

Rome in Africa

By Susan Raven

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NEW MASTERS FOR AFRICA

The fertility of North Africa had certainly not been lost on Cato, brandishing figs in the Roman senate as he reiterated *'Delenda est Carthago'*,¹ nor on his hearers; but the new masters of Africa did not at once set about exploiting the province which was to become, with Egypt, the most valuable as a source of food, at least cost in men and money. For a hundred years, their policy was dictated by their resolve that no power should again arise on the far side of the straits of Sicily which could threaten either their hold on Sicily or their sea routes across the Mediterranean. Not that their acquisition of Africa can be regarded as entirely accidental: during the next century and a half they established their rule round the whole of the Mediterranean basin, and north-west Africa could scarcely have escaped the common fate for long.

The Roman Republic was not equipped, however, and never adapted itself to run an empire. It was as if 'Marylebone Borough Council suddenly found itself with Ireland, France, and half Spain,' to use J. C. Stobart's apt simile. Rome had acquired Sicily in 241 BC, after the First Punic War, Corsica and Sardinia in 237 BC, after Carthage's Mercenary War, Spain thirty years later after the Second Punic War, Carthage's old territory in Africa after the Third, in 146 BC, and Macedonia in the same year—five provinces in the space of a century, and the Romans still had no coherent provincial administration. Senators were sent out to govern for one

year; they had absolute authority, military, executive and judicial, and there was no bureaucracy either to help them or to keep a check on them. The right to collect taxes was farmed out to contractors. The traditional honesty of the Roman aristocracy which had so amazed Polybius when he first went to Rome soon deserted its representatives abroad, surrounded by the temptations offered by rich provincial cities; speculation and the worst forms of usury and tax-farming were to become so commonplace that even a man like Cicero did not hesitate to line his pockets with a fortune.

1 'Carthage must be destroyed!'

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Street in Djemila (ancient Cuicul), Algeria

Carthage having been laid waste, her corner of Africa was not immediately ripe for this kind of wholesale exploitation. A watching brief limited to peace-keeping and the exaction of war tribute was, to begin with, the extent of official Roman policy. The territory enclosed by the ditch which the earlier Scipio had had dug after Hannibal's defeat in 202 BC, from Thabraca on the north coast south-east to the Gulf of Gabès, was surveyed and divided amongst the deserving. Some of it was given, free of tax, to the seven Phoenician cities which had sided with Rome and

had therefore become *civitates liberae et immunes*.¹ They continued to govern themselves. Some of the land was allotted to two thousand Carthaginian soldiers who had deserted to the Roman side during the war; some was given to Libyans who had surrendered, in return for a fixed tax; much was sold to rich men

1 Free and exempt city states.

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in Italy—the beginning of the vast *latifundia* which were later to arouse the cupidity of Nero. The Libyans who had worked the land for the Carthaginians continued to work the land, but for new masters.

There was room enough for extortion and repression but for the moment the Romans left the provincials to manage their own lives. Although towns and villages which had been loyal to Carthage were sacked and their occupants sold into slavery—or ‘sold’ with the land itself—the remainder, even in Carthaginian territory, continued to govern themselves in the Punic manner. Punic was still generally spoken and many Africans now learnt it for the first time. Enterprising Italian traders came to settle in the coastal towns and at Cirta (Constantine), and a few impoverished Italian farmers immigrated under their own steam. A quarter of a century after the sack of Carthage the Gracchi brothers, recognizing the new province’s potential, tried to settle several thousand Italians in holdings in northern Tunisia as part of their agricultural reforms in Italy; but this project failed.

The native kingdoms were left to themselves.

THE JUGURTHINE WAR

The neglect of the native kingdoms proved a mistake. Carthage as a military threat may have been destroyed for ever, but the Africans could be counted on to quarrel among themselves, largely because the problem of the succession to African kingdoms, which was not based on primogeniture but on the eldest-of-the-family principle or a division between brothers, was never resolved. The old native habit of handing sovereignty to the most competent ruler, whether son or brother or

nephew, accorded ill with Masinissa's family's ambitions. The Romans themselves were dragged against their will into dynastic squabbles. Worse, during the civil wars of the last decades of the Roman Republic, rival candidates to the throne of Numidia took opposite sides in the struggle for power in Rome. But it was one thing to make trouble for each other, quite another to interfere in the internal affairs of Rome itself, to side with one Roman general against another. From that moment, even nominal independence was doomed.

Masinissa, who had died during the siege of Carthage, had eventually been succeeded as king of Numidia by his son Micipsa; he, like his father, was a loyal ally of Rome and a competent ruler. But the succession problem which had bedevilled Masinissa's own rise to power was masked, not ended; for at first Micipsa had had to share kingship with two of his brothers, who both died soon afterwards, leaving him sole heir. One of these brothers, however, had left a bastard son, Jugurtha, who was older than Micipsa's two sons, and an ambitious and capable young man.

