Ancient Rome
A History

Second Edition

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Cover photo:
Cover design by Amy Rosen, K&M Design

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities

—T. S. Eliot, Gerontion 34).

The justification for a new book on Roman history would seem to involve a great deal of cunning, even more ambition if not hybris, and not a little vanity. Surely enough books have already been written on the subject? Can anything new be said about Roman history?

If it is true that every generation writes its own history then perhaps it is time for a book on Rome that reflects the experiences of a generation that enjoyed a vacation from history in the last decade of the twentieth century only to see the sudden, violent revival of history in the early twenty-first century. Globalization has united our world in ways that are at times reminiscent of the world of Rome's day when glass and linen from Egypt, silks from China, spices from India and the East Indies were in demand by elites all over the Mediterranean and Europe. Our generation has witnessed the rise of an economic, cultural, political and military colossus – the United States – and we are all too well aware of the dependencies, resentments, and fears it has generated world-wide. Inevitably comparisons arise with Rome's apparent domination of a unipolar world and the challenges it faced from the unpredictable churning of pre-political, pre-state peoples in Eurasia and elsewhere, and a resurgent Iran.

Rome's footprint on the world, like that of the modern West, was large. Its ghostly presence continues to influence our contemporary world. Languages based on Latin are spoken by millions of people who today live far beyond the confines of the original Roman Empire. English, heavily affected by Latin and Greek, is also spoken by millions. It is the second language of more millions and has become the de facto lingua franca of the world. To speak a modern European language is to

be influenced, none too subtly, by Roman culture and through it by Greek culture. The great mono-theistic religions of the modern world, Judaism, Christianity and Islam – but Christianity most of all – were deeply affected, though in very different ways, by their Roman and Greek heritages. The fact that Christianity originated within the Roman Empire and its Scriptures were written in Greek, the second language of the Empire after Latin, has something to do with an enduring focus on Rome since to understand Christianity one needs to understand Rome. In its Hellenized and Romanized form that religion has spread over much of the world, bringing with it embedded patterns of Greek thought and Roman law and organization. The influence of Rome on popular culture should not be neglected. This influence was magnified by nineteenth and twentieth century fiction writers and by Hollywood's instant recognition of the capacity of gladiators, Roman feasts and festivals and the Circus Maximus to attract and hold the interest of masses of people.

This book is organized around a number of perennially important questions in Roman history: Why did Rome succeed in creating an empire based on the city-state or polis when every other city-state – Athens, Sparta, and Carthage, for example – that attempted to do so failed? Why, after such stunning military success did the government of the Republic under which most of the Mediterranean and a good portion of temperate Europe were conquered, collapse? Even more astonishingly how did the Republic, phoenix-like, revive and recreate itself? Then, finally, in the fourth century A.D. under pressure from the powerful Empire of Persia in the East and numerous warrior bands and migrating peoples in the West, we see that Rome nearly collapsed only – miraculously – to pick itself again and this time completely redesign itself socially and culturally.

This approach undoubtedly oversimplifies or over-generalizes the long and complex history of Rome from its legendary founding in 753 B.C. to A.D. 732 when the Frankish successors of Rome turned back the conquering Arabs at the Battle of Poitiers in France. However, as an approach it has the advantage of making Rome's long history comprehensible by dividing it up into 8, relatively digestible segments. Rather than a continuous narrative where one event follows another chrono-logically, events and the chronologies are subordinated to a master narrative – the questions posed at the beginning of each of the 8 sections. These "master narrative questions" are traditional questions that are discussed in all Roman history courses and are by no means novel in themselves. All the usual topics of history will be found in this book, but they are not treated individually. For instance, religion is treated as part of Roman political and institutional history rather than as a topic in its own right. Similarly the household and other social-cultural topics are folded into the broader narrative. Underlying this approach is the assumption that the society of the Mediterranean city-state and Rome's version of it was very different from the kind of society and culture we know in the modern world. Perhaps in seeking justification for treating Rome once again we should settle for Eliot's own explanation of how history works:

> She (history) gives, gives with such subtle confusions
> That the giving famishes the craving.

In writing this book I had the advantage of calling on the patience, kindness and talent of a number of friends and colleagues who read either the whole or parts of the manuscript and provided me with invaluable comments. That the book still contains many flaws and shortcomings is due in no way to them. I wish to thank in particular Stanley M. Burstein, Arthur M. Eckstein, Richard I. Frank, Jane Laurent, Brigette Russell, Richard Saller, Walter Scheidel, and Mehmet F. Yavuz. Dick Frank, Ramsay MacMullen, Brigette Russell and Ashley Thorne made valuable comments on the new chapters (chapters 4 and 5) for the second edition. My thanks also goes to Bill Webber of Sloan

Publishing who first suggested the idea of a Roman history text and from the beginning proved to be an invaluable source of sound advice on every aspect of the book's writing and production. To my wife Pat and daughter Eliza I owe a particular debt of gratitude and affection for their patient and loving support.

In memory of
Gerald and Elizabeth Connolly
and
Dermot and Mary Nagle

Introduction

Rome in Context

1.   IS ROMAN HISTORY EUROPEAN HISTORY?

It is tempting to think of Roman history as a part of, or perhaps just an episode in, "European" history. This tendency should be resisted, however, because it projects into the Roman period perspectives that only became dominant thousands of years later when there was, finally, such a thing as "European" history. It is better to see Rome as part of a much older story rather than being ancient history's highpoint or endpoint. Despite its 1,000 year length, Roman history was an episode in the even longer history of the Mediterranean and Middle East, and a phase in the slow process of introducing Mediterranean practices into Europe. Chronologically Rome comes before Europe, but the Mediterranean comes before Rome.

WHAT ROME INHERITED   Romans inherited from the near and distant past of the Mediterranean a whole assemblage of technologies (e.g., the alphabet, coinage); political institutions and ideas (the city-state, the rule of law); military organizations and techniques (the hoplite phalanx); an economy based on inherited plants and specific agricultural practices; a pre-existing network of Mediterranean-wide contacts—and much more. Rome was not an isolated island in the middle of an ocean but, at least initially, just one community among many that shared a common Mediterranean material, social, and political culture. This world provided the Romans with the ingredients to create, over time, their own particular version of Mediterranean culture. That is what it was and remained: a variation on an already well-established theme. Once this is understood, the genius and originality of Rome in fashioning its own individual inheritance can be better appreciated.

2. THE CONNECTING SEA: THE MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT OF ROMAN HISTORY

The Mediterranean: Frontier or Highway?

Unlike the Atlantic or the Pacific, the Mediterranean was never an obstacle to communication. It was not a frontier the way the Atlantic and Pacific were before the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries A.D., but rather a major highway. Throughout much of history (with some notable centuries-long interruptions), Syrians, Egyptians, Greeks, Tunisians, Italians, and Spaniards were connected, if not united, by the Mediterranean.

Reflecting the meaning of its name, "The Middle-Earth Sea" or "The Mid-Land Sea," the Mediterranean should be thought of as more like a large land-locked lake than a sea. Certainly it is not an ocean, and although it appears from the map to be a single "lake," the Mediterranean is really a series of connected smaller "lakes" such as the Aegean and Adriatic Seas, and what eventually became Rome's own lake, the western Mediterranean. Yet another connected "lake," the Black Sea, serves as a link to the great plains of Eurasia and the Caucasus.

Among the reasons for the connective capacities of the Mediterranean is its relatively small size. Much of it can be traversed without ever losing sight of land, except for the effects of fog and recently smog. Currents and perennial winds contribute to the connectedness of Mediterranean lands by aiding navigation. High evaporation draws water into the Mediterranean from the Atlantic through the Straits of Gibraltar. This influx creates currents which circulate around the coasts of the southern rim of the Mediterranean in a counter-clockwise direction, while the prevailing winds tend to blow perennially from north to northeasterly directions. Innumerable islands, headlands, coves and harbors provide safe havens and useful stopping points for travelers—not that the Mediterranean is a particularly safe sea to navigate as the thousands of ancient and not-so-ancient

Mediterranean "Lakes" and Trade Routes

shipwrecks indicate. But as a navigable body of water, it is a lot safer than the great oceans of the planet.

Quicker, Cheaper, Easier: The Advantages of Water Over Land Transportation

It is a truism that in pre-modern times transportation by water was cheaper, more efficient and often safer than transportation by land. It is estimated by one scholar that in Roman times a given item could be transported for 5 miles overland, 25 miles by river and 115 miles by sea, for the same price.[1] Before the coming of the railroad and the super highway, canals were the preferred means of states aiming to solidify their control over territory and advance commerce. For almost all of human history, the fastest bulk goods could be moved on land was the pace of a horse, mule, or ox pulling a wagon or barge.

Travel by sea had, and continues to have, its own hazards—of pirates, storms, reefs, and currents (in the Mediterranean tides were not much of a problem)—but nothing compared to the hazards of land transportation. Throughout history river crossings, mountain passes, and forest paths have been places where robbers and governments have coerced tolls from travelers and thereby restricted trade. There were always the natural challenges of bad weather, floods, deserts, high mountains, swamps, forests, and other physical barriers. The size and nature of the "Middle Earth Sea" made it possible for travelers and traders to make an end-run around most of the obstacles to land travel and make it one of the most connected, if not unified, regions of the world. If Egypt was, as the Greek historian Herodotus said, the "gift of the Nile," the prosperity of the lands around the Mediterranean was the gift of the Mediterranean. The analogy, however, is not exact. The Nile contributed to Egypt's homogeneity, while the Mediterranean had the opposite effect: it contributed to the diversity of the cultures around it. Why this was so may be explained as follows.

Diversity and Dominance

Mediterranean connectedness had an important consequence: It was difficult for any single power to dominate it. The one empire that did so successfully was Rome's. Partly this is so is because the Mediterranean Sea places extreme limitations on the degree of control that can be exercised over it.

With the exception of Egypt, the Mediterranean region was—and to an extent still is—an enormously complex bundle of micro-ecologies and micro-regions requiring a high degree of agricultural and land management skill for their proper cultivation, maintenance, and profitable exploitation. Compared to the agricultural surpluses that states such as Mesopotamia and Egypt generated, those of the Mediterranean were relatively meager and hugely scattered. In imperial as in all ruling affairs, whoever controls the surplus of an economy has, at least potentially, the means to command obedience. In the case of the Mediterranean a ruling power had to take into account the variety of economies in the region and to be aware that squeezing any one region too much riskeddestroying its productivity and thereby its surplus. It took a calculating and cool mind to recognize that only so much could be wrung out of any given place or people before resistance or agricultural decline would end the source of income completely. Equally, it took high political skill to persuade elites in these scattered regions that it was to their advantage to share their meager surplus. Rome was successful in both these endeavors. Since Roman times no other state has had the right combination of skills or the will to unite the Mediterranean into a single state, let alone, as Rome also did, unite the Mediterranean with the equally diverse cultures of continental and Atlantic Europe.

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[1]Duncan-Jones, R. P., *The Economy of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 1982), 368.

Chronology of Roman History	
Traditional Founding Date of Rome	753 B.C.
The Roman Republic	509 B.C.–30 B.C.
The Early Empire (The Principate)	30 B.C.–A.D. 284
The Late Empire (The Dominate)	A.D. 284–A.D. 476
Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire	A.D. 476–A.D. 1453

The Roman Paradox: An Empire Without a Heartland

Paradoxically, to be a major power-wielder in the Mediterranean did not require the possession of a large landmass and a large population *if* the power in question could draw on the resources of rich—and willing—overseas satellites. In time Rome discovered this secret. When its empire was consolidated, its main food and mineral supplying regions were not primarily in Italy (much of which was hard to reach from Rome), but the grain fields and mines of southern Spain, Egypt, Tunisia, Sicily and Sardinia. Even recruitment for the army was eventually outsourced. By the Early Empire, the main recruiting grounds for soldiers and cavalry were, except for officers, in the provinces—anywhere but Italy. Native elites in these satellite provinces were gradually integrated into the ruling elite of the Roman Empire itself, just as Rome had earlier integrated the elites of Italy in the rule of Italy. In the second century A.D., for example, one of Rome's most distinguished emperors was a north African from Leptis Magna in Libya (Septimius Severus), and by the third century emperors were being drawn from Syria (Elegabalus), Arabia (Philip), north Africa (Aemilianus), and the Balkans (Aurelian, Diocletian, Constantius, Constantine)—again, any place but Italy. There was a down side to all of this. A network of overseas elites was fragile and difficult to maintain, and it worked only as long as the interests of the elites coincided with Rome's. The lack of a spacious, well developed, populous, accessible, homogeneous heartland was a weakness for which Rome was always forced to compensate. When the overseas network collapsed in the fifth century A.D., there was no substitute for it in fragmented, mountainous Italy.

3.   CLIMATE, FOOD AND THE ECONOMY

Climate(s) and the "Mediterranean Triad"

Geography books often refer to portions of the earth such as Chile, southern California and the southern peninsulas of Australia as having a "Mediterranean climate"—meaning a climate that has mild, wet winters and hot dry summers. While this is generally a true description of climate in the Mediterranean, it is also the case that there are many subtypes to be found within the region. One reference work, for instance, speaks of 64 climatic sub-types without even listing the inland sea's more numerous micro-climates. It is possible, for instance, to drive a few hours from Rome and find oneself among the snow capped peaks and the alpine forests of the Abruzzo national park in the Apennines. In one of his odes, the Roman poet Horace speaks of the "deep and dazzling snows" on Mt. Soracte just north of Rome (*Odes* 1.9). Wintertime travelers along the Saronic Gulf in Greece may be surprised to see high ranges of snowy mountains suddenly pop up before them as they drive toward Corinth from Athens.

THE MEDITERRANEAN TRIAD   Land and climate lend themselves to the production of a healthy, essentially vegetarian diet known as the "Mediterranean Triad" consisting of cereals, wine, and olive oil. The most common cereal in antiquity was wheat, but barley, oats and millet were also cultivated. Millet was considered a "famine" food to which people turned in times of crop failure in other cereals. Dried figs were another such famine food. The fact that cereals could be pro-

duced in abundance in such places as Sicily, Sardinia, Tunisia, and Egypt and transported in bulk cheaply by sea gave Rome the advantage of an assured food supply independent of the capacities of its own homeland. Naturally, this dependence on overseas suppliers created its own problems, requiring the control of these distant lands and the connecting sea lanes, but the diversity of these sources tended to guarantee that food could be obtained from at least one or more of them on a dependable basis.

To cereals of the triad should be added high protein legumes or pulses—peas, beans, and lentils, the "poor man's meat." A stock joke of Greek and Roman comedy, which suggests how commonly pulses were eaten, was the emphasis given on stage to the anti-social consequences of bean consumption. Shortage of water and forage makes cattle-raising in the Mediterranean a limited affair, at least compared with northern Europe where large quantities of beef were, and are, regularly consumed. By necessity most Mediterranean peoples were vegetarians. Oxen were traction animals and thus too valuable to be consumed as food. Poultry, pigs, goats, and sheep, however, were common and a valuable source of protein. In antiquity, meat was always a prestige food and the only time ordinary people had an opportunity to eat it was at religious festivals. Fortunately these were frequent, and an added bonus was that the well-to-do were expected to foot the bill for the sacrifices which provided the meat. The availability of free meat suggests why religious festivals were so popular everywhere throughout antiquity. One scholar has calculated that the typical Athenian had an opportunity to receive a share of meat from sacrifices every eight to nine days. Athens, however, may have been exceptional in this regard. Another exception to the general rule was Rome, whose inhabitants were the beneficiaries of 20,000 pounds of pork distributed daily by the state during the third century A.D. Fish was not, as might be expected, a common item of diet in part because most ancient peoples were farmers and fish had a short shelf-life unless salted. One way of preserving fish was to turn it into a paste or a sauce—the recipe for one of these, a pungent sauce know to the Romans as *garum*, is still available.

Food, Civilization, and Barbarism

Olives and olive oil were considered one of the gods' greatest gifts. Olive oil was used principally for cooking and as a condiment, but it also served many other, sometimes unexpected, purposes: as a contraceptive; as a soap; for lighting; for controlling fleas; as a medicine; as a perfume base; and as a food preservative. Its health properties are well known today but were also appreciated in antiquity. Olive trees were often designated as sacred, and the oil produced from them was given as a prize in athletic contests. High quality oil was valued the same way vintage wines were. They were transported all over the Mediterranean. So highly did the peoples of the Mediterranean value the olive and its products (and, of course, the grape and its products), that they identified civilization with its cultivation. Northern and central Europeans who ate large amounts of meat, milk and milk products, especially butter, were identified as barbarians by their diet (and supposedly their distinctive smells). Barbarians such as the Celts who, under Roman influence, exchanged their trousers for the toga and began to cultivate the vine and olive were thought to be on their way to being civilized—but barely. Eastward beyond the Rhine, where neither olive nor vine could grow, was the true of heart of barbarian Europe.

The Backbone of the Economy: The Farmers

Prior to industrialization, as much as 90 percent or higher of all peoples world-wide were involved in agriculture. By contrast, the sign of a developed economy today is the small proportion of the
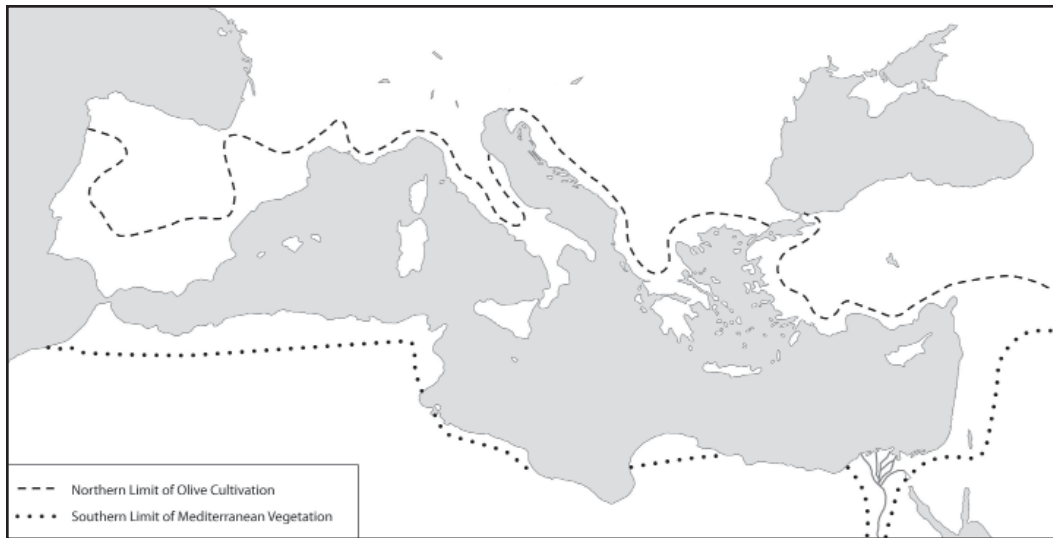
Mediterranean Vegetational Limits
Greeks and Romans popularly associated the cultivation of the olive and the vine with the limits of civilization. By that definition "civilization" did not penetrate very far beyond the shores of the Mediterranean.

population engaged full time in agriculture. Contemporary figures for the United States vary, but they range from a high of 3 percent to statistically negligible amounts (by comparison, agriculture in India and China still involves 50 to 60 percent of their populations). Wealth, therefore, was derived largely from land ownership or the control of the surplus generated by agriculture. This is not to say that other forms of economic activity—commerce, mining and the production of goods of all kinds—did not also generate significant amounts of wealth. Such cities as Tyre, Sidon, and Carthage were famed and alternately praised or envied for the material wealth they generated. The ancient economy, however, was by-and-large equivalent to the economy of an undeveloped modern country. Exceptionally, when the Mediterranean was at peace, much higher levels of productivity and trade were achieved, but never for extended periods. In ancient times the principal growth period was between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200, when Rome was at its height, as the figure showing shipwrecks demonstrates.

