

1: Thomas N. Habinek - Press Room USC

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Porcian Laws In BC, when he was only 39 years old, Cato was elected junior consul to his old friend and patron Flaccus. Repeal of the Oppian Law[edit] Main article: Oppian Law In BC, at the height of the Second Punic War and at the request of the tribune of the plebs Gaius Oppius, the Oppian Law Lex Oppia , intended to restrict the luxury and extravagance of women in order to save money for the public treasury, was passed. The law specified that no woman could own more than half an ounce of gold, nor wear a garment of several colours, nor drive a carriage with horses closer than a mile to the city, except to attend public celebrations of religious rites. This conflict spawned far more interest than the most important state affairs. Middle-aged married Roman women crowded the streets, blocked access to the forum, and intercepted their approaching husbands, demanding to restore the ancient ornaments of Roman matrons. They even begged the Praetors, Consuls and other magistrates. Even Flaccus hesitated, but his colleague Cato was inflexible, and made a characteristically impolite speech, which was later retold by Livy. Women went in procession through the streets and the forum, dressed up with their now legitimate finery. He soon set sail for his appointed province, Hispania Citerior. Post in Hispania Citerior[edit] In his campaign in Hispania , Cato behaved in keeping with his reputation of untiring hard work and alertness. He lived soberly, sharing the food and the labours of the common soldier. Wherever it was possible, he personally superintended the execution of his requisite orders. His movements were reported as bold and rapid, and he never was negligent in pushing the advantages of victory. The sequence of his operations and their combination in agreement with the schemes of other generals in other parts of Hispania appear to have been carefully designed. His stratagems and manoeuvres were accounted as original, talented, and successful; and the plans of his battles were arranged with expert skill. He managed to set tribe against tribe, benefited himself from native deceitfulness, and took native mercenaries into his pay. Hispania in BC The details of the campaign, as related by Livy, [20] and illustrated by the incidental anecdotes of Plutarch , are full of horror and they make clear that Cato reduced Hispania Citerior to subjection with great speed and little mercy. We read of multitudes who, after they had been stripped of all their arms, put themselves to death because of the dishonour, of extensive massacres of surrendered victims, and the frequent execution of harsh plunders. The phrase *bellum se ipsum alit* "the war feeds itself" was coined by Cato during this period. He claimed to have destroyed more towns in Hispania than he had spent days in that country. Roman triumph[edit] After he reduced the area between the River Iberus and the Pyrenees to a resentful and, as it turned out, temporary obedience, Cato turned his attention to administrative reforms, and increased the revenues of the province by improvements in the working of the iron and silver mines. For his achievements in Hispania, the senate decreed a thanksgiving ceremony of three days. In the course of the year BC, he returned to Rome and was rewarded with the honor of a Roman triumph , at which he exhibited an extraordinary quantity of captured brass , silver, and gold , both coin and ingots. Cato distributed the monetary prize to his soldiery, and was more liberal than might have been expected from his vigorous parsimony. There is some disagreement between Nepos or the pseudo-Nepos , and Plutarch, [23] in their accounts of this topic. Nepos claims that Scipio failed to obtain the province, and, offended by the rejection, remained after his consulship in a private capacity at Rome. Plutarch was probably mistaken, judging by the statement in Livy, [24] that in BC, Sextus Digitius was appointed to the province of Hispania Citerior. The notion that Scipio was appointed successor to Cato in Hispania may have arisen from a double confusion of name and place, since Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica was chosen in BC to the province of Hispania Ulterior. However true this account, Cato used his eloquence and produced detailed financial accounts to successfully defend against criticism of his consulship. The known fragments of the speeches or one speech under different names made after his return attest to the strength and boldness of his arguments. Plutarch [25] affirms that, after his Consulship, Cato accompanied Tiberius Sempronius Longus as legatus to

