



# THE ROMANS AND THEIR WORLD

A SHORT INTRODUCTION

BRIAN CAMPBELL

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## The Romans and Their World

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BRIAN CAMPBELL

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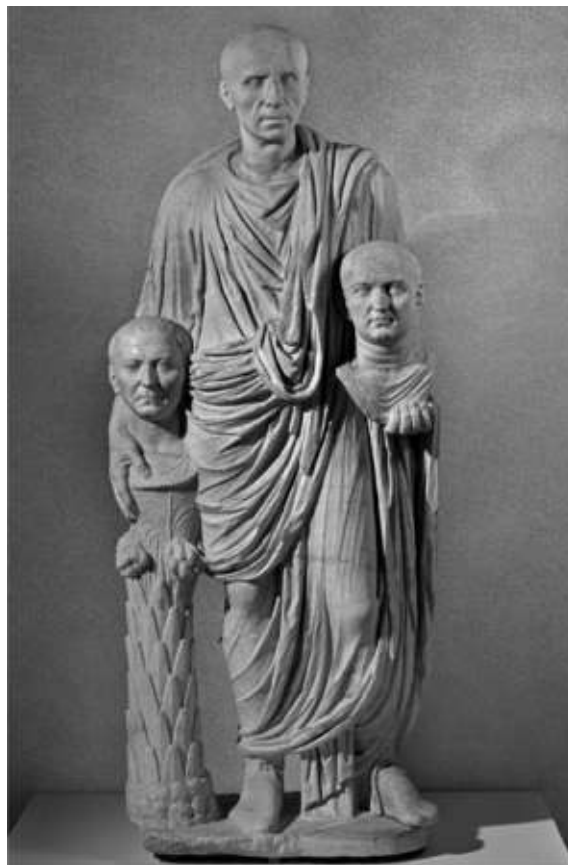
1. These holes dug on the summit of the Palatine Hill were intended to support the wooden framework of primitive huts and are the earliest evidence for settlement of the site in the Iron Age, ninth–eighth centuries BC.



2. The Capitoline Wolf. This bronze statue of a she-wolf probably dating from the sixth century BC suggests that the foundation story of Romulus and Remus was of an early date. During the Renaissance the figures of the boys were added.



3. François Tomb at Vulci. Wall paintings from this fourth-century BC tomb depict events from Greek mythology and Etruscan history, perhaps an incident in a war waged by Vulci against outsiders. On the left the Etruscan hero Macstrna frees a captive who and his comrades kill enemy soldiers whom they have apparently taken by surprise. On the extreme right the victim about to be killed is Cneve Tarchunies Rumach, Gnaeus Tarquinius from Rome (Cornell (1995), p. 138).



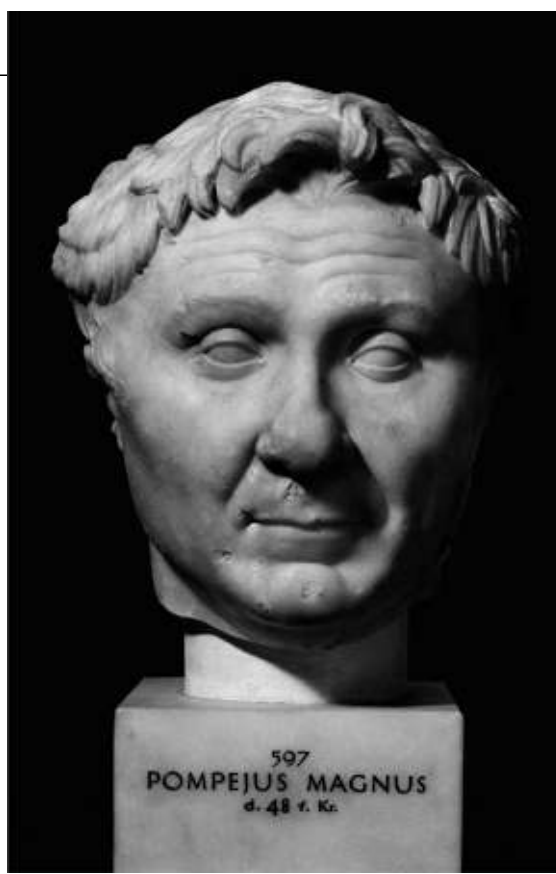
4. This statue probably dating from the time of Augustus shows a Roman nobleman carrying images of his ancestors. It was the practice to bring ancestral death masks to a funeral to demonstrate the importance of the family.



