Roman Reactions to Empire*

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1. Introduction

If the construction of the Roman Empire was the joint achievement of the Romans and their gods and goddesses, their most successful co-operation took place during the century beginning from the end of the First Punic War. In 241 BC, Roman overseas expansion had only just begun, with the addition of Sicily to their established (though still quite recent) hegemony over the central southern parts of Italy. As victors in the long sea-war with Carthage, they had just established themselves as the major force in the western Mediterranean; but they had shown little or no interest in the Hellenistic Kingdoms that dominated the Eastern world of the time and had even found the greatest difficulty in the 270's BC in beating off the attacks of Pyrrhus, King of Epirus. In the West, they still had to face many years of hard fighting before they could control the Northern areas of present-day Italy; they had not yet established a foothold in Spain, Gaul or North Africa.[1]

A hundred years later the situation had changed radically, even though the Romans had, in the meantime, shown their famous reluctance to acquire directly controlled overseas possessions. The growth of Roman power cannot be assessed, as it can be in the later Republic, by counting new provinces and provincial governors, but by more indirect methods: the military strength of Rome's major rivals was destroyed in a series of wars between 218 and 187 BC and from those years onwards a steady flow of embassies from the eastern Mediterranean world brought their problems and conflicts to the Senate at Rome for arbitration and resolution. At least from the point of view of the establishing of authority, Rome had no need of permanent garrisons or administrative mecha-

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1 Fighting in the West: S.L. Dyson, *The Creation of the Roman Frontier* (Princeton 1985); W.V. Harris in *CAH* VIII (Cambridge 1989), 107-62; J.S. Richardson, *Spain and the Development of Roman Imperialism, 218-82 B.C.* (Cambridge 1986).

nisms: the fear of potential intervention was enough to sustain her influence and to make sure that no undesirable rivals had a chance to establish themselves.[2]

One effect of all this was, of course, that Rome, in this period above all, became in ancient eyes the most spectacular example of a victorious city. Enemy after enemy had fallen before her military strength; the greatest of contemporary kings, the successors of Alexander the Great, had had to humble themselves before this community without kings, as it acquired wealth, glory and manpower beyond the reach of any known rival. The Senate, once a town council with limited advisory powers, had come to take decisions affecting the whole of the Mediterranean area. The historian Polybius, a Greek statesman who lived in Rome as a hostage for many years, built his whole history around the problem of this extraordinary transformation of the power-balance between the East and the West.[3]

Given the assumptions of city-state life in the ancient world, such a succession of triumphs by a single city had profound implications at a religious as well as at a political level: the gods and goddesses of an ancient city were members of the city's community in almost the same sense as were the human citizens.[4] The city's activities required the involvement of humans and deities alike, the performance of rituals playing a critical role in maintaining communication and good faith between them. It follows that a great sequence of triumphs for the city implied both a triumph for the gods and goddesses and also a vindication of the religious system operated by the human members of the community.

If this is the right way to visualise Roman attitudes to their own success, it must be legitimate to ask what was the effect of the dramatic Roman successes on the Roman idea of themselves and of their divine supporters. Can we find any reaction to success in their dealings with the gods of their own or of others' communities? Did the unparalleled success cause them to change their religious ideas and practices?

2. Imperial Attitudes

It is, of course, far easier to discuss Greek attitudes to the rise of the Roman Empire than those of the Romans themselves. Polybius is as ever our most important observer in this period, but there are ways of reconstructing other reactions too — hostile, favourable, neutral, hesitant — but almost all from Greek

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2 For the notion of Roman hegemony in this period, E. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*[2] (Oxford 1968); for its limitations, A.N. Sherwin White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East* (London 1984), 18-57.

3 Polybius 1.1-5; see F.W. Walbank, *Polybius* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1972), ch. 6; P.S. Derow, "Polybius Rome and the East", *JRS* 69 (1979), 1ff.

