

## Military and government

The administration of the Roman Republic relied on the organisation of the army. That means the structure of the most important people's assembly mirrored that of the army. The century assembly elected the highest state officials, who held power to decide over both civil and military matters.

## 01

Military and government

## Money makes the world go round

Roman society was based on a strict hierarchy: the individual's place within this hierarchy depended on his social status, wealth and authority. More money meant more political influence.



Replica of a Roman purse, Museum Lauracium, Austria. Photo: Wikicommons / Wolfgang Sauber / <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

## 02

Military and government

## Riches make the man

The Roman administration was based on the Republic's military organisation. After an official estimation by the censor, each citizen was assigned a specific military rank. His fortune determined which military equipment he could afford, i.e. which military rank he was given.



View of the Roman Forum, Rome. Photo: Wikicommons / BeBo86 / <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

## 03

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## Military and power

The symbol of the Roman legions the “aquila”, the eagle, became the epitome of Roman power with good reason. You can see it on this Roman denarius between two standards.



Denarius Serratus of C. Valerius Flaccus. Massalia, 82. Obverse: Victoria.  
Reverse: Aquila between standards.

## 04

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## Roman military units: The centuria

Legions were subdivided into centuriae. Each centuria consisted of 80 fully equipped soldiers.



Historical re-enactment of the 'Legio XV' in Pram, Austria. Roman soldiers around AD 70. Photo: Wikicommons / MatthiasKabel / <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>

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# Roman soldiers and their equipment

This coin shows how a legionary was equipped. A Roman soldier (on the left) is fighting a Macedonian enemy to save his Roman comrade lying on the ground.



Denarius of Q. Minutius Thermus(?), 103. Obverse: Mars. Reverse: Legionary (left) fighting a Macedonian to save his comrade.

## 06

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## Offence and defence

Legionaries protected themselves from attacks with a large wooden shield, carried on the left. With their right, they carried the gladius, a shortsword with an approx. 50 cm long blade. The original Roman gladius depicted here is in possession of the British Museum in London today.



Gladius, Mainz type, British Museum, London. Photo: Wikicommons / Jononmac46 / <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

## 07

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## No spear, no army

Vital part of the increasingly standardised legionary equipment were the pila. Those pila were heavy spears used to break the shield-protected enemy lines.



Replica of a Roman pila, from the 'Legio XV' in Pram, Austria. Photo: Wikicommons / MatthiasKabel / <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>



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## Give: Money in exchange for power

Only wealthy Romans could afford such a sophisticated equipment. And those who spent a lot of money to protect their country also demanded greater influence in the election of military officials.



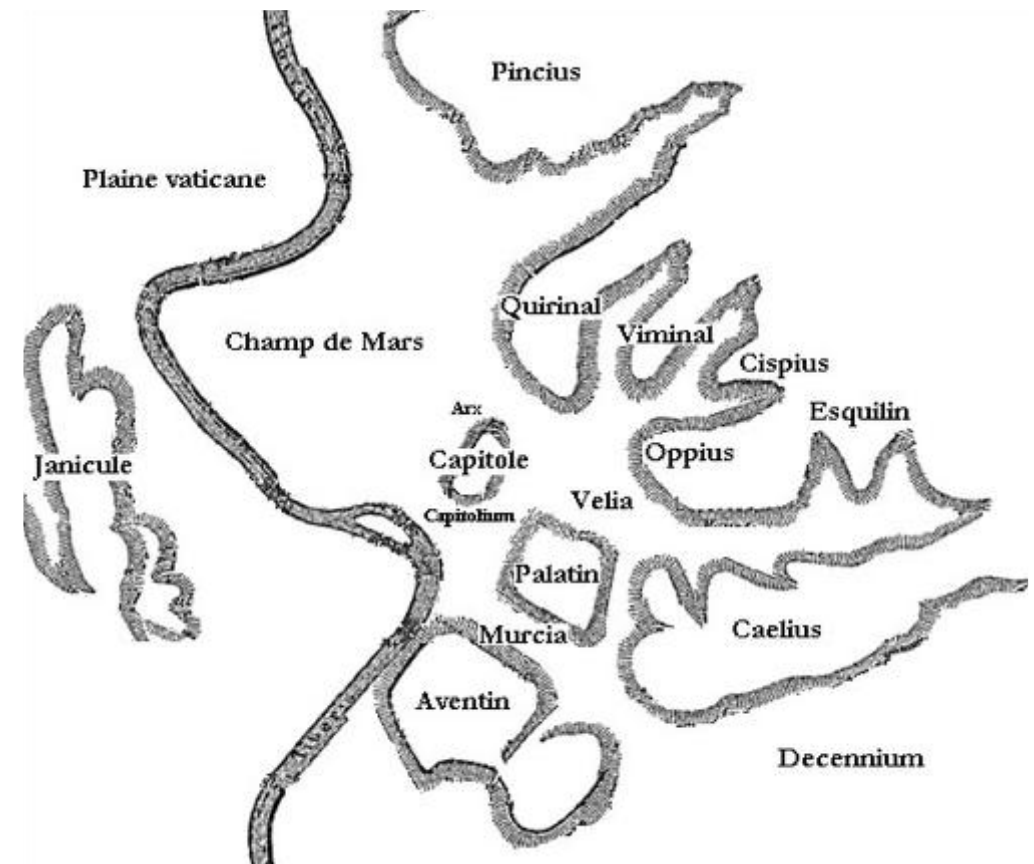
Historical re-enactment of the 'Legio XV' in Pram, Austria. Roman soldiers around AD 70. Photo: Wikicommons / MatthiasKabel / <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

## 09

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## The Roman people votes

So, the century assembly elected their consuls and praetors on the Campus Martius.



