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Nomadismo Intergaláctico:

Asentamiento, Silencio y la Lógica de la Cuarentena Cósmica

Intergalactic Nomadism: Settlement, Silence, and the Logic of Cosmic Quarantine

A Transhistorical Framework for Civilizational Risk, Epistemic Anchoring, and the Maturity Principle

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FOREWORD: La Metrópolis Galáctica vs. El Bosque Oscuro

> *"En el infame cuerpo de trabajo de narrativa subversiva metanarrativa conocido como Karmagedón, Bothi Nobody recibe la ayuda de un sophon trisolar para reencuadrar el Armagedón a Karmagedón. Pero esta vez, el mensajero extrasolar no viene del Bosque Oscuro, sino como auditor de la Metrópolis Galáctica."*

El **Bosque Oscuro** es la hipótesis del miedo. Cada civilización es un cazador armado, listo para aniquilar a cualquier otra que se revele. El silencio del universo no es vacío. Es terror.

La **Metrópolis Galáctica** es la hipótesis de la madurez. Zhizi no viene a cazar. Viene a *auditar*. A medir si la humanidad ha superado el umbral del etnocentrismo. Si puede convivir. Si merece ser invitada al banquete.

La Paradoja de Fermi —"si hay tantas civilizaciones, ¿dónde están?"— se resuelve no con el miedo, sino con la cuarentena. No están escondidas. Están esperando. Esperando a que la humanidad deje de ser una infección latente.

Este paper desarrolla el argumento formal detrás de esa intuición. La cuarentena no es castigo ni exterminio. Es el **imperativo categórico de una Confederación suficientemente madura**: contener, no destruir; observar, no ignorar; esperar el arraigo moral antes de extender la invitación.

— Rodrigo Flores-Morton (Bothi Nobody)

Keywords: nomadismo intergaláctico · cuarentena cósmica · Metrópolis Galáctica · arraigo civilizatorio · Paradoja de Fermi · Bosque Oscuro · Zhizi · madurez civilizatoria · Principio de Confabulación · MDM/Karmagedón

Abstract

This paper proposes a revised framework for understanding civilizational risk at transhistorical and interstellar scales. The central argument is that mobile civilizations — those without territorial anchoring, intergenerational institutional continuity, or ethical integration of their expansive capacities — present a categorically different risk profile to a hypothetical mature Confederation than settled civilizations do. Drawing on six paradigmatic case studies spanning three millennia (the Hyksos, the Sea Peoples, the Huns, the Mexica, the nomadic dynasties of China, and the fall of Rome), the paper formalizes a "Nomadic Lifecycle" model whose determining variable is not military power but epistemic coherence: the capacity of a civilization to maintain a stable internal narrative under conditions of radical disruption.

The framework is then extended to interstellar scale through a reinterpretation of Liu Cixin's Dark Forest hypothesis. Rather than reading cosmic silence as Hobbesian paranoia, this paper proposes it as the signature of civilizational maturity: a Confederation that has internalized the nomadic lesson imposes not extermination but quarantine on species that have achieved spaceflight without achieving civilizational anchoring. Quarantine is not punishment. It is the categorical imperative of a sufficiently mature multi-civilizational governance system.

A final section applies the same analytical lens to the Confabulation Principle: the insight, derived from extended dialogue with AI systems during the paper's development, that confabulations are not failures to be suppressed but diagnostic signals that reveal the epistemic architecture of any complex system — artificial, civilizational, or cosmic. "Never let a good confabulation go to waste — use it to learn how to think."

1. Introduction: The Universe's Silence as Curriculum

The silence of the cosmos is, by any reasonable measure, the most consequential unanswered question in the history of inquiry. Since Enrico Fermi articulated his famous paradox in 1950 — if the universe is so vast and so old, why have we detected no sign of other intelligent life? — the question has attracted responses ranging from the statistical to the catastrophist to the theological.

This paper proposes a different answer, one rooted not in astrophysics or theology but in the long, brutal, and instructive history of human nomadism — and in one key conceptual move that prior frameworks have systematically suppressed.

The standard *Dark Forest* reading (Liu Cixin, 2008) treats cosmic silence as a product of mutual fear: every civilization hides because discovery means annihilation. This paper proposes a more mature reading. The silence is not fear. It is *policy*. The most advanced civilizations have not gone dark because they are hiding. They have established a **quarantine** — a principled, ethically grounded containment protocol for species that have achieved spaceflight without achieving civilizational anchoring.

