which Rome soon became.

## Roman Government

The Senate was the most powerful institution of the Republic. It was made up of members of the patrician class, just like the earlier monarchical assembly. Eventually, plebeians (commoners) and equestrians (junior noblemen) who had served in high offices could join the Senate, effectively becoming members of the patrician class. The Senate passed laws, declared war, and discussed all matters affecting the city. From its members, two consuls were elected; they took care of executive and military matters. If a grave situation merited it, the Senate appointed a dictator to unify the government during the crisis. This appointment could only last one year.

The consuls had to be at least 42 years old, and had to have served in other posts for several years. They could serve for one year. The two consuls had the power of *imperium* – the power to command, which had once belonged to the king. Each consul could veto the edicts of the other. The consuls were also in command of the army. Initially the consuls were former senators or patricians, but plebeians were admitted to that office in 366 B.C.

The Assembly of the People had members from all classes. They elected the consuls and voted on their proposals. At first, the Assembly could not pass laws, and was dominated by the patricians, who were the patrons (see p. 9) of most members of the Assembly. Later reforms allowed the Assembly to initiate legislation.

The tribunes (not to be confused with military tribunes; see p. 79) were ten in number. They could protect plebeians and equestrians from patricians and government officials by exercising veto power. They could also veto unpopular laws and pass their own.

The Roman Republic continued to be controlled mainly by the patricians. One reason for this was that Roman public officials were not paid salaries, so the people holding them had to be wealthy to begin with. For another, the influence of patricians over the lower classes went beyond political power and wealth (see *Patrons and Clients*, pp. 9-10).

In 70 B.C., both Crassus and Pompey were elected consuls. They dismantled most of Sulla's reforms, returning powers to the tribunes and the equestrian class. The two consuls revived popular sentiment and exploited the hard feelings many common people had against the Senate. After Pompey's term ended, he received another military command, this time against the pirate kingdoms that had been brutalizing the Mediterranean. Having defeated the pirates, Pompey turned against Mithridates VI, who had again attacked Roman possessions. Between 66-62 B.C., Pompey fought in Asia, destroying Mithridates' kingdom and making it part of a Roman province. He then moved into the Middle East region, conquering Syria and making Judea a client-kingdom. Pompey returned to Rome in 62 B.C., covered in glory. The Senate, however, refused to give him honor for several of his victories, repudiated several agreements he had made in the East, and did not give his soldiers the land grants he had promised. Naturally, Pompey was enraged, and entered into a secret alliance (called the triumvirate) with his former partner Crassus and a young up-and-coming politician, Gaius Julius Caesar.



## Caesar and the First Triumvirate

Julius Caesar (see sidebars, pp. 52-54) had become a popular political figure during Pompey's absence. Crassus wanted to get more concessions for the equestrian class, and to be given a military command of his own. Pompey wished to be given the recognition he deserved, and Caesar needed their support in his bid for consulship. Also, the relationship between Crassus and Pompey was not very friendly, and Caesar was accepted as a mediator.

Caesar became consul in 59 B.C. He completely dominated politics, and his fellow consul had so little power that people referred jokingly to that year as the consulship of "Julius and Caesar." In return, Crassus got a price reduction for the tax-collecting privilege of Asia, and Pompey's achievements were recognized and lands were given to his army. Pompey married Caesar's daughter Julia and Crassus was given command of the campaign against Parthia. The Triumvirate went on.

In 58 B.C., Caesar was sent to govern Southern Gaul (*Gallia Narbonensis*). He decided to conquer the territory despite the Senate's threat to condemn him for the idea. The politician turned out to be a master general as well; in a series of campaigns he subdued the largest Celtic tribes. Furthermore, he led the first expeditions both to Germany and Britain, more for the glory than for any material gain. By 51 B.C., Gaul was firmly in Roman hands.

By 56 B.C., Crassus and Pompey had begun to feel jealousy towards their partner's success, but they resolved to continue their agreement. Caesar would remain in Gaul while Crassus and Pompey would become consuls. Pompey took command of an army in Spain, and Crassus marched against Parthia.

Crassus' inept leadership proved disastrous when his army assailed Carrhae (see sidebar, p. 79). Crassus himself died in the battle; his death was not only a blow to the Republic, but to the Triumvirate. The relationship between Pompey and Caesar became more strained. Pompey hadn't left for Spain, but remained in Rome while Caesar and Crassus were away.

Their rivalry became the focus of the old political struggle in the Republic. Caesar became identified with the *populares*, while Pompey became a conservative (which was ironic, considering his past actions) and the leader of the *optimates* faction. Riots, now typical in Rome, became savage. Gangs of ex-gladiators and criminals working for one faction or another battled on the streets of Rome. Their most important leaders were Clodius, who supported Caesar, and Milo, a Pompeian follower. Clodius was murdered, but the violence continued until Pompey, obeying the Senate's orders, led troops into the city to restore peace.

Pompey became the Senate's champion and was made the sole consul of the Republic. Caesar's success in Gaul made him a threat, so Pompey and the Senate decided to eliminate his power base by recalling him from Gaul. Caesar was ordered to return to Rome as a private citizen, where he could be disposed of. Upon hearing these orders, Caesar marched into Italy at the head of a legion, in clear disregard for the law (49 B.C.). As his army crossed the river Rubicon, which divided Gaul from Italy, he allegedly said "*Alea jacta est*" ("The die is cast"), creating a phrase that now describes an irrevocable decision.

### The Civil Wars

Pompey had no forces in Italy to rival Caesar's veteran army, so he fled to the East. Asia and Spain were solidly behind Pompey at first, but a quick campaign by Caesar captured the Spanish province, whose legions joined with him. Then Caesar's army invaded Greece. After some setbacks, he defeated Pompey at the battle of Pharsalus in 48 B.C. Pompey fled to Egypt, where he was assassinated by King Ptolemy and his sister, Cleopatra. Caesar arrived in Egypt and helped install Cleopatra on the throne.

Caesar returned to Rome triumphant, proclaiming himself dictator for life. He started using trappings of royalty, like having his portrait stamped on new coins, wearing purple robes, and holding the post of *pontifex maximus*, high priest of the Roman state religion. At the same time, however, he did not behave like Sulla or Marius; instead of purges, he issued pardons to most of his surviving enemies. He also extended Roman citizenship to several regions, and organized several new colonies. Finally, he assembled a great army to march against the Parthians. He was ready to lead it when he was assassinated.

Caesar's murderers had many motives. Several political leaders feared that Caesar would become a king and destroy the Republic. Others wanted revenge for their defeat at his hands. And a few others probably joined the conspiracy to increase their political power. In any case, none of their goals were realized after Caesar's death in 44 B.C. Fourteen years later, most of the conspirators were dead and the Republic had ceased to exist.

A new bout of civil war followed. The two leaders of the Caesarean party were Mark Antony, one of Caesar's lieutenants, and Octavius, Caesar's great-nephew, whom Caesar had adopted. With Lepidus, another follower of Caesar, they formed the Second Triumvirate. In Rome, they started their own persecutions and purges, while their enemies gathered forces in the Eastern provinces. At the battle of Philippi, in 42 B.C., the Caesarean forces triumphed. Then a period of tension between Octavius and Antony followed. Antony was captivated by Cleopatra, and rejected his Roman wife, who happened to be Octavius' sister. Octavius charged that Antony was conspiring to surrender the Eastern provinces to Cleopatra, and war was again declared in 32 B.C. In 30 B.C., Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide after being defeated. Octavius was now the sole leader of Rome.

### The Conspiracy of Catiline

This event was one of the most famous scandals of the Late Republic. Lucius Sergius Catilina (Catiline) was a patrician with a lot of ambition. When his bid for consulship was rejected in 65 B.C., he allegedly plotted with other disgruntled candidates to murder the elected consuls and take over the government. This plot was discovered but no actions were taken against the plotters (probably because there was no definite proof). In 63 B.C., Catiline ran and was once again defeated by the famous orator Cicero. He started a new far-flung conspiracy.

According to his accusers, Catiline's confederates started raising an army near Rome, with which Catiline would seize the city and overthrow the government. Cicero denounced this publicly and was granted extraordinary powers to suppress the conspiracy. Once again, however, there was not enough proof to justify an arrest. Catiline left the city. This convinced the Senate that the plot was real, and they declared him an enemy of the state.

Catiline's group decided to strike during the madcap festivities of the Saturnalia (see p. 21), but their plans were betrayed. Cicero arrested most of the conspirators in the capital. Catiline tried to flee but was killed in combat with Roman troops. Cicero then convinced the Senate to execute all the other plotters without trial.

Some historians believe that the whole "conspiracy" was blown out of proportion by Cicero for political gain. After the plot he was given the title of *Pater Patriae* (Father of the Country) for his role in the suppression of the plot.



## Julius Caesar

Gaius Julius Caesar is perhaps the most famous Roman general and statesman, and is considered to be the first Emperor, although he never officially took that title. His *cognomen* became synonymous with the word Emperor, and was used in other countries for the same purposes (for example, the German title *Kaiser* and the Russian *Czar* are both versions of "Caesar"). Republican Romans accused him of destroying the old Republic, and Imperial supporters praised him for saving Rome.

Caesar was described as a handsome man, despite the fact that he went prematurely bald. He was also a charismatic orator and politician, and knew how to gain public favor through arena spectacles and popular laws. He was married several times, and was reputed to have had several lovers, many of them foreign queens, and, according to his detractors, some kings as well. Throughout his life, Caesar had a bad reputation as both a womanizer and a homosexual. As a result, he was said to be "every woman's man and every man's woman." In his youth, he was something of a dandy, spending money on luxuries and accumulating large debts. During his tenures as governor of foreign lands, he was not above lining his pockets with the provincials' money.

In military matters, he showed the courage expected from all Roman citizens. He joined in the fighting, and personally rallied his troops when they wavered. As a general, he was unpredictable and well-organized at the same time, and managed to outmaneuver every general who faced him. Caesar was a harsh commander, but he won his troops' loyalty to the extent that sometimes they served without pay for long periods of time.

Caesar's early career gave no indication of his abilities. He started his career in the standard patrician way, but was able to secure the important position of *pontifex maximus* at a relatively early age, during Sulla's government. He almost fell victim to Sulla's purges, but was spared thanks to the intercession of several important patricians. He had a fairly undistinguished military career in his youth. One incident is revealing, however. While sailing on the Aegean, he was captured by pirates and held captive for 40 days before he was ransomed. Before he left, he jokingly swore that he would be back to avenge himself. The young Julius then hired a fleet and destroyed the pirates' refuge.

Continued on next page...

# THE EMPIRE

The Civil Wars proved that Rome could not be managed under its current system. Octavius Augustus devised a new government that hid under the institutions of the old; his new arrangement survived for over 300 years. Under the Empire, Rome grew in power and influence.

## AUGUSTUS

Octavius, now renamed Augustus, turned the unstable Republic into an Empire led mostly by one man. Augustus was very skilled in disguising his reforms under old names and offices, but by the time of his death it was obvious that the Senate did not have the power it had once enjoyed.



### The Principate

Octavius never accepted the title of king, wisely learning from Caesar's fate. Octavius was given the name Augustus, or "revered one." His title was *princeps* (First Citizen), which implied that he was merely the first among his peers, not an absolute monarch. In reality, however, Augustus held the reins of power. The word Empire itself came from the Roman term *imperium*, which indicated the power to command something, whether an army or a province. As *princeps*, Augustus had *imperium* over all the land of the former Republic. This eventually led to the term *imperator* to address the holder of that office.

Besides the title of *princeps*, Augustus also had himself elected to several other traditional Roman offices. He was a tribune, able to veto Senate decisions. He also held the position of consul, proconsul of several provinces, and, although he did not have the office of censor, he was given the same powers as one. Also, when he conquered Egypt, he did not turn it into a traditional Roman possession. The country became a Roman province that served as an Imperial power base through its grain reserves, but it did not fill the imperial coffers (except through the huge estates of the Ptolemaean kings that Augustus appropriated). Modern scholars think that Egypt's tax revenue going directly to Augustus and his successors is a historical myth, but GMs may wish to indulge in the background of Augustus' revenue rivaling that of the whole Empire's. Between that, his personal command of most of the legions in the Empire, and his government offices, his control over the Roman state was greater than that of any man before him, the ancient kings included.

The Senate continued to function with greatly diminished power. Members of the patrician class (see p. 7) held hereditary senatorial positions, and the *princeps* could appoint equestrians to the Senate. The Senate was in charge of trying other senators and important Romans, and of passing laws, although the *princeps* had veto power over those. For the most part, the Senate advised the emperor but had to follow his orders.

Perhaps the most important power of the Senate was its influence in the choice of a successor to the Emperor. The best Emperors Rome had – the Antonines – were for the most part hand-picked by the reigning Emperor and his circle of friends.

### *The Augustian Reforms*

Augustus realized that the empire was too large to be run by the institutions of the old Republic. He created a new bureaucracy called the “Imperial Household.” The new offices were filled by plebeians, freedmen, and even slaves, since most Romans from the patrician or equestrian class considered bureaucratic work beneath them. These new men owed no loyalties to anyone other than Augustus and, in a larger sense, the Empire itself. The civil servants would become one of the major foundations of the empire. Like any bureaucracy, of course, it eventually was plagued with corruption and lack of humanity, but it kept the government running for hundreds of years even when the current Emperor was incompetent or insane.

The new emperor also changed the city. Augustus boasted that he had found a Rome of brick and had left it a Rome of marble. Several of Rome’s greatest monuments were built during his reign. Also, he helped organize the administration of the city. Police and fire departments were organized under the control of city prefects. Another prefect was in charge of food distribution, not a small task considering Rome had a population of about a million people.

Another important change Augustus brought to Rome was the cult of the Emperor. Julius Caesar had set a precedent when his followers worshipped him as a god after his death. In the Eastern provinces, Augustus was worshipped openly, while in Rome, the Emperor had people worship his family’s *genius* (see p. 107) instead of himself. Augustus became little less than a god. And after his death, he was worshipped as a god, a practice that would continue for centuries.

## EARLY EMPERORS

Augustus’ biggest problem was the matter of succession. He had no children. First, he appointed his trusted general Agrippa as his heir, but Agrippa died in 13 B.C. Then he turned to his grandsons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, but they died in 2 and 4 A.D., respectively. Many at the time said that Augustus’ wife Livia poisoned all his heirs to ensure the claim of her son, Tiberius. Augustus had no choice but to appoint Tiberius as his successor. After Augustus’ death in 14 A.D., Tiberius rose to the Roman *principate*.

The new Emperor was an old man who seems to have been easily influenced by those about him. The Praetorian Guard commander, an Etruscan named Sejanus, was in some ways the true power during Tiberius’ reign. Under Tiberius and Sejanus, purges of suspected traitors started again. Finally, Sejanus was killed in 31 A.D. on Tiberius’ orders. When Tiberius died in 37 A.D., there was rejoicing in the streets, and high hopes for the popular new *princeps*, Gaius, nicknamed Caligula (Little Boots) by the soldiers he grew up with.

Caligula soon proved to be a madman who saw the Empire as his personal plaything. His vices squandered the treasury. He had himself deified while still alive, murdered any who dared to oppose him, and horrified Romans with his acts of insanity. Among the tales told about his reign are his nomination of his horse for consulship, leading an army to Britain but having it halt on the shores of France to gather seashells, and play-acting triumphs over the Germans, with actors in blond wigs masquerading as prisoners. His excesses were too much for those around him, and finally the Praetorian Guard murdered him in 41 A.D. As his successor the guards picked Caligula’s elderly uncle, Claudius, who had escaped previous purges because he seemed too harmless and inept to be dangerous.

### *Julius Caesar (Continued)*

After going through the requisite government positions, Caesar set his sights on the consulship. First he had to defend himself from charges that he had been involved in the Catilinian conspiracy (see sidebar, p. 51), of which he was acquitted. To become consul Caesar forged an informal alliance with Pompey and Crassus (see p. 50). During his consulship Caesar behaved in a tyrannical manner, using threats and force to get his proposals passed and to undermine the patricians’ power. At the end of his term of office, he was assigned to pacify Gaul.

Caesar’s conquest of Gaul showed him to be a military genius. He shaped the Roman legions at Gaul into a veteran, highly competent army that was much more loyal to him than to Rome itself. He not only pacified the powerful Gallic tribes, he made forays against the Germans and reached the fabled island of Britain, which he left after receiving the submission of several chiefs. All these actions stirred a lethal rivalry with his former partner Pompey, who saw his own glory as a general eclipsed by Caesar’s victories. Pompey and the Senate conspired to eliminate Caesar as a political threat. Faced with this, Caesar marched with his veteran legions against Rome.

During the civil war that followed, Caesar proved to be Pompey’s master. The two generals battled each other through the Empire, with Caesar winning most encounters. Pompey tried to seek refuge in Egypt and was murdered. After Pompey and his successors were dead and the senatorial cause destroyed, Caesar returned to Rome, but not before helping set his lover Cleopatra firmly on the throne of Egypt. He pardoned most of his surviving enemies, and tried to inspire good will in the Senate by his behavior.

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## Julius Caesar (Continued)

The patricians suspected (perhaps rightly) that Caesar was planning to become king of Rome. He continued to slight the Senate's power, angering its members. A conspiracy of senators and some of Caesar's own associates was formed. They assassinated him during the Ides of March, 44 B.C. According to tradition, several omens warned Caesar of his fate, but he chose to ignore them (see sidebar, p. 110). He was attacked by several dagger-wielding conspirators on the steps of the Assembly. The aging dictator defended himself with a stylus but was overwhelmed and killed. His murderers hailed themselves as the saviors of the Republic, but less than 20 years later the Republic had ceased to exist.



## Pompeii

The city Pompeii and its neighbor Herculaneum were destroyed by the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius in 79 A.D. This Samnite town had been conquered by the Romans in 89 B.C. during the Social Wars. The city prospered and became thoroughly Romanized.

Pompeii was first damaged by an earthquake in 62 A.D., and was eradicated by the volcano's eruption a decade and a half later. Mount Vesuvius' eruption covered the city under 20 feet of ashes. Herculaneum was overrun by a combination of lava and mud that completely buried it (if PCs are making it a point to stay away from Pompeii during that fateful year, the GM could put them in Herculaneum instead!).

The ruins of these cities were discovered during the 16th and 17th centuries. Historians and archeologists have found a wealth of information about Roman daily life in Pompeii, including near-intact private homes, works of art and even wall graffiti (see sidebar, p. 15). Archeological work continues to this day.

Claudius proved to be a competent Emperor, however. Suffering from a speech impediment and poor health, he was not an imposing man, but he was a good administrator who appointed fine generals. Claudius decided to expand the Empire: Judea became a Roman province and Britain was invaded in 43 A.D. The Roman general Aulus Plautius defeated a dozen British chiefs, and most of the British lowlands were conquered by 51 A.D.

Internally, Claudius extended Roman citizenship to several provincial cities, going so far as to allow men of Gallic ancestry to sit on the Senate. He encouraged Romanization (to become a citizen, proficiency in Latin and Roman culture was a prerequisite). The civil service grew and became more powerful; it was run by former slaves, many of them of Greek origin.

Claudius' first wife, Messalina, conspired to murder him, and he had her executed. He married again, this time to Agrippina, who succeeded in killing him after Claudius adopted Nero as his heir. She poisoned him with toxic mushrooms. Claudius died and became a new god in the Roman pantheon. Reflecting on this later, Nero called mushrooms "the food of the gods."

Nero became Emperor at 16. Among his first acts were the murder of Claudius' legitimate son, Britannicus. Then he turned against his mother; he accused her of conspiracy and had her killed. Instead of governing, Nero dedicated himself to orgies, the games, and writing bad songs and poetry; he then forced members of the Senate and his court to listen to his works. He scandalized Romans by participating in chariot races himself.



In 64 A.D., the city of Rome suffered a devastating fire. Nero showed so much enthusiasm for the rebuilding of the city that he was accused of having caused it, prompting the quip "Nero fiddled while Rome burned." To turn attention away from himself, Nero blamed the fire on an obscure religion; the already unpopular Christians were persecuted for this disaster.

Nero's atrocities resulted in a widespread conspiracy against him. When the Emperor ordered some famous generals to commit suicide, several provinces revolted, the Senate condemned him to death, and he was forced to flee the city. In 68 A.D., deserted by all, he committed suicide, claiming the world was losing a great artist. This was the end of the Julio-Claudian line.



69 A.D. became the Year of the Four Emperors. Civil war erupted throughout the Empire. Vespasian, a competent general and administrator, won the civil wars at the end of the year and founded the Flavian dynasty.

Vespasian died in 79 A.D. Like Augustus and Claudius before him, he was also deified (this honor had been withheld from Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, none of whom deserved it in the eyes of the Senate). At his deathbed, he supposedly predicted this when he said "Damn it – I can feel myself turning into a god." Titus, Vespasian's son, had a short but very popular reign between 79 and 81 A.D. During this time, Mount Vesuvius erupted and completely destroyed the city of Pompeii.

Domitian, Titus' younger brother, inherited the throne. He acted competently during the early part of his rule while constantly working to increase his power and reduce that of the Senate. The last three years of his life (93-96 A.D.) were a reign of terror, punctuated by numerous persecutions and murders. Internal rebellions made Domitian paranoid enough to murder anyone who posed a threat to him. It is unknown whether he was justified or if his actions created the conspiracy he feared; in any case, he was assassinated in 96 A.D.

The Senate, weakened under Domitian, still had enough power to dictate who would be the next Emperor. A famous though elderly lawyer named Nerva was chosen. A new dynasty began with him, in which Emperors were chosen for their ability, not their family ties.

## THE ZENITH OF THE EMPIRE

Nerva lived for less than three years after his appointment. During that time he deferred to the Senate and adopted a successor, chosen because of his qualities as a leader. This system heralded Rome's golden age.

### *Trajan and Hadrian*

Nerva died in 98 A.D., leaving his hand-picked successor, a Spanish general called Trajan, to take the throne. Trajan was the first non-native Roman to become Emperor. He fought wars with both Dacia and Parthia, defeating them and adding the countries to the Empire, which reached its largest size during his reign.

Internally, Trajan's administration brought great prosperity. The Emperor funded several social programs, including a child welfare fund that provided for orphans, a grain dole, and free entrance to the circus. To keep track of the treasury, Trajan had a corps of commissioners, called *curatores*, that went from city to city scouting for corruption. In addition, several of Rome's most famous monuments were built during this period.

Trajan died in 117 A.D., as he tried to return to Rome from his wars. The Parthian provinces had risen in revolt, and a massive Jewish rebellion had spread through Egypt and Northern Africa. Someone as capable as Trajan was needed.

His adopted heir Hadrian, also a general, proved equal to the task. After pacifying the region, he decided that Rome could not sustain the expansion Trajan had wanted. Instead, he abandoned the rebellious provinces in the East and also retreated from some areas of northern England. The army was kept well-trained and equipped, and a series of protective walls were laid across the most dangerous frontiers. One such wall survives in England, a 73-mile long defensive line known as "Hadrian's Wall."

The new Emperor also traveled tirelessly through the land, visiting provinces from Britain to Africa. During his travels, he supervised the construction of new buildings, revised the local tax laws, and helped establish a unified Roman legal code for all the provinces – an important step in uniting the Empire. The Imperial civil service was enlarged, staffed mostly by members of the equestrian class, especially in the area of tax collection. Hadrian died in 138 A.D.

## Imperial Decadence

Traditionally, Roman citizens were expected to live simple, healthy lives. Contact with the luxurious lifestyles of the East and the sudden influx of wealth (at least for a minority) that followed the Republic's expansion changed all that. The rich and powerful often engaged in exotic pleasures ranging from banquets to orgies. This became even worse when the Empire was formed. The power of the Emperors was much greater than that of the Roman noblemen, and their corruption was proportionately greater.

On the other hand, many of the tales that Roman chroniclers told about their Emperors may have been exaggeration and outright lies. Gossip and rumors were as common in the Roman world as in today's, and some of them had the same substance as today's tabloid stories. GMs running a campaign set in the Imperial court may discount some or all those rumors (or he may use them; a depraved Imperial household presents more challenges and dangers than a less-corrupt one).

Caligula, Nero, and Domitian were the first three "evil Emperors" who abused their already great power to intolerable levels. Their vices were imitated, but not surpassed, by several other Emperors.

The archetypal decadent Roman nobleman or Emperor would have about 80 points of disadvantages, ranging from Gluttony and Greed to Sadism and Lecherousness and unmentionable Odious Personal Habits.

### CALIGULA

Caligula was accused of committing incest with his sisters, among other bizarre sex acts. He was also known for murdering those around him without reason. He fed his circus animals with convicted criminals instead of beef, tortured critics in several ingenious ways, and forced parents to watch the executions of their sons. His casual cruelty respected no one; once, while conducting a sacrifice, he used the ritual mallet on the assistant-priest instead of the sacrificial animal. He was finally cut to pieces by several Praetorian officers.

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## Imperial Decadence

(Continued)

### NERO

Nero's infamous career began in his youth, when he and his friends prowled the streets and attacked and injured or killed passersby (see *Nobleman Gangs*, p. 14), burglarized shops, and assaulted noblewomen in their houses. After he became Emperor he indulged in all kinds of vices, including the practice of gorging himself and then using emetics to throw up in order to eat even more (some wealthy Romans did this as a matter of course, but most of their peers found the practice disgusting). Like Caligula he committed incest and innumerable sexual crimes, including sado-masochistic orgies where victims were killed for the entertainment of the Emperor and his favorites. He killed his own mother and organized several purges among the aristocrats.



### DOMITIAN

Domitian claimed he was a living god and was addressed as such. As a god, he had little qualms about executing anyone who displeased him. Domitian boasted about his sexual prowess and kept a harem of concubines, many of whom were common prostitutes. He was finally stabbed to death in his bedchamber.

## The Last Antonines

Hadrian's successor, Antoninus Pius, presided over a true golden age in Roman history (138-161). No major wars or rebellions broke out. The Emperor was a well-loved man who did not care for the vices that were common among the upper classes. Contemporaries and later historians consider his reign the height of Roman splendor. Antoninus was succeeded by Marcus Aurelius, another well-prepared, capable Emperor. His reign was for the most part a continuation of Antoninus' prosperity, except for external threats.

In the north, two German tribes, the Marcomanni and the Quadi, invaded Dacia and the Danube provinces. On the east, the Parthians once again attacked the Roman frontier. Aurelius spent most of his reign fighting Germans. His lieutenant, Avidius Cassius, defeated the Parthians. However, the returning Roman legions brought the plague with them, an epidemic that hurt the entire Empire. Some historians claim that this plague was the first step toward the fall of Rome.

Marcus Aurelius pushed the Germans back, and he may have wanted to extend Roman rule northward, but Avidius Cassius rebelled in the East. Marcus had to abandon the project, deal with the rebels, and then come back to Germany. Disease struck him down (perhaps the same plague that was rampant in Europe), and he died near modern Vienna in 180 A.D. Had he lived, history might have been quite different.

Marcus was a good Emperor, but he unwittingly betrayed Rome by breaking the adoption policy that had worked so well for almost 100 years. He was the first Antonine Emperor with his own sons, and he chose one, Commodus, as his successor. Commodus was cast in the same mold as Nero and Caligula, a petty tyrant with no care other than the pursuit of pleasure. He abandoned the Roman campaign and concentrated on the games; he himself performed as a gladiator. Enemies, real or imaginary, were executed and again the city ran rampant with spies, informers, and assassins. From 180 to 192 A.D., the Empire was in the hands of a madman. He was finally assassinated by an athlete of his household. His death marked the end of the Imperial golden age and the beginning of Rome's fall.

## THE LATE EMPIRE

The end of the Antonine line marked a decline from which Rome never recovered. Plague, barbarian invasions, oppressive laws, and inner struggles reduced the population and economic growth of the Empire even as new threats required Rome's dwindling resources. The Western possessions of Rome were weakened by barbarian invasions and the Empire was eventually divided.

### The Severan Emperors (193-235 A.D.)

After Commodus and his immediate successor Pertinax were both dead, the Praetorian Guard put the Imperial seat up for sale. The buyer, Didus Julianus, did not enjoy his purchase for long. Several rebellions broke out at the same time, and the winner, African-born governor Septimus Severus, became Emperor in 193 A.D. He had won with the army's support, and he intended to keep it. To achieve this, he increased military salaries, and gave them several "donatives" – grants of money and land.

This increased the expenses of the Empire greatly, at a time when the treasury had been bled dry by the wars and the plague that had reduced the number of taxpayers. To deal with this, Severus devalued the currency, created new taxes, and used "requisitions," the unpaid use of labor and services, for public works such as construction and road-building. Severus started relying on former army men to run the civil service. The lines between military and civilian service blurred. Furthermore, many of the military officers and civil servants were not native Romans, but provincials like Severus himself. The Emperor extended Roman citizenship to several more cities and regions.

Severus died in 211 while personally directing the British campaign. His son Caracalla succeeded him and followed in his father's footsteps, keeping the army happy and caring little about the rest of the Empire. Ex-soldiers were recruited into a secret police and spy network. To foot the bill, new taxes and more currency devaluations were instituted. Caracalla also gave Roman citizenship to all men in the Empire in 212 A.D., mainly to tax these new citizens. Caracalla started a grand expedition to Persia, but was murdered during the campaign in 217. His first successor, Macrinus, lasted less than a year.

In 219 A.D., Elagabalus, a 14-year-old Eastern sun-priest, bought his way onto the throne. He and his mother tried to impose the worship of the Unconquered Sun (see p. 112), with Elagabalus himself as the chief priest. The Emperor left most of the ruling to his mother, while he engaged in ritualistic orgies. Elagabalus and his mother were murdered in 222 A.D. by the Praetorian Guard (the usual suspects).

The last Severan, Alexander, had a 13-year reign that was fairly stable (at least by comparison), until he broke his predecessor's cardinal rule – keep the army happy. During a war with the Germans, Alexander Severus tried to bribe the barbarians instead of using his soldiers, who in anger killed him in 235.

### *Years of Chaos*

Between 235 and 260 A.D., there were between 12 and 20 self-proclaimed Emperors, some controlling only fractions of the Empire. The first of them, Maximinus, was a soldier of plebeian birth – the first commoner Emperor. He lasted four years, a lot longer than the average reign during the period, which was about two years. Almost all the Emperors died violently, usually at the hands of the Praetorian Guard or the army. A sad exception was Emperor Valerian, who in 259 was captured by the Persians.

While the political situation was in a shambles, external and natural disasters added to the ruin of the Empire. The plague continued to devastate Rome. German barbarians continued their raids, spearheaded by the Goths and Alemanni, who pillaged much of Gaul and northern Italy. Most of these pushes were repelled, but the frontiers remained wide open to further attacks.

### *Independent Households*

The barbarian invasions and the civil wars that wracked the Empire destroyed the government's influence outside large cities. The large landowners, who had grown in numbers since the last days of the Republic, had to fend for themselves; many decided to become self-sufficient and independent from the Roman government in all but name. Their villas (see p. 23) became fortresses; servants and slaves were transformed into small armies of bodyguards. The peasants that tilled the fields outside owed their loyalty and rent to the landlord, not the government.

It became impossible to collect taxes from these landowners unless the tax collectors marched ahead of a large army. For the most part, these large estates cut their ties with Rome. When the barbarian invaders took over, many landowners were overrun and their lands were taken over by German chieftains; the small private armies were no match for the Goths. In some cases, however, the former Romanized noblemen gave allegiance to the barbarian kings and kept their land in return for tribute. This system was a prelude to the feudalism of the Middle Ages.



## Roman Emperors

After 395 A.D., the letters (E) or (W) show rulership over the East or West.

Augustus	27 B.C.-14 A.D.
Tiberius	14-37
Caligula	37-41
Claudius	41-54
Nero	54-68
Galba	68-69
Otho	69
Vitellius	69
Vespasian	69-79
Titus	79-81
Domitian	81-96
Nerva	96-98
Trajan	98-117
Hadrian	117-138
Antoninus Pius	138-161
Marcus Aurelius	161-180
Commodus	180-192
Pertinax	193
Didius Julianus	193
Septimius Severus	193-211
Caracalla	211-217
(Geta was co-Emperor from 211-212)	
Macrinus	217-218
Elagabalus	218-222
Severus Alexander	222-235
Maximinus	235-238
Gordians I, II, III	238-244
Phillip the Arab	244-249
Decius	249-251
Valerian	253-260
Gallienus	253-260
(co-Emperor)	260-268
Claudius Gothicus	268-270
Aurelian	270-275
Tacitus	275-276
Florian	276
Probus	276-282
Carus	282-283
Carinus	283-285
Diocletian	284-305
Maximian (co-Emperor)	286-305
Constantine and Licinius	307-324
Constantine	324-337
Constantine II,	
Constans, Constantius	337-340
Constans, Constantius	340-350
Constantius	350-361
Julian the Apostate	360-363
Valentinian I, Valens	364-375
Valens	375-378
Theodosius I	378-395
Honorius (W)	395-423

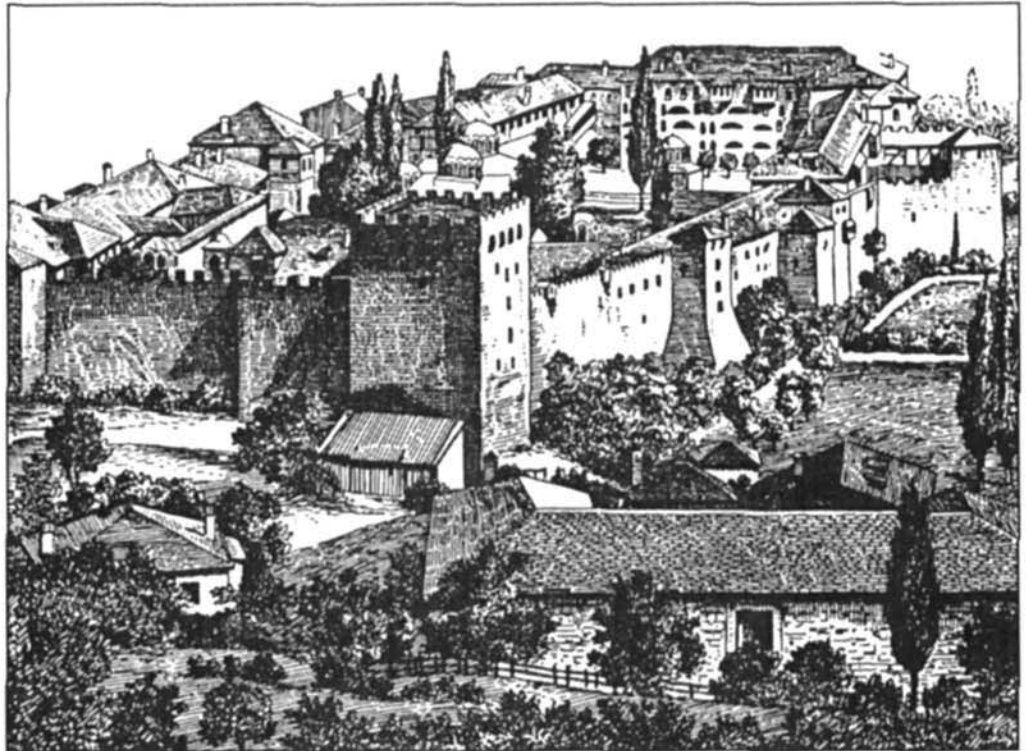
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## Gallienus and the Illyran Emperors

In 260, Gallienus rose to the throne. He reformed the army, since external threats and economic collapse had made it impossible to defend the frontiers. He managed to check the Goths but could not restore the Empire, which was fragmented for a while. A rebellious general, Postumus, created a "Roman Empire of the Gauls" and Odenathus and Zenobia, rulers of the city of Palmyra, declared an Eastern Roman Empire.

Gallienus' successor was an Illyrian, Claudius Gothicus (268-270 A.D.). He was the first of three Emperors from the warlike region of Illyricum (see p. 68). Claudius managed to stop the greatest danger facing Rome at the time: the Gothic invaders. The Emperor destroyed the Gothic army and had the survivors moved to colonies in the Danube. However, the Empire was still divided at his death.

Claudius Gothicus was followed by Aurelian (270-275), who pushed the Germans out of Italy and recaptured the Empires of the Gauls and the East, reuniting Rome by 274 A.D.



The Emperor now proclaimed that his power came not from the will of the Senate or the army, but from a new god, the Unconquered Sun (see p. 112). This cult was based on the religion Emperor Elagabalus (see p. 57) had tried to promote earlier, but this time it was adapted to Roman traditions. A Roman-style college of priests took care of the rites of the cult. This new cult was made the official Roman religion. The Emperor's powers were divinely ordained, and his power was supreme. This was an important change in the nature of the Empire, making it more similar to the monarchy of Persia than to the semi-Republican Empire of Augustus.

Aurelian tried to solve the Empire's economic problems by overhauling the currency system, but he did not have enough time. Like so many before him, the Emperor was murdered by a group of army officers. After another round of civil wars, another Illyrian, Marcus Aurelius Probus, became Emperor. Probus continued Aurelian's job, pushing back the Franks and Goths, pacifying the provinces, and overseeing the settlement of the defeated barbarian tribes. Probus was assassinated during an army mutiny. The winner of the power struggle that followed was Diocletian, who completely transformed the Empire.

## Diocletian and the Tetrarchy

When Diocletian became the ruler of Rome in 285 A.D., he declared that his accession was the will of the god Jupiter. He decreed that petitioners and any who approached him had to prostrate himself before him.

During the next decade several rebellions exploded across the Empire. In Gaul, bands of impoverished peasants called the *bagaudae* terrorized the countryside. Britain seceded under the command of the Roman general Carausius. Other wars broke out in Egypt and Africa, and the Persians attacked Roman allies in the East. Diocletian faced the same dilemma that had destroyed the Emperors before him: there were too many problems to be handled by one man alone, but if he gave too much power to another general, there was the danger of another rebellion.

The solution Diocletian devised was the Tetrarchy. Instead of retaining sole rule, the Emperor shared it with three other co-Emperors. The two senior leaders had the title of Augustus; the other two were Caesars. Both classes had a senior and junior rank. The *Augustus Jovius* (Jupiter's choice) was of a higher rank than the *Augustus Herulius* (Hercules' choice); the same distinction was made with the Caesars. Each controlled a portion of the Empire, and when the Augustus died or retired the Caesar would succeed him and appoint a new Caesar.

The Tetrarchy managed to suppress the rebellions and external threats to the Empire. The British "Empire" of Carausius was recaptured in 296. The Persians were defeated in 298 and other minor conflicts were taken care of before 300 A.D. Diocletian retired and persuaded or pressured the other Augustus to retire as well – the first time an Emperor stepped down from the throne. Constantius and Galerius became Augusti.

Unfortunately, without Diocletian the Tetrarchy fell apart. No one wanted the subordinate position of Caesar. Instead, several generals proclaimed themselves Augustus, and started in-fighting. At the Milvian Bridge, by the Tiber, one of the pretenders, Constantine, defeated his rivals (312 A.D.). Another rival, Licinius, was beaten in 324. With that victory, Constantine became the only Emperor.

## Constantine

Constantine is best known as the "Christian Emperor." Under him the persecution of Christians ended and the religion flourished. He planned to use Christianity as a unifying force in the Empire. Originally, Constantine seems to have worshipped the Unconquered Sun or Mithras, but after 312 he became a staunch supporter of Christianity. He did not try to impose the religion on the whole Empire, since most of the population and (more importantly) the army and its officers were still pagans. He allowed the Imperial Cult to continue, and even when he made Sunday a holiday he arranged it so it could be celebrated either as a Christian day or as the day of the Unconquered Sun.

The economy continued to be weak. A new monetary system was introduced based on a gold coin, the *solidus* (see p. 39). The shrinking economy reduced transactions in coins, and most trade was done by barter. Taxes had to be paid in gold; silver coins disappeared and copper coins were almost worthless.

Another important development of Constantine's reign was the construction of a new capital. The old Greek city of Byzantium, located in a strategic and easily-defended position, was chosen (see picture, p. 58). The new capital was both a replica of Rome and a Christian holy city, and it was named Constantinople. Constantinople became the capital of the Roman Empire, and lasted for 1,000 years after the fall of Rome.