4 John Scheid, *Religion et piété à Rome* (Paris 1985), 51-7.

sources.[5] Even when we do have what looks, at first sight, like a Roman reaction, it often seems suspiciously Greek in style and assumptions.

The main reason for this unbalanced perception is, of course, the usual affliction of those who study this period — that is the lack of any extensive Roman sources before the period of Cicero and Caesar, Livy and Virgil. We are quite well informed about Roman imperial attitudes in the dying days of the Republic and can take the temperature of their confidence in the justice of their own cause and the arrogance of their assumption of universal right to domination.[6] You only have to consider the implications of the opening claims of Augustus' *Res Gestae*:

> Externas gentes, quibus tuto ignosci potuit, conservare quam excidere malui.
>
> Foreign peoples, when they could safely be pardoned, I preferred to preserve rather than wipe out.[7]

That is to say: I preferred to avoid acts of genocide, unless there was some measurable risk to national security. "Pardon" means pardon for not agreeing to be peacefully absorbed into the Empire; "safely" means without any risk of continued defiance against the Empire. Augustus is claiming credit for this clemency and we have no reason to doubt that he knew his readers (or at least his Roman readers) would share his assumptions. Nor is there much comfort here for those who wish to see the Romans as in any sense apologetic about their imperial activities.

Cicero, Caesar and Augustus were writing in an imperial situation that had been evolving very rapidly in their own lifetimes. Brunt has used this late Republican material to show that the Romans were very far from having a defensive mentality about their imperial policy; that they knew quite well that the Empire expanded because they pursued a methodical policy of expansion.[8] The Empire they knew consisted of areas all round the Mediterranean, organized as provinces, under definite Roman administration and Roman taxation. There may have been little or nothing you could call a definite frontier,[9] but at least there were clearly Romans (i.e., free Italians), provincials (i.e., those living under Roman rule) and outsiders — even if these two might at any time receive orders they would be expected to obey. But it would be very unsafe to assume that this

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5 On these issues see J.L. Ferrary, *Philhellénisme et impérialisme* (Paris 1988), 223-64.

6 P.A. Brunt, "Laus imperii", in P.D.A. Garnsey and C.R. Whittaker, edd., *Imperialism in the Ancient World* (Cambridge 1978), 159-91 = *Roman Imperial Themes* (Oxford 1990), 288-323.

7 *Res Gestae* 3; on *clementia*, see S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius*, (Oxford 1971), 233-43.

8 *Loc. cit.* (above, n. 6).

9 For Roman attitudes to annexed and unannexed areas, W.V. Harris,*War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327-70 B.C.* (Oxford 1979), 105-6, 133-6; but see now Dyson *loc.cit.* (above, n. 1).

situation or this degree of clarity went back very far in time. It follows that the attitudes and ideas of earlier periods have to be reconstructed, not by arguing back from a quite different situation, but by the imaginative creation of the problems and tensions of the moments of their greatest success.

3. Expansion

The essential prerequisite for any such reconstruction is to measure the distance in imperial attitudes between the beginning of the second century and the late Republic. In some respects, it might be possible to argue that there was not too much difference. Thus, at all periods, the Romans were methodically bellicose, acquisitive and anxious for profit, private and public. Imperial systems and structures evolved gradually, since the Romans were always reluctant to transform their inherited methods to suit new situations; consequently, the expression and formalization of power often lagged behind acquisition of it. At most periods of this expansive phase, the Romans also retained their characteristic openness of attitude to their own citizenship, believing that old enemies could be progressively assimilated into their community as full members.[10] Aggression and openness might not seem compatible, and indeed there are fundamental problems of interpretation about the relationship between the two and the way they evolved over the middle Republican period.

Expansionism and profiteering may have been constants over the last three centuries BC; and it would certainly be hard to argue today that Roman motivation had ever been free from economic considerations;[11] all the same, Roman imperialism did change dramatically over the course of the Republic, not necessarily in its basic nature, but in the mode of exploitation of the power the Romans acquired; it is this that provides the most important variable over time.