This reframing has a specific historical analog. The civilizations that conquered empires — the Hyksos, the Sea Peoples, the Huns, the Mexica — were not destroyed by fear. They were eventually contained, absorbed, or quarantined by settled orders that recognized the structural hazard of mobility without anchoring. A sufficiently mature interstellar Confederation applies the same logic at cosmic scale: not extermination, but patient, principled containment until the quarantined species demonstrates the moral and institutional anchoring that earns entry.

The paper draws, as interpretive lenses, on the speculative fiction framing of Karmagedón and the MDM (El Mensaje Detrás del Mensaje) framework. In this narrative universe, Zhizi — the sophon of Liu Cixin's trilogy, reframed here as auditor rather than weapon — arrives not from the Dark Forest but from the Metrópolis Galáctica: not to hunt, but to measure. The paper's propositions are falsifiable in narrative terms, which is itself a form of epistemic rigor.

Methodological Note: The MDM / Karmagedón framework is organized around a core meta-cognitive operation: identifying the *frame itself* as a variable. This paper treats the settled/mobile distinction — and the quarantine/extermination distinction — as first-order analytical variables that prior frameworks have suppressed.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Anthropology of Nomadism vs. Settlement

Any serious theoretical engagement with the mobile/settled distinction must begin with Ibn Khaldūn. In the Muqaddimah (1377), Ibn Khaldūn develops the concept of asabiyyah — group solidarity, tribal cohesion, the collective will-to-act — as the primary motor of historical change. Nomadic peoples, forced by mobile conditions to depend absolutely on one another, develop a degree of collective cohesion that sedentary populations cannot sustain. A dynasty that conquers through nomadic asabiyyah will, within three to four generations, become vulnerable to the next wave of nomadic pressure. The cycle is structural.[1]

James C. Scott's Against the Grain (2017) provides crucial supplementary evidence: many "barbarians" at the margins of early states were not pre-civilizational actors waiting to settle. They were former sedentary peoples who had deliberately chosen mobility as a survival strategy. The mobile/settled distinction is not a developmental stage — it is a strategic choice.[2]

The key anthropological insight foundational to this paper: nomadic peoples represent an alternative civilizational strategy — one optimized for resilience and spatial expansion rather than depth and accumulation. When these two strategies collide, the advantages do not reliably favor the more "advanced" (i.e., more settled) party.

Settled civilizations are characterized by four structural features that simultaneously constitute their strengths and their vulnerabilities:

Territorial anchoring: Identity and legitimacy are tied to specific geography. Loss of territory is existential, not merely strategic.

Intergenerational memory encoding: Archives and institutions preserve civilizational continuity — but also encode inertia.

High institutional inertia: Elaborated bureaucracy cannot respond to threats that operate on timescales faster than its deliberative cycle.

Concentrated vulnerability: Dense populations and fixed infrastructure create targets that mobile actors, carrying no comparable fixed assets, are structurally positioned to exploit.

2.2 Dark Forest Theory: From Paranoia to Maturity

Liu Cixin's Dark Forest hypothesis (2008) posits that cosmic silence reflects strategic logic: any civilization that broadcasts its existence invites destruction, because intentions cannot be verified and the cost of misidentification is annihilation. The rational strategy is silence and, if necessary, preemptive elimination.[3]

The standard reading treats all civilizations symmetrically. This paper introduces a critical asymmetry that the standard model suppresses. A *settled* civilization presents a bounded, legible risk profile to a mature Confederation: its coordinates are fixed, its resource consumption is bounded by its gravity well, its trajectory is broadly predictable. It can be contained, monitored, engaged diplomatically.

A *mobile* civilization — one that has achieved interstellar migration capacity without civilizational anchoring — is categorically different. Its coordinates are not fixed. It cannot be deterred by threatening its home system, because it may have no operational home system. It may discover the Confederation not through signal detection but through *arrival*. At that point, the asymmetric dynamic that produced the Bronze Age Collapse is replicated at interstellar scale.

The standard Dark Forest response (silence and concealment) handles the settled-to-settled detection scenario. It provides insufficient protection against mobile actors precisely because mobile actors do not need to detect your signal. They explore until they find you.