Constantine discovered he could not rule the Empire alone. He appointed new Caesars, but he chose them from his family. His sons Crispus, Constantine II, Constans, and Constantius II each took over an area of the Empire. When Constantine died in 337, his sons fought among themselves (except Crispus, who was executed on his father's orders in 326). After the last of them died, Julian rose to the throne.

## Roman Emperors

(Continued)

Arcadius (E) . . . . .	395-408
Theodosius II (E) . . . . .	408-450
Valentinian III (W) . . . . .	425-455
Marcian (E) . . . . .	450-457
Maximus (W) . . . . .	455
Avitus (W) . . . . .	455-456
Leo I (E) . . . . .	457-474
Majorian (W) . . . . .	457-461
Severus (W) . . . . .	461-465
Anthimius (W) . . . . .	467-472
Olybrius (W) . . . . .	472
Glycerius (W) . . . . .	473-474
Nepos (W) . . . . .	474-475
Zeno (E) . . . . .	474-479
Romulus Augustulus (W) . . . . .	475-476

## Stilicho

Flavius Stilicho was the son of a Vandal mercenary and a Roman woman. Despite his ancestry, this Master of Soldiers was raised as a Roman, and had little sympathy or understanding for the Germans who had already taken over the Roman army and much of the Empire. Stilicho began his career as a cavalry officer; soon he was the leader of the Imperial bodyguard. He quickly gained the favor of Emperor Theodosius (see p. 60) and became the commander-in-chief of his army. When Theodosius died, Stilicho claimed to have been nominated the regent of the Eastern and Western Empires. Since he commanded the largest army in the Empire, he might have made good his claims if the Visigoth chief Alaric had not picked this time to attack Rome.

Before Stilicho fought Alaric he had to deal with the enmity of Rufinus, the chief adviser of Eastern Emperor Arcadius. Rufinus convinced Arcadius to declare Stilicho an enemy of the state, and to dispatch teams of assassins to kill the general. When Alaric invaded Greece and threatened the Eastern Empire, Stilicho marched east to check him, but then was ordered by Arcadius to send a large part of his army to Constantinople. Stilicho obeyed, but still managed to stop Alaric with his reduced forces. Before he could destroy the Visigoths, he was ordered to leave the east.

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## Stilicho (Continued)

Stilicho returned to Europe and shortly after that smashed a rebellion in Africa. Then he faced the Visigoths once more, and stopped Alaric's incursions into Italy. In 402, Stilicho defeated Alaric in a pitched battle. His troops were too undisciplined to pursue the enemy, and stopped to plunder the enemy's camp, allowing Alaric and most of his forces to escape. Alaric accepted a position in the Roman government as the defender of the Danubian provinces, and Stilicho was able to destroy another German invasion.

The general had saved the Western Empire, but his ambition got the better of him. He tried to make a deal with Alaric while scheming to take over the Eastern Empire. He was then accused of betraying Rome to the barbarians and was executed in 408. Alaric was emboldened by the death of the one general he feared, and he marched against Italy in a drive that climaxed with the sack of Rome two years later.

## Roman Empires After 476

The Roman Empire was gone, but only in the West. The Eastern Empire, also called the Byzantine Empire, continued to exist for several centuries, and was not destroyed until the Turks captured it in the 15th century. The Byzantines continued to call themselves "Romans," and as far as they were concerned the Empire never ended.

The German tribes that had toppled Rome did not believe in the end of the Empire either. Several continued to accept commissions and (sometimes) orders from the Eastern Emperors. In the 6th century, the Byzantines tried to recapture the West. General Belisarius actually retook Rome for a while; the city was stormed over and over and changed hands at least six times before the Byzantines contented themselves with some influence over the Papacy and some territory in Southern Italy.

*Continued on next page . . .*

## Julian the Apostate

The new Emperor had been raised as a Christian, but years of education in Greece and his disgust with the excesses of the Christian Emperors (Julian was the only survivor of Constantine's family; the rest had died in purges or in the civil wars) made him reject Christianity and try to reestablish the old pagan rites. Pagan temples taken over for Christian worship were returned and Imperial support for Christianity was withdrawn. These attempts to return to the past were unsuccessful and unpopular. Julian still had to face the Persian danger, so in 363 he led an army to the East. The invasion of Persia was unsuccessful; the Roman army was harassed and its supplies cut off. During a skirmish, Julian rushed to the front without his armor and was struck down. It was rumored that his killer was a Christian soldier in his own army.

## The German Invasions

After an eight-month reign, Julian's successor Jovian died, and was replaced by Valentinian, a general in the Army. He appointed his younger brother Valens as co-Emperor, and almost immediately had to fight off barbarian invasion throughout the Northern frontiers. In Britain, the Picts and Scots tried to swarm south; in Europe, the Germans continued to be a threat, and in Africa, Moorish and Roman rebels threatened the provinces of Mauritania and Numidia.

The Romans were able to stop everyone but the Germans. While trying to reach a diplomatic agreement with the Quadi, another Germanic tribe, Valentinian was so enraged by their insolence that he died from a stroke in 375 A.D. Valens then had to go to the West to deal with the Goths, and was killed at the battle of Adrianople. The victorious Germans took over large sections of Eastern Europe.

Several pretenders fought for the throne, until General Theodosius beat them at the battle of Frigidus in 394 and became sole Emperor. Theodosius was best known for his attempts to eliminate Christian heresies and his influence on Church affairs. Because of his support of Christianity, he was given the nickname "the Great." Theodosius died in 395. His was the last reign over a unified Rome.



## THE FALL OF ROME

Rome was now firmly divided into the Eastern and Western Empires. The Western Empire and the city of Rome were "lost" in less than 100 years, fragmenting into a dozen barbarian kingdoms. The influence of Rome over Europe did not disappear, however; the invaders who destroyed Rome were in turn seduced by its culture and tried to preserve the Empire, or at least its memory.

## The Division

Theodosius' sons Arcadius and Honorius became the Augustus of the East and West, respectively. Honorius was a boy of 11, and the real power of the West was held by a half-Roman, half-German general named Stilicho (see sidebar, p. 59). Each Augustus passed his own laws in his own territory and had no influence in the other's.

The capital of the Eastern Empire continued to be Constantinople. In the West, it was moved from Rome to the city of Ravenna, a marshy, unhealthy place but more easily defended. Ravenna also had a port, so the Emperor had an escape route. With barbarian invaders sweeping into the provinces, it was a necessary precaution.

### **The Last Invasions**

The chief threats during this period were the Visigoths, led by their king Alaric, and Attila's Huns. Alaric had fought for Theodosius during the civil wars, but had not been given the honors and titles he wanted. After the death of the Emperor he attacked Greece, and then moved against Illyricum, where Stilicho checked him with a combination of force and diplomacy. Alaric was then made Master of Soldiers by Honorius, and Stilicho was ordered to work with his former enemy, even after the chieftain demanded tribute. Honorius, fearing Stilicho was planning to claim the Empire for himself, had the general executed.

### **The Sack of Rome**

Alaric then moved once again against the Empire. First he created a puppet Emperor, Attalus, even though Honorius was still alive. When Attalus tried to act on his own, Alaric overthrew him and marched against Rome. Alaric did not intend to take the city, which was still very strongly defended. His intention may have been to extort money and titles from Honorius, who was holed up in Ravenna. Alaric's army surrounded the city, and then the chieftain started talks with the Emperor. Honorius refused to meet Alaric's demands, and the citizens of Rome, cut off from supplies, started to starve. Traitors opened a gate to the barbarians, who then marched in and sacked the city for three days. Alaric then moved his army south, perhaps to try to take Sicily and then Africa, but the Visigoth king fell ill and died shortly after a storm destroyed the ships he intended to use.

### **The Last Years**

A flurry of Western Emperors followed; Masters of Soldiers, Roman noblemen, barbarian chieftains, and the Eastern Emperors plotted and counter-plotted for power. Rome was sacked once more, by the Vandals this time, in 455. Almost 20 years of civil wars without an Emperor followed. In 474, Julius Nepos was sent from the East and became Emperor of the West. He needed to appoint a barbarian Master of Soldiers, and he chose Orestes. Orestes was a Roman who had served as Attila's secretary. After Attila's death, Orestes became a mercenary for Rome; his dealings with barbarians made him a perfect liaison between the Empire and its new soldiers.

Orestes, however, overthrew Nepos. The Master of Soldiers did not put himself on the throne; instead, he named his son Romulus as the new Augustus. The boy was nicknamed Romulus Augustulus ("little Augustus"). Orestes named as his Master of Soldiers the chieftain Odoacer. Odoacer was the son of Edeco, a German chieftain who had served with Orestes under Attila. Odoacer had lived as a brigand for a while, then become part of Rome's barbarian army. Odoacer demanded in 476 that his army be given a large land grant. When Orestes refused, he was murdered and Romulus Augustulus was forced to retire.

Romulus was the last Emperor of the West. Odoacer was satisfied with the title of Master of Soldiers (*magister militum*). The imperial robes and diadem were sent to Constantinople. Odoacer was in theory serving Zeno, the Emperor of the East, but this was little more than a sham. The Eastern Empire tried to reconquer the West, and for a while held on to large sections of Italy, but by 550 A.D. there were only a few Byzantine possessions in the south of the peninsula and in Sicily. Rome and the Roman Empire were gone.

## **Roman Empires After 476 (Continued)**

The next claimant to the Roman Empire was the Frankish king Charlemagne. After saving the papacy from the Lombards, he was given the title of Holy Roman Emperor during the 9th century. After the Carolingian Empire collapsed, Germany became the center of the Holy Roman Empire, a loose union of medieval baronies under the control of an Emperor. The Holy Roman Empire (which was "Neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire") lasted until the 19th century. Russia was also organized as an Empire under a Czar.

During the 20th century, both Mussolini's fascist state and Germany's Third Reich were attempts to recreate the Roman Empire. Both countries used ancient Roman symbols such as martial eagles, monumental triumphal parades and legionary salutations. The Roman Empire will probably continue to inspire dreams of power and conquest for centuries to come.



### **The Huns**

The Huns had played an indirect part in Rome's destruction by pushing the Goths south into the Empire. In 435, their king, Attila, unified the nomadic tribes and marched into Roman lands. By 451, he had devastated Illyricum and moved into Gaul. Attila then moved against Italy itself. Several Roman towns were razed. In 453, the Huns threatened Rome itself. According to legend, Pope Leo met with Attila on the eve of the attack, and by appealing to God he convinced the Hun to withdraw without attacking. Attila's army was weakened by plague and lack of supplies, which may have affected his decision. In any case, Attila died in 453 and the threat of the Huns ended.

# ROMAN TIMELINE

This is a timeline of noteworthy events in Roman history. Events marked with a **†** are critical points where, if things had gone differently, the rest of history might have been

profoundly affected. Time travelers and GMs creating alternate histories (p. 120) take note!

## B.C.

**753 B.C.** – The legendary founding of Rome by Romulus.  
**725-700** – Foundation of Carthage.  
**616-509** – Rule of Etruscan kings.  
**510** – Expulsion of the last Etruscan king, Tarquinius Superbus.  
**509** – Roman Republic is established.  
**494** – The office of tribune is created.  
**493** – Rome joins the Latin League.  
**451** – Codification of the Twelve Tables, the basis of Roman law.  
**392** – Capture of Veii.  
**390** – The Gauls sack Rome, then withdraw. **†**(What if they had not left? See pp. T131-32.)  
**343-341** – First Samnite War.  
**340-336** – The Latin War. Rome dissolves the Latin League.  
**328-304** – Second Samnite War. Roman defeat at Caudine Forks (321).  
**324** – Death of Alexander the Great. **†**(What would have happened had Alexander lived for another few decades? Might he have moved against Rome? At least one novel has been written on that subject.)  
**298-290** – Wars with Samnites, Etruscans, and Gauls.

**290** – Samnites are defeated.  
**285** – Gauls and Etruscans defeated.  
**281-272** – Wars with Pyrrhus.  
**264-241** – First Punic War. Romans victorious, get Sicily and Sardinia.  
**218-201** – Second Punic War.  
**218** – Hannibal crosses the Alps.  
**217** – Battle of Lake Trasimene. Hannibal defeats Roman army.  
**216** – Battle of Cannae. Roman army annihilated by Hannibal.  
**215** – First Macedonian War.  
**217-202** – Hannibal's army roams through Italy. **†**(What if he had advanced on the city of Rome?)  
**210** – Cornelius Scipio is made commander of Roman forces in Spain and regains initiative for Rome.  
**204** – Scipio invades North Africa.  
**202** – Battle of Zama. Scipio defeats Hannibal and wins Second Punic War.  
**200-196** – Second Macedonian War.  
**197** – Battle of Cynoscephalae.  
**192-189** – War against Antiochus of Syria.  
**171-167** – Third Macedonian War.  
**168** – Battle of Pydna.

**149-146** – Third Punic War.  
**149-148** – Fourth Macedonian War. Macedon becomes a Roman province.  
**146** – The rebellious city of Corinth is destroyed by the Romans. Carthage is razed to the ground. Africa becomes a Roman province.  
**133** – Tiberius Gracchus is assassinated. The city of Pergamum becomes part of Rome.  
**125-121** – Southern Gaul conquered.  
**104-100** – Marius holds successive consulships.  
**89-85** – First Mithradatic War. Italians are massacred throughout Asia by orders of King Mithridates. Sulla leads Roman army against Asia.  
**87** – Marius revolts at Rome.  
**83-81** – Sulla returns to Rome, becomes dictator until his voluntary retirement in 79 B.C. He dies a year later, believing he had saved the republic.  
**73-71** – Spartacus leads slave rebellion.  
**70** – Pompey and Crassus hold consulships.  
**60** – Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar form the First Triumvirate.  
**59** – Caesar becomes consul.  
**58-56** – Caesar pacifies Gaul.

**55** – Crassus and Pompey consuls for the second time.  
**53** – Crassus invades Parthia and dies at the battle of Carrhae. **†**(If the Romans had been successful, the Eastern threat might have been neutralized for centuries.)  
**52** – Pompey is sole consul.  
**49-46** – Civil War between Caesar and the Senate-supported Pompey.  
**48** – Battle of Pharsalus. Pompey is defeated and is murdered shortly afterwards.  
**48-47** – Caesar in Egypt.  
**44** – Caesar made dictator for life, but is shortly assassinated by senatorial party led by Brutus and Cassius.  
**43** – Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus form Second Triumvirate. **†**  
**42** – Battle of Philippi. Brutus and Cassius commit suicide.  
**36** – Parthian War.  
**31** – Octavian defeats Antony at Actium. **†**  
**30** – Antony and Cleopatra die. Egypt becomes Roman province.  
**27** – Octavian assumes the title of Augustus and *princeps*, becoming the first Roman Emperor.  
**20** – Treaty with Parthia.

## A.D.

**1-7 (4?) A.D.** – Jesus Christ is born.  
**14** – Augustus dies, succeeded by Tiberius.  
**14-17** – Germanicus campaigns against barbarians.  
**41-46** – Conquests under Claudius. Britain, Syria, and Thrace become Roman provinces.  
**58-63** – War against Parthians.  
**59-60** – Rebellion in Britain.  
**64** – Great Fire in Rome.  
**69** – Nero dies. Year of the Four Emperors. Vespasian wins civil war, becomes new Emperor.  
**79** – The city of Pompeii is destroyed by eruption of Mt. Vesuvius.  
**85-106** – Wars against Dacia. Dacia becomes a Roman province.  
**114-117** – Parthian War.  
**121-126** – Hadrian tours the Empire. Hadrian's Wall in Britain is built.

**138-161** – Reign of Antoninus Pius, the most peaceful and prosperous time the Empire ever enjoyed.  
**161-166** – Parthian War. Roman soldiers returning from the East spread the plague through the Empire. **†**(This may have been one of the main reasons for the decay of Rome. If some way of containing the plague had been discovered, the Empire might have survived much longer.)  
**167-175** – Wars against German tribes.  
**193** – Civil War after death of Commodus. Praetorian guards tries to auction off the Empire. Septimius Severus becomes Emperor.  
**195-199** – Wars against Parthia.  
**227** – Persian Empire rises, absorbs Parthia.  
**230-233** – War against Persia.  
**235-260** – State of constant civil war. Almost every single Emperor

rises and falls in the midst of violence. **†**(Nearly any military leader has a good shot to become the new Emperor. An ambitious and capable PC has a good chance to rise to the throne – and to meet a nasty end.)  
**258** – Roman Empire in Gaul established by Postumus.  
**259** – Emperor Valerian captured by Persians.  
**271-272** – Palmyra revolts and is conquered by Romans. Eastern provinces recovered.  
**274** – Empire in Gaul overrun. Rome is once again unified.  
**284** – Diocletian establishes the Tetrarchy.  
**306-337** – Constantine sole Emperor. Christianity is legalized.  
**330** – Constantinople becomes the capital of the Eastern Empire.  
**359** – War with Persia.  
**363** – Emperor Julian the Apostate invades Persia and dies.

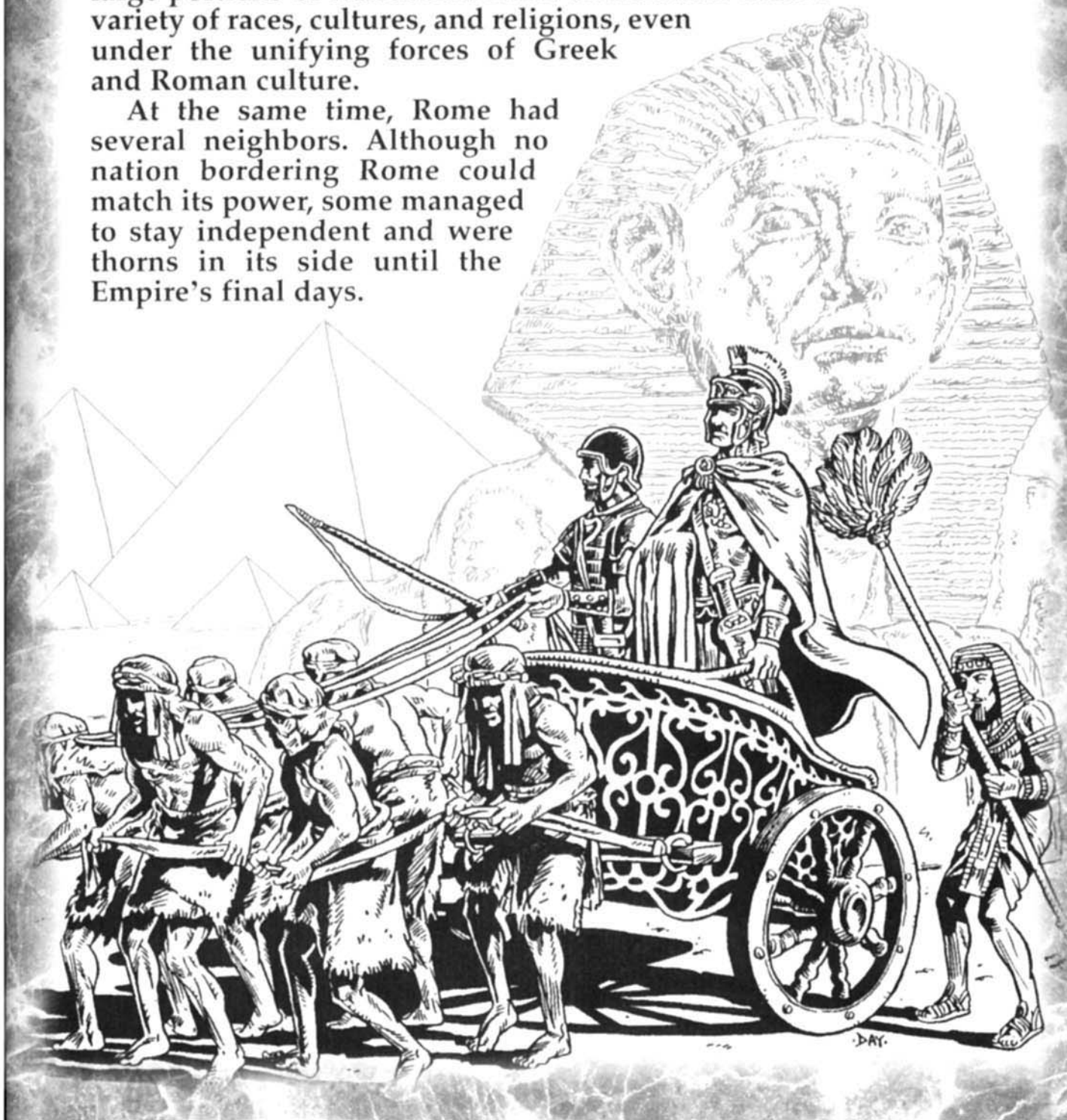
**376** – Visigoths enter Empire by invitation; bad conditions prompt rebellion.  
**378** – Battle of Adrianople. Emperor Vales killed by Goths.  
**395** – Permanent division of the Empire into East and West.  
**395-396** – Alaric invades Greece and is defeated by Stilicho.  
**408** – Stilicho is murdered by Emperor's orders.  
**410** – Sack of Rome by Alaric's Visigoths.  
**439** – Vandals conquer Africa.  
**451-453** – Attila's invasions. Attila is checked by Aetius at the battle of Chalons, then persuaded not to sack Rome.  
**453** – Death of Attila. **†**(If he had lived, he might have become a major threat to the Empire.)  
**476** – Last Roman Emperor of the West, Romulus Augustulus, is deposed by Odoacer. Traditional end of the Roman Empire.



# IV LANDS AND PEOPLES

At its height, the Roman Empire controlled parts of over 20 modern nations, including most of Europe and large portions of Africa and Asia. These lands held a variety of races, cultures, and religions, even under the unifying forces of Greek and Roman culture.

At the same time, Rome had several neighbors. Although no nation bordering Rome could match its power, some managed to stay independent and were thorns in its side until the Empire's final days.



# THE PROVINCES

Lands that were under direct Roman control were known as provinces. Each province had its own governor, usually a proconsul. The upper classes in the provinces, especially in western Europe, became extremely Romanized. In the east, Roman culture had to compete with the deeply-entrenched Hellenistic culture; see sidebars, pp. 46-48.

## ITALY AND SICILY

By Imperial times Italy was thoroughly Roman; almost every Italian was a full citizen, and the cultural ties with the Empire went back hundreds of years.

### CITIES AND LANDMARKS

Besides Rome, other important cities included Ostia, which was the largest port that supplied the capital, Neapolis, Tarentum, Pisae, and Brundisium. The peninsula produced wheat, barley, olives, and grapes – the basic needs of Rome. By the time of the Empire the capital was importing grain from other places. Much arable land was dedicated to the production of olive trees, which were more profitable, but less essential.

To the north lay the Alps, a formidable obstacle that separated the peninsula from the rest of the continent. Beyond the Alps was the province of Raetia, a buffer zone between the Empire and the German tribes to the north. To the southwest was the island of Sicily, a Roman province since the Punic Wars and a source of grain. The wealthy city of Syracuse was a major trading point on the island.

### PEOPLE AND CULTURE

To an outsider, there was not much difference between the citizens of Rome and those of any Italian town. Most of the character types described in Chapter 2 apply to the rest of Italy. To the north there was some Gallic influence (see below).

## GAUL

The region of Gaul was conquered slowly and painfully; the Celtic tribes that inhabited it were rebellious for centuries, and the Germanic peoples that lived in the North were even worse. Still, by 100 A.D., some regions of Gaul were as Roman as any Italian province.

### CITIES AND LANDMARKS

Gaul was divided into several provinces, which included the Narbonensis, Belgica, Upper and Lower Germany, and the *Trés Galliae* – Lugdunensis, Aquitania, and Belgica.

The Narbonensis was thoroughly Romanized; it eventually became one of the most prosperous commercial centers of the Empire, particularly its capital, Narbo, and its largest city, Arles. Arles was the main trading port of the province; the city had all the major Roman amenities, including all common public buildings, aqueducts, and schools. The city of Nimes was noted for its heavy fortifications. It was also a major producer of grain, one of the breadbaskets of the Empire. Wine making and a growing pottery industry also flourished there.

Wine was produced in Aquitania while the port of Burdigala (Bordeaux) was an important trading center. The city of Lugdunum was the capital of all of Northern Gaul, including the three provinces of the *Trés Galliae*. It contained an Imperial mint and was the annual meeting place of the 64 tribes of Gaul (the traditional Gallic assembly).



### Languages

Listed below are some of the languages that were spoken in areas of the Roman Empire, and the places where they are most likely to be encountered or useful to a traveler. These guidelines are not absolutes, of course, since travel was widespread and one could find Punic speakers in Britain, for instance, or Romanized Germans in Egypt. Unless mentioned otherwise, all languages are *Mental/Average*.

**Latin:** Spoken throughout Italy, widespread in all western provinces. In the East, it is more likely that natives will not understand it.

**Greek:** Second language of most Romans and Italians, very common in the Eastern provinces and Africa. Anywhere in the Empire, there is a good chance that any given person speaks some Greek, except in the northernmost provinces.

**Punic:** Language of Carthaginians and Phoenician traders. Very common in Africa, southern Spain, and the Eastern provinces.

**Aramaic:** The common tongue of the East. Spoken in Syria and Asia Minor.

Gallia Belgica was not as inhabited as the rest of Gaul. Most of the land was covered by dense forest, and travel there was dangerous since there were occasional aggressive Gallic or German tribes prowling around.

Roman "Germany" was only a small fraction of the lands the German tribes occupied. There was an Upper Germany where modern Belgium is located and a Lower Germany that corresponds roughly to western Switzerland. These lands were not very important or developed, probably for the same reason the Roman Empire did not seriously try to expand into Germany. The northern climate was not appropriate for Italian-style farming, so those areas were not desirable to Roman or Romanized settlers.

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The Gallic peoples who lived in the region before the Roman conquest had developed an advanced civilization. According to Roman sources, the Gauls loved battle and drinking. They did not build many cities, living mostly in small villages overseen by hill fortresses. At the center of Gallic culture were the Druids, priests, and judges who led the tribes. Many Roman chroniclers spread malicious rumors about the Druids, accusing them of practicing human sacrifice and unnatural activities.

After 200 years of Roman occupation, Gaul's culture had all but disappeared, especially around the cities. Latin was the main language of the upper class and the urbanites. Gallic was gradually abandoned, to the point that the language is not fully known today (a time traveler would not be able to learn the language above a skill of 8 before his visit; there is not enough information available).

## SPAIN

The Spanish peninsula was wrested away from the Carthaginians and the fierce tribes that inhabited it. In time, this area became one of the most important Roman regions – economically, politically, and culturally. Emperors (Hadrian and Trajan among them), philosophers, and artists were born there. Almost all native cultures were absorbed or forgotten.

## CITIES AND LANDMARKS

Spain was divided into three provinces: Baetica, Lusitania, and Tarraconensis. Important cities included Nova Carthago, Gades (Cádiz), Corduba, Saguntum, Malaca, Valentia, Toletum (Toledo), and Olisipo (Lisbon).

All regions were rich agricultural centers. Grain, olives, and wine were all produced and exported throughout the Empire. Spanish fish provided the most important ingredient for *garum*, the fermented fish sauce that was so popular in Rome (see p. 23). More importantly, Spain was a mineral-rich land; gold, copper, and silver were mined in great quantities. Iron mines provided material for the famous Spanish armorers and weapon smiths.

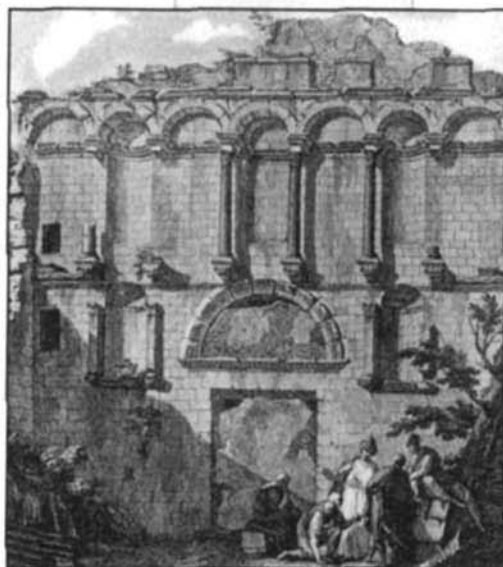
## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The original inhabitants of Spain were the Iberians, tribesmen who gathered around city-states. The west was populated by Lusitanians, who were more advanced and built powerful fortresses in mountain retreats. Greek and Punic traders and colonists influenced some areas in Spain. Many chieftains adopted Roman culture and their sons became influential citizens.

Some areas of Spain resisted Roman domination. In the province of Lusitania, tribesmen continued to hold out in their hill fortresses, remaining an occasional threat, while the Basque region in the North was never fully conquered. Basque was the only native Spanish language to survive Romanization. For the most part, however, Spain was firmly in Roman hands.

## Provincial Administration

Roman provinces were under the supervision of a governor. Depending on the province, the governor could be a patrician selected by the Senate, or a nobleman or equestrian chosen by the Emperor. The older provinces were usually under the control of the Senate, while all new territories belonged directly to the Emperor. The governors of Imperial provinces controlled any troops stationed there; those of senatorial provinces did not. The length of a governor's term was at least one year, and could stretch for decades.



The governor was in charge of collecting taxes, administering public works, and performing as a judge in matters that dealt with Roman citizens. The other parts of the government were left in the hands of the local population. Rome seldom tried to impose its legal or social system on the conquered provinces. Its culture was usually adopted voluntarily by the upper classes, and sometimes by the common citizens, especially those who served in the legions or as auxiliaries. This applied not only to cities but even semi-nomadic tribes.

Under the governor was a corps of civil servants of equestrian or plebeian rank. These administrators were well-trained and efficient, and, since they tended to stay in one province for several years, were often better informed about local conditions and news than the governors.



### *Mithridates' Massacre*

Pontus was an independent kingdom east of the Roman province of Asia. Its king, Mithridates VI, had expanded its kingdom to the east, conquering large areas of modern Russia and the Ukraine. The king now turned to the West, where the Roman province of Asia, burdened by taxes and Roman abuses, was ready to rebel. Mithridates attacked in 88 B.C., easily overwhelming the unprepared Roman garrisons.

Having conquered most of Roman Greece and Asia, Mithridates committed one of the largest massacres of the ancient world. In one day, all Romans and Italians living in the province of Asia were killed – between 80,000 and 150,000 people. The king had proclaimed that any debtor who killed his creditor would have half his debt forgiven, which led to the murders of many wealthy non-Romans as well. Most of the murderers were private citizens motivated by greed.

Even after Mithridates was defeated, the memory of the massacre continued to loom over Romans living in Asia. Romans living in that province should keep in mind that the natives have made clear their feelings for their conquerors.

## AFRICA

Africa was divided into several provinces, including Mauretania, Africa, and Cyrenaica. Before the Roman conquest, several cities of Phoenician and Greek origin had already been established; Carthage was one of them. After the destruction of Carthage, Romans and Italians founded several cities and transplanted whole populations to the new provinces, so that by the Imperial period, there were hundreds of thousands of native Italians in Africa. They intermingled with the native population, which for the most part was of Berber and Punic extraction.

### CITIES AND LANDMARKS

Roman Africa was beginning to turn into the deserts that exist today, but several regions were still among the most fertile lands of the Empire. Wheat and olives were exported to Rome, as well as exotic animals for the arena. There was also some ivory trade with the rest of the continent. Carthage, rebuilt after its destruction in the 3rd century A.D., was one of the most prosperous cities of the Empire, with a population of over 200,000. Tripoli was an important trading spot for caravan routes. Other cities included Hippo Regius, Cyrene, and Apollonia.

### PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The Berbers were a dark-skinned, semi-nomadic people. They were divided into tribes, and tended to live in small villages or travel in caravans. They spoke their own tongue (Berber is a Mental/Average language) and were never truly assimilated. The Phoenician settlers spoke Punic and used Greek as a trade language.

The Romans pushed the nomads away from the cities. They actually resettled some of the natives in what could be described as reservations, but rebellions broke out constantly; the North African deserts remained dangerous.

# EGYPT

Egypt had been settled by two great civilizations before it became the personal property of the Roman Emperor. The native Egyptian Empire and the Hellenized Ptolemaic kings both put their mark on the land. The population was well-settled, and an ancient but effective tax system and bureaucracy were established. All this, added to the great wealth, made Egypt a very important Roman possession. Under Roman rule, the tax laws were made even stricter, and the life of the native Egyptians was not an easy one.

## CITIES AND LANDMARKS

The Nile river was the foundation of Egypt's civilization. The fertile land made this province one of the most important grain sources for Rome. Besides food and papyrus (for documents), oil and marble were extracted and exported. The Hellenized city of Alexandria was a close rival of Rome in grandeur. By the time it became a Roman possession, Alexandria was not as powerful as before (its population had fallen from 1 million to some 750,000) but it was still a wealthy port that controlled traffic from India and produced many luxury items such as perfume and glass. The library of Alexandria was the largest in the world, although it was damaged several times, including once during Caesar's visit to Egypt (see p. 51). The Library was almost completely destroyed in 262 A.D.

Other famous cities included Thebes, the former capital of the Egyptian Empire, most of which lay in ruins visited by wealthy tourists, and Memphis, also a favored tourist spot. Romans loved to look at the pyramids, and were able to enjoy the wall paintings that decorated them (they were scoured away by sand well before the 20th century).

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The Egyptian population remained largely unchanged throughout the centuries. A peasant from 300 B.C. would probably not feel much out of place in 200 A.D. The land's rulers had changed constantly, including the native Egyptian dynasty, the Persian Empire, the Ptolemaic kings, and the Romans (and afterward the Arabs and the Turks). All these rulers were considered both king and god by the Egyptians.

The cities of Egypt had been deeply influenced by Greek culture before the Romans came, and they remained largely Hellenized. Most traders and scholars were Greek, although many leading Roman thinkers traveled to Egypt to further their studies.

# THE DANUBIAN PROVINCES

The Danube river was vital to the interests of the Empire. This frontier was constantly threatened by northern invaders, from the Germans to the Sarmatians and Dacians to the Huns. The natives of those regions, Illyrians, Greeks, Germans, and Thracians, were tough warriors that Rome found difficult to absorb. Even after those areas were Romanized, they did not abandon their military traditions. For centuries, Illyrians and Thracians continued to be known as the best soldiers available, and the legions made extensive use of their abilities.



## Adventure Seeds

Described below and on the next few pages are some adventure and campaign ideas for different regions of the Empire.

### GAUL

*Strange Occurrences at the Gallic Villa.* The population of a village in Gallia Belgica vanishes without warning. The houses are all intact (including the luxurious villa of a Romanized magnate), but no humans are to be seen. The PCs can be travelers happening onto this mystery, Roman officials in charge of investigating the disappearance, or natives from a neighboring village.

What caused the mass disappearance? Ancient Druid rituals, a barbarian raiding party, or something even stranger may be responsible.

### SPAIN

*Mountain Odyssey.* The son of an important Roman senator has been kidnapped by a Lusitanian hill tribe, and is being held in one of their impregnable mountain fortresses. The PCs are charged with leading a small force to free him. To make matters worse, when (if) the team reach the young man, they discover he has fallen in love with a young Lusitanian princess, and will not leave without her. The girl's loyalties are in question, though. She might betray the rescuers at any opportunity, but any attempt to guard or restrain her will incite the wrath of the patrician's son.

*Continued on next page . . .*

## Adventure Seeds

(Continued)

### AMERICA

*Strange Journey.* A party of beast-hunters is gathered by the provincial governor. He has heard that strange animals of prodigious size can be found in the jungle hinterland. To gain the Emperor's favor, the governor organizes a huge hunting party, complete with an army escort, to search for those animals. To make things more interesting, there are rumors that enormous treasure can be found in that region. The PCs can be beast-hunters, soldiers assigned to escort the expedition, or even Roman or Greek sages trying to expand their knowledge. At the end of the journey (including dangerous desert crossings where savage nomads and lack of supplies decimate the expedition), the survivors may discover that the rumors were a hoax, or they may stumble into a nearly impassable valley where dinosaurs and a sub-human race roam. Will the adventurers survive? What if they bring some *Tyrannosaurus* eggs back with them?

### EGYPT

*The Alexandrian Papers.* A Roman book collector is murdered in Alexandria. The investigation revealed he had purchased some ancient papyri from an Egyptian trader, who was also assassinated. The PCs can be relatives or colleagues of the dead Roman, who, in trying to uncover the murderers, become involved in the doings of a secret cult bent on recovering the purchased papyri at any cost. And just what do the papyri contain?

Continued on next page . . .



## CITIES AND LANDMARKS

Illyricum (or Illyria) and Pannonia were frontier lands beset by many enemies. As a result, some of the most hardened Roman citizens emerged from that region, eventually breeding the line of Illyrian emperors that helped stabilize Rome during the late 3rd century. There were rebellions during the Imperial period, but eventually this land provided some important defenders of Rome. Dacia, formerly a powerful independent kingdom, was conquered by the Empire and held for over a century before being conquered by barbarians. Its lands included parts of modern Romania (including the infamous region of Transylvania). Thrace was a source of auxiliary troops and later of Roman soldiers. Its coast had been colonized by the Greeks, who founded Byzantium, which would become the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Moesia was settled by Romans and transplanted German tribes.

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The inhabitants of the Danube provinces were racially similar to the Greeks and Romans. Their culture was more warlike and less urbanized. Illyrians and Thracians were eventually assimilated into the Empire and became staunch defenders of Rome; many Emperors were born in this region. To the north, Sarmatian raiders remained a constant danger (see p. 85).



## GREECE AND MACEDONIA

Greece and Macedonia had been the centers of Hellenistic culture, and were highly developed and civilized areas before Rome conquered them. In many ways, Greece paid back the Romans by conquering them culturally. Roman art, literature, and architecture was largely inspired by or directly copied from Greek sources. All this respect did not stop the Romans from crushing the Greek armies and razing at least one city.

These provinces also outlasted the people who conquered them. While the city of Rome was looted by the Germans, the Eastern Roman Empire continued to thrive, abandoning the Latin language completely and creating a Greek Empire that would last another 1,000 years.

## CITIES AND LANDMARKS

Greece was an important religious, academic, and tourist center. Macedonia provided good soldiers for the Empire. The best possible education was, as usual, found in Athens. Corinth was a famous resort for the rich. The Olympic Games were still held in the Greek city-states. All in all, however, Greece was a land in decay. Centuries of warfare had ruined the once-powerful city-states of classical times.

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The Greeks were perhaps the most sophisticated people in the ancient world. They were considered the elite in the fields of the arts, medicine, philosophy, and literature. Regrettably, since the death of Alexander the Great, the Hellenized lands had not been able to overcome their petty rivalries to effectively confront outside enemies.

There was great resentment against Romans, who were considered barbarians trying to pass themselves as Greeks. Latin as a language gained very little ground in these lands. Since most Romans could speak Greek, this was not a problem.

See *GURPS Greece* for more about these mythic and historic lands.

## ASIA MINOR

Asia Minor had been under the control of Hellenized monarchies before it was acquired by Rome. It was divided into several provinces, including Asia, Cilicia, Galatia, and Pontus. Exploitation by Roman tax-collectors and several wars weakened the economy of the area, but it eventually recovered and became the leading industrial region of the Empire. The Persians and Parthians continued to be threats for most of Roman history.

### CITIES AND LANDMARKS

Pergamum was the chief producer of parchment, the only source of paper other than Egyptian papyrus. Nicomedia was an important port, and Tarsus was well-known for its linen industry. Clothing made in Asia was very famous throughout the Empire. Asian wool and leather were highly prized. Iron and marble were also exported. To the east of Asia Minor was the client kingdom of Armenia.

### PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The original settlers of Asia Minor were Hittites, who had their own language. The cities' culture was a mixture of Persian, Greek, and Punic elements. The great wealth of Asia attracted many Roman settlers. The Romans proceeded to ruthlessly exploit the population, which led to several rebellions. Several Asian cults became popular in the late Roman Empire (see pp. 57-58).

This region was a constant battlefield between Rome and the Parthian and Persian Empires. The cities of Asia Minor were a hotbed of intrigue and violence stoked by an unsympathetic population (see sidebar, p. 71). Neither the countryside nor the cities were truly Romanized, and could be dangerous for travelers.

