Rome's expansion continued, now on a far grander scale. In 196 BCE a Roman general who shared what would soon be a fashionable attitude of warm respect for the Greeks defeated Philip V, confined him to the Macedonia north, and proclaimed that Greece was free. Warfare continued intermittently until the 140s, when the Romans, having defeated the Macedonians and the Greeks themselves, declared the former Greek world another province of their empire.

THE THIRD PUNIC WAR (149–146 BCE)

In the years that followed Rome's victory in the Second Punic War, Carthage came under continuing attack by Massinissa, king of Numidia and a Roman ally in North Africa. Rome tried at first to mediate, but then sided more and more with Massinissa. In 153 BCE, a Roman embassy led by the censor Cato was struck by Carthage's wealth and by its efforts to rearm. Cato led a campaign for invasion in the Senate, and in 149, after the Carthaginians attacked the Numidians, the Romans invaded the attackers' homeland. The invasion started poorly. But Scipio Aemilianus, the adopted grandson of Scipio Africanus, became consul in 147, and his leadership proved decisive. Carthage fell after a long siege and some vicious street fighting. The city was partly burned, but the Romans did not, as legend holds, sow salt in its territory so that nothing would ever grow there again. Eventually Carthage recovered to become a prosperous regional capital in what was now the Roman province of Africa.

Through the next decade and after, Roman armies carried out massive operations in Spain and Gaul, conquering most of each. The city that had been hamstrung by civil strife two centuries before found itself the ruler not only of Italy but also of an empire that stretched across much of the Mediterranean world. For the next century and more, Rome would never be at peace: a long series of wars, abroad and in the Italian Peninsula, would continue to reshape the Roman state and society.

THE EXPANDING REPUBLIC: CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Rome's rise to regional dominance brought with it vast cultural change. Romans began to write about their past. And Greeks realized that they were face to face with something they had not experienced before: a state as aggressive and powerful as Macedonia had been, but ruled as a republic rather than a monarchy. Their efforts to understand how this was possible also help us to understand the nature of the Roman Republic as it rose to dominance in the time of the Punic Wars and after.

POLYBIUS: EXPLAINING ROME

In the third century BCE, members of the Roman elite were beginning to learn Greek and write in the forms that the Greeks had created. By the second century, young Romans—some, but not all of them, patricians—were studying grammar and rhetoric in the Greek manner and using their skills to compose tragedies, comedies, epics, elaborate formal histories of the city, and technical treatises on subjects as dry and practical as husbandry.

In the mid-second century BCE the Greek general Polybius (ca. 200–ca. 118 BCE), who became a close friend of the younger Scipio during a long stay in Rome as a hostage, decided to learn how Rome had become great. Roman leaders could now entertain—and impress—a visitor with their long experience of politics and warfare. A sophisticated and widely read man, Polybius believed that one could survive the trials of the present only by finding patterns in the past—patterns created not, as the Jewish author of the book of Daniel thought, by divine intervention, but by human nature in action. Polybius set out to take apart Rome's institutions, in order to work out exactly what made them function so well.

Polybius A second-century BCE stele depicts the Greek general and historian Polybius, whose writings illuminated the history of Roman society and politics.

POLITICS Following Aristotle, Polybius noted that all states seemed to fall into six types: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, and their evil twins, tyranny, oligarchy, and mob rule. Whatever form a society took, it had little hope of attaining real stability. Human nature destined most cities to move through the entire set of forms of government in sequence, as each of the sound forms gradually failed and gave way to its own dark side.

Rome, however, seemed to have worked out a uniquely stable form of government. By allowing monarchical and democratic elements to temper its basically oligarchical constitution, it

had hindered the processes that normally made governments deteriorate from working as quickly and destructively as elsewhere. When foreign powers menaced Rome, the consuls, the Senate, and the plebeian assembly competed to serve the public good by cooperating as effectively as possible. And when the consuls or the Senate tried to make the state serve the one-sided ends of a monarchy or an aristocracy, the other elements in the constitution resisted. Rome's unique constitution created a system of checks and balances, one so smoothly machined and precisely balanced that it might preserve the city for a long time against the corruption that was inevitable in the long run.

SOCIETY Roman society as a whole, moreover, was organized in ways that promoted courage and patriotism. Family rituals, for example, helped to initiate the young into the values that made this republic uniquely durable. Great houses displayed masks that reproduced the features of their accomplished men. These served not only, like modern family photographs, as a record but also as an educational tool. At funerals, living men who resembled the distinguished dead donned these masks, and speakers connected the achievements of the deceased with those of his ancestors.

The experience of growing up in such families, Polybius explained, was powerful: it explained why Roman heroes had proved willing, over the centuries, to sacrifice their lives or even those of their sons, "setting a higher value on the interest of their country than on the ties of nature that bound them to their nearest and dearest." The virtues that the Spartans tried to instill in young men by taking them out of their families, and that Pericles had tried to teach by oratory in Athens, were integrated into Roman domestic life in a way that no Greek city had achieved. This helped to explain how the Romans could recruit enormous armies and navies not from mercenaries but from citizens, who fought "for their country and their children."

