

The Roman Empire : provincial administration

Bibliography

Sources in L. & R.: secs. 8,9, 32 and chapter V.

Dudley, chapters 25, 31, 35-9, 42.

Scullard, chap. 9, sec. 6 (the Republican system); chap. 11, sec. 7;
chap. 12, sec. 6.

Salmon, Part I, chap. 3; and sections elsewhere on provincial policy.

Besides the special study by Stevenson, see, inter alia:

Balsdon, Rome, pp. 43-67 (on the Republican system); 68-87 (on the Augustan system); 126-94 (on Imperial administration during the first two centuries A.D.).

Jones, Augustus, chaps. 8 & 10.

The Republican system (continued for the 'senatorial' provinces):

Each province governed by a proconsul or propraetor, appointed annually (appointment often prolonged). After Augustan settlement all were called proconsuls, but only those of Asia and Africa were of consular rank. Provinces assigned to those eligible each year either by lot or by mutual agreement - but the Emperor could intervene (cf. Tacitus, Annals, pp. 135 & 137 on the appointment of a governor for Africa in A.D. 21).

The governor's duties:

military command (after Aug. only in Africa) -
(a) external wars only with orders from Senate;
(b) internal security.

administration of justice - in accordance with his edict, and subject to the overriding lex provinciae (e.g. that of Pompey for Bithynia & Pontus, cf. Pliny, Letters X. 112).

collection of taxes and supervision of expenditure: under Republic the former usually farmed out to publicani; under Empire much of the financial administration undertaken by Imperial officials (procurators, see below).

The governor had a considerable staff, including legati (to help with judicial business) and a quaestor (for finance).

The 'Imperial' provinces:

Governed by a legatus, appointed by, and personally responsible to, the princeps, and holding office at his pleasure: one man under Tiberius remained in the same post for 24 years (Tacitus, Annals, p. 220, cf. p. 77). Duties and powers similar to those of proconsuls, but with added responsibility for military command in frontier provinces.

Subordinate senatorial officials:

legatus iuridicus, judicial assistant - not in all provinces, first appointed under Vespasian (e.g. in Spain and Britain).

legati legionum, commanders of legions. The colonels of auxiliary regiments and the staff officers of the legions were mostly of equestrian rank.

Financial administration:

Carried out by procurators in both types of province. The chief procurator in each province was a senior equestrian official, directly responsible to the princeps; he could thus act as a check on the governor: for an important example, see Tacitus, Annals, p. 331 (Classicianus). Procurators also responsible for imperial estates - which in some provinces were very extensive (cf. L. & R. sec. 42).

Publicani continued to collect customs duties and some local taxes (for one example, see L. & R. p. 333). Their rapacity still caused protests (e.g. 'publicans and sinners' in N.T.); hence Nero's proposal in 58 to abolish indirect taxation (Tacitus, Annals, p. 308f).

Periodic censuses in each province provided the basis for equitable collection of direct taxes. Main sources of revenue:

- (a) land tax, levied on all provincials (but not in Italy);
- (b) property tax (in Egypt and some other backward areas, poll tax), levied on all provincials, though some privileged communities were exempt.

Remission of taxes could be granted as an imperial benefaction in special circumstances (e.g. after serious fires or earthquakes).

Apart from customs and harbour dues (never more than 5%, and often considerably less), the main indirect taxes were:

- (a) 5% on manumission of slaves)
- (b) 4% on sales of slaves) all payable in Italy
- (c) 1% on other sales at auction)
- (d) 5% on inheritances: payable by all Roman citizens, in Italy and the provinces, but not by other provincials.

The last two were introduced by Augustus to fund the Military Treasury ('Bonus Fund', Res Gestae 17), and proved unpopular. However, his alternative suggestion of a land tax was even less acceptable, and the inheritance tax became permanent. In A.D. 15 Tib. refused to abolish the sales tax (Tacitus, Annals, p. 76), but two years later he reduced it to $\frac{1}{2}$ % (p. 98), and later on Gaius abolished it altogether.