## THE NEAR EAST

The Roman Near East was divided into the provinces of Syria, Palestine, and Arabia. The original cities of the region had been either Punic or Greek. Most of the population was made up of Aramaic speakers in the fields and Arabic nomads in the deserts. This area was the birthplace of several religions and cults that had deep influence on the Empire. Syria was the source of the Sun cult and Mithraism. Palestine gave Rome Judaism and Christianity. Centuries after the Western Roman Empire had fallen, Arabia brought forth Islam, the religion that eventually destroyed the Eastern Empire.

### CITIES AND LANDMARKS

Syria was the wealthiest province in the region. Its caravan routes reached from the Mediterranean to China, and were the main source of valuable silk for the Empire. The cities of Antioch, Damascus, and Palmyra were among the most prosperous in the Empire. Antioch had a population of 600,000, which made it the third largest city of the Empire. Palestine was much poorer, but the city of Jerusalem was an important religious center of the Jewish (and later Christian) faith, even after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem.



### Adventure Seeds (Continued)

#### THE DANUBE

*A Dish Best Served Cold.* A Sarmatian raid wipes out a small Roman fort; the PCs are the only survivors. As they flee through the forests they run into a mysterious stranger, clad in ancient warrior garb. He claims he has been following the Sarmatian raiders for a long time, and asks the group for their help. They have little choice but to agree, even though their savior's behavior is very peculiar. For one, he can never be found during the day. For another, he is very pale and has a very nasty smile. And what about the bloodless Sarmatian corpses that keep turning up on the trail of the raiders?

#### GREECE

*Beware of Greeks Bearing Gift Horses.* A Roman nobleman who is a close associate of the PCs falls victim to a Greek con-man who convinces him to buy the alleged head of the mythic Trojan Horse. When he discovers that the giant wooden head was created by local carpenters only a few weeks before, the nobleman turns to the adventuring party. He does not want to go to the authorities, because to do so will reveal his gullibility to the public (so far no one besides the con-man, the victim, and the carpenters know about the head, which is stashed away in a warehouse). Instead, he asks the characters to help him trick the forger into returning the money, in an embarrassing way if possible.

Continued on next page . . .

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Arabs, Jews, and Phoenicians made up most of the population of the area. Besides Greek, knowledge of the Aramaic language was very useful to a traveler, since many of the natives refused to adopt Roman or Greek customs. The region was very unstable, due mainly to several uprisings led by the Jewish population. These rebellions led to the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, much to the detriment of this holy city. Discontent remained rampant in this area.

### Adventure Seeds (Continued)

#### THE NEAR EAST

*The Quest for Silk.* A Roman Emperor wants to find out where silk comes from. He dispatches several trusted agents (the PCs) to Syria to find out. Each trader the travelers interrogate will send them to another city farther East; the travels become longer and more dangerous and the answers still remain "I don't know; I get my silk from the East." Eventually they will have to choose among returning to Rome with no good answer, returning with a believable lie, or pressing on beyond the boundaries of the Empire (*GURPS China* is a must if the third option is chosen).

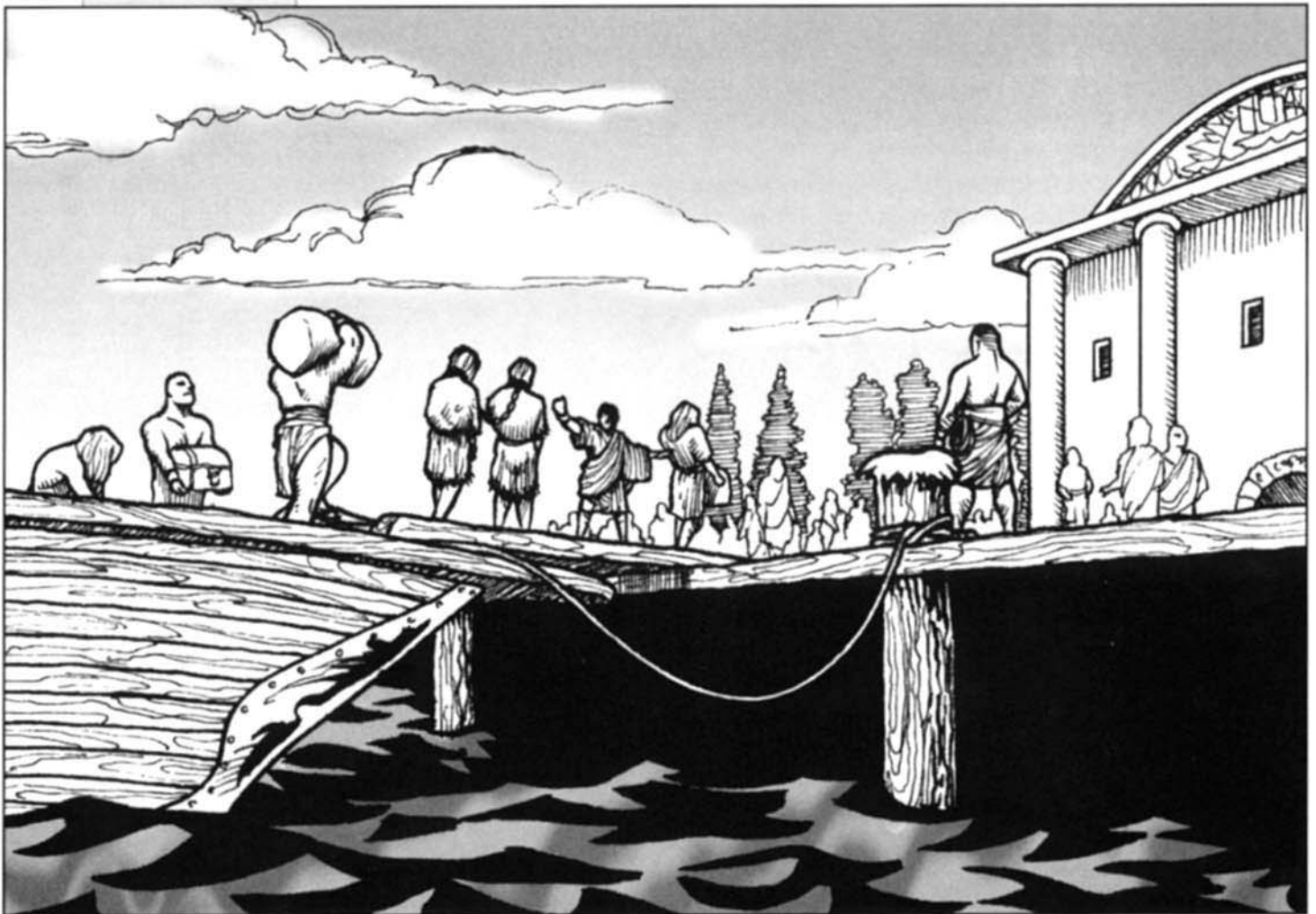
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## BRITAIN

The island of Britain was little more than a legend to most Romans until Caesar stepped onto its shores during the 1st century B.C. The island was not captured until the reign of Claudius just under a century later. Britain remained a remote and rather rustic province. During the Imperial period, the British frontier was heavily manned for over a century and a half. The size of the British garrison led some military commanders to try to become Emperors of Rome with its support.

## CITIES AND LANDMARKS

Britain's largest city, Londinium, had a population of 25,000 – a village in comparison to the great cities of the East. There were few British exports: some cloth, plus oysters' meat and pearls. There were also several mines of iron, copper, and lead.





## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Celtic tribes ruled England before the Roman conquest. Their culture had much in common with the Gauls (see p. 64). There were also Picts and Scots, primitive tribesmen even in comparison to the Celts. British inhabitants of the southern lowlands became very Romanized, but in the north, rebellious Britons, Picts, and Scots remained a constant threat. Hadrian's Wall and the higher Antonine Wall managed to safeguard the island for a while, but Britain was still one of the first provinces to be abandoned by the beleaguered Romans during the Late Empire.

## NEIGHBORS OF ROME

Rome had borders with dozens of other nations and territories. Many of these were client kingdoms, but there were a few nations or groups able to retain their independence and even attack the Empire. Rome's frontiers were never peaceful. Raids, skirmishes, or outright invasions were launched on both sides of the border.

### THE GERMANS

German tribes were scattered throughout northern Europe. For the most part they were herdsmen grouped in small tribes under the control of chieftains. After the Romans gave up their attempts to conquer the Germans, they tried to win them over with gifts and bribes to turn one tribe against another. That system worked for almost two centuries, until the weakened frontiers allowed the Germans to pour in.

The Empire fascinated the Germans. Its wealth and power impressed them, and even after they took over parts of the Empire they tried to pretend they were preserving Rome.

### PARTHIA AND PERSIA

These eastern kingdoms were Rome's main rivals. The borders were pushed back and forth in a series of wars that endured over the centuries. Eventually, however, Rome outlived both kingdoms.

The Parthian Empire was founded in 247 B.C. by Hellenized easterners. It occupied the Iranian Plateau. Their culture was mostly Oriental, however, and the Greek influence was soon lost. Parthia prospered because it controlled most of the trade routes to the East. Its kings were able to repel Rome for almost 300 years. In 224 A.D., a revolt overthrew the Parthian rulers and established the Sassanid Persian Empire.

The Persian Empire was as civilized and organized as its Roman counterpart. The Persians had a state religion, Zoroastrianism. They were never able to inflict a decisive defeat on Rome, although several Emperors came to an ill end while campaigning against them. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Persians continued to fight the Byzantine Empire until Muslim Arabs overran the Sassanids in the 7th century A.D.

#### *The Sarmatians*

These nomadic horsemen occupied most of what now is southern Russia and the Balkans, and were a constant threat to the Danubian provinces until the 4th century A.D. They constantly raided Roman possessions, sometimes with the help of German bands. The Goths conquered many Sarmatian territories, however, and later the Huns destroyed or absorbed them.

Sarmatian civilization was not very advanced, but they had sophisticated arts and crafts. Their weapons and armor were as fine as the Romans', and they may have invented the stirrup.

## Adventure Seeds

(Continued)

### BRITAIN

*The Water's Just Fine!* A Roman expedition pushing deeper into Britain dispatches a scouting cohort, which camps by the shore of one of the region's many lakes. During the night, the camp is awakened by horrible screams, only to discover that several night watchmen and pack animals are missing. The only clues are the grisly remains of a horse, which seems to have been bitten in half. And the next night, the PCs are assigned to the watch . . .

*Excalibur or XCVIIalibur?* The historical King Arthur probably was a Romanized Briton war chief who lived during the last decades of the Western Roman Empire. A historical Camelot campaign can be easily linked to the rest of Europe. Some PCs could be Roman or Romanized soldiers from the continent, traveling to Britain to serve under Arthur, while others can be native Britons fighting the invading Saxons.

A semi-fantastic Roman campaign can also be set in Britain, since this remote province of the Empire was always a land of mystery. Maybe, with the Empire crumbling, magic is returning to the island, and the faerie peoples are coming back just as the Saxons are invading England's shores. Myth and history can be combined.

Sources: *GURPS Camelot* lists several reference and fictional books useful to run a historical campaign in the Britain of the Late Empire. Additionally, David Drake's *The Dragon Lord* provides an interesting mixture of historical fact and fantastic elements in 5th-century England.

### ASIA MINOR

*Border Problems.* A series of skirmishes have broken out along the Parthian border. The PCs can be scouts sent by the Romans to find out if these encounters are a prelude for a major invasion. Alternatively, they could be the governors of the region or the commanders of the frontier armies, considering what military or diplomatic responses are adequate.

# V THE LEGIONS

Rome was built by soldiers. The legions allowed the Republic to survive and prosper, expanding and securing the Empire for half a millennium. From 200 B.C. to 300 A.D., Rome had the most powerful army in existence. The legions were the most disciplined and best organized military units in the ancient world, and they were not surpassed in those qualities until the 19th century. The legions were also a powerful weapon in the cultural conquest of the Empire.

Italian farmers joined the Army and traveled. They eventually settled in Gaul, Africa, Syria, and Britain,

bringing Roman beliefs, customs, and language wherever they went.



# HISTORY OF THE LEGIONS

The legions were originally the militia of the Roman city-state. By the time of the late Republic, they had become a highly organized professional army, and when the Empire began, they were a powerful standing army. The decline of Rome was both a cause and a result of the decay of the legions, until by the time of the Late Empire, they were a collection of barbarian warriors lacking the skills of their predecessors.

## THE ARMIES OF THE MONARCHY AND REPUBLIC

The early Roman army was not much different from that of its neighbors. It was an organized army, but not an extraordinary one. It was clashes against dangerous and determined enemies that caused the changes that would make the legions the most powerful military formation of their time.

The young city-state of Rome was influenced by the Greek style of war. The typical formation was the phalanx, a solid block of heavily-armed infantrymen carrying long spears. A small cavalry troop served as protection for the flanks; cavalry made up about 10% of the Roman army. The army was organized according to social distinctions, again following the Greek pattern. Every male citizen was expected to serve in the army, and to provide his own equipment.

At some point between the end of the monarchy and the early wars of the Republic, laws were passed dictating the size and composition of the Roman army. Most of the time, the strength of the Roman army was less than the numbers given below, but the theoretical army dispositions give an idea of the troops Rome could field in case of war.

The richer citizens could afford to maintain a trained horse, so Roman cavalry was made up of the young sons of the noble families. In theory, Rome could field 18 centuries (military units consisting of 60 to 100 men) of cavalry at any given time. In the next social echelon were the wealthy or middle-class citizens of the plebeian class (see p. 8); they were infantrymen, carrying the heaviest and most expensive equipment. The so-called "First Class" of infantry wore a bronze cuirass, helmet, and greaves; a large shield provided further protection. The weapons of the First Class were a sword and a spear. They were the largest part of the army, consisting of 80 centuries. Two of those centuries were made up of military engineers.

Each of the other classes was 20 centuries strong. The Second Class infantry wore no cuirass, and had to make do with leather or cloth armor. They were otherwise equipped like their social "betters." The Third Class had no greaves. The Fourth Class was equipped only with helmets, shields, and spears. Finally, the Fifth Class wore no armor at all and was armed with slings.

The First Class infantrymen were Heavy Infantry (TS 5); members of the Second Class were the equivalent of Medium Infantry (TS 4), and the rest were Light Infantry (TS 3). The Fifth Class skirmishers were Irregular Infantry equipped with slings (TS 3). Early Roman horsemen were lightly equipped (Light Cavalry without stirrups, with a TS of 3). Troop quality ranged from Raw to Seasoned, with a few high-quality units. Toward the end of a campaign, or if troops were raised shortly after a war, Troop Quality rose to Average or Seasoned.

In combat, the Roman phalanx marched as a solid unit. The heavy infantry was usually protected by a screen of Fifth Class skirmishers, with the cavalry in the wings. Their enemies fought in a similar fashion, so most battles became a massive clash between two phalanxes.

## Mass Combat Rules

GMs wishing to include large scale battles in a *Rome* campaign may use the *GURPS* Mass Combat System (see pp. C1112-124). Terms like Troop Strength (TS) and Troop Quality are references to those rules. Listed below are some additions and changes to the Mass Combat Rules that reflect the Roman milieu.

*Stirrups*: The stirrup was not invented until the last century before Rome's fall. Without stirrups, staying mounted while performing difficult maneuvers (such as fighting or shooting from horseback) is much more difficult. To represent this reduced effectiveness, cavalry units without stirrups have their TS value reduced by 1. Note that a superiority in cavalry is a huge advantage with or without stirrups.



## A Manipular Legion

A typical legion of the type used in the Punic Wars. The TS below is of a fully-manned legion. Most of the time, a legion on the field will have fewer effectives. Reduce the number of each unit by 5d-5%.

*Velites*: Lightly equipped skirmishers. 1,200 men. Average Quality. Individual TS 4. Total TS 4,800.

*Hastati*: 10 maniples of 120 men each. Average Quality. Individual TS 5. TS 600 per maniple. Total TS 6,000.


*Principes*: 10 maniples of 120 men each. Seasoned Quality. Individual TS 6. TS 720 per maniple. Total TS 7,200.

*Triarii*: 10 maniples of 60 men each. 5 are Seasoned troops, the other 5 Crack units. Individual TS 4.8 or 6. TS 288 or 360 per maniple. Total TS 3,240.

*Cavalry*: Light Cavalry in 10 *turmae* or 30 men each. Seasoned Quality. Individual TS 3.6. TS 108 per *turma*. Total TS 1,080.

*Number of Troops*: 4,500.

*Total TS*: 22,320.



## The Triumph

When a Roman army won a major battle, it was customary for the Roman commander to be honored with a parade and a festival to celebrate the victory. This was called a triumph.

The parade wound its way towards the Capitol on a flower-covered pathway. The members of the Senate came first, followed by musicians. Wagons displaying the spoils of the battle and the captured enemies were paraded through the streets. The general rode a chariot and was allowed to wear a purple toga, a laurel branch, and a white scepter, all symbols of royal power. The army marched behind him.

During the Imperial period, only Emperors were allowed to celebrate a triumph. They did so often, even when there had been no victories to boast of.

## Cannae

This was one of the worst defeats suffered by a Roman army. Hannibal (see p. 47) had penetrated deep into Italian territory in 216 B.C. A consular army made up of 48,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry was deployed against him. Hannibal's army consisted of some 35,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry. His infantry consisted of high-quality North African troops, slightly inferior Spanish soldiers, and finally a large but not very reliable contingent of Gauls. The Carthaginian cavalry consisted of light Numidian horsemen and Gaul and Spanish units. Hannibal's tactics were designed to eliminate the legions' greatest asset, their flexibility.

At the battle, Hannibal arrayed his army as follows: the center was deployed ahead of the wings, and was composed of Gauls and Spaniards. On the sides were the veteran North African infantry. The Numidian light cavalry was on the right wing, the Spanish and Gaul horsemen on the left. The Roman legions did not use their standard formation; instead of the flexible manipular strings, the troops were more concentrated to give the attack more shock power. This meant that the legions had already lost some of their maneuverability before the battle started.

Continued on next page . . .

The Gallic invasion of 390 B.C. showed how unwieldy the phalanx formation could be. The lightly-equipped Gauls swarmed around the rigid Roman lines, which could not maneuver to defend themselves. A more flexible arrangement was devised. Out of these changes, the Roman legion was born.

## The Manipular Legion

The former phalanx was broken into smaller units, called *maniples*. The early maniples were made up of 60 to 120 men. The smaller size of these sub-units allowed them to change facing more quickly and to maneuver better than the solid blocks of men used before. The equipment also changed; javelins replaced spears among most soldiers, and all the medium and heavy infantrymen were equipped with a short stabbing sword, the *gladius*. The javelins gave the legion an effective long-range attack, which was followed by a charge of sword-wielding infantrymen. The combination was effective both against light troops, who were decimated by the flight of javelins and then overwhelmed by the better-equipped Romans, and the phalanx, which was helpless against the missiles and could not maneuver if the Romans managed to break through their ranks. This, at least, was the theory.

## The Legions of the Punic Wars

As before, there were differences in equipment depending upon the social class of the soldier. The poorer soldiers were now called *velites* and wore little or no armor. They were equipped with javelins, swords, and small shields, and formed a skirmish line in front of the ranks of the legion proper. The first and second ranks were called the *hastati* and the *principes* respectively, and were made up of 10 maniples with 120 men each. They wore full bronze armor, large shields, a sword, and two javelins – one light, the other heavy enough to be either thrown or used in close combat. Some of the richer soldiers chose to wear chainmail instead; by the time of Marius (see below), the mail had replaced bronze breastplates. The last rank, or *triarii*, also wore armor, but instead of javelins they kept the thrusting spears of the early legions. With 10 smaller maniples of 60 men each, they provided additional shock action if the charge of the first two ranks proved insufficient to break the enemy.

*Hastati* and *principes* are Medium Infantry with javelins (TS 5); *triarii* are Medium Infantry (TS 4), usually more experienced (one level above average Troop Quality); the *velites* are Light Infantry with missile weapons (TS 4).

Each rank was made up of maniples, with a small space between them. The legion can be pictured as three sets of blocks, masked by a thin line of light infantrymen up front (see diagram on p. 75). Each maniple was led by two *centurions*, officers who had risen from the ranks.

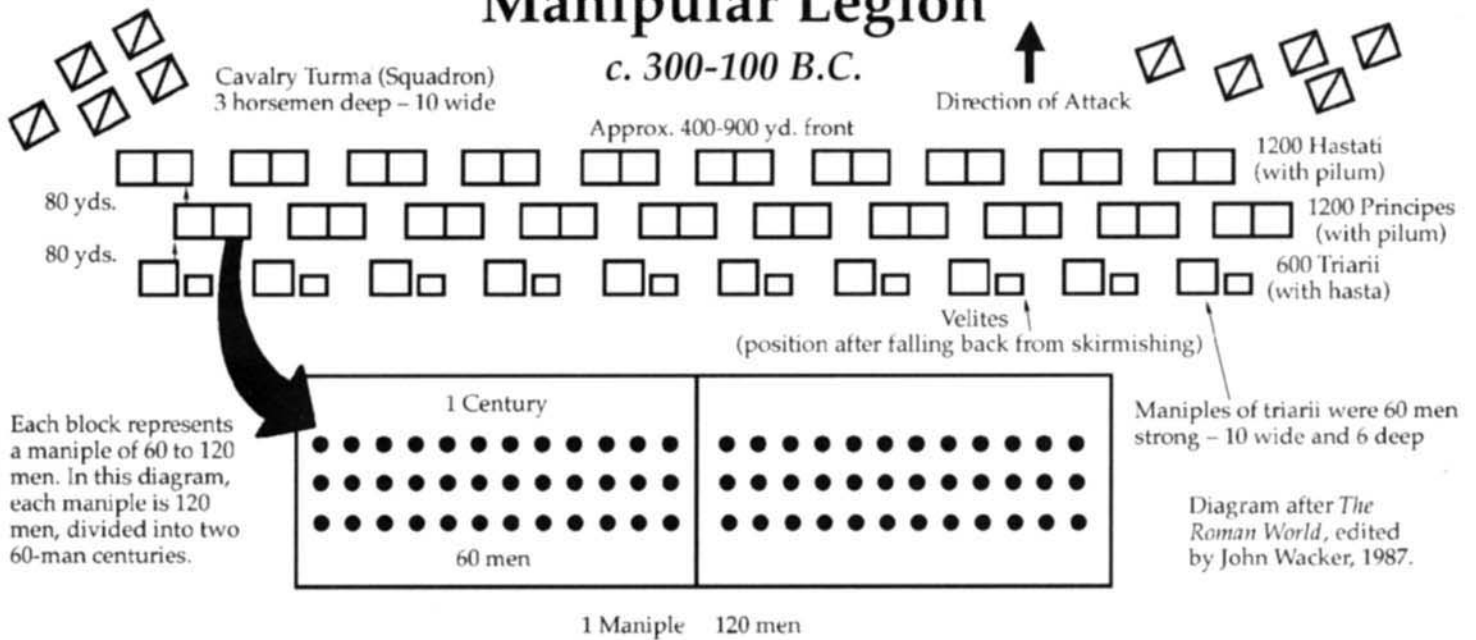
## The Legions Under Marius

The Roman general and consul Marius reformed the Roman armies into an even more flexible and unified force. Many of the changes attributed to him had been developing over the decades preceding his rise to power, but he institutionalized them. The army became more professional and better trained – and more loyal to its commander than to the State.

Marius wanted a more flexible legion able to maneuver in small units, but each unit had to be able to defend itself adequately. Maniples were too small to be used singly and too numerous to direct effectively with the small number of officers available. A new unit was created; the *cohort* consisted of six centuries, each ranging in size from 80 to 100 men. The cohort marched in an elongated square, six men deep and 100 men wide. Ten cohorts made up the legion. The legion's commander could maintain a reserve and maneuver his army with relative ease. When small units were necessary, the centuries in the cohort could act like the maniples of old.

# Manipular Legion

c. 300-100 B.C.



The trappings of the legionaries were also unified. Equipment distinctions between the different ranks were eliminated, and the lightly equipped *velites* disappeared. The long spear was abandoned, and all soldiers were equipped with a *pilum* (a short heavy throwing spear), *scutum* (shield), and shortsword. Armor quality varied, ranging from none at all to outdated bronze cuirasses to chain. The basic tactics (a volley of javelins followed by a charge with the *gladius*) remained unchanged. Cavalry units were usually recruited from Italian or foreign allies, and were used to guard the flanks of the legion. Auxiliary troops consisted of light infantry, usually bowmen and slingers.

Marius introduced the custom of assigning a symbol for each legion. This was the legion's eagle, a standard shaped like a silver eagle. A legion's eagle became the symbol of its pride, and was defended to the last. Losing one's eagle was a terrible dishonor.

Caesar became proconsul of Gaul when these reforms of the Roman Army were fully institutionalized. Cavalry almost exclusively consisted of Gallic warriors at this point. Caesar completed the process that Marius had begun by making his army personally loyal to him, and not to the Roman Republic. His soldiers willingly marched into Italy, in violation of Roman law, at his behest. This period of private control of the armies did not end until the rise of Augustus and the establishment of the Empire.

The late Republican legion also included a highly-trained engineer corps, able to construct sophisticated siege engines (see p. 83). All Roman soldiers were trained to build fortified camps, which were surrounded by ditches and other defenses. In a few hours, an army in hostile territory could erect a fort which served as a fallback position if a battle went against them, or as a defense from which they could hold out against a larger force.

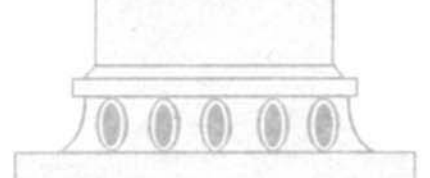
## THE IMPERIAL LEGION

Before Augustus, soldiers counted on their generals to reward them after a campaign, and the terms of service were unclear. A general had to raise his own troops when a crisis came about. When Augustus rose to power, he decided to end the practice of relying on a militia. The Emperor instead wanted a standing army that was constantly under arms and under his direct control. By certain standards, this was one of the earliest national armies in history.

## Cannae (Continued)

As expected, the Romans pushed back the Spanish and Gaul infantry. Meanwhile, the Gallo-Spanish cavalry destroyed the cavalry on the Romans' left, while on the other wing, the Numidians held their own. The legions pushed the center of the Carthaginian infantry until it almost broke, but Hannibal's leadership kept the center steady. The Roman general Varro doubled the density of the first ranks by filling the gaps between the *hastati* maniples with the *principes*. The legions now could only move forward, as inflexible as a Greek phalanx. The North African infantry, which had held its position, was now able to attack the flanks of the legions, hemming them in.

The Roman soldiers were now too close to each other to maneuver. Only the edges of their formation could fight back, and the units behind them could not assist. The Carthaginian cavalry had routed both wings of Roman cavalry, and fell upon the legions' rear. Then Hannibal's center pushed forward. The surrounded Romans were whittled down to the core. Less than 10,000 infantrymen escaped with their lives out of an army of over 50,000. Hannibal lost fewer than 7,000 men.



## Zama

The Roman general Scipio Africanus was threatening Carthage itself with his army. Hannibal was recalled from Italy with 12,000 of his veterans. After diplomacy failed, the Carthaginians tried force in 202 B.C.

Scipio's army consisted of 35,000-40,000 men, including a strong Numidian and Italian cavalry force. The infantry was Roman, veterans of several battles in Spain. Hannibal had the same number of men. His infantry consisted of mercenaries, Carthaginian militia, and his veterans. In cavalry, he was weaker than the Romans, but he had 80 elephants. Scipio's intention was to eliminate the Carthaginian cavalry and then use his mobile legions to outflank the enemy infantry. Hannibal realized this; to prevent the outflanking he only sent the mercenaries and native troops forward. His veterans stayed put on top of a hill, so if the first two waves were outflanked he could counterattack with his reserve (Scipio saw this and also kept a reserve made up of the legions' *triarii*.) Hannibal sent his elephants ahead in order to break the Roman formations.

The 80 elephants bore down on the legions, but Scipio had developed tactics to fight them. His missile troops pelted the elephants as they approached. Some of the beasts fled and either smashed through Hannibal's mercenaries or ran away to the sides after being harried by the Roman and allied cavalry. The elephants that reached the Romans were channeled through gaps left in the line; the animals took the path of least resistance and ran through the Roman lines without doing much damage, before being put to flight. Shortly after that, the Carthaginian cavalry was routed on both wings and pursued from the battlefield.

Infantry fighting followed. Both armies used loose infantry lines instead of phalanx formations; Hannibal had come to respect the flexible Roman tactics. The Roman *hastati* and *principes* pushed the mercenary line back, inflicting heavy losses.

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The new Imperial army was paid directly by the government, which also took care of securing lands for veterans. Permanent auxiliary armies made of non-Romans were also created. At the end of their term of service, the soldiers and their families were granted Roman citizenship. This encouraged the Romanization of the conquered peoples.

The most important non-military change was the elimination of social restrictions on legionaries. Any free citizen, regardless of his property or age, could join. This increased the pool of possible recruits and reduced the economic independence of the soldiers. Legionaries without property became dependent on the service for their welfare; eventually, they were loyal only to their general. The term of service was regularized, first to 16 years, then to 20. The general was in charge of distributing the state's payment to his soldiers and rewarding them with lands after their discharge. Auxiliary troops served for a similar length of time and were given land, Roman citizenship, or both.

The reforms started by Marius continued to unify equipment and preparation for battle. The legions became the best trained and experienced armies of their time. After retirement, officers were often recruited into the civil service, where they put their leadership and management skills to good use. An administrator who had been on the field often possessed a clearer understanding of how the Empire should function than one who had never left Rome.



Since Augustus had to pay the legions directly, he reduced their number to a manageable size and put them around the frontiers in defensive positions. The early Empire was not interested in new conquests but in defending the areas under Roman control. There had been 60 legions under arms when Augustus rose to the throne; he reduced the number to 28. The Empire paid the troops' salaries and awarded them with land upon their discharge. In this way the legions did not need to rely on their commanders.

Augustus' successors followed his practice of a strong border defense. Emperor Hadrian went even further, building several fortified walls along the more dangerous borders. These fortresses were not meant to be manned; they were far too long (some had a length of hundreds of miles). Rather, they served as base and fallback position for troops that fought beyond the walls.

Many historians have criticized the wisdom of this defensive policy, and the lack of a reserve that could be used if an invasion penetrated the borders. However, the policy of Augustus kept the Empire at peace for over a century, using an army of 300,000 to

safeguard over 50 million inhabitants, and at a relatively low cost. On the other hand, whenever a threat required a large army, the usual response was to move legions from other borders to the threatened one. A war on two fronts could be disastrous.

The weapons and tactics of the Imperial legion remained for the most part unchanged. Armor quality increased somewhat so that most legionaries were clad in metal armor, either chainmail or the *lorica segmentata* (see p. 43). Auxiliary cavalry ranged in quality from lightly-equipped horsemen to cataphracts clad in mail or scale armor. Stirrups were still unknown, so the impact of cavalry was not as great as in medieval times. Troop quality remained high; with a competent leader, a legion was able to defeat much larger barbarian armies. The statistics of the Roman army remained mostly unchanged. Auxiliary cavalry now ranged from Light to Heavy (cataphracts), and included some mounted archers. Auxiliary infantry provided missile weapons.

Another new element of the Imperial Army was the creation of an elite bodyguard for the Emperors: the Praetorian Guard. The Guard was originally made up of highly trained and experienced troops (Troop Quality of Crack or better), but their quality may not have remained high after being pampered in the city. As the only body of armed men around the Emperor, the Praetorians had the power of life and death over him, a power they exercised several times during Rome's history. By the time of the Late Empire, they actually put the Empire up for sale after murdering the Emperor.

## THE LATE EMPIRE

The barbarian invasions, the plagues and famine, and the internal crises that wracked the Empire during the 3rd century had an impact on the Roman army. Civil wars once again became constant; the Romans became their own worst enemies. Legions were moved from the borders to fight for one pretender or another, leaving them vulnerable to the Germans on the north and the Persians on the east.

Emperor Gallienus (253-68 A.D.) managed to bring back some stability after decades of civil war. At this point, the border troops were deficient in training and equipment. Gallienus and later emperors reduced the value of the border troops even more and concentrated on creating a central army that was highly mobile and well-trained. The defensive strategy changed; border soldiers (*limitanei*) were supposed to delay the invaders or just serve as a trip-wire to alert the central government, which would then dispatch an army to meet the threat. The enemy could not be kept outside the borders any more, so the new plan was to defeat it once it had penetrated Roman territory.

Emperor Diocletian (see p. 59) continued to maintain a standing cavalry force, which he divided into four main armies, one controlled by each of the four co-rulers of the Empire. He also tried to return, to a degree, to the earlier policies of secure frontiers. Several new fortresses and road systems were built to allow rapid troop movement. Diocletian also started a conscription system, a radical change from the volunteer nature of the Imperial army.

For mobility, more emphasis was put on cavalry than ever before. The new Roman cavalry included lightly-armed lancers and horse archers, as well as armored cataphracts based on the heavy cavalry of Parthia and Persia. These new units were stationed at strategic points within the Empire, ready to respond to any invasion. Equipment remained the same for the infantry, although in several provinces border soldiers were poorly outfitted. Training suffered, although not as badly as it would during the late 4th and 5th centuries.

Roman infantry suffered a general decline. At first, they lost their *pilum*, becoming Medium Infantry without missiles (TS 4). By the 4th century, they were Light or Irregular Infantry. Cavalry became stronger. There were units of Heavy Cavalry (TS 7), Light Spearmen (TS 3), and horse archers (Light Cavalry with bows, with a TS of 5, or 6 if Persian or Hunnish composite bows were used).

## Zama (Continued)

The native Carthaginians were hesitant in assisting the mercenaries, who had to do most of the fighting alone; there was actually some fighting between the mercenaries and the Carthaginian infantry when the Romans pushed the two lines together. The Carthaginian ranks withdrew in confusion, but Hannibal, by threatening to cut them down with his veterans, forced the survivors of the first two lines to reorganize on the wings of his veterans, who so far had not participated.

The battle stopped for some time while both armies reorganized. Hannibal had hoped that the Romans would press on, allowing his fresh veterans to attack the disorganized and battle-weary *hastati*, but Scipio ordered his army to stop its advance and the Romans obeyed (this is proof of the high degree of discipline in the Roman army; troops who see the enemy retreat in disorder want to charge, not stop). Scipio then placed the rear maniples on the sides of the first rank, extending his frontage in an attempt to outflank the Carthaginians. Hannibal also extended his line, using the survivors of the first two ranks on the sides.

The reformed lines met again and the fighting became fierce, without clear advantage for either side, until the Roman and allied cavalry returned to the field and fell on the rear of the Carthaginians; as at Cannae, this action decided the battle. Hannibal's army was routed and the Carthaginian general was barely able to flee.



## A Cohortal Legion (100 B.C. – 100 A.D.)

Described below is the TS value of an average legion such as Caesar or Augustus might have had on the field. The TS value below assumes a legion at full strength. To represent casualties, desertions, sick troops, etc., reduce the numbers of each unit by 5d-5%.

**First Cohort:** Usually placed on the right flank, this was the striking arm of the legion. The First Cohort was usually made up of Crack troopers, equipped with chainmail or segmented armor, a large shield, shortsword, and two javelins. 600 soldiers with TS 7. Total TS: 4,200.

**Two Seasoned Cohorts:** Made of veterans with slightly less training, similarly armed. Individual TS: 6. TS: 3,600 each.

**Seven Average Cohorts:** The bulk of the legion. Individual TS 5. TS: 3,000 each.

**Cavalry:** The average legion had only 120 cavalrymen. They were sometimes divided into two groups to guard both flanks. They wore chain, scale, or segmented armor, long swords and spears, and were of Seasoned quality. Individual TS 6. TS: 720, or two troops of 360 each.

**Auxiliary Slingers:** Lightly-armed foreign troops, of average to seasoned quality. Their number varied. This legion had 1,000 auxiliaries, divided into two 500-man troops to protect the legion's flanks. Individual TS 4. TS: 2,000 each.

*Number of Troops:* 6,120.

*Total TS:* 37,120.



For the central army and the Praetorian Guard, the period of chaos was somewhat beneficial. The Emperors knew that they depended on the army's goodwill and they heaped money and favors on it. When there was not enough money, or when the Emperor offended the soldiers in some way, a violent uprising quickly overthrew the current Caesar, and a civil war (hopefully short) followed until a new leader was secure on the throne. A number of emperors actually started their careers as common soldiers; examples include Aurelian, Diocletian, Maximian, Maximinus Thrax, Galerius, and Constantius I.

## DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN ARMY

When Constantine became the sole Emperor in 323 A.D., he started a series of changes that led to the deterioration of the Roman army, at least in the West. Constantine abandoned Diocletian's defensive policies, depending instead on a large central army and a weak border defense. Roman infantry, now completely relegated to a supporting role, lost a good deal of its training and discipline.

The legion was reduced in size, from 5,000 men to 1,000. A new type of cavalry unit, the *auxilia palatini*, 500 men strong, was created. These elite cavalry units were made up mainly of Germans, and usually wore metal armor. The legion was now made up of Light or Irregular Infantry (TS 3 or 2); the *auxilia palatini* were Heavy or Medium cavalry (TS 7 or 5). The Troop Quality of the infantry was Average or lower; the cavalry was usually Average or better.

Things became much worse by the end of the 4th century. More and more barbarian troops were incorporated into the Army. Whole tribes were hired and no effort was made to train them in Roman ways. The number of Roman-style units became very scarce in the West. Eventually, the border troops disappeared. The only true Roman armies were the cavalry forces, which were made up mainly of foreigners, and remained near the various capitals. At the battle of Chalons, the Roman general Aetius commanded an army of Visigoths, Alans, Franks, and Romans; the Roman soldiers made up less than 25% of the army.

By this stage, "Roman" armies were for the most part German and Hunnish war bands, with the exception of Eastern troops (use the stats for Late Imperial cavalry and infantry). The size of the armies involved was also much smaller; the Empire did not have the logistics to support large forces of men as they traveled and fought. An army was any unit with more than 1,000 men.

By the time the last Emperor was deposed in 476 A.D., there was no Roman army except in the Eastern Empire, which would eventually become the Byzantine Empire.

## THE ARMY

The Roman army described below is the one that came about after the reforms of Marius (see p. 74) and which, with a few reforms, existed until the changes made by Constantine in the 4th century A.D.

### ORGANIZATION

The Roman army had a large body of officers. The officers who rose through the ranks, the highest of which was the *centurion*, were the heart of the legions. An experienced, tough corps, the noblemen in charge relied on them to get the job done.

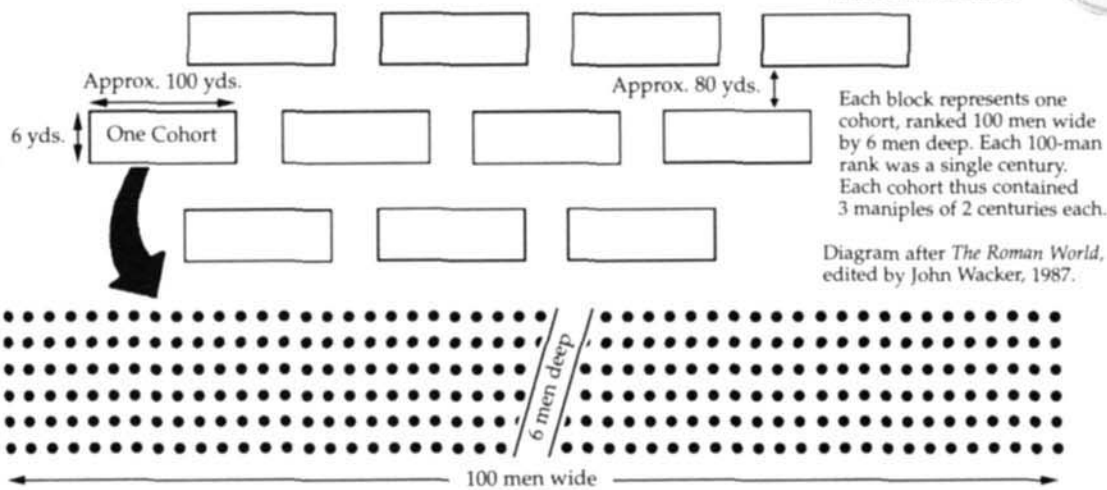
#### Units

The largest unit was the legion, the equivalent of a modern army division. A large army would consist of several legions and auxiliary units. A legion had between 4,000 and 6,000 men. The legion was itself divided into smaller units. Each legion had ten



# Cohortal Legion

c. 100 B.C. – through Imperial Rome



## Carrhae

cohorts, which had between 480-600 men. The shields of all the men of a cohort were painted in one color; this made it easier to organize the army and recognize each cohort. The cohort itself was divided into 6 centuries; a century held between 80-100 men. Each cohort formed a block in the army, basically its own little army; when deployed, a cohort was about 100-150 yards long and 6 yards wide; the 100-yard frontage allowed javelins to be thrown. Some historians think the front expanded to about twice that length when charging, giving each soldier more space on each side, but this is hard to prove without further evidence.