In its earliest phases, the objective was the organization of Italian manpower for further warmaking, thus creating a war-machine that generated its own momentum.[12] As the campaigns spread outwards from Italy, the profits came instead from the direct exploitation of warfare by means of looting and slaving, and from indirect exploitation through trading. It was not until the last third of the second century that we begin to find methodical attempts to create taxation income on a regular basis and consequently a methodical policy of the provincialisation of conquered areas.

The late Republic is in several respects different from all the preceding phases:

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10 A.N. Sherwin White, *Roman Citizenship*² (Oxford 1973).

11 For full discussion, Harris, *loc. cit.* (above, n. 10).

12 A.D. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenisation* (Cambridge 1975), 44-6; J.A. North, "The Development of Roman Imperialism", *JRS* 71 (1981), 1-9.

(1) the expansion of the Empire was no longer driven as it had been by the availability of allied armies, because after the Social War the distinction between allies and citizens had finally disappeared and the army was coming to be less a citizen militia and more like the professional army of the imperial period;

(2) there was no longer the same pressure from the annual command system, because the great opportunities for glory, the acquisition of new provinces and conquests increasingly fell, not so much to the magistrates of each year in turn, but to the great individual adventurers — Sulla, Pompey, Caesar and Octavian — who could transcend the boundaries and restraints of the annual rotation of office and obtain longer periods of power by manipulation of the senate or by appeal to the voters in the *comitia*;

(3) but, above all, the case for expansion was now put, as the late Republican sources show, in terms that would previously have scarcely applied at all — of profit and of the increase of state revenues. Cicero, justifying the pursuit of an eastern war, makes the connections explicit:

> ...how vigorously must you defend the safety of your allies together with the prestige of your Empire, especially when it is a question of your greatest revenues. The revenues of other provinces are such that we can scarcely regard them as adequate for the defence of the provinces themselves; but Asia is so exceptionally wealthy and productive that it surpasses all other lands in point of soil fertility, crop variety, extent of pasture-land and quantity of exports. So, if you look to maintain both your success in wartime and your advantage in peacetime, you must protect this province not just from disaster but from the very fear of disaster. In other areas of life, loss is suffered when a disaster occurs; but when it comes to revenues, the disaster does not wait for the evil event itself, but is brought about by fear of the event. Once a hostile army is approaching, pastures are abandoned, agriculture interrupted, sea-trade at a standstill. So the taxes dry up — from harbour-duties, from tithes, from grazing dues. Quite often a whole year's revenue is lost because of a single rumour of danger, a single apprehension of war.[13]

So the Roman people can be persuaded to act in defence of their income, not just in the face of a serious threat, but in order to prevent even the possibility of rumours of aggression. The relationships at this moment are quite well-defined — the Romans/Italians as the exploiters, the provincials as the tax-payers, the protection of provincial economic activity the predominant duty of the army.

4. The Most Religious of Men

By contrast, it would be hard to over-emphasise the fluidity of the situation in which the Romans found themselves in the 190s BC. It might be said that there was as yet no Empire; that there was as yet no such entity as Italy; and that even

13 Cicero, *Imp.Pomp.* 14-15.

Rome itself had ceased to be just a city and become a community defying simple definition. Obviously for the Greeks it must have been a major problem to work out who their conquerors were and how their systems operated; but the Romans too must have felt the need of establishing an identity more acceptable than their sheer capacity for violence.

The fluiduity is perhaps clearest in relation to the nature of the empire itself. There was one, but only one, province in the later sense — Sicily, which had indeed had a governor and a taxation system, inherited from its previous condition, since the defeat of the Carthaginians.[14] Beyond that, the establishment of the basic institutions of provincial life, as they were to be later on, dates from the last third of the second century.[15] In the 190s there was still no established structure at all. The status of Italy is almost as problematic. For one thing, much of what we mean by Italy still had to be subdued by force in the decades after the 190s; the rest was still a patchwork of independent states with their own cultures and languages, united only by some definition of their relationship to Rome. The conception of Italy was no doubt developing in this period, but it was far from having a sharp identity. Finally, Rome itself had both spread its citizenship out from the city and established intermediate stages of relationship all over central and south Italy, including Greeks, Etruscans, Samnites and many others. All this is, of course, perfectly familiar; but it is easy to forget how unresolved all the issues of Italian ethnic identity must have been in the years before the Social War.

