

Polybius, the constitution of the roman republic



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Polybius, the Constitution of the Roman republic of the Roman system makes the main part of the political treatise by Polybius. The Romans, according to Polybius, had three pure forms of government. All the functions were divided between the individual authorities are so equally that it was impossible, according to Polybius, to determine which system - monarchical, aristocratic or democratic - was there in Rome. Polybius shows the reader what functions belong to every form of power: the consuls embody the monarchical element, the senate is the aristocratic element and people are the democratic element. This situation existed at the time of greatest prosperity of the Roman state, and survived with little change in the time of Polybius. Polybius begins the analysis of separate magistrates with consuls. The consuls, when they are present in Rome, govern all the people and all the officers except the tribunes, they report to the Senate on all matters and enter the embassy to the Senate, oversee the execution of enactments, summon the national assembly, make proposals, execute orders, have unlimited authority in military affairs, may punish any person in the military camp and spend public funds at their discretion. The senate primarily administers the state treasury; in its jurisdiction are all crimes committed in Italy, it is responsible for the administration of embassies in countries outside of Italy; it decides issues of war and peace, receives the embassy. Polybius emphasizes that people do not participate at all in these events. Realizing that may give the impression that people can do nothing substantial, the author hastens to warn that this is a false opinion. He draws the reader's attention to the fact that people have a very strong influence on the life of the Roman state, as in people's hands is the right to reward and punish. From the viewpoint of Polybius these incentives determine people's

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entire lives. Prerogative of the people is the death sentence and imposition of fines, issues of war and peace, ratification of treaties and alliances.

Polybius then turns to consider how all three forms of government coexist in Rome. Polybius' purpose is to show that between these three forms there is a balance; since they are competing with each other they mutually balance.

Analysis of the constitution of Rome, carried out by Polybius, is striking in its precision and clarity. Rome in his description appears as a state with an ideal form of government. His model of government was partially borrowed from the system of Greek poleis, but comparing them would be difficult, because each Polis had—at least theoretically—self-government, due to which evolved a variety of political traditions, each with its variants, borrowings and imitations. There were monarchies, such as on Samos, where a king-pirate Polycrates ruled; there was despotism, especially in Asia Minor and Magna Graecia (Sicily and the south Apennine peninsula); there was oligarchy, as in Corinth and Massalia (Marseille); there was politeia, as in Lacedaemon (Sparta); there was democracy, like in Athens in a certain period. For example, if we compare Polybius' description with the system in Athens it becomes clear that citizens of Athens did govern: they were equal before the law, they chose high-ranking officials, including the strategos, and they decided by lot who would occupy administrative positions, which was updated every year; dishonest or incapable administrators were even punished. Bibliography Polybius. The Histories. Book VI. Retrieved from http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/6*.html