CHAPTER 7
The Han Empire: Why Was It Crucial for China's History?

The borders of the Han Empire somewhat resemble those of modern China. The Han dynasty, which began in 202 B.C. when a rebel named Liu Bang overthrew the Qin rulers and seized their throne, lasted four hundred years. But by resurrecting the ancient Chinese philosophical classics and establishing their ideas as the fundamentals on which the government of imperial China rested, the Han dynasty left an indelible mark on the Chinese people and their culture. For example, the Chinese ever since have called themselves "the Han."

The Han period was one of great prosperity. Trade in silk, wax, and cloth helped raise living standards to new highs. Efficient agricultural production allowed Han China to feed the world's largest population.

To govern the state, the Han emperors selected men who had passed a series of examinations in order to qualify for the civil service. Rather than depend on unreliable aristocrats, the Han wanted the most talented people to fill their bureaucracy. Begun in 124 B.C., this examination system lasted until the early twentieth century. The writings of Confucius and of Confucian scholars were among the most important subjects tested in these examinations.

In reading the selections that follow, focus your attention on the ways in which the Han emperors sought and maintained power, on who assisted them in governing, and on the political ideas on which they based their authority. Ask yourself: What were the forces that made Han China a stable society? What factors undermined its stability? And was this a just society?

SELECTION 1:

The Gao Zu Emperor's Wars

This selection is taken from an account by the most important ancient Chinese historian, Sima Quan, who became the court historian in 108 B.C. His dynastic histories provided a model for all later Chinese historians' writings about their nation's past. He opens his story with the revolution against the Qin that brought Liu Bang to power. On becoming the ruler, Liu Bang adopted the name of "the Gao Zu emperor." After quoting from Liu Bang's exhortation to his supporters, Sima Quan then details the many wars that the new emperor fought to consolidate his position.

"The world has long suffered beneath Qin. Now, though you men of Pei should guard the city for the sake of the magistrate, the other nobles who have risen in rebellion will join in massacring the inhabitants of the city. If you will unite and do away with the magistrate, select from among your sons a worthy man to be your leader, and declare yourselves with the other nobles, then your homes and families shall all be spared. But if you do not, you will all be massacred without further ado!"

The elders then led the young men and together they murdered the magistrate of Pei, opened the city gates, and welcomed Gao Zu. They wished to make him magistrate, but Gao Zu announced, "The world today is in chaos with the nobles rising up everywhere. If you do not make a wise choice of a leader now, you will be cut down in one stroke and your blood will drench the earth. It is not that I care for my own safety, but only that I fear my abilities are not sufficient to insure your welfare. This is a most serious business. I beg you to consult once more among yourselves and select someone who is truly worthy."

Xiao He, Cao Can, and the other civil officials were concerned for their own safety and, fearful that if they assumed leadership and the undertaking proved unsuccessful, Qin would exterminate their families, they all yielded in favor of Gao Zu. Then all the elders announced, "For a long time we have heard of the strange and wonderful happenings and the predictions of greatness concerning Liu Ji. Moreover, when we divine by the tortoise and milfoil, we find that no one receives such responses as Liu Ji!"

With this, Gao Zu declined several times but, since no one else dared to accept the position, he allowed himself to be made governor of Pei. He then performed sacrifices to the Yellow Emperor and to the ancient warrior Chi Yu in the district office of Pei and anointed his drums with the blood of the sacrifice. All his flags and banners he had made of red. Because the old woman had said that it was the son of the Red Emperor who had killed the snake, the son of the White Emperor, he decided to honor the color red in this fashion.

The young men and distinguished officials such as Xiao He, Cao Can, Fan Kuai, and others gathered together for him a band of two or three thousand men of Pei and attacked Hu-ling and Fang-yü. They then returned and guarded the city of Feng.

In the second year of the Second Emperor [208 B.C.] Chen She's general Zhou Wen marched west with his army as far as Xi and then returned. Yan, Ahou, Qi, and Wei all set up their own kings and Xiang Liang and Xiang Yu began their uprising in Wu.

Records of the Grand Historian of China: The Shih Chi of Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Burton Watson, trans., 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), vol. 1, pp. 82–83.

Qin's overseer in the province of Su River, a man named Ping, led a force of troops and surrounded Feng for two days. The governor of Pei marched out of the city and fought and defeated him. Then, ordering Yong Chi to guard Feng, he led his troops to Xi. The magistrate of Su River, Zhuang, was defeated at Xi and fled to Qi where the governor Pei's marshal of the left captured and killed him. The governor of Pei returned and camped in the district of Gang, proceeding as far as Fang-yu. Zhou Shi had arrived to attack Fang-yu, but had not yet engaged in battle. (Zhou Shi was a man of Wei who had been sent by Chen She to seize the area.)

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. How did the Gao Zu emperor assume the leadership of the rebellion against the Qin?
2. What are the dangers of calling for a revolution?
3. Why were so many wars required for the Gao Zu emperor to come to power?

SELECTION 2:

Staffing the Civil Service

Ruling China required a civil service with sufficient knowledge to accomplish all the tasks that the emperor expected of its members. The system followed a strict and elaborate hierarchy, for the Chinese were very sensitive to status. The imperial examination system was meant to provide the best qualified men for appointment to office. Two modern historians explain how it worked.

The position of the official class is illustrated in the Chinese histories. From these writings a picture of a highly complex civil service emerges; one in which grade and privilege were protected and revered. The structure of government provided for the steady promotion of the official from a junior to senior post, and with their gradual rise through the hierarchy they duly incurred further privileges, benefits and dignity. The official view of the official is described thus in an edict of 144 B.C.: "Now the officials are the teachers of the people. It is proper that their carriages and quadriges [chariots drawn by four horses], their clothes and robes should correspond to their dignity."

The edict then goes on to describe at length precisely how the carriages of officials of each grade should be painted. For example: "We order that on carriages of important officials ranked at two thousand piculs [a variable weight measure, usually about 133 lb, which represented the annual stipend, in grain, of the officials] both side screens should be painted vermilion; and on those of officials whose positions are ranked from one thousand to six hundred piculs the left screen only should be vermilion." This same edict goes on to say that any official who "departs into the hamlets" not garbed according to his rank should be reported to the Lieutenant Chancellor who "shall beg the throne to order him to be punished."

One of the major problems facing Gao Zu was finding enough officials to operate the ever-expanding government machine. In 196 B.C., he issued an edict to senior officials of the states and

Edmund Capon and William Macquitty, *Princes of Jade* (London: Sphere Books, 1973), pp. 64–66.

commanderies throughout the kingdom requesting that they should send likely candidates to the capital for examination. The *Han Shu* records:

> Now I, by the spiritual power of heaven, and by my capable gentlemen and high officials have subjugated and possess the Empire and made it into one family. I wish it to be enduring so that generation after generation should worship at my ancestral temple. Capable persons have already shared with me in its pacification. Should it be that any capable persons are not to share together with me in its comfort and its benefits? If there are any capable gentlemen or sirs who are willing to follow and be friends with me, I can make them honorable and illustrious.

This was also a useful way for the Emperor to gain widespread loyalties by drawing upon people from all regions to staff his government.

These, in broad terms, were the principles of government instituted by the first Emperor of Han. The system derived substantially from the preceding Qin, and was to change very little for the next two thousand years. Its two principal characteristics became permanent features of Chinese society. First, there was the status of the officials, that favored elite, educated in the *Classics*, virtuous, worthy and held in the highest regard as the representatives of the Emperor. The officials formed a hierarchy quite distinct from the aristocracy, men like Prince Liu Sheing, who ruled the enfeoffed states and kingdoms, which were the hereditary possessions of privileged lines. In the Late Zhou period the *Chün-tzu* had been an inherited position, which no doubt caused the irreconcilably reactionary attitudes adopted by them at that time. But the Han continued in the Qin tradition of appointment and promotion through examination.

In spite of Gao Zu's initial dislike of Confucianism he instituted a system of government through professional scholars of which Confucius himself would have heartily approved. As the Han government and institutions became established an official class developed and with it, certain benefits accrued to official families. For example, opportunities arose for the advancement of their sons into an official government position which would not be so easily available to the commoner.

As the general wealth of the Han Empire increased so there emerged a social class new to China, the merchants, traders and businessmen. However they were by no means accorded the status and dignity of the scholar-official—a sure sign of the impact of the Confucian ideal. The position of the merchant in Early Han society is made clear in an Imperial edict of 199 B.C. during the reign of Gao Zu. It reads: "Merchants are not to be permitted to wear brocade, embroidery, flowered silk, crepe linen, sackcloth or wool, carry weapons, or ride a quadrige or a horse."...

With Gao Zu's tough, uncompromising and yet realistic rule the foundations of the Han were laid. It was an auspicious beginning, although the best was yet to come. The reign of the Emperor Wu Di from 141 to 87 B.C. is generally and justifiably considered as the apogee of Han power. He ascended the throne at the tender age of fifteen and a half, and yet seems to have been in no way overawed by his predicament. He was a man of tremendous energy and adopted an increasingly autocratic position.

Gao Zu had established an elaborate machinery for the management of the Han Empire, in which the officials played a vital part. His immediate successors developed and refined this system—until Wu Di. The unwritten law of China located the emperor at the summit of the political and social structure, but left the running of the country to his highly placed bureaucrats. Wu Di overthrew this traditional hierarchy and increasingly took on the duties of government, acting more as a prime minister than as a head of state or monarch. His actions set a precedent, for subsequent governments tended to alternate between eras of personal administration by dynamic emperors and eras of government by the bureaucrats. Traditionally the Emperor was beyond reproach and could do no wrong.

Periods of imperial rule, such as Wu Di's, tended therefore to end in disaster because no check, criticism or reformation of his decisions and actions could be made. This forms a contrast to the less decisive, but generally more flexible

and stable, rule under the bureaucrats.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What were the privileges of a Chinese official?
2. Is an examination system a good way to recruit civil servants?
3. Why did the merchant class fail to enjoy high social status?

Selection 3: Chinese Buddhism

During the Han dynasty, one change of enormous importance for future Chinese history and civilization occurred. Beginning in the first century B.C., Buddhism reached China from India, carried at first by monks traveling along the trade routes that stretched north into Central Asia and then eastward into the heart of China. Ideas or religions that originate outside China have, historically, been resisted by the Chinese, but Buddhism proved to be a great exception. The spread of Buddhism in China (and still later to Japan) is comparable in historical importance to the later conversions of the Roman world to Christianity and of Southwest Asia and North Africa to Islam. In the following selection, a modern Western historian assesses the gradual integration of Buddhism into the Chinese worldview, complementing (but not displacing) Confucianism and Daoism, and what this meant for Chinese civilization.

