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Sociology, Slavery



Angela Oakley Professor Deville Humanities 300 March 3rd, 2013 The Census of Ancient Rome The Census of Ancient Rome was of great importance to the Romans, molded the city into political and military community capable of collective action. First of all, the word census means " estimate. " Meaning the census is a way to estimate the number of people in the population Having this figure would provide the ancient Romans with an idea of how large or small, weak or strong their army would be. Every five years male Roman citizens were required to register for the census. With the census the city was divided into four different classes depending on status in the community and wealth. When a man would register for the census, he would declare his family, wife, children, slaves and riches (Tu). The census meant freedom for the Romans, if a master wishes to free his slave; he would simply enter the slaves name in the census list as a citizen. Punishment for failing to register in the census was severe. If a male Roman citizen neglected to register; he would have all of his possessions confiscated including his freedom, as he would be sold into slavery. Servius, king of Rome established a system of dividing the common people into classes and enacted a law that punished with death all who failed to register with the census (Zoch 25). This resulted in a major increase of men capable of bearing arms. Here Zoch describes Servius's actions: Once the census was conducted, Servius also performed a lustrum (purification ceremony), whose purpose was to ward off evil; Since the census and lustrum occurred every five years, lustrum came also to mean a period of five years (25). With the census being of great importance, there were only two men responsible for compiling the lists, and these two men were chosen because of their proven

integrity and authority. This responsibility would consist of evaluating each man and placing him in his rightful place within the civic hierarchy of Rome. Assessing men of lower ranking class was nowhere near as intense as the process of inspecting a man of higher ranking class. Citizens of high position in the hierarchy would undergo an extensive inspection of his public and private life. Citizens would lose social status or be moved down the social ladder if they were found guilty of: committing perjury, fathering no children, or even failing to cultivate his land properly. The censors also performed the *lustrum* at the end of the census (Zoch 34). Another duty of the censors was to revise the Senate lists. A senator who had lapsed in his morals could be struck from the list by the censors. The censors passed laws as well, most of which were aimed at curbing the love of luxury. One example of a law passed by the censors was *Lex Orchia*, limiting the number of guests a person could entertain at a party. The procedure of the census comes from scattered and partial references in historians and antiquarians, in various works of Cicero, and in surviving laws (Ligt 257). Clearly, the census was of extreme importance to the Romans, performing a highly symbolical function, it was the foundation of Roman civilization. Works Cited Dandeleit, Thomas James. " Rome, 1592: An Introduction To A Newly Discovered Parish Census." *Memoirs of The American Academy In Rome* (2005): 207. JSTOR Arts & Sciences V. Web. 4 Mar. 2013. Jones, A. H. M. " Census Records of the Later Roman Empire. " *The Journal of Roman Studies*. Vol. 43, (1953), pp. 49-64. Print Ligt, L. de, and Simon Northwood. *People, Land, and Politics: Demographic Developments and The Transformation Of Roman Italy 300 BC-AD 14*. n. p.: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost).

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