SURVIVAL: CULTIVATE A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING   The key to the successful exploitation of the complex environment of the Mediterranean by farmers was diversity. Because so many regions possessed a diverse landscape of plain, hill, and marsh, it made sense to cultivate a variety of crops each suited to a particular area, soil, and microclimate. Olives resisted drought but did not fare well in areas subject to frost. They required relatively little cultivation and were extraordinarily long lived. Grape vines grew well on a number of soils, ranging from gravelly ground to marshy conditions. However, their cultivation required constant attention and a high level of skill. "The cultivation of the vine," said the Roman agricultural writer Columella (first century A.D.), "is more complicated than that of any other tree, and the olive, the queen of trees, requires the least expense of all" (*On Agriculture* 5.7). Cereal crops could be grown in between rows of fruit trees. Flocks of goats and sheep did well on hillsides where nothing else could be grown successfully. Herds of pigs foraged
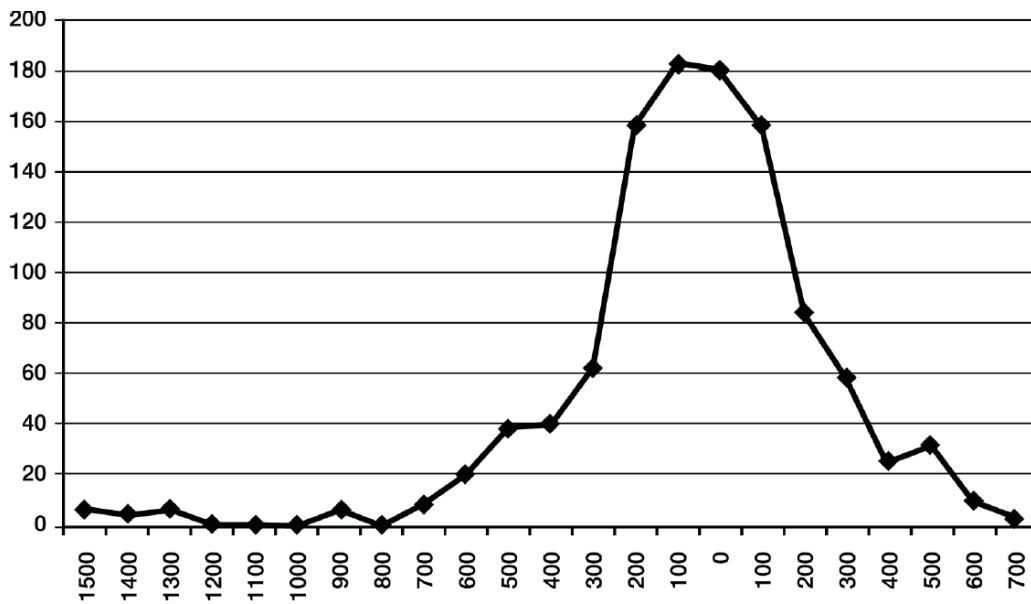
Shipwrecks and History

Shipwrecks in the Mediterranean from ca. 1500 B.C. to ca. A.D. 700. The figure shows graphically the great increase in commercial activity that occurred between the rise of the Greek city-states around 700 B.C. to the collapse of trade following the fall of the Roman Empire and the Muslim invasions of the seventh century A.D.

in oak, beach and chestnut forests. The key was to cultivate a little of everything. Then, if one crop failed, there was something else to fall back on. Exchange networks through local markets were also keys to survival in the risky environment of the Mediterranean. The best way to provide against risk was to produce the maximum that could be produced. If there was a surplus, it could be stored in the form of olive oil, vinegar, wine, dried fruits, preserved vegetables, grains, and cheeses. Animals, too, constituted a form of stored food.

Mediterranean farmers were not technologically backward. They have been criticized for not having developed the deep-digging mold board plow which was useful in the heavier, wetter soils of northern Europe, but in fact the plows of Mediterranean farmers were well suited to what counted in that part of the world: the preservation of moisture in the soil. They were canny exploiters of every environmental opportunity that presented itself. As a result, a typical farm consisted of a series of patches of land, small gardens, orchards, and grain fields scattered throughout the landscape. Children looked after their family's flocks and herds in other parts of the neighborhood. People mostly lived in villages, but many also constructed huts on distant plots where they could live at harvest time.

SLAVES Compulsory labor in some form was endemic to the Mediterranean and a constant throughout world history. The nature of agricultural work—and indeed all forms of heavy manual labor—made it attractive to engage as many hands in it as possible. The Roman agricultural writer Varro writing in the first century B.C. describes the labor component of farming this way:

> All agriculture is carried on by men who may be either slaves, or freeborn men or a combination of both. In the case of freemen farming is conducted when they cultivate the soil by themselves as many poor people do, with the help of their children or with hired hands when the heavy farm operations such as the vintage and haymaking take place. Then there is farming carried on by debtors, large numbers of whom are still to be found in Asia [*modern Turkey*], Egypt and Illyricum [*modern Balkans*] (*On Agriculture* 1.17).

There are thus in Varro's classification two basic classes of agricultural labor: freemen and forced laborers. The latter category is broken down into true slaves, chattels that could be bought and sold, and freemen who, usually because of debt, could be forced to repay their creditors through the labor. From the third century B.C. onward, however, the use of chattel slaves and not just unfortunate debtors down in their luck, became common in parts of Greece, Italy, and north Africa and grew in importance, reaching a high point in the late Roman Republic and early Empire (ca. 200 B.C.–A.D. 200). The development of chattel slavery coincided with the rise of cash-crop farming and monoculture throughout the Mediterranean and was aided and abetted by Rome's wars of conquest from the Second Punic War (218–202 B.C.) onward.

Risky Behavior: Monoculture and Famine

Monoculture—the dedication of an entire landscape to a single crop—was invariably the result of the intervention of some outside power, whether an overseas imperial power like Rome, or a local elite which forced the neighboring farmers to produce a single crop for sale in the market. Needless to say, such single crops were highly risky, being subject to the vagaries of the weather, plant disease and insect infestation. Their destruction could easily result in famine for the cultivators. Naturally, in such situations the elite only suffered loss of income. Throughout much of Mediterranean history there was chronic tension between the demands of elites for a larger share in the agricultural surplus and the limitations of the farming environment. It was a commonplace to say that "Famines are blue-blooded"—meaning they were generated by the bad agricultural polices of ruling elites. This is, of course, the commonly accepted of view of what causes famine today: famines are not caused by actual shortages of food but by the maldistribution of existing food supplies due to wars or poor governmental policies.

INSURANCE THROUGH NETWORKS   One of the principal resources of all Mediterranean farmers was their kin and friendship networks. The cultivation of good relations with relatives and neighbors was an essential key to survival. In a society without lending institutions and government social safety nets, the only alternative in bad times was to turn to one's social contacts. One "banked" favors with ones' neighbors—lending tools or work animals or one's own labor—in the expectation that the favor would be reciprocated. Unfortunately for these resourceful people, this effort to control risk could be frustrated by the intervention of outsiders whose considerations were other than the good of the farmers. Like other Mediterranean peoples, Romans too placed heavy emphasis on networks of friendship. These networks extended throughout their social, political, and economic system and to a considerable extent sustained it.

4.   POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHY

What held population down before modern times was not so much epidemics of diseases, lack of food, or low levels of technological development, as it was unsettled political conditions, marriage

practices, inheritance laws and, more generally low levels of health. Contaminated water supplies, bad human waste disposal habits, and lack of personal cleanliness were a source of such killers as typhoid, which were still dangers to life even in nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe and America. Throughout the pre-modern world, life expectancy at birth was low. Approximately half of all children died before reaching their fifth birthdays. Those who survived the barrage of early childhood diseases had a good chance of living into their thirties or longer. It took the health and sanitary revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to break this cycle and produce the population surges that are still underway in some parts of the globe.

Family Planning

The most effective and commonly practiced form of family limitation in ancient times was infanticide. The practical reasons for having few children are stated with clarity by the eight century B.C. Greek poet Hesiod. He argued that, ideally, a family should have only one son because "An only son preserves his father's name and keeps wealth within a single household, whereas if you have two sons you will need more wealth and live a longer life" (*Works and Days* 376). Hesiod goes on to say, however, that with the help of Zeus wealth can be found to support a larger family and concludes: "More children mean more help and greater wealth." Both strategies were risky. There was the possibility that, given the hazards of life in the ancient world, having only one or two children might leave a couple without any children at all, in which case old age would be truly bleak. The Greek statesman and historian Polybius, writing in Rome in the second century B.C., commented on this as a threat not just to individual households but to the state itself: "In situations where there are only one or two children and one is carried off by war and the other by sickness, it is clear that houses will be left unoccupied. As in the case of swarms of bees cities end up without resources and are enfeebled by slow degrees" (36.17). One well known Roman, Cornelia, mother of the famous Gracchi brothers, had 12 children, but only three of them survived into adulthood. Too many children, on the other hand, led to family disputes and the probable impoverishment of the whole family unit. Traditionally, one of the advantages of having an empire was the possibility that surplus children—at least males—could find jobs in imperial service overseas.

An Alternative to Malthus

There was, fortunately, an alternative to this grim scenario. The axiom of Thomas Malthus—that in the long term, increasing populations outstrip food resources—was not always fulfilled, even in pre-modern times. Rising population could and often did lead to more intense exploitation of existing farmland, and the bringing into production of new land. This was frequently the case in Greece, Italy and North Africa as archaeology demonstrates. In Greece this happened between 600 B.C. and 300 B.C. and in north Africa in Roman times. Italy was a rich land—far more so than ancient Greece—and could, with good government, support a thriving population. The archaeological and documentary picture of Italy shows a significant population increase beginning in about the third century B.C. at the same time that new agricultural land in the Po Valley and the Pomptine Marsh area of Latium in central Italy was being exploited. Elsewhere in Italy there was more intense agricultural exploitation of existing land, especially near large cities which provided markets and stimulated production. Specialized farms came into existence to supply cities with vegetables, fruits, flowers, and animal products. More distant markets supplied grain, wine, and oil. A huge, 118-foot-high artificial mound in Rome called Monte Testaccio near the Aventine, consisting entirely of broken pieces of amphora (ceramic food containers), testifies to the approximately 6 billion liters of olive oil estimated to have

been imported by Rome over a few centuries during the Early Empire, initially from Italy and then later from southern Spain and north Africa.

5. POLITICAL AND CULTURAL THEMES

The Power of the Polis: The Technology of Political Organization

From a cultural viewpoint, the most important inheritance of Rome from the eastern Mediterranean was politics. It may seem perverse to make a claim like this for the much derided realm of politics, yet good politics is at the heart of all successful states. If a people cannot get their politics (their governments) and their political culture (citizen understanding of, and participation in politics) right, in the long run they can get nothing right. Good governments guarantee personal security and property rights, restrain internal violence, administer justice, and protect people from outside aggression. Yet, how good governments are created and maintained is one of the most elusive of all human undertakings. In a sense, the maintenance of justice—which is what government is all about—is the ultimate "technological" achievement. It is the breakthrough that provides the foundation for all further human progress.

In human history there have been relatively few major political or governmental breakthroughs. The most important of these in ancient times was the invention of the city-state and an idea of citizenship in Sumer, in Mesopotamia around 3,000 B.C., from where it spread to the Mediterranean coastlands of the Levant (Syria/Palestine). Beginning around 750 B.C., Greeks in the Aegean area developed a very different version of the city-state and citizenship. In Greek the word for such an entity is *polis*, from which comes such English terms as "politics," "police," "polity," and "polite." Some scholars feel that "city-state" is not a good translation for the Greek term *polis* and suggest "citizen-state" instead. The Latin equivalent for *polis* is *res publica*—constitutional state or commonwealth—from which we get "republic." Instead of the Greek term *polites* for citizen, we use the Latinized "citizen" (from *cives* for citizen and *civitas* for state).

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE *POLIS*   Greeks regarded the *polis* as a form of government and a way of life morally superior to any other because, among other things, it guaranteed legitimate rule under law; personal and communal freedom; an effective military; and the participation of a higher proportion of people in public life than under any other form of government. That Greek citizenship did not extend to all *polis* inhabitants is beside the point. The fact that a small number of people achieved high levels of political awareness and personal freedom was miraculous enough in a world where almost everyone, male and female alike, were unfree. How this was possible and under what circumstances will be explored later in the book. However, one fundamental assumption will be touched on here.

From the Greek and later the Roman viewpoint, active participation in government was considered to be the highest form of human activity because it involved the exercise of the most important virtues—moderation, courage, practical judgment and justice—at levels not possible in the private sphere of life. Neither family nor work offered an adequate venue for full human growth. Primarily, of course, this ideology was true of males, but it was also indirectly true of females whose roles as shapers of citizens and sustainers of citizen households were regarded as vital to the survival of the *polis*. Thus women had a higher status in a *polis* than in any other political environment. At its best, the *polis* was a community of confident, well informed, highly motivated, self-governing people.

MILITARY PARTICIPATION RATIOS One of the most important features of the *polis* was the military advantage it conferred on its citizens; its military power was disproportionate to its numbers. The reason for this was that the *polis* had an extraordinary high military participation ratio—that is, a higher proportion of the citizens of a *polis* were available for military service and were better trained than under any other types of government. Proportionally speaking, the *polis* had, as a result, a distinct military advantage over other forms of political organization with which it came into conflict, other than another *polis*. It also had the advantage of rapid decision making. Assuming the *polis* was functioning as it was supposed to do, consensus could be hammered out on important issues such as war and peace quickly and decisively in private and public debates. That is not to say that consensus always led to wise policies, but it did mean that it was possible, for example, to wage war with a higher level of popular support than is the case in modern free societies. Athens' endless Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.) and Rome's wars with Carthage, the Punic Wars (264–241 B.C. and 218–202 B.C.) could not have been sustained without a high level of popular support which was based on political and social cohesion.

DRAWBACKS OF THE *POLIS* Despite these advantages, the *polis* had significant weaknesses. Greeks felt that if a city grew too large, citizens would lose control and the city would cease to be a *polis* and become something like paradigmatic Babylon, of which Aristotle said that it was so large that when it was captured "a considerable part of it was not aware that had been captured until three days later" (*Politics* 3.1276a28). The result was that in the Greek *polis* (of which there were some 1500 scattered around the Mediterranean and Black Sea), citizenship was severely restricted. *Poleis* (plural of *polis*) remained small, with perhaps an average of 700–1000 households per city and a phalanx army of just a few hundred. The largest number of hoplites (heavy infantry) the Greeks ever managed to field was 39,000 at the Battle of Plataea in 479 B.C. against the Persians. Aristotle was right when he said that if the Greeks had been able to unite they would have ruled the world (i.e., the Mediterranean). But this was a feat they did not attempt, let alone accomplish.

The *polis* was for Greeks a kind of political and military dead-end. They were unable to solve the problem of combining the ideals of *polis* life—freedom and the rule of law—with territorial and demographic expansion. It took the Romans to figure out a solution to this enigma and take the *polis* to the next level by inventing a more flexible and extensive form of citizenship detached from language, ethnicity, race and culture. It is to this model that the modern constitutional state is heir. It was Rome's genius to be able to find a formula that enabled it to preserve many of the most desirable forms of the small city-state—its freedom, its emphasis on the rule of law, its high level of citizen participation in self-rule, and citizen responsibilities of military service—with territorial and demographic expansion. In its early years the *polis* constitution allowed Rome with its relatively small population first to defend itself against its neighbors, then defeat and incorporate them in its state and eventually to dominate Italy and then the Mediterranean.

Time Line of the Development of Complex Societies

The gap between the time when urban life and states were established permanently in the Middle East and in Europe is noticeable.

ca. 3100 B.C.	The Urban and State Revolution: True cities and/or states are *permanently* established in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Anatolia (modern Turkey).
ca. 2000 B.C.	Palace Culture, quasi-urban society, develops in Crete and Mainland Greece.
ca. 1200 B.C.	Collapse of Palace System throughout Aegean. Failure of first indigenous European effort at urbanization and state formation.
ca. 800 B.C.	Revival of complex societies in Greece, the Aegean and parts of the western Mediterranean including Italy and north Africa. The *polis* or city-state makes its appearance.
753 B.C.	Traditional founding date of Rome.
ca. A.D. 500	Decline of cities and states in much of western and central Europe ("Fall of western Roman Empire"). Second failure of the city and state to take permanent root in the west.
ca. A.D. 1000	Final *permanent* establishment of cities and states in Western and Central Europe.

Part One

The Rise of Rome

1.   INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Other Challengers: The World in 350 B.C.

The global, Mediterranean approach to Roman history presented in the Introduction gets us only so far. Rome was only one of many cities in the region and its early history was not promising. It lagged behind many of its neighbors both in Italy and overseas. There is certainly no indication in its early years that it could even cope effectively with its aggressive neighbors. For centuries it waged on-and-off war with the pre-state peoples of Italy. In 390 B.C. Rome was humiliatingly captured and sacked by invading Celts. Its future was uncertain. By that same date other states had been making their mark on a much larger historical canvas and had been doing so for centuries. The great Persian Empire dominated all of western Asia from Afghanistan to the Aegean. For many years it had posed an imminent threat to the Greeks living around the Aegean, and the Greeks, or at least some of them, had fought epic wars in defense of their freedoms. Hundreds of Greek city-states in the Black Sea and Mediterranean exercised a kind of cultural—and at times a military—hegemony, over large portions of those regions. Carthage, just across the Tyrrhenian Sea from Rome, was a flourishing city-state. It exercised an extensive hegemony over the western Mediterranean. By 350 B.C. the transformation of Macedonia to the north of Greece into a super-state was underway. Under Philip, and then his son Alexander, Macedonia was to destroy the Persian Empire and establish Macedonian sovereignty over much of western Asia and the eastern Mediterranean.

So Why Rome?

Yet none of these states was to establish as long-lasting a dominion over the Mediterranean and parts of the Middle East and Europe as did Rome. The most powerful of the Greek city states,

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Athens and Sparta, had each established short-lived hegemonies in Greece, but in the end failed to find a way around the shortcomings of their political structures. City-states worked well as long as they remained small, but faltered when they had to expand and become large territorial states. The Persian empire was swept away by the Macedonians, but the Macedonians, in turn, were unable to replace the unitary, stable empire of the Persians with a single empire of their own and fell to quarreling among themselves. In the end they carved up the old Persian empire into three, feuding, territorial states ruled by kings.

The question of what enabled Rome to rise to power first in Italy, then in the western and finally the eastern Mediterranean, was a challenge to historians, politicians and political thinkers from the time its growing presence in Italy was first detected by Greeks in the fourth century B.C. The discussion goes on to the present day. It is the main theme of Part I of this book.

THE GREEK EXPLANATION   The Romans themselves ascribed their success to their traditions and the favor of the gods, which was a fairly standard, but not particularly helpful, way of explaining the rise of successful states in antiquity. Greeks, however, alone among the peoples of the Mediterranean, had a long tradition of secular inquiry into the rise and fall of states. While acknowledging the role of mortals and of the gods, they looked for more practically useful explanations of why some constitutions (in Greek, *politeiai*) were more successful in under-girding the strength of one state rather than another. Sparta, for example, was seen as a model of stability and power while other states seem to be forever in a state of *stasis*—civil unrest. Direct democracy and tyranny were regarded as the most unstable of all constitutions.

Plato and Aristotle, to name just two of the best known thinkers, put political science on a firm basis in their writings on politics and ethics. Plato is usually thought to have had a more theoretical approach to political analysis, while Aristotle was more empirical and pragmatic. Aristotle and the students of his school collected, for example, the constitutions of 158 states, Greek and non-Greek, to analyze what made them work or not work. Hence when Rome burst on the scene Greek thinkers were ready with explanations for what made its constitution so spectacularly successful. Down to modern times historians have, in one modified form or another, followed the Greek mode of analysis in attempting to discover what made Rome great.

WHAT MADE ROME SUPERIOR   According to this explanation Romans were first and foremost great politicians and statesmen, and only secondarily great fighters. They were excellent people-managers who came up with a wholly original form of citizenship that, unlike citizenship elsewhere, transcended race, ethnicity, language, and culture. The Roman war machine was formidable, but the Roman legion was not intrinsically better than the Macedonian phalanx, nor was Rome's navy—when it finally created one—better than Carthage's. What made Rome's military superior to the formidable war machines all around the Mediterranean was Rome's first class, unmatched political culture.

