

# Notes on Quiz #7

*Civilizations of the Ancient World • Spring 2023*

1. **What were some of the complaints of the plebeians that helped bring about the Conflict of the Orders? What advantages did the plebeians have in pursuing their goals?**

Early on in the Republic, the patricians kept control of government and the law. The plebeians had no officials to look out for their interests. They did not know what the laws were, and did not know how to prosecute their cases. They were largely locked out the magistracies, the senate, and the priesthoods. The patricians held rigidly to the idea that imperium—the right to command citizens—belonged only to patrician families, because the gods only trusted patricians.

The plebs had two major advantages. First, Rome could not fight wars without them. On several occasions they “seceded”—refusing to submit to the levy by which the armies were created, leaving Rome unable to fight its attackers. Second, the plebs had strength in numbers. They created laws for themselves and elected their own officials called tribunes, and because the plebs made up such a large portion of the citizen body these laws (called plebiscites) and officials had a major impact on Rome. Eventually, the Conflict of the Orders ended in 287 when a law was passed making plebiscites binding on all Romans.

2. **Describe at least three ways that consuls were different from kings. What do these differences tell us?**

Roman kings ruled alone and for life, and controlled the state religion. When the monarchy was abolished, the king’s political and priestly functions were separated. The king’s priestly functions went to a special priest called the rex sacrorum, and control over the priesthoods was held by the pontifex maximus.

The political authority of the king was given to the consuls. However, the place of one king there were two consuls (*collegiality*), with each consul being able to stop the other if he acted recklessly or ambitiously. In addition, the consuls served only one year, and generally could not be reelected.

The collective effect was the share the king’s authority across the property-holding families and to prevent the concentration of power or influence in a single man or family.

3. **What did the Romans mean when they called someone a *novus homo*, or ‘new man’? What would it tell us about such a man if he were to become consul?**

A “new man” was someone with no ancestors who had been consuls. Since the Romans determined “nobility” by whether someone had such an ancestor, a “new man” was someone who did not come from a noble family. A “new man” becoming consul was rare, but it did happen with outstanding individuals. (Two examples from the Late Republic are Gaius Marius and Marcus Cicero.)

**EC1. All of the following were assemblies of the Roman Republic EXCEPT:**

(c) the social assembly, which met on the pnyx and was organized by *socii* (color of ancestral footwear)

**EC2. What was the significance of the Twelve Tables?**

The Twelve Tables were twelve sets of laws that made rights, restrictions, and punishments public and available to all citizens. It’s the foundation of Roman law and the heart of the traditional customs (*mos maiorum*). Also, an incident associated with the board of ten (*decemviri*) charged with drafting these laws reaffirmed the Republic’s horror of personal ambition.