In this set of circumstances, it would not be surprising to find the Romans seeking self-definition in religious terms. It is indeed arguable that at any period the programme of religious activities and festivals provided above all an extended exploration of what it meant to be a Roman and that this was in fact the only way to find out.[16] Moreover, we know that in the longer run, religion became the special hall-mark of Roman identity for Greek observers. So, famously, Polybius the Achaean:

> The respect in which the Roman constitution is most markedly superior is in their behaviour towards the gods. It is, I think, the very thing that brings reproach amongst other peoples that binds the Roman state together: I mean their superstitiousness. For nothing could exceed the extent to which this aspect both of their private lives and of their public occasions is dramatised and elaborated. Many would find this astonishing. To me at least it seems clear that all this has been done for the benefit of the common

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14 M.H. Crawford "Origini e sviluppi del sistema provinciale romano", in *Storia di Roma* II.1 (Turin 1990), 91-6; on Sicily in general, see now R. Wilson, *Sicily in the Roman Empire: the Archaeology of a Roman Province 36 B.C.-A.D. 535* (Warminster 1990).

15 M.H. Crawford *op. cit.* (previous note), 91-122.

16 M. Beard, "A Complex of Times: No More Sheep on Romulus' Birthday", *PCPS* n.s. 33 (1987), 1-15.

people. For if you could form a state entirely out of wise men, then perhaps it would not be necessary to adopt this course. But since the mass of every people is fickle and full of lawless desires, irrational anger and violent impulses, it is essential that they should be restrained by invisible terrors and such-like melodramas.[17]

The idea of the exceptional religiosity of the Romans is most familiar from Polybius, though it is picked up by Cicero[18] and others[19] and becomes a truism about the Romans. Polybius put his particular rationalist gloss on the thought by emphasising the manipulative character, as he saw it, of élite attitudes. But it is quite likely that Polybius found the thought already in earlier accounts of Rome, perhaps already in Fabius Pictor, who after all included in a work apparently addressed to non-Roman readers one of the most elaborate accounts of a Roman religious ceremony to reach us; Dionysius[20] quotes at length this passage of Fabius to prove that the Romans were really Greeks; but Fabius' own point would have been different, most probably to show the elaborate concern of fifth-century BC. Romans about the gods and the keeping of vows. However that may be, there cannot be any doubt that the thought that Romans were the most religious of men was current already in the 190s BC and used in diplomatic exchanges:

From the Romans.

Marcus Valerius, (son of) Marcus, praetor, and the tribunes and the senate (of Rome) send greetings to the *boule* and the *demos* of Teos.

Your decree was delivered to us by Menippos, the envoy of King Antiochus, whom you had also selected as your envoy and who spoke to us enthusiastically in accordance with your decree. We received him well because of his previous repute and current good standing and looked on his requests with favour. The fact that we have, absolutely and consistently, placed reverence towards the gods as of the first importance is proved by the favour we have received from them as a result. In addition, we are quite certain for many other reasons that our high respect for the divine has been evident to everybody. Because of these considerations, and because of our goodwill towards you and towards the envoy who presented your request, we declare your city and its territory holy — as it is already — inviolable and free from Roman taxation; we will seek to improve both honours towards the gods and privileges for you, so

17 Polybius 6.56.

18 *ND* 2.8; *Har.Resp.*19.