Jugurtha took after his grandfather Masinissa. He was outstandingly handsome and brave, a great huntsman and soldier, and very popular

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with his uncle's subjects. According to Sallust, whose *Jugurthine War* provides the principal account of the dramatic feud which was to follow, Micipsa realized that his nephew would be a dangerous rival to his own sons and for this reason sent him in 134 BC as commander of Numidian troops to fight for the Romans against the rebellious Iberian tribes, hoping that he would be killed. The plan, such as it was, failed. Jugurtha—who was then about twenty years old—distinguished himself during the campaign, made many friends among the young Roman noblemen who were fighting alongside him, and returned to Numidia more popular than ever with his troops, and with an enthusiastic letter of recommendation to Micipsa from the Roman commander, Scipio. Micipsa took the hint: he made Jugurtha joint heir with his two sons, Hiempsal and Adherbal.

It was disastrous. When Micipsa died in 118 BC, the cousins were unable to keep up any pretence of friendship. Micipsa's sons were jealous, and Jugurtha, believing himself the better man, was impetuous and greedy. After murdering Hiempsal and defeating Adherbal in battle, he seized the throne for himself and set about bribing his friends in the Roman senate to turn a blind eye to his action.

The Romans were in some difficulty. By their lights Jugurtha was in the wrong, and it was difficult to resist the appeals of Adherbal, who had fled to Rome to canvass for support. They could hardly ignore the situation, since Numidia was a client kingdom; but they delayed. Jugurtha visited Rome to distribute more bribes, to encourage further delay. Then, when the Romans finally decreed that half Numidia should go to Adherbal, they did not back up the decision with force. Jugurtha was soon showing further contempt for the imperial power, and the cousins were once more at war. Still the Romans showed no signs of intervening.

In 112 BC, however, Jugurtha brought them down on his head. He committed the error, while sacking Cirta as a punishment for sheltering Adherbal, of killing indiscriminately all the adult male inhabitants, a certain number of whom were Italian settlers. The Romans felt obliged to avenge this atrocity. The war which then broke out, during the latter stages of which the Roman generals Marius and Sulla made their names, lasted for six years, and ended only when Jugurtha's father-in-law, King Bocchus of Mauretania, was induced to betray him and deliver him in chains to Sulla. Jugurtha died in prison in Rome, no doubt leaving behind him a legendary reputation as a heroic defender of Africa against Rome, just as his grandfather Masinissa had been the symbol of the African struggle against Carthage. He was not the last hero in this cause.

THE END OF NUMIDIAN INDEPENDENCE

For the moment Rome made no move to annex the heartland of Numidia, which was given to a half-brother of Jugurtha called Gauda, from whom

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the Romans felt they had nothing to fear. Their new ally, Bocchus of Mauretania, was rewarded with the western part of Numidia for his treachery to his son-in-law. Some of Marius's veterans, following what was beginning to be standard Roman practice in Italy with retired soldiers, were given, at the end of their army service, land on the border between the province of Africa and Numidia. But even though it was becoming clear that the native kings could not be relied on to rule their client kingdoms in peace or without involving Rome in tiresome and expensive punitive expeditions, the Republic made no attempt to extend its authority.

The next wars on African soil stemmed directly from the civil wars in Italy. Two sons of Gauda, Hiempsal and Hierbas, shared the throne of eastern Numidia after his death in 88 BC, and each used the rivalry between Marius and Sulla to advance his own cause: Hiempsal took the part of Sulla, Hierbas that of Marius. When Marius was defeated, and with him Hierbas, Hierbas was put to death in 81 BC by Sulla's troops under their commander Pompey, and Hiempsal was left as sole ruler of eastern Numidia. Once more the succession problem had been resolved by force. But the wheel of fortune turned: thirty-five years later Hiempsal and his son Juba I chose the wrong side during the civil war of the Triumvirate. When the Three Men, Caesar, Pompey and Crassus, had divided the Roman provinces between them, Pompey received Africa; and when war broke out between Caesar and Pompey, the Numidian king quite properly sided with Pompey, who was not only governor of Africa but had rid him, years before, of his brother Hierbas. After Pompey's death at Pharsalus, the Pompeian party continued to hold Africa and wage war against Caesar from there; for it was not then by any means a foregone conclusion that Julius Caesar would become the master of the Roman world.

The outcome was no more certain when Caesar finally landed in Africa to do battle with his adversaries; his troops were fewer, and his principal ally was an Italian soldier of fortune called Sittius who had fled to Mauretania after a spectacular bankruptcy, and had made a career for himself in Africa as a freelance military officer. Although Caesar could also count on the two kings of Mauretania, well to the west, the Pompeian strength was considerably greater, not counting Juba I's large forces. However, in 46 BC Caesar defeated the Pompeian army at Thapsus, on the east coast a few miles north of Mahdia. It was one of the decisive battles of the ancient world. Caesar lost fifty men; his enemies lost ten thousand.

