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978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,

Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

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CONQUERORS AND SLAVES

SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES IN ROMAN HISTORY

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# CONQUERORS AND SLAVES

SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES IN ROMAN HISTORY

VOLUME 1

KEITH HOPKINS

*Professor of Sociology, Brunel University*

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978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,

Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CONTENTS

<i>List of plates</i>	page vii
<i>List of tables</i>	viii
<i>List of figures</i>	viii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xiii
<i>Map</i>	xvi
I CONQUERORS AND SLAVES: THE IMPACT OF CONQUERING AN EMPIRE ON THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ITALY	I
The argument	1
The intrusion of slaves	8
A sketch of the economy	15
Continuous war	25
The products of war	37
The formation of large estates	48
Land in politics	56
The solution – mass migration	64
Structural differentiation and the wider implications of change: the army, education and the law	74
Appendix: On the probable size of the population of the city of Rome	96
II THE GROWTH AND PRACTICE OF SLAVERY IN ROMAN TIMES	99
The growth of a slave society	99
Why did the Romans free so many slaves?	115
Conclusions	131

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,

Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

III	BETWEEN SLAVERY AND FREEDOM: ON FREEING SLAVES AT DELPHI	133
	The background	133
	Full freedom and conditional release	141
	Prices	158
	Family ties among the freed	163
	Conclusions	168
IV	THE POLITICAL POWER OF EUNUCHS	172
	The power and privileges of court eunuchs	172
	Changes in the power structure	181
	The strategic position of eunuchs	186
V	DIVINE EMPERORS OR THE SYMBOLIC UNITY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE	197
	Introduction	197
	The beginnings of emperor worship in Rome, its establishment and diffusion	200
	Some functions of belief – the living presence	215
	Omens and portents	231
	Conclusions	241
	<i>Bibliography</i>	243
	Modern works cited in Chapter I	243
	Modern works cited in Chapter II	246
	Modern works cited in Chapter III	248
	Modern works cited in Chapter IV	249
	Modern works cited in Chapter V	250
	<i>Supplementary bibliography</i>	
	Roman history for sociologists and sociology for Roman historians	252
	<i>Index of subjects</i>	255
	<i>Index of proper names</i>	261

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,

Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## PLATES

*Between pages 222 and 223*

- 1 Apotheosis of Sabina. Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Inst. Neg. 60.2542
- 2a Apotheosis of Antoninus Pius and Faustina. Vatican, Archivio Fotografico Vaticano, Monumenti Musei e Gallerie Pontificie, Arch. Vat. xviii 27.22
- 2b Cameo of an emperor's apotheosis. Paris, Cabinet des médailles, Bibl. Nat. c4656
- 3a Maximinus Thrax. Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek 744. From Archäologisches Institut des deutschen Reiches, M. Wegner, ed., *Das römische Herrscherbild: Caracalla* (Berlin, 1971) pl. 69a
- 3b Domitian. Munich, Glyptothek 394. From Wegner, *Flavier* (1966) pl. 23a
- 3c Marcus Aurelius. Rome, Museo Capitolino, Imperatori 38. From Wegner, *Antonine* (1939) pl. 26
- 3d Lucius Verus. Turin, Museo di Antichità. From Wegner, *Antonine* (1939) pl. 41
- 4a Hadrian. Istanbul, Antikenmuseum 585. From Wegner, *Hadrian* (1956) pl. 16c
- 4b Severus Alexander. Naples, Museo Nazionale 5993. From Wegner, *Caracalla* (1971) pl. 56a
- 4c Marcus Aurelius. Rome, Campidoglio-Anderson 347. From Wegner, *Antonine* (1939) pl. 22
- 4d Augustus. Vatican, Museo Chiaramonti e Bracchio Nuovo