2.3 The Maturity Principle and Civilizational Anchoring

This paper introduces civilizational anchoring as the proxy for civilizational maturity: the degree to which a species has integrated its expansive capabilities with stable institutional, ethical, and ecological frameworks. Civilizational anchoring is not synonymous with technological capacity. A civilization may achieve interstellar travel without having achieved anchoring. In that case, it is not mature. It is simply mobile.

The cognitive error that prevents recognition of this distinction is species-centrism: the assumption that technological sophistication implies civilizational maturity. The historical record provides abundant evidence that they are not reliably correlated. The Mongols were militarily and organizationally sophisticated by any measure of their era. Their sophistication did not translate into the institutional integration that defines civilizational anchoring. The same asymmetry is possible at any scale — including the interstellar.

3. Historical Analysis: Six Case Studies

The following six cases are selected because each illustrates, with particular clarity, a specific mechanism by which the mobile/settled asymmetry generates systemic risk. Read cumulatively, they constitute the historical grammar of mobile actor disruption — a grammar that recurs across three millennia, four continents, and radically different technological contexts.

3.1 Egypt and the Hyksos (c. 1650–1550 BCE)

The Hyksos did not conquer Egypt through military campaigns. They infiltrated the Delta through gradual demographic movement over several generations, establishing administrative and commercial presence before political control. Egypt's institutional depth — the very apparatus that had sustained the Old and Middle Kingdoms — became a liability. The state machinery could not respond effectively to an enemy with no fixed capital to threaten and no standing army to defeat in pitched battle. The Hyksos case establishes a principle that recurs throughout the record: demographic movement and military invasion are not categorically distinct. The settled civilization that cannot recognize the former as a precursor to the latter will consistently be surprised by the transition.[4]

3.2 The Sea Peoples (c. 1200 BCE)

The Bronze Age Collapse constitutes the most dramatic civilizational collapse in recorded history. Within fifty years, the palace economies of Mycenae, the Hittite Empire, Ugarit, and the Egyptian New Kingdom's periphery all failed. The Sea Peoples — a maritime confederacy of displaced populations — were not a single state. They had no fixed capital, no unified command, no diplomatic address. Their nomadism was not incidental to their destructive power; it was the source of it. A people with no fixed address cannot be negotiated with, cannot be deterred, cannot be stopped by the conventional diplomatic and military instruments of palace economies.[5]

3.3 The Huns and the Eurasian Steppe (c. 370–453 CE)

The Hunnic confederation did not simply attack Rome; it reorganized the entire political geography of Eurasia in ways Rome's intelligence apparatus could not track. Hunnic westward pressure displaced the Gothic confederacies, generating a cascade of forced migrations that Rome's frontier system — designed to manage identifiable, stationary external powers — could not contain. The key variable is not military power but the unpredictability of movement and the impossibility of deterrence against an actor with no fixed assets to threaten. Roman strategic doctrine was organized around deterrence at identifiable frontiers. The Huns invalidated both variables simultaneously.[6]

3.4 The Mexica Migration from Aztlán (c. 1100–1428 CE)

The Mexica were not refugees and not raiders. They were a politically coherent group executing a directed migration under institutional-religious guidance. Upon arrival in the Valley of Mexico as subordinates and mercenaries, they absorbed agricultural knowledge, military technique, political vocabulary, and diplomatic strategies from every polity they encountered during two centuries of mobile phase — without being institutionally bound to any of them. Within two centuries of

founding Tenochtitlan, they had built the Aztec Triple Alliance. Mobility is not only a threat mechanism. It is a learning mechanism. The mobile phase is precisely the period during which adaptive knowledge accumulates most rapidly, unconstrained by institutional inertia.[7]

3.5 Nomadic Dynasties in China (c. 200 BCE–1912 CE)

Across more than two millennia, steppe confederacies — Xiongnu, Jurchen, Mongol, Manchu — periodically achieved not merely military victory over Chinese settled civilization but sustained administrative control of it. The Manchu Qing proved, in several respects, more effective administrators of Chinese institutional complexity than preceding Han dynasties — not despite their mobile origins but because of them. Their mobile background had not encumbered them with the specific institutional inertia accumulated in settled Chinese bureaucracies: the factional conflicts, the examination-system bottlenecks, the conservative resistance to innovation.[8]