19 D.H., *Ant.Rom.* 2.19.2; Gellius, *NA* 2.28.

20 D.H., *Ant.Rom.* 7.72-3; see E. Gabba, *Dionysius and the History of Archaic Rome* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford 1991), 134-5. See also A. Piganiol, *Recherches sur les jeux romains* (Strasbourg 1923); J.P. Thuillier, "Denys d'Halicarnasse et les jeux romains", *MEFRA* 87 (1975), 563-81.

long as you are careful to maintain your goodwill towards us in the future. Farewell.[21]

This letter, discovered in the temple of Dionysus in Teos, was preserved on stone by the Teans because it was one of a series guaranteeing their rights. What it proves today is how anxious the Romans at this date were to parade their religiousness in dealings with foreign states, claiming that it was partly at least for religious reasons that they were agreeing to the Tean requests, though it is significant that the last clause makes the continuation of Roman favour, towards gods and men alike, conditional on the good conduct of the men of Teos.

The status of the document is in fact even more curious than it looks: the letter was written when Antiochus the Great was on the verge of war with the Romans in 193 BC; the envoy mentioned in the text, Menippos, was on his way from Antiochus to the Romans as the king's representative and the Teans somewhat eccentrically chose him as their messenger, too. There is no way of knowing what kind of response the Teans were expecting or what they made of this one when they received it; but evidently this is not an innocent statement — rather an act of imperialist aggression in a religious code. For the present argument, it is the extraordinary emphasis on the Romans' unique religious character that is so important.

The same emphasis on religious scrupulosity appears in the Roman historians themselves at the same date. Livy reports a consultation of the fetial priests in 191 BC, on the very eve of the war with Antiochus the Great, already at that moment under arms in Greece at the invitation of the Aetolian League. The priests, the *fetiales* were consulted, as they regularly were at this date, about the proper procedures.

After this, the consul Manius Acilius on the senate's authority brought before the college of *fetiales* the question whether it was essential for a declaration of war to be announced to King Antiochus in person, or whether it would be adequate to have the declaration made at a border post; secondly, whether a separate declaration of war should be delivered to the Aetolian League and whether it was necessary formally to renounce the alliance and treaty of friendship with them before war was declared on them. The college replied that they had already given their ruling on the first point, when consulted about the declaration against King Philip: it was a matter of indifference whether the declaration was made to the King himself or at a military post. As for the treaty of friendship, it appeared that it had been renounced already since the League, in response to so many Roman delegations, had decreed neither to make the restitution demanded nor to offer any satisfaction. The League had, moreover, declared war on them when it seized by violence the city of Demetrias, an ally of Rome,

21 *Sylloge*[3] 601; see R.M. Errington, *ZPE* 39 (1980), 279-84.

and then attacked Chalcis by land and sea and invited King Antiochus into Europe so as to make war on the Roman people.[22]

This is a unique document in terms of what actually survives, but there is no reason to think it particularly unusual in Roman terms. The *fetiales* seldom appear in our records after the early second century, so their importance may (not certainly) have diminished later; but at this date they must clearly have been an important college and their declaration an important part of Roman war-propaganda.[23] The niceties of the sacred law are being carefully respected and the correct procedures defined, or perhaps re-defined; but, above all, priests are performing their characteristic role of standing as guarantors of the acceptability of political and diplomatic proceedings. To establish that it was the Aetolians who were to blame for the breakdown of the *amicitia* with Rome was a vital issue of the day. What we see here is the practical consequence of the claim made in the letter to Teos.

5. Religious Reactions of the 190s

The argument so far has been that in these early days (particularly the 190s BC) of contact between Rome and the eastern world, the Romans were already making use of their religion as a marker of their particular character and as a justification for their intervention.

A fundamental characteristic of Rome, distinguishing it from Greek cities, was its openness to outsiders. The citizenship of Rome had long become a great asset and was clearly prized and cultivated; as this period progressed, it became more and more valuable as the power and influence of Rome increased. At no date that we know about were the doors completely closed, as they could have been; though there are certainly times when the issue became much contested and access limited. There were two routes into Roman citizenship for those born non-Romans: first, the Romans could confer citizenship either on another community at a single stroke or on individuals within a still non-Roman community; or secondly, a single Roman by his own act could free as many of his slaves as he wanted to. Both methods were liberally used in the course of the late Republic, but they were both well-established long before the second century.