At almost the same moment, Sittius annihilated Juba's army, which was guarding Numidia, and both Juba's kingdom and Pompey's province fell to Caesar. The leading Pompeians committed suicide; for Juba, too, there was only one way out, and he engaged in a fight to the death with a Roman legionary. A slave dispatched the survivor; no one knows which of the two it was. Juba's young son was taken to Rome in Caesar's train to be shown off in his triumph, and to be brought up a Roman in Caesar's household.

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THE ROMAN OCCUPATION

It was Julius Caesar who at last extended direct Roman rule well beyond Scipio's *fossa regia*,¹ which had for a hundred years marked the boundary of Roman Africa. At one stroke, Roman territory in Africa was trebled to include most of the Numidian kingdom. The original African province was now called Africa Vetus to distinguish it from Africa Nova, as the new annexation was called, and the historian Sallust was appointed Africa Nova's first governor. His governorship gave him the opportunity to gather material for his book *The Jugurthine War*, which had been fought nearly seventy years earlier, but at the time it was principally remarkable for a rapacity which shocked even Sallust's contemporaries.

Caesar had learned the lesson of his campaign in Africa: that from the Roman point of view the native kingdoms were better abolished. True, King Bocchus of Mauretania was rewarded for his support in the Thapsus campaign by being given the western part of Numidia; but after his death in 33 BC his kingdom was ruled directly by the Romans, and then handed over in 25 BC to Juba II, the romanized son of Juba I.

Caesar was also responsible for the first major Roman settlements in Africa. His ally Sittius installed himself with his veterans on the western frontier of Africa Nova in a semi-autonomous fief based on Cirta, which formed a useful buffer state between the Roman territory and Mauretania and which, when Sittius died, could be readily absorbed into the province. Caesar also settled in Africa others of his veterans and—following the example of the Gracchi brothers—some of the dispossessed Italian peasants who were by now creating serious population

problems in Rome itself. Carthage, Thysdrus (El Djem), Hippo Diarrhytus (Bizerta) and a handful of places in the Cape Bon peninsula were among the townships which seem to have received Julian colonies during Caesar's brief reign.

Caesar's principal African project was the refounding of Carthage, which had been deserted for a hundred years. Before he could make it a reality he was murdered, in 44 BC, and the struggle for the control of the Roman world which followed led once more to a period of confused fighting in Africa. The two provinces passed to Caesar's great-nephew Octavian, then to Lepidus; Africa Vetus fought Africa Nova; and it was only in 36 BC that Octavian became their uncontested master. Elsewhere in the Roman world the war lasted until Octavian defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC. Two years later Octavian, shortly to assume the title of Augustus, or Emperor, officially refounded on the site of the Punic capital the city which, under the Empire, was to become once again a great metropolis of the Mediterranean world.

Carthage was just one, if the most important, of a number of Augustan

1 Demarcation ditch.

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colonies in Africa. Huge armies had been involved in the civil wars, and the new Emperor was faced with the problem of reducing the immense number of soldiers who had been recruited. In his *Res Gestae*, a summary of his activities which he composed late in life to be inscribed on his tomb (the main copy of which was found in Ankara), Augustus claimed that during his reign he either sent back to their own towns or settled in colonies more than three hundred thousand men. Some of those veterans, like those of his great-uncle Julius Caesar, were settled in Africa: inland from Carthage at places like Sicca Veneria (El Kef), Thuburbo Minus (Tébourba) and Uthina (Oudna); and also—a new departure—on the Atlantic coast of Mauretania, far to the west. There were also half a dozen Augustan colonies on the coast between Igilgili (Jijil) and Cartennas (Ténès); and another three were founded inland to help bolster up the authority of the new man whom Augustus now put in to rule Mauretania. The romanization of Africa was about to begin in earnest.

JUBA, KING OF MAURETANIA

Augustus gave the whole of Mauretania in 25 BC to Juba II of Numidia, then twenty-six or twenty-seven years old. Julius Caesar, cheated of the chance of displaying the elder Juba in his triumph, had taken his young son, also Juba, to Rome in his stead; and when Caesar was murdered the prince was brought up in the household of Caesar's heir Octavian. Like other sons of the Roman nobility of the day, Juba was given an education more Greek than Latin. He proved a willing pupil. He grew up with a passion for the arts, for literature and for science, and wrote books himself—all in Greek—on subjects as various as the history of Rome, Arabia, the Assyrians, African geography, painting, the theatre and even a medicinal herb. All these books are lost; their contents are known only through

what was repeated or plagiarized by other writers. King Juba seems, for all his encyclopaedic knowledge, to have been more credulous than critical. Yet in one sphere at least he was exceptional: he had a genuine and discriminating appreciation of art.