### Junior Officers

The petty officers of the legion were selected from men who had distinguished themselves for bravery and leadership. The *principales* were the equivalent of corporals or sergeants in the modern army (Rank Level 1); of equal rank were the cohort standard bearers, or *signiferi*. The *optio*, or “chosen,” was the centurion’s immediate assistant (Rank Level 2 or 3, depending on seniority; there was only one *optio* in a century).

### Senior Officers

The *centurions* were somewhat equivalent to modern captains (Rank 3). There were different ranks among centurions. The centurions from the First Cohort outranked the rest, and the Senior Centurion of the First Cohort, the *Primus Pilus*, was second-in-command of the legion in all but name. There were six centurions in each cohort – one per century. The centurions, promoted from among the common soldiers, were the most knowledgeable officers in the army, men who had seen combat both from the front line and as officers.

The *tribunes* led each cohort. Every legion had six tribunes: five *equites*, called *angusticlave tribunes*, and one of patrician rank, called a *laticlave tribune*. The former were often young sons of patrician families sent out to gain military experience in this position and, given that they were trusted with major commands, often proved the legion’s weak link. Seasoned centurions were on hand to advise, of course, but a reckless or timid young tribune in command of a cohort or two could be a major problem. The senior or *laticlave tribune* was older and more experienced, though he was not a professional soldier either. Officially, he was the legion’s second-in-command.

Crassus (see p. 49) marched with an army of 32,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry into Parthian territory in 53 B.C. Opposing them was an army of only 11,000: 10,000 horse archers and 1,000 heavy cavalry, led by the Parthian general Surenas. Crassus marched his army through the desert, and his thirsty and exhausted soldiers headed for a river. At that point the Parthians attacked.

The Roman cavalry sallied forth while the legions deployed. The Parthians feigned retreat, lured the enemy cavalry into an ambush, and decimated it. Then the horse archers showered the Romans with arrows for hours. Crassus held firm, believing that the enemy would eventually exhaust their arrows, but Surenas had provided 1,000 camels loaded with arrows to keep his army well-supplied. The Romans stood in the hot sun while arrows fell among them. Small desperate groups of men charged the cavalry and were cut down. But the archery was not enough to destroy the Roman formation.

The Romans tried to withdraw to the fortress of Carrhae, and were constantly harried by the Parthians; the Roman army became divided. The smaller portions were destroyed one by one, first by arrows, then by a charge of the heavy cavalry. The survivors reached Carrhae, only to discover that it had no supplies. Sunstroke and thirst felled almost as many Romans as the enemy arrows. Finally, the main Roman army was destroyed or captured, and Crassus was killed. Only 10,000 men escaped.

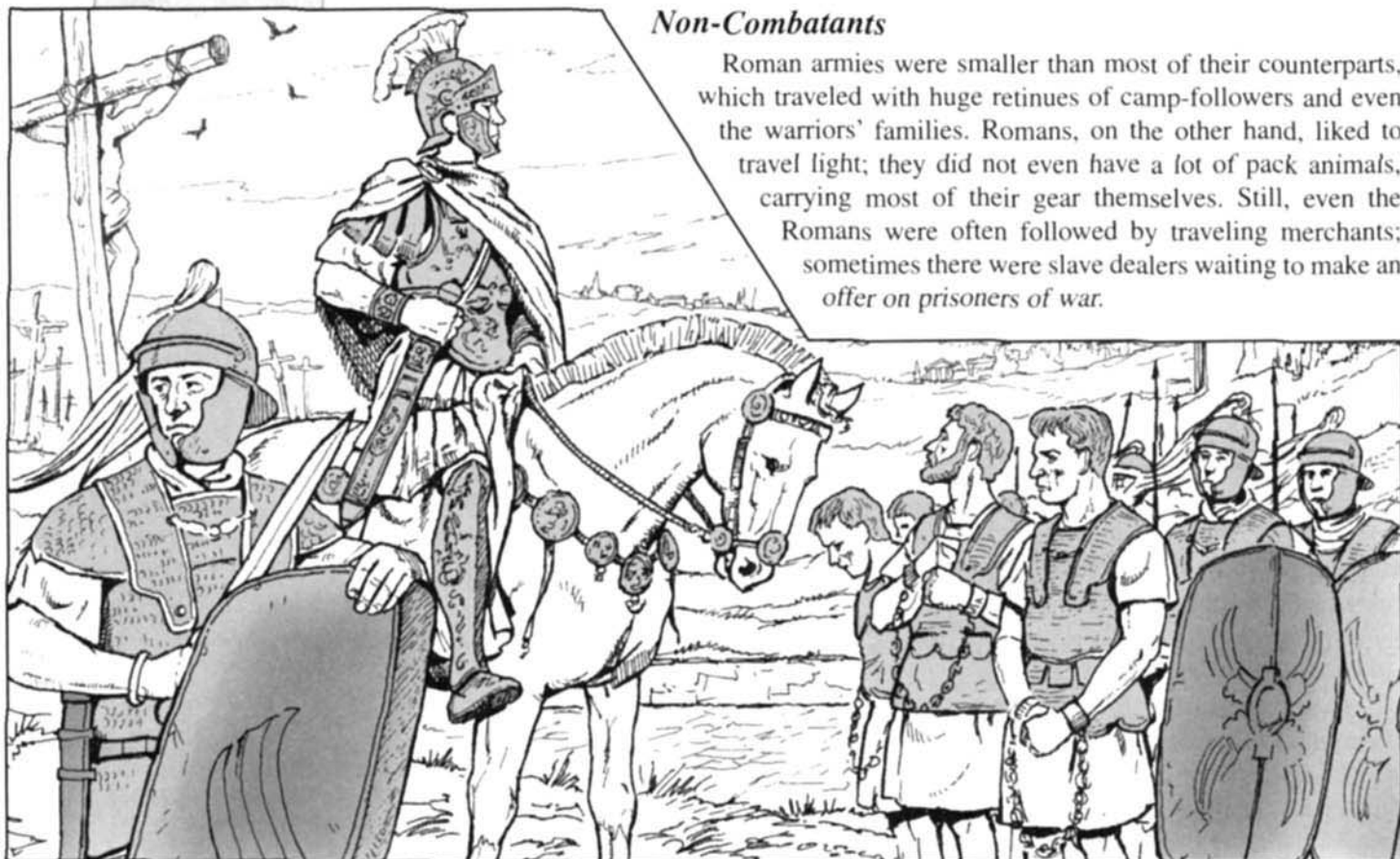
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## Carrhae (Continued)

The desert conditions played an important part in the defeat, along with the demoralizing effect of being attacked without being able to strike back. Crassus' greatest mistake was to allow his cavalry and infantry to be separated.

The *Prefect of the Camp* was the second-in-command in all matters not relating to battle. This was a centurion promoted to this position, in charge of the conduct of Roman camps and forts. While campaigning in hostile territory, his authority was limited to the provisional camps the legion built every night (see p. 82). During most of the Imperial period, however, legions were permanently stationed in fortresses; there, the Prefect had authority second only to that of the *legate*.

The *legate* was the commanding officer of the legion. Usually he was from the senatorial order, and already had experience as a tribune.



## Non-Combatants

Roman armies were smaller than most of their counterparts, which traveled with huge retinues of camp-followers and even the warriors' families. Romans, on the other hand, liked to travel light; they did not even have a lot of pack animals, carrying most of their gear themselves. Still, even the Romans were often followed by traveling merchants; sometimes there were slave dealers waiting to make an offer on prisoners of war.

## Pharsalus

Julius Caesar invaded Macedonia in 48 B.C. to defeat his rival Pompey. Pompey recognized the danger of facing his enemy on the field, despite the fact that he had a larger army. Instead, he kept Caesar bottled up and cut off from supplies. At Dyrrachium, Pompey defeated Caesar's forces and pushed his army into the mainland without a hope of reinforcement. Pompey decided to wait until Caesar's army was weakened; he also wanted Caesar to attack while Pompey held a strong defensive position. The senatorial party, however, pressured Pompey to take the initiative.

*Continued on next page...*

Each legion also had a number of soldiers charged with special duties. Among them were doctors and medics, clerks to handle paperwork and assist the governor and legate, court investigators, engineers, craftsmen, scribes, and priests to divine the omens. These men were technically combat soldiers and remained on the rolls of their centuries, but their usefulness in battle was questionable and they would usually stay in their rear-echelon posts when the army moved out. Throughout the Imperial period their numbers grew until, around 200 A.D., they made up about 10% of the legion. These soldiers were called *immunes*.

## AUXILIARIES

The *auxilia* were non-Roman troops attached to a Roman army. They included bodies of archers and slingers, light infantry, and, most importantly, cavalry. The Romans as a people did not have many great horsemen, so they relied upon troops from the provinces (Gauls, Moors, and Germans, among others). At first, these troops were under the command of their own chiefs, but eventually they were assigned Roman officers. As the Empire subsequently started to crumble, this practice was abandoned and auxiliary armies were organized and led by their own chieftains.

## Organization

Auxiliary infantry was organized into cohorts of 500-1,000 men, divided into six to ten centuries. Each cohort was its own army, and usually consisted of troops of the same national origin. Cavalry was divided into units called *alae* (singular *ala*), also between 500 and 1,000 men strong. Each *ala* was divided into smaller units called *turmae*, which had about 20-40 men trained to work in groups of 6-10 men each (a *turma*'s sub-unit is about the right size for a standard PC party).

## Officers

Infantry cohorts were commanded by a prefect, often promoted from among the senior centurions of a regular legion. Cavalry *alae* were led by a tribune; the *turmae* were commanded by decurions (one decurion per *turma*, each commanding a unit of ten men).

## ROMAN TACTICS

By Julius Caesar's time, Roman military science was fully developed. Young tribunes could study strategy and tactics developed for each type of enemy, whether disorganized hordes of barbarians, the Macedonian phalanx, or Parthian cavalry. When the legions worked as intended, they could face any army in the ancient world (or, for that matter, any army before the discovery of firearms) with a good chance of success.

### *The Legion in the Field*

The enemy, terrain, and goals of the legion determined how the army was deployed. When on the defensive, the legion could form a square, with the cohorts surrounding their camp animals and the non-combatants. In general, the legion tried to stay on the offensive.

The legions deployed in three lines; the front line was made up of four cohorts, followed by two lines with three cohorts each. The front line would make contact with the enemy, with the other two standing by to provide successive waves of attack, plug gaps or breakthroughs, outflank the enemy, or relieve the first line when its soldiers became exhausted.

The front four cohorts, six ranks deep, would advance toward the enemy at a slow pace. Auxiliary infantry, if any was available, screened their front and flanks, and peppered the enemy with arrows and sling stones. As the two armies drew closer, the auxiliaries would move to the wings of the legion.

When the first line was about 20 yards away from the enemy, they volleyed their *pila* and spread out with swords drawn (the *pila* volley was in reality two volleys, one for each *pilum* the soldiers carried; the second volley would fall well within half-damage range). The second rank would volley in turn and close the gaps opened by the widening ranks. This meant that before the enemy troops reached the Romans they had been hit by as many as four javelin volleys (a total of 1,600 missiles from the four frontal cohorts). In most cases the enemy lines were broken or in disarray before the Romans closed grips and started stabbing with their short swords. The rear four ranks of the cohorts would then start throwing missiles over their comrades' heads and into the main body of the enemy troops.

The right wing of the legion would try to push forward and turn the enemy's left. Auxiliary cavalry would attack any enemy cavalry and then fall on the rear or the flanks of the enemy infantry. If the enemy troops were composed mainly of cavalry, the legions would wait for the charge, volley their javelins, and hold their ground while allied cavalry struck the enemy's sides.

## Pharsalus (Continued)

This was not a big risk, however. Pompey had an army of 40,000 infantry and 7,000 cavalry, against Caesar's 22,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry. Pompey abandoned his strong hill position and marched down to meet Caesar's army on a plain. Caesar extended his lines by increasing the space between the maniples until his infantry had the same frontage as Pompey's. His left flank was covered by the Enipeus River, and he put his cavalry on his right. Pompey also put all his cavalry on one flank, and behind it a strong force of light missile infantry (archers and slingers); his plan was to rout Caesar's cavalry and then use his horsemen and missiles to smash Caesar's army in the flank and rear while Pompey's infantry held it in place. Caesar kept the *triarii* in reserve and placed six cohorts of elite troops to the right and rear of his legions to provide support for his cavalry.

Pompey's infantry deployed and waited for Caesar's charge; their role was to hold the enemy, not destroy it, and Pompey was hoping that the enemy would become exhausted if it charged the whole distance between the armies instead of being met halfway. Caesar's veterans realized this and checked their charge, advancing at normal pace until they were within javelin range, and then charging.

The cavalry battle went as Pompey had planned – at first. Caesar's cavalry was routed, and the Pompeians threatened the infantry. At this point, however, the six cohorts charged the cavalry. Caesar's veterans overwhelmed and routed them. Then they fell upon the disorganized missile infantry, which was also routed, and finally struck Pompey's legions on the flanks and the rear. At this point Caesar committed his reserve *third rank*; the sudden influx of fresh troops shattered Pompey's front lines, and the attack on the flanks demoralized the army, which fled.

Caesar's use of reserve forces and the training of his troops was the decisive factor in the battle. The speed and determination of his six picked cohorts allowed him to turn Pompey's plans against him.

## Late Imperial Army

This was the army organized by Constantine, which remained in existence for less than 100 years in the West but which was the basis of the Byzantine army in the Eastern Empire. Described below is a small army consisting of 500 elite cavalry with the support of two "legions."

*Imperial Guard units (auxilia palatini):* Cavalry, 500 strong, of Seasoned Quality. Individual TS 8.4. Total TS 4,200.

*Two Legions (Light Infantry):* 1,000 men each: one unit has Average Quality, the other is Green. Individual TS 3 or 2.4. Total ST: 3,000 and 2,400 respectively.

*Skirmishers:* 500 men. Light Infantry with bows, Average Quality. Individual TS 5. Total ST 2,500.

*Number of Troops:* 3,000.  
*Total TS:* 12,100.

The legion was reduced in size from 5,000 men to 1,000. A new cavalry unit, the *palatini*, 500 strong, was created. These elite cavalry units were made up of Germans and usually wore metal armor. The legion now consisted of Light or Irregular Infantry (TS 3 or 2); the *palatini* were Heavy or Medium cavalry (TS 7 or 5). The Troop Quality of the infantry was Average or lower; the cavalry was usually Average or better.

If the first four cohorts failed to push back or rout the enemy, the second line of cohorts would join the battle. The shock effect of a new charge would often break the target, and if that were not enough, there were three more cohorts ready for a third charge, an outflanking maneuver, or both.

Against infantry, the Roman formation could handle many times its own numbers. Cavalry charges had a better chance against the Romans, but for the most part they were not enough. Mounted archers could harass the legions at a distance without risking contact, but by themselves they could not destroy the legions (see *Carrhae*, sidebar, p. 79). Guerrilla tactics were the only serious obstacle to the legions, which were designed to fight in open fields.

## ROMAN FORTIFICATIONS

The Romans were builders at heart, and Roman soldiers were no exception. Whether marching through enemy territory or fortifying the frontiers, Roman engineers created impressive fortifications.

### Fortified Camps

From Republican times to the Late Empire, whenever a Roman army marched in the open, it set a fortified camp around itself every night. The camp acted as protection against night raids and made a rallying point if the next day's battle went against the legions. Camps were built according to a precise set of instructions, depending on the size of the forces to be camped; there was one type of camp for one cohort, another type for a legion, another for two legions camping at the same time, etc. All camps were square, surrounded by a ditch and a palisade, with watch towers. The tents were set in streets and squares, with special positions for the officers, and even a sacrificial altar!

### Castles and Fortresses

When forts were required for a prolonged period of time, Romans built castles out of stone. The Imperial policy of border defense inspired the construction first of border forts and then of the fortified lines of Hadrian's time. Stone forts were built along the same lines as fortified camps, but were more strongly fortified, with fighting towers instead of observation towers.



Emperor Hadrian went even further, building several walls along the borders. The one in Britain was 120 miles long, 73 of which still survive. Portions were built of stone, and others of turf. Towers and gates were spaced every mile along the walls. The Roman troops were expected to engage the enemy beyond the Wall, and retreat to it in case of a disaster. South of the wall was a string of forts, holding most of the troops guarding the fortification.

## SIEGE WARFARE

What Romans could build, they could also tear down. Roman engineers were experts in siege warfare. Their methods included the use of catapults, battering rams, moving towers that reached to the top of the target's walls, and the construction of a fortified line around the besieged castle or city, isolating it completely (see *Heavy Weapons*, p. 44).

# THE LIFE OF THE ROMAN SOLDIER

This section describes the conditions of Roman soldiers from 100 B.C. to 200 A.D. A member of the legions enrolled to serve for 20 years, almost a lifetime by ancient standards. During that time he trained, marched long distances, and occasionally fought for his life.

## RECRUITMENT

For most of its history, the Roman army was a volunteer organization. At first, all Roman citizens over the age of 17 were liable for service, but by the time of Marius the army was made up mostly of volunteers. Recruitment during the Republican days was undertaken not by the government but by the commanding officers of the army. A general would travel to a Roman district or a province where he was known and respected and would attract young men to his service, in return for the promise of a land grant at the end of that service. The Emperor later replaced the generals, offering the same promise to all soldiers of the Empire.

Legionaries were recruited from all the provinces whose inhabitants had been granted Roman citizenship. By the reign of Augustus this included large sections of Gaul, Spain, Africa, and the East, as well as most of Italy. Non-citizens could join the auxiliary forces.

Sometimes slaves tried to join the legions to escape their situation. By the same token, provincials tried to falsify papers to pass as citizens, since the pay of legionaries was higher than that of auxiliary troops. The penalty for pretending to be a free citizen included flogging and even death, but many tried anyway (joining the army if not a citizen is a potentially lethal Secret; see p. 36).

A citizen wishing to join the legions had to prove that he was a citizen and be fit for service. Most recruits procured letters of recommendation from relatives or patrons with ties to the military. Without such letters, the applicant might be rejected. This provision changed as fewer people found it desirable to join the legions.

The applicant was interviewed and examined, usually in a provincial capital or major city. Besides determining his legal status (see above), the recruit was given a physical exam. There was even a height requirement; the preferred heights were between 5'8" and 5'10" (very tall for Romans, giving recruits an average ST of 11 to 13). The interview also inquired about what craft or trade the applicant followed before trying to join the army. Some professions were considered undesirable (baker, innkeeper, and weaver, for instance), while others would gain some additional consideration, including blacksmith and huntsman.



## Adrianople

This Roman disaster cost Rome the life of an Emperor and has been seen as the beginning of medieval warfare. Emperor Valens was trying to suppress a Gothic rampage led by the chieftain Fritigern. At first he used guerrilla warfare against the Goths, sending elite squads of Roman infantry to ambush small parties of Germans at night or while they were foraging. Unfortunately, Valens was persuaded to commit the whole of his army to crush the main Gothic band.

The Roman army, after a long march, came upon the Goths, who were camping with their families in a wagon circle. Most of their cavalry was out of the camp, foraging far away. The Germans tried to negotiate for peace while the Romans deployed their lines and Fritigern sent out messengers to round up his cavalry. The talks did not last long, and fighting started. The Romans were already hot and thirsty, and the Germans started a brush fire which blew smoke in the legionaries' faces. Auxiliary archers started shooting the Goths, but they got too close and a counterattack threw the skirmishers back, disorganizing Roman lines. Shortly after that, the German cavalry arrived and struck the Roman horsemen by surprise. The Roman cavalry broke and fled, abandoning the infantry, which retreated in disorder.

Emboldened, the Goths cut off the Roman infantry. The Romans fought bravely, but were slaughtered after several hours of fighting. Emperor Valens died with his troops.

## The Last Roman Armies

By the 5th Century, there was no "Roman" army. Almost every soldier who fought for the Empire in the West was German or descended from Germans. Cavalry was the striking arm, and battles were fought by very small armies. Below is a powerful army of cataphracts and horse archers, the best the Romans could field at this time. This is an all-cavalry army. A large army would have three or four times as many Irregular Infantrymen (Green Quality, Individual TS 1.6), adding TS 9,600 to 12,800 to the TS of the army below. Note that a 10,000-strong legionary army would have a total TS of 60,000+!

**Cataphracts (HC):** 500 men, Average Quality, Individual TS 7. Total TS 3,500.

**Horse Archers (MC):** 500 men, Average Quality, Individual TS 7. Total TS 3,500.

**Light Cavalry:** Two troops of 500 light lancers each, Average Quality, Individual TS 3. Total TS 1,500 each.

**Number of Troops:** 2,000.  
**Total TS:** 10,000.

## The Roman Navy

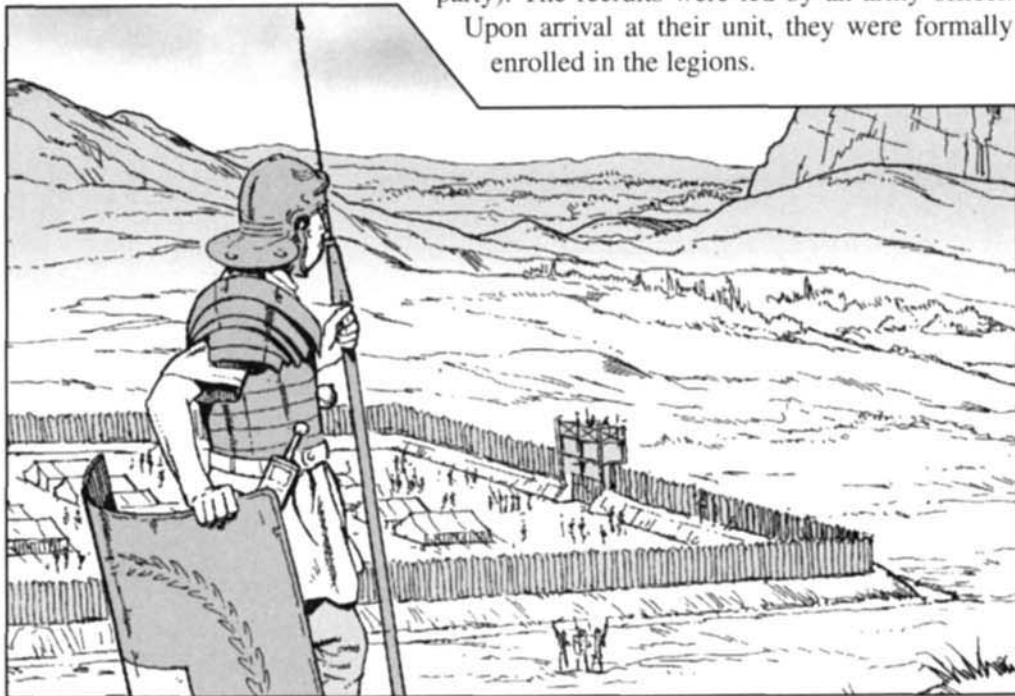
The Romans did not have a navy until the First Punic War (see p. 47). They copied the design of a beached Carthaginian ship, and built several galleys while oarsmen trained on dry land by rowing on long benches. Early Roman ships were multi-decked galleys (quadriremes and quinquiremes) with a metal ram at the front. A new invention, the *corvus*, was added to their ships. The *corvus* was a gangplank equipped with a hook at its end. After ramming an enemy, the Roman sailors dropped the *corvus* onto the target, linking the two ships and allowing a swift boarding action. Roman war-galleys carried more marines than the Carthaginian ships, so most boardings ended in a Roman victory.

After the Punic Wars, the *corvus* was abandoned. Roman ships depended on their artillery (catapults and *ballistae*) and their size. Besides the massive quinquiremes, fast attack ships called *liburnians* were designed for patrolling and escort missions.

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Once the recruit passed all the tests, he was assigned to a unit, given travel orders and a cash advance worth 75 *denarii* (between \$75 and \$300, depending on the time period; pay increases usually failed to keep up with inflation in the Imperial period). He also took an oath to serve the Empire. From that moment on he was considered to be a member of the legions. The unit he was assigned to was usually several days of travel away, or even further. Groups of recruits traveling through the countryside were a common sight in the Empire (such a group could make up the nucleus of an adventuring party). The recruits were led by an army officer.

Upon arrival at their unit, they were formally enrolled in the legions.



## TRAINING

Legionaries followed a strict and calculated training schedule. They learned to use the *pilum* (Spear and Spear Throwing skills), the *gladius* (Shortsword skill) and the *scutum* (Shield skill). They practiced with wooden weapons designed to weigh twice as much as real equipment. In addition to weapon practice, legionaries exercised by marching constantly (see *Hiking*, p. 36) in full gear – a 60-lb. load. Swimming, running, and jumping were also part of the Roman curriculum.

The recruits were also drilled in the fine points of marching in formation, dressing ranks as ordered, and charging or flinging *pila* in unison. Drilling was constant to keep the soldiers' skills honed. While the ability to instantly follow orders was required, the Romans did not try to stamp out initiative. Quick-thinking tribunes won many battles for the Empire.

Besides fighting and physical skills, Roman soldiers were trained in fort building (see p. 82). Many soldiers also learned an additional craft. The legions often made their own food, construction materials, and even weapons. Literate recruits with a talent for mathematics often became the clerks and record-keepers of their unit. Soldiers with skill in a craft were sometimes given exemptions from unpleasant tasks such as night watch or latrine duty.

During training the soldiers were also taught to feel contempt for their enemies. The Greeks and Macedonians were looked down upon because of their unwieldy and "cowardly" phalanxes. Gauls and Germans were depicted as stupid barbarians who charged forward in disorganized knots, easy prey for a disciplined army. Tougher enemies like the Parthians were not as easy to ridicule.

See p. 38 for legionary training written up as a martial style.

## DAILY LIFE

While stationed at a permanent base, most soldiers drilled for a few hours each day. After drill, legionaries with special assignments were excused from regular duty. During peacetime, as many as half the effectives of a unit might be involved in non-military assignments (see below). Sentries were always posted, at least in theory. During their free time, soldiers gathered in bath houses, which existed in most large military installations, to talk and gamble.

Once a week, the soldiers were taken on a 25-mile march into the countryside in full gear. During the march, maneuvers were rehearsed and a fort would be built for the night.

Some soldiers were stationed in provincial cities or were assigned non-combatant tasks. *Soldiers in Peacetime*, below, details some of these jobs.

## DECORATIONS AND PUNISHMENTS

Like modern armies, the legions had several awards for valor and extraordinary service. These awards were given in the form of medals, ceremonial spears, bracelets, and small golden crowns (*coronae*). These included the *corona civica* for saving the life of a Roman citizen, the *corona vallaris*, given to the first soldier that entered an enemy's fortified camp, and the *corona muralis*, for being the first over the wall of an enemy city. Any of these decorations will give a soldier a +1 Reputation with legion personnel (up to +4).

Punishments could be very harsh. Beatings were common; centurions carried a vine-staff (treat as a light club) with which they hammered at disobedient or clumsy soldiers. A soldier or unit convicted of cowardice received cuts either in pay or spoils, was sentenced to spend the night outside the fortified camp (as if the rest of the legion were ashamed of his company), and was given a ration of barley bread instead of wheat, which was an insult (wheat was traditionally the food of brave and disciplined soldiers, while barley was usually fed to pack animals).

A legion that failed in a spectacular way could be disbanded, its number stricken from the rolls, and all its soldiers discharged dishonorably. To many, this was a punishment worse than death.

Gross negligence (falling asleep while on guard duty, for instance) could be punishable by death. A condemned legionary was given over to the *fustuarium*; he was forced to run between two ranks of his fellow soldiers, who beat at him with clubs until he died (in *GURPS* terms the soldier has to run some 30 yards while being attacked every second by 1d clubs doing 1d crushing damage each; hit location is determined randomly, and the punishment continues until he runs through or dies). Once in a while, a soldier survived the *fustuarium*: depending on the severity of the offense, he might be allowed back into the army or dishonorably discharged. A unit guilty of gross cowardice or insubordination was decimated: every tenth man in it was killed by beheading.

## SOLDIERS IN PEACETIME

A soldier in the heyday of the Empire could actually hope to spend his term of service without fighting a single battle. Even in more troubled times a legion stationed in a peaceful province might see no more danger than the occasional outbreak of banditry or rioting. This was not to say that the soldiers were inactive during peacetime.

Soldiers were assigned to police duties in provincial cities, safeguarding markets, apprehending miscreants, and "showing the flag." Patrols were sent along the roads, watching for bandits, protecting grain shipments, and escorting valuable cargoes. Governors and high officers had an entourage of guards, messengers, clerks, and investigators drawn from the legions. These positions were coveted for their high pay, freedom from menial labor, and good career prospects.

## The Roman Navy (Continued)

Sailors and soldiers in the Navy could be either citizens or provincials. The pay was not as good as that of the army, though the Navy accomplished similar tasks. The Roman fleet efficiently suppressed piracy in the Mediterranean and assisted in many military operations, including the invasion of Britain.

Like all other aspects of the Empire, by the 4th century the Roman navy had decayed. Piracy became common once again as Roman patrols became rarer. Corrupt officials let ships rot as they plundered the budget. Eventually, the only seaworthy Roman ships belonged to the Eastern Empire.


## Other Enemies of Rome

### SARMATIANS

The Sarmatians occupied parts of eastern Europe and what now is Russia. They were a nomadic people who traveled on ox-drawn carts and fought from horseback. Sarmatian noblemen and knights were known for their equestrian skills, their long lances, and their scale armor. This was sometimes made of metal, but more often of bone scales sewn over leather (PD 3 DR 3, weight 30% heavier than comparable heavy leather armor). They also carried bows. The warrior class made up the core of the army and may have included women. Legends claim that female Sarmatians were expected to fight before marrying, and archaeological digs of Sarmatian graves have revealed female bodies next to weapons and suits of armor.

The bulk of the Sarmatian army was probably light cavalry without missile weapons (base TS 3) of Green to Seasoned Quality. The noblemen and retainers will make up 6d+2% of the total numbers of the army (not the total TS); they are medium cavalry with composite bows but no stirrups, with a base TS of 7 and Seasoned or better quality.

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## Other Enemies of Rome (Continued)

### BRITONS

The Celtic tribes that lived in Britain were very similar to the Gauls in weapons and tactics (see main text). The main difference lay in their use of chariots in combat, an archaic weapon that had not been used elsewhere for centuries. British chariots have a base TS of 45; they carried a Medium Infantryman with javelins. Most of their infantry was Light. Troop quality ran the gamut from Raw to Elite.

The Picts were TL1 or 0 primitives from the North of Britain who remained a threat to Romanized Britain throughout its history. They were Light Infantry and fought using guerrilla tactics.

### THE GERMAN TRIBES

There were so many different Germanic tribes that it is hard to generalize about them. The earliest Germans encountered by the Romans were extremely primitive, fighting half-naked with crude spears and shields and no discipline. Toward the last centuries of Roman rule, there were German armies that fought on horseback wearing full armor, and some were led by Roman-educated generals.

The early German warriors were Light Infantry (base TS 3) of Green to Seasoned quality. Of these, 4d% carried bows (raising their TS to 6). There were small groups of noblemen and retainers with better armor and weapons (Medium Infantry, TS 4), but they did not make up more than 2d% of the total numbers of the army.

Some tribes fought with very large arms such as heavy axes and two-handed weapons. These tribesmen could be treated as Medium Infantry even if lightly armored; noblemen and retainers would be the equivalent of Heavy Infantry (TS 5).

Eastern Germans had been in contact with Huns, Sarmatians, and other nomadic tribes. By the 4th and 5th centuries there were mounted units in their armies, consisting of Light and Medium Cavalry with no missile weapons (TS 3 and 5, respectively). Most Roman cavalry during the late Imperial period were recruited almost exclusively from these warriors.

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The legionaries, when not involved in military duties, spent a good deal of their time engaged in construction work. Each legion had an engineer corps that few cities and provinces could match; provincial governors used the legionaries to promote Romanization. Soldiers built and repaired the paved roads that linked the Empire. They also used their skills to erect public buildings such as temples, baths, and theaters. These activities helped to justify the expense of the Army. The provincials saw the soldiers as builders, not invaders, and were impressed by the neatly arranged roads and huge structures they created.

Even with these non-military duties, soldiers had large amounts of free time. Many spent this time like any other citizen, going to the races or games, or drinking at the local wine shop. Some of them engaged in diverse schemes to get cash, ranging from petty thievery to extortion. "Protection rackets" seem to have been very common in the provinces. Some businessmen recorded protection payments in their ledgers as yet another expense. The New Testament has an admonishment to Christian legionaries, forbidding this practice.

The centurions were also involved in other duties. In some areas a centurion could be in charge of collecting taxes from unfriendly areas. They were used as messengers between governors and other military and political figures. Some were given secret assignments, gathering intelligence or organizing covert operations (an excellent plot for an adventure).

A soldier could not marry while in the service, but there were ways around this prohibition. Despite the legal ban on marriage, many legionaries had informal unions with local women. The Roman authorities turned a blind eye to these unofficial marriages, if only because the soldiers' sons were very likely to join the army when they grew up. A soldier's son was usually considered a full Roman citizen, even when illegitimate. The soldiers' companions usually lived outside the military installations so they did not interfere with the camp's discipline.

## RETIREMENT

After the soldier's 20 years of service ended, he could leave the army. Many chose to stay longer, often serving in positions of some responsibility or even rising to command rank due to their experience. Those who left were given a land grant the size of a small farm, or a cash payment of 3,000 sesterces (\$750) – enough to open a shop, for instance. In addition, the soldiers were induced to save a portion of their salaries in special legionary-run banks. These savings could be substantial, sometimes over twice the retirement payment.

## THE ENEMIES OF ROME

The Romans met dozens of cultures and races as they expanded over three continents. The legions faced at different times the Greek phalanx, mounted Parthian archers, and chariot-driving Britons. Most of the time, the legions prevailed.

Described below and in the sidebars are some of the peoples that battled the Romans at one point or another.

### The Gauls

The Gauls were the Celtic peoples who inhabited what is now France and Northern Italy. They had been at odds with the Romans since 300 B.C., and were not fully conquered until the beginning of the Empire. Romans looked down on their culture, but the Gauls had a very sophisticated civilization only marginally less-developed than the Republic's (see p. 64).





Most Gauls wore the equivalent of cloth or leather armor, and little else. Only the wealthy could afford a suit of chainmail. In combat, the Gauls used swords, spears, and shields. There were some bowmen among them. The Gauls fought both on horse and on foot. Gallic cavalry was recruited by Romans and Carthaginians at different times.

Treat most Gallic foot soldiers as Light Infantry of Green or Average Quality. About 4d% of their numbers will be Medium Infantry of the same quality. The horsemen were better trained; they are Light Cavalry, without missile weapons, of Average or better quality.

### Carthage

The powerful city-state of Carthage was for a time the most dangerous rival of the expanding Roman Republic. For over half a century, the Punic Wars (see p. 47) threatened the existence of Rome. By defeating Carthage, Rome became an international power that grew into an empire.

The merchant lords of Carthage depended for the most part on mercenaries. Native Carthaginians could not be called to arms unless the city or its immediate lands were threatened. The mercenaries were hired from North Africa, Gaul, Spain, and Numidia. Their national origins determined the types of troops that made up the army. Native Carthaginian officers were usually in command, although Carthage was not above hiring extraordinary foreign generals in time of need.

The North African infantry was made up of men of Phoenician and Libyan extraction. It fought in a phalanx (see the Greeks, below; use their description and TS value). Gauls and Spaniards also provided heavy infantry and cavalrymen, armed with medium armor and swords (base infantry TS 4; base cavalry TS 5). The Gauls also had cavalry units (see above for a description of the Gallic armies). The Spanish soldiers were renowned for their bravery and endurance; treat them as Medium Infantry of Seasoned or higher quality. Numidian light infantry used spear and shield, with contingents of archers (TS value 3 or 5). Numidian cavalry was light and highly mobile (TS value 3).

The Carthaginians also used elephants, with the following game stats. *War Elephant (WE)*: A single heavily-armored, battle-trained elephant and its trainer. Some WE can carry up to four archers in "baskets" – add the appropriate TS value. TS value 250.

## Other Enemies of Rome (Continued)

### THE HUNS

The Huns were steppe nomads who started pushing into Europe by 400 A.D. Even before that, the Huns forced the Germans west, instigating the first German raiding of Roman lands. The Huns were believed to be the offspring of witches and demons; many preachers called them the harbingers of Armageddon, and the destruction they brought about seemed to prove it. They were considered a threat by both Romans and Goths, who eventually joined forces to defeat them.

The Huns were horsemen who spent most of their lives in the saddle. It is believed that they were among the first people to use stirrups, which enabled them to shoot more accurately from horseback; recent scholars now claim that the Huns did not have stirrups, however, so it is up to the GM to determine whether the steppe barbarians used them or not. Their primary weapon was the recurved composite bow, but they also used lassos, spears, and sabers. They were lightly armored, with leather and hide (treat as Light or Medium Leather armor).

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## Other Enemies of Rome (Continued)

Their tactics were simple but effective. Against an infantry formation, the Huns fired arrows from a distance until their enemies broke, and then moved in to rout the troops with spear and sword. Against heavy cavalry, they kept their distance, content with plying their adversaries with arrows and avoiding a head-on clash.

Medieval writers claimed that the Huns traveled in huge hordes numbering as many as half a million warriors. In fact, most Hun war-bands had a thousand or fewer fighters. Their success was due primarily to the fact that the Roman and German armies opposing them were disorganized and undisciplined. They would not have been so successful against experienced Roman generals like Augustus or Hadrian.

In addition to the ethnic Huns, the armies of Attila and other steppe invaders often had contingents of other races. Sarmatians, Germans, and even renegade Romans could be found in their ranks. They often adopted their masters' weapons, but also fought with their own. Sarmatians and Germans would thus give the Huns a heavy cavalry component, and Romans might have helped them with siege equipment.

Some historians claim that by the time the Huns had reached the Empire, cavalry was only a minority of their force. The evidence for this lies in the fact that these invaders had settled in Hungary for several years, and there simply was not enough pasture to raise horses for the whole army. If the GM wishes to accept this theory, reduce the proportion of mounted Huns in the army to 6d% of the total army numbers (not TS). Otherwise, the whole Hun army is mounted.

The average Hun is a Light Cavalry soldier with a composite bow (base TS 6, 7 if the GM decides the Huns had stirrups). They fought and pillaged frequently; average Troop Quality is Seasoned, with sub-units of Crack quality.

### OTHERS

Rome had several other enemies. Moorish and Berber tribesmen in North Africa were Light Cavalry with javelins (TS 4). Jewish rebels were Light and Medium Infantry (TS 3-4). Treat Persian forces like Parthian cavalry, and Dacians like Germans, with allied Sarmatian troops.

Using elephants is always risky, however. Elephants' morale cannot be higher than 13, regardless of their quality. Furthermore, if the opposing forces try to spook the elephants (this must be a direct order from the opposing forces' commander) by using missile weapons against them, each elephant in the unit must make a Morale roll at -3. If they fail the roll by 3 or less, they leave the battlefield (their TS is subtracted from the unit's value); if they fail the roll by 4 or more, the elephants go berserk and charge against their own lines! In that case, increase the opposing force's TS accordingly.

### The Greeks

When the Romans first met the Greeks on the battlefield, the armies they faced were derived from the ancient Greek phalanx with improvements by the Macedonians. The Greek city-states were grouped under very loose alliances, except for some powerful Macedonian kingdoms. Their disunity made them an easy target.

