

Notes on Quiz #4: Acquisition of Empire

1. The expression “drawing a line in the sand” comes from the incident in which a Roman envoy named C. Popillius Laenas successfully
 - a. drew a circle around Antiochus IV and demanded he not invade Egypt
 - b. drew a rectangle around Hannibal and demanded he behead himself
 - c. drew a pentagon around Philip V and summoned the shade of Hercules
 - d. drew a sudoku around Eumenes II and solved it in only three minutes

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, ruler of the Seleucid empire, amassed his forces on the border of Egypt in 168 BCE, wanting to take it from his fellow hellenistic monarch, the underage Ptolemy VI Philometor. Roman interests lay in preventing the Seleucids from gaining more power, so a delegation was sent led by a senator, C. Popillius Laenas to demand his withdrawal from Egypt and Cyprus. Antiochus said he would discuss it with his council, whereupon the Roman envoy drew a line in the sand around Antiochus and said: “Before you leave this circle, give me a reply that I can take back to the Roman Senate.” Not prepared for war with Rome, Antiochus withdrew.

2. Ways the acquisition of empire transformed Roman life included all of the following EXCEPT:
 - a. Larger, slave-worked farms feeding the growing population of Rome and other cities
 - b. Low tax collection and benevolent governors ensuring vibrant provincial economies
 - c. The influence of foreign art and ideas clashing with conservative Roman culture
 - d. Italian allies resenting fighting harder in Rome’s armies for less reward

Economically, large and small farmers as a whole benefited from the conquests. It was easier for the wealthy to establish large slave-worked estates, especially in central and southern Italy. Farmers began to produce commercially for Italy’s rapidly growing cities, which grew from the influx of wealth from Rome’s conquests and increased trade and commerce. The inflow of precious metals helped to create a stable monetary system, and the minting of millions of coins to pay soldiers helped to monetize the economy. Wealthy Romans increased their fortunes through war booty, overseas commerce, and lucrative public contracts. • Socially, imperial expansion benefited upper-class Romans, but created numerous discontented social groups. Many provincials resented their loss of independence and felt oppressed by often corrupt and rapacious Roman governors and tax collectors. Even Rome’s Italian allies came to feel abused. They did much of the fighting, but Rome kept most of victory’s fruits and treated them more like subjects. • Successful wars flooded Italy with slaves. While some skilled slaves came to work as household servants, tens of thousands ended up in far more dangerous and hostile conditions in mines, large workshops, and the fields of great estates. In the 140s and 130s, several dangerous slave revolts broke out, particularly in Italy and Sicily. • Meanwhile poorer citizens, especially the rural and urban plebs, faced desperate social and economic conditions by the late second century. Wealthy nonsenators who made up the equestrian class resented the difficulties placed in the way of equites who sought to rise into the ranks of the consular nobility. • Culturally, the values and methods of foreign art and cultural expression, experienced by many in wars away from home and at home through immigration, the presence of foreign slaves, war booty, and burgeoning international commerce, created dissonance with the more reserved Roman culture. The process of adaptation to resolve this cultural conflict included the use of Greek artistic tools, including epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, history, and philosophy, to create art that emphasized the ideals and identity of Rome. • Politically, imperial expansion strained the Republic’s system of government. The rewards that came from holding high office and commanding conquering armies greatly increased, and this in turn raised political competition among the leaders of noble or would-be-noble families in the senate to destructive levels. The expansion of the lower offices of the *cursus honorum* only intensified the competition for the two consulships at the top. Attempts to rein in ambitious individuals by legislating what had been traditional norms and by instituting punishments for those who violated them only produced greater efforts to evade them. At the same time, fear that someone might gain political advantage by sponsoring needed reforms prevented the senate from solving the problems that others could manipulate to their benefit. While Rome’s empire grew, the competing oligarchs who controlled it became less and less able to solve the problems it created.

3. Publicani

- a. tended bar in pubs
- b. handled public contracts
- c. tried to “influence” the public
- d. were a form of *lycan* or werewolf

One key element of Roman provincial government was tax farming. Because the governors had no supporting bureaucracy, tax collection was outsourced to for-profit corporations run by Roman middle class businessmen (publicani). These corporations gouged the populace by collecting as much money as they could, handing over to the Roman state the fixed amount the senate decreed for that province and pocketing the rest. This resulted in resentment, rebellion, and increased need for Roman military presence and oppression in the provinces.

4. Romans who adapted Greek forms to create art that strengthened the Roman identity included all of the following EXCEPT:

- a. Ennius, a master of tragic, comic, and epic poetry
- b. Plautus and Terence, who adapted Greek comedy to reflect a Roman audience
- c. Metellus Numidicus, who composed a tragic play called *Carthage: Judgment Day*
- d. Cato the Elder, the first Roman to write an important history in Latin

Roman authors, including Ennius, Plautus, Terence, and Cato the Elder, used Greek tools to write Latin works to strengthen Roman identity.

5. The alarming ambition of men like Scipio Africanus and Flaminius in the years after the war with Hannibal led to

- a. Romans who wanted more power being installed as kings in nations Rome ruled over
- b. laws imposing minimum ages and secret ballots
- c. good nobles fleeing the cesspool of Rome for the provinces, where virtue prevailed
- d. calls for women to be allowed to run for office, since they would do a better job

In the decades after the Second Punic War, new laws were passed governing the minimum age for elected office, bribery, and the need for secret ballots.

Optional Extra Credit

EC. In your opinion, why did Rome decide that, defeated and weakened as it was, Carthage must be destroyed?

There are a number of factors that could be mentioned. The terrifying threat to Rome following the disasters at Trasimene and Cannae had created a visceral and lasting irrational fear of the Carthaginians, much as with the Gauls sacking Rome two centuries before, such that the mere continued existence of the city was disquieting. Also, the Romans had already experienced Carthage having been vanquished only to rise again. • More practically, wealthy Romans like Cato the Elder had a strong interest in increasing Roman sea trade, which a resurgent but peaceful Carthage would still threaten. Uncontested control of the extremely important grain harvests of Sicily and Sardinia were potentially even more of a factor.