Fall of Rome Document Walk

Guiding Question: “What factors caused the ‘Fall of Roman Empire’?”

Documents 1 & 2: (Military Strength)

*Petition of the Araguenians and Rescript of the Emperor Philip [r. 243-249 CE] on Official & Military Extortion, 246 CE*

Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *The Military Institutions of the Romans (De Re Militari)*, 390CE

Documents 3 & 4: (Excess of Rome)

Ammianus Marcellinus (c.330-395 CE): History, XIV.16: The Luxury of the Rich in Rome, c. 400 CE.

Practical Public Beneficence, CIL XI.5942

Document 5: (Excess of Rome)

Pliny the Elder, *The Grandeur of Rome*, c. 75 CE

Document 6: (Conditions of the Poor)

Juvenal, *On the City of Rome* (late 1st, early 2nd Century CE) -- Satirical poem

Document 7: (Perspective of Conquered Peoples)

Galgacus: “On Roman Imperialism”

Document 8: (Inflation and Military Expenditures)

Monetary Value and Military Wages

Document 9: Expansion of the Empire

Map collection -
- Roman Empire: 218 BCE
- Roman Empire: 100 BCE
- Roman Empire: 54 CE
- Roman Empire: 221 CE

Document 10: Christianity Mini-Collection

Cassius Dio, Roman History, Book LXI, 211-233 CE.


Constantine Augustus and Licinius Augustus, *Edict of Milan*, 313 CE

The Bible, Exodus 20:1-3
Documents 1 & 2:

**Petition of the Araguenians and Rescript of the Emperor Philip [r. 243-249 CE] on Official & Military Extortion, 246 CE**

We are unreasonably oppressed and we suffer extortions by those persons whose duty it is to maintain the public welfare. For although we live remotely and are without military protection, we suffer afflictions alien to your most felicitous times. Generals and soldiers and lordlings of prominent offices in the city and your Caesarians, coming to us, traversing the Appian district, leaving the highway, taking us from our tasks, requisitioning our plowing oxen, make exactions that are by no means their due. And it happens thus that we are wronged by extortions. Our possessions are spent on them, and our fields are stripped and laid waste....

**Flavius Vegetius Renatus, The Military Institutions of the Romans (De Re Militari), 390CE**

THE ROMAN DISCIPLINE THE CAUSE OF THEIR GREATNESS

Victory in war does not depend entirely upon numbers or mere courage; only skill and discipline will insure it. We find that the Romans owed the conquest of the world to no other cause than continual military training, exact observance of discipline in their camps and unwearied cultivation of the other arts of war. Without these, what chance would the inconsiderable numbers of the Roman armies have had against the multitudes of the Gauls? Or with what success would their small size have been opposed to the prodigious stature of the Germans? The Spaniards surpassed us not only in numbers, but in physical strength. We were always inferior to the Africans in wealth and unequal to them in deception and stratagem. And the Greeks, indisputably, were far superior to us in skill in arts and all kinds of knowledge.

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**GLOSSARY:**

**Affliction:** 1. an illness; 2. a serious problem

**Felicitous:** happy or fortunate

**Extortion:** the crime of obtaining something such as money or information from somebody by using force, threats, or other unacceptable methods

**Requisition:** a demand for something that is required
Ammianus Marcellinus (c.330-395 CE): History, XIV.16: The Luxury of the Rich in Rome, c. 400 CE.

Rome is still looked upon as the queen of the earth, and the name of the Roman people is respected and venerated. But the magnificence of Rome is defaced by the inconsiderate levity of a few, who never recollect where they are born, but fall away into error and licentiousness as if a perfect immunity were granted to vice. Of these men, some, thinking that they can be handed down to immortality by means of statues, are eager after them, as if they would obtain a higher reward from brazen figures unendowed with sense than from a consciousness of upright and honorable actions; and they are even anxious to have them plated over with gold!

Practical Public Beneficence, CIL XI.5942

TRANSLATION:
Lucius Vennius Sabinus, with his son Efficax, gave as a gift to the people of Tifernum Tiberinum (this) fountain and the (entire) water collection system, from their property line up to the intake, for the embellishment of the community.

GLOSSARY:
Licentiousness: pursuing desires aggressively and selfishly, unchecked by morality, especially in sexual matters
Venerate: to honor somebody or something as sacred or special
Pliny the Elder, *The Grandeur of Rome*, c. 75 CE

In great buildings as well as in other things the rest of the world has been outdone by us Romans. If, indeed, all the buildings in our City are considered in the aggregate, and supposing them---so to say---all thrown together in one vast mass, the united grandeur of them would lead one to imagine that we were describing another world, accumulated in a single spot.

