

Cato, *On Agriculture*, 2
(A farming manual from the 2nd Cent. BCE)

When the master arrives at the farmstead, after paying his respects to the god of the household, let him go over the whole farm, if possible, on the same day; if not, at least on the next. When he has learned the condition of the farm, what work has been accomplished and what remains to be done, let him call in his overseer the next day and inquire of him what part of the work has been completed, what has been left undone; whether what has been finished was done betimes, and whether it is possible to complete the rest; and what was the yield of wine, grain, and all other products. Having gone into this, he should make a calculation of the labourers and the time consumed. If the amount of work does not seem satisfactory, the overseer claims that he has done his best, but that the slaves have not been well, the weather has been bad, slaves have run away, he has had public work¹ to do; when he has given these and many other excuses, call the overseer back to your estimate of the work done and the hands employed. If it has been a rainy season, remind him of the work that could have been done on rainy days: scrubbing and pitching wine vats, cleaning the farmstead, shifting grain, hauling out manure, making a manure pit, cleaning seed, mending old harness and making new; and that the hands ought to have mended their smocks and hoods. Remind him, also, that on feast days old ditches might have been cleaned, road work done, brambles cut, the garden spaded, a meadow cleared, faggots bundled, thorns rooted out, spelt ground, and general cleaning done. When the slaves were sick, such large rations should not have been issued. After this has been gone into calmly, give orders for the completion of what work remains; run over the cash accounts, grain accounts, and purchases of fodder; run over the wine accounts, the oil accounts — what has been sold, what collected, balance due, and what is left that is saleable; where security for an account should be taken, let it be taken; and let the supplies on hand be checked over. Give orders that whatever may be lacking for the current year be supplied; that what is superfluous be sold; that whatever work should be let out be let. Give directions as to what work you want done on the place, and what you want let out,² and leave the directions in writing. Look over the livestock and hold a sale. Sell your oil, if the price is satisfactory, and sell the surplus of your wine and grain. Sell worn-out oxen, blemished cattle, blemished sheep, wool, hides, an old wagon, old tools, an old slave, a sickly slave, and whatever else is superfluous. The master should have the selling habit, not the buying habit.

¹ Possibly on the public roads, as in the French *corvée*.

² It was the regular custom among the Romans to let out certain work by contract in contrast with the work that was done by the farm organization under the management of the overseer.

Strabo, *Geography*, 14.5.2

(A geographical description of the Roman world that also provides each region's history, early 1st Cent. CE)

The first place in Cilicia, then, to which one comes, is a stronghold, Coracesium, situated on an abrupt rock, which was used by Diodotus, called Tryphon, as a base of operations at the time when he caused Syria to revolt from the kings and was fighting it out with them, being successful at one time and failing at another. Now Tryphon was hemmed up in a certain place by Antiochus, son of Demetrius, and forced to kill himself; and it was Tryphon, together with the worthlessness of the kings who by succession were then reigning over Syria and at the same time over Cilicia, who caused the Cilicians to organise their gangs of pirates; for on account of his revolutionary attempts others made like attempts at the same time, and thus the dissensions of brethren with one another put the country at the mercy of any who might attack it. The exportation of slaves induced them most of all to engage in their evil business, since it proved most profitable; for not only were they easily captured, but the market, which was large and rich in property, was not extremely far away, I mean Delos, which could both admit and send away ten thousand slaves on the same day; whence arose the proverb, "Merchant, sail in, unload your ship, everything has been sold." The cause of this was the fact that the Romans, having become rich after the destruction of Carthage and Corinth, used many slaves; and the pirates, seeing the easy profit therein, bloomed forth in great numbers, themselves not only going in quest of booty but also trafficking in slaves. The kings both of Cyprus and of Egypt co-operated with them in this, being enemies to the Syrians. Neither were the Rhodians friendly to the Syrians, and they therefore afforded them no assistance. And at the same time the pirates, pretending to be slave-dealers, carried on their evil business unchecked. Neither were the Romans concerning themselves as yet so much about the peoples outside the Taurus; but they sent Scipio Aemilianus, and again certain others, to inspect the tribes and the cities; and they decided that the abovementioned piracy was due to the incompetence of the rulers, although they were ashamed, since they themselves had ratified the hereditary succession from Seleucus Nicator, to deprive them of it.

Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 45.34
(early 1st Cent. CE)

on Rome's victory over Epirus, an ally of Macedon, during the Fourth Macedonian War

[45.34] Anicius' camp was not far away, and the consul sent a letter telling him not to be disturbed at what was going on, for the senate had made a grant to his army of the plunder from those cities in Epirus which had gone over to Perseus. Centurions were sent to each of the cities to say that they had come to bring away the garrisons in order that the Epirots should be free as the Macedonians were free. The town councillors in each community were sent for and warned to have the gold and silver brought out into some public place, and cohorts were ordered to visit all the cities. Those who were to go to the more distant places started before those who were to go to the nearer ones, and they all reached their destination on the same day. The military tribunes had received instructions as to what they were to do. All the silver and gold had been collected together in the morning, and at ten o'clock the signal was given to the soldiers to sack the cities. So great was the amount of booty secured that 400 denarii were distributed to each cavalryman and 200 to each foot soldier, and 150,000 human beings were carried off. Then the walls of the plundered cities, some seventy in number, were destroyed, the booty sold and the proceeds furnished the above-mentioned sum for the troops.