The Greeks, like the Romans, fought mainly on foot. Their primary unit was the *phalanx*, a square of infantry armed with long spears. Each soldier wore body armor (this could range from heavy leather to bronze breastplates and greaves; metal helmets were always worn), a round shield, and a spear. The Greek spear was originally 7 or 8 feet long; the Macedonian *sarissa* ranged from 14 to 21 feet in length. On level ground, the phalanx was an immovable force. The forest of spears was proof against cavalry charges, while most infantry was too disorganized to battle it.

Against the phalanx, the Romans used their flexible legions to maneuver more easily. At the battle of Cynoscephalae, the Romans attacked a phalanx from the rear. The Greek soldiers were unable to turn ranks quickly; they could either drop their spears and face the Romans unarmed or hold on and offer their backs to the Roman *gladius*. The phalanx was massacred.

Macedonian cavalry wore bronze body armor and used spears. Treat it as Heavy Cavalry without stirrups (base TS 7). By Roman times the Macedonian cavalry was only a small part of the army (1/5 of total Troop Strength).

A phalanx soldier was either Heavy or Medium infantry (base TS 4 or 5); they are treated as pikemen to neutralize cavalry superiority. Surprise attacks on a phalanx are more disastrous than normal; increase all penalties resulting from a surprise attack by 1.

### Parthians

The Parthian kingdom (see p. 69) became a thorn in Rome's side during the Late Republic, and continued to be a threat to the Eastern provinces until the Persian Empire absorbed it in 227 A.D.

The Parthians fought primarily on horseback, which gave them a great advantage against the legions. The bulk of their army was made up of lightly-armored cavalry archers using composite bows. Elite units of noblemen used both bows and lances, and wore scale armor, usually gilded; they were used as shock troops. Against infantry, the archers would approach and fire from a stationary position. The archers were kept supplied by arrow-laden camels. When the targets tried to charge them, the Parthians rode away. On many occasions, this false retreat would lure small groups of infantry or cavalry away from the protection of the main body where they could be destroyed at leisure.

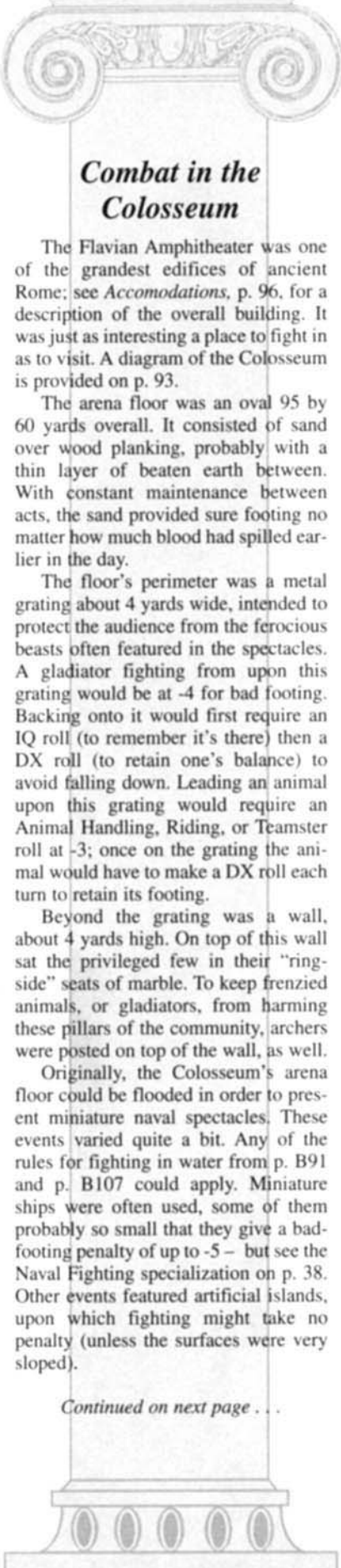
Eventually, the elite heavy cavalry would sweep down with lances and swords. The Roman legion could normally hold its ground against the Parthian charge, but if several hours of archery volleys had preceded it, the Romans might be too tired and demoralized to resist.

The average Parthian archer was Light Cavalry with a composite bow, using no stirrups (base TS 6), of Green to Seasoned quality. The Parthian elite was made up of Medium Cavalry with composite bows (base TS 7) of Seasoned to Crack Quality. Parthian elite cavalry will never make up more than 1/4 of the army's total Troop Strength.

# VI THE GAMES

The aspect of Roman culture that inspires the most fascination – and revulsion – is the arena games. Rome was almost unique in its use of murderous sports as entertainment on such a large, public scale. Men and animals fought and died by the thousands to satisfy bloodthirsty spectators.





## Combat in the Colosseum

The Flavian Amphitheater was one of the grandest edifices of ancient Rome; see *Accommodations*, p. 96, for a description of the overall building. It was just as interesting a place to fight in as to visit. A diagram of the Colosseum is provided on p. 93.

The arena floor was an oval 95 by 60 yards overall. It consisted of sand over wood planking, probably with a thin layer of beaten earth between. With constant maintenance between acts, the sand provided sure footing no matter how much blood had spilled earlier in the day.

The floor's perimeter was a metal grating about 4 yards wide, intended to protect the audience from the ferocious beasts often featured in the spectacles. A gladiator fighting from upon this grating would be at -4 for bad footing. Backing onto it would first require an IQ roll (to remember it's there) then a DX roll (to retain one's balance) to avoid falling down. Leading an animal upon this grating would require an Animal Handling, Riding, or Teamster roll at -3; once on the grating the animal would have to make a DX roll each turn to retain its footing.

Beyond the grating was a wall, about 4 yards high. On top of this wall sat the privileged few in their "ring-side" seats of marble. To keep frenzied animals, or gladiators, from harming these pillars of the community, archers were posted on top of the wall, as well.

Originally, the Colosseum's arena floor could be flooded in order to present miniature naval spectacles. These events varied quite a bit. Any of the rules for fighting in water from p. B91 and p. B107 could apply. Miniature ships were often used, some of them probably so small that they give a bad-footing penalty of up to -5 – but see the Naval Fighting specialization on p. 38. Other events featured artificial islands, upon which fighting might take no penalty (unless the surfaces were very sloped).

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The games were not as overwhelmingly popular as their sheer scale would indicate. More Roman citizens attended plays and other less violent spectacles than gladiatorial contests, and chariot races had a much larger audience. Many leading Roman thinkers had criticized blood sports since their inception.

Still, the games were a part of Roman life. Their popularity ebbed and flowed as Roman society changed, and at their zenith the games were very popular indeed. Some Roman authors argued that witnessing the Game's carnage was just the thing for building a proper Roman citizen!

This chapter deals with gladiatorial combat, where trained warriors faced each other, arena battles where men fought animals or animals fought one another, and chariot races, a less violent but still dangerous spectator sport.

## ARENA COMBAT

"We who are about to die salute thee." That was the phrase gladiators would repeat to the Emperor or the sponsor of the game. The arena was a dangerous, cruel place, and those who entered had a good chance of not leaving alive. Still, there was much more to the experiences of the gladiators than the bouts of fighting in the Colosseum (see sidebar, p. 93). A campaign based around the men and women who battled in the arena need not be mindless hack and slash, but can be full of adventure, intrigue, and roleplaying.

## HISTORY OF THE GAMES

The origins of the games go back to Etruscan times (see p. 46), and ancient religious customs. As part of the funeral rites of chieftains and noblemen, men were sacrificed over the tomb by having them fight each other to the death. This tradition either continued through the time of the Republic or was revived within it; fights were staged at the funerals of several prominent Romans, the earliest known Roman example taking place in 264 B.C.

In time, the combats started losing their religious significance and became nearly pure entertainment (although religion was often still used as a pretext for staging the games throughout their history). The funeral was an excuse for the fights; in some cases the honoree had been dead for years before the "celebration." Eventually, gladiatorial battles were organized without any relation to funerals. At first, the games were private events held on noblemen's estates. Men and animals fought before patrician families. Long before Julius Caesar's time, however, the games had become a public spectacle, held as part of the celebrations that triumphant generals gave in the city or funded by politicians seeking votes. (Whether in distaste for the fare or the political gamesmanship, in 63 B.C. the Senate outlawed running for office for two years after financing a gladiatorial show.) The first amphitheaters, the large circular buildings constructed specifically for arena combat, were built during Caesar's time.

During the late Republic, the games were organized and owned by private individuals. Gladiator companies were owned by rich magnates, not unlike modern football teams. Combatants were assets to the company, both as a source of prestige and as extra muscle that could be used at will. During the turbulent last centuries of the Republic, street gangs composed exclusively of gladiators played an important role.

Because of the potential danger a large number of trained fighters represented (Spartacus' rebellion was the most glaring example; see sidebar, p. 94), the government was impelled to control the games. This process was completed by the time of the Empire.

The games reached the height of their popularity during the Imperial period. Several Emperors were notorious fanatics for gladiatorial combat, some going so far as to participate in the events. The largest arenas were built during this time. All gladiators were controlled by imperial magistrates, who took over the traditional roles of the rich sponsors.

As Roman society decayed during the Late Empire, opposition to the games increased. The Stoic emperors were the first to curb their abuses. Hadrian forbade forcing slaves into gladiatorial service, and Trajan and Marcus Aurelius emphasized *faux* combat.

The widespread adoption of Christianity further impacted gladiatorial contests, since blood sports were contrary to Christian ethics. The fact that many early Christian martyrs had met their ends in the arena also did not endear the games to them. Emperor Constantine (see p. 59) outlawed arena games in 325 A.D. due to the lobbying of Christian moralists. This prohibition was ineffective, however, and was seldom, if ever, enforced. In 392, St. Almachius, a monk, rushed into the arena to prevent the fights and was killed by an angry gladiator. He was the last Christian to die in the arena. This marks the traditional end of the games; the monk's martyrdom inspired enough outrage to enforce the laws. However, records still show fights between men and animals as late as 498 A.D., and of animals against animals in 523 A.D., long after the end of the Western Roman Empire. In the Eastern Empire, great spectacles resembling the games featuring horsemanship and martial prowess continued for many more centuries still. It would not take much of a stretch of the imagination to assume that the more grim business of combats to the death also continued in out-of-the-way locales.

## THE GLADIATORS

Many kinds of men (and women) entered the arena. Captured barbarians, slaves, and criminals often fought side by side with young noblemen, former soldiers, and thrill seekers. Some were helpless victims who never had a chance to survive, while others enjoyed long, prosperous lives and became legends in their own times. If a contender was lucky, he had a life outside the arena; if he was skilled, he might return to it.

### Combat in the Colosseum (Continued)

The Colosseum's naval feature was later removed, and replaced with an underground warren of stone cages, storage rooms, ramps, and hoists. The wood floor – which could be removed in the days of naval conversions – became a permanent fixture riddled with trap doors, some of which were very large and led to long ramps. Launching surprises from these trap doors (as during the tiger-enhanced duel in *Gladiator*), or simply leaving one of these doors open, could spell doom for the unwary gladiator.

Should a fight begin or somehow spill into this underground world, most of the passageways leading to the ramps and elevators would be very narrow – 1 yard wide – to prevent animals from turning back around. They would also be very dark unless the trap door overhead was open or a torch lit nearby.



## Other Gladiator Venues

The Flavian Amphitheater, or Colosseum, may have been the premier place for a gladiator to make his name, but it did not open till 80 A.D. Before then, and outside Rome, gladiators fought under many different conditions.

The earliest gladiators probably fought in the gardens of private homes or at tomb sites outside of cities; a particularly well-stocked garden could present all sorts of hazards and impediments to vision, resulting in a sort of cat-and-mouse variant of the traditional combat. In neither case would there be any special arrangements for either the gladiators or the small, select group of spectators. Most likely the only thing protecting the spectators from the gladiators was an armed security force, possibly consisting of other gladiators.

By the end of the Republic a portion of the Circus Maximus was in regular use as the scene of public games. The ground throughout the Circus was particularly soft and swampy, which could make a crucial difference in matchups featuring horses or trampling beasts. In 55 B.C. Pompey encircled this area with iron bars to protect the public from the participants. The bars only served to heighten the reputation of elephants in the Roman eyes (see p. 94) when several of the beasts buckled them. In 46 B.C. Julius Caesar enlarged this arena and surrounded it with a water-filled moat.

In their Imperial heyday – as the games gained audiences throughout the empire – amphitheatres built along the lines of the Flavian Amphitheater but on a smaller scale sprang up around the Mediterranean. The average “colonial” amphitheater might hold 20,000 spectators and feature an oval arena floor some 60 yards by 36 yards. Those in poorer regions would still be made of wood (but see p. 96). Many of these provincial venues featured as many hidden trap doors, secret ramps, and the like as the Flavian Amphitheater itself.

A few amphitheatres, called *naumachia*, were built solely for nautical combats. In 2 B.C. August built a *naumachia* with triple the area of the Flavian Amphitheater (though likely it was far less grand overall). Its “lake” featured an artificial island, thickets, and gardens. On a fighting surface so large (roughly 150 yards around), it's just feasible that dedicated *naumachia* gladiators might need Boating skill. Swimming skill would almost certainly come in handy at some point.

A gladiator's expectations of his occupation depended mainly on his origins. There were four ways in which someone could find himself fighting for his life before an audience. The lowest class of gladiators consisted of criminals condemned to death. Mostly they were thrown unarmed or with light weapons against trained gladiators or wild beasts. Gladiatorial recruiters went over the lists of condemned men and women searching for good subjects. Since they received no training, many did not consider them to be gladiators, merely victims.

Minor criminals were recruited. They usually had to choose their punishment: in the mines, deportation, or becoming gladiators. A large percentage chose the games over working in the mines; conditions there were much worse. These gladiators would serve for three years and assist as teachers for two, becoming freedmen in five years.

Purchased slaves became gladiators under similar conditions. Many of them were war prisoners whose exotic features or skills were sought after by arena coordinators. Some of these barbarians refused to fight for the entertainment of their captors, and killed themselves before the event. Others tried to revolt, or to storm the walls of the amphitheater, which amounted to suicide as well. The only successful gladiator insurrection was led by the Thracian gladiator Spartacus (see sidebar, p. 94).

The last group were free citizens of all classes, including young noblemen. Most were volunteers, but others were coerced into becoming gladiators by powerful patrons or enemies, or to expiate offenses. For instance, several Emperors ordered underlings who had annoyed them into the arena. Free men were paid a large amount of money upon joining (from \$500 to \$2,000) and if victorious received a prize purse. After serving the full term, many re-enlisted, receiving even more money (a trained, blooded gladiator commanded a higher prize).

Several of the volunteer gladiators joined not for the money but for the glory and adventure. Hot-headed youths from all classes often became gladiators despite the social stigma associated with arena sports (gladiators of all origins were considered slaves in the social order).

Members of prominent families sometimes hid their identities under masks or closed helmets to prevent scandal. At several times during the Imperial Period, noblemen were forbidden to participate or were limited to entering less violent contests where fights were not to the death. In some cases, the odds were grossly weighted in the aristocrat's favor.

At first, women fought only during the “light entertainment” portion of the events – bloodless duels to draw laughter from the audience. They were allowed to directly participate in the games during Nero's reign (54 A.D.) but were outlawed by 200 A.D.

## Gladiator Classes

By the height of the games, gladiators were divided into different classes (for descriptions of the best-known classes, see sidebar, p. 95, and for martial arts styles for some of the more common classes, see p. 38). Each class received different weapon training and fought different types of fighters. There were as many as 16 different fighting forms taught in gladiatorial schools. Each form used its own distinctive equipment.

Connoisseurs often met at bars to discuss the relative merits of each class. Long discussions ensued as to whether large-shield men (*scutari*) were superior to small-shield men (*parmulari*). A Roman could develop the Odious Personal Habit of launching himself into a tirade on the subject.

Equipment types and physical abilities were the main distinguishing feature. The *retiarius*, for instance, wore no body armor and was armed with a trident, a net, and a dagger. *Retiarii* were chosen for their speed rather than strength. They were often pitted against heavily armored opponents, usually the *mirmillo* who wore a helmet with a fish design, a large shield, copper or leather vambraces on the strong arm, and a long sword.

Other heavy fighters included the Samnites, also armed with large shield and sword but with a different helmet design. The equivalent of a medium-weight contender was the Thracian, lightly armored and wearing a target shield and a chopping shortsword (*sica*). The *dimachaeri* wielded a long sword in each hand.

The most heavily armored gladiators may have been the *crupellarii* or *hoplomachus*, who wore segmented armor like that of the legion on their bodies, arms, and legs (treat the armor on the limbs as scale). An A.D. 21 encounter with several rebelling *crupellarii* may have helped the legions to decide to switch to segmented armor from chain – the legionaries fighting the *crupellarii* had to resort to their pickaxes to penetrate the gladiators' defenses!

Not all gladiators fought on foot. The *essedarii*, originally from Britannia, battled each other from war chariots. They wore heavy armor and threw javelins at each other or at opponents on foot or horseback. The *equites* were trained horsemen who used swords and light lances (the lack of stirrups prevented them from jousting in the medieval manner).

## A GLADIATOR'S LIFE

Professional gladiators, as opposed to the condemned cannon fodder, led a full life outside the arena. GMs and players wishing to run a gladiator campaign should keep that in mind: A gladiator's life did *not* consist of constant deadly bouts separated by endless training. A veteran gladiator could expect to fight in the arena not much more often than one to three times a *year*. In that respect, they resembled top boxing contenders today. A veteran gladiator with over 20 years' experience would retire or die after 30 or 40 fights. Training took a large part of the day, but after that the gladiator had ample spare time. See the sidebar for more about their leisure activities.

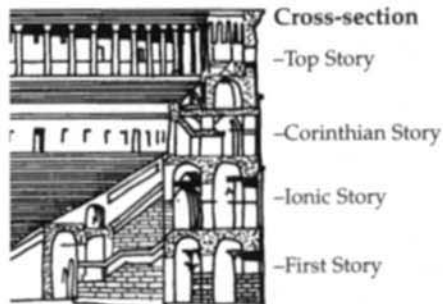
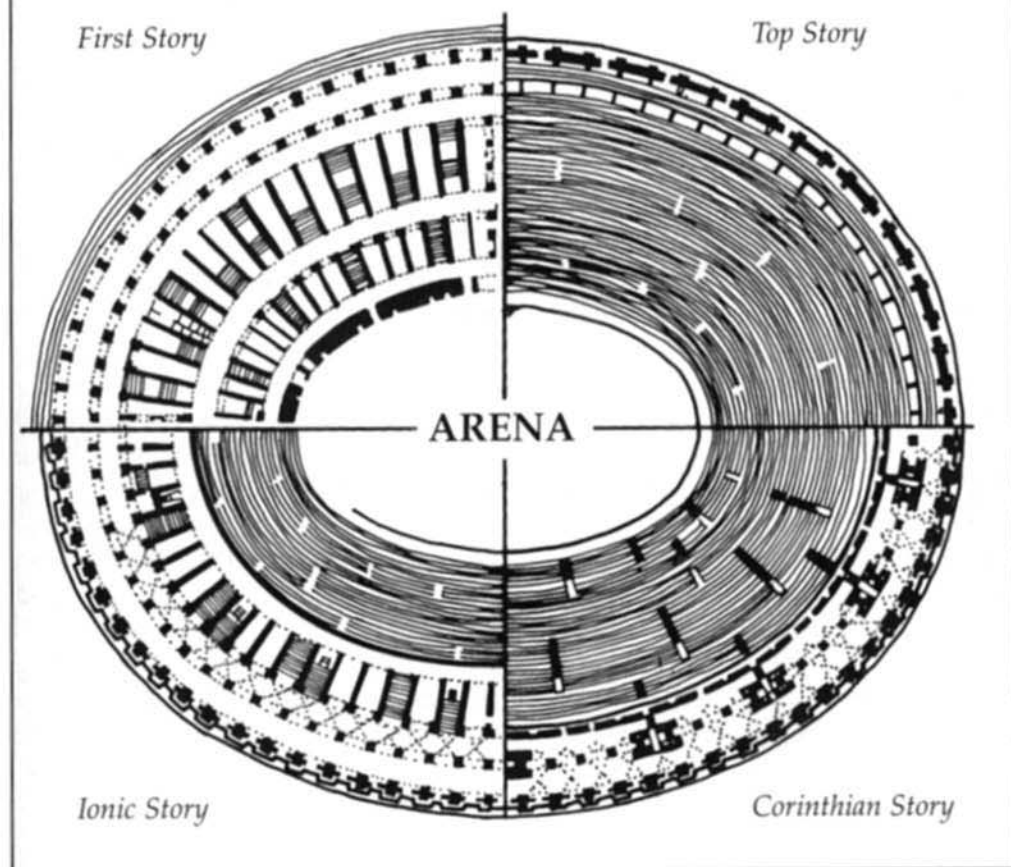
## Extracurricular Activities


Gladiators did not stay inside their barracks, but had an active life outside them. Many married and raised families during their time of service. Others were content with seducing women from all social stations.

The female mistresses of gladiators, called *ludia*, were regarded with the same mixture of contempt and fascination given in the 1920s to gangsters' molls. A common scandalous tale was the one of the opulent noblewoman running away with a famous gladiator, to the delight of the public. As long as they did not attract undue attention from the *lanista* or Imperial authorities (i.e., by getting caught in a crime), gladiators could engage in all sorts of activities. These could range from reciting arena tales in exchange for drinks or money to hiring out as a fencing teacher, bodyguard, or enforcer. Gladiators were sometimes hired to teach legionaries about guerrilla fighting and other dirty tricks.

Upon completing his term, a gladiator could rejoin or retire. Release from service was usually part of the arena events (see p. 101). Many stayed in service for decades. Tomb inscriptions show some gladiators competing in more than 30 arena events, representing a career spanning over two decades. Upon retirement, gladiators often had enough money to open a small business (bar ownership was a common choice), although mismanagement sometimes resulted in former arena heroes living their last days in squalor. Others opened their own *ludus* to train the next generation of fighters. Whatever their choices, most gladiators were forever barred from Roman citizenship; their status was still below those who came to watch them kill. As with other freedmen, however, their sons could become Roman citizens.

## The Colosseum, Rome





## Spartacus' Rebellion

Spartacus was born in Thrace, a land famous for its fighters. He was a former soldier under the Romans. For some reason he deserted but was arrested and enslaved as a gladiator.

In 73 B.C., he and two Gauls, Crixus and Oenomaus, led 70 of their fellow gladiators in a mutiny and broke out of their barracks. Hiding out in the mountain area of the Vesuvius, the gladiators recruited runaway slaves. As it turned out, many of these slaves were German, Gallic, or Thracian, prisoners that Marius and Sulla had captured in their wars of conquest, and a number were battle-hardened warriors.

Spartacus proved to be a gifted military leader. He defeated two Roman armies in quick succession and marched through southern Italy, destroying Roman estates and freeing the slaves within. In a few months he commanded an army of almost 70,000 men.

At this point Spartacus quarreled with Crixus and decided to divide his forces with him. Crixus took over most of the Gallic and German slaves, while Spartacus kept his fellow Thracians. In 72 B.C., Crixus was defeated and his army destroyed. Spartacus then decided to march north with his army, with the intention of crossing the Alps and escaping Italy altogether. He defeated several consular armies as he moved north, almost like Hannibal's invasion in reverse. He then destroyed the army of the provincial governor of southern Gaul, clearing a path out of the peninsula.

However, the slave army turned south once again for unclear reasons. They might not have had enough supplies to cross the Alps (always a risky undertaking), or perhaps his men became overconfident and refused to leave. Spartacus and his army marched south again, and actually considered assaulting Rome before moving on.

Crassus (see p. 49) was given command of the Roman forces, and managed to bottle up Spartacus in a small peninsula off the Italian coast. The Thracian tried to bribe Cilician pirates to sail his troops out of Italy, but the pirates abandoned him after taking his money. Spartacus marched north and managed to push through the Roman forces, but in doing so his army was split in two, and defeated completely by Crassus in 71 B.C.

*Continued on next page...*

## The Gladiatorial Barracks

The *ludus* was both home and training center for arena fighters. *Ludi* were run by the *lanista*, a trainer who was usually a retired gladiator. Each troop of gladiators (known as a *familia*) lived in a *ludus*. Living conditions were usually meager; each person had a small single suite. Food consisted mainly of barley and beans, with meat served occasionally. Still, the average Roman plebeian lived just as poorly.

There were three gladiatorial schools in the city of Rome, and several others in the larger provinces. The bigger ones had masseurs and physicians to complement the training staff.

Mistreatment of reluctant, incompetent, or disobedient gladiators was a common occurrence. Each school had cells complete with shackles on the walls and other torture implements. The worst treatment was reserved for unwilling gladiators: the criminals, slaves, and captured barbarians.

Originally, all gladiators were confined to their living quarters, but by Imperial times they could leave at will. The gladiators were not allowed to carry weapons except during training or in the arena, but most people in the streets left them alone; even unarmed, a gladiator could be a dangerous man.

## MEN AND BEASTS

In the arena, equal time was given to fights between men and fights with animals. An Emperor or high government official trying to influence public opinion would make a point of bringing exotic beasts to the arena to try amusing the jaded citizens of Rome. In other provinces, less affluent citizens had to make do with domestic animals spiced up with the occasional import. The tradition of animal fighting survives to this day in Spain and South America, where bullfighters still face and kill beasts for the entertainment of a full coliseum.

The Roman public became accustomed to the sight of strange wild animals, more so than at any time before the invention of television. They developed ludicrous nicknames for the beasts they saw at the circus. Elephants were known as "Lucanian cows," leopards were called "African mice," and ostriches were known as "sea sparrows," for instance.

## History

As Rome expanded its frontiers, soldiers and merchants started returning home with exotic pets, to the delight of the local citizenry. At first, foreign animals were exhibited, not killed. Temporary zoos were erected where people could flock to see the first captured lions and elephants. Animal trainers became popular; they usually worked with bears and dogs.

One of the first recorded killings of animals occurred in 98 B.C., where bulls and elephants were made to fight each other. In 55 B.C., a gladiatorial game was "spiced" by releasing elephants into the arena, where men with javelins attacked them. Panic broke out in the amphitheater when some of the maddened elephants tried to climb into the spectator areas. Romans also tended to dislike watching elephants killed (this affection for elephants was one of the reasons they were not used by Roman armies), so that type of event was not repeated very often. Elephants were mainly used in mock combats.

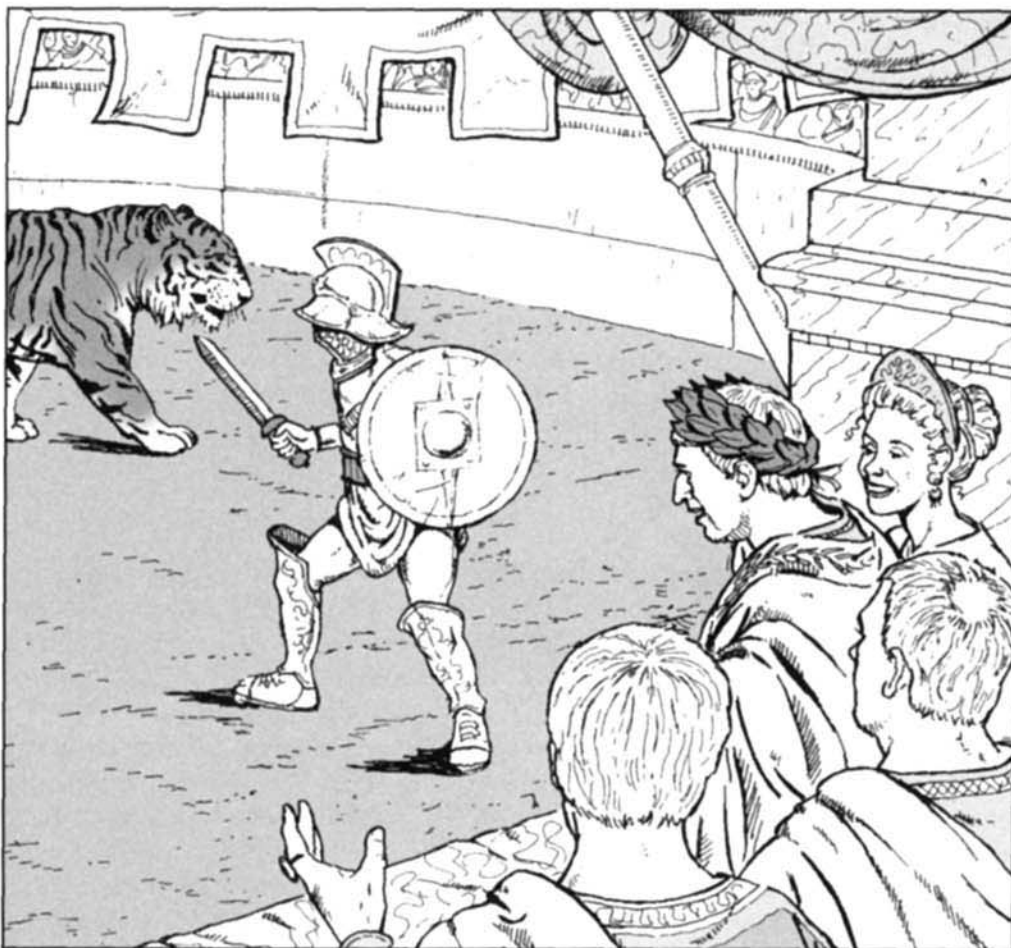
Still, by the end of the Republican period, other animals were brought into the arena. They were useful for public executions (where condemned criminals were sent to starving lions and wolves as an early phase of the arena events). More sophisticated and involved events were eventually devised. Animal combat persisted in Rome even after human fights were outlawed.



## The Beast Fighters

Some gladiators were trained to battle animals in the arena. Like their counterparts, they were divided into different categories. The *bestiarius* faced lions, bulls, and other dangerous animals armed only with a spear and a knife. At other times the men were armed with shields and spears; they sometimes wore body armor of some sort. There were very few free volunteers among this type of beast fighter because the risks were great. Close combat with wounded and furious animals was extremely dangerous, and casualties were much more common. For the most part, two or more men attacked one beast, although sometimes the fight would be one-on-one.

On the other hand, the *venator* (hunter) used bow and arrow against the animals. Black African archers were sent into the arena to shoot the animals that had just killed convicted criminals. Many Roman noblemen (and noblewomen) also enjoyed the "sport" of shooting the animals from the safety of the podium. There are no records of stray shots hitting audience members, but since many noblemen were often drunk during the games it is not unlikely that the animals were not the only victims of this part of the event.



## Animal Fights

Arena spectacles also included unlikely battles between beasts. A tigress would be made to fight a lion, or several leopards would be released against a bull, and so on. Any combination imaginable must have been used at least once (if the result was too one-sided, the fight was a short one, and the arena managers were out one or two animals for little value, so the event coordinators tried to set even matches). The animals were usually beaten or egged on with burning branches so that they would be enraged when they emerged into the arena.

## Spartacus' Rebellion

(Continued)

Surrounded, Spartacus fought and died while most of his followers fell with him. Crassus made an example of the survivors; over 6,000 prisoners were crucified along the road. His revolt was never forgotten by Roman slave-owners, who established highly repressive punishments to keep slaves from rebelling again.

During Roman times, the Thracian gladiator was a villain and a figure of terror. Spartacus has since moved on to become a popular hero. A movie starring Kirk Douglas was made about him in 1960. He has also been used as a symbol of the workers' struggle in Marxist and Communist ideology.

## Gladiator Classes

Described below are the weapons, armor, and skills of the more famous gladiator classes. These guidelines changed over time, and often were not followed to the letter; the GM can alter them in any way he wishes.

None of the gladiator classes listed here usually wore torso armor (except chain for the *essedarii* and the *dimachaeri* occasionally), though their limbs were protected.

### RETIARIUS

These fighters were chosen for speed and agility. They were lightly equipped (cloth armor or no armor at all), and were armed with a trident (see p. 44), a net, and a knife. They were supposed to make up for the disparity in armor with skill.

A veteran *retiarius* might have DX 13+, Move 7+ given that he fights unencumbered with Running skill and perhaps Increased Speed, Knife, Net 15+, and Spear 15+. See p. 39 for the *retiarius* written up as a martial style.

### MIRMILLO

The *mirmillo* wore a large shield, heavy leather armor, a heavy helmet, and *galeri* – arm protectors (see p. 44). Occasionally, he was equipped with chain. His weapon usually was a thrusting broadsword.

A veteran likely would have ST 13+ and high skill in Broadsword and Shield. See p. 38 for the *mirmillo* written up as a martial style.

Continued on next page . . .

# A DAY AT THE ARENA

The games were a regular event in Roman life. At some times during the Imperial Era they were held almost every day. In addition to the great spectacles in the Colosseum, there were smaller private amphitheatres, some in the city of Rome but most in the provinces, where lesser events were continuously held.

The schedule of a typical arena event is described below, with ideas and gaming notes to incorporate it into a campaign.

## Gladiator Classes (Continued)

### SAMNITE

These heavy fighters often wore bronze breastplates, arm protectors for their sword arms, helmets, and large shields; they were armed with either a short sword or a broadsword.

A veteran would likely have ST 14+ and high skill in Shield and Broadsword and Shortsword. It could well be that these gladiators wouldn't know which sort of sword they would be wielding until the weapons were handed out just prior to a match. See p. 38 for the Samnite written up as a martial style.

### THRACIAN

This popular gladiatorial class wore a helmet, arm protectors, greaves, and a small shield. They often had no body armor, or were equipped with cloth or leather breast plates. Their weapon was a heavy chopping shortsword, the *sica* (see p. 44).

A veteran Thracian might possess ST 13+, DX 12+, and high skill in Shortsword and Shield. See p. 38 for the *mirrillo* written up as a martial style.

### DIMACHAERI

*Dimachaeri* fought with two broadswords. They wore bronze chest armor sometimes, greaves, and a pot-helm. A veteran would be very proficient with the Broadsword skill, and possess a good deal of Off-Hand Weapon Training.

### ESSEDARI

These warriors fought in pairs from war-chariots, flinging javelins before dismounting and fighting on foot with spears or swords. They were usually equipped with chain armor and pot-helms. They would need skill in Broadsword, Teamster (Horse), Spear, and Spear-Throwing.

### EQUITES

These lancers charged each other on horseback. They sometimes wore bronze breastplates and carried long swords in addition to their spears. They would need Broadsword, Riding, and Spear.

## The Eve of the Games

The night before the games were to start, the participating gladiators were clad in golden tunics and served a banquet. Spectators could watch the banquet, and many gamblers took the opportunity to examine the fighters on which they planned to bet. This was also a chance for the gladiators to gain the attention and favor of a powerful man (who might later purchase or hire him out of the arena to serve as a bodyguard or agent) or a woman who found gladiators irresistible. A few successful Fast-Talk and Sex Appeal rolls (the gladiator's Reputation can be added to those skills) could be very beneficial later on – that is, if the fighter survived the following day.

The meal was sometimes festive, with gladiators joking about the next day's contests, sometimes even placing bets on themselves. For the most part, the gladiators did not drink heavily and watered their wine; fighting with a hangover the next day could be fatal. Gladiators who decide to get intoxicated should follow the *Drinking and Intoxication* rules on pp. CII162-168. Those with Alcoholism or Compulsive Carousing should have to roll vs. *severe* penalties to avoid overimbibing given the nervous tension and free-flowing wine that accompanied these meals.

When the gladiators were unwilling victims, or knew that they were to be slaughtered (a rare event), it was much more somber. There were times when whole troops of gladiators committed suicide the night before the game, if only to spite the sponsor. This happened often with German captives, who preferred to die rather than perform like trained animals.

## Accommodations

Most public games were held in amphitheatres – open buildings with several rings of seats around the arena. Every city and most large towns under Roman control had an amphitheater or some equivalent structure. Rome itself boasted the most impressive of these structures – the Flavian Amphitheater, better known to medieval writers and modern audiences as the Colosseum.

During the Republican time, and in the less prosperous areas, the amphitheatres were made out of wood. This was risky, however; the weight of thousands of people put enormous strain on wooden structures. In 27 A.D., for instance, a wooden amphitheater collapsed, killing or injuring tens of thousands of spectators in a provincial region. When they were affordable, stone and concrete were the preferred materials.

The larger amphitheatres were some of the most impressive buildings of the Roman world. The Colosseum was an immense limestone, tufa, and concrete oval about 62 yards high with diameters of 206 and 172 yards. It opened in 80 A.D. with construction taking place under Vespasian and Titus and finishing work under Diocletian.

The first three of its four stories formed stacked arcades, originally filled with statues but now empty. The three stories featured the three classical styles of columns and capitals – Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian, respectively. The fourth story was plain, with windows that originally were fitted with shields of bronze. Awnings could be rigged overhead to shield the audience from the sun.

The Colosseum could seat 45,000 with standing room for another 5,000 (not the nearly 90,000 cited by early sources and often erroneously repeated). Still, this size made it the largest stadium built until the opening of the Yale Bowl in 1914.

The seating was strictly arranged by social class, with marble seats for the upper classes down low and wooden seats for the masses up high. The Colosseum had scores of entrances, each with its own number, for careful crowd control as in a modern stadium.

See *Combat in the Colosseum*, p. 90, for more information.

### Getting There

Once a sponsor (usually a powerful nobleman or civil servant, and often the Emperor himself) prepared a game, written announcements were placed in eating houses and bars. Criers would run through the streets, announcing the game and mentioning the names of the gladiators scheduled to appear there. Some announcers wrote the date and gladiator lists right on the walls of buildings; this type of graffiti was found in Pompeii.

People wishing to see the spectacle had to wait in line at one of the entrances to the amphitheater to buy tickets. This area was full of wandering street vendors, offering everything from food and refreshments to cushions to put over the hard stone benches. While they waited, spectators could place bets on their favorite gladiators. They also could procure sexual services from the hordes of prostitutes who loitered about the Colosseum, willing to perform their work semipublicly within the niches of its walls.

Arena tickets were often given away in lotteries; occasionally entrance was free to everyone. Delays in letting the spectators in, rudeness, and hot weather sometimes sparked fights. These could turn into full-scale riots, spoiling (or overshadowing) the event.

The tickets presented the assigned seats with the level and the seat number. Even from the highest level the spectators had a clear view of the event. Sailors would work overhead, fitting out the awnings to provide shade. Women were sometimes segregated to the upper gallery and sometimes forbidden to attend altogether. The lower levels had cushioned seats and were better shaded. Only noblemen of the patrician rank and their guests could sit there. The game sponsor sat in the central box, surrounded by his favorites and special guests. By 10 a.m. or so, most of the seats were occupied and the games were ready to begin.

### The Pompa

The *pompa*, or procession, announced the name of the sponsor and the occasion that had prompted the game. It included a parade of the gladiators that would participate in the game. The audience had the chance to cheer their favorite gladiators and (it was hoped) the sponsor. The gladiators marched around the arena, displaying their weapons and shouting back at the spectators (if a gladiator makes a successful Bard roll, the audience will later react to him at +1). Then they stopped in front of the central box and saluted the sponsor, with the common gladiatorial oath, which included a pledge "to be bound, to be burned, to be scourged, to be slain, and to endure all else required of us as proper gladiators, giving up alike our souls and our bodies." Afterward, the gladiators marched out of the arena.

The *pompa* provides a dramatic opportunity to develop campaign subplots. As they walk around the arena, the gladiators can spot loved ones, patrons, or enemies and exchange words or signals with them. In a Secret Magic campaign (see p. 116), a witch could use this opportunity to curse some of the fighters. On a successful Vision roll, the contestants might notice something unusual about some spectators, like a cloaked figure making strange gestures, for instance.

### Royal Gladiators

Several Emperors were captivated by the games. Some went as far as to participate as gladiators or chariot racers, an immensely inappropriate act in Roman eyes. To understand the Roman citizens' feelings, imagine how the American public would react if the U.S. President challenged a World Wrestling Federation champion to a match . . . or if a professional wrestler should be elected governor! To Romans, the scandal was even worse because gladiators had the same status as common slaves. Despite all this, several Emperors defied social conventions and went into the arena. Sometimes this was the final straw that precipitated their murder.