It was neither technology nor bloody-mindedness that ultimately led to Roman suzerainty of the Mediterranean, but rather flexibility in political, social and military matters—and deep seriousness—especially this latter. Romans understood how dangerous the Mediterranean was. It would be hard for them not to think otherwise. It is estimated that Rome suffered 90 severe defeats on the battlefield in the period of the Republic. The Celtic sack of the city in 390 B.C. was a nagging, humiliating memory. As late as 105 B.C. Roman legions suffered a staggering defeat at the hands of migrating Celts and Germans at the battle of Arausio in southern France, losing, it is said, 80,000 men in a single day.

2. SOURCES: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ROMAN HISTORY AND HOW DO WE KNOW IT?

The Written Sources: Historiography

The reconstruction of Roman history presents many challenges. The elite of Rome are over-represented in the surviving historical writings record while ordinary people hardly appear at all or at best as stereotypes of mobs. Even among the elites only a small percentage, mostly among the principal magistrates of the state—the censors, consuls and emperors—could be considered well known. Although the Republic was founded in the late sixth century B.C. (traditionally in 509 B.C.) the first true personality that we can talk about was Appius Claudius Caecus (the "Blind"), censor in 312 B.C. The representation of women's viewpoints—by women—is virtually non-existent. Elite women feature prominently in the Roman historical narrative, but all the narratives were written by men, so that when these women "speak" in the sources, their speeches are the compositions of male authors. Except in the case of inscriptions and a few fragmentary poems, no woman's voice is heard unmediated and direct. Even when women speak to us from inscriptions, their messages are for the most part formulaic; that is, they repeat standard phrases that were used by males and females alike, often chosen from sample books provided them by the producers of the inscriptions.

The written sources, which constitute the bulk of the evidence for Roman history, have their own built-in biases. Inscriptions, as noted in the previous paragraph, tend to be formulaic and repetitive. As for literature, it is estimated that only about 5 percent of all the compositions of ancient writers actually survives. Why this particular 5 percent survived was not purely a matter of accident, but the product of a complicated process of selection. Some choices were made in antiquity. Many works perished because of their specialized nature or because they were deemed publishing failures. An ancient critic by the name of Dionysius of Halicarnassus said of the historian Polybius (much of whose history has perished), that he was "an author whom no one could bear to read to the end" (*de comparatione verborum*, 4). Ancient historians were as much or more literary stylists than historians in the scholarly sense of the term, and when their style was judged inferior little point was seen in preserving them. Still other choices were made by medieval intermediaries, who were ultimately responsible for passing on this potpourri of antiquity to later generations. The lack of printing was obviously a huge obstacle to the dissemination of books which had to be produced by hand. The evidence for Roman (and Greek) history ranges, as a consequence, from the highly polished literary works of *some* historians, *some* poets, *some* playwrights, and so on, to scraps of papyrus containing lists of purchases and sales, and the crude and misspelled graffiti found on lavatory walls and elsewhere. On occasion we know more about days or weeks of some periods than we do about years or whole centuries of other periods.

BUT ARE THEY REAL SOURCES? Then again ancient sources are not sources in the modern sense. Ancient historians draw mainly on literature, not archives. The kinds of sources social historians use for later periods of history—such as wills, marriage contracts, title deeds, letters, commercial contracts, property registries and the like—have mostly vanished. There is no equivalent for ancient historians to the archives of court houses, businesses, churches, presidential libraries or the Library of Congress. Although military affairs predominate in Roman and Greek historical narratives, there are no minutes of the meetings of generals and their staffs before battles. The closest we come to these kinds of sources are the debates Caesar reports as having taken place in his war councils during the invasion of Gaul, but these reports were written for propaganda purposes and are not the

minutes of the actual meetings. Modern historians would gladly exchange a few chapters or even whole books by some ancient historian for the unadorned notes of supply officers or the memories of enlisted men.

Inscriptions

Fortunately beyond literature there are other important sources of Roman history. Hundreds of thousands of inscriptions in Latin and Greek, most inscribed on stone but some on metal, provide a great deal of information about the public and private life of individuals and cities throughout the Mediterranean and parts of Europe. Rome's earliest extant public document, for instance, is a religious inscription in archaic Latin in the shape of an obelisk known as the "Black Stone"(the *lapis niger*). It was found buried in the Roman Forum and dates from around 500 B.C. The most distinctive inscriptions are those recording the laws of cities, the decisions of town senates, the regulations of religious worship, letters from emperors and governors, votes of honor, and the careers of notables.

The habit of erecting inscriptions ("the epigraphic habit" as it has been called) was not limited to institutional practice and the highest levels of society. For example, our only substantial body of information about the all-important centurions of the Roman army comes from inscriptions. Innumerable inscriptions commemorate the lives and deaths of individuals of every class, including freedmen (indeed, especially freedmen) and slaves. A gravestone put up by a slavewoman at Rome reads simply *Zena, cocus*—"Zena, cook," suggesting that though she was a slave she was proud of her occupation and well enough off to afford to have the inscription cut in stone and erected. Thousands of grave inscriptions help us understand the duties and affectionate relationships that Romans thought went into making a happy family. It comes perhaps as no surprise that most funerary monuments were put up by members of the nuclear family—husband and wives, parents and children, and siblings—to each other, while only 5 percent were put up to other kin such as grandparents, aunts and uncles outside the immediate nuclear family. Again, not surprisingly, the most common terms used to describe family members in these inscriptions were: *benemerens* (well deserved), *dulcissimus/a* (sweetest), *carissimus/a* (dearest). Another common term, *pius* (devoted), was used of parents, children and siblings reciprocally, meaning that all members of the family were expected to be affectionately devoted—to have *pietas*—to each other. As a source of information, however, inscriptions have their limitations. They represent urban rather than rural life, for the most part the well-off rather than the poor, and some periods rather than others. Certain social groups, such as ex-slaves, tend to be overrepresented while the poor free citizen population is underrepresented. Despite the existence of huge numbers of tomb inscriptions which provide the deceased's age at death, such inscriptions provide little of worth about life expectancy in the Greco-Roman world.

LITERACY   Inscriptions tell us something about levels of literacy in the Roman world, but exactly what is hard to say. Probably a majority of scholars think literacy was most highly developed among members of the Roman elite (including women) and in the Roman Empire period (first century A.D. onward) among army officers and bureaucrats. Urban dwellers, who were surrounded by inscriptions, were likely to have been more literate than rural dwellers. At a minimum the former must have known enough to figure out basic abbreviations and formulas such as the omnipresent SPQR—"The Senate and the Roman People"—and some inscriptions such as epitaphs were so standardized that most everyone must have known what they meant. Longer, more complex inscriptions which contained laws, poems, official letters, philosophic doctrines and the like would have presented greater challenges.

Image of SPQR from the Arch of Titus

The short formula "SPQR"—The Senate and the Roman People—summed up the ideology that underpinned the Roman state. Though often more senate than people it expressed a basic truth about Rome so that even after the state came under the rule of emperors the formula was still used widely.

Coins

Another important, but very different source of information about Roman history is coinage. Coins survive in huge numbers and varieties. They offer some advantages over other ancient sources in that they were produced officially and thus convey the issuer's message directly. They also tell us how the issuers hoped to influence their target audience. Thus, for example, when the Italians revolted against Rome they struck coins in 90 B.C. depicting a bull (which stood for Italy) trampling a wolf (standing for Rome). After the revolt was put down Rome issued coins proclaiming the reconciliation of Rome and Italy represented by two women holding hands. It was reconciliation, however, with a reminder of who won: One of the women has her foot on a globe of the earth. In his war with Mark Antony, Octavian—Julius Caesar's adopted son and heir—issued coins with the legend: "champion of the freedom of the Roman people" (*libertatis populi Romani vindex*). This had the double purpose of portraying Octavian as a traditional Roman (he was anything but) and making Antony seem like a foreign enemy. The fact that Antony was allied with Cleopatra and was headquartered in Egypt helped give substance to this clever piece of propaganda.

Archaeology

Archaeology provides much of the information we have for early Rome and a good deal regarding the material culture of Rome in later periods. There are, however, problems of interpretation and

Italy and Rome; Caesar/Aeneas

A. Italia and Roma clasp hands, but note that Roma has her foot on the globe indicating her preeminence. B. A coin issued by Julius Caesar around 47 or 46 B.C. showing Aeneas escaping from Troy, carrying his father and a statue of Athena (the Palladium). Caesar was here establishing his claim that his family, the gens Julia, as legend had it, was descended from Aeneas and the goddess Venus.

built-in biases in archaeology just as complex as those found in other sources. Cemeteries are often the most important (or only) source of information for ancient peoples. Modern cities or towns are at times located on ancient sites and make the archaeology of urban settlement spotty. Excavations for telephone cables, sewers, and subways bring to light artifacts of earlier occupation haphazardly and accidentally—that is, if the excavators do not rush to cover them up to prevent the archaeological authorities from intervening to stop or slow down the work.

The earliest archaeological excavations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were often no more than plundering expeditions in search of valuable pieces of art for museums or wealthy private collectors. Hence temples, palaces or villas were systematically looted or, later, excavated, while the artifacts of ordinary people were ignored and cast aside. To this day while thousands of elite sites have been explored throughout the Mediterranean, the number of small farm sites excavated can be counted on a single hand. Careers are not made by excavating cottages or stables. There is also a bias in terms of what is being looked for. In an excavation, more recent levels (i.e., levels closer to the present) were frequently just shunted aside in favor of what was assumed to be the more "important" periods of the past or, for that matter, just the particular period in which the supervising archaeologist (or his or her sponsors) was interested. There was also a tendency to look for the supposed ancestors of a particular ethnic group or to burnish the past of the nation conducting the excavations.

To the extent that they can, modern archaeologists have labored to correct these tendencies. Many excavations are models of careful, scientific enterprises. Attention is paid to a much wider spectrum of finds than in the past. Where funds are available, sites are studied for all aspects of the lives of the inhabitants. Pollen, seeds, bones, animal and human excreta are collected for analysis, along with the usual pottery, coins, mosaic tesserae, and so on. Locally made coarseware pottery, which in the past was passed over in favor of imported, high status ceramics, is given increasing attention. Field or landscape archaeology which surveys large tracts of the countryside for all signs

of human habitation has helped fill out the picture of the role of the "silent majority" of rural dwellers in history.

Making connections between a collection of material remains and a particular ethnic group is now a much more cautious affair than in the past, to the point where in some instances archaeology has virtually severed itself from

Chronology of Roman History	
Traditional Founding Date of Rome	753 B.C.
The Roman Republic	509 B.C.–30 B.C.
The Early Empire (The Principate)	30 B.C.–A.D. 284
The Late Empire (The Dominate)	A.D. 284–A.D. 476
Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire	A.D. 476–A.D. 1453

the evidence of the written record. In some extreme cases history and archaeology have become two disconnected fields of study of the past. Some problems, however, cannot be overcome even by the most conscientious excavators. Uneven geographical representation remains a problem and varies with the amount of time and resources a particular society is willing to put into archaeology. Some countries in western Europe have been combed by archaeologists for centuries while others, especially in the lesser developed countries of the Mediterranean, have little by way of an established archaeological record. This should be kept in mind when we consider the past before the existence of written records, and in the case of the vast majority of non-elite peoples who remained mute even after the upper classes acquired the techniques of record keeping. The record is often haphazard and full of pitfalls of cultural misrepresentation.

Despite the shortcomings of our sources, they constitute in their totality an amazing assemblage of materials. Pulling them together required the labor of thousands of highly competent scholars from dozens of countries over many centuries. Simply establishing the texts of the surviving written documents occupied generations of scholars since the Renaissance (not to mention the work done by ancient scholars prior to that time). Epigraphists have labored to gather inscriptions from all over the Mediterranean and Black Sea areas, publish them and, where possible, preserve them in special-

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The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest:
A Victory for Freedom or a Defeat for Civilization?

An interesting example of the kinds of issues archaeology can raise for modern people is the discovery of the presumed site of the slaughter of three Roman legions by German tribesmen under their leader Arminius (later dubbed "Hermann the German"—his actual German name is unknown) in A.D. 9. An amateur archaeologist looking for coins stumbled on the site in 1987 and today a popular museum and park have been established on the spot. However, long before the discovery of the site of the great battle Arminius had become a symbol for German nationalists. In 1808 a German playwright wrote a play, *Die Hermannsschlacht*—"Hermann's Battle"—to stir up anti-Napoleonic sentiment and to urge Germans to unite for their freedom as their ancestors had against the oppressive, imperialist Romans. A memorial statue to Arminius at Detmold, the presumed site of the battle in the nineteenth century, became a symbol of pan-German nationalism after the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. Needless to say the French and others who suffered at the hands of German militarism interpreted the Roman loss not as a victory for freedom but as a triumph of barbarism and a catastrophic set-back for civilization. What, the thinking went, would European history have been like if Germany had been successfully brought within the Roman Empire and "civilized"? A similar monument to that at Detmold is to be found in New Ulm, Minnesota. The museum at Kalkriese, the presumed site of the battle, has a web site: http://kalkriese-varusschlacht.de.

ized museums and institutions. It is sad to read periodically of such-and-such an inscription that was seen by some scholar in a previous century but has now vanished—meaning that the stone was subsequently burned for lime or used for building purposes. Numismatists perform similar functions for coins. Papyrologists sift through hundreds of thousands of fragments of early forms of paper (mostly papyrus, hence the name) found mainly in Egypt, to reconstruct valuable literary, economic and social texts. Despite the shortcomings of archaeology the problem for scholars today is how to absorb and properly use the mountains of evidence that generations of field work has produced.

1

The Founding of the City

1. THE ENVIRONMENT OF ROME'S EARLY HISTORY

Italy: A Geographically Fragmented Land

Italy is not a naturally unified land. It is a mosaic of different regions and sub-regions that throughout history have had difficulty communicating with each other. It lacks a large natural "center" the way, for instance, France and England have geographically coherent central homelands, or as Egypt or Mesopotamia had in antiquity. Symbolic of the way the ancients thought about Italy was the fact that for a good portion of their history, Romans did not think of the Po valley, today Italy's most productive region, as part of Italy, and with good reason. The Po constituted what amounted to a separate country, being generally more in contact with continental Europe through the Brenner Pass than with peninsular Italy to the south where the Apennines impeded communications. The Romans called the Po valley *Gallia Cisalpina*—that is, "Gaul-on-this-side-of-the-Alps." (Gaul proper or modern France was *Gallia Transalpina*—"Gaul-on-the other side-of-the-Alps"). It was an alien land inhabited by Gauls (Gaels—or, as we know them more commonly, Celts). Vestiges of this sense of regional diversity persist to the present. An active political movement currently seeks to detach northern Italy from the rest of the country, arguing that as the most developed and wealthiest part of Italy, the north should not be forced to subsidize backward parts of southern Italy and Sicily. Other parts of Italy besides the Po valley are still difficult to reach from each other. Without the modern magnificent tunnel under the central Apennine massif, "the Gran Sasso d'Italia"—a long and terrifying drive—central and eastern Italy would still be hard to access from the Roman or western side of the mountains. Before the building of the modern *autostrada*, the road from Naples south to Reggio (which connects travelers by ferry to Sicily) was a nightmare of winding roads and hair-pin bends.

Physical Features of Italy

    THE MOUNTAINS OF ITALY   Peninsular Italy (i.e., Italy south of the Po) is about 100,000 square miles (slightly larger than Oregon), 680 miles in length and 150 miles wide at its widest point. Only 7 percent is plain; the rest of it is mountainous or hilly. In Word War II the Allies made one of their most tragic and costly mistakes of the war by thinking they could easily march up the Italian peninsula from the south and drive into Central Europe through the Po valley. Time and again they were stopped by the Germans who made skillful use of the mountainous terrain to block their advance. It is no surprise that some of Rome's most hard fought wars were conducted in these very same mountains against the hills peoples of Italy and that one of their greatest defeats, the battle of Caudine Forks, came at the hands of Samnite highlanders who dominated the central and southern backbone of Italy. The Samnites remained unruly and at times rebellious down to the first century B.C., long after Rome had conquered most of the Mediterranean. Even granted the excellence of Roman roads, Italy remained a fragmented land. More than in most countries, geography had a profound effect on the course of Rome's history.

THE PLAINS OF ITALY   The zigzagging of the Apennines back and forth across Italy creates three great natural, lowland regions. The first two, the Po valley in the north and Apulia in the south, open onto the Adriatic. In early times the valley of the Po, although immensely fertile, was covered with forest and marsh. The process of reclaiming it for agriculture was launched but not completed in the Roman period. Apulia in the south was something of an independent mini-country, forming a natural sub-region with the lands facing it across the Adriatic. Its most natural lines of communication were with Illyria (modern Serbia, Croatia and Albania) across the Adriatic.

The most important part of Italy in ancient times was the third region made up of the districts of Etruria (modern Tuscany), Latium (Lazio), and Campania. It opens directly onto the Mediterranean proper and faces toward Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica, and beyond them to Algeria and Tunisia. The richest agricultural land and most of the mineral wealth of Italy are to be found in these south-western lowlands. Peninsular Italy's main rivers, the Arno, Po and Volturno drained the region and made access to the sea from the landward side relatively easy. Between Apulia and Campania the mountains flatten out to form a large plateau, known to the Romans as Samnium, which dominates the plains on either side.

POOR HARBORS   Italy has about 2,000 miles of coastline but relatively few good, natural harbors. Those in the south, Naples and Taranto, were seized early on by colonizing Greeks. Rome's harbor at Ostia was a poor one, clogged with mud banks and sand bars. This, and the strength of the Tiber's current, made access to Rome upriver from Ostia a challenge so that for many centuries ports north and south of Rome at Civitavecchia and Puteoli had to be used. It took the resources of the empire in the time of the emperor Claudius, supplemented later by the work of Trajan, to make Ostia into a practical alternative. Even then, maintaining Ostia was an expensive proposition.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME   The natural lines of land communication of all Italy, as is still true today, passed through Italy's southwestern lowlands rather than through the difficult central high-lands or the narrow Adriatic coastal plain. Long before there were any roads leading to Rome, all the lines of communication in Italy naturally converged on a site where a number of low hills—the legendary "Seven Hills of Rome"—overlooked a ford on the lower reaches of the Tiber. Rome, with its central location astride these natural communication routes, had internal lines of communication and a hugely important strategic location in Italy. It could—at least in theory—control all movement north or south or from the Mediterranean into the interior. Conversely, however, Rome's geographi-cal position could be a liability if the city was weak, since it could be approached by hostile forces from two, three, or four different sides. It was sacked by Celts, Germans (three times), and Arabs in ancient and early medieval times.

Italy: A Culturally and Linguistically Fragmented Land

Italy was not only a land divided by geography but also by culture. It is natural to assume that because today Italy is thought to possess a "Latin" culture—meaning its people speak a language based on Latin—it must always have been so. But in early Roman history Latin was very much a minority language confined to the small area of the peninsula known as Latium (modern Lazio). Rome itself was but one of a number of Latin-speaking communities. Forty languages or dialects are known to have been spoken in ancient Italy ca. 400 B.C. at about the time Rome's expansion began.