War	Number of Slaves Captured in War
Third Samnite War (297-293 BC)	58,000 – 77,000 slaves
First Punic War (264-241 BC)	Over 100,000 slaves
Wars in Northern Italy & Spain (201-167 BC)	c. 300,000 slaves

Time Period	Estimated annual average number of slaves captured in war
297-241 BC	c. 3,300 slaves/year
241-202 BC	c. 5,300 slaves/year
201-167 BC	c. 8,700 slaves/year

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(Legal experts' opinions about various cases involving fugitive/runaway slaves, compiled in the 6th cent. CE but often quoting late 1st Cent. BCE–2nd cent. CE experts)

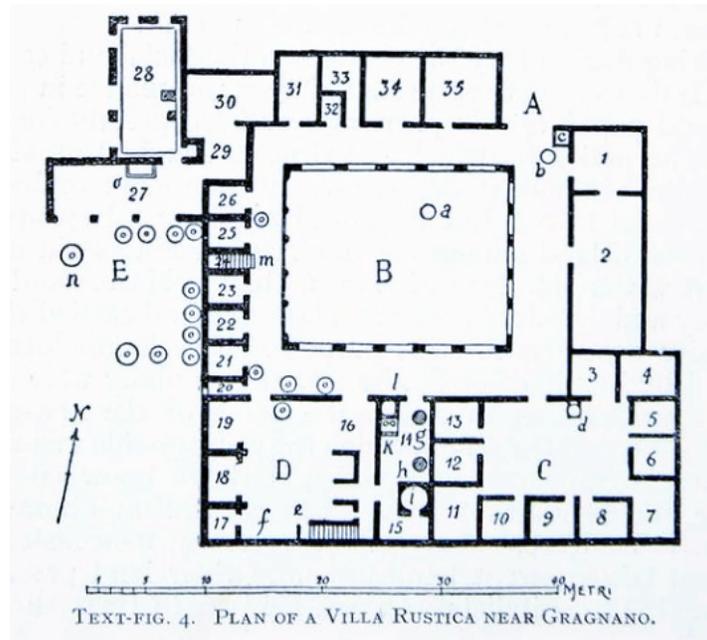
(4) Proculus, having been interrogated with reference to a slave who had concealed himself in the house of his master for the purpose of finding an opportunity to escape, says that although one who remains in the house does not seem to have run away, he is, nevertheless, a fugitive. If, however, he concealed himself only for the purpose of waiting until his master's anger had subsided, he is not a fugitive. Nor is he a fugitive who, when his master intends to whip him, runs off to a friend in order to induce the friend to intercede for him. Nor is he to be considered a fugitive who went away for the purpose of committing suicide; ... for he says that the opinion held by many unreasoning persons—namely, that he is a fugitive slave who remains away for a night without his master's consent—is not correct; as the offence must be determined by the intention of the slave.

(5) Vivianus also says that, where a young slave left the house of his master and returned to his mother, and the question is asked whether or not he is a fugitive; he is one if he went away for the purpose of concealing himself to avoid returning to his master; but if he did so in order the more readily to obtain pardon for some offence by means of his mother, he is not a fugitive....

(7) Caelius also says that if your slave should run away and take with him his sub-slave,¹ and the latter unwillingly, or being ignorant of his design, accompanies him, and having obtained an opportunity to return to you, neglects to do so, he is not considered to be a fugitive. Where, however, the sub-slave understood what was taking place at the time he took to flight, or subsequently learned the intention of the slave, and was unwilling to return to you when he could have returned to you, and was unwilling to do so, it is another thing. He also holds that the same rule should apply to the case of a slave stolen by a thief.

¹ i.e. the slave's slave, who was technically owned by the master.

Country Villa at Gragnano¹
(A villa from the first century BCE)



Plan of Villa 34, Gragnano. Key: (b) Drinking trough, (2) Cattle shed/stable, (d) oven, (14-15) Bakery with oven, (21-23 and 25-26) slave rooms, (24) stairs, (27) storage area, (E) storage for earthenware vessels that hold wine, oil, and grain, (28) Pressing room for olives and grapes, and (31-35) rooms whose use is uncertain.