A MIXED CONSTITUTION Polybius was not starry-eyed, though. He found the Romans greedy and cruel. When they captured a city, he observed not only human corpses but also those of dogs and other animals, cut to pieces. His understanding of Rome, moreover, was that of a foreigner, who sometimes applied Greek ways of thinking about society inappropriately to what remained a foreign world. He did not see—as we soon will—that Rome was undergoing an economic transformation while he lived there, which would add new sources of strength and strain to those he appreciated. Nonetheless, Polybius's vision of the Roman constitution and of Roman society captured something that would fascinate readers and political philosophers for centuries. When the American Founding Fathers needed a model for the constitutional order of their new country, they found it—so they believed—in the Roman mixed constitution that Polybius described.

ROMAN VALUES

Few if any Romans could have rivaled Polybius in producing a sophisticated explanation of what made their state so special. But most would have agreed with his emphases, and by the mid-second century BCE, Romans themselves were giving expression to what they considered distinctively Roman beliefs and values.

THE INTERESTS OF THE STATE Just as Polybius argued, special traditions nourished Roman abilities in politics and warfare. Like Athenians and Spartans, ordinary Roman men served as their country's soldiers, and men of family and position as cavalrymen and officers. The great Roman commanders saw the giving of counsel as an essential duty, and tradition held that they were bound to advise the Republic to the best of their ability, even if doing so might lead to their own deaths. When Regulus, the Roman commander sent to attack Carthage during the First Punic War, was captured by Spartan mercenaries, the Carthaginians sent him back to Rome on parole. They demanded that he advise the Romans to make peace or exchange prisoners. Instead, Regulus told the Romans to continue waging war against their enemies. He then returned to Carthage, although he knew that he would be savagely put to death for doing so. (The Carthaginians supposedly placed him in a barrel full of spikes and rolled it down a slope.)

Central to the exalted behavior of Romans like Regulus was the belief that the state and its good health mattered most, individual ambition not at all. True, the ancient families that dominated the Senate and the consulship were the ones that celebrated their members' accomplishments with the funerals that so impressed Polybius. But Romans imagined themselves as a people of virtuous farmers, more or less equal.

Tradition heralded heroes like Cincinnatus (b. ca. 519 BCE). A consul, a patrician, and a staunch opponent of all efforts to improve the standing of the plebeians, Cincinnatus had lived plainly, so the story went, farming his own land. When an emergency arose during one of

Rome's wars, he agreed to serve as military commander at the request of one of the consuls and the Senate. Cincinnatus carried out his task brilliantly and defeated the enemy, against whom he himself led the infantry. But as soon as the enemy surrendered, he spared them; and as soon as he had accomplished his task, he returned to his farm.

THE TRIUMPH Though the story of Cincinnatus is a bit too good to be true (and probably took shape some centuries after the events it describes), it accurately conveys the values of those who told it. So did many of the rituals that the Romans used, along with tales of the mighty dead, to give expression to their values. For example, the triumph—a great procession derived from Etruscan ritual—was held in honor of Roman generals who returned from the field after defeating the city's enemies. Only commanders who had killed some 5,000 of the enemy and held the rank of praetor or consul could enjoy a triumph.

Those who did receive this signal honor—starting, according to Roman tradition, with Romulus himself—might ride in a four-horse chariot through the city to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill. Accompanied by his sons, if any, as well as the members of the Senate, enemy captives dressed for sacrifice, musicians, torchbearers, and colorful banners and paintings, the *triumphator* passed through large public places where the entire city could see him. Nothing could have emphasized the primacy of military virtue more effectively.

RELIGION

Rome was also a devout city. It revered a rich panoply of gods, both the older Roman ones and newer ones from Hellenistic Greece. At the start of the Republic, the cult of the three great Roman gods, Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno, and Minerva, was moved to the Capitoline Hill, where a stone temple with terra-cotta decorations, in the Etruscan manner, was built for them. Jupiter was officially worshipped as ruler of the universe; Juno as mother of the earth; and Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, presided over the arts and crafts. Temples to other gods—Saturn, Ceres, Mercury—spread out below the Capitoline Hill. Of these the temple of Janus was especially important. Janus was the two-faced god of beginnings and endings, war and peace. The gates of this small, rectangular temple in the Forum were opened when Rome was at war and closed—a rare event—only when it was completely at peace.

Roman Gods A second-century CE relief—perhaps part of a model of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill—portrays the three gods most central to Roman religion: Jupiter, ruler of the universe, in the center; Juno, mother of the earth, on the left; and Minerva, goddess of wisdom, on the right.

Vestal Virgins This first-century CE relief depicts the goddess Vesta (seated on the left) and her Vestal Virgins, full-time priestesses who took vows of chastity and who could be punished by death if the vows were broken.