Juba married Cleopatra Selene, the daughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra. She, too, had been taken to Rome after the defeat and death of her parents and brought up in Augustus's household by Augustus's sister Octavia, Mark Antony's generous and forgiving widow. Together these two children of Rome's enemies were to create at Iol Caesarea (Cherchel), King Bocchus's old capital now renamed by Juba in honour of Augustus, what must have seemed to them, in their exile from all they had known in their youth, an oasis of civilization. A temple, a palace, a theatre and an amphitheatre were built in classical style; there was probably a Roman-style forum and a royal palace (not yet located). Celebrated actors were imported, a fine library was founded, statues were commissioned from

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Greek ateliers. It is to this royal art patron, wholly African by blood, that the museums of Algiers and Cherchel owe the finest works of Greco-Roman art found in Africa. Juba had a second capital far to the west, at Volubilis in modern Morocco; here, too, many of the beautiful bronzes in the museum at Rabat are almost certainly a testimony to his taste. It has even been claimed, with perhaps less justification, that the splendid cargo of first-century BC Greek bronzes and statues found in 1907 in a sunken Roman merchantman off Mahdia, on the eastern coast of Tunisia, and now in the Bardo Museum in Tunis, was on its way not to Rome but to Juba in Caesarea.

Although his tastes were Greek and his lineage African, Juba's loyalty was to Rome and to his protector Augustus. It never wavered during his fifty-year reign. From that point of view at least, the Emperor had chosen his agent of civilization with his customary prudence. Juba's kingdom was, however, enormous, mountainous and extremely vulnerable to attack from tribes which did not welcome subservience to Rome as much as he did. If Augustus had hopes that Juba would be able to suppress risings with his own troops without calling on the help of Roman legionaries, they were not fulfilled. When there was trouble, Rome had to go to the rescue. For the most important factor in the romanization of Africa and the development of its immense prosperity was not one client king or a few thousand Italian settlers. It was peace.

Roman rule was a mixed blessing, but the *pax Romana* was not an idle phrase. The Greek city states had declined not least because throughout their history, both at home in Greece and abroad in Magna Graecia (Sicily and southern Italy), they had been unable to avoid fighting each other. Peace was Rome's great gift to the decaying Hellenistic world and to the new provinces carved out of Europe and

North Africa. She acted as foster mother to the old cities of the east and the new cities of the west, so that they lived amicably side by side. For the next four hundred years serious warfare was by and large confined to the frontiers of the Empire.

The remarkable prosperity of the lands bordering the Mediterranean was made possible by peace. And peace, if not always easily kept, was made possible by the Roman legions under the command of the Roman Emperor.

THE THIRD AUGUSTAN LEGION

In 27 BC Augustus had divided government of the Empire between himself and the senate. The frontier provinces, where fighting was still going on and which needed legions for peace-keeping, he kept under his own direct control, ruling them through legates, while the pacified provinces, which needed soldiers only for civilian policing purposes or as a token guard for the proconsul who governed in the name of the Roman people, went to

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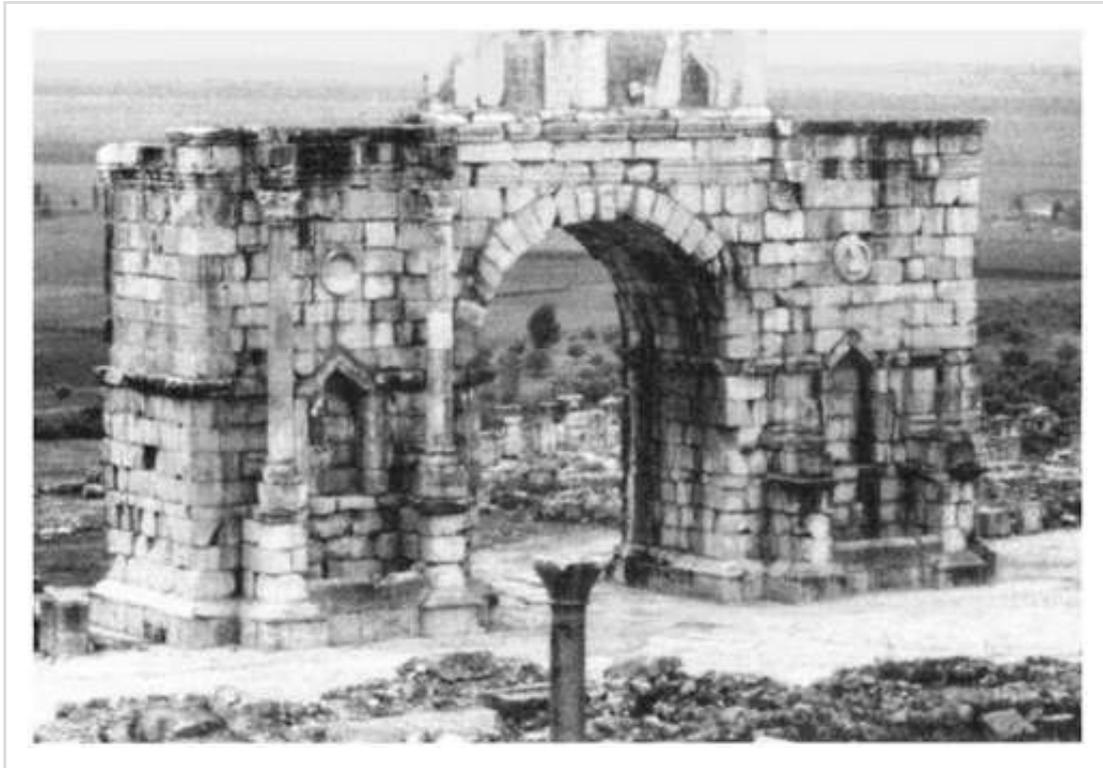
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Arch of Caracalla of AD 216-17 at Volubilis. It originally had on top a bronze statue, probably of Caracalla, in a six-horse chariot