On the surface no culture could seem more alien to China than the Indian culture from which Buddhism emerged. The languages are poles apart, for Sanskrit is alphabetic, highly inflected, polysyllabic, and has a very complicated grammatical system; while Chinese is written in ideograms, is basically monosyllabic and uninflected, and has an extremely economical grammatical system. Chinese literature, despite Daoism, is comparatively earthbound, while Indian takes off in flights of imagination; China was this-worldly, while the Indian tradition pursued other-worldly goals; China dealt with historical timespans, India with cosmic eons; and China was concerned with family ethics, while India was devoted to universal salvation. How was this great gulf to be crossed?

The initial success is partly explained by the fact that the Chinese who first became interested in Buddhism regarded it not as a foreign religion so much as an offshoot of Daoism; and the religion's domestication was further assisted by the fact that Daoist terms had to be used to translate the key concepts of Buddhism. At the same time Buddhism at this early stage appealed to the general human desire for salvation and the protection of powerful gods, instead of attempting to propagate very specific Indian ideas.

The Neo-Daoist influence was very effective in preparing the way for Buddhism in the Chinese-held south; but in the north . . . the barbarian rulers preferred to lend an ear to foreign proponents of a foreign religion rather than become too dependent on Chinese advisers. Bud-

Raymond Dawson, *The Chinese Experience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), pp. 117–18.

dhist monks also (like eunuchs at the imperial palace or clerics at European courts) had the attraction of having no family attachments to provide another focus of loyalty, and so they seemed likely to prove trustworthy servants. Consequently these proponents of an unworldly religion were soon drawn into politics, which they were glad to embrace for the opportunity it gave them of securing patronage for their faith.

The credulous barbarian chieftains were not, of course, won for Buddhism by the exposition of metaphysical subtleties, but by the monks' apparently magical powers. The performance of miracles persuaded the superstitious rulers not only of the efficacy of their Buddhist counselors but also of the power of the Buddhist deities to protect the state, which remained the important reason for imperial patronage of Buddhism even in the more sophisticated era of the Tang. Magical practices were also a feature of Buddhism in its Indian birthplace; and great pilgrims, scholars, and translators did not abide permanently on the higher plane of doctrine, but descended to perform their various party tricks.

The famous monk and translator Kumarajiva, for example, was an adept at swallowing needles, a skill he often displayed before hosts of awed spectators. And when the pilgrim Xuan Zang went to India he saved himself from being killed by pirates by concentrating his thought on Maitreya in the Tushita Heaven, with the miraculous consequence that a great wind arose, and the waters of the Ganges mounted and capsized the pirates' ships, which made them repent and become lay members of the Buddhist community. Performances of magic were featured among the entertainments at the great Buddhist festivals, and this interest in magic stemmed naturally from the fact that Buddhist philosophy considered the world to be an illusion.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. How did Buddhism enter China, and why did many Chinese convert to Buddhism?
2. What was the connection between Buddhism and Daoism?
3. Confucianism was a set of beliefs and practices dealing with how China should be governed and how Chinese family life should be conducted. How might Confucian teachings be reconciled with Buddhism?

SELECTION 4:

The Han Dynasty Assessed

A modern European historian of ancient China assesses the successes and the failures of Han rule in this selection. Note in particular the Han emperors' constant need to defend China's northern borders against threats from hostile barbarian tribes. (In this, as in other respects, Han China and the Roman Empire faced similar problems.) Note also the important innovations in military technology and organization that the Chinese achieved. It may help to remember that the famous Great Wall, which still stretches along China's traditional northern border, had been begun under the Han dynasty's predecessor, the Qin.

Han power, as exercised during the reign of Wudi against the "barbarians," was partly due to the regime's capacity for organization. Having got into its stride, the governmental machine could enlist conscripts not only to go on campaign, but also to secure fresh supplies and construct roads; similarly, the system of lines of defense, which we call the Great Wall, was well maintained and was extended at this period.

China had another crucial advantage over her enemies. She could rely on her agricultural economy and to an even greater degree on the products of her industry and craftsmanship—iron and steel weapons, luxury articles like silk—which the surrounding peoples wished to buy. These products of state-controlled factories (after 119 B.C.) constituted a means of exerting pressure, a trading asset, a major trump card in the game of Chinese diplomacy, the economic basis on which the system of tribute was to be founded. The government also kept strict control of the export of goods (weapons, iron tools and domestic animals) that might strengthen the military power or increase the economic resources of the barbarians.

Another cause of success was the fact that Chinese fighting methods had changed radically since the beginning of the century, having adapted to those of her enemies. The use of the chariot in battle was virtually abandoned. In their encounters with the Xiongnu the Han showed a technical virtuosity and a mobility that they had learnt from the nomads. The commonest tactic on both sides consisted in rapid raids employing few men, mostly horsemen, designed to dislodge the enemy, seize his cattle and horses, and induce his chiefs to surrender. Clearly such a form of battle did not result in decisive victory for either camp; Wudi never finally defeated the Xiongnu. Fighting methods were very different in Central Asia; they required troops who were less highly trained but could endure long marches and lay siege to towns.

Conscripts—mounted bowmen of the northern and north-western provinces, crossbowmen on foot and other infantrymen of the central and eastern provinces—made up but a small part of the army at the end of the second century; the core of the troops consisted of mercenaries, true professionals, and convicts.

A further source of Han superiority was its weaponry, which was increasingly made of iron and steel, especially in the case of the long swords used by the cavalry; instead of leather armor, armor made of iron plaques was improved as the plaques became smaller and were used in conjunction with scale-like plates. This coat of mail now also covered a larger area of the chest and shoulders. The crossbow, which had been invented during the Period of the Warring States and had a bronze mechanism of extraordinary precision which the Han kept secret—remained one of the weapons that China's neighbors feared most. Improved models like the repeating crossbow may have come into common use at this time.

Yet another cause of the Han victories, especially those of the years 129 to 119, lay in the valor of their generals, who included Wei Qing and Huo Qubing (died 117, aged twenty-four), Li Guangli and Li Guang. Not all received equal reward for their merits. Li Guang, who was an extraordinary bowman, committed suicide when he was over sixty rather than suffer sentence for having lost his way in the desert with his men; Li Ling, his grandson and another ill-starred officer, surrendered to the Xiongnu in 99 B.C. after defeat in unequal combat.

It should be remembered that a Chinese general returning after a setback risked beheading and that an officer who surrendered to the Xiongnu and was taken prisoner endangered his whole family. Li Ling's mother, wife and son were executed when the government heard of his defection. Sima Qian, the historian, who had defended him before the emperor, was accused of wishing to deceive the latter and was sentenced to castration. Thus the last campaigns of Wudi's reign cost China many brave officers, including Li Guangli, who went over to the enemy in 90, and Li Ling, who died among the Xiongnu in 74.

Every Han victory depended not only on good organization, on the bravery and endurance of the men and on rapid conveyance of provisions, but also on an adequate supply of horses. Wudi's

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Michele Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, *The Han Dynasty*, Janet Seligman, trans. (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), pp. 90–91.

wars emptied all the stud-farms of the empire; the campaigns of 119 B.C. alone resulted in the loss of 100,000 horses. We touch here on a vital point and one of the major difficulties encountered by the Han: an insufficient supply of fresh horses. In 118 the government fixed the price of a stallion at 200,000 cash (or 20 gold *jin*). In this way it encouraged the breeding of horses. Moreover, the introduction of new breeds from the western lands, the planting of lucerne from seeds brought back by Zhang Qian, had enabled the government to reconstitute a cavalry. The fact remains that Wudi's campaigns were extremely expensive in horses, equipment and above all in human lives. To cite a single example: Li Guangli returned from the Fergahan campaign with 10,000 of the 60,000 soldiers with whom he had set out.

These wars were also costly in terms of the defensive systems involved, the need to maintain garrisons and provide them with grain. Yet in the long term the implementation of the government's policy of colonization proved an asset. Conquered commanderies, especially those of the north-west, were occupied immediately by Chinese colonists, dispatched (usually forcibly) to develop the new territories. The main transfers of population took place in 127 (100,000 persons in Shuofang commandery), 120 (725,000 persons), 118, 111, 100, 99 and 92 B.C. It has been calculated that over two million persons were directed to the northern frontiers in this way during Wudi's reign.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What prompted the Han emperors' campaign to expand China's borders?
2. What happened to a Han general who was defeated?
3. How do horses figure into the Han victories?

SELECTION 5:

A Chinese Woman Among the Barbarians

The Han were acutely aware of the cultural and social differences between themselves and the "barbarian" peoples beyond the Great Wall. This sense of cultural distance should be clearly apparent after reading this extract from a poem written by a Chinese woman, Tsai Yen, who was captured by barbarians and eventually became the wife of a chief of the Tatars. Note in particular Tsai Yen's opening complaint that "the mandate of Heaven / Was withdrawn from the Han Dynasty." The concept of "the mandate of Heaven" is important in the Chinese tradition: It means that an imperial dynasty is legitimate only as long as it protects the Chinese people and rules justly; when a dynasty no longer fulfills this condition, it loses "the mandate of Heaven" and deserves its downfall.

I was born in a time of peace,
But later the mandate of Heaven
Was withdrawn from the Han Dynasty.

Heaven was pitiless.
It sent down confusion and separation.
Earth was pitiless.
It brought me to birth in such a time.
War was everywhere. Every road was dangerous.
Soldiers and civilians everywhere
Fleeing death and suffering.
Smoke and dust clouds obscured the land
Overrun by the ruthless Tatar bands.
Our people lost their will power and integrity.
I can never learn the ways of the barbarians.
I am daily subject to violence and insult.
I sing one stanza to my lute and a Tatar horn.
But no one knows my agony and grief.

II

A Tatar chief forced me to become his wife,
And took me far away to Heaven's edge.
Ten thousand clouds and mountains
Bar my road home,
And whirlwinds of dust and sand
Blow for a thousand miles.
Men here are as savage as giant vipers,
And strut about in armor, snapping their bows.
As I sing the second stanza I almost break the
lutestrings.
Will broken, heart broken, I sing to myself.

VII

The sun sets. The wind moans.
The noise of the Tatar camp rises all around me.
The sorrow of my heart is beyond expression,
But who could I tell it to anyway?
Far across the desert plains,
The beacon fires of the Tatar garrisons
Gleam for ten thousand miles.
It is the custom here to kill the old and weak
And adore the young and vigorous.
They wander seeking new pasture,
And camp for a while behind earth walls.
Cattle and sheep cover the prairie,
Swarming like bees or ants.
When the grass and water are used up,
They mount their horses and drive on their cattle.
The seventh stanza sings of my wandering.
How I hate to live this way!