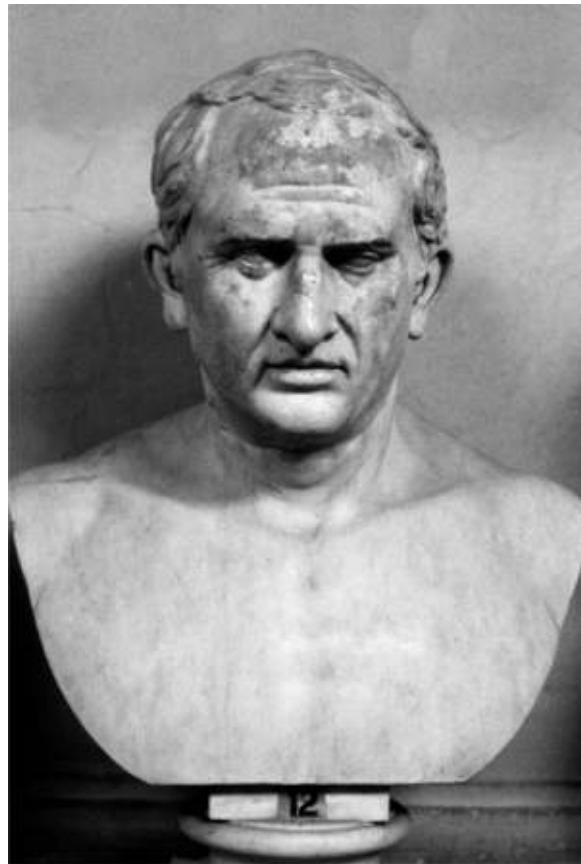
5. This denarius minted in Rome in 113 or 112 BC celebrates the voting process. Obverse: Helmeted head of goddess Roma with legend ROMA. Reverse: on the left a man receives from the figure standing below a ballot on which he can record his choice. The figure on the right has crossed the gangway and is placing his ballot in the voting urn. The purpose of the gangway was to prevent interference with or intimidation of the voters. The sign above carries the first letter of the voting tribe represented. P. Nerva is the name of the moneyer responsible for minting the coin (M.H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (1974), no. 292).



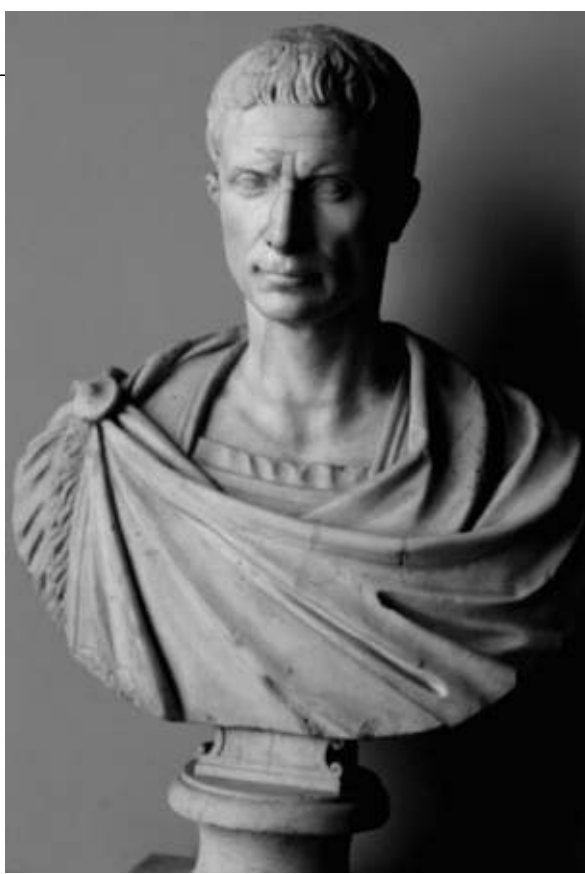
6. Triumphal Monument of Cornelius Sulla depicting a suit of armour, two trophies with armour, and a shield with the helmeted head of Rome, suggesting that Sulla's victory was that of the state.



7. Portrait of Pompey. His unconstitutional career was instrumental in the fall of the Republic, although he ended his life as its defender.