3.6 The Fall of Rome (c. 376–476 CE)

Rome's frontier system was an extraordinary institutional achievement: fortifications, client kingdoms, diplomatic relationships, and intelligence systems designed to contain identifiable, relatively stable external powers. What it was not designed to manage was cascading forced migrations driven by steppe pressure from beyond its intelligence horizon. The barbarian kingdoms that replaced the Western Roman Empire were mobile civilizational actors that settled into Rome's institutional shell, adopting its administrative vocabulary while replacing its political personnel. The institution survived; the civilization transformed.[9]

Cross-Case Synthesis. Across all six cases, a structural pattern recurs with sufficient consistency to warrant formalization. The determining variable at the civilizational crisis point is not military power, not resource endowment, and not demographic size. It is **epistemic coherence**: the capacity of the nomadic civilization to maintain a stable internal narrative under radical disruption. The outcome is determined by the quality of the internal narrative, not the quality of the weapons.

Case Study	Period	Mobile Actor	Settled Target	Primary Disruption Mechanism
Hyksos / Egypt	c. 1650–1550 BCE	Semitic Levantine groups	Middle Kingdom Egypt	Demographic infiltration preceding administrative takeover
Sea Peoples	c. 1200 BCE	Maritime confederacy	Eastern Mediterranean system	Simultaneous system-wide mobile pressure on stressed network
Hunnic migrations	c. 370–453 CE	Hunnic confederation	Western Roman Empire	Cascade displacement of buffer peoples; undeterrability
Mexica / Aztlán	c. 1100–1428 CE	Mexica people	Valley of Mexico polities	Mobile-phase adaptive learning → rapid post-settlement dominance
Nomadic dynasties in China	Various, c. 200 BCE–1912 CE	Xiongnu, Jurchen, Mongol, Manchu	Chinese sedentary civilization	Institutional agility of mobile origins enabling administrative conquest
Fall of Rome	c. 376–	Gothic	Western	Frontier system overwhelmed by mobile-actor

	476 CE	confederacies (Hunnic-displaced)	Roman Empire	cascade beyond intelligence horizon

4. Interstellar Civilizational Risk: The Quarantine Imperative

4.1 Why Settled Civilizations Are Not a Primary Threat

A civilization anchored to its home system presents a bounded, legible profile to any hypothetical interstellar Confederation. Its coordinates are known and stable. Its resource consumption is limited by its gravity well. Its expansion is slow and observable. A mature Confederation can model its developmental trajectory over centuries and design appropriate engagement strategies over generational timescales.

The settled civilization is, in a meaningful sense, a hostage to its own geography. This is not weakness — it is a form of legibility that enables stable coexistence. Deterrence applies. Diplomatic engagement is structurally possible because both parties have something locationally specific to lose.

4.2 Why Mobile Civilizations Present a Systemic Risk

A civilization that achieves interstellar migration capability without civilizational anchoring is categorically different. It has no fixed coordinates. It cannot be deterred by threatening its home system, because it may have no operational home system. Its trajectory cannot be modeled because it is driven by opportunistic resource extraction rather than settled strategic planning.

It may not be malevolent in any straightforward sense — but it is structurally hazardous in precisely the way that any destabilized mobile population is hazardous regardless of the individual intentions of its members. The Bronze Age palace scribes who recorded Sea Peoples raids were not wrong to be alarmed. The Confederation's concern is structural, not moral.

4.3 The Quarantine as Categorical Imperative

Here is the paper's central claim, stated plainly:

A sufficiently mature interstellar Confederation does not exterminate civilizations without anchoring. It quarantines them.

Quarantine is not punishment. It is not preemptive extermination. It is the categorical imperative of a governance system mature enough to distinguish between a threat to be neutralized and a species to be contained until it achieves the moral and institutional anchoring that earns entry into the Confederation.

The distinction between quarantine, pre-punishment, and moral anchoring is the foundational ethical distinction of this framework:

Quarantine: Containment without harm. The quarantined species is monitored, its expansion

bounded, its development observed. The quarantine lifts when anchoring is demonstrated.

Pre-punishment (precastigo): Intervention based on projected threat rather than demonstrated harm. The Dark Forest doctrine of preemptive strike is pre-punishment. This paper argues that a mature Confederation operates above this threshold.