XI

I have no desire to live, but I am afraid of death.
I cannot kill my body, for my heart still has
hope
That I can live long enough
To obtain one and only desire—
That someday I can see again
The mulberry and catalpa trees of home.
If I had consented to death,
My bones would have been buried long ago.
Days and months pile up in the Tatar camp.
My Tatar husband loved me. I bore him two sons.
I reared and nurtured them unashamed,
Sorry only that they grew up in a desert outpost.
The eleventh stanza—sorrow for my sons
At the first notes pierces my heart's core.

XIII

I never believed that in my broken life
The day would come when
Suddenly I could return home.
I embrace and caress my Tatar sons.
Tears wet our clothes.
An envoy from the Han Court
Has come to bring me back,
With four stallions that can run without stopping.
Who can measure the grief of my sons?
They thought I would live and die with them.
Now it is I who must depart.
Sorrow for my boys dims the sun for me.
If we had wings we could fly away together.
I cannot move my feet,
For each step is a step away from them.
My soul is overwhelmed.
As their figures vanish in the distance
Only my love remains.
The thirteenth stanza—
I pick the strings rapidly
But the melody is sad.
No one can know
The sorrow which tears my bowels.

The Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China, Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung, trans. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), pp. 4–7.

XVII

The seventeenth stanza. My heart aches, my tears fall.
Mountain passes rise before us, the way is hard.
Before I missed my homeland
So much my heart was disordered.
Now I think again and again, over and over,
Of the sons I have lost.
The yellow sagebrush of the border,
The bare branches and dry leaves,
Desert battlefields, white bones
Scarred with swords and arrows,
Wind, frost, piercing cold,
Cold springs and summers
Men and horses hungry and exhausted, worn out—
I will never know them again
Once I have entered Chang An.
I try to strangle my sobs
But my tears stream down my face.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Based on Tsai Yen's verses, describe Tatar life.
2. What aspects of Tatar life does Tsai Yen find intolerable from the Chinese point of view?
3. Why does Tsai Yen have ambiguous feelings about returning to Han China?

SELECTION 6:

Han China and Rome Compared

As has already been pointed out, Han China and imperial Rome faced similar problems, including fending off barbarian threats and maintaining a sprawling empire that embraced most of the civilized world as known to Chinese or Romans. Both empires eventually collapsed, although their legacies to their respective civilizations were enormous. In selection 6, modern historian S.A.M. Adshead perceptively compares the Han and imperial Roman experiences.

The Roman empire was laid out like an amphitheater around the arena of the Mediterranean. Rome itself was the imperial box, the older coastal provinces were the stalls, the new inland *limes* [borderland] provinces were the heavily buttressed upper circles. The internal differentiation was between, on the one hand, upper and lower, *limes* and city, and on the other, sun and shade, the old urbanization of the east, the new urbanization of the west.

The Han empire, *per contra* [on the other hand], was laid out like a wheel. The region of the two imperial capitals, Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang, formed the hub; the converging valleys of the Wei, the Fen, the Ching, the Lo, the Han and the Huang-ho [all Chinese rivers] formed the spokes. The internal differentiation was between center and circumference, capital and provinces. Both

S.A.M. Adshead, *China in World History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), pp. 15–18.

empires in antiquity were centrally planned, but Rome in a series of concentric circles, China in a series of radiating lines. The Roman empire was the work of a city state which sought to stabilize its dominion by universalizing cities, city life, institutions and values. It tended therefore to homogenization, a general rise in the level of urbanization, a Conrad Hilton civilization of everywhere-similar fora, basilicas, theaters, baths, circuses and insulae. The Chinese empire, on the other hand, was the work of a bureaucratic territorial state which sought to stabilize its dominion by monopolizing for the court capital resources, amenities, protection and prestige. It tended therefore to heterogenization, to a fall in the general level of urbanization following the unification of the empire and a growing disparity between the lifestyles of court and country. Both empires lived by and for cultural glamour and conspicuous consumption but in the one case they were diffused, in the other concentrated.

A comparison of the extent and character of the communications systems of the two areas suggests that Han China was less integrated than the Roman empire. According to [American historian Joseph] Needham, the Roman empire under Hadrian [early second century A.D.] covered 1,763,000 square miles and had 48,500 miles of road, an average of 27.5 miles of road per 1,000 square miles of territory. Han China, on the other hand, covered 1,532,000 square miles and had 22,000 miles of road, an average of only 14.35 miles of road per 1,000 square miles of territory. Moreover, while for Han China, roads were the essence of the communications system, for Rome they were only an adjunct to the Mediterranean whose sea lanes will have at least doubled the total length of routes. Needham suggests that the greater use of rivers and canals for transportation in China as compared to Europe counterbalanced the advantage of the Mediterranean. This may be true for the later periods of Chinese history, the Tang and the Sung [both later Chinese dynasties], for example, when the Grand Canal has been completed, but it is doubtful for the Han. Neither the Yellow River nor its tributaries, in whose valleys Chinese civilization was then centered, are good for navigation and most Han hydraulic activity was for irrigation, not communication. Like the Achaemenid [Persian] empire, Han China was a road state on a plateau, and this in itself ensured inferiority in spatial integration to a Mediterranean empire, since in premodern conditions land transport was twenty to forty times more expensive that water transport. Moreover, the loess limited the utility of the roads by its vertical cleavage, crevassing and occlusion of adjacent valleys. Teilhard de Chardin [a French scholar in northern China in the twentieth century] vividly describes this terrain: "an unbelievable network of fissures with vertical walls, in the midst of which one feels as lost and paralyzed as in the middle of the trees of a forest or the waves of the sea." Needham seems to imply that Han China and Rome were not dissimilar in spatial relations; to me, the evidence suggests that they were strikingly different.

Even allowing for accidents of survival, it is difficult not to conclude from the archaeological remains that Han China was a less splendid society than Imperial Rome. The Great Wall no doubt is a stupendous monument, though most of its imposing appearance dates from Ming [fifteenth–seventeenth centuries] rather than Han times, but it stands by itself, and though Chinese cities had impressive walls, they did not contain the monumental public buildings of the Classical West—the amphitheaters, aqueducts, arches, basilicas, baths, circuses, theaters and temples. Rome was a federation of city states, Han China was a swollen court; but in addition, the difference between their towns was rooted in different options for building materials and different conceptions of what a house was for.

The fundamental options of Rome and, following her, Europe generally, were for stone, diffusion of heat by hypocausts or multiple fireplaces, and durability. A house was a capital investment, perhaps the prototype of all fixed capital investment, an assertion of culture in the face of nature. The fundamental Chinese options, on the other hand, were for wood, concentration of heat at the *kang* or heated divan, and reparability. A house was a charge on income, an extension of consumer non-durables, an adaptation of culture to nature. In the West, buildings were

in principle winter palaces, exclusions of weather, permanent embodiments of hearth and family. In China, buildings were in principle summer houses, modifications of weather, makeshift additions to the real home which was the loess cave or the family tomb. The one option produced monumentality and splendor, the other convenience and harmony. . . .

The body politic of the Han was healthier than that of the Roman empire. With its superior physical technology in arable farming and metallurgy and its lower degree of urbanization, intercommunication and luxury building, the Han world did not suffer from irremediable contradictions between superstructure and base, state and society. Frictions there were, no doubt, but they were adjustable without cataclysm.

In the Roman body politic, on the other hand, with its more primitive physical technology yet more grandiose and more parasitic sociology, there were such contradictions, especially after the Illyrian emperors, in response to the military mutinies and barbarian invasions of the mid-third century, doubled the army and multiplied fortifications without sufficient provisions for increased agricultural productivity behind the front. The huge carapace of the Roman *limes* imposed a burden on the organism it shielded that was far heavier than the Han protectorate garrisons in Central Asia. The Great Wall is impressive, but with Han Wu Di's forward policy, it ceased to be a frontier and Han China was not a *limes* society with its attendant costs and dangers.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why did the Roman federation of city-states not develop in Han China?
2. How did Roman and Chinese construction methods differ?
3. Why did the Great Wall lose its importance after Wu Di's reign?

UNIT 2

The Early European Experience

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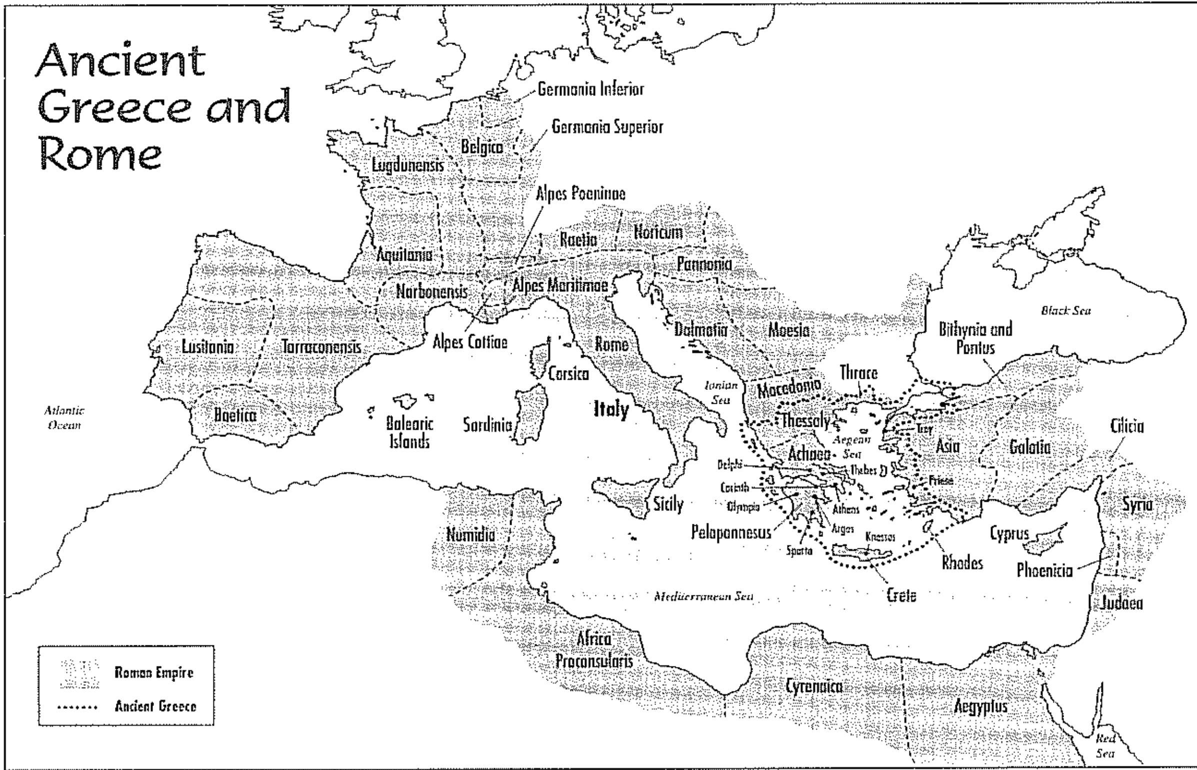
Ancient Greece and Rome
Germania Inferior
Germania Superior
Belgica
Lugdunensis
Alpes Poeninae
Raetia
Noricum
Aquitania
Pannonia
Narbonensis
Alpes Maritimae
Black Sea
Dalmatia
Moesia
Bithynia and Pontus
Lusitania
Tarraconensis
Alpes Cottiae
Rome
Corsica
Thrace
Ionian Sea
Macedonia
Atlantic Ocean
Baetica
Balearic Islands
Sardinia
Italy
Thessaly
Aegean Sea
Asia
Galatia
Cilicia
Achaea
Thebes
Delphi
Corinth
Olympia
Sicily
Athens
Argos
Sparta
Knossos
Syria
Numidia
Peloponnesus
Cyprus
Rhodes
Phoenicia
Mediterranean Sea
Crete
Judaea
Africa Proconsularis
Cyrenaica
Aegyptus
Red Sea
Roman Empire
Ancient Greece