8. Portrait of Cicero. Orator, constitutional theorist, philosopher and assiduous correspondent, Cicero was one of the leading players in the last generation of the Republic and helped to make it one of the best-known periods of Roman history.



9. Portrait of Caesar. Ruthless in achievement of what he considered to be his proper place in Roman society, he combined the skills of a decisive and aggressive general with the abilities of an orator and writer. His political skills, however, failed to find an accommodation between his dominant position and the framework of the Republic.



10. Denarius minted in Rome, 44 BC. Obverse: wreathed head of Caesar; legend: CAESAR DICT PERPETVO (Dictator in perpetuity). Reverse: Venus, holding Victory in her right hand and a sceptre in her left; at the bottom of the sceptre is a shield; legend: P. SERVILIUS MACER (the moneyer). The Julian family claimed descent from Venus and Aeneas (M.H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (1974), no. 480 (6)).



11. Denarius 43–42 BC, from mint moving with Brutus. Obverse: head of Brutus; legend: BRUTUS IMP (Brutus Imperator), L. Plaet(orius) Cest(ianus) (the moneyer). Reverse: slave's cap of liberty, two daggers with the legend: Ides of March; the cap of liberty was traditionally worn by slaves when they received their freedom. Brutus followed Caesar by having his image on the coinage, often seen as a mark of kingship (M.H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (1974), no. 508).



12. Denarius 36 BC and after, from mint moving with Octavian. Obverse: head of Octavian with legend: IMP CAESAR DIVI F II VIR ITER RPC (Imperator Caesar, son of a god, triumvir for the second time for setting the state in order). Reverse: temple with four columns and a star in pediment; veiled figure inside holding a lituus (staff carried by priests); lighted altar; the inscription on architrave of temple reads DIVO IUL (In honour of the Divine Julius); legend COS ITER ET TER DESIG (consul for the second time and designated for a third). This coin celebrates Octavian's relationship with Julius Caesar, now a god with his own temple; the star represents his ascent to heaven (M.H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (1974), no. 540).



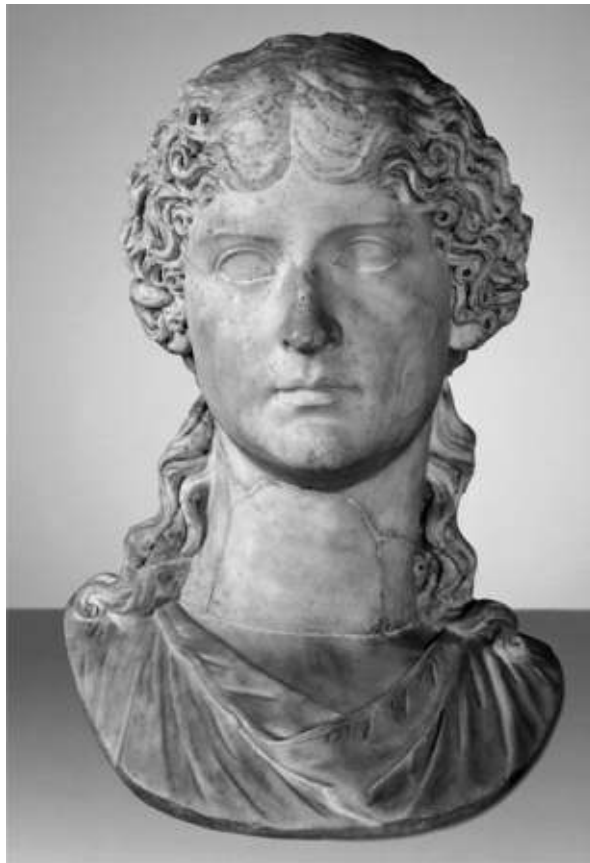
13. This statue of Augustus was found during the excavation at Prima Porta of a villa that probably belonged to Augustus's wife Livia, and represents Augustus in the dress of a Roman general. The central scene depicted on his armour shows a Parthian returning a Roman military standard, either to Augustus's stepson Tiberius, or possibly to Mars, the god of war. This celebrates Augustus's recovery of military standards (in reality as the result of a diplomatic deal) lost by Crassus and Antony.