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,

Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## TABLES

I.1	The militarism of Rome: the numbers of citizens serving as soldiers in the Roman army, by decades, 225–23 BC	<i>page</i> 33
I.2	Population changes and migration in Italy, 225–8 BC: some speculative figures	68
II.1	The population of five slave societies	101
III.1	Preliminary analysis of 1,237 manumissions recorded and surviving from Delphi	140
III.2	Conditionally freed slaves were increasingly exploited	151
III.3	The average prices paid by slaves for freedom at Delphi (201–1 BC)	159
III.4	The cost of full freedom increased, but the cost of conditional release held steady at Delphi (201–1 BC)	161
III.5	Manumissions by male slave-owners decreased; manumissions by female slave-owners increased. Manumissions in which relatives formally collaborated increased	164
III.6	Slave families were split by manumission	166
Appendix III.1	Conditions of release in manumissions from Calymna	170
III.4 <i>bis</i>	Recast to include prices paid by slaves multiply freed	171

## FIGURES

I.1	The growth of slavery in Roman Italy – a scheme of interdependence	<i>page</i> 12
I.2	Peasants ate most of their own produce: a hypothetical scheme	17
I.3	Young men's length of service in the Roman army: some coordinates	34

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,  
Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## PREFACE

This is a book about the Roman empire. It is not a narrative history, but an attempt to analyse a changing social structure and to evoke a lost world. It is also an attempt to apply some modern sociological concepts and techniques to Roman history. That may seem strange, but it would not have seemed strange to the founding fathers of sociology, Marx and Weber, nor to Pareto. Weber wrote two long works about the ancient world. Yet most students of sociology learn more about the Arapesh, the Nuer and the Trobrianders than they do about the Romans or the Chinese, who created and preserved mighty empires and highly influential cultures.

Social historians of the post-mediaeval world have long taken advantage of developments in the social sciences. Economic history, demographic history, quantitative history have become accepted, productive, even fashionable branches of history-writing. But classical historians, with some notable exceptions, have typically insulated themselves from these trends with the notion that the ancient evidence is too fragmentary and the ancient world too alien for these modern concepts to be easily applied.

All history is contemporary history and reflects not only the prejudices of the sources but current concerns and concepts. The achievements of the Roman world need to be interpreted with empathetic understanding of what the Romans themselves thought and with concepts which we ourselves use. Modern historians might well take this for granted, but many ancient historians have allowed themselves to be isolated from mainstream modern history. Several factors have contributed: the rigours of learning classical languages, the organization of universities, convention and tradition. Whatever the causes, the results are clear: a wide gulf between the ways in which modern and ancient historians write their history.

This book like its twin volume (*Succession and Descent*) attempts to bridge the gap between modern concepts and ancient sources; sometimes they are woven together in a single analysis; at other times



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,  
Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

### *Preface*

more can be gained from maintaining a counterpoint between modern and Roman perspectives. One objective is to experiment with methods borrowed from sociology in order to gain new insights into changes in Roman society – not new facts, but a different way of understanding the relationship between various changes.

This is not the place to embark on a long discussion about methods. That requires an abstract language of its own. But let me mention one difficulty. Throughout this book I try to explore some of the long-term consequences of repeated actions, for example, the consequences of importing slaves into Italy during the period of Rome's imperial expansion, or of allocating colonial plots to emigrant Italian peasants. I want to explore the consequences of these actions independently of the intentions of individual actors. Actors often did not know the long-term consequences of their actions. Therefore, I cannot properly follow the conventional practice of citing quotations from an ancient source in order to authenticate each step in the argument. The ancient source, if we are lucky, tells us only what an ancient author thought was happening and how he felt about it, or how he thought that others felt about it. That is obviously important, but partial. In the face of this difficulty, we have to look out for other methods by which we can validate analyses. Of course neither effort nor awareness of the difficulties guarantees success.