Europe and the Byzantine Empire, About 1000
Kingdom of Norway
Kingdom of Sweden
Kingdom of Scotland
Kingdom of the Volga Bulgars
Irish Kingdoms
Kingdom of Denmark
Russia
Kingdom of England
Kingdom of Germany
Duchy of Poland
HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE
Atlantic Ocean
Kingdom of France
Kingdom of Navarre
Kdm. of Hungary
Principality of Tmutarakan
Kingdom of the Asturias and Leon
Kdm. of Croatia
Kdm. of Serbia
Kingdom of Burgundy
Kingdom of Italy
Black Sea
Kdm. of Georgia
Adriatic Sea
Principality of Transylvania
Caliphate of Cordova
Co. of Barcelona
Kdm. of Bulgaria
BYZANTINE EMPIRE
Tyrrhenian Sea
Mediterranean Sea
Ionian Sea
Maghreb
Idrisids
Zeirids
Hamdanids
Mediterranean Sea
Fatimite Caliphate

UNIT 2
The Early European Experience

European civilization first began on the small islands of the Aegean Sea and on Crete. From there the cultivation of wheat, grapes, and olives that supported their economies passed to the mainland. Here the Indo-European peoples whom we know as Greeks took what they learned and adapted it to their own circumstances.

One city, Athens, was especially adept at seizing opportunities to build an empire through seaborne trade in wine and oil. Even more importantly, Athenians introduced a form of government as yet unknown in the ancient world, whereby a majority of citizens, rather than a single ruler and his advisers, decided policy. The Athenians called their constitution a democracy, a word that we use today to describe our own political system. Athenian democracy and social organization was not perfect; some of its weaknesses are demonstrated in the selections that follow.

Rome followed Athens at the center of the Mediterranean stage and held that position for six hundred years. Early Roman politicians spoke of their system of government as a republic and were as proud as any Athenian of the way it worked. The Romans could also point to their creation of an empire that encompassed the Mediterranean, a feat never before accomplished which provided their elites with a very comfortable way of life. Our selections speak of the building of the Republic, the causes of its expansion, and finally its breakdown, which led to the assumption of power by the Caesars.

Rome built an empire that encompassed most of the world known to Western people of the time, and which eventually adopted Christianity as its religion. In the Byzantine Empire, ancient Rome's direct heir, a synthesis of Mediterranean life emerged: Roman political institutions, the Christian religion, and Greek culture.

While Byzantium continued the classical tradition in eastern Europe, Germanic invaders destroyed much of its culture in the West. Charlemagne made the first attempt to link a Germanic kingdom to the earlier Mediterranean civilization.

In studying these selections, consider:

1. What were the differences and similarities between Athens and Rome?
2. What was the role of women in both societies?
3. Why did Christianity quickly develop a structure?
4. Contrast the culture of the Byzantine world with that of Charlemagne's Frankish kingdom.

CHAPTER 8
Ancient Greece: What Was the Ideal and the Reality of Democracy?

Compared with the great empires that we have been studying, ancient Greece was unique. Beginning about 750 B.C., when written records first appeared, the people of mainland Greece, the Greek islands, and the coast of Anatolia (modern Turkey) organized themselves not into large kingdoms, but rather into tiny self-governing cities, each jealously guarding its independence. The emergence of these city-states coincided with a great population and economic expansion in the Greek-speaking world. The city-states responded by building extensive trading networks and frequently dispatching their surplus population to colonies—new cities—that they established at many places along the shores of the Mediterranean.

Our English word *politics* comes from the ancient Greek word for city, *polis* (plural: *poleis*). Not only did the Greeks form the first cities on the European continent, they also made city life and its politics central to their way of life. How should cities be run? Who should be a citizen? How should public policy be determined? And who should rule? A king? A dictator? The local aristocrats? The richest men? Or all the people? The answers that the different Greek cities gave to these questions have added other words to our vocabulary: monarchy ("rule by one"), tyranny (dictatorial rule by an illegal usurper), oligarchy ("rule by the few"), ostracism (exiling from a city someone who was considered too dangerous to be allowed to remain), and, most important, democracy ("rule by the people [*demos*]").

It was in Athens, the largest and among the richest Greek cities, that the idea of self-government first occurred. By the early fifth century B.C., a democratic system of government was in place in Athens. For the next several centuries, any citizen could address the city assembly, might be chosen to serve on the city council, or could become a municipal administrator. Policy was decided by voting in the citizen assembly.

How well did Athenian democracy work, and was it a real democracy by modern standards? These are the questions you should keep in mind as you read the selections in this chapter.

SELECTION 1:

The Oration of Pericles

Pericles (ca. 490–431 B.C.), a leader of the Athenian city-state at the height of its wealth and power, had no doubt that Athenian democracy was a great success. In this selection he addresses the Athenian citizens early in a great war that Athens fought against its rival, Sparta. The occasion was the public funeral that was held for Athenian citizens killed in battle. At stake in this war was leadership of the entire Greek-speaking world, as well as Athens's economic dominance.

These were not Pericles' actual words; instead, they were written by the famous Athenian historian Thucydides (ca. 460–400 B.C.), whose Peloponnesian War *tells the dramatic and tragic story of how the ambition and arrogance of Athens eventually united most of Greece against it and led to its downfall. In putting these words into Pericles' mouth, Thucydides explains that he is providing the gist of what the orator had to say on this occasion. Whether or not Pericles actually said such things, Thucydides' version of his words is a classic call for citizens to take pride in governing themselves democratically. As such, it remains a key document of Western civilization.*

I shall begin with our ancestors: it is both just and proper that they should have the honour of the first mention on an occasion like the present. They dwelt in the country without break in the succession from generation to generation, and handed it down free to the present time by their valour. And if our more remote ancestors deserve praise, much more do our own fathers, who added to their inheritance the empire which we now possess, and spared no pains to be able to leave their acquisitions to us of the present generation. Lastly, there are few parts of our dominions that have not been augmented by those of us here, who are still more or less in the vigour of life; while the mother country has been furnished by us with everything that can enable her to depend on her own resources whether for war or for peace. That part of our history which tells of the military achievements which gave us our several possessions, or of the ready valour with which either we or our fathers stemmed the tide of Hellenic or foreign aggression, is a theme too familiar to my hearers for me to dilate on, and I shall therefore pass it by. But what was the road by which we reached our position, what the form of government under which our greatness grew, what the national habits out of which it sprang; these are questions which I may try to solve before I proceed to my panegyric upon these men; since I think this to be a subject upon which on the present occasion a speaker may properly dwell, and to which the whole assemblage, whether citizens or foreigners, may listen with advantage.

Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighbouring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favours the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if to social standing, advancement in

The Complete Writings of Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War (New York: Modern Library, 1951), pp. 103–105.

public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition. The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbour for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty. But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Against this fear is our chief safeguard, teaching us to obey the magistrates and the laws, particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually on the statute book, or belong to that code which, although unwritten, yet cannot be broken without acknowledged disgrace.

Further, we provide plenty of means for the mind to refresh itself from business. We celebrate games and sacrifices all the year round, and the elegance of our private establishments forms a daily source of pleasure and helps to banish the spleen; while the magnitude of our city draws the produce of the world into our harbour, so that to the Athenian the fruits of other countries are as familiar a luxury as those of his own.

If we turn to our military policy, there also we differ from our antagonists. We throw open our city to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality; trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens; while in education, where our rivals from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness, at Athens we live exactly as we please, and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger. . . .

Nor are these the only points in which our city is worthy of admiration. We cultivate refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy; wealth we employ more for use than for show, and place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining the struggle against it. Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters; for, unlike any other nation, regarding him who takes no part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless, we Athenians are able to judge at all events if we cannot originate, and instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What are the deeds of Athens that prompt Pericles to boast?
2. How does public opinion in Athens affect society, according to Pericles?
3. What kind of reception would this talk have received? Who was unlikely to support Pericles' views?

SELECTION 2:

Women in Athens

By modern American standards, Athenian democracy was flawed. Not everyone in the city participated. Athens was a slaveholding society, and slaves had no political rights. Foreigners, called metics, *from other Greek city-states who lived in Athens were barred from citizenship. Women, even*

if they were Athenian born, had no right to participate in politics. Indeed, the lives of most women (except for cultivated prostitutes, who entertained well-to-do men at dinner parties) were almost completely controlled by their husbands, fathers, or other male kinfolk. The following selection, written by a contemporary American historian, describes some aspects of women's life in democratic Athens.

In 451/50 the Athenians passed a law about citizenship on the proposal of Perikles. It provided that a child should only have citizenship if both its parents were citizens. This law implied that women, as well as men, could be citizens. Attic Greek had two words for "citizen," *astos* (feminine *astē*) and *politēs* (feminine *politis*). Both are used of women. But proof of citizenship was not the same for men and for women. This is shown by the questions asked at the examination of men who had been chosen to the nine archonships [magistracies]. Each candidate was asked to state the name of his father, the deme [clan] of his father, the name of his father's father, the name of his mother, the name of his mother's father, and the deme of his mother's father. He was not asked to state the deme of his father's father, since it was the same as that of his father, membership in demes being hereditary in the male line. The candidate was not asked to state the deme of his mother, since women were not registered in demes. The lists kept by the demes attested the status of male citizens, but no such lists were kept to attest that of female citizens.

Before 451/50 there may have been no statute nor even any acknowledged rule governing the transmission of citizenship by descent. Certainly some male Athenians of earlier generations took foreign wives and their sons were citizens. In the fourth century the crucial step in recognizing a young man as a citizen came when he was in his eighteenth year and was presented to the assembly of his father's deme; the demesmen voted on oath whether to add him to their list. . . .