More important than the linguistic divisions of Italy were its cultural divisions. The cultural world of the peninsula was starkly divided between those peoples—regardless of language—who chose the *polis* or city-state way of life and those who adhered to looser forms of society such as

From 1 to 10 in four Indo European Languages

Most of the languages of ancient Italy belong to the huge body of languages known as Indo-European (IE for short). IE speakers today inhabit a swath of the earth reaching, in the Old World, from Iceland in the west to northern India. Of all the world's language families IE is today the most widespread and has the most numerous speakers:

Latin	Greek	Iranian	Celtic
Unus	Heis	Yek	Aon
Duo	Duo	Do	Do
Tres	Treis	Seh	Tri
Quattuor	Tessares	Chahar	Ceathair
Quinque	Pente	Panj	Cuig
Sex	Hex	Shesh	Se
Septem	Hepta	Haft	Seacht
Octo	Okto	Hasht	Ocht
Novem	Ennea	Noh	Naoi
Decem	Deka	Dah	Deich

Although separated by time and distance Indo-European languages still bear remarkable similarities to each other in vocabulary and morphology. The date of the "arrival" of the various Indo-European language-speakers who came to dominate Italy remains unsettled. So does the question of how best to relate the material remains uncovered by archaeological excavation with the languages of peoples known to have lived there in the historical period. One model suggests that Latins, Osco-Umbrians etc. migrated directly to the places where their presence is known historically. Another theory assumes a much earlier movement of Indo-European speaking peoples into Italy. Linguistic diversification then took place wholly within Italy. In either scenario the people who eventually ended up as Latins, Oscans, Umbrians etc. established their identity and formed their culture within Italy in the places they settled, regardless of when and where they came from.

the tribe or chiefdom. The mountain dwellers, mostly Osco-Umbrian speakers, followed the more traditional ways of life while the peoples of the plains tended to be urbanized, regardless of their ethnic or linguistic origins.

THE ETRUSCANS   The Etruscans inhabited the agricultural and mineral-rich area north of Rome known today as Tuscany. Apart from the Greeks in the south the Etruscans were the most technologically and politically advanced people in Italy.

Linguistically, Etruscan is not related to any known language. Perhaps like Basque, another stand-alone language, it was a survivor of an earlier more widespread language which, under pressure of invasions or immigration ended up being spoken in just one region while dying out elsewhere. About 11,000, very brief inscriptions in Etruscan survive, mostly the names of people, gods and spirits.

One of the great unresolved mysteries of ancient history is the origin of the Etruscans. In antiquity Dionysius of Halicarnassus, an historian of early Rome, believed that the Etruscans were native to Italy, whereas Herodotus maintained that they were transplanted Lydians from Asia Minor. There

are undeniable similarities between Etruscan arts and practices and those of the east. *Tholoi*—beehive shaped—tombs similar to those found at Mycenae in Greece and on Crete have been found in Etruria, and the practice of divination by means of the entrails of animals has parallels in Mesopotamia. Many artistic motifs are also found in both areas. There is even an inscription in what appears to be Etruscan on the Aegean island of Lemnos, which could, logically, have been the site of one of the stages of Etruscan western migration. On the other hand the archaeological record shows no break in the development of Etruscan cities from the previous indigenous, Villanovan culture. Every known Etruscan city is preceded by a Villanovan settlement, a fact that has led to the debate about whether the Etruscans were transformed Villanovans or whether the new culture should be explained by the arrival of immigrants from somewhere else, usually the east.

THE OSCO-UMBRIANS   The most widespread group of Indo-European languages in Italy in early times was Osco-Umbrian (also known as Sabellian), a group of related languages and dialects spoken by the inhabitants of central Italy reaching from Umbria in the north to Lucania in the south. Messapian in Apulia in the southeastern corner of Italy may have been related to Illyrian, the language spoken across the Adriatic in the ancient Balkans.

Villanovan Ceremonial Vessel
Bronze Villanovan situla dating from the 8th–7th centuries B.C. The ceremonial bucket was used in religious rituals and sacrifices.

The speakers of Osco-Umbrian were the most widely dispersed peoples in Italy and possibly the most populous also. They were not, however, a unified people. Their lands were principally the Apennine highlands where they practiced some settled agriculture but primarily a form of pastoralism known as transhumance. Most of the mountains are unsuited to arable cultivation, but the raising of animals can be practiced with great success. Transhumance, which survived down to the nineteenth century in some parts of Italy, involved moving flocks into the mountains in the spring once the snows had melted and the alpine meadows had begun to produce fresh grass, and then reversing the process at the end of summer when the dry season in the valleys was ending. This life-style did not lend itself to the kind of settled agriculture that was practiced on the coastal plains of Italy.

When the agricultural villages of central Italy began coalescing into cities in the seventh century, the internal regions of Italy where the Osco-Umbrians lived remained faithful to the old ways. There was to some extent a movement toward the production of field crops in the valleys of central Italy, but in terms of political development the highlanders preferred to maintain their independence and refused to make the kinds of sacrifices of personal freedom required by urbanization. In times of threat the Osco-Umbrians could coalesce as a confederation, especially the four Samnite tribes, the Hirpini, Pentri, Caraceni, and Caudini who possessed a common religious sanctuary and meeting place in the highlands of central Italy.

There thus existed a kind of economic, social and political fault line through the middle of Italy from north to south that inevitably led to prolonged warfare in which eventually the urbanized
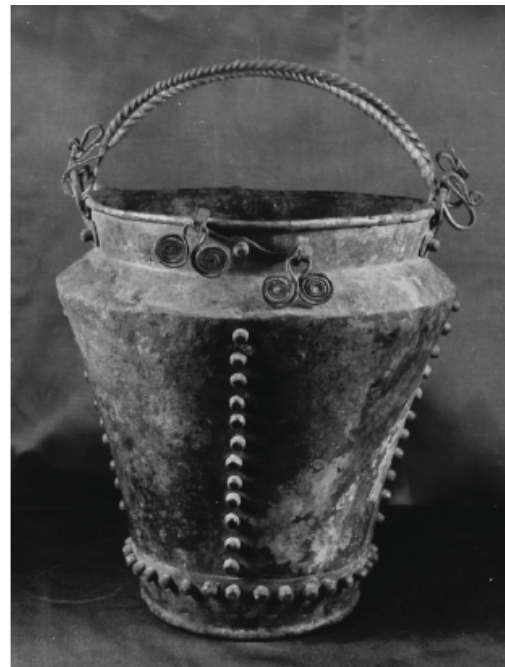
plains-dwellers, championed by Rome, were victorious. It was in this competitive and risky environment that Rome's warlike character developed.

PRESTATE CELTS, GERMANS, AND AFRICANS   By contrast with the urbanized littoral of the Mediterranean, all the interior regions of Africa and Europe remained resolutely pre-urban, pre-state and tribal. From at least the sixth century B.C., the area north of the Mediterranean, stretching from Spain through France, southern Germany, and Austria, was occupied by warlike Celtic-speaking peoples. Much longer than the Greeks and Romans, they resisted the Mediterranean impulse to form states or build cities and generally remained content with less complex forms of society such as the chiefdom. In response to Greek and Roman presence, some of the Celtic tribes began to form proto-states, but aggressive Roman intrusion into France and the Balkans terminated these tentative efforts. Celtic peoples left to their own devices in fringe areas of Europe, such as Scotland and Ireland, resisted state formation down to modern times. The same was true of the interior regions of Spain and north Africa, where warlike peoples lived in fragmented societies that constantly warred with each other and with their sedentary neighbors.

From the fifth century B.C., Celts from Gaul infiltrated the Po valley and spread down the Adriatic coast. Celtic has close linguistic affinities with Latin, although the speakers of the two languages parted company centuries earlier, with one group, the Latins, ending up in Italy while Celtic languages spread throughout much of continental Europe from Ireland to Romania and as far south as central Spain. The fate of the two languages could not, however, be more different. Today speakers of Latin based languages (Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian) number in the hundreds of millions whereas Celtic is spoken by less than a million (mostly in Wales) in the isolated "Celtic Fringe" of Europe. The consequences of successful imperialism are not insignificant.

GREEKS   From around 750 B.C. a flood of Greek migrants began moving across the northern rim of the western Mediterranean, paralleling the path of the Phoenicians from Syria and Lebanon who were moving primarily along the coast of Africa toward the Atlantic. Greek footholds were established along the coast of Spain and also the French Riviera where Massilia (modern Marseilles) was the principal settlement. In Italy so many Greek colonies were founded along the Ionian Sea coast in the south that the region became known as "Greater Greece" (*Magna Graecia*). Of the many Greek colonies in Sicily, Syracuse was the most important while nearer Rome was Naples. Both Phoenicians and Greeks settled in Sicily, but the interior remained in the hands of the original inhabitants, called Sicels by the Greeks, who were supposed to have come originally from mainland Italy.

THE LATINS   If the Osco-Umbrians were the most widely dispersed of the native peoples of Italy and the Etruscans the most advanced, among the least dispersed and least numerous were the Latins, among whom the Romans constituted simply one group.

Latin speakers inhabited the small coastal area of Italy known as Latium (modern Lazio). Its boundaries were the Tiber river to the north, the Apennines to the east, the Monti Lepini to the south, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west—approximately a square with sides of 30 miles—for a total of just over 900 square miles. This represents about 1percent of peninsular Italy. For comparison's sake, the city of Los Angeles is 464 square miles; Greater London is 650 square miles—and we are talking not just of Rome and its territory, but of all of Latium.

The Latins had, however, the great advantage of location, and as real estate agents always remind buyers, location is everything. To their south along the coast the Greeks had established a flourishing urban civilization as early as the late eight century. To their north the Etruscan speaking peoples of Tuscany were equally well located, and like their Latin neighbors were the recipients of powerful

Pre-Historic Italy		
Dates	*Archaeological Definition*	*Historical Definition*
1000–900 B.C.	Proto Villanovan/Final Bronze Age	Pre-urban
900–700 B.C.	Villanovan/Early Iron-Age	Proto-urban
700–500 B.C.	Orientalizing	Urban

technological, economic and cultural influences that were spreading westward from the heartland of the then developed world, namely, the Middle East. Although a dangerous environment, Latium was well situated to benefit by a confluence of influences not just from overseas but also from Italy and its own indigenous, diverse cultures. Nevertheless, location alone does not explain Rome's success in defending its homeland and eventually extending its sway first over Italy and then the whole Mediterranean.

2.   Rome's Rise: Archaeological and Social Theories

The first phase of Rome's rise to power was hidden in a much larger development: The rise of cities and states in the western Mediterranean. By the first millennium B.C. when urbanization got underway in the west, the state was already thousands of years old in the eastern Mediterranean. Growth of the state and the city in the was a slow and fitful process that did not achieve permanence in northern and Atlantic Europe for nearly another millennium and a half.

The Rise of Cities

ARCHAEOLOGY   The period 900–700 B.C., which coincides with the beginning of the Iron Age, sees the development of what is known as Villanovan culture, so called after a small village near Bologna, in north-central Italy. This culture represented a distinct break with the past. Old Bronze Age sites were abandoned and new large nucleated settlements were established on sometimes previously unoccupied sites. In Etruria residents left their hut villages for large, defensible plateaus. The significance of Villanovan culture is that all of the known city-states of Etruria—the first indigenous cities of Italy—evolved out of Villanovan sites. This period, therefore, is regarded as the proto-urban stage of the development of the city and the state in Italy.

The next stage, 700–500 B.C. sees the emergence of true cities, again, first in Etruria and then slightly later in Latium. Villages coalesced into genuine urban centers, some laid out architecturally on grid patterns with identifiable public buildings such as temples, large paved open meeting places and fortifications. Etruscan farmers achieved high levels of excellence, inventing, among other things, the *cuniculus*, or tunnel method of draining river valley bottoms. By eliminating meandering streams and marshes, this technique reduces erosion and expands cultivatable land. This is evidence that a ruling class was able to gain control of whatever surplus the economy managed to produce and devote needed funds to public works and not just the enrichment of individual clans or kin groups. Toward the end of the period the development of "princely tombs," richly furnished burials in Etruria and Latium, confirms the presence of an energetic, warlike aristocracy. If the previous proto-Villanovan period had been characterized by tribal organizations led by individual chieftains, the new urban society suggests a much higher level of social and political complexity. The beliefs that kings presided was an historical memory, but these rulers should not be confused

with the kind of dynastic, hereditary kings who ruled in the ancient Middle East or in Europe before the twentieth century. At least at Rome, and probably elsewhere, such kings were not hereditary; kin or clan groups (*gentes* in Latin) retained significant amounts of power. To come to power rulers needed, in some measure, the approval of the citizenry.

WHY THE EARLY URBANIZATION OF ETRURIA AND LATIUM? The facts are clear enough but the question remains: Why did indigenous Italian states and cities first make their appearance in Etruria and then Latium and not elsewhere? The influence of Greek cities being constructed in southern Italy and Sicily is often cited as an explanation, but their presence is more a condition than a cause. Plenty of peoples with whom Greeks were in contact in Italy (and elsewhere in the Mediterranean) did not choose the path of urbanization and statehood. The ultimate answer is unattainable at this point. We lack the kinds of documentation that are available for state and urban formation in modern times—how, for instance France or Germany or Japan—evolved into modern nation states. We are left with written sources that are difficult to interpret and analogies with the evolution of other ancient cities and states elsewhere. We know a good deal more about the process as it occurred a short time earlier in Greece and much earlier in the more distant ancient Middle East. In the Americas, where documentation is also largely absent, scholars have used archaeology and the techniques of social anthropology to create plausible scenarios for the evolution of states and urban centers in Meso- and South America.

In Greece many cities (*poleis*) emerged by a process called synoecism, literally "the coming together of households," or households grouped in villages, to form cities. In most instances villages were abandoned in favor of a central location, which was usually fortified, equipped with a water supply, public buildings, meeting places, temples and residences. A somewhat similar process seems to have occurred in Etruria and Latium. Throughout coastal central Italy, villages were abandoned and individually advantageous sites evolved into true cities. Saying this, however, does not get us very far. We are still left wondering what initiated the process of synoecism in the first place. In the case of Etruria and Latium the following is a possible scenario of what might have occurred.

NATURAL RESOURCES Etruria, and to a lesser extent Latium had a number of significant natural resources that were suddenly in high demand when the technology of iron extraction began to become widespread sometime after 900 B.C. The essential ingredients for this process were: iron ore, preferably good quality; limestone; and plenty of timber for conversion into charcoal. Etruria had all of these in abundance and in convenient locations. They were not buried in the high Apennines but right on the coast, or nearby, as was the case with iron-rich island of Elba. Populonia on the mainland opposite Elba was also well supplied with iron ore. So much slag was produced there in antiquity that it has proved profitable in recent times to reprocess it using modern techniques. Besides metals, Etruria and Latium were both rich in forests and good agricultural land. They had excellent local communications, and were accessible by land as well as by water. The climate was mild. Rainfall was sufficient so that agriculture could be conducted without the expense or immense labor of irrigation.

NO GREEK COLONIZATION NORTH OF CAMPANIA If ever there was an area ripe for colonization and exploitation by outside powers, this was it. The ships of land-hungry Greeks and energetic merchants of Phoenicia prowled the Mediterranean looking for just such opportunities. Greeks had earlier settled key portions of southern Italy helping themselves to good agricultural land and key harbor sites, pushing the original inhabitants into the interior. So successful was this colonizing endeavor that the region acquired the name "Greater Greece." In Sicily Greeks and Phoenicians

together carved up the island, seizing its best sites and likewise driving the original inhabitants into the interior. A similar process began on the western coast of Italy. Greeks picked the island of Ischia off the bay of Naples in Campania as an initial base, and as their fortunes improved they settled first at Cumae on the mainland, and then built a new city nearby, *nea polis* in Greek or—as we know it, Naples. This site gave Greeks access to the agricultural riches of Campania. But that was as far north as they got. What was significant about Etruria and Latium was that no Greeks or Phoenicians, outside strictly regulated trading enclaves, were able to carve out colonies exclusively for themselves in either region. There was no repetition there of the land grabs that occurred in southern Italy, Sicily (and in Africa, Spain and southern France). Why not?

SELF-CONFIDENT URBANIZATION   Apparently Etruscans and Latins were sufficiently far along in economic, social and political development that they were able to resist the aggressive colonization of the Greeks and Phoenicians while benefiting from the trading contacts these foreigners offered. Perhaps early initial contacts with Greeks and Phoenicians and knowledge of what happened to others clued Etruscans and Latins into what might happen if they did not do something to resist the aggressive outsiders. But what where they to do? The only solution was for them to become like Greeks and Phoenicians, that is, by urbanizing and forming states that would give them the resources and armies to defend their mineral and agricultural resources. When Japan was challenged by outsiders in the nineteenth century it made a somewhat similar decision and was able to fend off colonizing western powers by becoming like them, though only up to a point. The Japanese had the self-assurance to take what they needed from outside sources, but not any more than they needed.

A similar pattern of self-confident borrowing seems to have characterized the peoples of western, central Italy. The process of evolution was not geographically or chronologically even. Initially, southern Etruria made rapid strides in the development of a flourishing city-state system. Northern and central Etruria lagged behind as did Latium, but eventually both areas caught up and by around 500 B.C. a string of fully developed, powerful political centers were in existence between the rivers Arno and Liris.

CREATING NEW IDENTITIES   To push the question farther and ask where the self-assurance for this self-transformation came from is to go beyond our evidence. Probably stimulation from the outside word coincided with internal developments in central Italy to allow Etruscans and Latins to launch themselves on an independent path of political and social evolution. It is true there were many borrowings from Greeks and Phoenicians; indeed in the early stages of their growth there were so many that the period is referred to as "orientalizing," meaning that many goods and cultural influences from the east appeared in the societies of Etruscans and Latins. The alphabet, for example, was an "oriental" import in the sense that it was invented by Canaanites (ancient inhabitants of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine) about 1200 B.C., perfected by Greeks (who added vowel signs) sometime in the ninth century (or perhaps later), imported into Etruria, and then finally borrowed by the Latins from the Etruscans. This superb information storage and retrieval technology contributed to the development of both peoples and aided their rapid evolution from low to high levels of social and political complexity. But it was not a wholly one-way process. The massive technology transfer met with a willingness on the part of the Italian natives to transform themselves and invent for themselves new identities based as much on their own indigenous traditions as on the extraneous techniques they took from Greeks and Phoenicians. In the case of the Romans, this process of adaptation was to produce a wholly new type of state that outstripped in many respects its models.

3. THE ROMAN VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED

Understandably, Romans would not have appreciated this modern explanation in which archaeology, economic theory, sociological speculation, and abstract political models dominate. Their belief was that history was made by individual human beings, usually (but not always) elite males, practicing warfare and statecraft or some combination of the two, and enjoying divine favor. They shared this view with the Greeks and with most peoples until modern times, when historians began to expand the definition of history beyond elites, warfare, and institutions to the rest of society and to deeper "forces" of various kinds, especially economic forces.

ROMAN SELF-DEFINITION   Although they were literate from the sixth century B.C., it took expansion into the western Mediterranean in the third century B.C. (300–200 B.C.) to jolt the Romans into awareness that they needed to pay attention to the public opinion of the Mediterranean at large, and not let others tell their story for them. In the same way that contemporary political candidates are strongly advised to define themselves before their enemies do it for them, the Romans lagged behind in the campaign for public opinion in the Mediterranean. Greeks such as Timaeus of Tauromenium (modern Taormina), writing in Sicily around 260 B.C., had already begun to sketch out a version of Roman history. Greek intellectuals in the company of Rome's great enemy Hannibal composed histories of the great war with Rome (218–202 B.C.) from the Carthaginian viewpoint. Romans thus had to come up with an explanation of who they were, where they came from and, most importantly, what justified and enabled them to conquer successfully large swathes of the Mediterranean. They needed to establish that their wars were just and that they were a force for good or, preferably, a force destined by *Fortuna* or Providence to rule.

Early Roman History Writing

The fifty years from 200 to 150 B.C. saw the appearance of the first histories of Rome. The early historians, known as annalists (because they wrote chronological accounts of Roman history on a year-by-year basis), initially wrote in Greek. They were not professional writers or historians, but Roman senators who, in addition to putting a good spin on Rome's activities, also had personal axes to grind. For example, the first of these writers, Fabius Pictor, stressed the importance of his own *gens*, the Fabii, at the same time that he recorded the greatness of Rome. Later writers emphasized the role of other great families such as the Valerii, Claudii, Cornelii, and others. Most of their work has vanished, however, and survives only in fragments or incorporated in the history of later writers whose work has survived.