Not to mention among our great works the Circus Maximus, that was built by the Dictator Caesar---one stadium broad and three in length---and occupying with the adjacent buildings no less than four iugera [about 2 acres] with room for no less than 160,000 spectators seated---am I not, however, to include in the number of our magnificent structures the Basilica of Paulus with its admirable Phrygian columns [built also in Julius Caesar's day], the Forum of the late Emperor Augustus, the Temple of Peace erected by the Emperor Vespasian Augustus---some of the finest work the world has ever seen? [and many others].

Frequently praise is given to the great sewer system of Rome. There are seven "rivers" made to flow, by artificial channels, beneath the city. Rushing onward like so many impetuous torrents, they are compelled to carry off and sweep away all the sewerage; and swollen as they are by the vast accession of the rain water, they reverberate against the sides and bottoms of their channels. Occasionally too the Tiber, overflowing, is thrown backward in its course, and discharges itself by these outlets. Obstinate is the struggle that ensues between the meeting tides, but so firm and solid is the masonry that it is able to offer an effectual resistance. Enormous as are the accumulations that are carried along above, the work of the channels never gives way. Houses falling spontaneously to ruins, or leveled with the ground by conflagrations are continually battering against them; now and then the ground is shaken by earthquakes, and yet---built as they were in the days of Tarquinius Priscus, seven hundred years ago---these constructions have survived, all but unharmed.

GLOSSARY:

**Accession**: to make a formal record of an addition to a collection

**Aggregate**: collected together from different sources and considered as a whole

**Conflagration**: a large disastrous fire

**Obstinate**: unwilling to change or give up something such as an idea or attitude
Don't forget the drunkard who likes to fight:
If he hasn't killed anyone yet, he suffers,
And he mourns all night like Achilles for Patroclus,
Lying first on his face and then on his back, tossing
And turning all night. He can't get to sleep otherwise:
Only a brawl puts some people to sleep!
But even though he's young and flushed with wine,
He carefully avoids the man with the crimson cloak
And the long procession of servants and burning lamps.
As for me, led home only by the moon
Or a small candle, whose wick I tend with care,
Me he despises. Thus begins a wretched fight--
If you can call it a fight when he punches
And I take a beating: he stands in front of me
And orders me to halt. What can I do?
Especially in the face of a frenzied maniac
Who, by the way, is stronger than I am?
"Where are you coming from? Whose beans and vinegar
Are you farting out your ass? What low-life
Shoemaker have you been eating leeks with
And stuffing your face with boiled sheep's head?
Why don't you answer me? Speak!
You want I should kick some sense in you!
Where do you beg? What synagogue
Do you pray at?" You can try to say something,
Or you can try to slip quietly away,
It really doesn't matter one way or another:
You're going to get pounded, and taken to court
The next day because you bothered him.
You see, this alone is the poor man's freedom:
After being beaten and punched you have the right
To ask that a few teeth be left in your mouth.
All the incentives to victory are on our side. The Romans have no wives to kindle their courage; no parents to taunt them with flight, man have either no country or one far away. Few in number, dismayed by their ignorance, looking around upon a sky, a sea, and forests which are all unfamiliar to them; hemmed in, as it were, and enmeshed, the Gods have delivered them into our hands. Be not frightened by the idle display, by the glitter of gold and of silver, which can neither protect nor wound. In the very ranks of the enemy we shall find our own forces. Britons will acknowledge their own cause; Gauls will remember past freedom; the other Germans will abandon them, as but lately did the Usipii. Behind them there is nothing to dread. The forts are ungarrisoned; the colonies in the hands of aged men; what with disloyal subjects and oppressive rulers, the towns are ill-affected and rife with discord. On the one side you have a general and an army; on the other, tribute, the mines, and all the other penalties of an enslaved people. Whether you endure these for ever, or instantly avenge them, this field is to decide. Think, therefore, as you advance to battle, at once of your ancestors and of your posterity.

GLOSSARY:

**Enmeshed**: to catch somebody or something in the mesh of a net

**Garrison**: a body of troops stationed at a military post

**Hemmed**: to surround and enclose somebody or something
Document 8:
Monetary Value and Military Wages

[Diagram showing the relationship between wages and coinage over time, with a focus on the silver content and wages of soldiers.]
When Nero assumed the *toga virilis*, the Divine Power shook the earth for a long time on the very day of the ceremony and by night struck terror to the hearts of all alike.

"He died in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and was numbered among the gods, not only by a formal decree, but also in the conviction of the common people. For at the first of the games which his heir Augustus gave in honor of his apotheosis, a comet shone for seven successive days, rising about the eleventh hour [about an hour before sunset] and was believed to be the soul of Caesar, who had been taken to heaven; and this is why a star is set upon the crown of his head in his statue."

[We] thought to arrange that no one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, of that religion which he should think best for himself, so that the Supreme Deity, to whose worship we freely yield our hearts, may show in all things His usual favor and **benevolence**.

And God spake all these words, saying, "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

**GLOSSARY:**

**Benevolence:** showing kindness or goodwill

**Toga Virilis:** A white toga symbolizing manhood that boys of ancient Rome were allowed to wear at age 15