the senate. To this rule, however, Africa was an exception. Although it was a frontier province and needed a legion to guard it, Augustus ceded it to the senate. This may have been a diplomatic concession. So it was the proconsul, the representative of the senate, now in residence in the newly-founded *colonia* of Carthage, who was commander-in-chief of the Third Augustan Legion which the Emperor seconded to the province.

The Third Augustan Legion's first identifiable base in Africa was at Ammaedara (Haïdra) in the steppe country some one hundred and fifty miles south-west of Carthage. This was a strategic position from which the Legion could police the

movements of the tribes between the southern steppes and the Tunisian plateau and keep an eye on any incursions from the Aurès mountains to the south-west.

The Legion was recruited at this time largely from Rome's western provinces, in particular from Gaul;¹ for it was Augustus's policy to guard the provinces with legions raised in other parts of the Empire. This policy was to change; but for the moment the Third Augustan Legion was a body of some five or six thousand foreigners. However, they were Latin-speaking and Roman-trained and even when, a century or so later, the army raised legionaries in Africa itself, those recruits all had to learn the

¹ The soldiers of General Bugeaud who conquered Algeria in 1830 were not the first Gallic troops to set foot there.

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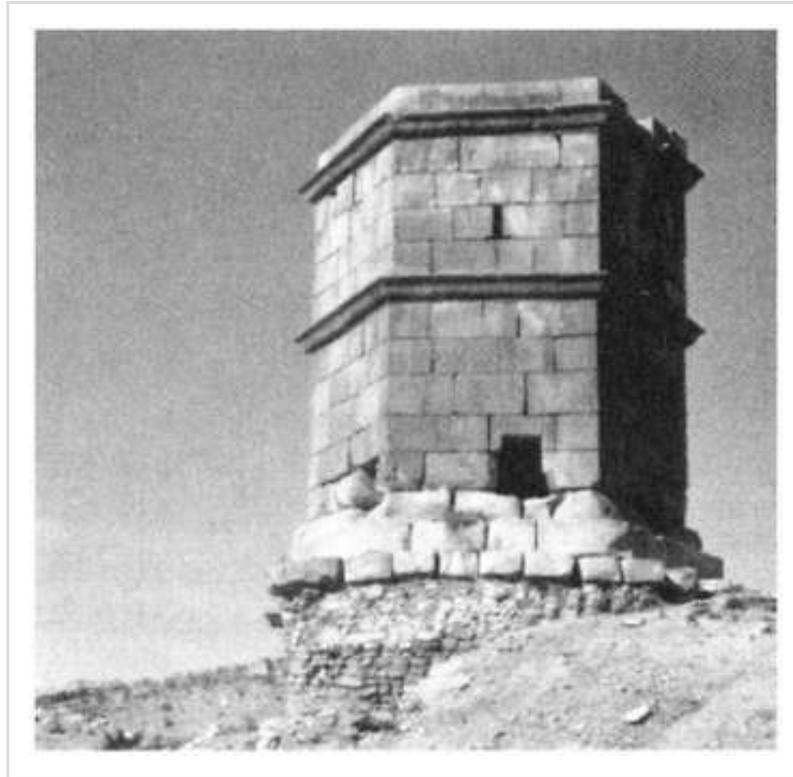
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Hexagonal mausoleum at Haïdra (ancient Ammaedara) in Tunisia, once the Third Augustan Legion's headquarters

Latin language and Roman discipline, and were trained in Roman skills of all kinds.

For four hundred years (with one thirty-year interval) the Third Augustan was the only Roman legion permanently garrisoned in north-west Africa.¹ It was assisted by auxiliary units of non-Roman citizens and the total effective strength of Rome's African army was probably between 20,000 and 25,000 men—certainly no more. It was responsible for the keeping of internal peace and for defence from outside attack. A region some fifteen hundred miles wide, which stretched from the Atlantic to the Libyan desert, was policed, if sometimes with difficulty, by these 25,000 men. In times of crisis, reinforcements were drafted in from other parts of

the Empire, from Pannonia, for instance, or Spain, as we know from inscriptions and gravestones; the nature of the army changed over time, but it was essentially the Third Augustan Legion and its auxiliaries which bore the brunt. They were to be kept busy.