Thrace , but this seems incorrect because, although Scipio Africanus believed that one Consul should have Macedonia , Sempronius was soon in Cisalpine Gaul , [26] and in BC Cato was in Rome dedicating a small temple to Victoria Virgo. In the decisive Battle of Thermopylae BC , which led to the downfall of Antiochus, Cato behaved with his usual valor, and enjoyed good fortune. After the action, the General hugged Cato with the greatest warmth and attributed to him the whole credit of the victory. That this is a fact rests on the authority of Cato himself, who, like Cicero , often indulged in the habit, offensive to modern taste, of sounding his own praises. After an interval spent in the pursuit of Antiochus and the pacification of Greece, Cato was sent to Rome by the Consul Glabrio to announce the successful outcome of the campaign, and he performed his journey with such celerity that he had started his report in the senate before the return of Lucius Cornelius Scipio , the later conqueror of Antiochus, who had been sent off from Greece a few days before him. During this period, Cato visited Athens where, in trying to prevent the Athenians from listening to the propositions of the Seleucid king, Cato addressed them in a Latin speech, which required an interpreter to be understood by the audience. Whether this was out of necessity or merely a choice by Cato remains unclear, however, since the assertion that he might very well have already known Greek at the time can be made from anecdotal evidence. For example, Plutarch said that while at Tarentum in his youth he had developed a close friendship with Nearchus, who was himself a Greek philosopher. Similarly, Aurelius Victor stated he had received instruction in Greek from Ennius while praetor in Sardinia. Nevertheless, because his speech was an affair of state, it is probable that he complied with the Roman norms of the day in using the Latin language, which compliance was considered in diplomacy as a mark of Roman dignity. If he was not personally engaged in the prosecution of the Scipiones Africanus and Asiaticus for corruption, it was his spirit that animated the attack upon them. Even Scipio Africanus "who refused to reply to the charge, saying only, "Romans, this is the day on which I conquered Hannibal" and was absolved by acclamation" found it necessary to retire, self-banished, to his villa at Liternum. Cato was also opposed to the spread of Hellenic culture, which he believed threatened to destroy the rugged simplicity of the conventional Roman type. It was in the discharge of this censorship that his determination to oppose Hellenism was most strongly exhibited, and hence, the behavior from which was derived the title the Censor by which he is most generally distinguished. He revised with unsparing severity the lists of Senators and Knights, ejecting from either order the men whom he judged unworthy of membership, either on moral grounds or on the basis of their lack the prescribed means. The expulsion of L. Quinctius Flaminius for wanton cruelty was an example of his rigid justice. His regulations against luxury were very stringent. He imposed a heavy tax upon dress and personal adornment, especially of women, and upon young slaves purchased as favourites. In BC he supported the lex Orchia according to others, he first opposed its introduction, and subsequently its repeal , which prescribed a limit to the number of guests at an entertainment, and in BC the lex Voconia, one of the provisions of which was intended to limit the accumulation of what Cato considered an undue proportion of wealth in the hands of women. Public works[edit] Among other things he repaired the aqueducts , cleansed the sewers , and prevented private persons drawing off public water for their own use. The Aqua Appia was the first aqueduct of Rome. Cato also ordered the demolition of houses which encroached on the public way, and built the first basilica in the Forum near the Curia Livy, History, Later years[edit] From the date of his Censorship BC to his death in BC, Cato held no public office, but continued to distinguish himself in the senate as the persistent opponent of the new ideas. He was struck with horror, along with many other Romans of the graver stamp, at the licence of the Bacchanalian mysteries, which he attributed to the influence of Greek manners; and he vehemently urged the dismissal of the philosophers Carneades , Diogenes , and Critolaus , who had come as ambassadors from Athens , on account of what he believed was the dangerous nature of their ideas. He also uttered warnings against the mischievous influence of Chaldean astrologers who had entered Italy along with Greek culture. He procured the release of Polybius , the historian, and his fellow prisoners, contemptuously asking whether the Senate had nothing more important to do than discuss whether a few Greeks should die at Rome or in their own land. It was not till his eightieth year that he made his first acquaintance with Greek literature, though some think after examining his writings that he may have had a knowledge of Greek works for much of his life. In his last years, he was known for strenuously urging his countrymen to prosecute the Third Punic War and to destroy

Carthage. In BC, he was one of the deputies sent to Carthage to arbitrate between the Carthaginians and Massinissa , king of Numidia. From that time, he began concluding his speechesâ€”on any topic whatsoeverâ€”with the cry, "Moreover, I advise that Carthage must be destroyed " Ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam. He regarded the individual householder as the germ of the family, the family as the germ of the state. By strict economy of time he accomplished an immense amount of work; he exacted similar application from his dependents, and proved himself a hard husband, a strict father, and a severe and cruel master. There was little difference, apparently, in the esteem in which he held his wife and his slaves; his pride alone induced him to take a warmer interest in his sons, Marcus Porcius Cato Licinianus and Marcus Porcius Cato Salonianus. To the Romans themselves little in this behavior seemed worthy of censure; it was respected rather as a traditional example of the old Roman manners. In the remarkable passage xxxix.

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