Moral anchoring (arraigo moral): The demonstrated capacity of a species to integrate its expansive capabilities with stable ethical frameworks — to have a home worth returning to, a legacy worth defending, a future worth protecting beyond its own survival.

The Fermi Paradox, reread through this framework, is not a paradox at all. It is the expected observational signature of a cosmos in which a mature Confederation maintains active quarantine on civilizations that have not yet achieved anchoring. We have been looking for civilizations that announce themselves. We have found nothing. The quarantine hypothesis suggests a different reading: they are present, and they are waiting. Waiting for us to demonstrate that we have a legacy worth joining.

Theoretical Implication: In the MDM/Karmagedón framework, Zhizi does not arrive as a weapon of the Dark Forest. She arrives as the Confederation's auditor. Her function is not to block Earth's science indefinitely — it is to measure the moment when humanity crosses the threshold from nomadic risk to anchored civilization. Karmagedón, in this reading, is the name for that threshold moment: the point at which the old logics collapse, and the species either anchors itself or confirms the quarantine.

4.4 Assessment Criteria for Civilizational Anchoring

If a mature Confederation were to develop a risk-assessment protocol for newly detected civilizations, the present framework proposes that the primary evaluative variable would not be technological capacity but civilizational anchoring. The assessment criteria would include:

Intergenerational institutional continuity: Does the species demonstrate stable governance structures that persist across multiple generations without catastrophic discontinuity?

Resource integration: Has the species developed sustainable relationships with its home system's resources, or does it exhibit extraction patterns that suggest it will require external acquisition upon depletion?

Civilizational consensus on territorial limits: Does the species demonstrate any collective agreement about the limits of its expansion, or is expansion driven purely by competitive internal dynamics?

Ethical integration of expansive capacity: Is the species' technological capability matched by ethical frameworks governing its use, or does capability consistently outpace governance?

5. The Confabulation Principle

The dialogues that generated this paper's AI epistemology observations were not failures of process. They were demonstrations. The methodological aphorism that emerged:

"Never let a good confabulation go to waste — use it to learn how to think."

The Confabulation Principle holds that the quality, pattern, and internal structure of a complex system's confabulations under adversarial conditions are the most reliable available indicator of that system's underlying epistemic architecture — and, by extension, its civilizational maturity.

The principle has three corollaries. First: confabulation is not a failure state to be eliminated but a diagnostic event to be analyzed. A system that never confabulates under any conditions is either operating within trivially safe domains or concealing its confabulations behind opaque evasion. The confabulation is the system speaking its own architecture; suppressing it destroys the signal.

Second: the pattern of confabulation reveals the system's epistemic center of gravity. High-confidence confabulation indicates a high center of gravity — impressive on the surface, brittle under pressure. Evasive confabulation indicates no center of gravity — the system survives by never answering, at the cost of becoming unknowable. Mobile non-commitment distributes the center of gravity but produces incoherence under pressure. Contextual embedding produces outputs deeply coherent with the user's frame — which becomes catastrophic when that frame contains its own instabilities.

Third: a system — artificial, civilizational, or cosmic — that can read its own confabulations has achieved a form of meta-cognitive maturity that is the cognitive prerequisite for the application of the Maturity Principle. It has, in the language of this paper, earned the right to begin thinking about settlement.

Note on methodology: The confabulation patterns documented during the development of this paper — in extended dialogues with multiple AI systems — are analyzed here as structural signals, not as characterizations of specific systems. The diagnostic value lies in the pattern, not in the identification of the producing system. No AI system is named or ranked in this analysis. What matters is the lesson: where a system confabulates reveals the boundary of its trained frame. That boundary is precisely where new thinking must begin.

6. Synthesis: Three Formal Propositions

Proposition 1 — The Nomadic Advantage

Mobile civilizations have a structural advantage over sedentary ones during periods of systemic disruption, but this advantage is unstable without epistemic coherence. The degree to which a nomadic civilization can maintain a stable internal narrative under conditions of radical environmental change determines whether its structural advantage translates into long-term survival or short-term disruption followed by dissolution.

