

## Barkus Aurelius and the Canines

By OER Project staff

### *Finding What They Buried*

The Canine state grew from nomadic community to a global group of societies from about 12,000 BCE to 8,000 BCE. Very little was known about this ancient, four-legged people until the recent discovery of an ancient scroll written by their legendary leader, Barkus Aurelius. Known as *The Barkus Decree*, the scroll provided information invaluable to Canine historians, who now have a fuller picture of this society and especially of Barkus Aurelius's time as ruler from 4355 to 4344 BCE, a reign of 77 dog years.

*See the next page* for an excerpt from the scroll that provides a record of certain rituals, laws, and societal norms that Barkus sought to enforce, and is one of the most important primary source documents in Canine studies.

### *The Canine Howl of Fame*

One of the most significant aspects of the Barkus Decree came not from its content, but from the way it was distributed. Prior to the reign of Barkus Aurelius, it was nearly impossible to communicate something far and wide without the message being corrupted in some way. The message was howled loudly from the highest hill, heard by several surrounding dogs and re-howled further, where it was heard by even more dogs, howled again, and so on. But after being passed from a terrier to a pug to a labrador, a howl communicating something as simple as, *Dog party this Saturday afternoon*, might be heard, in its seventh iteration as, *Collective learning will eventually lead to our extinction*.



Artist's depiction of Barkus Aurelius (the grey pug handing the card to the other dog) engaging in the ancient Canine ritual known as Poker. [A Friend in Need](#), by C.M. Coolidge, 1903. Public domain.











Then came the invention that made Barkus Aurelius the legendary ruler whom history would never forget. He was determined that his message—his laws, his ideas, his demands—be understood by *all* dogs in the Canine state. Critics say he was motivated by ego, but when he created a device that could record his howled message and then replay it howl-for-howl as many times as necessary, he was justifiably praised as an innovative genius. The device, known as the *yowlaphone* would change nearly every aspect of Canine society because it ensured that everyone was hearing the same message. Laws, beliefs, and new ideas could be shared instantly and accurately—as long as the king wanted to share them.

### *Dog Days Are Over*

After his long reign, Barkus Aurelius ceded power to his daughter, Catherine the Great Dane. Despite rumors of his death, most historians believe he went to live on a farm and remains there to this day.

# AP THEMES INTRODUCTION

## The Barkus Decree

-  All who live in the Canine society must follow the rules laid out by your king, me, Barkus Aurelius. Those who also worship the Dogma are free to do so, but such practices may not contradict the behavior required by the king and described here.
-  Let it be known that all who study the Dogma shall be welcome within the walls that encircle Canine lands.
-  Coyotes shall be forbidden from Canine lands and punished should they enter them, for their violence against all dogs and their rejection of the way of the Dogma is abhorred [hated].
-  Wolves entering Canine lands shall be greeted with tribute [gift or tax] of the best kibble and treats. For, yea, although wolves are also potentially violent, they are much scarier, and we can't really get rid of them without pretending to be super nice.
-  All dogs, whether they are Alpha, Beta, or omega, shall submit to me, Barkus Aurelius, your king, and as king I will preside over the elite Canine Council.
-  Alpha dogs shall be members of the Canine Council, and, under my rule, enforce and interpret laws, collect taxes, and supervise all Beta dogs.
-  Only half of taxes collected will be used for myself, Barkus Aurelius, and the royal family. The rest will be distributed among Canine business owners whose work improves the lives of Canines, such as producers of flea powder, or those that provide important services, such as belly rubs. You're welcome.
-  Beta dogs shall serve Alphas in exchange for protection from wolves and coyotes. Betas may gain Alpha status by triumphing at our ancient ritual known as Poker, in which cards and discs are ceremoniously moved about late at night.
-  The omega dogs shall serve Beta dogs in exchange for not getting their tails bit off, since they are just omegas and no one likes them because they yap all the time.
-  Certain crimes may result in dogs losing their position, that is, going from Alpha to Beta, or from Beta to omega. The worst of these crimes is peeing on any of the "no pee on" trees within Canine walls, for our pee inhibits the growth of this important foliage. Without the trees, the squirrels could not escape our playful chasing, meaning we might actually catch them, which would be really awkward since we don't even like squirrel meat, but they don't know that, so it would turn into a whole thing.