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When not in Rome, still do as the Romans do? Africa from 146 BCE to the 7th century

Studying North Africa poses a variety of problems. Historical as well as archaeological research bears the burden of a colonial view on Africa's past, which tends to overemphasize its Roman aspects. Berber (Numidian and Moorish) political entities together with Punic (Carthaginian) cities had a long history when Rome entered the African scene. The history of Roman North Africa in its narrow sense started with the forming of *Africa vetus* in 146 BCE, after the third Punic War and the destruction of Carthage. For the centuries to come, Rome relied on client kings in Numidia and Mauretania to secure the new province. Initially *Africa* consisted of the Carthaginian hinterland and had the *fossa regia* as a demarcation line drawn by Scipio the Younger between the territory of the Numidian kings and the Roman province. Caesar added *Africa nova* (parts of the Numidian territory between the Tusca and Ampsaga rivers as well as Tripolitania) after the defeat of the Pompeians and their African allies, most prominently Juba I, at Thapsus in 46 BCE. The vast domains that were acquired helped the new political concept of Augustus' principate to satisfy the claims of its followers. The process of full annexation of North Africa finished during the early principate under Emperor Claudius (41–54 CE) when Mauretania became part of the Empire.¹

Scholarship defined the spread of Roman civilization – 'Romanization' – as an acceptance of something like a Roman identity by local populations, or as a phenomenon of migration. Thousands of Roman colonists and members of the aristocracy started to penetrate North Africa with Roman norms, lifestyle, architecture and language from the first century BCE onwards. Scholars have regarded that as a thorough demographic and cultural change. But was North Africa in fact rather a Roman colony comparable to French Algeria in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? A variety of processes of change were successively labelled with the term 'Romanization', and the parameters vary considerably from one study to another. 'Romanization' was no organic cultural, political, economic or social development nor ever fully completed. Thus the Roman World was not a homogeneous zone of Romanness, although it tended to present itself that way, in opposition to the surrounding 'Barbarians'. It in-

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¹ Fishwick 1993/1994; Woolf 2012, 97–100; for an overview on Roman North Africa see Lassère 2015; Raven 1993; Fenwick 2012; Fenwick 2008 (archaeological research); Hobson 2015 (economy).