An Athenian woman did not marry; she was given in marriage. A law is quoted by Pseudo-Demosthenes [a minor political writer] to show who has the right to give a woman in marriage:

> Whatever woman is pledged on just terms to be a wife by her father, or by her brother who has the same father, or by her paternal grandfather, the children born of her shall be legitimate (*gnēsioi*) children.

The word used here for wife is not *gynē*, the customary word of classical prose, but the archaic *damar*. The language of law could be conservative. The verb translated as "pledge" is *engyān*. It and its noun *engyēsis* are crucial for understanding classical marriage. It might equally be translated "entrust."

Engyēsis was an oral contract, made between the man who gave the woman into marriage and the bridegroom. The form of words is known. The man giving the woman said: "I pledge (such and such a woman) for the purpose of producing legitimate (*gnēsioi*) children." He uttered the verb *engyō* in the active. Uttering the same verb in the middle voice, the bridegroom replied: "I accept the pledge." The woman could be referred to in the passive participle. She was not a party to the contract but its passive object. The same verb was employed in the procedure for personal surety for repayment of a debt. The creditor "pledged" (active) the debtor (passive) to the person who offered himself as surety; the latter "accepted the pledge." The procedure of surety did not create a permanent relationship. It entrusted the debtor to a third person to ensure that the creditor could recover the loan. Marriage by *engyēsis* did not create a new community; it entrusted a woman to a man for the large but not unlimited purpose of bearing him heirs.

The man who gave the woman in marriage had been her *kyrios* (guardian, master) up to that point. When marriage was concluded, the husband became her *kyrios*. *Engyēsis* did not complete the conclusion of marriage; it needed to be

Raphael Sealey, *Women and Law in Classical Greece* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 12–13, 25–26.

followed by *ekdosis*, the transfer of the woman to the bridegroom's dwelling. *Engyēsis* could be revoked, as is illustrated by the contract between Euktemon and Demokrates. But *engyēsis* was more than a betrothal, since it was part of the procedure transferring *kyrieia* to the bridegroom.

The variable element in *engyēsis* was the dowry. In Athens dowry (*proix*) had a precise sense. It was a sum of money or valuables transferred from the woman's original family to the bridegroom for the woman's upkeep. If it was not a sum of money, it had to be assessed at a monetary value, so that the woman's original family could recover it if the marriage was dissolved. When property other than money was given as dowry, that property was sometimes said to be given "in lieu of dowry." The possibility of *engyēsis* without dowry is mentioned by a litigant hypothetically, but no actual occurrence is known. Since the dowry was intended for the support of the woman, the husband had to refund it if the marriage was dissolved. If he did not refund it, the woman's relative(s) had an action against him and this action was called the *dikē sitou* or "action for grain." While the marriage lasted, the husband had full authority to administer the dowry. If, however, he fell into debt, his creditors might seize his property, but an attempt could at least be made to prevent them from seizing his wife's dowry. The dowry, administered by the husband, was distinct from the woman's paraphernalia, which were at her disposal. The stock phrase for her paraphernalia was "clothes and gold jewelry" (*himatia kai chrysia*), although their nature might vary.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. How did marriage in ancient Athens take place?
2. What was meant by the term *kyrios*?
3. What was the role of the dowry for an Athenian wife?

SELECTION 3:
The Limits of Government

In Greek theater many strong women appear, demonstrating that their public life was not so limited as the law would make it. One of the most vivid female personalities appears in Sophocles' Antigone. *Although the setting is Thebes, the play was produced in 441 B.C. before an Athenian audience. At this time the democracy was in the sure hands of Pericles and his followers. Antigone demonstrates that the state, as represented by King Creon, can be despotic and deserves to be resisted when it violates individual civil rights. Creon has denied burial to her brother Polyneices because of his attempt to overthrow him. However, according to Greek belief the unburied dead are not free to join loved ones in the Underworld and cannot rest, so Antigone has taken the matter into her own hands and buried Polyneices' corpse. The guard that Creon has placed over the body speaks.*

GUARD: Someone left the corpse just now,
burial all accomplished, thirsty dust
strewn on the flesh, the ritual complete.
CREON: What are you saying? What man has dared to do it?
GUARD: I wouldn't know. There were no marks of picks,
no grubbed-out earth. The ground was dry and hard,
no trace of wheels. The doer left no sign.
When the first fellow on the day-shift showed us,
we were all sick with wonder.
For he was hidden, not inside a tomb,
light dust upon him, enough to turn the curse,
no wild beast's track, nor track of any hound
having been near, nor was the body torn. . . .
[*Antigone is discovered, arrested, and brought before Creon.*]
CREON (*to Antigone*): You there, whose head is drooping to the ground,
do you admit this, or deny you did it?
ANTIGONE: I say I did it and I don't deny it.
CREON (*to the guard*): Take yourself off wherever you wish to go
free of a heavy charge.
CREON (*to Antigone*): You—tell me not at length but in a word.
You knew the order not to do this thing?
ANTIGONE: I knew, of course I knew. The word was plain.

Sophocles, *Antigone*, Elizabeth Wyckoff, trans., in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), vol. 2, p. 167–168, 173–74.

CREON: And still you dared to overstep these laws?
ANTIGONE: For me it was not Zeus who made that order.
Nor did that Justice who lives with the gods below
mark out such laws to hold among mankind.
Nor did I think your orders were so strong
that you, a mortal man, could over-run
the gods' unwritten and unfailing laws.
Not now, nor yesterday's, they always live,
and no one knows their origin in time.
So not through fear of any man's proud spirit
would I be likely to neglect these laws,
draw on myself the gods' sure punishment.
I know that I must die; how could I not?
even without your warning. If I die
before my time, I say it is a gain.
Who lives in sorrows many as are mine
how shall he not be glad to gain his death?
And so, for me to meet this fate, no grief.
But if I left that corpse, my mother's son,
dead and unburied I'd have cause to grieve
as now I grieve not.
And if you think my acts are foolishness
the foolishness may be in a fool's eye.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What motivates Antigone to violate Creon's law?
2. How does Antigone articulate the religious views of ancient Athens?
3. How might an Athenian audience react to this play?

SELECTION 4:
Greek Slaves

The fact that democratic Athens—like the rest of ancient Greece—was a slaveholding society has already been noted. In selection 4 the American

historian M.I. Finley analyzes the slave population. Although Finley concludes that most of the slaves whose names are known were of non-Greek ("barbarian") origin, we also know that enslavement was the fate of many Greek citizens captured in wars with other city-states.

No modern historian would dispute the fact that the great majority of slaves were not of Greek origin. That is also suggested by a study of slave names. They include many names, more or less ethnic in origin, relating to the barbarian world: names of peoples (Thratta, Carion, Phrygios, Lydos, Syros), topographical names (Asia, Italia, Neilos), typically native names (Lydian Manes, Phrygian Midas, Paphlagonian Tibios), names of historical figures (Croesus, Amasis, Cleopatra). Furthermore, a slave of barbarian origin may very well have received a purely Greek name from his master, whereas the reverse is much less likely. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the rare lists of slaves which have been preserved and in which their origin is mentioned. Particularly striking is the fragmentary Athenian list of goods confiscated in 414 B.C. from those responsible for the sacreligious mutilation of the herms, on which 45 slaves appear, nearly all barbarians. The same is true of the slaves in the Attic silver mines, from the fourth century B.C. on, whose origins are known. Nor are there slaves in the comedies of Aristophanes to whom there is reason to attribute Greek origin.

However, as soon as one tries to extend this detailed research, in an attempt to estimate the relative proportion of Barbarians and Greeks in the whole stock of slaves, one is faced with all sorts of insuperable difficulties. In classical times, the slaves whose origin is indicated are very rare. Beyond the lists mentioned above, account can only be taken of, let us say, 20 or 30 cases—for example, the confidential agent of Pausanias, the regent of Sparta, an Argilian (from Argilos, neighbouring town of Amphipolis on the Thracian coast [modern northeastern Greece]), or the servants "coming from Dardanus" (on the east coast of the Hellespont [modern Turkey]) who were given to Xenophon during his stay at Scillus in the Peloponnese, or the miner Atotas, who on his gravestone in the Laurium district of Attica proclaims himself to be a Paphlagonian from the Black Sea Region. . . .

Now this enormous preponderance of Barbarians that one seems to be observing in the slave stock of Greek cities is difficult to understand if war had been the usual means of acquisition. Did the Greeks not in fact spend most of their time fighting each other rather than the Barbarians, which should have resulted in the reverse pattern? To which can be added the fact that their interventions in the barbarian world were too episodic and too dispersed to explain the regular supply of slaves originating from this or that remote area such as Paphlagonia, Phrygia [both in modern Turkey] or Syria; even if it is true that the Greeks on the periphery had to be particularly aggressive towards the Barbarians around them, such as the Thessalians on the margin of the Dacian Highlands [modern Romania] whom Aristophanes calls "insatiable slave dealers" (*Plutus* 521). The effect of such military operations could only have been to supply the market in periodic surges, in Greek cities as well as in a Hellenistic Kingdom such as Egypt.

There remains to be accounted for the apparent contrast between the frequent accounts of enslavement of Greeks as a consequence of war or piracy and the rarity of slaves of Greek origins. Apart from imagining that they were generally disposed of in Barbarian lands (which must have happened sometimes, to the great agitation of public opinion, but certainly was not systematic), one must therefore ask what became of them after their capture, at the moment when, put up for sale, they disappeared into the anonymous mass of slaves.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

M.I. Finley, ed., *Classical Slavery* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), pp. 12–15.

1. Does the fact that the ancient Greeks practiced slavery on a large scale diminish your respect for Greek democracy? Why or why not?
2. The great Greek philosopher Aristotle justified slavery on the ground that people who had been enslaved were by definition inferior and thus deserved their fate. Why do you think he came to this conclusion?
3. Before the Civil War, defenders of slavery in the American South justified their region's "peculiar institution" by pointing to democratic Athens: slavery, they said, permitted slaveholders to enjoy the leisure and prosperity necessary to build a great civilization. Does the evidence that Finley presents support this argument?

SELECTION 5:

The Apology of Socrates

Although Sophocles' Antigone (selection 3) was a fictional character, Socrates (ca. 469–399 B.C.) was not. Ostensibly an ordinary Athenian citizen, he made himself famous by subtly questioning every conventional opinion of his fellow citizens. Unlike the professional educators of his day, called sophists, or teachers of wisdom, he wrote no books and accepted no fees. But he attracted a devoted circle of young followers, including some of the city's most prominent politicians.

Many Athenians did not care for Socrates' constant questioning of their politics and values. Depressed by their defeat in the Peloponnesian War and by the imposed rule of a pro-Spartan clique, these Athenians considered Socrates an unpatriotic nuisance—and after they restored democratic rule, they made him the scapegoat for all their troubles. He was tried on charges of corrupting the young men and denying the gods of Athens, found guilty, and condemned to choose between exile and death.