Map of Rome's hills. Source: Wikicommons / Coldeel / <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

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## Highest-ranking officials

The highest-ranking representatives of the executive branch were consuls and praetors. They held both military and civil power, as this coin clearly indicates. The consul greets the aquila to emphasise his military function. Behind him, you can make out fasces. Those bundles of wooden rods were carried by lictors before the higher-ranking officials and expressed the power of consuls and praetors to pronounce judgements.



Denarius of A. Postumius Albinus. 81. Obverse: Hispania. Reverse: Consul greeting aquila, fasces in the background.

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## Organising the people

Legend has it that Servius Tullius, sixth king of Rome, divided the Roman people into 193 centuriae, according to economic fortune. Whether or not the opinion of an individual would be taken into consideration at the century assembly entirely depended on the centuria this person belonged to.



Servius Tullius, fantasy portrait by Frans Huys, 1522–62. Source: Wikicommons / Deutsche Fotothek, Nr. 70231735/  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

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## Money equals power

The centuria assembly reflected the distribution of wealth in Rome. Each centuria had only one vote, no matter how many members eligible to vote it had. The cavalry, from whose ranks the senators were chosen, encompassed 18 centuriae. They cast their vote first. The infantry made up the next class of still rather few, but very wealthy, Romans. This class had 80 votes. If cavalry and first class foot soldiers agreed on a majority, votes of the other centuriae were not even taken into consideration.

|                                    |                  |                     |
|------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Reiter</b>                      |                  | <b>18 Centurien</b> |
| <b>Fußsoldaten</b>                 | <b>1. Klasse</b> | <b>80 Centurien</b> |
|                                    | <b>2. Klasse</b> | <b>20 Centurien</b> |
|                                    | <b>3. Klasse</b> | <b>20 Centurien</b> |
|                                    | <b>4. Klasse</b> | <b>20 Centurien</b> |
|                                    | <b>5. Klasse</b> | <b>30 Centurien</b> |
| <b>Handwerker</b>                  |                  | <b>2 Centurien</b>  |
| <b>Musiker</b>                     |                  | <b>2 Centurien</b>  |
| <b>Nicht wehrpflichtige Männer</b> |                  | <b>1 Centurie</b>   |

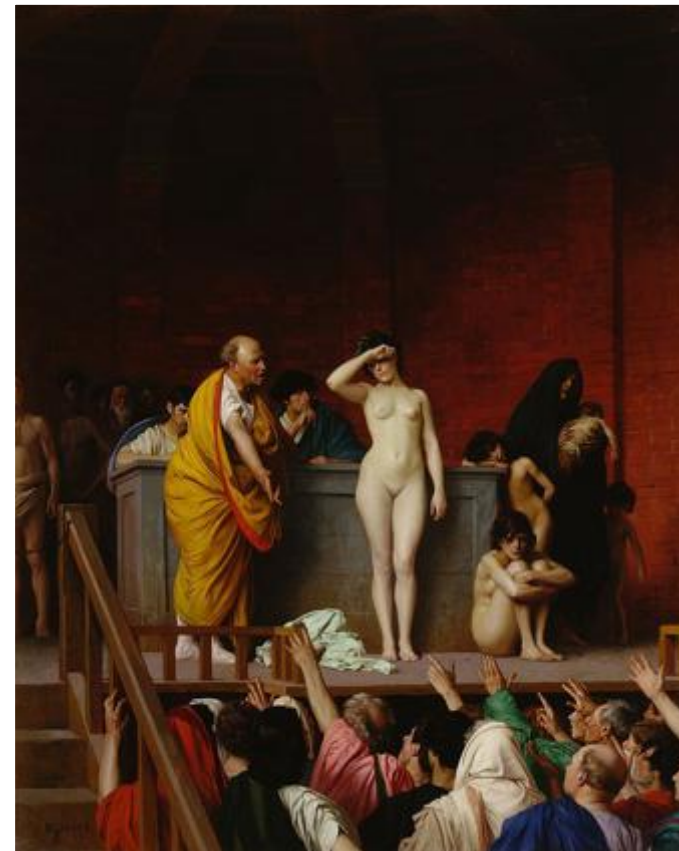
Hierarchy of the 'comitia centuriata', the centuria assembly.

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## Democracy, Roman style

A significant part of the population did not have any say in political affairs: slaves, children and women.



Slave market, painting by Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1884. State Hermitage, St Petersburg. Source: Wikicommons / Hermitage Torrent.

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## Military policy becomes state policy

Due to the close connection between military and political institutions, the needs of the military became the needs of Rome.



Standard (vexillum) of the Roman army. Source: Wikicommons / Ssolbergj / <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>