14. Denarius 28 BC, eastern mint (?). Obverse: head of Octavian with legend: CAESAR COS VI (Caesar, consul for the sixth time). Reverse: crocodile with legend: AEGYPTO CAPTA (the capture of Egypt). This celebrates Octavian's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra and the addition of Egypt to the Roman Empire (*The Roman Imperial Coinage I*<sup>2</sup>, no. 275a).



15. Ara Pacis. The Altar of Peace was voted in honour of Augustus by the senate in 13 BC. The enclosing wall depicts the arrival of the priestly orders and imperial family at the altar. Various scenes emphasize the blessings of peace established by Augustus.



16. Portrait of Agrippina the Elder (14 BC–AD 33). Agrippina was the daughter of Marcus Agrippa and Augustus's daughter Julia, and was married to Germanicus, who was subsequently adopted by Tiberius. Germanicus died in AD 19 after which relations between Tiberius and Agrippina declined since she may have suspected the emperor of plotting against her husband and then against her family. Eventually banished from Rome she was starved to death in exile.





17. Tombstone of Marcus Caelius, a centurion who was killed in the military disaster in Germany in AD 9 under the command of Quinctilius Varus; see p. 106.



18. This statue found at Lanuvium shows the emperor Claudius in the guise of Jupiter, supreme god of the Roman state, whose bird was the eagle. The emperor wears an oak wreath and holds a sacrificial offering bowl in his right hand, emphasizing his role in the life of the Roman state. The statue illustrates the tradition of idealized portraiture of imperial figures. Claudius suffered from various physical and mental problems and was not naturally a charismatic figure.



19. Brass sestertius, AD 71, mint of Rome and Lugdunum. Obverse: Vespasian; legend: IMP CAESAR VESPASIANUS AUGUSTUS PM T P P COS III (Imperator Caesar Vespasian Augustus, pontifex maximus, holding tribunician power, father of the fatherland, consul for the third time). Reverse: wreath with legend inside: The Senate and people of Rome: In Honour of the Restorer of the State's Liberty. Vespasian celebrates the liberty of Roman people achieved under his rule, in contrast to the tyranny of Nero (*The Roman Imperial Coinage* II, no. 456).



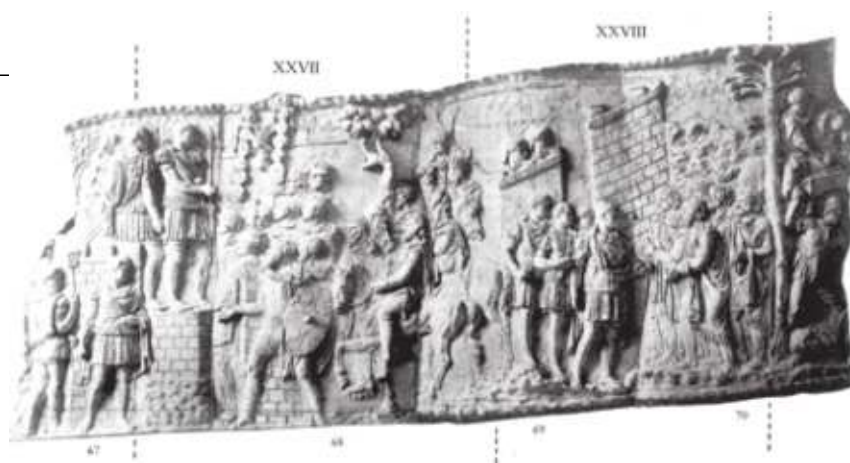
20. Bronze military diploma of AD 103 showing holes for binding wire. This folding tablet was carried by a soldier to prove his entitlement to the benefits and status of a veteran; a copy was kept in Rome.



21. This gilded silver helmet, dating from the third–early fourth centuries ad, was found at Deurne in Holland and belonged to a cavalryman; it has a ridge and nasal-piece, and is divided into six segments with an embossed anchor on each.



22. This is a view looking down from the fortifications of Masada towards the Roman siege mound. Masada is an isolated plateau 1,500 feet high on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Herod had enhanced the fortifications and built a palace. Masada fell to the Romans in AD 73 or 74 at the end of the Jewish rebellion; see p. 159.