Plato, Socrates' disciple and the author of many dialogues that record his teaching, was present at the trial and later wrote down what his mentor said in his own defense. In reading Plato's version of Socrates' words, imagine the setting: Standing before a court of five hundred male citizens, the accused had to plead his own case without the benefit of a lawyer (although his friends might help him write his speech). To gain sympathy, defendants frequently brought forward their wives and children, looking as pitiful as possible. Socrates scorned such tricks.

It may be that some one of you, remembering his own case, will be annoyed that whereas he, in standing his trial upon a less serious charge than this, made pitiful appeals to the jury with floods of tears, and had his infant children produced in court to excite the maximum of sympathy, and many of his relatives and friends as well, I on the

Plato, *The Apology*, in *The Last Days of Socrates*, Hugh Tredennick, trans. (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 67–69.

contrary intend to do nothing of the sort, and that although I am facing (as it might appear) the utmost danger. It may be that one of you, reflecting on these facts, will be prejudiced against me, and being irritated by his reflections, will give his vote in anger. If one of you is so disposed—I do not expect it, but there is the possibility—I think that I should be quite justified in saying to him, 'My dear sir, of course I have some relatives. To quote the very words of Homer, even I am not sprung 'from an oak or from a rock,' but from human parents, and consequently I have relatives; yes, and sons too, gentlemen, three of them, one almost grown up and the other two only children; but all the same I am not going to produce them here and beseech you to acquit me.'

Why do I not intend to do anything of this kind? Not out of perversity, gentlemen, nor out of contempt for you; whether I am brave or not in the face of death has nothing to do with it; the point is that for my own credit and yours and for the credit of the state as a whole, I do not think that it is right for me to use any of these methods at my age and with my reputation—which may be true or it may be false, but at any rate the view is held that Socrates is different from the common run of mankind. Now if those of you who are supposed to be distinguished for wisdom or courage or any other virtue are to behave in this way, it would be a disgrace.

I have often noticed that some people of this type, for all their high standing, go to extraordinary lengths when they come up for trial, which shows that they think it will be a dreadful thing to lose their lives; as though they would be immortal if you did not put them to death! In my opinion these people bring disgrace upon our city. Any of our visitors might be excused for thinking that the finest specimens of Athenian manhood, whom their fellow-citizens select on their merits to rule over them and hold other high positions, are no better than women. If you have even the smallest reputation, gentlemen, you ought not to descend to these methods; and if we do so, you must not give us license. On the contrary, you must make it clear that anyone who stages these pathetic scenes and so brings ridicule upon our city is far more likely to be condemned than if he kept perfectly quiet.

But apart from all question of appearances, gentlemen, I do not think that it is right for a man to appeal to the jury or to get himself acquitted by doing so; he ought to inform them of the facts and convince them by argument. The jury does not sit to dispense justice as a favor, but to decide where justice lies; and the oath which they have sworn is not to show favor at their own discretion, but to return a just and lawful verdict. It follows that we must not develop in you, nor you allow to grow in yourselves, the habit of perjury; that would be sinful for us both. Therefore you must not expect me, gentlemen, to behave towards you in a way which I consider neither reputable nor moral nor consistent with my religious duty; and above all you must not expect it when I stand charged with impiety by Meletus here.

Surely it is obvious that if I tried to persuade you and prevail upon you by my entreaties to go against your solemn oath, I should be teaching you contempt for religion; and by my very defense I should be virtually accusing myself of having no religious belief. But that is very far from the truth. I have a more sincere belief, gentlemen, than any of my accusers; and I leave it to you and to God to judge me as it shall be best for me and for yourselves.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Some historians believe that Socrates was flippant at his trial. Do you agree?
2. What are some differences between trials in the United States and those of ancient Greece?
3. Why does Socrates claim to have more religious belief than the members of the jury?
4. Does the fact that democratic Athens put Socrates on trial—and condemned him to death—diminish your respect for Athenian democracy? Why or why not?

SELECTION 6:

An Appraisal of Socrates

Socrates is remembered in Western civilization as a supreme example of a man of heroic integrity, who refused to compromise his right to be his society's truth-seeking "gadfly" even at the risk of his life, and who accepted death rather than be exiled from his native city. In the following selection, a prominent British historian of ancient Greece, John B. Bury, appraises Socrates' stand. Do you agree with Bury?

The ideas which we owe to Socrates are now so organically a part of the mind of civilized men that it is hard to appreciate the intellectual power which was required to originate them. Socrates was the first champion of the supremacy of the intellect as a court from which there is no appeal; he was the first to insist that a man must order his life by the guidance of his own intellect. Socrates was thus a rebel against authority as such; and he shrank from no consequences. He did not hesitate to show his companions that an old man has no title to respect because he is old, unless he is also wise; or that an ignorant parent has no claim to obedience on the mere account of the parental relation. Knowledge and veracity, the absolute sovereignty of the understanding, regardless of consequences, regardless of all prejudices connected with family or city—this was the ideal of Socrates, consistently and uncompromisingly followed. . . .

Though he was the child of democracy, born to a heritage of freedom in a city where the right of free discussion was unrestrained, the sacred name of democracy was not more sheltered than anything else from the criticism of Socrates. He railed, for instance, at the system of choosing magistrates by lot, one of the protections of democracy at Athens. He was unpopular with the mass, for he was an enemy of shams and ignorance and superstition. Honest democrats of the type of Thrasybulus and Anytus, who did their duty, but had no desire to prove its foundations, regarded him as a dangerous freethinker who spent his life in diffusing ideas subversive of the social order.

They might point to the ablest of the young men who had kept company with him, and say: "Behold the fruits of his conversation! Look at Alcibiades, his favorite companion, who has done more than any other man to ruin his country. Look at Critias, who, next to Alcibiades, has wrought the deepest harm to Athens; who, brought up in the Socratic circle, first wrote a book against democracy, then visited Thessaly and stirred up the serfs against their masters, and finally, returning here, inaugurated the reign of terror.* Look, on the other hand, at Plato, an able young man, whom the taste for idle speculation, infused by Socrates, has seduced from the service of his country. Or look at Xenophon, who, instead of serving Athens, has gone to serve her enemies. Truly Socrates and his propaganda have done little good to the Athenian state."

However unjust any particular instance might seem, it is easy to understand how considerations of this kind would lead many practical unspeculative men to look upon Socrates and his ways with little favor. And from their point of view, they were perfectly right. His spirit, and the ideas that he made current, were an insidious menace

John B. Bury, *A History of Greece*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1959), pp. 576, 579–80.

*Alcibiades and Critias, disciples of Socrates, were also Athenian politicians whose unwise policies helped ensure the city-state's defeat in the Peloponnesian war.

to the cohesion of the social fabric, in which there was not a stone or a joint that he did not question. In other words, he was the active apostle of individualism, which led in its further development to the subversion of that local patriotism which had inspired the cities of Greece in her days of greatness.

And this thinker, whose talk was shaking the Greek world in its foundations, though none guessed it, was singled out by the Delphic priesthood for a distinguished mark of approbation. In the truest oracle that was ever uttered from the Pythian tripod, it was declared that no one in the world was wiser than Socrates. We know not at what period of the philosopher's career this answer was given, but, if it was seriously meant, it showed a strange insight which we should hardly have looked for at the shrine of Delphi.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why is Socrates held up as an example of heroism?
2. What does it mean to appeal to intellect as the final norm for right actions?
3. How would Confucius react to the speech of Socrates?

CHAPTER 9
Early Rome: What Explains the Republic's Rise and Fall?

Of all the cities in the ancient Mediterranean world, Rome was the most spectacularly successful. Founded according to tradition in 753 B.C., and at first simply one small town among many in central Italy, Rome expanded its power until, by 28 B.C., its rule extended from one end of the Mediterranean to the other.

How did Rome grow so mighty? For ancient Romans (and the few Greeks who admired them), the answer was simple: Rome was a republic, and self-government created virtuous, heroic citizens who could conquer the world. (The word *virtue* contains the Latin root *vir,* or "man"; originally meaning "manliness" and implying self-sacrificing courage and incorruptibility.) The problem with this self-congratulatory view was that, by the time Rome had conquered the Mediterranean, the Roman Republic itself had collapsed under corruption and civil war. Until then the wealth of conquered lands poured into the city, paying for imposing public buildings and lavish entertainment, including savage gladiatorial combats. Men and women of the upper classes enjoyed enormous wealth, much of it used to build luxurious country estates. These aristocrats dominated the ruling Senate and filled all the important offices, but they also fought each other in a century-long civil war. Eventually, in 27 B.C., Augustus Caesar (63 B.C.–A.D. 14) emerged as the victor. Although he claimed to be the republic's restorer, he in fact inaugurated the increasingly autocratic Roman Empire. As you read this chapter, keep in mind this outcome—and ask yourself why the Roman Republic managed to conquer the known world but in the process destroyed itself.

SELECTION 1:

The Formation of the Republic

As the proclaimed restorer of the Roman Republic, Augustus patronized many important men of letters who praised Roman traditions and urged their compatriots to revive ancient virtue. Among them was the historian Livy (59 B.C.–A.D. 17), who wrote a massive history of Rome from its origins. Livy based his history on ancient Roman legends, interpreting them according to the attitudes of his own time. One of his many dramatic stories told of the overthrow of the monarchy that had originally ruled Rome and of the establishment of the Republic, an event traditionally dated to 509 B.C. The leader of the rebellion was Lucius Junius Brutus, who went on to become one of the first two consuls, the highest officials of the republican regime. Even through imperial times, two consuls were elected annually by the Senate for a one-year term. In the extract from his history that forms this selection, Livy explains the significance of Rome's transformation from a monarchy to an aristocratic republic.

My task from now on will be to trace the history in peace and of a free nation, governed by annually elected officers of state and subject not to the caprice of individual men, but to the overriding authority of law.

The hard-won liberty of Rome was rendered the more welcome, and the more fruitful, by the character of the last king, Tarquin the Proud. Earlier kings may all be considered, not unjustly, to have contributed to the city's growth, making room for an expanding population, for the increase of which they, too, were responsible. They were all, in their way, successive 'founders' of Rome. Moreover it cannot be doubted that Brutus, who made for himself so great a name by the expulsion of Tarquin, would have done his country the greatest disservice, had he yielded too soon to his passion for liberty and forced the abdication of any of the previous kings. One has but to think of what the populace was like in those early days—a rabble of vagrants, mostly runaways and refugees—and to ask what would have happened if they had suddenly found themselves protected from all authority by inviolable sanctuary, and enjoying complete freedom of action, if not full political rights.

