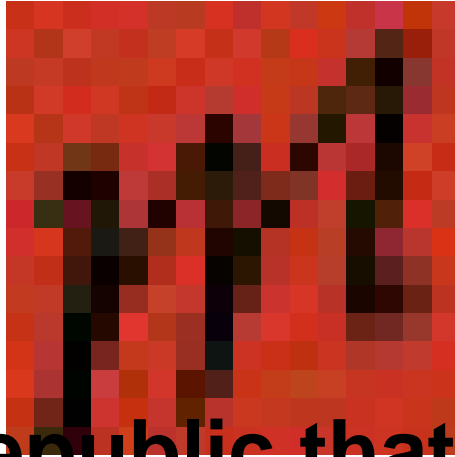


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X.6 Of a republic that conquers

- The Spirit of Law - Book X. On the laws in their relation to offensive strength -

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X.6 Of a republic that conquers

It is against the nature of the thing, in a federative constitution, for one confederate state to take land from another, as in our times we have seen among the Swiss. [1] In mixed federative republics, where the association is among small republics and small monarchies, it is less exceptional.

It is also against the nature of the thing for a democratic republic to conquer cities incapable of entering into the sphere of democracy. The conquered people must be able to enjoy the privileges of sovereignty, as the Romans established it at the outset. One should limit the conquest to the number of citizens that will be fixed for the democracy.

If a democracy conquers a people in order to govern it as a subject, it will risk its own liberty, because it will entrust too much authority to the magistrates it sends into the conquered state.

In what danger would the republic of Carthage not have been if Hannibal had taken Rome ? What would he not have done in his city after the victory, he who caused so many revolutions after his defeat ? [2]

Hanno could never have persuaded the senate not to send reinforcements to Hannibal if he had made only his jealousy speak. The senate, which Aristotle describes to us as so wise (something which that republic's prosperity proves to us so well), could only be persuaded by sensible reasons. It would have had to be too dense not to see that an army three hundred leagues away was absorbing necessary losses that would have to be repaired.

Hanno's party wanted Hannibal to be delivered to the Romans. [3] At that time they could not fear the Romans, so they feared Hannibal.

It is said that they could not believe Hannibal's victories ; but how could they doubt them ? Were the Carthaginians scattered throughout the world unaware of what was taking place in Italy ? It is because they were not unaware of it that they did not want to send reinforcements to Hannibal.

Hanno becomes more firm after Trebia, after Trasimene, after Cannæ ; it is not his disbelief that increases, but his fear.

[1] For Tockenbourg. [Allusion to the struggle in 1706-1718 of the valley of Tockenbourg with the canton of Saint Gall.]

[2] He was at the head of a faction.

[3] Hanno wanted to deliver Hannibal to the Romans the way Cato wanted to deliver Cæsar to the Gauls.