Priests and priestesses were organized into groups called colleges: the Vestal Virgins served Vesta, the Roman goddess of the hearth. Male specialists scrutinized every piece of evidence they could find to determine what the gods desired them to do and had in store for them. Priests charged with divining the future used ancient methods to interpret the entrails of sacrificial animals, as well as certain forms of animal behavior. Eclipses, earthquakes, and the births of strange fetuses, human or animal, were recorded and then connected with later events to show that the gods had sent omens in advance. Ancient ritual brotherhoods continued to perform their rites, and new priesthoods—like those of the orgiastic mystery religion of Dionysos, imported from Greece—offered new forms

of religious experience. Like the Athenian calendar, the Roman one was dotted with holy days—some forty-five of them.

In some ways, though, the core of Roman religion was private, not public, based in the household, with its own lares and penates—the gods who protected households and certain other realms. The head of the family was responsible for seeing to it that these gods were fed by sacrifices, and their statues attended banquets and other family occasions. A wealthy household might include a handsome shrine to its gods, with fine reliefs sculpted to represent the protector and the protected. Even the poorest plebeian house would have its own more modest version.

THE FAMILY

The family—the large kin group that Polybius had seen as essential to the preservation of Roman values—was the core of Roman society. Each head of household, or paterfamilias, ruled his family, at least in theory, absolutely. The Roman father had the power of life and death over his children, as the Twelve Tables had stated (in practice, he exercised this only when deciding if a particular baby, perhaps one born with a deformity, should be exposed—left outdoors to die—or accepted). Yet mothers also mastered the stern tradition of Roman virtue and lived by it when called on to do so—as Regulus's wife supposedly did by torturing Carthaginian prisoners to death on learning of her husband's fate.

Sons and daughters grew up listening to the same tales of family tradition, and both passed to maturity through carefully marked stages of life. For sons, this meant changing from the boy's toga with its purple stripe to the manly toga, which was all white, at the age of fourteen, when they might also receive permission to attend their fathers, if they were senators, on official business. Girls entered maturity by marrying, for which they were considered ready by the age of twelve.

EDUCATION

The sources do not tell us much about the ways in which Roman children were educated in the first centuries of the Republic. Though the state provided no official schools, it seems that schools of some kind existed by the second century BCE, and that girls as well as boys attended them. The children apparently studied Greek poetry, which probably means that their families could afford tutors to teach them the elements of the language. Formal education became one more way in which the boys and girls of the upper class were separated from the rest of society. The early teachers were men of low status, slaves, or freedmen—one reason, probably, that we know relatively little about them.

Boys engaged in physical education: not the naked gymnastics of the Greek tradition, which the Romans tended to look down on, but training in horseback riding and the use of weapons. Hunting was highly valued as both a form of exercise and a training in boldness and dexterity. Both boys and girls, finally, learned by watching their parent of the same sex: boys about the public life of politics, law, and war-craft; girls about the skills of household management.

WOMEN'S LIVES

When Roman men spoke about women—for example, in the stone epitaphs with which husbands celebrated the virtues of their honorable, loving wives—or represented them in paintings and sculpted reliefs, they emphasized female docility and removal from economic life. In fact, though, many women lived more active and visible lives in Rome than had been possible in Athens. In the Greek city, women were supposed to occupy separate quarters, or at least to seclude themselves when male visitors arrived. In Rome, by contrast, women and children inhabited every corner of their houses. When guests arrived, the mother of the family might be working at her loom—a useful occupation and a symbol of her virtue and commitment to overseeing

An Ideal Wife This grave marker from around 80 BCE includes a portrait of a Roman husband and wife. The husband is identified by his trade as a butcher; the wife, by feminine virtues typically valued by Roman men: she is "chaste, modest, and not gossiped about."

POMPEII'S VILLA OF THE MYSTERIES

This painting is part of a large fresco featuring life-size figures that decorates all four walls of a grand room in the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii. The name of the house reflects the idea that the fresco depicts the "mysteries" of initiation into the religious cult of Dionysos. Scholars disagree on this interpretation of the fresco, however; some believe that it shows preparations for marriage rites. In any case, this lavish wall decoration clearly indicates that the household was a prosperous one. The red color of the background was made from cinnabar, an expensive pigment, and its extensive use announced the prestige of the villa's occupants.

In the detail shown here, a fully dressed, veiled woman enters a room at left. A naked boy reads from a papyrus scroll under the watchful eye of a female figure, perhaps his mother, who also holds a scroll. Another woman, wearing a wreath and carrying a plate of what may be bread, glances back while she walks out of the scene. Throughout the fresco, the use of shading and perspective creates an illusion of depth.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What clues to everyday life in ancient Rome do you see in this section of the fresco?
2. What details in the fresco suggest that the family living in the villa were of the elite?
3. Historians disagree about the fresco's meaning. Drawing on your reading of the chapter, what is your interpretation of it?