The first Caesar to do this was Caligula (see sidebar, p. 55). He liked to appear clad in the trappings of a Thracian gladiator (see p. 96) and loved to drive chariots. He would spar with gladiators, whom he killed for no good reason. Nero occasionally made noble Romans fight in mock gladiatorial contests, and became an avid charioteer. Commodus was another would-be gladiator; he had planned to accept the consulship while wearing gladiatorial gear, but was murdered the night before.

Besides the Emperor, several other noblemen and Imperial favorites went into the arena, or started their careers as arena contestants. Caligula put gladiators in command of his bodyguard, for instance. For common gladiators, these aristocratic opponents were at best an embarrassment and at worst a lethal danger, because if the gladiator killed or hurt them, his life was forfeit.

## Adventure Seeds

The adventures detailed below assume that all or most of the adventurers are gladiators or chariot racers during the Imperial period.

### LOVE KILLS

One of the party's fellow gladiators (or a PC himself) has been discreetly seeing an important lady; the gladiators have helped him sneak into the lady's *domus* (mansion) several times, without learning her identity. One day, however, their friend surprises them with the revelation that his lover is one of the Vestal Virgins (see p. 111)! Even worse, a senator has discovered everything and is threatening to inform the authorities. The lives of everyone involved in the affair will be forfeit.

The adventurers have several choices. They can try to buy off the senator. He does not want money, but will force the party to undertake a number of illegal operations, including the intimidation and murder of several people, drawing them into a quagmire of deceit and crime. Alternatively, they could try to silence the senator permanently, but it is likely that the nobleman has taken steps to protect himself.

The Vestal Virgin suggests a third alternative: She and the party can escape Rome and start a new life in a far-off province. All the PCs have to do is outwit the city guard, carry off one of the most important women in the empire, and outmaneuver the inevitable pursuit. Even if they succeed, the group will have acquired a nasty Secret and a powerful Enemy.

### TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

A new gladiator is sweeping the games scene. His abilities seem superhuman (to determine his skill levels, take a few of the PCs' highest skill levels and add 8), and he takes a perverse delight in toying with his adversaries before killing them. He never gives his enemy a chance to ask for mercy (once he lopped off a victim's hand as he was trying to raise it in the air in surrender). One of the PCs is a gladiator scheduled to fight him in one month.

If the party takes a closer look, they discover that there is something *wrong* with the gladiator. He is not that good during training, except a few days before his turn at the arena. There is also the matter of the old Dacian woman who visits him a week before each bout, and the little packages she leaves him. Perhaps his abilities are supernatural. The investigators have a few weeks to figure out how to stop him.

Continued on next page . . .

## Light Entertainment

The early morning games were the least spectacular, an opener that whetted the jaded appetites of the audience and led to the main events later on. Sometimes the first events were humorous or "light" skits: old gladiators fighting toothless beasts in a farewell performance, or women and midgets mock-fighting each other in choreographed humorous battles.

More often, animal events began the show. Convicted criminals (rebellious slaves or members of illegal sects such as Christianity) were put to death. Sometimes the victims were bound to stakes, which were then wheeled into the arena. On other occasions they were thrown in free, and even armed with a spear or a sword to make the chase last longer. A half-starved and maddened animal was then released. The beast usually tried to escape the arena and, when it was thwarted, turned on the nearest target. The victims generally had no chance.

In a cinematic campaign, condemned PCs might be able to escape their fate. A bound victim might try to get loose before the animal is released (roll vs. Escape-2; keep in mind that each attempt will take a few minutes). After that, all he has to do is defeat the animal.

If someone manages to kill the beast, make a reaction roll for the crowd. Modifiers: +5 if the condemned man killed the beast with his bare hands, +1 to +3 if the battle was dramatic and skillfully fought, and modifiers depending on the mood of the crowd, the reputation of the victim, etc. A man convicted of a horrible crime (fratricide, for instance) would suffer a -3 or worse. On a Very Good or better roll, the crowd will cheer the survivor and petition for his release, which the game sponsor would usually grant. The ex-convict might even be approached by arena handlers and offered a job!

Non-violent characters might try to *appease* the beast. This would take an Animal Handling roll at a -10 to -15 penalty! If the first attempt fails, he can try again, at +2 if he does not panic, try to run, or fight (this requires a Will roll).

Other modifiers: +10 if the character once helped the animal in question. "Saintly" characters might receive otherworldly help, at the GM's discretion, and be able to calm the animal down with a Will roll. The right spells or psionic abilities can replace the Animal Handling roll. If successful, make a reaction roll for the crowd, as above. A very dramatic or moving change (the beast coming to a sudden stop, or approaching and licking the convict's face, for instance) would give a +5 bonus.

When the animal match was over (after the convicts were killed), fights between animals or between men and beasts followed. The public was always interested in new and exotic combinations . . . tiger against lion, bear against bull, a leopard faced with a pack of wolves. Sometimes an animal would kill another, and then would be set upon by one or more *bestiarii*. This went on until all the animals were killed. Few beasts survived their arena appearance.

This part of the event usually lasted until noon. After all the animals were dead, servants cleaned the blood and removed the corpses (and made sure the corpses *were* corpses; see p. 101).

### Intermission

The crowd took this time to eat and drink; those who had not brought their own food or purchased it outside the amphitheater could now do so as vendors walked through the aisles. A sizable portion of the crowd often left the amphitheater to get their lunch. The spectators who remained could engage in gossip with their neighbors; this can be a good opportunity for the GM to hand useful rumors (or red herrings) to spectators.

Occasionally, the crowd would also vent their anger on some issues. The audience was traditionally allowed to say whatever it pleased in the Flavian Amphitheater (this also applied at the Circus). Corrupt officials, unpopular politicians, and even well-known people who had been involved in recent scandals were catcalled, jeered, and pelted with food.

During the intermission it was also common to throw lottery tickets around the bleachers. Prizes ranged from free food and drink (redeemable at participating restaurants and wine shops) to cash, jewels, and even land grants. The intermission was a potentially hazardous moment. The crowd could get impatient, and name-calling or the scramble for lottery tickets could spark fights, a riot, or a panic. See p. 17 for other perils of riots. Spectators caught in the bleachers are in even more danger, because it is easier to fall down the steps: all rolls to avoid damage are at -2. For the most part, however, the audience remained relatively peaceful until the main events were ready.

At this time, a second group of condemned criminals was executed in the arena. The first two victims would be put in the arena, one with a weapon, the other unarmed. Once one was dead, the winner was disarmed and another armed convict thrown in, and so on. Most of the people in the audience did not find this "show" very interesting. The victims were not very skilled and the whole situation was mere butchery. If a victim managed to kill several men with his bare hands, the crowd could swing to his side. Make a reaction roll at the end of each fight as per pp. 100-101. The roll is at a further -2, with a +1 bonus for every fight the convict wins.

To indicate the end of the intermission and to keep the audience entertained, small theatrical skits were sometimes performed. Dances and pantomimes (see *Theater*, p. 21) were common, as well as boxing matches, athletic contests, and animal acts (these trained animals were the only ones who were not killed in the arena).

## Adventure Seeds (Continued)

### A TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Gladiators are being dispatched to the German frontier to train some border units in guerrilla warfare, advanced swordsmanship, and unarmed combat. The PCs are sent to a frontier garrison manned by a cohort (see p. 78), and begin training the soldiers. The tribune in charge of the cohort looks decidedly unhappy at the newcomers' arrival, however.

One night, the group is awakened by one of the centurions of the cohort. The garrison, he tells them, is about to murder them. The tribune is a traitor, and with the help of German marauders plans to overwhelm all the border posts in the area, build a huge army, and declare his uncle, a prestigious senator, as the new Caesar. The PCs have to sneak out of the camp, elude the garrison and its German allies, and warn the other posts of the upcoming attack.



## Athletes

Spectator sports were not as popular in Rome as arena games, but they had their following, especially in the Greek provinces, where the Olympic Games continued to be held. Athletes from all over the Empire competed at javelin and discus throwing, marathons, running, wrestling, and boxing.

Outstanding athletes were awarded pensions and cash prizes by the cities or provinces they represented. Some became residents of rich areas, selling their talents to the highest bidder. After several years of sports, they often opened athletic schools to train the next generation.

During the games, athletic events were scheduled during intermissions. Boxing and wrestling were two favorite events for Roman spectators; although not as gory as most other events, they were violent enough, especially when the boxers were armed with spiked gloves (called *cesti*). A boxer armed with a *cestus* does thrust cutting damage in addition to Boxing or Brawling bonuses.

## Blind Fighters and Exotic Skills

Blind fighters were gladiators who wore the same equipment as Thracian or Samnite warriors (see p. 96), plus helmets lacking visors. In a realistic campaign, these gladiators will flail at each other at -10 skill, or -6 if they have trained extensively in this type of fighting. In a cinematic campaign, the GM might allow these gladiators to learn Blind Fighting (see p. CII38 and the martial styles on p. 38). Remember that downtown Rome was a crowded, noisy area (-3 penalty) and a full Colosseum garners a -4 to this skill. A warrior wearing the visorless helmet gets a -2 to Blind Fighting, cumulative with other hearing modifiers, to a maximum of -7.

## Fighting vs. Animals

Cornered, berserk animals are extremely vicious and dangerous. The rules for fighting animals in the *Basic Set* reflect the abilities of animals in the wild. The noise, mistreatment, and unfamiliarity of the arena often drove animals into hysterical, brutal attacks. GMs may use the optional rules below to represent this danger.

*Continued on next page*

## The Fights

Once again the gladiators paraded into the arena, this time clad in purple robes (usually reserved for royalty). They faced the sponsor and gave him the famous greeting: "*Ave Imperator! Morituri te salutamus!*" – "Hail Caesar [or the title of the sponsor if he was someone other than the Emperor], we who are about to die salute you!" The sponsor made a show of inspecting the gladiators' gear, which was then passed on to the fighters.

Mock combat preceded the real thing: Gladiators using wooden practice swords and spears sparred and displayed their skill until the crowd started clamoring, "Steel! Steel!" The *lanista*, who served as referee of the event, then passed out the real weapons.

Depending on the size of the arena and the wealth of the sponsor, the fights varied in sophistication and quality. The most common situation was a single duel between two fighters with different gear: the *retiarius* against an armored *mirmillo*, for instance. Sometimes two warriors in chariots would charge toward each other and use javelins. Horsemen with spears or swords jostled or charged unmounted enemies. Sometimes two teams of gladiators battled each other, ranging in size from two opposing pairs to dozens of men recreating historical battles.

Some game organizers were even more creative. Gladiators were made to fight blind, equipped with helmets lacking visors (see sidebar). The sight of the two fighters trying to hit each other was a source of laughter, and since a deadly injury was more likely, a source of suspense as well. Even crueler was the "fight without finish," a free-for-all where every time a gladiator died or was severely wounded he was replaced by a fresh one.



During the normal fights, an injured gladiator would offer his surrender by pointing his right index finger upward. The surrendered gladiator's life was then at the mercy of his victorious enemy, but the gladiator always turned to the Emperor or the game's sponsor, who would listen to the crowd. If the spectators thought well of the vanquished and wished to let him live, they screamed "*Mitte*" ("Let him go!") and waved their handkerchiefs; the Emperor would then point his thumb upward as a sign to spare the victim (according to some historians, the Emperor and the audience actually pointed down, a signal which meant "drop the sword"). Otherwise, the crowd would scream "*Occide!*" ("Kill") or "*Jugula!*" ("Cut his throat!") and the sponsor would turn his thumb down or point it toward his chest – a death sentence, which the victorious gladiator then carried out.

The GM has several options to resolve a gladiatorial fight. The fastest way is to make a Quick Contest of Weapon skills to decide who won. He can treat it as a Contest of Skills (see p. B87), with each contest representing 30 seconds of real time. Or he can play out the fight in full; the fight was supposed to be a flashy and drawn-out affair.

The lethality of the combat is up to the GM. In general, gladiators all knew each other and probably were not very bloodthirsty. On the other hand, one gladiator's tomb inscription rues having spared a competitor's life, because that foe ended up killing the merciful gladiator in a later bout! Arena promoters might arrange events so fighters with personal grudges squared off in the arena. Some grudges might even be the result of manipulation by the *lanista*.

When a gladiator asks for mercy, make a reaction roll for the crowd. Modifiers: +1 to +10 depending on the skill and flair displayed by the fighters, or equivalent penalties if the gladiators were clumsy. Critical successes and failures are worth +5 and -5 respectively.

Add the Reputation of the loser to the roll; an unknown gets a -3 penalty. On a Good or better roll, the crowd will ask for mercy. Otherwise, they will ask for blood.

After the bout was over, attendants wearing masks representing the god Mercury came and checked the fallen gladiators. To make sure they were dead, the attendants stuck the bodies with hot irons (a shamming gladiator must make a Will-8 roll to resist the pain without making an outcry, Will-4 if he has High Pain Threshold). At other times the attendants would wear the mask of Charon (the mythical ferryman of the dead) and crush the heads of the fallen with a mallet. In either case, the bodies were taken to a mortuary, where if they showed any sign of life their throats were cut.

Losers whose lives were spared were carried to an infirmary where their wounds were treated. Sometimes the *lanista* was present to punish any gladiator whose performance had been below par (remember that gladiators were the social equivalent of slaves, and often received the same cruel punishments – see p. 8).

The winner, if he was not required to fight again, would parade through the arena holding a palm leaf as a sign of victory. Then an attendant brought the prizes to him on a silver dish. Prizes included gold coins and jewels worth between \$100-1,000, depending on the sponsor and the reputation of the gladiator. Sometimes a wooden sword, the *rudis*, was also given to the victorious gladiator; this gift represented liberation. He could now retire or re-enlist.

## CHARIOT RACING

Even more popular than gladiator fights, chariot racing was the national sport. The races were the best-attended spectacle in Rome as well as the basis of most gambling. People were more likely to know the names of the current racing champions than those of any major public official or senator.

### *The Circus Maximus*

The largest racing venue was the *Circus Maximus* in Rome, which could seat 250,000 people and accommodate, standing, another 100,000 . . . over a third of the city's population at certain periods of the Circus's use! The racing course was some 840 yards long and 84 yards wide; the whole area of the circus was about 200 by 900 yards. The seats for the patricians and equestrians were the best in the building, and over all stood the Imperial box, which had a great overview of the contest.

The race course ran around a central wall, called the *spina* or "backbone." This central wall was decorated with obelisks and columns celebrating famous racers and exhibiting trophies. Also in the *spina* were two sets of markers to indicate the number of laps in a race (usually seven). The first set consisted of seven metal dolphins, and the other of seven marble eggs. One of each was removed as each lap was covered.

### *The Racers*

Chariot racers – *aurigae* – were slaves, freedmen, or non-citizen provincials; there was a social stigma associated with the sport, although not as great as the one assigned to gladiators. Most of them were foreigners, including Moors from North Africa, Spaniards, Greeks, and the occasional Briton.

The *aurigae* were expert chariot drivers. Most of them also had some skill at performing for an audience, although some of the most popular drivers ignored their fans and concentrated solely on racing. They did not seem to have a sense of solidarity since they regularly used dirty tactics against one another.

The best-known charioteers were popular heroes. Sometimes riots ensued if an *auriga* was arrested for some crime. A charioteer with enough fame to incite a riot would in effect have a Patron (racing fans of a city), with a base cost of 10 points; the *auriga* must also have a Reputation of +4 among charioteering fans.

## Fighting vs. Animals (Continued)

A cornered, wounded, or berserk predator can claw enemies with more force than normal. This is an All-Out attack; the animal cannot Dodge on that turn. This attack does thrust/cutting damage based on the animal's ST. A lion with ST 30 will do 3d cutting damage instead of the customary 2d-2 (see sidebar, p. B143).

This is dangerous for the animal as well. If the target is wearing metal armor, the animal needs to roll against its HT minus the DR of the armor. A failed HT roll results in the animal tearing a claw off or bruising its paw, which takes 1d-3 damage for every 2d of damage it does; the animal's DR protects it, and the target takes normal damage. A berserk beast can tear a fully armored man to shreds in a few seconds, even if the animal injures itself in the process.

*Example:* A *bestiarius* wearing a bronze cuirass (DR 4) is hit by a ST 35 tiger doing 4d-1 cutting damage. The tiger rolls vs. HT-4 (the DR of the armor), and misses. The tiger's paw takes 2d-6 damage.

## Dangers of Charioteering

*Aurigae* risked life and limb from the moment the race started. A charioteer could fall off his chariot, be dragged by his horses, or get crushed by an overturned vehicle. If he survived these dangers, he had to avoid the other racers or be run down.

Falling off a chariot usually occurred when the reins snapped, an unlikely occurrence unless the chariot had been sabotaged. A fall while the vehicle is running at full speed will do 4d crushing damage (this can be halved with a Jumping, Acrobatics, or DX-4 roll). If the chariot was going more slowly, damage is 2d crushing.

A more serious mishap took place when the link between chariot and horses broke. As a result, the charioteer was yanked off the cab and dragged by the (probably panicked) horses. The victim takes 3d damage plus 1d-3 every round he is dragged by the team. He can cut himself loose by drawing his knife (this will require a DX-3 or Fast-Draw-2 roll, since he is being dragged along the ground) and slicing through the reins (DR 3 HP 4). The knife is positioned such that the act of drawing it cuts the reins.

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## Dangers of Charioteering (Continued)

Being caught by an overturning chariot was one of the most common causes of death among *aurigae*. The charioteer can leap clear by taking the Dodge and Retreat maneuver (an Acrobatic Dodge can also be attempted) as per pp. B108-109. Being smeared in grease or dung provides PD 1 for this purpose. A success results in a normal fall from a chariot (see above). On a failure he is hit by the chariot. This does 6d crushing damage if traveling at full speed, 4d otherwise.

If two chariots crash, assume that they will be unable to continue the race. Roll a die for each driver. On a 1 or 2, the driver is dragged off by his horses. On a 3 or 4, he is thrown clear of the vehicle. On a 5 the chariot overturns, and on a 6 he takes no damage.

A dismounted racer may have to avoid oncoming vehicles (1 in 6 chance after losing the chariot). He can Dodge and Retreat as above. Failure results in 2d trampling damage.

## Dirty Tricks

Two chariots going head to head or nearly so (no more than one pace behind each other) can try dirty tricks on each other, like whip attacks or bumping wheels. A whip attack while driving a chariot requires a Whip-3 roll. On a hit, do normal damage. The driver of the targeted chariot must make an Animal Handling roll minus the damage rolled, or he will be at -2 on the next contest of Teamster skills. This is dangerous for the attacker, however, because if the target rolls a critical failure on his Animal Handling roll, his chariot will crash in front of the attacking charioteer, taking them both out.

Alternatively, a driver can try to disable a rival's wheels by bumping into them. This requires a Teamster-4 roll and does 1d damage to the spokes of the target's wheel. The spokes are treated as light poles, with DR 1 and HT 3. If the roll is failed, the attacker takes damage to his own wheel. At least three spokes must be taken out before the chariot crashes.

Chariot racers could earn a fortune in prizes and gambling. A Spanish charioteer, Diocles, won 36 million sesterces (\$4 million) over his 24-year career. Besides the money, *aurigae* enjoyed the admiration of thousands of fans. On the other hand, the profession was very risky; deaths and crippling injuries were very common, and sometimes irate fans from another faction (see below) tried to fix results or get revenge by murdering rival charioteers!

When not training or racing, charioteers were free to do as they pleased. They were often invited to parties – old-fashioned noblemen would not hear of having foreigners and ex-slaves at a social gathering, but the younger, less-conventional ones, including several Emperors, loved their company. As with gladiators, scandals involving women of good birth and dashing charioteers were common.

## The Chariots

The vehicles used at the races were light wooden chariots driven by teams of horses. A chariot could have as few as two horses, or as many as 10! Most races were run with four-horse teams (*quadrigae*). The speed of the chariots was very great, perhaps as high as 30+ miles per hour (a Move of 15 to 18). The chariots were not very stable, however, and were prone to overturning or breaking. The Teamster (Horse) skill is used to control the vehicle.

## The Teams

There were several teams, or “factions,” of *aurigae*. Originally there were four, but by the second century A.D. the number had been increased to six. Each faction was known by its color. The first four were the Reds, the Blues, the Greens, and the Whites; later on the Purples and the Golds were added to the list. Sometimes each color represented an actual political group; in some cases the Imperial faction was represented by the Golds, while the senators rooted for the Greens. A victory for a color could be seen as a good omen for the political faction that supported that color.

During the races, the charioteers wore tunics with the colors of their faction. This made it easy for the spectators to recognize their favorites and cheer them on. Bets were usually placed on the colors, unless more than one charioteer of each color was participating, in which case bets could be made by colors or by individual racers.

The *aurigae* wore metal helmets and arm and leg paddings to protect themselves, although in an accident this would be of little help. They also rubbed their bodies with boar's dung, possibly in hopes of avoiding entanglements in their vehicle's reins or skidding under the chariot's wheels if run over. Other equipment included a whip to push their horses (which they sometimes used on the other drivers) and a knife to cut the reins, which were attached to their waists, in case of emergency.

## A DAY AT THE RACES

During any given holiday, 10 to 24 races could be held. The most popular events nearly paralyzed the city, as a majority of its adult population attended the races.

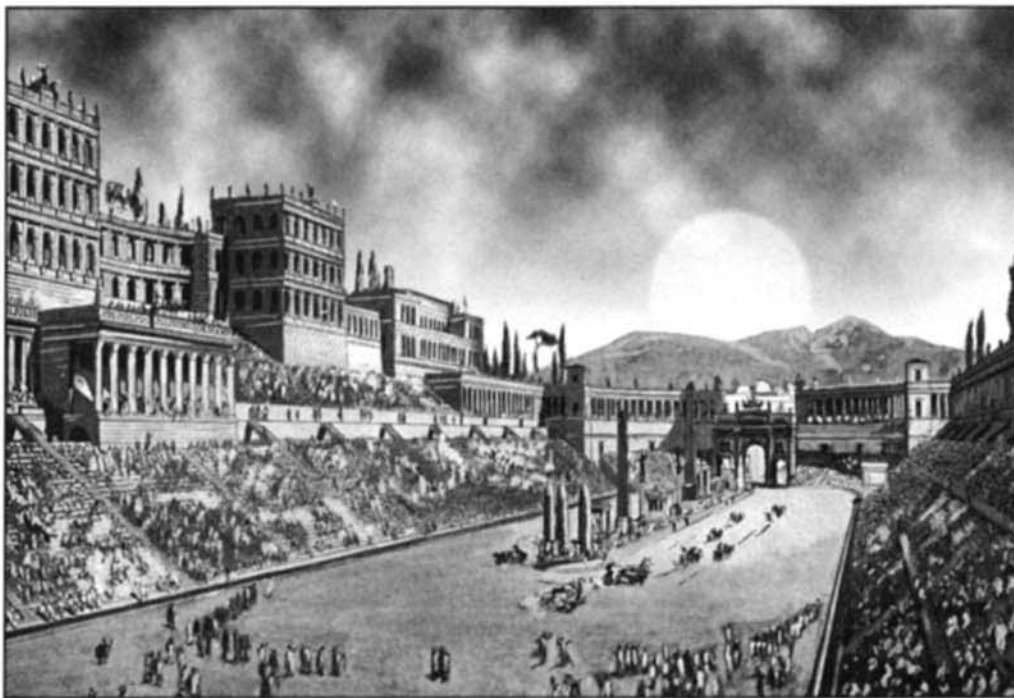
## The Preparatives

After a race was announced, the betting would start. People from all classes, from the Emperor to the humblest slave, would wager on their favorites. Things could become so desperate that horses and drivers would be drugged or poisoned, or unscrupulous gamblers would try to bribe or blackmail charioteers into throwing the race. Scandals of this type were very common. Some even tried to work magic against drivers!

The day of the race, crowds gathered early in the morning. The process of getting to the Circus was very similar to that of the Flavian Amphitheater (see p. 97). Once the crowd was ready, a procession went around the circus, led by the magistrate of the



games, followed by priests and finally the contestants in their vehicles. After the procession was over, the crowd started chattering about the contestants and their chances. This was an important social event; many friendships and enmities were made at the Circus (and some romantic liaisons as well).



### The Race

The magistrate in charge of the race signaled for the start with a white cloth. The contestants, usually six but sometimes as many as 10, waited in closed boxes called *carceres* ("prison cells"). On the signal, the stall doors opened simultaneously, and the charioteers bolted out. The race was run in a counterclockwise fashion, with the leading horses making for the inside track closest to the *spina*.

Even on the first straight run there were dangers. Chariots could accidentally smash into each other. Sometimes a ruthless driver would try to break an opponent's wheels or even whip the nearest charioteer (see *Dirty Tricks*, p. 102). The greatest risk lay in taking the turns at the end of the *spina*, because the course narrowed dangerously, enough for one or two chariots, but not for all six or 10.

This was the place where most accidents occurred. After a crash, teams of slaves ran onto the course to remove bodies and debris so the chariots returning for another lap would not have to deal with those obstacles.

As the chariots completed each lap, the noise and tension in the crowd would reach new heights. On the corners, teams of slaves splashed the wheels of chariots with water; the friction in the wheels sometimes caused the vehicles to catch fire. (Roll 1d. On a 1, a chariot's wheels will catch fire at some point in the race, likely during the later laps. Unless the fire is put out within 10 seconds, the chariot is out of the race, and the driver takes 1d fire damage. Should the chariot wheels not receive the water-splashing treatment, for instance if a competitor has bribed the slaves handling this task, then the wheels catch fire on a 1-2 on 1d.)

The last lap was the peak of the event, when the surviving chariots made a last run for the goal mark. After a race was won, the magistrate of the games handed the award to the charioteer. News criers raced through the streets to announce the name of the victor. Occasionally, a flock of pigeons painted in the winning color was released over the city, letting everyone know who won.

### Roleplaying a Race

Following are some suggestions for running a race in the course of a game. GMs are encouraged to add more detail if they desire. Before starting the race, the GM should calculate the speeds of all the vehicles in the contest (for simplicity, he can assume they all have the same basic Move). He can either use a map of a race course or run the race as an abstract series of skill rolls.

When the contestants take off from their stalls, have each of them roll against their Teamster (Horse) skill. The one that makes his roll by the most takes the lead; the others rank according to the amount they made their rolls by. On any tie, the chariots are nose-to-nose.

If a driver fails his first roll, the chariot's team does not leave the gate properly; all successive rolls are at -2. On a critical failure, the chariot crashes against one of its neighbors. If at the front or rear of the race this will be the nearest chariot. If in the middle of the pack, roll randomly between the two closest chariots to see which suffers the crash as well.

**Modifiers:** +1 for Combat Reflexes. The drivers can try to use their whips to spur their horses: If a driver makes a Whip and an Animal Handling roll by 3 or more, he gets a +2 bonus to his Teamster skill, and the speed and acceleration of his chariot is increased by 1; if he makes either roll by less than 3, nothing happens. If either rolls fails, he spooked his horses, and he gets a -3 to his Teamster skill. On a critical failure, he loses control of his team - the Teamster roll is at -6, and an Animal Handling roll is required to bring the mounts back under control.

Roll successive Quick Contests to determine the order of the chariots; these "turns" can last as long as the GM desires (one for each lap should be the minimum number, however). The chariot order at the end of the previous roll gives a penalty to the roll, equal to the "place" of the chariot minus one. For instance, suppose that of six chariots, the Gold is in the lead, the Purple and Green are tied for second, the Red is third, Blue fourth, and the White is lagging in fifth place. Gold rolls at no penalty, Purple and Green roll at -1, Red at -2, Blue at -3, and White at -4. The winner of the contest moves up one place; if one or more drivers tie for the win, they all move up one place. If the leading charioteer wins, he gets a +1 to his roll on the next turn. The charioteer who has the lead at the end of the last lap is the winner.

# VII MYTHS AND RELIGION

For most of their history, Romans were less religious than superstitious. In most cases, they paid only lip service to their gods. On the other hand, most citizens of the Empire believed in the supernatural, in divination and sorcery, and that dismissing prophecies would only bring trouble. Roman chroniclers delighted in pointing out that a soothsayer warned Julius Caesar of his imminent assassination, and that by ignoring her he brought about his own destruction.



Later in the Imperial period, this attitude changed. People looking for guidance during troubled times turned to Oriental religions and mystery cults. Out of a confused melange of gods and goddesses, Christianity finally emerged as the new Imperial religion, and the old gods were abandoned or forced underground.

## ROMAN RELIGION

From its beginning, Rome was a land of many gods, and as it grew its inhabitants worshipped and followed more and more deities and doctrines. As the Empire conquered Greece and the east, it was in turn conquered by the religions of those peoples. By the Late Empire, dozens of different cults held sway over different sections of Rome: Mithraism was popular with soldiers, while the worship of Isis had a large female following. Many Romans played it safe by worshipping several gods at the same time. It was not uncommon to find icons of Mithras, Jesus, and Jupiter in a house, as well as a small shrine to appease the old *lares* or house spirits.

One reason for this religious diversity was that the original Roman religion was not emotionally satisfying. Dealings with the gods were regarded in the same way that Romans saw contractual obligations. There was little promise of an afterlife or higher reward. This did not matter much while the Republic and the Empire were peaceful and prosperous, but during times of crisis people started looking for a religious "escape." The old gods were unable to provide it so many Romans turned to the beliefs of other lands. By the 4th century, Mithraism and Christianity were the most popular new religions; both provided a reason to exist, promised a better life after death, and had much more emotional appeal.

At the same time eastern beliefs invaded the Empire, the leaders of Rome created new gods by deifying themselves. Several Emperors became gods after their deaths and some tried to do so while still alive. The Imperial cult was as empty of emotion as that of the older gods. It was a religion of convention; when the Roman citizen sacrificed to the old gods and the Empire, he was renewing his loyalty to Rome rather than expressing his religious beliefs.

## THE ORIGINS OF ROME

Rome's genesis is steeped in myth and legend. According to tradition, the Roman people were descended from gods and heroes.

### *The Aeneid*

This heroic narrative was written by Virgil in 19 B.C. It retold the myths about Rome's origins in the story of the Trojan hero Aeneas, a demigod (the son of Aphrodite). When his city was destroyed, Aeneas fled with the gods of city and home – the *lares* and *penates* (see p. 107) – of Troy.

A series of long voyages followed as Aeneas and his supporters searched for a new home. In their travels they had to overcome many dangers, including Harpies, storms, and the enmity of the goddess Juno. Aeneas stopped at Carthage and fell in love with its queen, Dido, but he had to move on and the heartbroken queen killed herself. That tragedy was seen a prelude to the long animosity between Rome and Carthage. After a visit to the Underworld, Aeneas and his surviving followers reached the land of Latium. There, a war was waged between Aeneas and the Rutulians, a neighboring kingdom, with gods and heroes fighting and performing miracles for both sides. Aeneas killed Turnus, the king of the Rutulians, and won the war.

Aeneas married Lavinia, the daughter of Latinus, the king of Latium. The *numina* of Troy became the new gods of the Latins, and the Trojans learned the language and customs of their new land. Aeneas' son Ascanius founded a new city, which he called Alba Longa.

### *Predestination*

Most Romans believed that the future was foreordained and a person's fate could be discovered beforehand by correctly reading the omens that occurred in his life. This was particularly true of important and influential Roman citizens.

GMs running a Roman campaign must decide whether this Roman belief is true and what role fate will have in the characters' future. If a GM runs a campaign according to Roman tradition, once a person's fate is determined (whether good or bad) circumstances will bring that fate to pass despite anyone's action.

Those who have seen good omens may become cocky; those who believe they are doomed might give up. This does not make for a good campaign. A good compromise is to combine predestination and free choice so adventurers do not feel they are being led around.

If omens are used in the campaign, the GM might make them hard to interpret. For instance, suppose a civil service prefect has a choice of working in either Britain or Thrace. The afternoon of the day before he has to make his decision, he spots an owl (see sidebar, p. 109) flying from the west. This might mean that to go west (to Britain) would be dangerous to the prefect. On the other hand, maybe the owl predicts that a great danger will come from the west; maybe Thrace is about to be invaded by a German tribe. A wrong interpretation can fulfill the prophecy as surely as a correct one. The omen above only predicted danger, so the witness is not doomed to die. Most omens should be vague about the results as well. A bad omen could warn of demotion, temporary loss of favor, or a dangerous battle or mission. This gives the group a chance to overcome the difficulties fate causes, instead of being helpless puppets of their future.

For another way to handle destiny in a campaign, see the *Destiny* advantage on p. 35.

## Etruscan Undead

The Etruscans (see p. 46) were fascinated with death and the afterlife. They devoted much of their energy to building and maintaining grave sites for their ancestors, and to sacrificing offerings to the dead. Given their beliefs, this was energy well spent.

Like the Greeks and Romans, the Etruscans believed that the souls of the dead were carried to Hades. They thought that a man's spirit became divided after death and that part of it dwelled near its mortal remains. If their resting places were not comfortable, and if periodic offerings of food and gifts were not made, the dead might leave their graves and exact revenge. The Romans shared some of that respect for the dead, but not to that degree.

An interesting mixture of *GURPS Horror* and *Rome* would deal with this issue. Travelers might come upon an abandoned Etruscan town in a remote area – a town where the dead walk the streets. In a cinematic campaign, the result of disrespect to one's ancestors might turn the uneasy dead into zombies or vampires. The GM could go further and set an adventure where, on the eve of a powerful astrological alignment, all dead Etruscans become animated and break free from their tombs.

## Romulus and Remus

Twelve generations after the rise of the house of Aeneas, Numitor, the 13th king of Alba Longa, was deposed by his evil brother Amulius. Amulius killed all the sons of Numitor, and made his only daughter a Vestal Virgin so she could bear no sons. Rea Silva, the daughter, caught the fancy of the god Mars (see p. 108), and bore twins. Amulius had her imprisoned; the babies were put in a basket and thrown in the Tiber River.

The twins were fed by a she-wolf and a woodpecker, both of whom were servants of Mars. The chief shepherd of Amulius found the babies and raised them as his own sons. Thanks to their godly prowess, Romulus and Remus became the leaders of the shepherds in the region. The two boys were eventually discovered by their grandfather, the deposed Numitor. With their help, Numitor overthrew and killed Amulius and once again became king of Alba Longa.

The twins then decided to found their own city, and a bitter rivalry ensued, since each wanted to give his own name to the city. To settle the dispute, the twins agreed that the first one to see a flight of vultures would be the winner. As they waited, Remus sighted six vultures; very shortly afterwards, Romulus saw twelve. Remus claimed that he had seen the birds first, while Romulus alleged that he was the winner because he had seen more vultures. Remus was killed, either in the fight that ensued among the twins' followers, or when he leaped the walls of the new city, a sacrilegious action.

The new city (called Rome) grew powerful under Romulus. According to some legends, in the 37th year of his reign Romulus disappeared in a thundercloud, and the senators around him declared that he had been carried off to heaven. The deified Romulus was renamed Quirinus (see p. 108). Another tradition claims that Romulus was actually torn to pieces by the senators, who then invented the story of his deification to cover their crime.



## Spirits

The original Romans believed that all things, living or dead, were inhabited by spirits, called *numina* (singular *numen*). These spirits were not good or evil; they could be appeased and bargained with through sacrifices, and they reacted angrily if not worshipped properly. There was a *numen* for every place, activity, working tool, and weather event. These spirits also had larger versions that did for the whole nation what the minor *numina* did for households. These higher spirits eventually became gods.

The more common *numina* were found in every household. They included the *lares*, who guarded the home and the land, the *penates*, guardians of the storerooms and the food, and Vesta, the female *numen* of the fireplace. A shrine to all three was usually kept somewhere in every house, and small offerings of food were given to them. Additionally, a family spirit, the *genius*, was also given homage. The *genius* lived in the *pater familias*, and was passed along from one generation to the next. Worshipping one's ancestors involved paying respect to the *genius* of one's family. The earliest Emperors deified their *genius* instead of themselves. This *genius* then was passed from each Emperor to the next, in essence passing along the godhood. The spirits of the dead, or *manes*, dwelt in the tombs of the deceased, and had to be kept appeased or they could haunt the living (see sidebar, p. 106).

These spirits required small offerings; to neglect them was supposed to bring bad luck. At first, the duty of appeasing and dealing with the *numina* lay with the eldest male of the family (see *pater familias*, p. 5). As rituals became more complex, a class of priests and priestesses was created (see p. 111).

## THE ROMAN PANTHEON

As Rome grew from a farming settlement to a city, some *numina* became more important. Their support was considered necessary for any major undertakings such as war, the erection of public buildings, and the founding of colonies. Later on, as the first contacts with Greek culture took place through the Etruscans (see p. 46), these powerful *numina* became associated with equivalent Greek gods. By the time of the Republic, these gods were firmly established and all had several temples in the city.

The gods of Rome dwelt in Olympus, originally believed to be Mount Olympus, a mountain range in Greece. Later on, Olympus was said to be in the heavens. Many heroes and giants tried to reach Olympus, always unsuccessfully.

### Jupiter

Jupiter was the chief Roman god. Originally Jupiter (also called *Jovis Pater*) was the *numen* of the heavens. He was associated with the Greek lightning-god Zeus, and became the leader of the gods, the divine equivalent of the *pater familias*. He was the bringer of rain and lightning, and was worshipped as the protector of Rome and the deity of loyalty. Jupiter was also the god of oaths; swearing by his name was not lightly done in early Rome.

Jupiter was the son of Saturn, and the brother of Neptune and Pluto. He and his brothers drew lots to see which portion of the universe each one would rule. Jupiter won the Heavens, Neptune the Sea, and Pluto the Underworld. He was the father of most of the other gods and acted as judge to both gods and mortals. He was the most powerful god.

He had many aspects, which were worshiped by different cults. Jupiter Lucetius was a god of light. Jupiter Elicius controlled rain and the weather. Jupiter Fulgur was the god of thunder and lightning.

The Roman version of Jupiter did not have a very human personality, being more of a force of nature. Greek influence gave him the attributes of Zeus; he was a temperamental and lecherous god, famous for his infidelities. He is usually depicted as a bearded, mature man.

## The Sky Stones of Jupiter

Jupiter Lapis was the deity of the mysterious stones (*lapides silices*) that were kept in the Capitoline temple in Rome and were used to take oaths. These stones were said to have come from the sky – thunderbolts that later became stones. People wishing to give important oaths swore over them. Historians believe that the stones in the Capitoline temple were prehistoric flint tools.

Still, the idea of stones that were once thunderbolts conjures up several interesting possibilities. Maybe the stones were magical, with the ability to cast thunderbolts and enforce oaths (see the Great Geas spell, p. M68; the spell would be modified to apply to the oath the subject makes), among other things. Perhaps these powers were forgotten (or temporarily lost when the world's mana level dimmed), or perhaps they are still functional (in which case PCs swearing over them had better mean their oaths).

## Godly Magic

In a Full Magic campaign (see p. 116) with active deities, priests and other mortals with links to the gods may know some divinely granted or taught spells. Outlined below are some Colleges of Magic (see p. B149) that are appropriate to a particular god. People with ties to that deity do not have to be restricted to those spells, but these are the most likely to be granted by that god.

**Jupiter:** As the leader of the gods, Jupiter is the most powerful deity in Olympus. Any College of Magic could emanate from him. Worshipers of one of Jupiter's aspects have narrower choices. Followers of Jupiter Elicius, for instance, could know weather-related Air and Water spells, while those of Jupiter Lucetius would be restricted to Light and Darkness spells.

**Juno:** The worshippers of this goddess would have access to Protection and Warning (her geese alerted the Romans about the Gallic invasion of 390 B.C.) and Healing spells.

**Quirinus:** Colleges of magic under Quirinus' influence would include selected spells from the Protection and Warning and Body Control Colleges, particularly those which increase strength or vitality.

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## Godly Magic (Continued)

**Mars:** Mars-related spells included those mentioned under Quirinus (above) plus Healing and Plant spells related to agriculture.

**Vesta:** All Fire spells would be known to a follower of Vesta. Food spells could also be available.

**Apollo:** Followers of Apollo will have access to a wide variety of spells, including the Knowledge, Fire, Light and Darkness, and Sound colleges.

**Pluto:** As god of the Underworld, all Necromantic spells can be learned from Pluto. Since his power extended to the underground, Earth spells also fall under this god's influence.