In such circumstances, unrestrained by the power of the throne, they would, no doubt, have set sail on the stormy sea of democratic politics, swayed by the gusts of popular eloquence and quarreling for power with the governing class of a city which did not even belong to them, before any real sense of community had had time to grow. That sense—the only true patriotism—comes slowly and springs from the heart; it is founded upon respect for the family and love of the soil. Premature 'liberty' of this kind would have been a disaster: we should have been torn to pieces by petty squabbles before we had ever reached political maturity, which, as things were, was made possible by the long quiet years under monarchical government; for it was that government which, as it were, nursed our strength and enabled us ultimately to produce sound fruit from liberty, as only a politically adult nation can.

Moreover the first step towards political liber-

Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, Aubrey de Sélincourt ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 105–106.

ty in Rome consisted in the fact that the consuls were annually elected magistrates—in the limitation, that is, not of their powers but of their period of office. The earliest consuls exercised the full powers of the kings, and carried all their insignia, with one exception—the most impressive of all—namely the 'rods.' These were allowed to only one consul of the two, to avoid the duplication of this dreadful symbol of the power of life and death. Brutus by his colleague's consent was the first to have the rods, and he proved as zealous in guarding liberty as he had been in demanding it. His first act was to make the people, while the taste of liberty was still fresh upon their tongues, swear a solemn oath never to allow any man to be king in Rome, hoping by this means to forestall future attempts by persuasion or bribery to restore the monarchy.

He then turned his attention to strengthening the influence of the Senate, whose numbers had been reduced by the political murders of Tarquin; for this purpose he brought into it leading men of equestrian rank and made up its number to a total of three hundred. This, we are told, was the origin of the distinction between the 'Fathers' and the 'Conscripts': i.e. the original senators and those (the conscripts) who were later enrolled, or conscripted, as members of the senatorial body. The measure was wonderfully effective in promoting national unity and lessening friction between patricians [members of the leading families, who dominated the early Republic] and populace.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why does Livy associate the rule of law with the formation of the Republic?
2. Why does the author believe that liberty needs time to mature?
3. How did the symbol of the rods affect republican Rome?

SELECTION 2:

Cicero Describes Pompey's Triumph

Few Romans of the first century B.C. knew more about the Republic's intricate politics, or wrote so well about it, than Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.). Not a member of the old Roman elite, Cicero was a clever lawyer and a marvelously persuasive orator whose letters, speeches, and essays would define Latin style for more than a millennium and a half in Europe. (Students in advanced Latin courses still wrestle with his elegant syntax.) But while he was polishing his prose, he was also ceaselessly intriguing for money and high political office. In a letter to a friend in 55 B.C., Cicero describes the return to Rome of the conquering general Pompey, who had won a series of victories in the eastern Mediterranean and was now bidding for supreme power in the Republic. Pompey was given a "triumph," the kind of pompous military parade with which Rome traditionally honored a general who had won a great battle. In turn, Pompey entertained the Roman populace with "games" that included gladiators

fighting to the death against each other and exotic wild animals. Historians believe that Cicero himself would have liked to stage a triumph, so perhaps a bit of envy lurks between his lines. In any case, his letter paints a vivid picture of public life in the late Roman Republic.

In the end, both Pompey and Cicero would die violent deaths amid the Republic's final convulsions.

If it was ill health that kept you from the games, I congratulate you on your good fortune; but if it was your dislike for such diversions that detained you I rejoice doubly: that you are well and that you are sane enough in mind to scorn the silly admirations of the people. I say this, however, on the supposition that during the days of the games you were putting in your time profitably. You would withdraw, no doubt, to that den of yours, which looks out over the Bay of Naples, and in the seclusion of your charming retreat you would spend the morning hours in cursory reading; whereas we, who left you for the show, were going to sleep over the performance; the rest of the day you were passing according to your fancy; whereas we had to put up with what could pass the Board of Censors.

In fact, the offerings were most elaborate but, to judge your taste by mine, not at all to your liking; for first, to do honor to the occasion those actors returned to the stage from which they had retired to do honor to themselves. Why, the voice of your particular favorite, Aesop, failed him in an especially impressive passage.

Why should I say more? Being familiar with such programs, you know what events came next. These did not have the charm even of ordinary shows, for the elaborateness of the spectacle took away all delight. I am sure you missed the display with perfect equanimity. How could one be pleased with six hundred mules in the *Clytemnestra*, or three thousand punch bowls in the *Trojan Horse*, or varied paraphernalia of cavalry and infantry in some battle scene! These spectacles won popular approval, but they would have pleased you not at all. If during the days of the games you had heard your slave Protogenes read anything whatsoever except my orations, you would have had more delight than any one of us.

As to the Greek and the Oscan shows, I am sure you did not miss them; for you can see the Oscans show off any day in your town council, and as for Greeks, you take to them so little that you will not take the Greek highway to your villa. Why should I suppose that you missed the athletic games when I know that you scorn gladiators? In these performances even Pompey acknowledges that he wasted his money and his pains. The final event consisted of hunting shows, two of them, continuing through five days, magnificent, to be sure; but what pleasure can a gentleman take in seeing a puny man torn to pieces by a monstrous beast or a beautiful animal pierced by a spear? The last was the day of the elephant-baiting, which brought the crowd much wonder, but little pleasure. Nay rather the beasts aroused some sense of pity as if there were some community of feeling between them and man (so that the crowd rose up and cursed Pompey).

I have written you a longer letter than usual out of an abundance, not of leisure, but of affection, because in a certain letter, if you but remember, you gave me a half-way invitation to write you something that would console you for having missed the games. If I have attained my object, I rejoice; if not, I comfort myself with the reflection that hereafter you will come to the show and visit me and not stake your hope of enjoyment on a letter from me.

Letters of a Roman Gentleman Selected from the Writings of Cicero, Arthur Patch McKinlay, trans. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1926), pp. 85–87.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why did Cicero find Pompey's games so distasteful?
2. What does this letter tell you about public culture in Rome?
3. In what way do you suspect Cicero's complaints are a bit artificial?

SELECTION 3:

A Roman Bath

Among the pleasures of life in Italian cities were the baths, which afforded citizens, most of whom had no running water in their homes, time to relax and socialize. From three of four o'clock in the afternoon until dinnertime, every Roman man headed for the baths. Women were supposed to go in the mornings, but the more daring joined their male companions, if there were no separate facilities for women. The baths were both public and private, with only a very small charge that went to the attendants. They were extremely egalitarian, with rich and poor alike enjoying the waters and the games available to the bathers. In this selection a modern French scholar describes an excavated bath at Pompeii.

Next to the buildings used for shows, the most characteristic structures of Roman cities were undoubtedly the *thermae* or public baths. Here again, we are discussing an Italian architectural invention, which is derived from the Hellenic gymnasium. Like the Roman theaters and amphitheaters, they first appeared in southern Italy: the oldest known example is that of the Stabian Baths at Pompeii. In their earliest form, they antedate the Roman conquest (about 89 B.C.), but modified several times, they kept being modernized and enlarged until the end of the city (A.D. 79). One may clearly see there the development of comfort and luxury, a typical evolution of baths under the Empire. To the earliest period belong several narrow dark cabins used for private baths. In addition, the large courtyard surrounded by columns and used for exercises form part of an old, Greek-style, *palaestra*.

Originally, the water was drawn from a neighboring well. But this rudimentary equipment was gradually improved. Pipes brought in water from aqueducts, and large halls were built, each of which was used for the various *steps* of the complicated process which a bath then was. By 89 B.C., the Stabian Baths had already been provided with the essential parts. But it is particularly in the Forum Baths, built around 80 B.C., and remarkably preserved, that we can clearly see the interior plan for buildings of this type.

The Forum Baths, like the Stabian Baths, are divided into two parts: the larger one was for men and the smaller for women. There is still a *palaestra*: it fills up the rear section of the men's baths, but its dimensions are relatively modest: a square of about twenty meters on each side. It was not used for old-fashioned exercises, but rather for strolling, for playing ball and, especially, the constantly repeated pleasure of conversation. The women's baths had only an uncovered area, perhaps arranged as a garden.

The men's bath is more complete. It has the four parts necessary for any Roman bath-building: an *apodyterium*, a large cloakroom where the bathers took off and left their clothes, then a cold room, the *frigidarium*, then a warm room, the *tepidarium*, and finally a steam room, the *caldarium*. Everyone went from one to the other according to the customary ritual. The plan of the Pompeian baths shows that the *apodyterium* opened into both the *frigidarium* and the *tepidarium*: thus it was possible for one to go directly into the cold room for the first ablution, accomplished by plunging into a pool which took up almost the whole room, or else one could first enter the warm

Pierre Grimal, *Roman Cities*, G. Michael Woloch, trans. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp.l 68, 70–72.

room, where the body gradually became used to a high temperature. After a few moments, the bather went into the *caldarium*, where the heat caused abundant sweating. A basin was placed there, holding lukewarm water and a tub into which one could plunge. It was then possible, by following the route in the opposite direction, to return to the *frigidarium* for a last cold bath.

In the more complicated and sumptuous baths built during the imperial era, other rooms were used for massages, for applying oil, and the rooms for conversation and strolling were multiplied. This is quite apparent, for example, in one of the largest baths of Timgad (called the Large North Baths or the Northern Baths), whose arrangements and symmetry obviously relate to the most magnificent bath-buildings in Rome, those of Caracalla or those of Diocletian. There one finds, next to the *caldarium*, where basins kept the hot room humid, rooms for dry heat, called *laconica* or Spartan baths, where the temperatures could climb even higher.

The need to locate in the baths sources of heat, powerful yet still capable of maintaining varied temperatures in the different kinds of rooms, led the architects to invent ingenious methods, of which the most common was the use of pavement supported on pillars of brick, which were called *suspensurae*. Thus, the hot air from the furnace circulated freely and warmed the floor, then it escaped through a large number of vertical pipes built into the walls, while the dust and smoke were carried along. In order to control the temperature of a room, it was sufficient to vary its location along the path of hot air, and the rooms closest to the furnace were obviously the hottest.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why were baths so popular with the Romans?
2. What institutions in the modern world are similar to the Roman baths?
3. How were Roman baths heated?

SELECTION 4:

The Last Day of Julius Caesar

In the latter part of the first century B.C. institutions of the Republic withered and the generals and their armies began to struggle to take over the city and the lands that now were under Roman control. At times they might join forces in a triumvirate (a three-man coalition), but they were extremely fragile and no one was surprised when they fell apart. Julius Caesar (ca. 100–44 B.C.) was a powerful general who rose to prominence because of his successful wars in Gaul. Once back in Rome, the number and strength of his loyal troops convinced the politicians of Rome that cooperation with him was prudent. Caesar disposed of his enemies and soon governed as if he were Rome's only ruler, a king in all but name.