Much the same considerations apply to gods and goddesses as to men and women.[24] In the same way, the boundaries of Rome were always open, but the policy of admissions could become controversial and change from time to time. The arrival of a new deity was always an official act of the state, not that of an

22 Livy 36.3.7-12.

23 On the *fetiales*, see G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*[2] (Munich 1912), 550-54; T. Mommsen, *Staatsrecht* II[3] 110-3; J.W. Rich, *Declaring War in the Roman Republic* (Brussels 1976); T.R.S. Broughton, "Foreign Legates and the Fetial Priests", *Phoenix* 41 (1987), 50-62.

24 So J.A. North, *PBSR* 44 (1976), 11.

individual; but in the same way as with men, you could admit either friendly gods whose power you were recognizing, or former enemies of Rome summoned away from their home communities and given a new home within the Roman *imperium* (through the ritual of *evocatio*).[25] Also, in the same way there is a kind of ambivalence between generosity in the sharing of benefits and aggression in the absorption of outsiders into the expanding Roman nexus.

It is important to notice that in neither its divine nor its human aspects does Roman openness lead to any methodical accumulation of outsiders. They might have instituted a policy of the methodical appropriation of power, for instance, by bringing the great cults of all the areas of Italy or of all the provinces to Rome, but they did not do so.[26] Their actions related to specific circumstances and transactions, not to a general method. However, their attitudes were notably free of ideas of the purity of their own racial origins or the purity of their own gods, and this finds expression at not only a practical but also a mythical level: the greatest families of Rome traced their origins either outside the city (like the Claudii) or to original Trojan followers of Aeneas; more strikingly still, the actual foundation story of Rome emphasised how Romulus, the city's founder, offered asylum in the city to all comers in his new community.[27] This may perfectly well also reflect the realities of the archaic period in the area; and certainly the various cities of the Latin area had ancient traditions of common rights including the freedom of the individual to move between cities of the Latin league. So the tradition of openness was indeed a very ancient one.[28]

It is precisely because of this openness in the traditional Roman conception of themselves and their human and divine citizenship that the reversal of these policies in the 190s is so much in need of explanation. The facts are clear and not in serious dispute: after the 190s, no new gods were accepted for some years apart from very local Italian ones;[29] from the end of the Hannibalic Wars onwards no new groups of citizens were accepted from amongst the allies for many years, putting an end to the third-century practice and eventually leading to the conflicts of a hundred years later; from roughly the same date, the flow of "new men" into the ranks of the consulars came to an end; that is, whereas the 190s

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25 For *evocatio*, G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion* II (Eng.tr. Chicago 1970), 424-31; J. Legall, "Evocatio", in *Mélanges offerts à J. Heurgon* I, 519-24.

26 Wissowa, *op. cit.* (above, n. 23), 49-50.

27 Serv., *ad Aen.* 2.761.

28 T.J. Cornell in *CAH* VII.2 (Cambridge 1989), 264-74

29 For lists, K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Munich 1960), 417; examples of local cults would be Fortuna from Praeneste (see J. Champeaux, *Le culte de la Fortune dans le monde romain* II [*CEFR* 64, Rome 1985], 17-35); or Juno from Lanuvium (see R.E.A. Palmer, *Roman Religion and the Roman Empire* [Philadelphia 1974], 30-32). It is possible, of course, as e.g. Palmer (*ibid.*, 151-71) argues in relation to Faunus, that foreign deities lie concealed beneath Latin names.

saw quite a number of consuls elected with no noble ancestors (Cato [cos. 195] and Acilius Glabrio [cos. 191] being the most famous), from the later 190s BC this flow, too, completely stops.[30] It is not adventurous to suggest that these developments were connected and that they should be seen as a definition of boundaries between what was truly Roman and what was not.