History is a conversation with the dead. We have several advantages over our informants. We think we know what happened subsequently; we can take a longer view, clear of ephemeral detail; we can do all the talking; and with all our prejudices, we are alive. We should not throw away these advantages by pretending to be just collators or interpreters of our sources. We can do more than that. Almost inevitably, whatever our ambitions, we finish up by foisting simplifying fictions on the complexities of a past which is largely lost. At first sight, this may seem unflattering; but it helps account for some of the differences between successive generations of historians. Historical interpretations do not necessarily get better; many simply change. Even so, one of the persistent problems in each generation is how to choose between competing fictions. That is where sociological methods can be helpful. And that is why these two books make use of sociological concepts and arguments, set out explicit hypotheses, and seek to support those arguments with models, figures and coordinates, as well as with quotations from the sources. They are all attempts to reveal how Romans thought and to measure links between factors; they are attempts to limit the arena within which elusive and competing truths may probably be found.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,  
Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

### *Preface*

Modern historians with their wealth of data sometimes seek to discover why actors behaved as they did; they seek to recover intention. Ancient historians for the most part know only about behaviour; they are therefore sometimes tempted to read back from behaviour to intention by imputing rationality. Two obvious problems arise: whose rationality? and should we assume that actors (emperors, generals or peasants) were rational? In the chapter called 'Divine emperors', I try to show how sociologists are concerned not only with statistics and models but also with understanding actors' thoughts and feelings and with symbolic action; in this chapter I examine what we in our culture would probably call the irrational and the untrue. I suggest that certain untrue stories about emperors (rumours, predictions, miracles) were the currency of the political system, just as money was the currency of the economic system. These untrue stories have been largely neglected, because proper historians, like detectives, are trained to scent out the truth. Yet if we want to enter the thought-world of the Romans, we must restrain our prejudices and treat 'lies' seriously.

I have been extremely fortunate in my advisers. Professors P. A. Brunt and M. I. Finley have read chapter after chapter with meticulous care and critical acumen; Dr J. A. North has read the final version of each chapter and saved me from numerous errors of fact and thought. Professor Sir Henry Phelps Brown has given me repeated tutorials in economics and I would like to thank Professor R. P. Dore for his friendly encouragement. In addition several scholars have given me their advice on individual chapters: Christian Habicht and Chester Starr read Chapter I; David Apter and Edward Shils made suggestions about Chapter II; Ernst Badian improved Chapter III considerably; Robert Boccock gave me thoughtful advice about Chapter IV as did Geoffrey Lloyd about Chapter V.

This book has been over ten years in the writing and over that time I have incurred debts of gratitude to colleagues in several universities and to institutions which have been generous in their grants of research funds. I am particularly grateful to King's College, Cambridge for the grant of a four-year research fellowship, to the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton which for two years, 1969–70 and 1974–5, allowed me to sit quietly reading and thinking in ideal circumstances; I am also very grateful to Professors Frank Gilliam and Carl Kaysen for numerous conversations, as well as to my other colleagues at the Institute. The Nuffield Foundation, the Social Research Division of the London School of Economics, the Social Sciences Research Council and Brunel University have each provided me with funds with which I could employ research assistants to help with the enormous task of

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,  
Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

*Preface*

coding ancient data. I want to thank Lynda Rees, Graham Burton, P. J. Roscoe and Oliver Nicholson for hard work and amused tolerance. Finally, I should like to thank my colleagues at the University of Leicester who first taught me sociology, and my colleagues at the LSE and Brunel who tolerated my strange interests in the Roman world.

K.H.