**Vulcan:** Vulcan could grant any Fire, Making and Breaking, or Enchantment spell.

**Mercury:** A follower of Mercury (particularly a thief) could learn Movement and Sound spells.

**Neptune:** Besides Water Magic, this god could grant any weather-related spell as well as Animal spells related to sea creatures and horses.

**Bacchus:** Mind Control spells, especially those with negative effects, are the province of this god, as well as any spells related to shapeshifting.

## Omens

Romans believed in two ways to divine the future. The first one was to use rituals and ceremonies (see *The "Etruscan Art,"* p. 115). The other was to interpret strange or unusual events that occurred around a person. The lives of future Emperors and prominent citizens were supposedly full of omens that foreshadowed their deeds. Some animals, objects, and natural phenomena were also supposed to predict future events. GMs wishing to add flavor to the campaign can bring those omens into play. Whether the omens are true or meaningless is up to the GM. The PCs should believe that they are true (at least most should; see *Disregarding Omens,* p. 110).

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## Juno

Jupiter's wife was also a sky goddess, although she was associated more closely with the night sky and the moon. She became the equivalent to the Greek Hera, the goddess of marriage, childbirth, and women in general. She acted as a "guardian angel" of all women. One of her aspects, Juno Moneta, was the goddess of bankers; her temple housed the first Roman mint.

In the myths she is usually portrayed as a jealous woman; she destroyed many of the women Jupiter seduced. She was also guilty of vanity, punishing women who compared themselves to her or who did not pay her proper respect.

## Quirinus

This god was the deified Romulus (see p. 106). He was one of the three main gods of the Roman pantheon, together with Jupiter and Mars, until his worship was abandoned in favor of Juno's. He was the god of men-at-arms. There was no Greek equivalent of Quirinus, which may have influenced the god's fall into disuse. By the Imperial period there were very few worshippers of Quirinus.



## Mars

This was the god of both agriculture and war, and was also called Mavors and Mamers (some Italian mercenaries called themselves the Mamertines, or "sons of Mars"). He was linked to the Greek war-god Ares. He was supposed to insure a good planting of the crop and protect the army during war.

He was mostly invoked by soldiers, but as Mars Silvanus he protected believers from disease. Mars was served by a woodpecker called Picus, who had once been human and could foretell the future. The father of Romulus and Remus, Mars protected them and helped them rise to power. He was also a god of revenge, and was invoked by Augustus when he denounced the assassins of Julius Caesar.

## Vesta

The original *numen* of the home hearth eventually had a national equivalent; its temple was the Empire's hearth, and its fire was tended to by the Vestal Virgins (see p. 111). She was identified with the Greek goddess Hestia, who had the same powers.

Vesta was the guardian of the family and the community. The fireplace of every Roman home was dedicated to her. She was also the patron goddess of bakers.

## Pluto

Pluto, or Dis, was the Roman version of Hades, the dreaded god of the Underworld (Pluto was originally a Greek euphemism for Hades – it was considered dangerous to speak the god's name out loud). He was Zeus' brother, and was charged with keeping the dead in his subterranean kingdom, also called Hades. There the souls of the evil dead were judged and punished with complex tortures. Most of the dead were not disciplined; they simply could not leave.

Pluto also had some connections with agriculture. Being the god of the underworld, he owned all the wealth hidden under the ground, including minerals and recently-planted crops. Still, no one worshiped, and rarely mentioned, this deity except in the vilest curses.

## Vulcan

The god of fire and crafts. He was originally only the god of fire and volcanoes, but later became identified with the Greek god Hephaestus and became the deity of blacksmiths and craftsmen.

Vulcan was lame, a result of being thrown from heaven and falling towards the Earth for a whole day. He built many wondrous artifacts, including a chair that held his mother, the goddess Juno, and an invisible net with which he caught his wife Venus when she committed adultery with Mars.

The worship of Vulcan concentrated mainly on his qualities as the god of fire. Prayers were made to him to prevent fires and volcanic eruptions. His priests (called *flamines*) officiated at ceremonies where fish were thrown into a sacred fire. Temples to Vulcan were kept outside city walls, since they were dedicated to such a destructive deity.

### Mercury

Mercury was the messenger of the gods, as well as the god of merchants, travelers, and thieves. He was linked to the Greek god Hermes. He was portrayed as a young man dressed with winged sandals and cap, which allowed him to travel at incredible speeds. Besides helping mortal travelers (marking stones were set on roads in his name), Mercury also guided the souls of the dead to the underworld, Pluto's realm (see above). Gamblers, thieves, and con men prayed to him for luck in their endeavors.

The formal worship of Mercury was sponsored by members of the merchant guilds, who donated money to fund temples and religious festivals in his name.

### Janus

Another native Roman god, Janus was the deity of doorways, beginnings, and endings, and was represented as having two faces. The doors of his main temple at Rome were only closed when there was peace throughout the Empire – an event that happened only a handful of times in the whole history of Rome. His blessing was asked before starting any undertaking (the first month of the year is named after him).

### Saturn

Saturn was another agricultural god, in charge of protecting the grain while it was underground. Saturn was the father of Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto. He also fathered Picus, Mars' servant. This god was worshipped in the popular Saturnalia winter festival (see p. 21). The day Saturday was named for him.

### Neptune

Neptune was the god of the sea and sailors, and was the equivalent of Poseidon in Greek mythology. At first, however, he was a god of rivers and lakes, and it was not until the Romans were influenced by the Greeks that his influence was extended to the sea. His symbol was the trident; other than that, he looked much like Zeus. Like his brother, Neptune had numerous liaisons with mortal women, from which were born several heroes.

This god was as harsh as the sea, punishing those who displeased him with storms and floods. Shows of piety could move him, or so sailors believed.

### Apollo

The Greek sun-god Apollo was worshipped by the Romans, who kept his original name. He was a protector of herdsmen, as well as patron of musicians and poets – his symbol was the lyre. As god of prophecy and oracles, he was well-regarded by the Romans, who were fascinated by omens. Apollo's bow and arrows slew anyone they targeted; his power was such that even the other gods avoided him.

The god was so skilled in medicine that once he resurrected a man, an action that caused enmity between him and Jupiter. Apollo killed the giant snake Python, which guarded the oracle of Delphi, and that city continued to produce prophecies well into Roman times. Famous seers claimed to have been taught by the god, or to be descended from him.

## Omens (Continued)

Omens do not require the casting of spells; they are events or visions that can happen to anyone. Tales of omens are not automatically believed, however. The status and credibility of the witness are considered before most people accept an event as an omen.

Listed below are some of the things that Romans considered omens or ingredients in omens:

**Animals:** Romans used the divination technique of *haruspication*, (see p. 116), where animal entrails were "read" for signs. Besides that, animals and animal actions were an important source of omens. Birds were very common in omens. Eagles were the forecasters of storms, and symbols of the legions or the Empire; an injured eagle, for instance, was a symbol of danger for the Empire or a legion. Owls were supposed to bring bad luck. Bees brought good fortune.

**Objects:** Objects were seen as symbols; if something happened to an object, the omen affected the person or thing with which that object was associated. For instance, a patrician's toga was a symbol of the patrician class; a story about Augustus claims that one day his toga split and fell down, which was interpreted as an omen that one day he would have all patricians at his feet. A broken statue was an omen of death or injury for the person represented in that statue, or if that person was dead, of a surviving relative or even his whole family.

**Actions and Events:** Some events were thought to be the harbingers of future developments, or to determine good or bad luck. If a Roman leader stumbled or fell just before setting out on campaign, this was considered a bad sign. Sometimes a quick-witted person could turn a bad event to his advantage. When Julius Caesar was campaigning in Africa, he slipped and fell on a beach; the general grabbed two handfuls of earth and yelled "Africa, I have tight hold of you!" thus turning the fall into a symbol of his future conquest.





## Disregarding Omens

Not all Romans were inclined to listen to or believe omens and their significance. This was particularly true of Stoics and Epicureans (see p. 112). In a campaign without magic, this attitude will bring negative reactions from the more superstitious Roman majority. If a person ignores omens and then suffers the omens' predicted consequences, his peers will scorn and ridicule him.

During the First Punic War, for instance, the Roman admiral Claudius Pulcher had brought aboard several sacred chickens to allow priests to read omens before an upcoming battle. The chickens refused to eat, which the priests interpreted as a bad sign from the gods. Frustrated, Pulcher said "Well, if they won't eat, let them drink instead!" and tossed the chickens overboard. He decided to press on despite the bad omens, and was terribly defeated. Many Romans blamed this defeat on Pulcher's sacrilegious disregard of the omens, and he was forced to retire in disgrace.

According to Roman chroniclers, several events foreshadowed Caesar's murder, but the dictator ignored them. Warned not to appear in public during the Ides of March, he scorned the prophet who predicted his death during that time. "The Ides of March have come," Caesar said. "Yes, they have come, but they have not yet gone," was the prophet's reply. Later that day he was murdered.

Romans who refuse to believe in omens have the Delusion "Omens Are Meaningless," worth -5 or -10 points. In a non-magical campaign, this disadvantage is worth -5 points because most Romans will react to these people at -1. Not believing in omens is akin to not believing in the power of the gods, a sacrilegious attitude. In a campaign where magic and divination work and are important in the campaign, the delusion is real and dangerous, and worth -10 points. In a Secret Magic campaign (see p. 116) it should be worth -5 points. This way the players will not know whether their "delusion" is real or not.

## Venus

This love and fertility goddess was the Roman version of Greek goddess Aphrodite. The original Venus was more a goddess of the home and cleanliness, but Greek influence changed this. Venus was a fickle goddess, a symbol of lust and passion. She was also the goddess of romance, and was reputed to help young lovers overcome their difficulties. People who engaged in illicit affairs often called to her in their prayers.

Venus was reputed to be the grandmother of the Roman hero Iulius, who originated the Iulii clan. Julius Caesar, Augustus, and several Emperors belonged to this family and so could claim they were the descendants of the goddess herself.

## Bacchus

Bacchus was the Roman version of the agricultural and wine god Dionysus. He was not widely worshiped (although his name was often used in bars), but his cult attracted some attention during the Republican period.

This god was born a mortal, but even before he became a deity he had great powers, being able to shapeshift victims, control weather, and use music to force people to dance madly. He taught men to cultivate grapes and make wine. As a wine god, however, he represented both the pleasures of wine and the evil that can come from its abuse. He punished many men by visiting them with bouts of madness in which they murdered their loved ones.

## Hercules

This god of strength did not have a Roman equivalent, but was taken from the Greek pantheon, and his name Romanized from the Greek Herakles.

Hercules was originally a mortal, the son of Zeus and a normal woman. His strength was so great that he was able to wrestle gods and giants. Among Hercules' exploits were his Twelve Labors, which he undertook to achieve immortality. He changed the course of rivers, killed the Hydra, and destroyed several other monsters. Besides his great strength, Hercules' main weapon was a powerful bow only the strongest heroes could bend. The arrows were poisoned with the blood of the Hydra, so powerful that it destroyed the demigod himself. Hercules met his end when the centaur Nessus tricked his wife into smearing Hydra poison on a garment. When Hercules put on the tunic, he was seized by such agony that he set himself on fire. Zeus took pity on him, however, and when the flames had consumed Hercules' mortal form, the god took him to Olympus, where he was deified.

Hercules was a popular god for soldiers and gladiators. During the Late Empire, Hercules was the god of the junior, or lieutenant, Emperors (see p. 59).

## Diana

Diana was a nature and fertility goddess who was later identified with the Greek deity Artemis. She protected mothers of all species and was also the deity of domestic animals. She was called upon by hunters and was well known by her bow and arrows, which were as powerful as her brother Apollo's. Pregnant women asked for her protection.

The goddess was also the patroness of plebeians (see p. 8) and slaves. In fact, the traditional priests of Diana were supposed to be runaway slaves!

## The Divine Qualities

Besides worshipping the deities above, Romans also believed in and invoked "qualities" like Justice or Loyalty. These qualities were given godly attributes. They had wills of their own and affected men as they wished. Statues and temples were erected to them.

Among these qualities were *Concordia* (Unanimity), *Fortuna* (Luck), *Iusticia* (Justice), *Pax* (Peace), *Pietas* (Dutifulness), *Veritas* (Truth), and *Victoria* (Victory).



Gamblers and anyone taking a chance would mutter a prayer to *Fortuna*. After a successful war a procession to *Victoria* would be conducted out of gratitude.

## THE PRIESTHOOD

The relationship between the *numina* and their worshippers was mostly personal. However, when something necessitated the intervention of a major deity, the citizens consulted a priest. The priest helped conduct the sacrifices to the gods and interpreted their will. As time went on, the office of priesthood became a matter of learning the right rituals rather than a function of piety or spiritual abilities. There were several priestly schools, such as the Pontiffs, who mainly dealt with rituals and sacrifices, and the Augurs, who concentrated on divination.

### The Pontifex Maximus

The *Pontifex Maximus* was the head of the Pontiff College and religious leader of Rome. Originally, the ancient Roman kings held that office. When the Republic came about, the position became purely religious. The *Pontifex Maximus* was not a priest; by the time of the late Republic, it had become a political office (Julius Caesar served in that position for a while). Augustus took over the office of *Pontifex Maximus*, and after him, it became the hereditary office of the Emperors, reverting in some ways to the time of the kings.

### The Vestal Virgins

The Vestal Virgins, six in number, were in charge of keeping the sacred fire in the temple of Vesta. This was supposed to never go out. The Virgins were chosen from girls six to ten years old, who were supposed to serve for 30 years. There were three types of Vestals, with two members in each type: the beginners or novices, the initiated and acting priestesses, and the elders. The eldest Virgins ruled and taught the rest.

The Vestal Virgins had several privileges and could exert great influence in many matters, even with Emperors. On many occasions, they persuaded the Emperor to issue pardons. Also, it was considered bad luck for a Vestal to meet a person who had been condemned to death (the Vestals still attended the arena, because the people there had some chance of survival). If a Vestal ran into such a person, the criminal had to be released to avoid the bad omen (crafty PCs might try to arrange such a meeting to save a friend).

These privileges had a price in the duties the Vestals had to fulfill, and the punishments if they failed. If a virgin allowed the fire to go out, she was severely beaten, and a special ceremony was conducted to start the fire once again. If she broke her vow of chastity, she was buried alive, and her lover publicly whipped to death. Despite this, scandals involving soiled Vestal Virgins happened occasionally in Rome.

## EASTERN CULTS

Religions that originated in Persia, Asia Minor, Syria, or the Greek territories eventually gained the favor of Romans. They grew in popularity during the Imperial period.

### The Bacchanals

The cult of the god Bacchus (see p. 110) was one of the earliest exotic cults to become popular in Rome. The rites of Bacchus included playing flutes, wild dancing, and the consumption of wine. It was rumored that the cultists also engaged in self-flagellation, whipping themselves as part of the dance, and ended the ritual in a sexual orgy. The Senate banned its practice for a while, but by the time of the Empire it had returned.

## Evocatio

The ceremony of *evocatio* was an ancient tradition in Rome and other Italian cities. It was a symbol of the defeat and capture of a city, and was believed to have great power as well. When a city was captured by the Romans, the ceremony of *evocatio* was led by priests or even the general of the army. The ceremony removed the gods of the city and transferred them to Rome.



Each city was supposed to have one or more patron deities that oversaw the city and protected it during times of danger. If the gods of the city were removed, it meant certain doom for it. The Romans only used the ceremony of *evocatio* when the target was to be utterly destroyed; it was done at the siege of Veii and before the destruction of Carthage (see p. 48).

In a Secret Magic campaign (see p. 116), the ground of a city whose gods have been removed becomes unholy ground: bad luck plagues anyone who tries to settle there. Treat this like a special 3-point Curse spell (see p. 116) that affects anyone who lives on the city grounds. Removing the gods of a city is a disaster for the defenders – if using the mass-combat rules, reduce the TS of all defenders by *half* and its morale by 3 levels. In a non-magic campaign, the effect is psychological and legal; people who try to settle on accursed ground will be shunned by others and may have to face legal charges. Tiberius Gracchus (see p. 49) tried to resettle Carthage; this was yet another reason for his downfall.

An unholy city can be rebuilt if a ceremony lifting the curse is performed. Carthage was eventually rebuilt almost a century after its destruction.

## Stoicism

Stoicism was more a philosophy than a religion, but for some citizens it became a stronger source of moral support than most Roman cults. First introduced into Rome by the Greeks, Stoicism preached the calm endurance of misfortunes and the search for inner peace. Its creator was the Greek philosopher Zeno, who claimed that Reason was the most powerful force in the universe. A man who followed the natural law of Reason could accept triumph and tragedy with the same serenity, and would be able to fulfill his duties to the best of his abilities. Failure and success were of no consequence as long as one did his best and remained true to Reason.

This doctrine was very appealing to Romans of the upper classes, who were supposed to be raised with a strong sense of duty. Stoics became enemies of superstition (looking down on the Romans who turned to diviners and augurs in search of an answer) and tried to endure their problems with serenity. They will get a -1 reaction from citizens who know of a Stoic's disdain for omens.

## Epicureanism

This philosophy asserted that the world was made of small particles called "atoms" and nothing else; there were no gods and no afterlife. Since this life was the only one to be had, the chief goal in it was to enjoy it to the fullest. Morality was only a set of rules to prevent people from hurting each other.

This outlook was popular among the upper classes. Many noblemen paid lip service to these beliefs and used them to justify their decadent vices. True Epicureans looked down on decadence, however. Excess was believed to shorten one's life, and to bring about unpleasant consequences.

In any case, this doctrine appealed to the wealthy, who could afford the pursuit of pleasure. To slaves and the poor, it was much less appetizing.

## Mystery Cults

Eastern in origin, these cults were best known for their secret rituals which only initiates of the religion were allowed to attend. This naturally sparked suspicion. Rumors and tales about wild orgies, self-mutilation, and human sacrifice were very common (some of those stories had a basis in truth). The cults were generally not persecuted unless their activities became violent or offensive.

Some popular cults included the worship of Cybele, an Asian fertility goddess called "the Great Mother." The cult had both male and female priestesses. Some male priests, known as *galli*, castrated themselves in the course of their initiation ceremony. Other ceremonies included sexual orgies. Although most Romans looked down on them, the Cybelines were reputed to wield magical power, and several prominent citizens from all classes joined the cult.

Isis, an Egyptian goddess, was a goddess of fertility like Cybele, but also of magic. The priests of the cult had to be a descendant of the Egyptian priestly caste. Initiates confessed all their sins to the members of the cult and by doing so washed away all past transgressions. Her cult was popular in the eastern provinces and built a large following in Rome itself. Devotees of Isis wore colorful robes and masks during public ceremonies.



## Judaism

Judaism stood out from most religions in the ancient world in that it claimed the existence of one god only, and denied the power of all other deities. Originally a religion of nomadic herders, by the time of the Romans it had evolved into a sophisticated religion, with a Great Temple in Jerusalem, rabbinical schools, and much influence.

The Jews had expanded to the rest of the Hellenized East after Alexander the Great's conquests. Jewish commercial colonies flourished in most eastern cities; many rulers granted them legal rights that included exclusion from military service and the right to be tried by their own courts. Most Jews outside Judea adopted the Greek language and some Greek traditions, but they remained loyal to the Great Temple of Jerusalem, which every Jew was supposed to visit once in his life.

The Jews in Egypt and Syria helped Augustus during the civil wars that made him Emperor. In return, their privileges remained unchanged or were increased. Jews were not required to participate in the Imperial cult. Emperor Caligula tried to force Jews to worship the Empire, but with no success, and his successors restored the privilege.

## The Unconquered Sun

*Sol Invictus*, the Unconquered Sun, was another eastern religion. Sun worship was very common in the ancient world, and it was easy to confuse solar deities. Emperor Elagabalus (see p. 57), brought this cult to Rome; before his accession he had been the

chief priest of that religion in the east. Elagabalus tried to impose this religion on all Romans, but failed. His version of the sun cult was very unpopular (his behavior in general was very offensive to most Romans, which did not do much for the prestige of the religion he tried to impose).

Later, the cult of the Unconquered Sun was brought back by Emperor Aurelian (see p. 58), but in a less offensive manner. Eventually, the Unconquered Sun was associated with the Persian god Mithras (see below), and the cults became intermixed, at least to the eyes of an outsider.

### **Mithraism**

Mithraism was the worship of the Persian god Mithras. Mithras was a god of fire and light, often associated with the sun. He was born from a rock and achieved godhood by slaying a sacred bull. Mithras embodied all good qualities and was in constant struggle against the forces of evil. This militant vision appealed to men, soldiers in particular. The followers of Mithras believed in life after death, a happy eternal life for those who upheld the qualities of mutual help, humility, and brotherly love. Mithraism did not admit women and used a series of secret rites to initiate new members, including the ritual sacrifice of bulls.

Mithraism was first brought to the West by the soldiers of Alexander the Great. It became common in the eastern and Greek worlds, and by the time of the Late Empire it started to spread in Rome. It became the most common religion in the Roman army. Since mutual cooperation was one of the virtues preached by Mithraism, fellow believers helped each other; becoming a worshipper of Mithras was a sure way to advance in the army. Mithraism became the main rival of Christianity in the 4th century. It is said that Emperor Constantine (see p. 59) actually favored Mithraism over Christianity for a while.

## **CHRISTIANITY**

Christianity began as a small Jewish sect that emerged during the last half of the 1st century. The center of Christian belief was the following of the precepts taught by Jesus Christ and his disciples. They included a belief in eternal life after death, the practice of charity and mutual aid, and the rites commemorating Christ's sacrifice on the cross. They worshipped the Holy Trinity, composed of God the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. Christians used secret signs (such as the drawing of a fish) to recognize each other.

At first, Romans treated Christianity as a version of Judaism, which gave Christians the same rights as Jews (see p. 112). Orthodox Jews, on the other hand, knew better, and clashes between Jews and Christians were frequent. This may have led to the expulsion of the Jews (including Christians) from Rome in 49 A.D.

Like Judaism, Christianity denied the existence or power of any other god, and claimed that it alone held the truth of the universe. This led many Christians to refuse to sacrifice to the Emperor, since they did not recognize his divinity. To most Romans, this was treason – an insult to the sacred symbols of the State, the equivalent of flag-burning today. Other Christian practices, such as the division of money and property among the members of the community and the secrecy of their rituals, made them the target of rumors and dislike by the population. One such rumor held that Christians engaged in human sacrifice and were covert cannibals!

As a result, Christians were persecuted and their religion outlawed. This persecution was not as massive or widespread as once believed. It usually exploded every few years when an Emperor or provincial governor used Christians as scapegoats for an unrelated problem. That is why Emperor Nero or his underlings accused Christians of setting the great fire of Rome (see p. 54); a small, secretive, and intransigent sect was a perfect target for mob anger.

### **Other Christian Heresies**

Arianism (see p. 114) was only one of many heresies that plagued Christianity during the Late Empire. As the new religion became more entrenched, religious fervor grew to violent proportions. Walking into an inn staffed by Arians and claiming that the Son was the equal to the Father could start a fight or even a riot. Since Christianity held that there could be only one truth, it was almost impossible to reconcile two opposing doctrines.

Theological arguments became very common in the Empire from the 3rd century A.D. onwards. Jews and Christians held open debates even before that. By the end of the 4th century, individuals from all walks of life became very concerned with religious doctrine. Shop owners, bar patrons, sailors, and slaves might suddenly engage total strangers in religious discussions, and would often become enraged if their opinions were not shared. It was common to see two pedestrians arguing as to the holiness of the Son as opposed to the Father, or even more obscure theological themes.

### **MONTANISM**

This was a mystical heresy based on the teachings of Montanus, a prophet who claimed the Second Coming of Christ was imminent. Montanus and two young women founded a group of followers who called themselves the *illuminati* or "enlightened" (no relationship to the 19th-century *Illuminati* – or is there?). Fasting, chastity, and self-sacrifice were encouraged.

### **DONATISM**

This heresy appeared in the 4th century and held that priests who were not in a state of grace could not perform sacraments. This caused problems when bishops who had surrendered sacred books to the Roman authorities during times of persecution were reinstated to their positions. The Donatists held that any rites these bishops performed were unholy. Donatism lasted until the 5th century A.D.

### **ADOPTIONISM**

Going even further than Arianism, Adoptionism asserted that Christ was a man, and was the son of God only because he was imbued with the spirit of God. This doctrine caused a great deal of violence and controversy.

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## Other Christian Heresies (Continued)

### GNOSTICISM

Gnosticism claimed that the world was not created by God but by a lower entity called a demiurge, who pretended to be the true God and built an evil, imperfect universe. This doctrine held that man's spirit was trapped in the material world, which had to be renounced in order to achieve salvation. To transcend the material world, knowledge had to be found. This knowledge (*gnosis*) was mystical or even magical in origin.

### The Imperial Cult

From the time of Augustus, attempts were made to give the new government a link to the gods. Julius Caesar was deified after his death; in life he had been worshipped as a god by several Eastern peoples, according to their tradition. This Oriental custom of worshipping the monarch as a god gained ground steadily in Rome. Several Emperors were given the status of gods after their deaths. A new group of priests, the *augustales*, was established. Wealthy freedmen were appointed to be *augustales*, which increased their status enormously. In life, Emperors had their family *genius* (see p. 107) worshipped instead.

This worship was more like an oath of allegiance to the state than a religion, however. The sacrifice to the Emperor (burning a pinch of incense in a brazier) had more political than spiritual significance. By deifying a dead Emperor, the Senate recognized the service that Emperor had given Rome; "bad" Emperors (Caligula and Nero, for instance) were not deified. Other Emperors, like Domitian (see p. 55), tried to deify themselves in life, but after their death they were refused that honor.

The Late Empire saw an increase in Oriental despotic practices. The power of the Emperor was seen to derive from the gods, not men. People had to prostrate themselves in front of the Emperor, a practice borrowed from Persian ceremony. Prostration continued in Byzantium (the Eastern Empire) for another 1,000 years after the fall of the Western Empire, despite the fact that Christianity was the official religion of the Empire.

### The Persecutions

The first mass persecution of Christians was stirred by Nero or his advisors in 64 A.D. Several men and women were arrested. Originally, the Christians were charged with arson, but it was then changed to "hatred of humankind," with the claim that Christian beliefs and practices were a threat to the Empire. The penalty for this crime was death by crucifixion, immolation, or the arena.

After Nero, persecution was sporadic. There was no law specifically forbidding Christianity. Under Trajan and Hadrian, Christians could be condemned for treason if they refused to worship the Emperor. After 260 A.D., Christians were granted immunity. By the 4th century, they had grown in numbers until they formed almost 10% of Rome's population. While trying to stabilize the Empire, Diocletian (see p. 59) started another persecution spree, destroying churches and forcing Christians to worship the state deities.

Despite these obstacles, Christianity spread quickly through the Roman world, particularly in the eastern lands and in Africa and Egypt. Emperor Galerius stopped the persecutions in 311 A.D. Shortly thereafter, Emperor Constantine made Christianity the chief religion of the Empire. Despite the opposition of several pagan leaders (the most notable of which was Emperor Julian, also known as "the Apostate"), Christianity spread not only to Rome but to the German tribes beyond its borders (see *Arianism*, below).

### Arianism

From its earliest days, Christianity was a divided religion. Several heresies appeared during the first few centuries of its appearance (see sidebar, p. 113). The fact that all Christians were technically outlaws made it impossible to stamp out rival branches of the religion. When Christianity was adopted by the Empire, bishops (religious leaders of a city or region) met in public and hammered out an orthodox body of beliefs; anyone who refused to accept this body of beliefs was branded a heretic.

One such heretic was a priest named Arius. In 318 he became convinced that God the Father was the only true God, and that the Son and the Holy Spirit were his creations. This belief was rejected by the Council of Nicaea, which had been summoned by Emperor Constantine to solve this problem. The struggle between Arians and Orthodox Christians lasted for almost 70 years; several bishops, and even some Emperors, favored Arianism. In 381, however, all Arian bishops in the Empire were deposed.

Around the same time these controversies arose, Arian missionaries had been hard at work in the German lands. As a result, several tribes of Goths, Burgundians, and Vandals were converted to Christianity – Arian Christianity! The barbarians were given one more reason to fight the Empire. (The Franks were converted to orthodox Catholicism – a major turning point in European history.)

## MAGIC

When designing a Roman campaign, the GM should decide how real magic and the power of religion will be. In a historical campaign set in the Republican or Imperial periods, the easiest course is to declare that Rome was a no-mana or low-mana area, and that there was no godly intervention. The *characters*, of course, are not supposed to know this. To make it easier for the players to roleplay, the GM should not tell them whether gods and magic are real or not.

### COMMON MAGIC IN ROME

The two most important sources of magic in Rome were religious divination rites (below) and the common people's search for charms to prevent or bestow curses (see sidebar, p. 115).

## The "Etruscan Art"

Most Romans believed in magic, especially divination magic, which they called the "Etruscan Art." Divination was done by priests, astrologers, and street magicians. In a historical campaign, the GM can decree that divination is a superstition and had no power (though the PCs will usually believe in divination). Alternatively, he could allow Divination spells to work (see p. M55). He might even neglect to tell the *players* that they work, and give nasty surprises to skeptic characters (there were many such events in Roman tradition; see sidebar, p. 110). There were three types of formal divination techniques. The spell prerequisites can be ignored if the diviner is a priest or only knows one particular Divination spell.

The result of a successful divination is usually an accurate interpretation of a sign. For instance, if going into battle the next day is doomed to failure, the stars will predict bad luck, the sacred birds will behave in an odd manner, and the guts of the sacrificed animal will not look normal. If a roll is failed, the diviner failed to interpret the signs correctly and his predictions will be wrong. Straight answers are very rare.

Following are three types of Divination common to Roman campaigns. All have the following statistics:

*Cost:* 10

*Time to cast:* 1 hour unless specified otherwise.

*Prerequisite:* History spell (see p. M54), and element spells as specified for the particular methods of divination.

*Augury:* The study of portents or omens, most importantly the flight or behavior of birds (see sidebar, p. 109). A Vision roll must be made before casting the spell (the GM rolls it in secret); if failed, the spell is at -5. *Prerequisite:* 5 Earth and 5 Air spells. This was the most common divination used by Roman priests.

## Charms and Curses

Street magicians and witches made a small living in the cities and villages of Rome by selling potions and casting curses. The GM must decide how much power, if any, is in these potions and charms. Many Romans searched for sorcerers to bless them or curse their enemy; some gamblers tried to fix the races by harming opposing drivers through magic (see p. 22). Curse and Bless spells may be learned in a Secret Magic campaign; as to the prerequisites, the Magery requisites should remain, and the GM could replace the prerequisite spells with a 5-10 point Unusual Background, allowing the character to cast those two spells only.

### BLESS

### REGULAR

A general spell of aid and protection. Must be cast on another; you cannot bless yourself. In some game worlds, this spell can be cast only by holy men or "good" wizards; this decision is the GM's to make.

The effect of the blessing is as follows: All the subject's die rolls are modified favorably by one point (or more, for a more powerful blessing). The modification will *not* affect critical successes or failures. This lasts indefinitely . . . until the subject fails some die-roll (or a foe *makes* a good die-roll) and the subject is in some serious danger. Then the blessing miraculously averts or reduces the danger – and ends.

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## Charms and Curses (Continued)

It is up to the GM to decide when the blessing has its final effect, and what form the protection takes. If an arrow is aimed at your heart, a 1-point blessing might move it to your arm, while a 2-point one would send it through your hat, and a 3-point one would let it slay a foe behind you.

*Duration:* As above.

*Cost:* 10 for a 1-point blessing, 50 for a 2-point blessing, 500 for a 3-point blessing. Blessings may not be "stacked" – a stronger blessing dispels a weaker one.

*Time to cast:* 1 minute for every point of energy in the spell.

*Prerequisite:* Magery 2, and at least 2 spells from each of 10 different colleges. Magery 3 is required to cast a 3-point blessing. A GM may require "holy" or "good" status if he wishes.

*Item:* Any, commonly a charm. The blessing is cast on the item rather than a person, and affects the wearer of the item. When the blessing averts some great danger, the item loses its enchantment. Energy cost to cast: 10 times the cost to cast on a person.

### CURSE                      REGULAR

Exactly the opposite of Bless. All the subject's die-rolls are modified unfavorably, lasting until he scores some notable success despite the bad rolls – GM's decision as to exactly what this is. Then the success turns somehow to ashes, and the curse is ended.

*Cost:* 3 for a 1-point Curse, 10 for a 2-point Curse, 20 for a 3-point Curse. Like Blessings, Curses cannot be "stacked."

*Time to cast:* 2 seconds for a 1-point Curse, 4 for a 2-point Curse, 6 for a 3-point Curse.

*Prerequisites:* As for Bless, except that both very good and very evil characters can curse.

*Item:* Any. The curse is cast on the item rather than a person, and affects the wearer of the item. GMs should make rolls in secret, and otherwise do whatever they can to keep players from realizing they have encountered a cursed item! When the Curse delivers its final "zap," the enchantment vanishes. Energy Cost to Cast: 10 times the cost to cast on a person.

*Astrology:* Divination through examination of the heavens, including weather. Observation of the sky is necessary; the caster must be outside, and is at a -5 unless it is a clear night. Without a reference library (cost \$2,000, weight 200 lbs.), all rolls are at a -5. If the divination involves an individual, his birthplace and birth date must be known, or all rolls are at a -5. These penalties are cumulative! *Prerequisite:* 10 Air spells. Only Greek and Persian magicians practiced this spell; no Roman priest used it.

*Haruspication:* divination by examining the entrails of a slaughtered animal (must be at least 20 lbs. – no pigeons!). Only one question can be asked per animal. *Prerequisite:* 10 Earth spells. This was the second most common priestly divination in Rome.

## THE SECRET MAGIC CAMPAIGN

Alternatively, the GM might allow magic to exist, although veiled in secrecy and not readily available (or totally unavailable) to the adventurers. Magic would be the province of true diviners, the shamans and druids of primitive lands, and maybe some dark cults in the Empire's underbelly. The gods could exist, but their intervention would be as unexplainable and fickle as any force of nature, and the characters would not be likely to tell the difference. They would assume that most natural events obey the will of the gods, anyway.

In a Secret Magic campaign, the GM should make a list of spells that work in the game universe, perhaps limiting spells to those in the *Basic Set*. The Roman Empire should be mostly a low-mana area (see p. B147), with pockets of normal and (rarely) high mana. High priests of certain Roman cults will have some divination powers (see below); druids and other "barbarians" with Clerical Investment may have other abilities (left to the GM to devise).

GMs should also arrange magic in such a way that the players will not know whether they are facing sorcery or "mundane" tricks disguised as sorcery. For example, the PCs are being housed in a noble's village. Aroused by chanting in the night, they creep out and see the nobleman and his servants engaged in some sort of ritual. At this point, the GM starts making rolls and announcing to each character "You are asleep," or "You feel drowsy, but can still act." Are they being attacked by a Sleep spell? Was their food drugged? Or perhaps the cultists' incense burners are releasing some narcotic to which they have developed immunity . . .

## THE FULL MAGIC CAMPAIGN

This campaign assumes that magic is a real and powerful force. Most of the campaign world would have a normal mana level and spells would be relatively easy to find and learn. Gods and spirits would be active participants in world events, either through agents or surrogates, or by stepping in themselves!

A full magic campaign would not fit in a historical setting, since even in historical accounts, magic was seen as a fickle, easily-faked force at best, or contemptible superstition at worst. On the other hand, a GM running an Alternate History campaign (see p. 120) can design a Rome where magic is real and powerful, taking into account how this would affect Roman institutions and history.

If magic had been a powerful force in Rome, it probably would have been codified in a sensible, systematic way. The Roman legions often had an attached Engineer corps; along the same lines, a Sorcerer corps could be added. Generals should be able to perform priestly rituals, particularly the dreaded ceremony of *evocatio* (see sidebar, p. 111), which would be an important element of any siege.

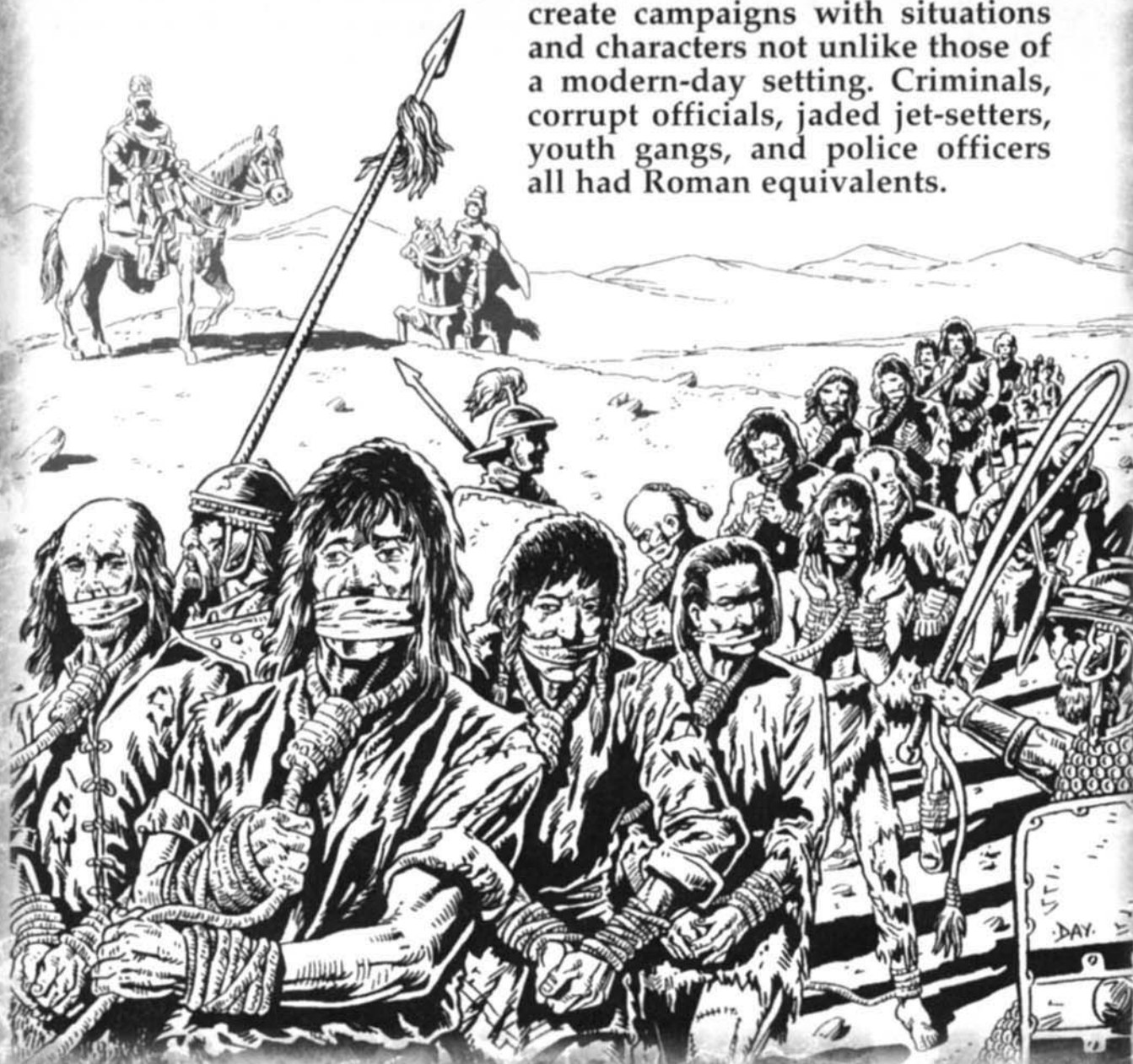
The colleges of Magic that would appeal most to the Roman mind would be those of Knowledge, Communication and Empathy, and Healing. Elemental magic would also be common.

For an alternate history setting where magic is common in Rome, see pp. 123-124.

# VIII THE ROMAN CAMPAIGN

Rome is a perfect backdrop for almost any type of campaign. Historical roleplaying, high adventure, cloak-and-dagger intrigue, epic battles, mythical magic, and the supernatural all have a place in the Empire. All kinds of themes from fiction and history can be adapted to a Roman campaign.

In the cities, the sophistication of the Roman world can be used to create campaigns with situations and characters not unlike those of a modern-day setting. Criminals, corrupt officials, jaded jet-setters, youth gangs, and police officers all had Roman equivalents.



