

Notes on Quiz #8: The Roman Republic

1. The Conflict of the Orders was a struggle for power involving
 - a. plebeians against patricians
 - b. Romans against Greeks
 - c. soldiers against sailors
 - d. Romulus against Remus

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. Consuls were different from Roman kings in all of the following ways EXCEPT:
 - a. consuls served only for a year, kings for life
 - b. there were always two consuls; kings ruled alone
 - c. kings ran the state religion; consuls did not
 - d. consuls were elected, while Roman kings were chosen by right of combat

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. In Rome, calling someone a “new man” meant that they
 - a. had just completed the rite of passage into adulthood at age 14
 - b. had no ancestors who were consuls, and so their family was new to the nobility
 - c. had recently joined the legion and become a soldier
 - d. had metaphorically been born yesterday (i.e., that they were an idiot)

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.)

4. All of the following were assemblies of the Roman Republic EXCEPT:

- a. the centuriate assembly, which met just outside the walls of Rome and was organized by centuries (military companies ranked by economic class)
- b. the tribal assembly, which met in the Forum and was organized by tribes (geographic regions)
- c. the social assembly, which met on the pnyx and was organized by *socii* (color of ancestral footwear)
- d. the curiate assembly, which conferred imperium and was organized by *curiae* (originally, ethnic divisions)

Assemblies of the Roman Republic included the centuriate assembly; the tribal assembly; and the curiate assembly.

5. According to patriotic legend, the Romans kicked out their kings and established a Republic after

- a. a queen slapped a peasant
- b. a senator killed a priest
- c. a prince raped a noblewoman
- d. a general slew a god

According to legend, the son of the tyrannical seventh king, Tarquin Superbus, raped the most virtuous woman in Rome, Lucretia. This sparked an uprising among the nobility, who ended the monarchy and declared a Republic.

Optional Extra Credit

EC. 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.