1 Compare tiny Britain, with four legions tied up there during almost the whole Roman period.

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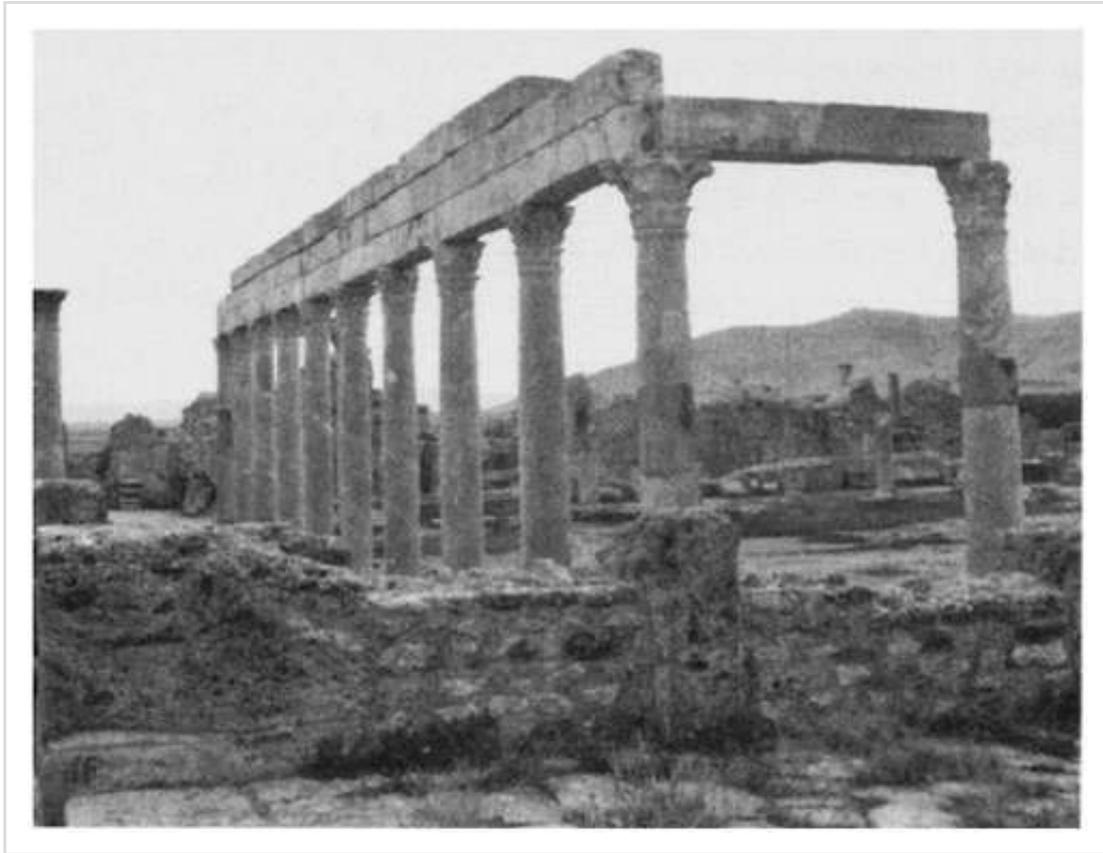
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Portico of Petronius Felix and his sons at Thuburbo Maius, near Pont du Fahs in Tunisia, built in AD 225

THE REVOLT OF TACFARINAS

In 21 BC, within a year or two of the Legion's arrival, the proconsul of Africa was awarded a triumph for a military campaign about which nothing is known except that it was fierce enough to deserve a triumph.

Very little can now be reconstructed of the native opposition to the Romans. The big set pieces—the rebellion of Jugurtha, the revolt of Tacfarinas—are reported by Roman historians, but there were certainly others. A succession of triumphs awarded to his generals for campaigns in Africa, otherwise unrecorded, in 34, 33,

28 and 21 BC testify to constant disturbances during the early part of Augustus's reign. In 19 BC yet another triumph was awarded to the new proconsul, L. Cornelius Balbus (who had been born in Phoenician Spain), for a victory over the Garamantes of the Fezzan, in the desert south of Tripolitania. In a notable expedition into the Sahara four hundred miles south of the coastal cities, he reached the oases of Garama (Germa) and Cydamae (Ghadames); but the Roman presence was not permanent, and further campaigns had to be waged against the Garamantes later. In Juba's Mauretania fighting seems to have been endemic for a quarter of a century, until the western tribes were

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defeated, with, of course, Roman help, in AD 6, but again only for a short period.

In AD 17 the most serious of north-west Africa's early wars broke out. This was the revolt of the Musulamii under Tacfarinas. In AD 14, the last year of Augustus's reign, the Third Augustan Legion had constructed their first military road in Africa. It ran north-west from the port of Tacapae (Gabès) in southern Tunisia towards Ammaedara (Haïdra)—perhaps across the Musulamians' traditional routes between their summer and winter grazing grounds—and the new road may have seemed a provo-cation. The first rising was swiftly put down, but the next, under their new leader Tacfarinas, was another matter.

