

## **The Roman empire and its urban and municipal elites in the Republican era**

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Rome's relationship with its subject states in the Republic period was very diverse. Those outside Italy were organised into provinces, under direct Roman rule via the provincial governor and his staff. Within Italy, before 89 BC., most communities were in theory independent allies of Rome, although bound by terms which restricted room for manoeuvre, and the others were Roman colonies of various types which had a closer relationship with Rome; after 89 BC, Roman citizenship was extended to the whole of Italy, although all communities remained self-governing and there was no central administrative control.

Within this structure, local elites played a central role in Roman control and in mediation between central authority and local communities. Three criteria were important in establishing the status of local elites and their relationships with Rome; legal status, social status and culture. Direct political co-optation of local elites into the Roman elite (even amongst those who held Roman citizenship) was relatively rare in the Republican period, despite the fact that integration of others was central to Rome's own foundation legends and identity. Instead, power was exercised, particularly in Italy where there was little central control over urban communities, via establishment of cultural hegemony and via dense networks of connections between Roman and local elites.

This paper will adopt a networked approach, examining the complex economic and social connections between the Roman and local elites which linked them together and allowed power and influence to travel in both directions. It will also examine how Roman culture was used as a means of integrating local elites into the imperial project. The focus will be on Roman Italy as a case-study for how Roman and local elites interacted and how the latter engaged with Rome's imperial project.