LEGENDS, FACTS AND HISTORY   The result is that the early history of Rome is, even to the present, a quagmire of scholarly dispute. What little there was by way of public records of early times was destroyed when an invading band of Celts sacked Rome in 390 B.C. The principal surviving sources of early Roman history (in chronological order), Polybius, M. Tullius Cicero, Titus Livius (Livy), Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Plutarch, lived between 600 to 800 years after the events they claim to describe.[1] What follows summarizes and synthesizes their account. Since no actual hard data existed in their time for Roman origins, all these writers constructed their own versions of early Rome from differing ideological viewpoints. Their sources were those early annalists whose

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[1]Polybius: ca. 200 B.C.–ca. 118 B.C.; Cicero: 106 B.C.–43 B.C.; Livy: 59 B.C.–A.D. 17; Dionysius: ca. 55 B.C.–ca. 10 B.C.; Plutarch: ca. A.D. 50–ca. A.D. 120.

versions of Roman history were skewed by the tendencies and viewpoints sketched above. For centuries, historians have sifted the sources to separate the various layers of history writing, the legendary from the factual and, as archaeological evidence became available, to connect both in coherent narratives. Despite progress in all these endeavors, much of the writing about early Rome still reflects individual historians' premises and has a distinctly personal character.

The Foundations of Rome

The version made canonical by Fabius Pictor around 200 B.C. has Alba Longa being established by the descendants of Aeneas sometime around 1150 B.C. (The most popular date for the fall of Troy was 1184 B.C.).[2] Romulus and Remus, natives of Alba, then founded Rome some 400 years later. Six additional kings were given schematic reigns to fill in the gap between Romulus and the traditional date of the next major event, the founding of the Republic in 509 B.C. These kings were: Numa Pompilius, Tullus Hostilius, Ancus Marcius, Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius, and Tarquinius Superbus.

The historical reality behind these kings is impossible to recover at this point. All we can say is that they probably represent early leaders of the developing community, of whom some were Sabine (Numa and Ancus), some Latin (Romulus and Tullus Hostilius), and some Etruscan (the two Tarquins and possibly Servius Tullius, despite his Latin-sounding name).

ROME'S HETEROGENEOUS ORIGINS   The Romans used these stories of origins to their own propaganda advantage. Unlike many Greek peoples (such as the Athenians) who claimed to have been sprung from the earth (called *autochthony*)—the most noble form of origin—the Romans chose to emphasize the simplicity and heterogeneity of their beginnings and the fact they had not just one but many founders. They pointed out that from the start they were an amalgam of peoples and customs.

ROME'S BALANCED OR MIXED CONSTITUTION   In the schematic account of Rome's early history presented by the sources, Servius Tullius played a key role in the evolution of the Roman constitution. According to tradition he was responsible for the creation of the Centuriate Assembly (i.e., a voting assembly of Roman citizens made up of units called "centuries") which took over some of the responsibilities of the old clan or Curiate Assembly.[3] The first 18 centuries were assigned to the cavalry (Latin, *equites*). The remainder of the population was divided into five classes (*classes*) depending on their wealth and standing in the community. According to Cicero, this act of Servius Tullius in establishing the Centuriate Assembly rounded out the process of constitution building because now Rome possessed the three elements of the best (or mixed) constitution: monarchy (the king); aristocracy (the Senate); and democracy (the Centuriate Assembly). Servius is also credited with the creation of 24 districts called "tribes" (although they had nothing to do with kinship). Four of these were urban and twenty rural. This arrangement provided the basis for the census.

In Cicero's scheme (which he borrowed from Greek political theorizing), the natural cycle was now complete and the balanced constitution began to decay. Servius was murdered by the son of the first Tarquin—also called Tarquin—who, to distinguish him from his father, was given the name "Superbus"—the "Arrogant." The usurper lived up to his name. Unlike the previous six kings who had governed justly and according to the law, Tarquin acted tyrannically. He oppressed the Senate

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[2]The importance of the connection between Troy and Rome is discussed at length in chapter 8, section 2.

[3]The Curiate Assembly was the most ancient division of the Roman people and probably the basis of Rome's military organization. The term "*curia*" may mean "a gathering of men."

On this coin issued about 54 B.C., Junius Brutus (reverse) proclaims his supposed family connection with the Brutus who liberated Rome from the tyranny of the kings and launched the Republic some 400 years earlier. The coin was issued just ten years before Brutus felt himself called upon to eliminate another tyrant, Julius Caesar. Liberty is portrayed as a woman (obverse).

and forced the people to work on huge building projects such as the completion of the Capitoline temple to Jupiter and the great sewer that drained the Forum area (the *Cloaca Maxima*) whose exit point into the Tiber can still be seen. In foreign affairs he extended Roman hegemony over Latium. As the cycle of constitutional decay continued, an uprising by the nobility occurred, led by L. Junius Brutus "The Liberator." This led to Tarquin's expulsion and the establishment of a new constitution which was based on the old but guaranteed *libertas*, "freedom" to the people. This was the Republic, established supposedly in 509 B.C.

And the Truth?

For centuries scholars have wrestled with the innumerable problems raised by this schematic account of the regal period of Roman history. How much truth, if any, is to be found in the (often conflicting) stories of the kings? The answers range from extreme skepticism to guarded hope that the outline of the story contains at least some kernels of truth. There is no general consensus, but on some points there is agreement. Thus for example, no one believes that there were just seven kings; there had to have been more to fill the gap between 753 B.C. and 509 B.C. Much of what we read in the stories are clearly simple projections by later historians into the ancient past of practices that became common centuries later. The following points may be noted as having some grounding in historical events.

1. All of the kings, with the exception of Servius Tullius, were confirmed in their power to rule—*imperium* in Latin—by the passage of a confirming law called a *lex curiata* passed by the Curiate Assembly, the clan assembly of the people. The next step in the appointment of the king was the endorsement given by the Senate (*patrum auctoritas*) to the whole process. This method of selecting kings seems suspect in that it conforms to Greek theories of what constituted legitimate rule and also looks like the procedures that were used during the period of the Republic in the selection of magistrates. On the other hand it may reflect a genuine tradition that insisted that Rome's early kings were not tyrants, but rather leaders selected by

a political process in which the clan heads still had a good deal of influence. When elected they ruled according to established traditions.

From this we can conclude that the early Roman state had three divisions or agencies. The first was the king who had multiple functions, primarily as commander of the army, but also as judge and priest. The second was the people who were organized into 30 divisions called *curiae*. The *curiae* were grouped in turn in three divisions called tribes (a geographical, not a kin term): the Ramnenses, the Titienses and the Luceres, said to have taken their names from Romulus, Titus Tatius the Sabine leader, and Lucumo or Lucerus, an Etruscan warrior leader who had helped Romulus in his fight with the Sabines. Apart from their political role, the *curiae* were the basis for the recruitment of the Roman army, and as noted, had some say in the confirmation of the ruler. The third institution, the Senate, was in essence the public face of the elite of the community, the *patres* or "Fathers" of Rome.

2. The presence of two Sabines in the list of kings, Numa Pompilus and Ancus Marcius, suggests there is some truth to the tradition that Rome was founded as a joint venture of a variety of ethnic and linguistic groups of which Latin and Sabine speakers were the foremost. One scholar suggests that the original synoecism of Rome was the coming together of the communities of the Palatine, which was inhabited by a group of Latins, and of the Quirinal, which was the abode of Sabines.

The presence of peoples of different ethnic backgrounds, especially at the elite level, in the newly evolving cities of Italy is well established. At the time of initial urban development in Italy a much more fluid relationship between citizenship and ethnicity existed. Greek cities in the south included many indigenous peoples in their populations and the presence of Greeks and Phoenicians in some Etruscan cities is also well known. From inscriptions we know that there were also high status Latins in Etruscan cities. In a rich burial at Tarquinii an inscription in Etruscan to "Rutile Hipukrates" (Rutilius Hippokrates in its Latin form), was found. The name is a composite of Latin and Greek elements. At Caere there were Ate Peticina (Latin, Attus Peticius), Tita Vendia and Kalatur Phapena (Kalator Fabius) in the seventh century, and Ati Cventinas (Attius son of Quintus) in the sixth. At Veii there is a tomb to Tite Latine (Titus Latinus). A Roman literary tradition recalls the migration of a group of Sabines led by Attus Clausus (Appius Claudius) to Rome. In these circumstances, the presence of non-Romans and non-Latins in Rome during its early history is plausible. How strong a presence this was is difficult to estimate, but it was at least sufficient to leave its mark in the historical tradition and provide sanction for Rome's willingness to find a place for non-native Romans in their state in later times. This practice, as will be seen, became a central feature of Roman expansion and a key mechanism of its eventual integration of Italy.

3. Servius' reforms may represent the moment when the army came to vote on political issues. Servius' reforms involved the creation of a new assembly distinct from the curiate assembly, the *comitia centuria,* which was based on the census. The Roman army in its original form was organized, in Greek fashion, as an army of heavy infantrymen or hoplites, each equipped with a helmet, cuirass, greaves, shield and thrusting spear.

The Centuriate Assembly was the civilian version of the army, namely, the army assembling without arms. A division into five classes at the time of Servius is unlikely. Originally the army probably consisted of only those men who could afford hoplite equipment. An ancient source refers to a distinction between the *classis* "the class," and the *infra classem*, that is those below the class, probably those who could not afford the requisite weaponry for service in

the hoplite phalanx but nevertheless could serve as light armed skirmishers and consequently deserved a role, if only a minor role, in the political deliberations of the state. The *infra classem* had representation, but it was unequal representation. Hence from the beginning the Centuriate Assembly was not democratic in the sense of being made up of citizens who were arithmetically equal to each other ("one man one vote"). Roman state practice stressed, instead, geometric or proportional equality, i.e., greater wealth meant greater responsibility, hence political influence. Some citizens had by definition, more influence or more votes than others.

The Centuriate Assembly had a long and complicated historical evolution lasting many centuries and it is extremely difficult to disentangle the early phases of its development from later development. The reconstruction of the Servian reforms presented here is speculative and is based to a considerable extent on analogies with the better known role of the army during the evolution of Greek cities.

ROME OF THE KINGS   The Rome that developed under the leadership of the kings was a dynamic, expanding state. By the end of the sixth century it had expanded from an area of perhaps 75 square miles to 300 square miles and its population may have been as much as 35,000. Rome, however, suffered from internal problems of governance whose natures are difficult to grasp. Aristotle's explanation of why it was that monarchies came to an end in the city-states of Greece may suggest a way of understanding them. He says that in early times in Greece "it was unusual to find outstanding men, especially as in those days people lived in small cities," hence kings were common. As time went on, however, and the city-states expanded and "many men were found who were alike in respect of excellence and they would no longer submit to monarchy" but sought a different form of government, namely a commonwealth, which would more fairly—from their viewpoint—reflect the new social reality (*Politics* 3.1286b). This comment of Aristotle suggests that the kings became the victims of their own success. As the *polis* expanded so did the size, wealth and sophistication of the governing class. Given the competitive nature of aristocracy, it became intolerable that one single individual—the monarch—should have all the honor, glory and power in his hands alone.

4. THE END OF THE MONARCHY

The Historiographic Problem

For the historians of the late Republic (133–30 B.C.) it was conventional to portray the last king of Rome, Tarquin the Proud (Tarquinius Superbus), as a corrupt and brutal tyrant. He and his sister-in-law (who eventually became his wife) conspired first to kill their respective spouses and then the ruling king. Begun with such savagery, the reign progressed from one outrage to another until finally a Roman nobleman by the name of Lucius Junius Brutus had the courage to organize a coup and drive out the Tarquins. In this version of things, after the successful expulsion of the tyrant, two consuls were chosen to replace the deposed king, and so without civil war, bloodshed, or much fuss of any kind, Roman freedom was won. An alternate, much less emphasized tradition has the king of the Etruscan city Clusium, Lars Porsenna, capture Rome and expel the tyrant (Tacitus *Hist.* 3.72*;* Pliny *n.h.* 34.139*).* In this scenario it is possible that the outsider Porsenna ended the monarchy.
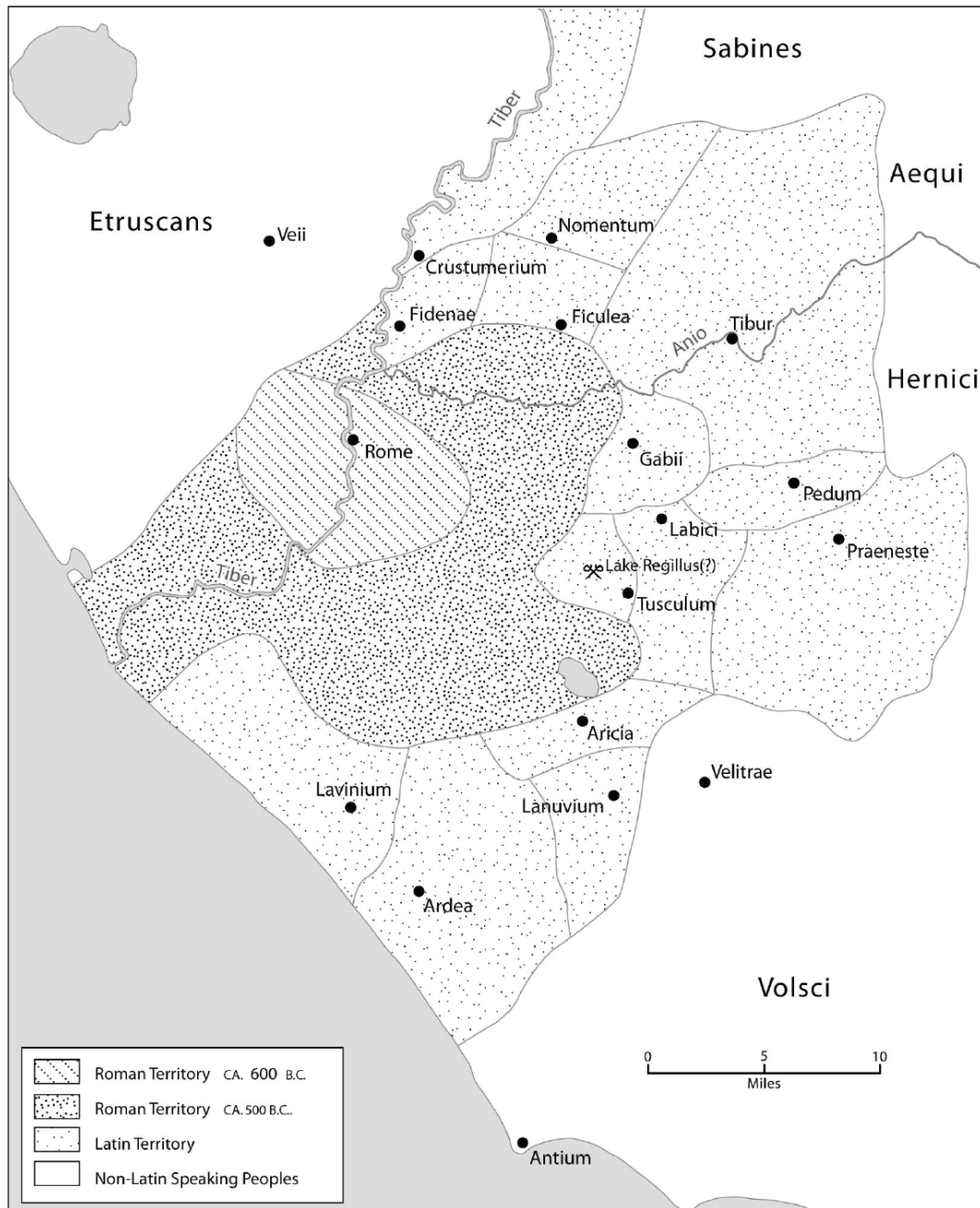
Rome and Latium 600–500 B.C.

Although the largest, Rome was still one of a number of Latin states and Latium itself was sur-rounded by non-Latin speaking peoples.

A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT?   It is understandable how the story of the expulsion of the Tarquins and the liberation of the Roman people by the aristocracy could have achieved the level of an heroic national saga, and equally understandable that modern historians would be skeptical of the tale. Much of the narrative looks as though it was borrowed from stock, moralising Greek accounts of tyrants of whom the Greeks knew plenty. Other parts of it have the appearance of an historical romance. There may also have been apologetic implications behind the tale. The lurid account of the excesses of the Tarquins and the emphasis on the smooth transition from the kings to the Republic may have been aimed at defusing the revolutionary implications of the dethronement of a legitimate king by force. Later Romans looking back at early Rome could have worried that such a coup might encourage would-be "liberators" to proclaim freedom for themselves against alleged oppressors. In fact, the first century B.C. was to produce quite a few such "liberators" using precisely this argument.

The trouble is that there is little in the historical record to put in the place of these two traditions. They each raise an equal number of objections and counter theories. Perhaps we may have to be satisfied with an application of Aristotle's generalizing version of the evolution of the early Greek *polis*. According to this theory Rome had reached the stage where a monarchy was no longer politically viable and it came to an end either by internal coup, bloody or otherwise, or by outside intervention or by some combination of the two. The one thing that does seem certain is that around 500 B.C. the rule of the kings ended and a new republican constitution was introduced to replace the old monarchical one.

A POSITIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE MONARCHY   Reflecting his own troubled times when the need of a firm hand seemed necessary for Rome, Livy took a positive view of the kings, or at least those before Tarquinius Superbus. He claimed that without the discipline of the kings, the anarchic character of the early Romans might have led them to look for democracy, but fortunately the "tranquil moderation" of the kings, as he calls it, forestalled that catasrophe:

> For what would have been the consequence if that rabble of shepherds and vagrants, fugitives from their own countries, having under the protection of an inviolable asylum (*Romulus established Rome as an asylum to attract migrants to the new city*) found liberty, or at least impunity, uncontrolled by the fear of royal authority? In such circumstances they would no doubt have been distracted by the demagoguery of tribunes and would have engaged in contests with the patrician rulers. This would have happened before the influence of wives and children, and the love of the soil, all of which take time to develop, had united their affections. The nation, not yet matured, would have been destroyed by discord. Luckily, the tranquil moderation of the government of the kings before Tarquin allowed the people, their strength being now developed, to produce wholesome fruits of liberty. (Livy, *Preface* to Book 2)

2

Early Rome:
External Challenges

1. LIFE IN A DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENT

INTERNATIONAL ANARCHY   Romans lived in a dangerous neighborhood. The whole of Italy was an anarchic world of contending tribes, independent cities, leagues of cities, and tribal federations. The Mediterranean world beyond Italy was not much different. During the period of Rome's emergence (ca. 500–300 B.C.) the Persian Empire had first consolidated its hold on the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean, and then lost it to Alexander the Great and the Macedonians. The Macedonian successor states of Alexander's empire fought each other to a standstill. They put down internal revolts and battled invaders.

Greeks fought with and against the Persians for two centuries. Individual Greek city-states waged incessant wars with each other, as did alliances of Greek states. Wars lasted for generations. The great Peloponnesian War raged in two phases from 460 to 446 B.C. and from 431 to 404 B.C. During Rome's early years, the Phoenician colony of Carthage in Africa emerged as a belligerent, imperialistic power in the western Mediterranean, driving the Greeks first out of most of that area and then fighting centuries-long campaigns against them in Sicily. They waged similarly aggressive wars against the Berbers of north Africa. Continental Europe, although we know little about its history in detail in comparison with the Mediterranean world, was probably even less settled and certainly as warlike, to judge from the hoards of weapons, armor, and chariots that have been excavated by archaeologists and can be found in huge quantities in northern European museums. Historically, we know of the impact of raiding warrior bands of Celts from Ireland to what is today Turkey. Fear of the Celts, *metus Gallicus*, was lodged deeply in Roman cultural perceptions and, as we will see, with good reason.

"All states are by nature fighting an undeclared war with all other states" said one of the speakers in Plato's dialogue the *Laws* (625e). A corollary of this assertion is that all states and tribes

were always prepared for war. A truer statement of the international situation might perhaps be that "*some* states are by nature fighting declared *and* undeclared wars with *some, possibly many* other states." The irony was (and is) that the absence of organized states leads to anarchy, but so does the existence of organized states. The harsh world of interstate anarchy of the Mediterranean and European worlds fostered a culture of belligerence, militarism and aggressive diplomacy among all parties. International law was minimal and in any case unenforceable. War "is a harsh instructor" said the Greek historian Thucydides, who witnessed the Peloponnesian War at first hand (3.82). If the Romans were good at war it was, in part, because they had so many and such good teachers.