One index of the process may be offered by the history of the introduction of the cult of the Magna Mater.

The cult was originally conceived with the full treatment of Roman enthusiasm for innovation. It was invited on the suggestion of the Sibylline books; Delphi was consulted; the goddess' symbol, a black stone, was shipped over from Pergamum (so it seems) and greeted by an appropriate miracle;[31] after the end of the war, a new temple was built in a prominent position on the Palatine and new games started to be celebrated once the dedication had taken place, and possibly earlier.[32] So far, we have the normal pattern of an invitation to a new deity in a war-crisis,[33] followed by the offering of temple, worship and so on. This is Roman religious innovativeness in its traditional working form.

During the process of acceptance, however, various restraints and controls on the cult and various unusual measures become apparent. There seems to have been a specific law passed in relation to the foundation, known to us from Dionysius of Halicarnassus but presumably dating from the 190s BC.[34] Whether they came from this law or not, there were certainly regulations of separation: the Phrygian priest and priestess who came with the cult were carefully controlled and inaccessible to the Romans, their cultic activities were confined to the temple and to a single procession from which Roman citizens were excluded. Meanwhile amongst themselves the Romans set up new "companionships" (*sodalitates*) to dine in the goddess' honour;[35] of these the

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30 That is, there were no more individuals who achieved the consulship starting as complete outsiders; it is now well-established that new families constantly entered the oligarchy in this period, as shown by Hopkins and Burton in K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge 1983), ch. 2.

31 E. Schmidt, *Kultübertragungen* (Giessen 1909), 1-18; H. Graillot, *Le culte de Cybèle, mère des dieux, à Rome et dans l'Empire romaine* (Paris 1912); P. Lambrechts, "Cybèle, divinité étrangère ou nationale?", *BSBAP* 62 (1951), 44ff.; E. Gruen ,"The Advent of the Magna Mater", *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy* (Leiden 1990), 5-33. For the alternative tradition of importation from Pessinus, Liv. 29.10.5; 11.7; Cic., *Har. Resp.* 27-8.

32 Latte, *op. cit.* (above, n. 29), 261.

33 Though the vow was taken after the dark days of the Hannibalic War; see Gruen, *op.cit.* (above, n.31), 6-7

34 D.H., *Ant.Rom.* 2.19.4.

35 For these *sodalitates*, Cic., *Sen.* 45; Gellius, *NA* 2.24; on religious sodalities, see H.S. Versnel, "Historical reflections", in *Archaeologische Studiën van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* (Scripta Minora 5 — Lapis Satricanus 1980), 108-12.

only members were the leading nobles themselves. Neither Roman citizens nor slaves were allowed to become priests.[36] The games, too, had special rules attached to them: slaves were excluded and, for the first time and very significantly, senators were separated from non-senators in the audience.[37]

A possible explanation might be that the Romans only discovered the undesirable features of the cult when the black stone and its accompanying priestly personnel arrived. Until that point they had never heard of the self-castrated priests, the wild music and chanting, the dancing to ecstasy, or the dying god Attis, all of which were characteristic of the cult in Asia Minor.[38] The regulations followed as they discovered all these things; the delay between the arrival of the black stone in 204 BC and the real launching of temple and games in 191 BC could be explained by their hesitation as they found out the truth. This surely implies too simple-minded a picture of the senate and their decision. Even if they made the original decision in ignorance, there had been plenty of time for consultation between the original suggestion and the importation of the black stone.

A far better explanation would be to see the fit of defensiveness as part of the process of drawing religious boundaries around Romans, Roman institutions and the Roman élite characteristic of the 190s BC. As a reaction to their astonishing success and to the lack of definition of their own community and its relationships, there is nothing surprising about such a reaction. As so often in these years, the success of Roman violence had run ahead of their capacity to deal with the consequences.

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36 D.H., *Ant.Rom.* 2.19.5

37 Livy 34.44.5, 54.5.

38 On the cult, see Lambrechts, *loc. cit.* (above, n. 34).