London

November 1977

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

- AE* *Année Epigraphique*.
- Ancient Roman Statutes* A. C. Johnson *et al.*, *A Translation with Commentary*, Austin, Texas, 1961
- BMCRE* *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, ed. H. Mattingley *et al.*, London 1923- .
- CAH* *The Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. J. B. Bury *et al.*, Cambridge, 1923-39.
- CCAG* *Catalogus codicum astrologorum graecorum*, vol. 6, ed. W. Kroll, Brussels, 1903; vol. 8, ed. F. Cumont *et al.*, Brussels, 1911-29.
- CIG* *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. A. Boeckh *et al.*, Berlin, 1828-77.
- CIL* *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, ed. T. Mommsen *et al.*, Berlin, 1863- .
- CJ* *Codex Justinianus*, ed. P. Krüger, Berlin, 1877.
- Corp. Pap. Jud.* *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, ed. V. A. Tcherikover *et al.*, Cambridge, Mass., 1957-64.
- CPR* *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*, ed. C. Wessely, Vienna, 1895.
- CSHB* *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, ed. B. G. Niebuhr *et al.*, Bonn, 1828-78.
- C.Th.* *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. T. Mommsen, Berlin, 1905.  
*The Theodosian Code*, trans. C. Pharr, Princeton, 1952.
- D.* *The Digest of Justinian*, ed. T. Mommsen, Berlin, 1870.
- ESAR* T. Frank *et al.*, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, Baltimore, Md., 1933-40.
- FD* *Fouilles de Delphes*, ed. G. Daux *et al.*, Paris, 1922- .
- FIRA* *Fontes Iuris Romani Antejustiniani*, ed. S. Riccobono *et al.*, Florence<sup>2</sup>, 1940-3.
- GCS* *Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller*, Leipzig, 1897- .
- GDI* H. Collitz, J. Baunack *et al.*, *Sammlung der griechischen Dialekt-Inschriften*, Göttingen, 1899.
- IG* *Inscriptiones Graecae*, Berlin, 1873- .
- ILAlg* *Inscriptions Latines de l'Algérie*, ed. S. Gsell, Paris, 1922-57.
- ILS* *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, ed. H. Dessau, Berlin, 1892-1916.
- JRS* *Journal of Roman Studies*.
- MGH* *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores antiquissimi*, Berlin, 1877-91.
- NJ* *Justinian's Novellae*, ed. R. Schöll and W. Kroll, Berlin, 1895.
- OGIS* *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, ed. W. Dittenberger, Leipzig, 1903-5.
- ORF* *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta*, ed. H. Malcovati, Turin<sup>3</sup>, 1967.
- PBSR* *Papers of the British School at Rome*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,  
Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*List of abbreviations*

- PG* *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris, 1857– .
- P.O.* *Patrologia Orientalis*, vols. 18–19, ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau, Paris, 1924–6.
- P.Giss.* *Griechische Papyri im Museum . . . zu Giessen*, ed. O. Eger *et al.*, Leipzig, 1910–12.
- P.Lond.* *Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, ed. F. G. Kenyon *et al.*, London, 1893–1917.
- P.Oxy.* *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, ed. B. P. Grenfell *et al.*, London, 1898– .
- PSI* *Papiri greci e latini*, ed. G. Vitelli *et al.*, Florence, 1912– .
- R.A.C.* *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, ed. T. Klauser, Stuttgart, 1950– .
- RE* *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. A. F. von Pauly *et al.*, Stuttgart, 1894– .
- RIB* *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, ed. R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright, Oxford, 1965.
- SIG* *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. W. Dittenberger, Leipzig<sup>3</sup>, 1915–24.
- TAM* *Tituli Asiae Minoris*, ed. E. Kalinka *et al.*, Vienna, 1901– .
- ZSS* *Zeitschrift der Savigny Stiftung*.

To find standard editions of classical authors, see *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. N. G. L. Hammond, Oxford<sup>2</sup>, 1970, or W. Buchwald *et al.*, *Tusculum Lexikon griechischer und lateinischer Autoren*, Munich, 1963. For translations and texts, see the Loeb Classical Library; many useful translations are also in The Penguin Classics. Selected sources are translated with a commentary in N. Lewis and M. Reinhold, *Roman Civilization*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1966, two volumes.