The Regal Period

Under the kings there were no serious external threats either from within or outside Italy. Roman power expanded so that by the end of the fifth century, the city was probably the most powerful of the Latin states. But the historical situation changed quickly. First, Rome was challenged soon after 500 B.C. by its Latin neighbors. Then there occurred one of those demographic shifts to which Italy was periodically subject: the movement of highlanders to the plains. Unfortunately for the Romans, these population movements coincided with the infiltration of an even more aggressive, warrior people from outside Italy, the Celts. Coping with these threats took over two centuries and in the case of the Celts, even longer. As late as 225 B.C., a Celtic horde was able to reach within 50 miles of Rome before being defeated, and during the make-or-break war with Hannibal (218–202 B.C.) the Celts were among his staunchest and most effective allies.

Rome and the Latins

First the Latins, aiming to trim Rome's power, attempted to reinstall the recently expelled king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus, but were defeated by the Romans at the Battle of Lake Regillus in 496 B.C. This was a crucial victory—even if historically obscure—in that it confirmed the recently won independence of the Republic. Later generations of Romans who passed through the Roman Forum were reminded of this battle by the large temple to Castor and Pollux, which was vowed to the two gods by the commander Postumius during the battle and subsequently built in a prominent position in the Forum. It occupies that position to the present day. Three of the fine columns that date from a rebuilding of the temple in 117 B.C. can still be seen.

Following their victory over the Latins, the Romans in 496 B.C. entered into a pact with them, the Cassian Treaty (*Foedus Cassianum*), which regulated their relations for the next century and a half. Its terms are not precisely known, and whether it was a treaty among equals or unequals is disputed.

The task of the alliance was to defend Latium against attack and, where possible, expand its boundaries. The league started with a number of advantages. Latium was a geographical unit with no major mountain ranges to disrupt communications and isolate Latin cities from each other. By 500 B.C. the Latins were already an urbanized people who shared a common ethnicity. Their cities were little self-governing republics, in many respects like Greek *poleis*, but with the advantage that, in addition to speaking the same language, they also shared a number of key legal rights and had a long tradition of religious association. Festivals were celebrated jointly among them at sanctuaries such as that of Diana on the Aventine in Rome, Venus at Lavinium, and—most importantly—every spring in the Alban Hills there was the great Latin festival in honor of Jupiter Latiaris—"Jupiter Guardian of the Latins." Latins could intermarry among themselves (the right known as *conubium*), own property, and enter into contracts which were recognized in each other's cities (*commercium*). They also possessed the right of migration (*ius migrandi*) from one Latin state to another. This right
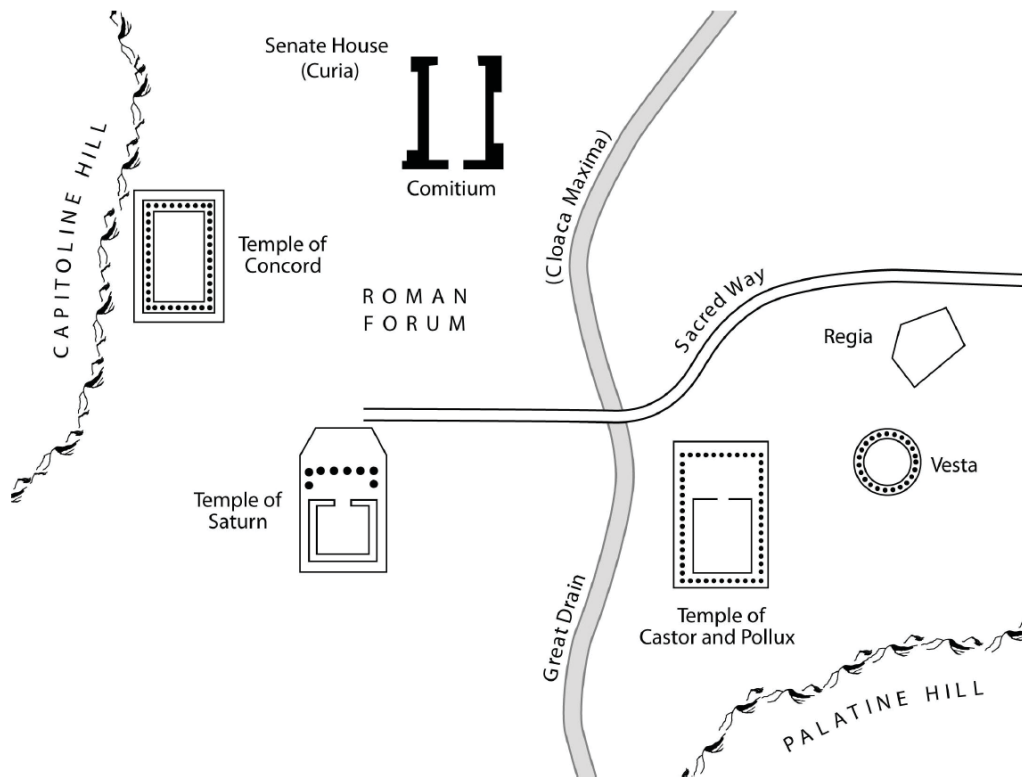
Ground plan of Early Roman Forum

*Before the area known as the Roman Forum could be put to use, it had to be drained. The "Great Drain" (*Cloaca Maxima*) which was built for that purpose in the sixth century B.C. still functions, although it is now integrated with the main sewer system of modern Rome. Its mouth, framed by three concentric arches, is a conspicuous landmark on the Tiber embankment. The drain was much admired in antiquity for the engineering qualities which enabled it to support the great buildings constructed over it and to resist the backwash of frequent floods. The Sacred Way (*Sacra Via*), Rome's oldest street, was lined with porticoes and shops. As the main route to the Capitol, it was used by triumphal processions.*

included the automatic grant of full citizenship in the new domicile. Collectively, these rights were known as the Latin Right (*ius Latii*), and the Romans designated the Latins as Allies of the Latin Name (*socii nominis Latini*).

These shared rights and cultural similarities, important though they were, did not, however, bring about political unity. The Latin states did not evolve or, for that matter, aim to evolve, into a federal union. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of potential military cooperation and greater political unity, the Latins had a major advantage over the other inhabitants of Italy such as the Greeks, Etruscans, and Oscans. These peoples, too, had similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds among themselves, but had even less political unity than did the Latins. For example, when the Etruscan city of Veii was besieged by the Romans, it received no help from the members of the long standing Etruscan league to which it belonged. As in the case of Greek cities, they were notorious for their endless squabbles and their inability to get along with each other.

Temple of the Twins Castor and Pollux

The sorry remains of a once great temple that dominated one end of the Roman forum from the earliest days of the Republic.

The Oscan Threat

It was fortunate that the Cassian Treaty came into existence when it did because both Latins and Romans almost immediately found themselves under severe pressure from migrants and invaders from the mountainous interior of Italy. For the next century Latins and Romans together struggled to maintain themselves against these intruders.

UNSTABLE ITALY   Peninsular Italy was, from the viewpoint of demographics and economics, an inherently unstable region. The plains' peoples were committed to settled agriculture and a form of the state based on the city. The interior mountainous regions were more favorable to herding, and in consequence settlements there were much less permanent. Whereas urbanized centers were the core of the Italian states in the plains regions, the Oscan and Umbrian states in the interior, to the extent they can be called states, took the form of loose tribal confederations. Their populations lived in scattered settlements or hamlets. At least in the case of the Samnites, however, their lack of urbanization did not affect their ability to cooperate among themselves for military purposes.

THE SACRED SPRING   A challenge the Oscans had to deal with intermittently was that of overpopulation. Their solution to this recurring problem was the institution of the "Sacred Spring," (*ver sacrum*). This was a religious ritual in which all of the creatures born in a particular year—human as well as animal—were declared "sacred" (Lat. *sacer*), i.e., dedicated to the gods. At the end of the year all the animals so designated were sacrificed to the gods and so passed into their possession, while the humans were allowed to live but with the understanding that upon reaching adulthood they would emigrate to make a livelihood for themselves elsewhere in Italy. Needless to say such an arrangement made for unstable and unfriendly relations with neighbors. The settled, less aggressive agricultural inhabitants of the lowlands were the most likely victims of the *ver sacrum*. Without warning, a group of warlike and desperate young people might appear out of the mountainous interior and fall on an agricultural settlement or city which they would either take over or perish in the attempt.

The institution of the *ver sacrum* was highly successful, at least from the highlanders' viewpoint. During the fourth century, Oscans infiltrated Campania and took over both the flourishing Etruscan city of Capua and the Greek city of Cumae. The same fate befell many other Greek cities on the Tyrrhenian Sea coast. In Apulia in the south, massive walls had to

Chronology: Wars of the Republic I	
Wars with the Oscans	ca 500–400 B.C.
Capture of the Veii	396 B.C.
Sack of Rome by the Celts	390 B.C.
Latin Revolt	340–338 B.C.
Samnite Wars	326–304; 298–290 B,C,
Battle of Sentinum	295 B.C.
War with Pyrrhus	280–275 B.C.
FIrst Punic War	264–241 B.C.
Second Punic War	218–202 B.C.

be built to defend the towns of that region. By 350 B.C. Lucania and Calabria were overrun by Oscans.

AEQUI, VOLSCI, AND SABINES   While Romans and Latins were squabbling among themselves around 500 B.C., the nearby hill peoples, identified in the sources as Aequi and Volsci (probably Umbrian-speaking), seized their opportunity to expand their possessions and moved down into the plains of Latium and Campania. They overwhelmed the strong Latin towns of Tibur and Praeneste and took possession of the Alban Hills and its sacred sites. Further south they occupied the Monti Lepini and reached the Mediterranean coast where they established themselves at Antium and Terracina. The nearby Etruscan city of Veii took the opportunity of Roman and Latin weakness to seize control of the mouth of the Tiber and the valuable salt route, the Via Salaria, by which salt was carried into the interior of Italy. The Sabines, a hill people with a long history of involvement— peaceful as well as warlike—with Rome now posed an additional threat directly to Rome from the northeast. A significant economic downturn in Rome is detectable in the archaeological record at this time, and the long temple building program which had been begun under the kings came to an abrupt end in 484 B.C. It seems that at this time many Latins took the opportunity to migrate to safety at Rome. A dangerous consequence of the success of the Oscans in fighting their way through Latium to the coast was that the urbanized people of the nearby Trerus River valley, the Hernici, were cut off from their natural cultural allies, the Latins.

A DESPERATE SITUATION?   It is hard to estimate how desperate the situation was at this time for the Latins, Romans, and Hernici. In the absence of any genuinely useful information, the historians of later periods inflated what little information they had to give the impression that the armies of the contenders were locked in constant warfare. That there was constant warfare is undoubtedly accurate, but armies, at least not large armies, are unlikely to have been involved. The experience of the Romans and Latins was not at all like the epic collision that occurred at about the same time between the Greeks and the Persian Empire, where genuinely large armies and fleets were involved. More often than not the clashes of the Latins with their foes were in the forms of skirmishes, raids and counter raids, as the Roman historian Livy noted.

Some perspective is provided when we consider the size of the region in dispute. Most of the action of the century and a half of war took place within a radius of 12–25 miles of Rome. Veii, the nearby threatening Etruscan city, was just 10 miles from Rome. Another major Etruscan city, Caere, was 24 miles away; the important Latin city of Tibur was 18 miles and Tusculum about 12. Nevertheless, we should not overly discount the reports of the sources. The fact that warfare kept up for over a century suggests that despite the resources of the Latins, a significant struggle, whatever the size of

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The Fate of a Greek City at the Hands of the Oscans

The story is told by the historian Aristoxenus of Tarentum who lived about the time of the conquest of Poseidonia (modern Paestum, south of Naples) by Oscan highlanders.

We act like the peoples of Poseidonia who live on the Tyrrhenian Sea. Although they were originally Greeks, it happened that they were completely barbarized, and became Oscans. Nevertheless they still celebrate one festival that is Greek to the present. For this event they gather together and recall those ancient words and institutions which were once theirs and after lamenting them and weeping over them in each other's presence, they return home (Athenaeus 14.632a).

the forces involved, took place. Romans and Latins and their institutions were tested severely. Fortunately for them they proved, in the end, capable of outlasting their more simply organized, if more aggressive, opponents. It is worth spending time on this early period because it was precisely in this only vaguely-known segment of Roman history that its character and institutions were developed. When better sources become available (after 300 B.C.), Rome's childhood and a good part of its adolescence, so to speak, were already over. By then it was already a highly successful, functioning state.

COUNTER MEASURES   What looked like small steps to counter the invaders had important results. Like American frontier forts, Latin fortresses were established at the strategic locations of Cora, Signia, Norba, and Setia with the aim of containing the Volsci in the Alban Hills and the Monti Lepini. Their powerful defensive walls are still impressive.

These fortresses put the invading Oscans on the defensive, though as late as 350 the Volsci were still in possession of Velitrae in the Alban Hills and Privernum in the Monti Lepini. An alliance was made with the Hernici and a little later with the Samnites. The climactic battle of the war took place in 431 B.C. at the Algidus Pass, just 18 miles from Rome. Vague recollections of these events were stored in the memories and archives, such as they were, of great Roman families such as the Quinctii (to which clan Cincinnatus belonged), the Valerii, Claudii, Cornelli, Julii, Postumii, Manlii, Fabii and others. These tales were heavily embroidered by later historians who liberally borrowed from Greek sources and later periods of Roman history.[1]

The Walls of Norba
The massive east gate of Norba. Norba was one of a string of colony-fortresses established on impregnable positions in the foothills of the Monti Lepini to contain the raids of the Aequi and protect the great north-south highway, the Via Appia. Norba, along with her sister fortresses served Rome and the Latins well in all their wars in Italy.

[1]It is not always certain that a particular family later prominent in Roman history is to be connected with a particular event in early times. Families preserved tales of their ancestors and sometimes were able to insert the names of ancestors, fictitious or otherwise, into the record.

The Fall of Veii

By dint of constant fighting the Sabines, Aequi and Volsci were either defeated, driven back into the hills, or contained. By 400 B.C. Rome was ready to turn its attention to the nearby Etruscan city of Veii which, given its location just 10 miles away, posed an immediate threat to Rome. After an

Early Rome and Her Neighbors

epic siege of supposedly 10 years (suspiciously like the 10 year siege of Troy by the Greeks), Veii fell and Rome appropriated its gods, its people and its territory. By the ritual of *evocatio* ("calling-forth"), the gods of Veii were invited to abandon the fallen city and move to Rome, where they would continue to be worshipped. The most famous of the Veian gods who migrated to Rome in this fashion was the goddess Juno (the Greek equivalent was Hera), who ended up with her own temple on the Aventine Hill where she was worshipped as Juno Regina, Queen Juno. By this process Rome not only propitiated the angry gods of Veii but also eliminated the political claims of Veii by delegitimizing its right to divine protection. *Evocatio* was to become a feature of Roman statecraft and imperialism during the Republic. A particularly prominent example of the use of *evocatio* in later time was the calling forth of the gods of Carthage, Rome's mortal enemy, which in 146 B.C. was eliminated as completely as was Veii.

THE SPOILS OF VICTORY Apart from removing a dangerous strategic rival, the conquest of Veii immensely expanded Rome's economic and military resources. It is estimated that Rome's territory was increased by about 60%. Veii's land was divided up into parcels of 7 iugera (about 4½ acres) and distributed, according to Livy, to every member of the plebeians (5.30). An important side-effect of individual (*viritim*) land grants of this type to poor citizens was that by being bumped up in the census, they became eligible to serve in the main striking force of the army, the phalanx, and not merely as skirmishers or light infantry as they had been in the past. For the same reason, they moved up within the political system to higher levels of participation and influence. In Rome's political culture, higher levels of civic responsibility in both military and political domains followed upon elevation in economic status. In the class-census (*classis*) system, privileges were nicely balanced with responsibilities (more on this in the next chapter). This technique of individual land grants, which was used throughout much of Rome's history, had the multiplying effect of reducing poverty while at the same time increasing the state's citizen manpower reserves, its citizens' political participation, and overall economic strength.

Conquest and Colonies

The conquest of Veii represented Rome's most significant independent (i.e., independent of the help of the Latin League) acquisition of territory to date. Paradoxically, however, in proportion as Rome expanded its borders it became exposed to new threats—the problem of all expanding states, imperial or otherwise. As old buffer zones were eliminated, Rome found itself with new—often hostile—neighbors and new borders to defend. Expansionism of this type had to balance the gains of new territory with new defensive responsibilities. Given a sufficient level of paranoia—or aggressiveness—this process could go on forever.

To address this challenge, Rome relied on an old technique used in the past in conjunction with the Latins: the construction of a jointly sponsored fortress in recently conquered territory. The Latin term for these frontier posts is "colony" (*colonia*) but that term has become so loaded with modern meanings that we need to keep in mind that for Romans and Latins, the term originally had a specific, defensive connotation.
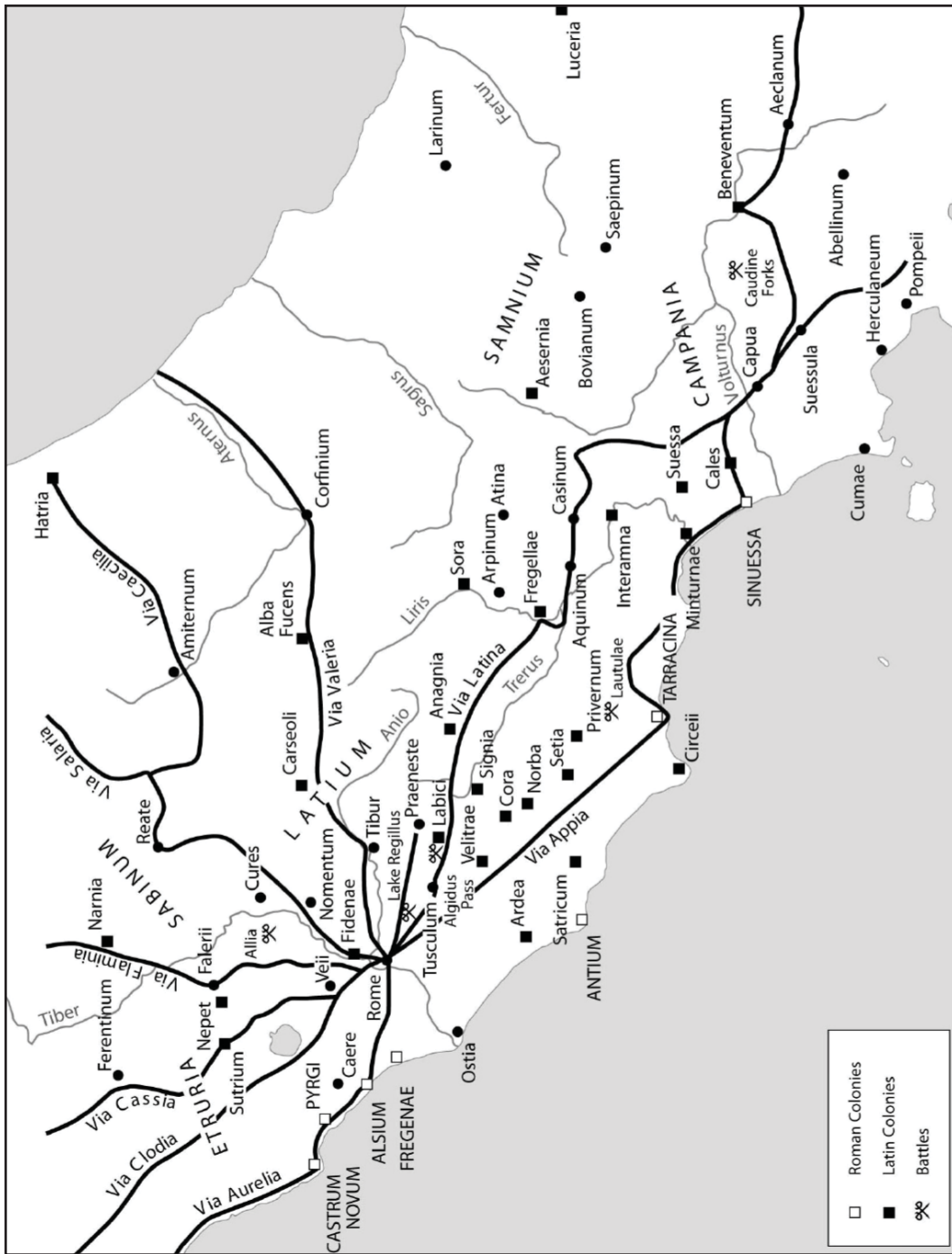
THE PROBLEM OF ANNEXATION Few ancient states, and certainly not Rome or any other Latin state in this period, had the capacity to annex and bureaucratically administer new territory. *Polis* type states de facto had minimal governments and no standing bureaucracies whatsoever. The

"administration" of such states was made up of a handful of annually elected magistrates, a council made up of ex-magistrates, and at certain regular times, citizen assemblies. Occasionally committees of these assemblies served in administrative capacities, but only for very carefully defined periods of time, usually no more than a year. No administrative position had a salary attached to it. Compensation for those who served in these capacities was psychic and political. The individual gained in honor and enhanced powers of patronage; his family gained in glory and authority. There were no paid professional politicians or administrators in ancient *poleis*, and Rome was no exception. At most the state covered the expenses of magistrates and administrators, but there was nothing like, for example the bureaucracies the British built up to administer India or the Ottomans the Middle East. In the absence of such complex governmental bodies, Romans and Latins had to find other means to protect their territory. Hence the invention of the "colony."