In a villa at Gragnano (Villa 34), built perhaps in the first century BCE, for example, five small rooms (21-23 and 25-26) on the west side of the main court year may have been slave rooms; a staircase (24) led to a second story and probably at least five more rooms. The two courtyards to the south of the main courtyard (D and C), too, are surrounded by small rooms identified as slave quarters. These small rooms measure 3 x 2 meters (10 x 6.5 feet) and have plain, undecorated walls. In courtyard D there were iron stocks with fourteen openings to chain one or both ankles of slaves, so we have some idea of how this area was used – perhaps some version of an *ergastulum*.² How the other rooms were occupied is unknown, but Cato provides a hint in his agricultural manual when he sets out the equipment for a vineyard of 100 *iugera*.³ For a staff of sixteen, he suggests four beds, four mattresses, and four coverlets – not to mention one chamber pot (11). Clearly, then, slaves shared beds and, we should expect, rooms. However, perhaps like the resting room or kitchen mentioned in the agricultural manuals, courtyard C at Gragnano provided an open space for work, cooking, eating, and socializing. Other rural slaves – herdsmen, shepherds, and bird keepers – slept near the animals that they tended (Columella 1.6.8; Varro 2.1.26, 3.9.7).

¹ Description and caption quoted from Sandra R. Joshel 2010, *Slavery in the Roman World*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 136-138 with slight adaptations to fit with this image.

² Slave prison.

³ A measure of land, roughly equivalent to an acre.

Horace, *Epistulae*, 2.2.1-19
(A collection of satirical poems from the late 1st Cent. BCE)

Suppose anyone really wanted to sell you a boy born at Tibur or Gabii¹ and made this pitch to you: “He is fair and handsome from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. And he will be yours for 8,000 sesterces.² This home-born slave is prepared to serve at his master’s nod. He knows a little Greek; he is suitable for whatever task you want. With this wet clay, you can make whatever you please. He can sing something untrained but sweet, when you are drinking. Many promises lessen the buyer’s trust, when someone who wants to get rid of his goods praises a slave on sale more lavishly than is right. Nothing forces me to sell. I am not rich but I am not in debt. None of the slave dealers would do this for you, and I would not do this for everybody. Once he shirked his work, and, you know how it is, he hid under the stairs, afraid of the whip hanging on the wall.”

¹ Tibur and Gabii are two towns in Latium.

² A rough, misleading estimate for the modern value of this would be around \$6,500–7,500.

Varro, *On Agriculture*, 2.10.4-7
(A farming handbook from the mid-1st cent. BCE)

4 It is not every people that is fitted for herding; thus neither a Bastulan nor a Turdulan¹ is suited, while Gauls are admirably adapted, especially for draught cattle. In the matter of purchase there are some six methods of acquiring a legitimate title: by legal inheritance; by receiving, in due form, through mancipation² from one who had a legal right to transfer; by legal cession,³ from one who had the right to cede, and that at the proper time; by right of possession;⁴ by purchase at auction from war-booty; and lastly by official sale among other property or in confiscated⁵ property. 5 In the purchase of slaves, it is customary for the *peculium*⁶ to go with the slave, unless it is expressly excepted; and for a guarantee to be given that he is sound and has not committed thefts or damage; or, if the transfer is not by mancipation, double the amount is guaranteed, or merely the purchase price, if this be agreed on.⁷ ...

6 "As to the breeding of herdsmen;⁸ it is a simple matter in the case of those who stay all the time on the farm, as they have a female fellow-slave in the steading, and the Venus of herdsmen looks no farther than this. But in the case of those who tend the herds in mountain valleys and wooded lands, and keep off the rains not by the roof of the steading but by makeshift huts, many have thought that it was advisable to send along women to follow the herds, prepare food for the herdsmen, and make them more diligent. 7 Such women should, however, be strong and not ill-looking. In many places they are not inferior to the men at work, as may be seen here and there in Illyricum, being able either to tend the herd, or carry firewood and cook the food, or to keep things in order in their huts.

¹ Inhabitants of the Baetic Province in Southern Spain, modern Andalusia.

² Mancipium was the most formal act of purchase. In the presence of six Roman citizens of full age, the purchaser laid his hand on the object purchased (here the slave), asserted his ownership, struck with a piece of money the scale held by one of the witnesses (per aes et libram), and gave the coin to the seller. See Gaius, *Inst.*, I.119.

³ A legal fiction, in which the owner (dominus qui cessit) and the prospective purchaser (cui cedebatur) appeared before the magistrate (qui addixit). The purchaser claimed the object as his own; the magistrate asked the owner if he had any defence; and when he replied that he had none, the magistrate adjudged the object to the claimant. See Gaius, *Inst.*, I.2.

⁴ Usucapio is unchallenged possession for one year in the case of movable property, for two years in the case of immovable property. See Gaius, *Inst.*, II.41.

⁵ Sectio is the official term for the sale at auction of confiscated property, e.g. the property of a person who had been proscribed.

⁶ "an amount of property that an individual might use, despite the fact that the ultimate owner was the head of the household. Families needed all their adult members to be able to operate as effective economic agents: a *peculium* allowed a son to run a farm, or to buy and sell goods without constant reference to his father. By allowing some slaves a *peculium* they could act as commercial agents and farm managers or could run shops or tenements." (Woolf, *Rome: An Empire's Story*, p. 86).

⁷ In the case of transfer without mancipation, the seller was bound by law in double the value of the property. This guarantee is exacted in case the title prove bad, before the purchaser is secured by usucapio.

⁸ In Rome, the child of a female slave will be born a slave.