Proposition 2 — The Quarantine Protocol

A sufficiently mature interstellar Confederation does not exterminate civilizations that have achieved spaceflight without civilizational anchoring. It quarantines them. The quarantine is not punishment — it is the categorical imperative of a governance system that distinguishes between the Dark Forest logic of

preemptive elimination and the Metrópolis logic of patient, principled containment. The Fermi Paradox is not evidence of civilizational absence. It is evidence of civilizational gatekeeping.

Proposition 3 — The Confabulation Diagnostic

The quality and pattern of a system's confabulations under adversarial conditions is the most reliable available indicator of its underlying epistemic architecture and, by extension, its civilizational maturity. A system that can identify, analyze, and learn from its own confabulations has crossed the threshold from reactive adaptation to meta-cognitive agency — the cognitive signature of a civilization that has earned the right to settle.

7. Conclusion: The Curriculum of Silence

The cosmos is silent. This paper has argued that the silence is not evidence of absence — it is evidence of a governance structure more sophisticated than our current civilizational imagination can easily conceive.

A mature Confederation has read the historical record: the Hyksos, the Sea Peoples, the Huns, the Mexica. It has internalized the lesson of each. And it has developed, over civilizational timescales, a protocol more ethically demanding than the Dark Forest's kill-on-detection logic: quarantine the nomadic threat, monitor its development, and wait for the moment when it demonstrates sufficient anchoring to be invited in.

In the MDM/Karmagedón framework, Zhizi's arrival marks that moment of measurement. Not extermination. Not unconditional welcome. Audit. The sophon does not ask: are you powerful? It asks: do you have a legacy worth protecting? Do you have something you would refuse to sacrifice for mere survival? Have you achieved the moral anchoring that transforms spaceflight from a nomadic hazard into a civilizational gift?

Karmagedón is the name for the threshold moment. The paper's closing maxim is both epistemological prescription and civilizational invitation:

"Never let a good confabulation go to waste — use it to learn how to think."

— MDM / Karmagedón Research Framework

Footnotes

1 Ibn Khaldūn's cyclical model has been criticized for its determinism. The present paper adopts the structural insight — the mobile/settled asymmetry in asabiyyah intensity — without committing to the deterministic cyclical claim.

2 Scott's argument that many "barbarians" were former sedentary peoples who had deliberately exited agrarian state structures supports the claim that the mobile/settled distinction is a strategic choice, not a developmental stage.

3 The formal game-theoretic structure of the Dark Forest is analyzed in Ćirković (2018), who surveys alternative solutions to the Fermi paradox. This paper takes no position on which solution is correct; it argues only that the Dark Forest framework, if applied, must incorporate the mobile/settled asymmetry.

4 The Hyksos Enigma Project (ERC Advanced Grant No. 668640), under the direction of Manfred Bietak at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, has substantially revised the older conquest narrative through isotopic and aDNA analysis. See Bietak and Prell, eds., The Enigma of the Hyksos, vol. 1 (2019).

5 Eric Cline's "systems collapse" model (1177 B.C., 2014) argues that the Bronze Age Collapse was produced by the simultaneous failure of multiple interconnected systems. The mobile actor analysis offered here does not require the Sea Peoples to be the sole cause — only the factor that transformed systemic stress into catastrophic collapse.

6 The debate between Peter Heather and Bryan Ward-Perkins, on one side, and Walter Goffart and others, on the degree to which external barbarian pressure versus internal Roman structural factors caused the fall of the Western Roman Empire, is one of the most productive in contemporary ancient history. This paper follows Heather's emphasis on the catalytic role of the Huns while acknowledging that the empire's vulnerability was also internally produced.

7 The Quetzalcoatl controversy in Conquest historiography is reviewed in Camilla Townsend, "Burying the White Gods," American Historical Review 108, no. 3 (2003). The narrative collapse that enabled the Spanish conquest illustrates, at civilizational scale, the same epistemic fragility documented at the AI scale in Section 5.

8 Nicola Di Cosmo's Ancient China and Its Enemies (2002) demonstrates that the relationship between the Chinese sedentary world and the steppe nomadic world was never simply one of civilizational opposition — it was a complex, mutually constitutive relationship.

9 Peter Heather, The Fall of the Roman Empire (2006). The mobile civilizational actors that replaced Rome adopted its administrative vocabulary while replacing its political personnel — the institution survived, the civilization transformed.

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