THE LATIN COLONY   The Latin colony was an ingenious invention. It was a sovereign state, an autonomous, self-governing entity with its own citizen assemblies, elected magistrates and senates (councils made up of ex-magistrates), but with loyalties to the larger Latin community. It drew its membership from throughout the Latin League, allowing citizens of different Latin cities (including Rome) to leave their home states and start a new life for themselves among a whole new set of faces. Just this opportunity alone must have appealed to a certain number of people. There was also a very significant material incentive: a decent size grant of land which elevated the founding members of a colony to a new and higher socio-economic status. For a second or third son who had little chance of making it in the home state, for men as well as for women, the availability of new land represented an escape from a possibly poverty-stricken existence.

There was, however, a price of sorts to be paid: the loss of citizenship in one's native state. Thus a Roman citizen joining a new Latin colony ceased to be a Roman citizen and acquired the Latin citizenship of the new colony, and similarly for citizens of other Latin states. Settlement among hostile indigenous peoples far from home and among strangers from other states, although fellow citizens, must have created difficulties of all sorts. Nevertheless, the fact that so many Latin colonies were successfully established over so many centuries (eventually there were 34 of them), and under such difficult conditions says a great deal about the capacity of the Latins to cooperate among themselves in new ventures.

About a dozen Latin colonies (sometimes called *priscae Latinae Coloniae*—the earliest, "old time" Latin colonies) were established before the Latin League came to an end in 338 B.C. Fidenae, Sutrium and Nepet guarded the northern approaches to Rome and Latium. Velitrae, Signia, Norba, Cora and Setia protected the Latin plain from the Volsci and Aequi, who had taken possession of the Alban Hills and the Monti Lepini. Satricum and Ardea covered the southern approach to Rome and backed up Cora and Norba farther north. Antium and Circeii were fortresses on the coast. All these fortresses were situated in naturally strong positions, some on hill tops, some on the sides of steep ravines or on rivers or streams. They guarded roads, rivers, and mountain passes, and were impossible to take except as a result of extended sieges which could not be conducted without inviting an attack from other colonies, from Rome itself, or its allies. Together they formed a deep defensive network protecting the Latin heartland. In the course of centuries, fortresses of this type were established at strategic points throughout Italy. They were to become Rome's most faithful allies—its primary shield—and over time the most effective dispensers of Latin culture from the Alps to Magna Graecia in the south. They were also to become as Cicero said later, "the fetters of Italy."

Colonies and Roads

Legend:
- □ Roman Colonies
- ■ Latin Colonies
- ✂ Battles

Labels:

Luceria

Larinum

Ferrur

Aeclanum

Beneventum

Saepinum

Abellinum

SAMNIUM

Caudine Forks

Aesernia

Bovianum

CAMPANIA

Pompeii

Herculaneum

Volturnus

Capua

Suessula

Cumae

Sagrus

Suessa

Cales

Corfinium

Aternus

SINUESSA

Hatria

Atina

Casinum

Arpinum

Via Caecilia

Amiternum

Alba Fucens

Sora

Fregellae

Interamna

Minturnae

TARRACINA

Liris

Aquinum

Lautulae

Carseoli

Via Valeria

Anagnia

Via Latina

Trerus

Privernum

Circeii

Via Salaria

Anio

LATIUM

Praeneste

Labici

Signia

Cora

Norba

Setia

Reate

SABINUM

Tibur

Lake Regillus

Velitrae

Cures

Nomentum

Tusculum

Algidus Pass

Ardea

Satricum

Via Appia

Narnia

Fidenae

Allia

ANTIUM

Via Flaminia

Falerii

Veii

Rome

Ferentinum

Tiber

Nepet

Caere

Ostia

ETRURIA

Sutrium

PYRGI

ALSIUM

FREGENAE

Via Cassia

Via Clodia

CASTRUM NOVUM

Via Aurelia

The Warlike Celts (Gauls, Gaels)

Despite success in containing the Etruscans, Sabines, Aequi, and Volsci, and having expanded north of the Tiber by incorporating Veii, Rome and Latium were not secure. Warlike Celtic tribes from across the Alps had been settling in the Po valley for a number of generations and had already dislodged the Etruscans from that region. They were now threatening Etruria itself. These events occurred towards the end of the fifth century B.C., but the bulk of the migration seems to have taken place primarily during the fourth century. In due course the Po valley itself came to be known to the Romans as *Gallia Cisalpina*—Cisalpine Gaul ("Gaul This Side of the Alps"). News of these settlements and awareness that the Celts could launch attacks through various passes in the Apennines was available to Romans and Latins alike. Livy notes that one of the reasons the Etruscan cities did not come to the aid of Veii when it was under Roman siege was their preoccupation with "new settlers of strange nationality with whom their relations were ambivalent and far from comfortable" in parts of Etruria (Livy 5.18).

THE SACK OF ROME   Of the Latin cities, Rome, being the farthest north, was the most exposed. Still, while not unexpected, the appearance of a Celtic horde just north of Rome, the quick and overwhelming defeat of the Roman army at the battle of the Allia (390 B.C.), and the subsequent capture of Rome itself, must have been an overwhelming shock to the Romans. It undoubtedly contributed to the defensive paranoia that fueled much of Rome's expansion in later years. Forever after, July 18, the *dies Alliensis*, "The Day of the Allia," was observed officially as an "inauspicious day" in the Roman calendar. Fear of the northerners, *metus Gallicus*, became embedded in the Roman psyche more deeply than any other fear, and was reflected even in its law. A special state of emergency known as the *tumultus Gallicus* could be called by the magistrates. It suspended all exemptions from military service and gave the authorities a free hand to call up whatever reserves they thought were necessary to meet the threat. The state had made a decision that the sack of Rome would not be repeated.

THE FAILURE OF THE LATIN LEAGUE   At this critical juncture it was clear that the Latin League and the concentric lines of defense built up in the previous century had failed spectacularly. This revelation of the city's vulnerability deeply influenced its future strategic thinking and led to a fundamental reevaluation of the usefulness of the Latin alliance. The success of the first invasion, it was felt, would surely encourage the Gauls to raid again, and indeed for the next two centuries this was the case. It was particularly worrying because these invastions occurred unpredictably. For example, a powerful Celtic force appeared in 358 B.C. at Pedum, just 14 miles from Rome. Less than 10 years later they were again in Latium, this time in alliance with a Greek fleet from southern Italy. To meet this particular threat took one of the largest call-ups of troops in Roman history.

Roman Recovery

The opportunity to reorganize Rome's defenses came soon enough. The Celts moved on in search of new opportunities for glory and plunder, and the Romans set about building proper defenses for the city. Stone walls about six miles long made of rock from the quarries of Veii were constructed around the core of the built-up area. (So strong were these walls that a good stretch of them, the so-called "Servian Walls" can still be seen just outside the main train station in Rome). Their construction is an indication of both Rome's fear of future attacks and its resourcefulness. Colonies

were established to the north at Sutrium and Nepet, and at Setia and Satricum to the south. Nearby Tusculum was fully incorporated into the Roman state in 381 B.C. Its citizens were given the full Roman franchise while being allowed to administer their own internal affairs as they had in the past. A city of this type, having local autonomy but with Roman citizenship, came to be known as a *municipium*—that is. a city that shared the burdens (*munera*) of the Roman state, mainly the responsibility of military service. The nearby city of Caere was given a limited form of cititzenship called *hospitium*, a kind of honorary citizenship, in recognition of services rendered to Rome during the Celtic occupation.

LATIN UNHAPPINESS   The Latins also began to reevaluate their relationship with Rome. Secure for the time being against outside aggression, they took a critical look at Rome's growth and came to the conclusion that the conquest of Veii and the settlement of its territory by Roman homesteaders had created a huge imbalance in their relationship. Then in 354 B.C. the Romans made an alliance with the Samnite federation, which was a significant power to the east of the Latins. This was followed in 348 B.C. by an alliance with Carthage which essentially recognized Rome's preeminence in the central plains region of Italy.

The main trigger, however, for the dissolution of Rome's relationship with the Latins came as a result of a request for help from the Campanian city of Capua which found itself threatened by Samnite encroachment. This action, taken independently of the Latin League, gave Rome a toehold on the southern side of Latium. From the Latin viewpoint this amounted to a form of envelopment.

A TURNING POINT IN HISTORY   The decision of Rome to abandon its recent alliance with the Samnites and aid the Campanians was logical, strategic—and opportunistic. Capua was the head of a rich, well established federation in Campania, and in terms of political culture closer to Rome than the Samnites. In choosing to take up the cause of a *polis*–type state, the Romans began the long process of defending urbanized peoples throughout the Italian peninsula—and eventually outside Italy—against the tribal Celts and Oscans. This decision by the Romans, despite its apparent unimportance, was actually a turning point in their history and possibly, not to overly exaggerate, in world history. Romans of later generations recognized this, and the belief found its reflection in the work of Livy, the great historian of the late Republic. Livy noted that the alliance with Capua led inevitably to war with the Samnites. Victory over the Samnites in turn had the effect of projecting Roman power deep into southern Italy. This then provoked the enmity of the powerful Greek city of Tarentum which turned for help to Pyrrhus, a Hellenistic king from Epirus, just across the Adriatic from Tarentum. Roman victory over Pyrrhus and Tarentum led them, finally, into war with the Carthaginians (Livy 7.29).

The conflict with the Samnites ended soon after it began (the First Samnite War 343–341 B.C.). An agreement was worked out by which the Samnites recognized coastal central Italy, including Campania, as part of the Roman sphere of interest while the Romans recognized Samnite suzerainty of the inland areas of central Italy and the left bank of the Liris River in Campania. At this point, probably thinking that their situation—wedged between Rome and Roman-dominated Campania—was critical, the Latins rightly recognized that their autonomy was at stake and rose in revolt (340–338 B.C.). The war was hard fought, but its details are unknown. With help from their erstwhile enemies the Samnites, the Romans defeated the Latins decisively by 338 B.C., and a whole new era of Roman history began.
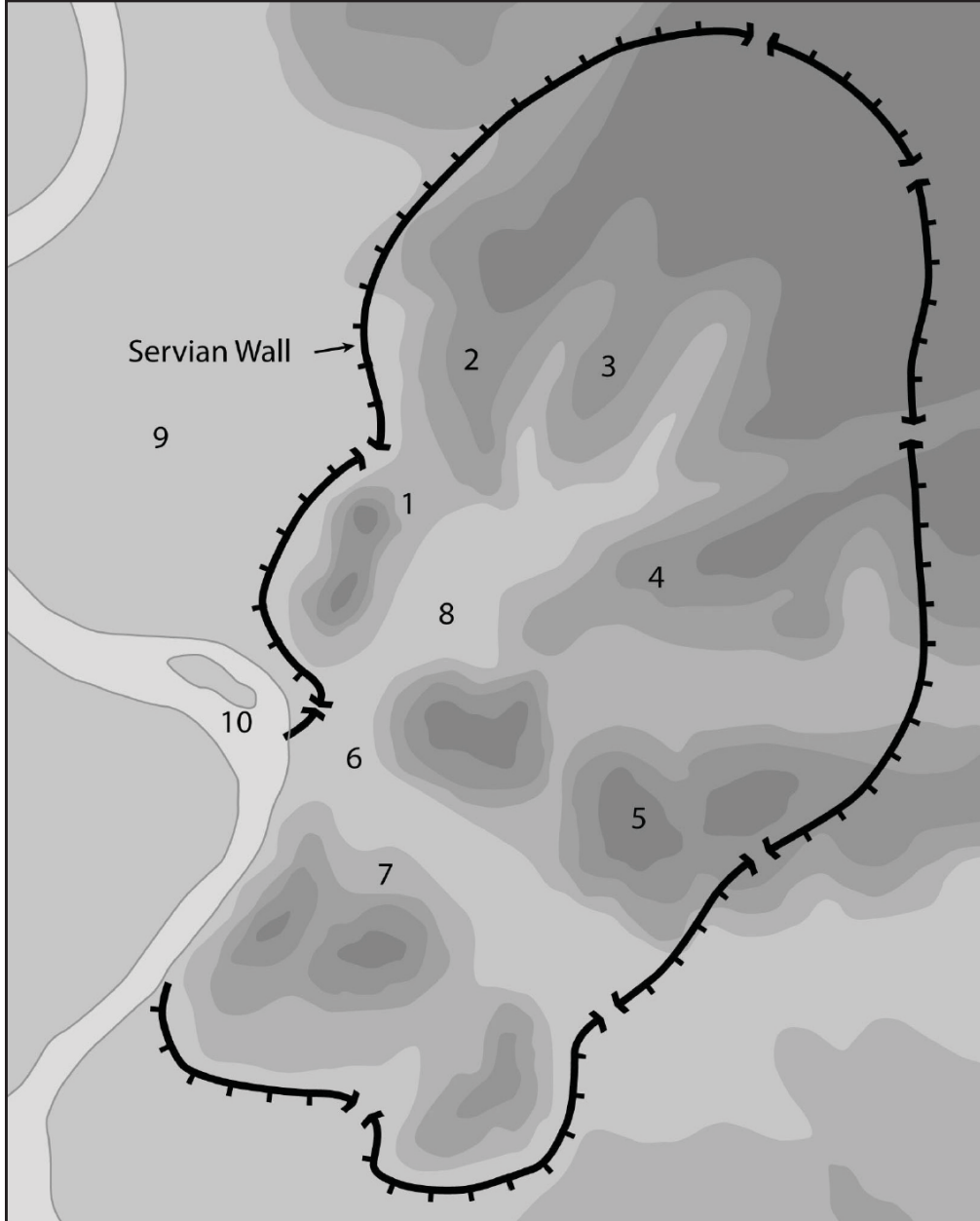
Rome, Seven Hills, Servian Walls

*The Seven Hills of Rome and the so-called "Servian Wall," actually built in the fourth century after the Celtic sack of the city. The Romans disagreed as to which of the hills should be counted among the "Seven Hills" of Rome. The most likely are the following: **1.** Capitoline; **2.** Quirinal; **3.** Viminal; **4.** Esquiline; **5.** Caelian; **6.** Palatine; **7.** Aventine. Also included are **8.** The Forum, and **9.** The* Campus Martius *or "Field of Mars" located outside the pomerium, and **10.** The Tiber Island where the Tiber was most easily crossed. The Servian Walls are indicated by the dark perimeter line.*

2. A NEW BEGINNING: ROME AFTER THE LATIN WAR

The settlement worked out with the Latins after the war was crucial to Rome's future development. Despite the obscurity of the period, which comes as a result of poor documentary evidence, we know enough to conclude that a major historical milestone was passed. Principally it was this: The old rule for *polis*-type societies was that, once a certain size in terms of population and territory had been reached, further development was impossible without loss of the fundamental constitution and way of life of the *polis*. Most Greek *poleis* were in the realm of 700–1000 families and a territory of perhaps 25–100 square kilometers. Even Athens, which had a much larger population and territory than most *poleis*, had built-in limitations to its growth. Rome after the defeat of the Latins found a way out of this cul-de-sac that allowed for growth while at the same time retaining the characteristics of its *polis* and its Republican constitution.

The End of the Latin League: Terms of the Settlement

The momentous solution worked out by Rome for its defeated adversaries did not spring out of nothingness. Latins and Romans, as previously noted, had much in common both culturally and politically. They had such mutually interchangeable rights as marriage, trade, and migration. The establishment of the institution of the colony showed how expansion could be achieved without loss of autonomy. Basing its solution on this past experience, the Romans settled on the following:

1. While some land was confiscated from the conquered Latins, Volsci, and Campanians and assigned to individual Roman settlers, the bulk was left in the possession of its original inhabitants. The conquered were neither enslaved nor reduced to the level of serfs, but given new legal, social, and political relationships with Rome.

2. The Latin League was abolished as an institution. A small number of Latins were incorporated in the Roman state and given full citizenship rights while being allowed to continue to administer their own internal affairs. These were such smaller Latin states as Lanuvium, Pedum, Aricia, and Nomentum. Citizens of such states became Roman citizens in the fullest sense (*cives optimo iure*) and their states became known as *municipia optimo iure*.[2] They could vote in Roman assemblies and run for Roman political offices. At the same time they had control of their own internal affairs. What they lost was the ability to conduct foreign affairs as independent states.

    On the whole the number of citizens inducted into the Roman citizenship body at this time was small. Nevertheless, cautious as it was, an important precedent was established, namely, that non-citizens could be given all the rights of Roman citizens *while* retaining citizenship of their own, native communities. The connection between citizenship and place was severed. In the past a person could be only a citizen of the place of his native birth and present domicile. After 338 B.C. it was in principle possible for a community any place in Italy (or elsewhere for that matter) to have the full Roman citizenship while retaining its own local autonomy and citizenship.

3. The large Latin states of Tibur and Praeneste which were too large to be absorbed, at least at this time, remained as Latin states but with individual treaties with Rome and no capacity to

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[2] The English dictionary equivalent of *municipium*, municipality, does not much help our understanding of the Roman term. In this instance it seemed better to keep the Latin term.

act independently in the matter of foreign relations. In this regard all diplomatic arrangements, declarations of war, treaties with foreigners and so forth, were a matter for Rome to decide. Cora also received this status as a reward for service on the Roman side during the recent war. These were *civitates foederatae*, allied states with separate treaties with Rome.

4. Seven old Latin colonies founded before 338 B.C. remained as Latin colonies, but their relationship was now exclusively and individually with Rome, not with each other as autonomous members of the Latin league. These were Sutrium, Nepet, Ardea, Circeii, Signia, Setia and Sutrium. They were forbidden to consult with each other as they had in the past and their mutual rights of trade (*commercium*) and marriage (*conubium*) were abrogated. The territories of Antium and Velitrae were annexed.

5. The truly major problem that needed a solution was what to do about peoples such as the Volsci and the Campanians who were differed from Rome in language and culture. The traditional solutions—enslavement or enserfment—were not considered. Instead the Romans came up with a new legal status for them: second class citizenship and partial incorporation in the Roman state. Such states were designated as *civitates sine suffragio* or *municipia sine suffragio*—states without the vote but having to bear the burdens (*munera*) of military service in the Roman army.