## Measures and coins

The following rough equivalences are used:

- 1 *modius* = 8.62–8.67 litres = 6.5 kg wheat
- 1 *medimnos* = 52 litres = 39 kg wheat
- 1 *iugerum* = 0.25 hectare = 0.625 acre
- 4 HS (*sesterces*) = 1 *denarius* (*dn*) = 1 *drachma* (*dr*)
- 100 *drachmae* = 1 *mna* (usually)

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978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,

Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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*To Juliet*

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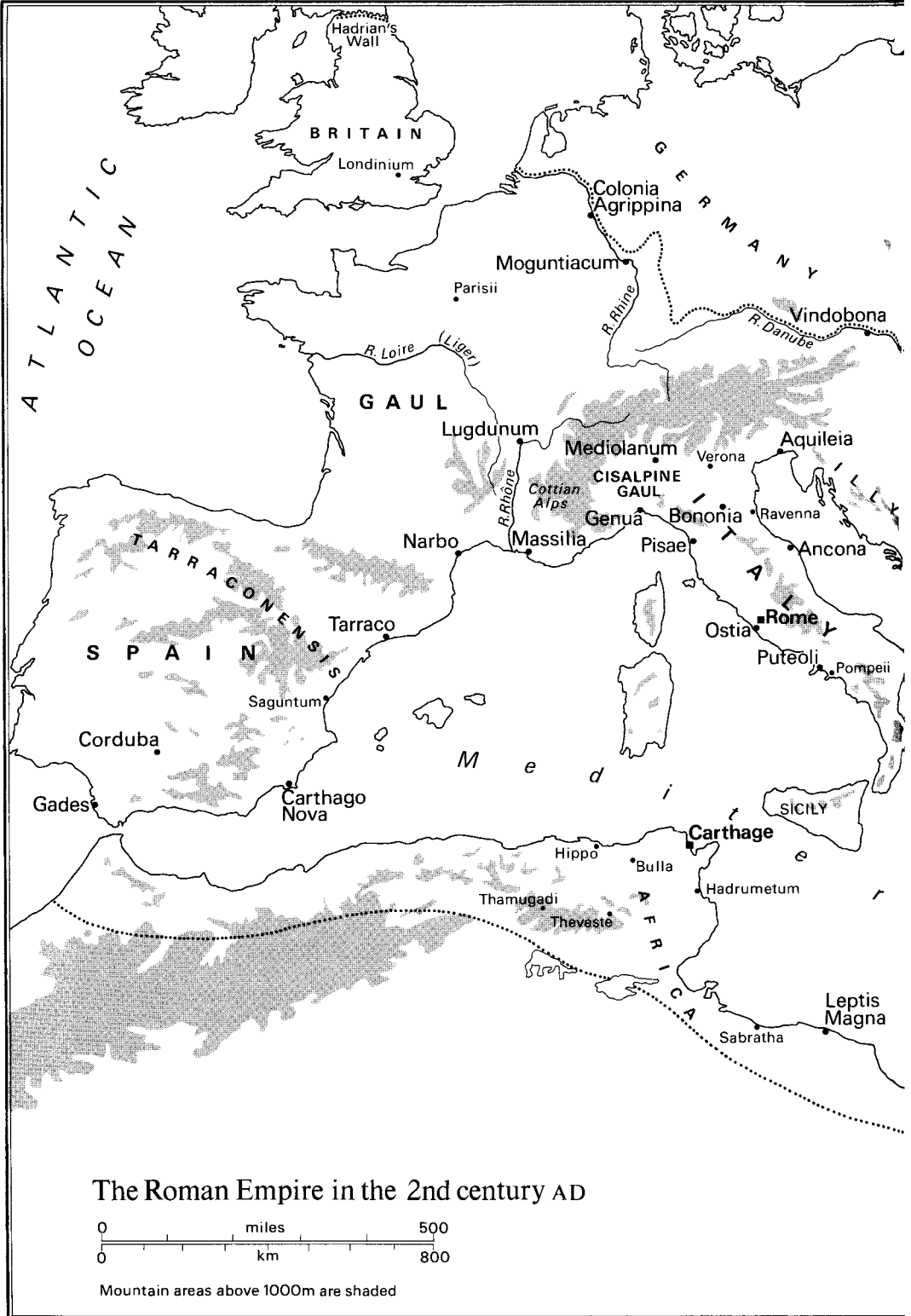
978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History,

Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28181-2 - Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History, Volume 1

Keith Hopkins

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