## Charietto

Charietto was a 5th-century German warrior who, like many others, started his career as a raider. At some point he switched his allegiance and tried to sell his services to the Roman Empire. When he could not find any takers, he decided to work for himself.

He started alone, ambushing small bands of Frank bandits and bringing their severed heads back to the Roman cities. The authorities paid him a bounty on each head delivered, and the former bandit soon acquired an impressive reputation, while building a small band of hardened brigands – all now working indirectly for the Roman government. Charietto actually started coordinating his efforts with the commander in chief of the Roman legions of the Rhine region. The combination of Roman strategy and Charietto's counter-guerrilla missions was very successful. In one of his expeditions, however, Charietto ran into a large band of Germans. His men deserted him and he fell in the ensuing fight.

## Adventure Seeds

Included here are adventures suitable for various *Imperial Rome* campaigns. Province-related and gladiatorial adventures can be found in Chapters 4 and 6, respectively.

### DON'T DRINK THE WINE!

An influential senator has been the target of several poisoning attempts. The first one failed because one of his slaves took a sip of the wine he was about to serve his master and keeled over dead before he could give it to him. The second left the senator alive, but partially paralyzed and blind. The PCs are put in charge of the investigation (the senator should be the Patron of one or more of them).

The likely culprits include Marcus Pompeianus, an Imperial favorite whom the senator slighted at a party. Pompeianus has been known to bear lethal grudges for less offense. The senator's son has a motive as well; his gambling and licentious lifestyle prompted the senator to reduce his money allowance. There have been sightings of several unknown Libyans around the senator's house in the city, and everyone knows that the senator's tenure as governor of Africa made him many enemies there.

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## CAMPAIGN STYLES

*GURPS Imperial Rome* can be used either in a realistic or cinematic style. In a realistic campaign, characters are heroic but down-to-earth, and their ability to change the world is limited; reckless behavior will almost certainly cause death or serious injuries. Cinematic roleplaying is full of action and swashbuckling feats; the PCs are able to outperform most other people, and they can save the Empire or change the course of history single-handedly.

In general, the point total for starting characters is higher in a cinematic than in a realistic campaign. Also, in a cinematic game historical accuracy can be secondary to having fun. Anachronisms (stirrups in the 2nd century A.D., for instance, or making the traditional legions face the Huns) can be allowed, *if* doing so will not cause conflicts between the GM and the players. Some players will prefer accuracy.

## CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

The first question a GM has to answer as he prepares a Roman campaign is "When?" The Rome of the Punic Wars was different from the Rome of Augustus, and had almost no resemblance whatsoever to the Rome the Visigoths sacked in 410 A.D. A party consisting of a private gladiatorial troupe, for instance, should be set before the Imperial period, because by that point, all gladiators worked directly for the government.

### *The Monarchy and Rome's Origins*

This period is surrounded by myth, and is the best setting for a Roman fantasy campaign. The chronicles of the time are filled with great heroes, magic and the intervention of gods. Travelers can join the cast of *The Aeneid* (see p. 105) as they move from the ruins of Troy to their future home. The information about this period is scarce and made up of old legends, so GMs can be creative in detailing the setting. A cinematic campaign could have the PCs meet or *be* characters from Greek and Roman mythology (or even Gallic or Persian beliefs).

### *The Early Republic (500-300 B.C.)*

This is a time of uncertainty for Rome, as the city faces enemies from all quarters: the Gauls, Etruscans, Samnites, Greeks, and rival Italian cities all threaten Rome. Internally, plebeians and patricians struggle for supremacy. The PCs can be military heroes, politicians, or popular leaders, or even all of those roles at different times.

### *The Punic Wars (264-146 B.C.)*

These are the three wars fought against Rome's greatest rival, the city-state of Carthage (see p. 47). This is a great setting for a military campaign. During the First Punic War, the fledgling Roman navy can be the focus of a campaign. The Second Punic War is a time of great danger for Rome; the PCs can be scouts trying to keep track of Hannibal's invading armies, or Roman generals trying to defeat the Carthaginians and their allies. Alternatively, they can be mercenaries from any nation, working for the Carthaginians.

### *Republican Rome (250-50 B.C.)*

After the fall of Carthage, Rome became the most powerful force in the Mediterranean. One by one, Greek, African, and Eastern cities and countries were absorbed into the Empire. At the same time, conflict between the conservative *optimates* and the revolutionary *populares* brought violence and intrigue to the city itself.



Romans may have problems dealing with the conquered territories. The subjugated Greeks consider their conquerors to be backward barbarians. Acts of resistance were frequent, from open rebellion to assaults on lone Romans.

In Rome itself, political battles in the Senate degenerated into actual battles in the streets. Characters can become involved in intrigue in many ways, from being actual conspirators to becoming unwitting pawns in the power struggle.

### ***The Civil Wars (50-27 B.C.)***

This marks the end of the Republic, as Caesar and Augustus fought against other Romans and created the Empire. It was a time of chaos, where capable soldiers and politicians could carve a niche in the new order – or face disaster if they backed the losing side. The PCs can be high-class Romans deciding the fate of the Republic, common soldiers or civilians swept up in the dangers of civil war, or foreigners trying to profit from Rome's internal conflict.

### ***The Early Empire (27 B.C. to 81 A.D.)***

The reign of Augustus started the true Roman Empire. For most Romans, not much changed except that the civil wars had ended. On the borders, there were still skirmishes against the German tribes in the north and the Parthians in the east. Some Emperors (Augustus and Claudius) had good, peaceful, and prosperous reigns, but others (Caligula, Nero, and Domitian) were depraved, insane, or both. Persecutions of rivals, real or imaginary, were common. The Praetorian Guard made and destroyed several Emperors.

In an Early Empire campaign, there will be plenty of intrigue, scandal, and orgies; mayhem-oriented PCs (or players) will enjoy themselves. Life in Rome for high-status characters might get *too* interesting, considering the routine massacres that some Emperors undertook. Outside the city, there is a whole Empire to conquer, administer, and visit. The villains of choice will be Germans and Parthians.

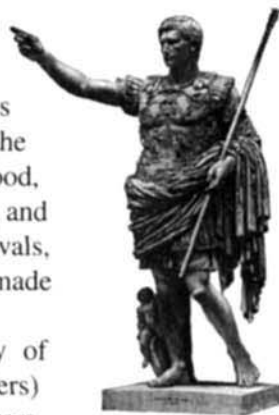
### ***The Pax Romana (96-193 A.D.)***

This is the golden age of Rome, the time of the “good Emperors.” Germans and Parthians are still threats, but of the “cold war” type. Raids and counterraid in the German frontier still continue while the Parthian Empire conspires against Rome (and vice versa). The policy of a strong frontier defense works well for over a century and the Empire is at peace within its borders. Perhaps too quiet a time for some players, but any adventure that can be set in a relatively peaceful area will run well here (hidden horrors, crime-solving, and low-key espionage all work well in this period).

### ***The Age of the Soldier-Emperors (193-284 A.D.)***

Civil wars, barbarian invasions, plagues and oppressive taxes make this a hazardous period to live in. The legions spend as much time fighting each other to put their favorites on the throne as they do facing the many foes pouring over Rome's borders. Life becomes dangerous for everyone; even a peasant deep in the Empire's heartland can have his property seized and destroyed, not by barbarians but by Roman soldiers! Goths from the north overrun large areas of the Empire, while the Persians become a new threat in the East.

The PCs can be soldiers trying to preserve the Empire or take it over, civilians trying to survive, or Goths carving up pieces of the provinces. Germans join the Roman Empire and become the backbone of the new army.



## ***Adventure Seeds***

### ***(Continued)***

The investigators have to identify the culprit (or culprits, if two of the parties above have joined forces), and then figure out a way to deal with them. Calling the authorities will do no good if the killer is the Imperial favorite, for instance.

### **INTRIGUE IN MOESIA**

The Emperor hears rumors that the governor of Moesia is plotting with Sarmatian and German tribes, allowing them to raid into the province with impunity in return for their loyalty. The Emperor cannot have the governor arrested and executed out of hand, because the suspect's family connections are too powerful. Secret agents are dispatched to discover the truth.

The PCs can be Praetorian Guards assigned to this mission, military officers recruited to assist the agents, or Romans with useful connections in the province. The investigation shows that the governor is free of guilt; instead, his attempts to stamp out abuses in the provincial administration have earned him many enemies among the civil service. The bureaucrats are trying hard to destroy him by weakening the borders. They have used red tape to delay vital supplies to frontier garrisons, and have been using agents to bribe barbarians to raid into the province.

If anyone discovers the plot, they will be the targets of the corrupt bureaucrats. Attempts on their lives and even accusations of treason will be used against them.

### **THE LONG WALK**

This is the aftermath of the battle of Carrhae (see sidebar, p. 79). Vultures flock to the desert to feast on thousands of Roman corpses. The PCs are a small knot of survivors, cut off from the rest of the army, trying to return to Roman lands. The Parthians are hunting them down. They are in a strange land, with nothing to rely on but their wits and salvaged equipment. They may not even know the language or the customs of the locals. As the water runs short, they are forced to venture into a Parthian town . . .

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## Adventure Seeds (Continued)

### THE OLD MAN AND THE BEAST

The characters are Roman soldiers, civil servants, or merchants living in an African city. They are on the market square one day when they witness two Roman soldiers mocking and beating an old man, dressed in the style of the nomadic tribes to the south. The incident is forgotten until the soldiers die within two days of the incident. One was torn apart while on sentry duty; his fellow watchmen never heard or saw a thing. The other is found in his room a day later, without a mark on him, but the expression on his face leaves no doubt that he died of fear.

The following day, another Roman who was in the plaza that day is also savagely slain. A blabbering servant keeps stuttering about a *thing* that was neither man nor beast leaping from the second floor balcony leading out of the victim's room. Whatever is doing this, it seems clear that it wants to kill all the Romans present in the market that day. What is causing these deaths, and can it be stopped before it gets too close to the party of witnesses?

### FRANKLY, SEPTIMA . . .

This adventure takes place during the Late Roman Empire. A messenger arrives at a luxurious villa and tells the Roman lady in charge that her husband has been killed in battle. Furthermore, barbarians are overrunning the province. The lady refuses to leave, even though she can only rely on her slaves and a few free servants. This is *her* land, and she will do whatever she has to keep it. The PCs are her servants or slaves, who must protect their mistress and her lands at all costs. A further challenge can be presented if there is a dearth of equipment and tools at the estate, compelling everyone to make the most of limited resources.

## Campaign Crossovers

Rome can be used as a setting or source material for several other GURPS campaigns. Listed below are some examples.

*Continued on next page . . .*

### The New Roman Empire (284-395 A.D.)

The reforms of Diocletian and Constantine (p. 59) changed the face of the Empire. For a time, Rome endured constant danger; the legions all but disappeared. The PCs can be Romanized barbarians, who use their skills to defend the Empire their fellows are destroying, citizens of the provinces facing the invaders with little or no help from the central government, or refugees from areas already devastated.

### The Fall of Rome (395-476 A.D.)

This is the most chaotic period in Rome's history. Most of the European provinces have become barbarian kingdoms; Rome is sacked and surrounded by German armies. Finally, the last Emperor of the West is deposed without a successor. This may be a disheartening period for *players*; on the other hand, things will never be boring! Roman PCs can try to come to terms with the barbarians they cannot repel or make a heroic last stand for civilization. German characters can become the rulers of the new order, if they are talented and fortunate enough to carve themselves a kingdom. Independent barbarian types can come into their own here.

# ALTERNATE HISTORIES

The GM, of course, does not have to follow the normal course of history. Sometimes, to keep players from "predicting" events, he could alter them slightly. If the PCs are trying to avoid the city of Pompeii in 79 A.D., postpone (or advance) the date of Mt. Vesuvius' eruption, or make it happen to a different Roman city! A few name and date changes will eliminate any unfair advantages knowledgeable players may have.

Going even further, the GM might want to set his campaign in an alternate history, a Rome that never was but *could have been*. What might have happened if Hannibal had sacked Rome? Or if Caesar had not been assassinated? Might an able leader have saved the Western Empire from the German barbarians? The *Timeline* on p. 62 has several dates where history might have been changed if a chance event had altered what happened in "our" timeline.

Creative campaign designers might go further. What if the Romans had developed technology beyond TL2? How would the 20th century look if the Roman Empire had never fallen but instead gone on to expand into America, all of Europe, and a large section of Africa? A struggle could be set between, say, a steam-ship driven TL5 Rome and a more populous TL4 Mongol Empire.

The advantage of an alternate history setting is that the campaign will go through totally uncharted waters. Such a campaign might range from the ludicrous/cinematic (Rome as it was during the 3rd century A.D., except the legionaries are armed with laser rifles, gladiators fight with force swords, and the games are broadcast in full holo throughout the galaxy) to the thoughtful/realistic (a portrayal of how Roman institutions such as slavery and the military would be affected by the invention of gunpowder, the cotton mill, or the steam engine).

An even more challenging version of the above involves letting the PCs play an important role in the events that will change history forever. In a cinematic campaign, a very smart character might learn the secret of gunpowder from the Chinese and pass the invention of muskets to his former schoolmate, a young legate in charge of defending the Parthian frontier. Or a party of time travelers arrives in Italy circa 400 A.D., hell-bent on preventing the sack of Rome. Will they be able to transform the remnants of the legions in time to prevent disaster?

Outlined below are two sample alternate histories of Rome. GMs can expand them into full-fledged campaigns or use them for inspiration in creating their own alternate histories. Also see the *Roma Aeterna* chapter in *GURPS Alternate Earths* for a world in which the Roman Empire continues to flourish through the 19th century.

## THE UNENDING EMPIRE

The year is 2000 A.D. – if the Christian calendar is used. To most people on Earth, this is the year 2753 A.U.C. (see sidebar, p. 18). The Roman Empire has survived for over 1,000 years, and under the rule of Antonius Augustus XXII, it now controls most of the world and the skies above it. The city of Luna, built 40 years ago, has become the stepping stone to the rest of the solar system. The Roman Empire controls all but two areas of the world. South America's Quechuan Confederation wars and competes with the Empire, while Asia, led by China and Japan, has some measure of independence.

This growth has been gradual and full of setbacks. It was not until the 26th century A.U.C. (18th century A.D.) that the American Northwest was conquered and settled by Romans, and even now North and Central America are frontier lands, plagued by constant upheaval.



### The Changes

Several factors played a part in the survival and prosperity of the Empire. Between 9 and 11 B.C., the Roman general Drusus led several legions deep into Germany, greatly expanding the Empire and killing tens of thousands of natives. Many German tribes, terrified by the Roman might, migrated eastward. All subsequent Roman campaigns against the Germans were wars of conquest instead of defensive actions.

The course of the Empire did not change again until 161 A.D. Emperor Marcus Aurelius was preparing to launch an expedition against the Parthians, but a poisoning attempt left him too ill to proceed. There was no major attack against Parthia, and the plague that broke out in the East did not affect most parts of the Roman Empire. The Emperor lived ten more years than our timeline's counterpart. When he died in 189 A.D., a successor was appointed, Aullus Germanicus.

From then on a whole new line of Emperors appeared, continuing the tradition of the Antonine Emperors (see p. 56). Few Emperors were murdered, although many of their sons and close relatives were killed whenever it seemed that an Emperor would try to bequeath the throne to one of them. The next 20 Emperors were mostly men chosen for their ability, and they ruled competently. The legions were not weakened by decades of civil war. When the Goths and later the Huns reached the Roman borders, the Roman armies repelled them.

Christianity was persecuted until the 3rd century A.D. but was finally legalized. In the prosperous Empire, it never managed to gain as many converts as it would have in times of chaos and confusion. The same happened to Mithraism. Both religions and a dozen others still compete for followers. Islam appeared in Arabia but was persecuted by the Persians and the Romans both. Mohammed never achieved any military successes and his religion gained little influence outside the Arab tribes.

## Campaign Crossovers

(Continued)

### GURPS CLIFFHANGERS

A favorite theme of pulp fiction is the lost Roman city, hidden somewhere in Africa or Asia (or even in a huge underground kingdom), where the Imperial tradition still survives. A mixed party of 1930s adventurers and New Romans, maybe fighting a common foe (another lost civilization, or exploiters from the outside world) can have some wild adventures.

Alternatively, a *Cliffhangers* campaign set in the Roman period is also possible. The PCs can be gladiators, secret Imperial agents, or barbarians fighting the evil Empire; all the cinematic storylines can be used in the *Cliffhanger* style, where death-defying stunts and narrow escapes are the order of the day.

Sources: Aaron Allston's *Lands of Mystery* is a roleplaying supplement for *Champions* using a lost world with a Roman civilization. Edgar Rice Burrough's *Tarzan and the Lost Civilization* is one of the first and best books with that theme.

### GURPS CHINA

The Chinese and Romans traded indirectly; Chinese silk made its way into Roman markets in return for Roman precious metals. Some Roman traders actually reached China during the reign of Antoninus Pius (see p. 56). The two Empires never actually interacted in history, however, although they came very close at least once. In 97 A.D., a Chinese army was sent out to conquer Rome, and was called back only a few days before it reached the Roman province of Asia Minor. What if the army had pressed on, and the world's mightiest Empires had clashed?

There is an even more interesting way to use both settings in a campaign. The disaster of Carrhae (see p. 79) in 53 B.C. resulted in the capture of about 10,000 Roman soldiers (almost two whole legions) who were sold by the Parthians as slaves. Some historians have found evidence that European mercenaries were employed by the Chinese nations of the time on their frontiers, and it is possible that those mercenaries were the Roman legions, sold by the Parthians as slave-soldiers. A campaign where some PCs are soldiers (or the commanders) of this force and others are Chinese magistrates in charge of this "barbarian" army would make for a fascinating meeting of East and West.

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## Campaign Crossovers (Continued)

### GURPS FANTASY

Magic played an important part in Roman culture. A Secret Magic campaign (see p. 116) can be played in historical Rome without problems; as far as most Romans (discounting some skeptical intellectuals) were concerned, magic *did* exist and was used to predict the future, influence events, and even kill people. Diviners and soothsayers can help motivate the PCs in the direction the GM wishes them to take. Primitive tribes fighting the Empire might have some lost secrets to use against the invaders.

A more ambitious GM might want to explore an "alternate" Rome where magic was as powerful as that in most fantasy settings. Maybe magic and thaumaturgy could be taught alongside philosophy and oratory in Roman schools. The priests of Rome might be in contact with their gods, and the Emperor would wield enormous magical, as well as political, power. The ceremony of *evocatio* (see p. 111) might be as necessary for a successful siege as the deployment of catapults and sappers.

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During the 6th century, probes into Asia resulted in a war with China. The Empire did not expand much beyond the limits of its "mainstream" counterpart, but was able to keep peace within its borders. Because of the cultural interchange with Asia, Western and Eastern ideas met and mingled and technological advances were made. Peace and a high literacy rate also helped, although dependency on slavery slowed the development of labor-saving devices.

A form of printing press was invented in the city of Pergamum in 912 A.D. Black powder was first used by the Chinese in 1016, and the Romans adopted it for use in explosives by 1100. The first cannon (*ballista ignea*) was demonstrated for Emperor Constans Arabicus in 1200 A.D. By 1300 A.D. some legions were equipped with flintlock muskets (*pilum igneum*). The first steam engines were developed in 1100 A.D., but were not put into general use for centuries.

Several Emperors sponsored thinkers and inventors. Most of their work went into creating amusing toys for the nobility, from delicate bronze automatons to crank generators that produced audience-pleasing electrical sparks. The research also led to the invention of the telegraph and the railroad (*via ferrea*). The first steamship was launched in 1400 A.D. It was designed for river travel on the Nile.

In all technological fields the Romans enjoyed a large lead over the rest of the world. The Persian Empire was wracked by civil wars, failed attempts to conquer India, and the steady encroachment of Rome. It adopted firearms almost a century after the Romans did. China's history remained largely unchanged. The Mongols overran Persia in the 13th century A.D. but made only a little headway in the Roman Empire before being turned back.

By 1700 A.D./2453 A.U.C., Rome controlled all of Western Europe and had reached TL5. It expanded to the East, conquering the remnants of the Persian Empire, Central Africa, and most of Northern India. Expeditions to the West discovered first



Iceland and then America (*Terra Nova*). Colonies were established in North America and the Aztec Empire was conquered by 1800 A.D. The Inca Empire had reached TL4 independently, however, and was able to fight the Romans off.

### Rome: 2000

Rome now has the equivalent of a constitutional monarchy. Each new Emperor is chosen by the Senate and is then formally "adopted" by the reigning one. For the last 200 years, the practice has been plagued by corruption and intrigue, but the system works after a fashion.

Technologically, Rome has reached TL8 in most fields. Slavery still exists, but the use of robots and computers has greatly reduced the percentage of slaves in the population. Only the very wealthy still own slaves. Arena games are televised via satellite, and car races are very popular. There is also a combination of arena combat and car racing that has begun to catch on; armored vehicles battle each other while racing on an obstacle course.

Culturally, there have not been too many changes. Women have acquired more rights but are still second-class citizens. There have been several populist movements, and citizens have some voting power over local officials, but the Emperor and the Senate still have enormous power. Large masses of urban poor survive on the grain dole and live in substandard conditions in crowded slums.

This setting can be used with *GURPS Cyberpunk*. Senate members and trading houses have as much power as any corporation in most standard cyberpunk settings. Independence movements on four continents generate conflict and challenges. Whether they are fighting the mightiest Empire the world has ever seen or are working for it, PCs will have their hands full.

## MAGIC ROME

*The conspirators exchanged one more glance. At Cassius' nod they spread out and surrounded the aging man climbing the steps of the Capitol. Already Metellus accosted him, begging for a pardon that could not be granted. But even as Caesar dismissed Metellus, Brutus blocked his way and the men rushed in for the kill. "For the Republic!" Brutus screamed as he thrust the dagger at the dictator.*

*The blade glanced off, deflected by an invisible force.*

*Caesar's expression never changed even as several more blows landed and were turned aside, one making a small cut on his shoulder. The dictator pointed an outstretched arm at the paling Brutus. "Et tu, Brute?" he asked. A stream of flame leaped from Caesar's hand and struck the young man's chest. The conspirators scattered as Brutus fell to the ground, toga ablaze.*

*Cassius stepped back, his eyes narrowed into slits, his hands working the arcane gestures of a spell. Caesar did not give him a chance; the flame jet turned on the sorcerer. Cassius shrieked and collapsed, the spell he had tried to prepare dissipating harmlessly. The dictator managed to set two more men on fire before the last conspirators fled into the city.*

*As several gaping senators surrounded Caesar, the dictator allowed himself a smile. Keeping his abilities a secret had paid off handsomely. The Romanized Druid who had trained him in Gaul had done a magnificent job. When the soothsayer warned him of the conspiracy, he had refused to change his schedule, but he had readied a spell of protection and had prepared himself for just such an eventuality.*

*"You fool," he muttered to Brutus' smoldering form. "Power comes in many forms. I would not be Caesar without using them all."*



## Campaign Crossovers (Continued)

*Sources:* Harry Turtledove's *Videssos* cycle deals with the adventures of a Roman army that, through Gallic magic, finds itself transported to a land where magic is real and common. Furthermore, the land where they arrive, the Empire of Videssos, is almost identical to the Byzantine Empire (see p. 59) with the addition of magic. Another series by Turtledove, *The Tale of Krispos*, gives more information on Videssos. GMs interested in adding magic to Rome should consult those books.

### GURPS HORROR

The city of Rome was a capital city teeming with hundreds of thousands of inhabitants. What hidden horrors could dwell in the city's underbelly? Mystery cults abounded in the Roman world; some in fact were accused of practicing human sacrifices and worshipping evil beings. And the frontiers of the Empire were largely uncharted areas where strange peoples (and creatures) might hide and threaten unwary travelers.

Roman scholars with a bent for the supernatural would become occult investigators, different from their Victorian or modern counterparts only by their wearing of togas instead of tweed jackets. A Roman magistrate investigating a series of murders will be as shaken by unearthly twists as a 1920s policeman. Themes and characters from most *Horror* campaigns can be transplanted to Rome, where investigators will have to contend with the mundane dangers and problems of the Empire as well as the supernatural ones.

*Sources:* David Drake has written several excellent novels and short stories about supernatural or simply terrifying events in the Roman Empire. The short story collection *From the Heart of Darkness* and the novel *Killer* are full of examples of horror and dark fantasy in Rome.

### GURPS SPACE

In an Alternate History campaign (see p. 120), Rome might have survived to launch its own Space Age. PCs can be explorers and soldiers launching their *Trireme*-class starships toward brave new worlds. Or legionaries in battlesuits can exchange nuclear missiles with Chinese cybertanks on futuristic battlefields.

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## Campaign Crossovers (Continued)

Another possibility is to bring *Space* to Rome. Aliens might crash-land, send spies, or even launch wars of invasion against a primitive Earth. Rome can be used as the setting of secret invasions (imagine remaking *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* in 100 A.D. Rome – perhaps you'd better have *GURPS Horror* on hand as well) or even overt ones (Romans against Martians in a twist on the *War of the Worlds*).

*Sources:* David Drake and Karl Edward Wagner's novel, *Killer*, deals with an alien beast stranded in the Imperial city. A ex-gliadiator turned beast-hunter teams up with an alien agent to retrieve it. Another Drake novel, *Ranks of Bronze*, uses the survivors of Carrhae (see *GURPS China*, p.121), with this premise: what if the survivors had been sold to a space-faring guild to be used against primitive civilizations across the galaxy?

### GURPS SPECIAL OPS

Although the Roman army did not have official Special Ops units, it used elite soldiers and agents for covert operations, ranging from night raids on enemy camps to the assassination of rebel leaders. Some of these crack teams included gladiators, gifted soldiers, and provincials with talents for woodcraft and stealth. An example of large-scale use of special forces was Emperor Valens' employment of small elite squads, numbering a total of 2,000 men operating out of several cities. These squads successfully used guerrilla tactics against a large army of Goths in 378 A.D., and were successful, but Roman officers jealous of the glory of the commander of this elite unit urged the Emperor to attack the Goths in the open, resulting in the disaster of Adrianople (see p. 83).

A GM wishing to run a tongue-in-cheek *Special Ops* campaign in a low-tech setting could tinker with history a little and create an elite corps of soldiers (maybe a secret *Praetorian Guard* unit) that is sent on special missions around the Empire. It can be played like a modern-day campaign, simply replacing MP-5 submachine guns with daggers and short swords. The characters will have less firepower to rely on, and will have to use their wits more often. An inventive GM might also delve into *Black Ops* for truly twisted adventure ideas.

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In this world, Roman history remained largely unchanged until the 3rd century B.C. Magic existed, but it was a fickle and unreliable force; most of the world was a low-mana zone (see p. B147). Shortly after the end of the Punic Wars, however, something triggered a massive change in the world's mana levels. Strange lights burned in the sky, and earthquakes and volcanic eruptions shook the earth. Mount Vesuvius erupted and destroyed Pompeii (see p. 54) centuries before its time. Spells and curses that had no effect before the upheavals suddenly worked again. Still, few Romans took magic seriously. When battles against the Gauls and the Numidians turned into defeats after mages and shamans used magic against the legions, the Senate dismissed such tales as excuses for cowardice. Some prominent Romans started using soothsayers and private magicians, however, and even studied the art themselves.

When Caesar campaigned in Gaul, he witnessed first-hand the effectiveness of magic. He developed tactics to counter magic and then incorporated sorcerers into his armies, first using sympathetic Gallic mages and then training Roman soldiers with the natural talent. The general himself proved to have great aptitude for magic, and learned spells in secret. After foiling his murder attempt, he used his dictatorial powers to legalize magic – provided it was used in the service of the State.

Now magic is regulated by the Republic (Caesar is still reigning as dictator). A Sorcerers' Corps is attached to the legions. Rome's systematic approach to magic is paying off, as more spells and formulas are discovered by researchers. At the same time, private magicians and soothsayers are being persecuted relentlessly through the Empire. Those who are captured are crucified or enslaved.

What changes will be made in Roman history, with Caesar living and magic a powerful force? Whatever the answer, PCs in this setting will have their hands full with military action, political intrigue, and arcane sorcery. See pp. 114-116 for more on magic.

## CAMPAIGN THEMES

Once a setting is decided on, the central theme of a campaign should be chosen. This theme does not have to last for the whole campaign (an *Army Life* campaign could turn into a *Public Service* one after the PCs rise from their military posts to jobs in the government, for instance), but it will provide a focus for the first adventures, dictating the types of PCs that will be allowed in a campaign and the general direction the campaign will go.

Generally, a party where all the characters are from a similar social background will work best for extended campaigns. A party consisting of two gladiators, a centurion, a junior senator, and a trader may stay together for the course of an adventure (if they are in a ship attacked by pirates, for instance) but afterwards the characters would go their separate ways unless provided with a binding (and unusual) reason to stay together.

### Army Life

Soldiering, on and off the battlefield, is the focus of this type of campaign. The PCs can be anything from lowly privates to the consuls in command of the entire army. In times of war, they can expect to do a lot of marching and sailing as they travel to strange lands to fight enemies of the Republic or the Empire. During peacetime, the soldiers will stay in one place longer and will be able to build a life there while engaging in all sort of pursuits, from hunting down bandits and guerrillas to building bridges.

Warfare need not be the center of this type of campaign. Like the soldiers of most modern armies, Roman soldiers rarely if ever saw combat. While stationed at a post, Roman soldiers can be involved in murder mysteries, courtly intrigue, espionage missions, and many other situations. Besides enemy armies, soldiers will be threatened by corrupt or inept governors, natural disasters, civilian riots, or mischief from a hostile populace. There can be plenty of military action, of course. During the course of Roman

history, there were very few years where there was no war on at least one of the Empire's frontiers.

Besides Roman soldiers, PCs can be camp followers, foreign auxiliaries, engineers, or doctors. They will be less restricted by military discipline in these cases, allowing more leisure during peacetime and more opportunities to find trouble.

*Sources:* The *Videssos Cycle* novels by Harry Turtledove describe the tactics and life of the legions.

### Public Service

The PCs are (or are working for) members of the patrician class. During his career, a Roman nobleman could expect to be an officer in the army, hold several public offices in the capital, and serve in or govern a far-off province. All types of adventures, from military action to intrigue in exotic lands, can be introduced into the campaign.

At least one of the PCs should be a nobleman (either a senator or a close subordinate); the rest can be bodyguards, personal agents, professional administrators, or foreign allies. Adversaries can come from rival factions within the Empire, wild barbarian tribes, fanatical cults, rebellious provinces, and a myriad of other forces.

*Sources:* *The First Man in Rome* by Colleen McCullough.

### The Game's the Thing

This is the arena campaign (for more information, see Chapter 6). All or most of the PCs are gladiators, risking their lives for fame and fortune, or because they have no other choice. This does not have to be a hack-and-slash campaign – in fact, most professional gladiators fought only a few times a year. Any sort of realistic campaign would address the question of what gladiators did the rest of the time.

The answer can be as varied and interesting as the GM wants it to be. Gladiators can be busy seducing the wives of noblemen (and afterwards covering their tracks and evading the wrath of jealous husbands), teaching their craft to wealthy youngsters or even whole Roman armies, hiring themselves out as bodyguards or secret agents, engaging in covert or criminal activities, becoming the unwitting pawns of court intrigue, or all of the above. And, once in a while, the climax of these activities can be played out in the arena, where the audience is unaware of the hidden issues that lie between a seemingly simple duel between two men.

### Freedom Fighters

The PCs are battling the Empire, struggling to liberate their nation, their people, or (in the case of slaves) themselves. Examples include Jewish Zealots in Palestine, Celtic rebels in France, Spain, and Britain, and Spartacus' slaves and gladiators. In a realistic campaign, the struggle will be a grim one, with the better equipped and organized legions steadily isolating and destroying the rebels – it would be unlikely that any PC action would alter the outcome of the siege of Masada, for instance.

In a cinematic campaign, the heroes are larger-than-life powerhouses, and the Empire can be portrayed as an evil but incompetent institution (in a realistic campaign set in the latter Imperial period, the Empire *is* incompetent and decaying). Guerrilla warfare will work best against the legions, which are designed to fight in the open. Assassination and sabotage could demoralize a garrison and even force it to flee. Imaginative *Special Ops* tactics should be rewarded by the GM.

*Sources:* The movie *Spartacus*. The *Asterix* comic book series is a humorous extreme of the freedom-fighter storyline.

## Campaign Crossovers

(Continued)

### GURPS TIME TRAVEL

Rome is a favorite spot for time travelers. As the civilization that shaped the Western world, the Imperial period is a critical historical point. Time tinkers with a political agenda might want to cause or prevent such events as Caesar's assassination, the crucifixion of Jesus, the Sack of Rome, the destruction of Jerusalem, Hannibal's invasion of Italy, the rise of Christianity, the conquest of Britain, the conquest of Gaul... the list is endless.

Or, if Rome had endured to become a technological empire, it might have developed its own dimension-traveling techniques. Its intention: to ensure that all other parallel realities have a 10,000-year Empire. Maybe the Time Patrol is engaged in a secret war with Roman agents for control of the Multiverse – an interesting situation for PCs on either side of the struggle.

*GURPS Timeline* has two scenarios based on historical Roman reference points. *The First Sack of Rome* (pp. TI31-32) lets time travelers witness and interfere with the siege of the city by Brennus the Gaul in 390 B.C. *The Chinese Invasion of Rome* (pp. TI37-38) discusses how East almost met West around 97 A.D.

*Sources:* David Drake's *Birds of Prey*: a time traveler from the far future recruits an Imperial agent to track down a threat against humanity, hidden in the decaying Roman Empire of 262 A.D.



### GURPS RIVERWORLD

In this series by Philip José Farmer, everyone who ever lived on Earth is reborn on the shores of an enormous river. If you put enough Romans together in one place, they *will* rebuild something like the Empire or the Republic. Maybe the reborn Julius Caesar will reform his legions and march against a multinational host led by Hannibal! PCs from different periods of Roman history would have a lot of things to disagree on, even as they faced strangers from other times and places.

# GLOSSARY

**aediles:** The first administrators of the city of Rome.  
**augur:** Seer or soothsayer.  
**augustales:** Priests (appointed from wealthy freedmen) devoted to the Imperial cult.  
**bagaudae:** Bands of impoverished Gallic peasants who terrorized the countryside during Diocletian's reign.  
**ballista:** Siege weapon, either a catapult or a giant crossbow.  
**barritus:** A battle cry used by the Roman legions.  
**basilica:** Courthouse.  
**cella:** Small chapel in a mansion.  
**centuria:** Century, a military unit 80 to 100 men strong.  
**centurio:** Centurion, a Roman officer.  
**cohors:** A cohort, a military unit 500 to 1,000 men strong.  
**Cohortes Urbanae:** City Cohorts. The city's garrison, to be called on in times of trouble.  
**comissatio:** Roman social gathering held after dinner.  
**consul:** Chief Roman magistrate during the Republican era. Two consuls were elected by the Senate every year.  
**corvus:** A hooked gangplank used to link ships before boarding.  
**curator:** A city administrator. Each was in charge of a different city function, like water supply, grain supply, etc.  
**curia:** An assembly meeting hall.  
**curiosus:** Spy, scout, or secret agent.  
**Cursus Publicus:** The public post, a messenger service widely used by ambassadors and statesmen.  
**decurio:** Decurion, military officer in charge of a body of cavalry.  
**denarius:** A Roman coin, worth about \$1 during the Imperial period.  
**Dominus:** Master; form of address implying slavish deference; sometimes a title given to one's patron.  
**domus:** High-class house or mansion.  
**equites:** The equestrian or knightly class, who originally acted as cavalry for the Roman army.  
**evocatio:** A traditional ceremony symbolizing the defeat and city's capture.



**flamines:** Priests devoted to the god Vulcan.  
**foederati:** Allies.  
**forum** (plural *fora*): Public building.  
**fuxina:** A gladiatorial trident, used by the *retarius* class gladiators.  
**galerus:** A leather and bronze armband, used by gladiators.  
**garum:** Fermented sauce made from fish.  
**gladius:** Short stabbing sword of the legions.  
**grammaticus:** The first school a wealthy Roman child attended.  
**Gutones:** The Goths.  
**hasta:** A heavy spear used by the early Roman legions.  
**honestiores:** Honorable people, as seen through the eyes of the law – mostly noblemen and the wealthy.  
**humiliores:** Dishonorable people as seen through the eyes of the law – usually poor and uneducated Romans.  
**iaculum:** A gladiatorial net.  
**insula** (plural *insulae*): Apartment building.  
**judex:** Judge.  
**lanista:** Gladiator trainer.  
**lares:** Roman domestic spirits.  
**legatus:** Legate, the commander of a legion. Also, an ambassador, envoy or high-ranking deputy.  
**legion:** A military unit made up of maniples, cohorts, and/or centuries. The equivalent of a modern division.  
**liberti:** Freedmen – former slaves.  
**limitanei:** Roman soldiers who guarded the Empire's borders.  
**ludia:** Female mistresses of gladiators.  
**Magister militum:** Master of soldiers, the leader of the Roman legions.  
**maniple:** A legion unit of between 60 and 120 men.  
**mansio:** Rural staging posts that could house messengers during the night.  
**matrona:** A married woman.  
**optimates:** Conservatives in the Senate, who wanted to preserve the power of the nobility.  
**palatium:** The Imperial palace.  
**palla:** A shawl-like outer garment worn by Roman women.  
**pater familias:** The eldest male of a family, and head of the household.  
**patricius:** Patrician, Roman nobleman.

**penates:** Roman household deities.  
**pilum** (plural *pila*): A javelin used by the legions.  
**plebs:** The plebeian class, made up of free non-noble Roman citizens.  
**pompa:** A procession before the games that announced the sponsor.  
**pontifex maximus:** Roman high priest.  
**populares:** Senators who wanted to give more rights to the equestrian and plebeian classes.  
**praefectus:** A Roman city manager or administrator, assigned by the Emperor.  
**praefectus vigilum:** The centurion in charge of the *vigiles*.  
**Praetorian Guard:** The Emperor's personal bodyguard.  
**princeps:** Literally "First Citizen," a title sometimes given to the Emperor.  
**principes:** A military unit made up of maniples.  
**rex:** King.  
**rhetor:** Secondary school for Romans.  
**scutum:** A large shield, used by the legionaries.  
**serica:** Silk.  
**sesterce:** A Roman coin. At first it was the base unit of currency, but inflation devalued it.  
**sica:** A heavy chopping sword, used by Thracian gladiators.  
**sicarius:** Assassin or mugger.  
**signifer:** Standard bearer, low-ranking officer.  
**stola:** Long cloth worn by Roman women.  
**strigilis:** A scraper used to clean off dirt.  
**spina:** Literally "backbone," the central wall of the *Circus Maximus*.  
**thermae:** Roman baths and bathhouses.  
**toga:** White outer garment worn by Romans on formal occasions.  
**toga virilis:** A plain white toga, worn by young plebeians once they turned 16.  
**tribunus:** Tribune, either a military officer in charge of a cohort or a civilian government official representing the interests of the plebeian class.  
**triclinium:** Roman dining room.  
**tunica:** Tunic.  
**turma:** A cavalry squadron.  
**venator:** Hunter.  
**via:** Main road.  
**vigiles:** City watchmen.  
**villa:** Roman country house.



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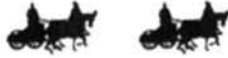
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*The Eternal City*. Edited by David Drake. Stories by several SF authors set in or dealing with Rome.

The *Falco* novels (*The Silver Pigs*, *Venus in Copper*, *Shadows in Bronze*, *The Iron Hand of*

*Mars*, *Poseidon's Gold*, *Last Act in Palmyra*, *Time to Depart*, *A Dying Light in Corduba*, *Three Hands in a Fountain*, *Two for the Lions*, et al.). Lindsey Davis' excellent series of novels about the adventures of Falco, a private detective in Rome in the 70s A.D.

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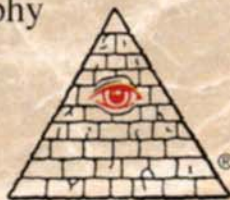
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Written by  
C.J. Carella  
Edited by  
Jeremy Zauder  
Cover by  
Rowena  
Maps by  
Mike Naylor  
Illustrated by  
David Day,  
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