Tacfarinas, like Jugurtha before him and many another of the Empire's most dangerous enemies, had learnt the art of war from the Romans themselves; he added gifts of his own. The Roman historian Tacitus tells us in his *Annals* that Tacfarinas 'had deserted from service as a Roman auxiliary. His first followers were vagabonds and marauders who came for loot. Then he organized them into army units and formations, both infantry and cavalry, and was finally recognized as the chief, no longer of an undisciplined gang, but of the Musulamian people—a powerful tribe on the edge of the desert.¹ Taking up arms, they brought in the neighbouring Mauretians, under their leader Mazippa... Tacfarinas retained in camp an élite force equipped in Roman fashion, which he instructed in discipline and obedience; while Mazippa's light-armed troops burnt, killed, and intimidated.'

It was a model guerrilla campaign, with Tacfarinas, according to Tacitus, 'giving way under pressure and then attacking from the rear'. Con-ventional Roman victories had little meaning in such a war; the survivors simply retreated to the

desert to re-form and then returned to make lightning raids where they were least expected, constantly harrying the static Roman positions.

The Romans soon learnt that guerrilla attacks must be parried by guerrilla tactics. But Tacfarinas was not easily defeated. Despite frequent set-backs, he 'raised reinforcements in the interior and had the insolence to send representatives to Tiberius [who had succeeded Augustus as Emperor] demanding land for himself and his army. As the alternative, he offered endless war. No personal or national slur, it is said, ever provoked the Emperor more than the sight of this deserter and brigand behaving like a hostile sovereign... With Roman power at its height, was this bandit Tacfarinas to be bought off by a treaty granting lands?'

Tiberius was enraged. He ordered an amnesty in the hope that many rebels would lay down their arms; meanwhile the Romans hurriedly

1 The Musulamians in fact occupied the region between Theveste (Tébessa) and Sicca Veneria (El Kef).

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taught themselves new methods of war, mobile, light-armed, fast striking, the very antithesis of the solid legionary formations. They even, most unusually, continued fighting in winter. In spite of some success, however, including the capture of Tacfarinas's brother, 'enough of the enemy was left to revive hostilities'; and Tacfarinas was still at large.

The fighting flared up with renewed vigour shortly after Juba II died in AD 23, and left Mauretania to his son Ptolemy—'too young for responsibility', reported Tacitus with unusual mildness. The Moors revolted almost immediately against the tyrannical rule of the new king's favourites. Tacfarinas seized his chance: he appealed to all who preferred freedom to slavery to make a united effort to get rid of the Romans altogether, and soon had a new army composed not only of Musulamians and Moors but also of disaffected or dispossessed peasants from Africa Proconsularis itself, and troops sent by the Garamantes. The Roman governor of the year, however, was a man of energy and military gifts called Dolabella; and within a few months, having induced the unwilling Ptolemy to join the fight, his troops surprised the enemy in their encampment at Auzia (Souk El Ghoziane), some fifty miles south-east of Caesarea, in a dawn attack: they 'were dragged to death or captivity like sheep', and Tacfarinas himself was killed. With his death, the heart went out of the rebellion. It had lasted seven years.

The revolt of Tacfarinas was by no means the last of the uprisings. There were plenty of others—scarcely a decade went by without trouble somewhere. But they were better contained; the Romans now knew the kind of warfare they could expect, and had learnt that mobility was more important than brute strength.

A NEW MODUS VIVENDI

The following reign, that of Caligula, brought important military and political changes. In AD 37 the Emperor took the Third Augustan Legion out of the control of the proconsul, who could not provide continuity of command (nor, necessarily, military experience), and entrusted it instead to a legate chosen by himself for his professional capacities as a soldier, who commanded the whole region where Roman troops were garrisoned.

A year or two later Mauretania was annexed to the Empire. Juba's son Ptolemy, who had no heir, was the last king. He had been officially recognized as *socius et amicus*¹ of Rome for his part in the war against Tacfarinas; but he made the mistake of appearing at an imperial function in Rome in a style even more ostentatiously luxurious than that of Caligula, who was his cousin (they were both descended from Mark Antony). The Emperor, his jealousy inflamed by greed, had Ptolemy put to death and