23. Two scenes from the column of Trajan, which stood 38 metres high topped with a threemetre statue of the emperor in military dress. It was voted by senate and people partly to celebrate the extent of Trajan's building work in his new forum. But it was also monument to the Roman army's victorious campaigns against the Dacians, and Trajan's personal leadership. A continuous frieze 200 metres long carved on the shaft tells the story of the two Dacian wars. Of the scenes illustrated, one depicts Trajan standing on a high tribunal with his officers addressing the troops, who line up with their standards. The other depicts Trajan again with his officers, receiving a deputation of Dacians. See F. Lepper and S. Frere, *Trajan's Column* (1988).



24. Brass sestertius AD 104–111, mint of Rome. Obverse: head of Trajan; legend: IMP CAES NERVAE OPTIMO PRINCIPI TRAIANO AUG GER DAC PM TR P COS V PP (In honour of Emperor Caesar Nerva Trajan Most Excellent Augustus, Germanicus Dacicus, pontifex maximus, holding tribunician power, consul for the fifth time, father of the fatherland). Reverse: the personified figure of the river Danube grabs Dacia (in female form) by the throat and presses down on her with his knee; legend: SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI SC (The senate and people of Rome to the most excellent princeps; by decree of the senate). The image vividly portrays how the river Danube itself has been recruited to fight on the Roman side. (*Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* III, p. 168, no. 793).



25. Brass sestertius, ad 116–117, mint of Rome. Obverse: head of Trajan; legend: IMP CAES NER TRAIANO OPTIMO AUG GER DAC PARTHICO PM TR P COS VI PP (In honour of Emperor Caesar Nerva Trajan Most Excellent Augustus, Germanicus Dacicus Parthicus, pontifex maximus, holding tribunician power, consul for the sixth time, father of the fatherland). Reverse: Trajan in military dress holding a spear in his right hand and parazonium in his left. The river gods of the Euphrates and Tigris recline at his feet and between them sits the personified figure of Armenia; legend: Armenia and Mesopotamia brought within the power of the Roman

people; by decree of the senate. Despite the positive message of the coinage the invasion of Parthia was ultimately a disaster (Cotton, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum III*, p. 221, no. 1033).

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26. This sandstone tombstone, c. AD 80, found in Lancaster, honours an auxiliary cavalryman, Insus, son of Vodullus. He is depicted holding the severed head of an enemy who has fallen beneath his horse's hooves.



27. This sepulchral relief, dating from the time of Augustus, probably came from a tomb near Rome and shows L. Vibius and his wife; the figure of the boy between them may represent the funeral mask of their dead child; he bears a striking resemblance to Vibius.



28. This arch was erected in the Roman forum in AD 81–82 by the senate and people in honour of Titus and his victory over the Jewish rebellion in ad 70 and the sack of Jerusalem. This scene depicts Titus's triumphal procession in which he rides in a chariot accompanied by the goddesses Victoria and Roma.



29. The Circus Maximus from the scale model of ancient Rome in the Museo della Civiltà Romana. The Circus was Rome's oldest public space and lay in the valley between the Palatine and Aventine hills. By the end of the first century AD it had a capacity of up to 250,000, with a track 540 metres long by 80 metres wide. It was used for staging various games but principally chariot racing; there were twelve starting gates at the western end, a central barrier (spina) contained ornamented lap counters to mark the seven laps of a race, conical turning posts (metae), and two obelisks originally from Egypt.



30. This sepulchral monument from Foligno in Italy dating from the second or third centuries AD depicts a chariot race in the Circus Maximus.



31. The Pantheon in Rome. This temple was originally planned by Marcus Agrippa but was completed in its present form by Hadrian and dedicated to all the gods. The traditional porch leads to a circular room 43.3 metres in both diameter and height, illuminated by a single central oculus nine metres in diameter. The inscription above the porch refers to Agrippa's original work: Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, consul for the third time, made [this].



32. The Ludovisi Sarcophagus, named after its first owner, dates from the mid-third century AD and depicts a battle between Roman troops and barbarians. The Romans are winning though the scene is extremely violent and perhaps reflects something of Rome's struggles with barbarian peoples in the third century. The commander on horseback in the centre of the battle may originally have been buried within the sarcophagus.



33. This bronze equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, now stands in the Capitoline Museum in Rome, with a copy outside in the Piazza del Campidoglio.



34. The aqueduct at Segovia in Spain was built from granite blocks during the reign of Claudius; the arcade of arches is 728 metres long with a height of 28 metres; the water was carried in the covered channel on top of the second row of arches. It took its water from the Rio Acebeda about twelve kilometres south of the city.



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