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Introduction

Rome formed a model government that was imitated by several states at the time. Similarly, Aristotle praised the Carthaginian government as one of the best governments of antiquity. This paper compares the two forms of governments and determines that there were significant differences.

The executive

The Roman government was a republic headed by the consul. Two consuls held the highest position in the republic and acted as rulers. The senate was composed of patricians and was responsible for electing the two consuls. The lower class of plebeians had the power to elect their representatives called tribunes. The tribunes had the power to veto ordinances passed by the senate. In the later years, plebeians increasingly gained power to the extent that they could contest the position of a consul. However, patricians still managed to control power through influence and wealth. Just like in the Roman Empire, the peasants in Carthage gained increased influence on matters of governance with time. Some historians of the time attributed the peasant empowerment to the decline of the empire.

The Carthage republic was an oligarchy headed by Suffets or judges. The government of Carthage was dominated by the maritime group made up of powerful merchants. Like the consuls, the Suffets were elected annually from the aristocracy. They resembled roman consuls in that they came from wealthy and powerful families. In fact, historians believe that the Carthaginian government was a formalized clan system with hegemonic families dominating power for decades. Another similarity between the

Suffets and the consuls was that both sets of leaders ruled collegially. Suffets had both executive and judicial power, just like the Hebrew judges, but lacked military power.

Sometimes the roman republic endorsed dictators to resolve an emergency such as war for a limited period. Dictators had control over the military and made important decisions autocratically. Even though the Romans appointed ad-hoc generals, the consuls had the primary responsibility of managing military affairs. In contrast, the Carthagian generals had a fully functional office of the general, who remained in office till the purpose of their appointment was accomplished. The council of 104 judges checked the powers of these generals and had the power to fire and crucify errant generals.

The legislature

The senate was the most powerful instrument of governance in the Roman Empire. Senate used to convene and pass laws in a large building called the curia situated at the Roman Forum. The senate lost most of its influence after the formation of the empire in 27 B. C. E. due to the suppression powerful emperors who murdered dissenting senators and installed non-patricians to the senate. Similarly, the council wielded the most power in the Carthaginian Empire.

There was a supreme council in Carthage made up of members of the aristocracy that had a wide range of powers. Members of this council were elected on the basis of their economic status in the belief that the poor had no time for governance since they were busy searching for wealth. The council made most governance decisions. Carthage government employed

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elements of democracy as characterized by the election of legislators and the existence of trade unions and town councils. The legislature voted on issues that the Suffets and the supreme council failed to reach unanimous decisions. The legislature's decision was final.

Citizen rights

The Roman republic was a form of elective representation where citizens elected their representatives to the assembly. One qualified to be a roman citizen if he was over 15 and was from the native tribes of Rome. Citizens wore a toga to distinguish themselves from slaves and noncitizens. Emperors wore a purple toga to identify themselves as the first citizens. Full citizens enjoyed the right to trade, vote and marry other freeborn citizens. Other citizens were restricted from holding public office. The aristocrats (known as patricians) held most of the power during the early years of the republic. Both men and women could attain full citizenship, but only men could vote. There is no evidence of an emphasis on individual citizenship in the Carthaginian Empire though there was a distinct application of tough foreign policies to allies and their citizens.

The roman republic invented the doctrine of equality under the law enshrined in the 12 tablets carved in 499 B. C. E. Further, natives of conquered territories had the right to become citizens of the Roman Empire. In contrast, the Carthaginian constitution was largely a collection of principles of governance meant to preserve the status quo. This view is corroborated by observations of historians that Carthaginian philosophy endorsed the dominance of the aristocracy.

Finally, Carthaginian colonies differed from roman colonies in that it

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extracted punitive levies and taxes from them. Historians hypothesize that the Carthaginian government had no desire to form formal empires as it lacked the capacity to administer large empires. Most of the colonies and allies were effectively confederations that sought protection and support against trade rivals. Carthage then used the taxes to finance its fleet and recruit mercenaries to protect its interests.

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