1 Friend and ally.

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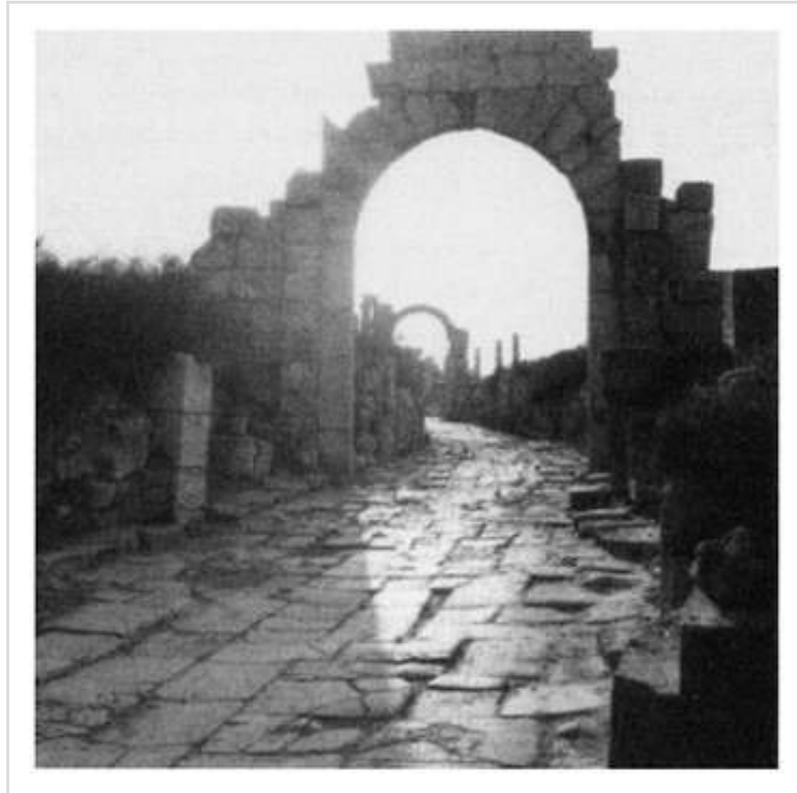
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Rome in Africa

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seized Mauretania, though not without trouble. Aedemon, a freedman loyal to Ptolemy, raised a rebellion in protest, which took Caligula's successor Claudius some three or four years to put down, even though certain Moors supported the Romans. Volubilis, an ancient Moorish township and second capital of Juba II, was rewarded for her loyalty to Rome with special status.

But the rising is principally of note as the occasion of another Roman expedition to the far south. In AD 41, in pursuit of the Moors retreating to the desert, C. Suetonius Paulinus¹ crossed the Mount Atlas range and led his troops into the typical *reg* of the Sahara, all bare rocks and red gravel. Though it was midwinter, his troops suffered from heatstroke and thirst, and he had to turn back after ten days' march. His colleague, Cn. Hosidius Geta, also reached the desert, while pursuing another Moorish chieftain. Only prayers to the local gods, and a providential shower of rain, saved the troops from dying of thirst. Henceforth the western desert was left to its own people.



Leptis Magna, Libya: the Arch of Trajan seen through the Arch of Tiberius. The market is immediately to the right

There were also expeditions across the central Sahara towards the end of the first century AD, reported by Ptolemy of Alexandria in his *Geography*. The first was a disciplinary foray in AD 70, after the Garamantes from the

1 Suetonius Paulinus was later sent to Britain, where he conquered Boudica (Boadicea).

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Fezzan pillaged the territory of Leptis Magna. Later, the Romans mounted two exploratory campaigns: one, a decade later, under Septimius Flaccus, was a march of some three or four months into ‘the midst of the Aethiopians’ (perhaps as far as the Tibesti mountains), the other, at the turn of the century, under Julius Maternus, reached the land of Agisymba (unidentified), ‘where the rhinoceroses foregather’—probably Lake Chad.

But the only evidence yet found of any contact between the Romans and the people on the southern edge of the Sahara are the Roman coins found in the fourth-century tomb of Tin Hinan, so-called queen of the Tuareg, at Abelessa in the Hoggar mountains in southern Algeria.

There appear to have been close ties, however, between the people of the Fezzan and the Romans from the first century onward. At Germa, their capital, four hundred and thirty miles south of Leptis Magna, is the most southerly Roman-style monument in Africa west of the Nile Valley, first noted by an English traveller in 1826, a magnificent mausoleum probably dating from the late first century AD. Even more interesting is the complex of *foggaras*, or subterranean water channels, constructed to tap water from underground water levels sometimes many miles away, which was discovered in the 1930s by an Italian archaeological expedition. There are other Roman remains which suggest links with Rome—in the shape not of rulers or administrators, but of traders and technical experts, no doubt sent to advise the inhabitants. The Romans certainly made no attempt to conquer the Fezzan and rule it directly.

* * *

From now on Roman Africa consists of Mauretania as far south as Volubilis (divided for administrative convenience into Mauretania Tingitana and Mauretania Caesariensis); Numidia as far south as the Aurès mountains; and Africa Proconsularis with the narrow coastal strip of Tripolitania. Between the first and third centuries of our era these regions were fundamentally peaceful, especially the fertile north-east: the unwalled cities, the vast olive groves of the second century, the vulnerable aqueducts—all are silent witnesses to the tranquillity of the countryside.

The desert tribes outside the borders probably numbered no more than a hundred thousand, at the most: during the course of centuries, many must have been drawn to live inside the Roman provinces themselves. In the interior, some precautions had to be taken against sudden raids from isolated mountain communities. The cities of the west, civilian as well as military, were walled: at Volubilis, the territory of the Baquates tribe reached almost to the gates, and others were occasionally besieged. But many of these tribes too were gradually drawn under the Roman influence.

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