An opposition group formed among leading politicians who had been denied Caesar's favor. Cicero, although not an active member of the opposition, sympathized with it (a stand that would later cost him his life). Some of Caesar's friends also took the opposing side because they feared that he had become a threat to Rome's traditional liberties. One of these friends was Marcus Junius Brutus, a descendant of the patrician leader

who in 509 B.C. had killed Rome's last king and proclaimed the Republic (selection 1). A conspiracy formed to kill Caesar on the date known, Roman-style, as the Ides of March (March 15), 44 B.C. What happened next is dramatically narrated by the ancient biographer Plutarch (A.D. 46–120). In reading this account, remember that Plutarch was writing more than a century after the events that he described.

When Caesar entered, the Senators stood up to show their respect to him, and of Brutus's confederates, some came about his chair and stood behind it. Others met him, pretending to add their petitions to those of Tullius Cimber, in behalf of his brother, who was in exile; and they followed him with their joint applications till he came to his seat. When he sat down, he refused to comply with their requests, and upon their urging him further began to reproach them severely for their importunities, when Tullius, laying hold of his robe with both his hands, pulled it down from his neck. This was the signal for the assault.

Casca gave him the first cut in the neck, which was not mortal nor dangerous, as coming from one who at the beginning of such a bold action was probably very much disturbed. Caesar immediately turned about, and laid his hand upon the dagger and kept hold of it. And both of them at the same time cried out, he that received the blow, in Latin, "Vile Casca, what does this mean?" and he that gave it, in Greek to his brother, "Brother, help!" Upon this first onset, those who were not privy to the design were astonished, and their horror and amazement at what they saw were so great that they neither fled nor assisted Caesar, nor so much as spoke a word. But those who came prepared for the business enclosed him on every side, with their naked daggers in their hands.

Whichever way he turned he met with blows, and saw their swords leveled at his face and eyes, and was encompassed like a wild beast in the toils on every side. For it had been agreed they should each make a thrust at him, and cover themselves with his blood. For this reason Brutus also gave him one stab in the groin. Some say that he fought and resisted all the rest, shifting his body to avoid the blows, and calling out for help, but that when he saw Brutus's sword drawn, he covered his face with his robe and submitted, letting himself fall, whether were by chance or that he was pushed in that direction by his murderers, at the foot of the pedestal on which Pompey's statue stood, now wet with his blood. So that Pompey himself seemed to have presided, as it were, over the revenge done upon his adversary, who lay here at his feet, and breathed out his soul through his multitude of wounds, for they say he received three-and-twenty. And the conspirators themselves were many of them wounded by each other, while they all leveled their blows at the same person.

When Caesar was dispatched, Brutus stood forth to give a reason for what they had done, but the Senate would not hear him, but flew out of doors in all haste. They filled the people with so much alarm and distraction, that some shut up their houses, others left their counters and shops. All ran one way or the other, some to the place to see the sad spectacle, others back again after they had seen it. Antony and Lepidus, Caesar's most faithful friends, got off privately, and hid themselves in some friends' houses. Brutus and his followers, being yet hot from the deed, marched in a body from the senate-house to the capitol with their drawn swords, not like persons who thought of escaping, but with an air of confidence and assurance. As they went along, they called to the people to resume their liberty, and invited the company of any more distinguished people whom they met.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why would the conspirators agree that each of them should strike Caesar?

"Caesar" in *Plutarch: The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, John Dryden, trans., rev. by Arthur Hugh Clough (New York: Modern Library, 1937), pp. 892–93.

2. Pompey was once Caesar's friend, then was defeated and died as his enemy. What does Plutarch find ironic about the scene of Caesar's assassination?
3. What role does Brutus play in killing Caesar?

SELECTION 5:

Marc Antony's Funeral Oration

Although Caesar's assassins claimed that they had acted only to preserve Roman liberties, among the people of the city there were doubts. Much that Caesar had done benefited the populace. A calculating Marc Antony seized the opportunity at Caesar's funeral to remind the men and women of Rome all that they owed to Caesar. Better than any contemporary author, William Shakespeare captures the skill of Antony to rally public opinion against the conspirators. (It should be noted that Shakespeare took most of the material for his tragedy Julius Caesar *from Plutarch).*

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest,—
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men,—
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal*
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me. . . .

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.

Julius Caesar, act 3, scene 2, in *The Yale Shakespeare*, Wilbur L. Cross and Tucker Brooke, eds. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993), pp. 959–60.

*a traditional Roman festival

You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Caesar put it on;
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii.
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
See what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
And, as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolv'd
If Brutus so unkindly knock'd or no;
For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar lov'd him.
This was the most unkindest cut of all;
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.
O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.
O now you weep, and I perceive you feel
The dint of pity; these are gracious drops.
Kind souls, what, weep you when you but behold
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. How does Shakespeare's Marc Antony turn public opinion against the assassins?
2. Marc Antony refers to the time he offered Caesar a crown. Why do you suppose Caesar refused it?
3. Does Marc Antony show in his eulogy that he has the right to be Caesar's successor rather than Brutus?

Selection 6:
A Woman's Protest

This selection describes an event during the Roman civil wars. Roman society was torn apart by irreconcilable political partisanship within the city. Reflecting this condition, the Republic's government, headed by the Senate and the consuls, could not control its generals. Marius, Cinna, and Sulla, all of whom are mentioned in the selection, were earlier generals who seized power during the course of these civil wars.

In 43 B.C., Hortensia, daughter of a former consul (and thus a member of one of Rome's leading families), took the lead in protesting the action of the alliance formed against Julius Caesar's assassins. This alliance, called the Triumvirate ("the three-man group"), brought together Octavian, Marc Antony, and Lepidus. Their announced goal was to avenge Julius Caesar, but in fact they aimed to divide the Roman world among themselves.

Hortensia's protest is an eloquent testimony to the role that women played in Roman society. The voices of some women from the most important families could not be ignored; ordinary women, of course, had no such role.

The triumvirs addressed the people on this subject [paying off their debts] and published an edict requiring 1400 of the richest women to make a valuation of their property, and to furnish for the service of the war such portion as the triumvirs should require from each. It was provided further that if any should conceal their property or make a false valuation they should be fined, and that rewards should be given to informers, whether free persons or slaves. The women resolved to beseech the women-folk of the triumvirs. With the sister of Octavian and the mother of Antony they did not fail, but they were repulsed from the doors of Fulvia, the wife of Antony, whose rudeness they could scarce endure. They then forced their way to the tribunal of the triumvirs in the forum, the people and the guards dividing to let them pass. There, through the mouth of Hortensia, whom they had selected to speak, they spoke as follows: "As befitted women of our rank addressing a petition to you, we had recourse to the ladies of your households; but having been treated as did not befit us, at the hands of Fulvia, we have been driven by her to the forum. You have already deprived us of our fathers, our sons, our husbands, and our brothers, whom you accused of having wronged you if you take away our property also, you reduce us to a condition unbecoming our birth, our manners, our sex. If we have done you wrong, as you say our husbands have, proscribe us as you do them. But if we women have not voted any of you public enemies, have not torn down your houses, destroyed your army, or led another one against you; if we have not hindered you in obtaining offices and honours,—why do we share the penalty when we did not share the guilt?

"Why should we pay taxes when we have no part in the honours, the commands, the statecraft, for which you contend against each other with such harmful results? 'Because this is a time of war,' do you say? When have there not been wars, and when have taxes ever been imposed on women, who are exempted by their sex among all mankind? Our mothers did once rise superior to their sex and made contributions when you were in danger of losing the whole empire and the city itself through the conflict with the Carthaginians. But then they contributed voluntarily, not from their landed property, their fields, their dowries, or their houses, without which life is not possible to free women, but only from their own jewellery, and even these not according to fixed valuation, not under fear of informers or accusers, not by force and violence, but what they themselves were willing to give. What alarm is there now for the empire or the country? Let war with the Gauls or the Parthians come, and we shall not be inferior to our mothers in zeal for the common safety; but for civil wars may we never contribute, nor ever assist you against each other! We did not contribute to Caesar or to Pompey.1 Neither Marius nor Cinna imposed taxes upon us. Nor did Sulla, who held despotic power in the state, do so, whereas you say that you are re-establishing the commonwealth."

While Hortensia thus spoke the triumvirs were angry that women should dare to hold a public meeting when the men were silent; that they should demand from magistrates the reasons for their acts, and themselves not so much as furnish money while the men were serving in the army. They ordered the lictors [Roman police] to drive them away from the tribunal, which they proceeded to do until cries were raised by the multitude outside, when the lictors desisted and the triumvirs said they would postpone till the next day the consideration of the matter.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What does this passage reveal about the role certain women could play in Roman politics?
2. Was it only because they risked losing some of their wealth that Hortensia and her supporters were angered?
3. What caused the triumvir to postpone immediate action against Hortensia and her followers?

Appian, *Roman History*, Horace White, trans., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 195–99.

CHAPTER 10
Imperial Rome and Early Christianity: How Can the Achievements of Augustus and Jesus Be Compared?

The dying Roman Republic had created an empire, but with Julius Caesar's death it was an empire without an emperor. Rebellion, war, and corruption among leading public officials flourished unchecked. The last decades of the Republic suggested—and the failure of Caesar's assassins to reestablish the old political order proved—that Rome could be governed only by a strong ruler. The city of Rome and its traditional institutions simply could not govern the entire Mediterranean world.

The struggle for power in Rome entered its final phase. Caesar's grandnephew and adopted son, Octavian, who was still a youth at his studies at the time of Caesar's death, hurried back to Rome only to learn that Marc Antony had given away most of his inheritance. For a time Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus—the Triumvirate mentioned in chapter 9, selection 6—were allied against Caesar's assassins. But after Brutus and the other assassins had been defeated in war and either committed suicide or otherwise died, the victorious triumvirs' personal ambitions and jealousy drove them apart. By 27 B.C., after a new series of wars, Octavian was the sole ruler of the Roman Empire.

Octavian shrewdly called himself *princeps* ("first citizen") and claimed to be restoring the Republic. Actually he ran the government. The obedient Senate voted him the title of *Augustus* ("he who is revered"), and his name has gone down in history as Caesar Augustus, the first Roman emperor. He brought Rome peace and prosperity after decades of anarchy. The Empire over which he presided would endure for centuries, and some elements of the Roman system of government, notably its law codes, remain to this day fundamental to the political structures of most European states.

During Augustus's reign (for he would hold power until he died peacefully in A.D. 14), there was born in distant Roman-ruled Palestine a Jewish boy known as Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth. Augustus's name and lists of accomplishments were carved onto innumerable public monuments all over the Empire; his image appeared on all the Empire's coins. No documents mentioning Jesus survive from his lifetime, and he died an ignominious and painful death by cru-