   It was an unpopular status as Rome found out quickly, but it had its uses and it was certainly a lot better than some of the usual alternatives that defeated states suffered in ancient (or more recent times). Citizens of such states could migrate to Roman territory and achieve full citizenship. They were in a better position to familiarize themselves with Roman law, political practice and culture than would otherwise have been possible and could thus move toward full incorporation in the Roman state. Their elites were able to establish important personal relationships with their opposite members at Rome. De facto, the status of citizenship without the vote became a preparatory phase for full citizenship. From the Roman viewpoint, to have whole groups of cities and peoples in the *sine suffragio* status served to create a buffer zone between Roman territory and more distant allies who had less constricting relations with Rome. The Hernici, old-time allies of Rome but enemies during the Latin war, opted to remain as allies rather than accept the status of *sine suffragio*.

6. Roman citizen colonies, i.e. independent cities made up exclusively of Roman citizens, were sent out to two key places on the coast, Ostia and Antium, to provide protection against piratical raids. This step was taken as an alternative to the creation of a navy for which Rome was not yet ready, and indeed Rome was historically slow to extend its power by naval means, although eventually it had no choice but to build a fleet of its own.

7. There was an important religious and cultural component of the settlement of 338 B.C. Ancient myths, which told of Rome's founding by the venerable Latin state of Alba Longa and of the shared Trojan origin of Latins and Romans, were emphasized. Although the Latin League as an association of independent republics was over, its religious traditions were maintained. As in the past, joint religious festivals were held at the traditional Latin shrines throughout Latium. Thus was cemented the idea of ethnic unity, although the new state engineered in 338 B.C. was not based on ethnicity. In fact, the genius of the Roman invention of 338 B.C. was that any ethnic group anywhere in Italy (and eventually anywhere in the Mediterranean) could be incorporated in some fashion into the Roman state; neither ethnicity, nor language nor culture were obstacles to Roman growth—provided, of course, the incorporated peoples

were willing to agree to the rules of the new state. The Republic had begun to evolve from a *polis*-type state into a proto-territorial state, without losing the advantages of a *polis*-state or acquiring the administrative disadvantages that normally went with the acquisition of large amounts of conquered territory and resentful, subject populations.

Consequences of the Settlement of 338 B.C.

WHAT ROME AVOIDED   First, a permanent class of serfs or slaves was not created. As a result, Roman garrisons were not needed to police the newly conquered territories. Second, no oppressive administrative bureaucracies were imposed by Rome. Roman appointees did not run the dozens of cities that now came under Roman overlordship. Except for the states without the vote (*civitates sine suffragio*), the conquered states paid no tribute to Rome. No Roman judges, tax collectors, or police intruded in the lives of the conquered peoples. What Rome demanded were soldiers in time of war, not taxes. The conquered ran their own internal affairs much as they had in the past. The new Roman state was in fact just a loose confederation of self-administering cities and communities dependent to a considerable extent on mutual tolerance and trust. This goes a long way towards explaining why Roman civic ideology and political propaganda stressed *fides*—trust, good faith, dependability—so much. Because it underpinned domestic culture and social relations in Rome itself, it was logical to promote it also in foreign relations.

WHAT ROME GAINED   From economic and military viewpoints, the settlement of the Latin war produced huge gains for Rome. Direct annexation of population and territory was small, but the transformation of its former allies as described above resulted in an overall 37 percent increase of territory and a 42 percent increase of population. The core area of central coastal Italy came under Roman direct control. In emergencies it could call up large bodies of troops and, assuming success in war, could reward all inhabitants of this area with booty and land grants. To order and stability, Rome added tangible material benefits.

The Roman Footprint in Italy

Although Romans were not present in large numbers anywhere outside their central homeland, their fortress-colonies and the roads that connected them with Rome were visible manifestations of their presence or near-presence. The existence of allies and colonies in distant places gave emphasis to the need for good communications at all times of the year and in all weather. Some of these places were genuinely hard to reach, and Rome launched a road building program to link them with each other and with Rome itself. The program took centuries to complete.

ROADS   The Romans learned a great deal about road building from the Etruscans. When they conquered the Etruscan city of Veii, they inherited a preexisting network of roads that connected it to other Etruscan cities to the north and west. To this network the Romans added the Via Amerina which connected the important colony of Nepet to Rome. Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber, and Praeneste, a key city in Latium, were linked to Rome by the Via Ostiensis and the Via Praenestina respectively. The Via Latina was the inland route by which Rome kept open communication with Campania, while somewhat later the Via Appia provided an alternate route closer to the coast. Most of these roads were built along already established tracks or roads. Their elevation to roads (*viae*) involved straightening where possible, the addition of bridges and culverts, and surfacing

with gravel. Paving with stone, which was an expensive under-taking, came later in fits and starts. An important aspect of these road building activities and the huge expenses involved suggest that Romans had arrived at a high level of self-confidence. They knew that while good roads provided a quick means of reinforc-ing frontier fortresses and aiding allies, the converse was also true: enemies could use the roads to attack Rome. In fact the Via Latina was used by both Pyrrhus (in the early third century), and Hannibal (later in the same century) when they launched their raids on Rome itself.

Coin with Fides legend

CENTURIATION   The division of land confiscated from ene-mies also left a powerful visible imprint on the landscape of Italy. Whether it was a matter of founding a colony or individual allot-ments an elaborate process known as centuriation (*centuriatio*) was used to guarantee an orderly transfer of land to the settlers and their descendants. Roman surveyors divided up the land to be assigned into squares, rectangles and irregular areas marked by stone boundary markers, a number
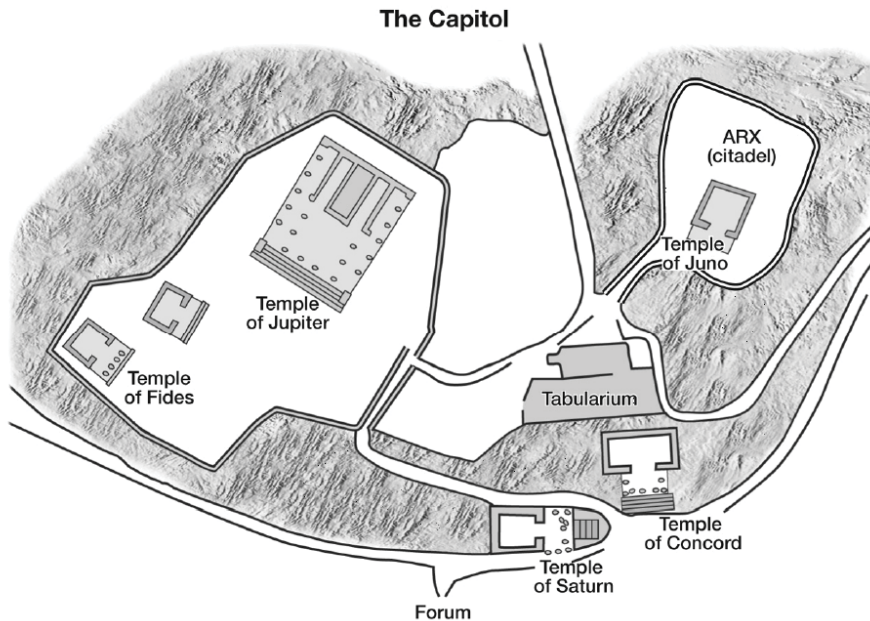
**Plan of Capitoline Hill**
The Romans gave visual emphasis to their ideology. The Temple of Fides was located in a prominent position on the Capitol overlooking the Forum as a perpetual reminder to Romans and visitors to Rome of the stock Romans claimed to put in trustworthiness and dependability. The clasped hands on the coin proclaim the dependability of the armies (first century A.D.).
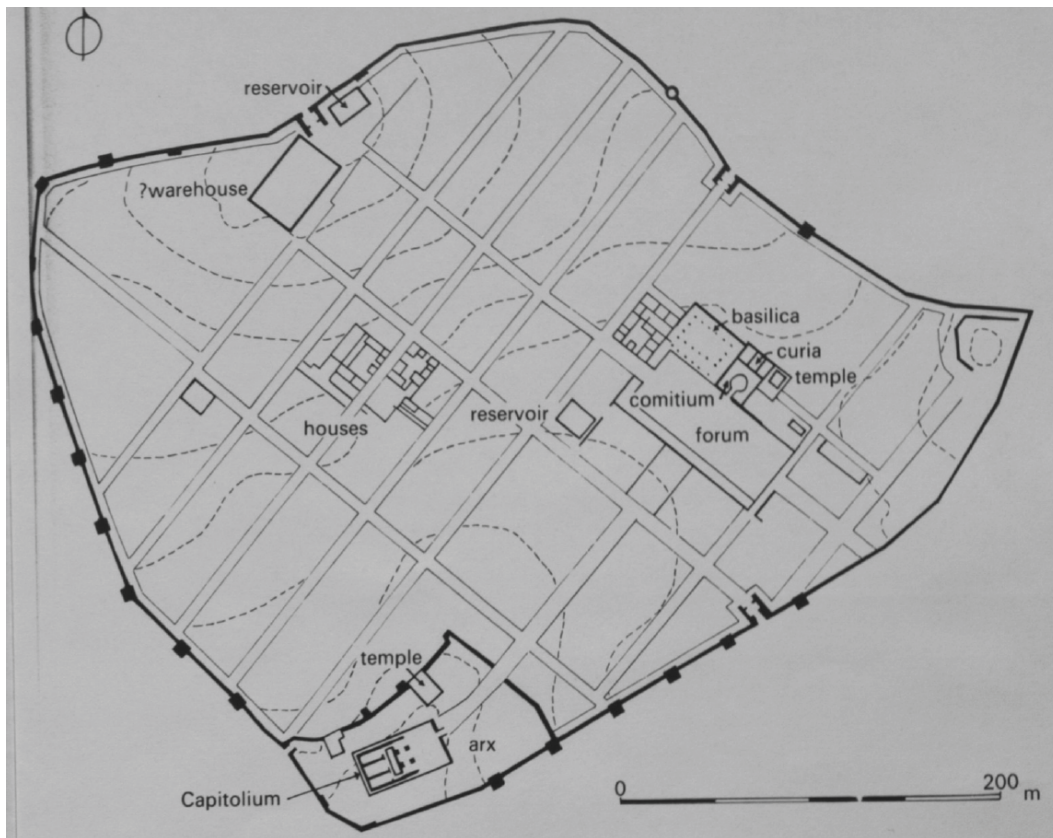
Ground plan of Cosa

Cosa was founded in 273 B.C. as a frontier outpost on the coast north of Rome. The colony had to cope with pirates and the nearby hostile Etruscan city of Vulci. It was surrounded by walls. Eighteen towers facing the sea strengthened the defenses. Its capitolium *or tripartite temple to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, was located on the hill above the colony in the* arx *or citadel. It was built in imitation of its counterpart in Rome. Such "Capitols" were a standard feature of all Roman colonies.*

of which survive. Registers were kept of the allotments to keep control of the land distribution process and avoid future disputes.

The work of centuriation is most visible from the air where the marks of the original grids can still be seen in the ground throughout Italy, but most especially in the Po valley and in Apulia in southern Italy.[3] The unit of measurement was the *actus* and the normal size of a century was 20 x 20 *actus*, or about 125 acres. The actual lines (*limites*) of the grid were marked by walls, roads and ditches and it is these that have left their mark in the countryside to the present. *Limites* that ran east and west were known as *decumani*; north-south lines were *kardines*.

Centuriation, the presence of Latin speaking peoples in powerfully fortified colonies, and roads linking the colonies to each other and to Rome were constant reminders to the native peoples that although they may have been a majority in terms of population, real power no longer lay with them.

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[3]Centuriation is still visible over large areas of Tunisia, France, Germany, the Danube Valley and parts of the Middle East.

For native elites there was little choice but to cooperate with the new authorities. Thus began the slow, uneven process of "Romanization." Long before the term "divide and conquer" was invented, Rome was following the procedure throughout Italy as a matter of self-interested statecraft. Eventually it would do so throughout the Mediterranean and a good portion of Atlantic and continental Europe.

The Roman Military

The Roman army had originally been modeled on the close-order fighting unit of the phalanx used by Greek armies. The Roman phalanx, perhaps 4,000 men strong, was made up of heavily armed infantrymen or hoplites who were equipped with cuirass (breast plates), greaves (shin guards), helmets, and round shields. Packed closely together in files eight deep, the purpose of the phalanx was to drive enemy forces from the field and hold the ground captured.

For the siege of Veii, the legion was expanded from 4,000 to 6,000 men, probably by expanding the single class system to five classes. Pay may have been introduced at this time for the purpose of covering the individual soldier's living costs while away from home. The cavalry unit of the army went from 6 to 18 centuries. By mid fourth century, the single legionary army was split into two legions, and by the end of the century there were four legions. By that time also the phalanx legion had been transformed into the more flexible manipular legion made up of 30 subunits called "maniples" (*manipuli*—"handfuls"), and each maniple was in turn divided into two "centuries" (of 60 to 80 men) commanded by centurions. It took most of the century for the Romans to complete the restructuring of their army, but in the end it was an extraordinarily efficient fighting force.[4]

AUXILIARIES AND THE ALLIES   What we think of when we hear the term "Roman Army" is, reasonably enough, an armed body of men made up of Romans. In reality, however, a Roman army was rarely made up of just "Romans." Brigaded alongside the Roman legions was an equal number of soldiers drawn from its Latin and non-Latin allies. Thus a consular army of two legions would be accompanied on campaign by two legion-equivalents of allies. Under treaty arrangements with Rome, the allies at the beginning of each year were told how many troops they needed to provide and when and where they were to appear. Allied units were made up of 500 men in *turmae* or cohorts, 10 of which made a wing (*ala*)—the term for the legion-equivalent. Their equipment, so far as we can tell, was the same as that of the Romans themselves. The individual allied cohorts were commanded by their own officers called *praefecti*. Somewhat confusingly the whole allied *ala* was commanded also by prefects, but these were Roman officers appointed by the consuls.

3.   THE SAMNITE WARS: THE CAMPAIGN FOR ITALY

Down to the settlement of 338 B.C. Rome had been buffered against direct contact with the Samnite federation by the presence of its Hernican and Latins allies. The settlement of 338 B.C., however, put Rome, through its Campanian involvement with Capua, in direct confrontation with the Samnites.

CONFRONTATION WITH THE SAMNITES   As the Romans were expanding their hegemony, so were the Samnites. Strategically located on a saddle of mountain land overlooking two of the major plains of Italy, Campania and Apulia, Samnium was in a position to dominate all of central and southern Italy. By the mid–fourth century B.C. it was well on the way to doing so. Previous Oscan incursions from the highlands had, as we have seen, swept the Greeks and Etruscans out of Campania (with

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[4]The next chapter has an extended discussion of the military changes that took place in the fourth century.

the exception of Naples), but when Rome incorporated the Campanians into its commonwealth in 338 B.C., it came into direct competition with the Samnites for control of that area. The Samnites in turn were confronted for the first time not just by individual cities as they had been in the past, but by an organized block of peoples reaching from south of Naples to Etruria. The confrontation between the two powers came in the Liris valley. It is unlikely that at this time either side thought they were about to enter into a multi-phased, decades-long war for supremacy in Italy, but that is what occurred.

Rome strengthened its position in the Liris valley by founding Latin colonies at Cales in 334 B.C. and Fregellae in 328 B.C., and a Roman colony at Tarracina on the coast in 329 B.C.[5] The founding of Fregellae, which was on the left bank of the Liris, may have been seen as a particularly provocative act because the Samnites had for some time been moving to control that area. In addition, Rome had interests in Apulia, into which the Samnites were infiltrating, where the cities of Arpi and Luceria had requested Roman help. The great conflict was thus a struggle throughout most of central and southern Italy between the urbanized, agricultural populations of the plains and the pastoral highland peoples. For almost a generation the wars dragged on—bloody, confused, unending. They occurred in two phases: the Second Samnite War between 326 B.C. and 304 B.C., and the Third Samnite War between 298 B.C. and 290 B.C.

The Strategic Issues of the Samnite Wars

Each side had strategic advantages and disadvantages. Geographically the Samnites had a major advantage over Rome throughout their protracted contests. "No position in war is stronger," says the military analyst Correlli Barnett, "than a strategic offensive coupled with a tactical defensive."[6] Translated for the war between Rome and Samnium, this means that Italian topography made it easy for the Samnites to attack Roman territory, but difficult for the Romans to attack the Samnite homeland. The most natural approach to Samnium for Roman armies was through Campania, but rugged mountains on Samnium's Campanian side made any assault from that direction difficult. The Romans always had to attack uphill, as it were, into the mountain fastnesses of the Samnites.

Samnium had a weakness, however: Its rear was vulnerable to an attack from the plains of Apulia. The only problem with an Apulian strategy for Rome was how it was to get its armies into Apulia. Not by sea—Rome lacked a fleet and even if it had one the dangers of shipping men and equipment all around southern Italy into the Adriatic would have made that approach too risky. That left a two-step assault, first a move across central Italy to the Adriatic, followed by a march down the coast into Apulia, as the only alternative. This strategy, too, had its problems. Central Italy's mountains were full of belligerent tribes and the terrain was horrendous for campaigning.

ALL BAD CHOICES   Rome's choices were all bad choices, but of these the frontal assault on Campania seemed at first the only practicable one. The Romans tried this and, predictably, they failed badly. The battle of Caudine Forks in 321 B.C., which resulted in a whole Roman army being forced to surrender, was, in the opinion of the Romans, their worst defeat in history. Rome was forced to give up its recently established fortresses at Fregellae and perhaps Cales, and its links with Campania, the Via Latina and the Via Appia, were cut. An uneasy five-year truce followed. With the

[5]Distances from Rome were not great. Fregellae was just 60 miles from away, directly on the line of the *Via Latina*, about halfway between Rome and Campania. Warfare, in other words, was still being conducted within a day or so's walking distance of Rome.

[6]Correlli Barnett, *The Swordbears,* Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1975, p. 96

failures of the first round of the war in mind, Rome was forced to rethink its options. It decided on a combined Adriatic-Apulian strategy.

A New Strategy: Isolating North and South

Since its first encounter with the Samnites in the 350s B.C. Romans had been conscious of the danger of having to fight a two-front war with the Samnites on one side and an alliance of Etruscans, Celts and Oscans on the other. Its worst case scenario was for these two groups of enemies to unite. To avoid this possibility Rome had to exploit its central place location, its main strategic asset.

CENTRAL PLACE THEORY   In the diagram below, hypothetical country B has central place location relative to countries A and C. At first glance B's position looks dangerous since it could be attacked simultaneously by A and C. However, B has the natural advantage of internal lines of communication which allow the rapid movement of armies from one frontier to another. The attacking nations have no such advantage. If they are to succeed they have to coordinate their attacks exactly, a difficult task under any circumstances. However, there is a caveat: To exploit the advantages of internal lines of communication requires high levels of national self-discipline and a willingness to engage in long term planning.

Romans were conscious of the advantages and disadvantages of their position in central Italy from early times. Their discipline and attention to organization was the product of a society militarized by necessity. They knew what they had to do to survive in a dangerous environment. Rome's strategy, based on its central place location, even if not always followed, was reflexive. Nevertheless the sheer doggedness and intelligence with which the Romans pursued their strategy in the period following Caudine Forks is one of the more visionary feats of statecraft and military planning in history. Less well known than some of Rome's other achievements, it deserves to be looked at in some detail.

BUILDING A BARRIER IN CENTRAL ITALY   Rome's initial approach to its two-front problem was necessarily diplomatic. It could not conduct wars in the north with much hope of success while simultaneously contending with the Samnites in the south. From the 350s B.C. on, Rome sought to neutralize the northern threat by seeking long-term truces with key Etruscan and Umbrian cities. A major achievement was a 30-year-truce negotiated in around 330 B.C. with the Senonian Celts (Gauls) who had settled on the Adriatic side of Italy. These were the most threatening (and closest) of all the Celts and it was vital to keep them quiet while wars with Samnium were in progress. Almost to the end, Rome was successful in isolating north and south, though there was trouble in Etruria between 311 B.C. and 308 B.C. When the Celts and Etruscans finally did join in the fighting

A	B	C
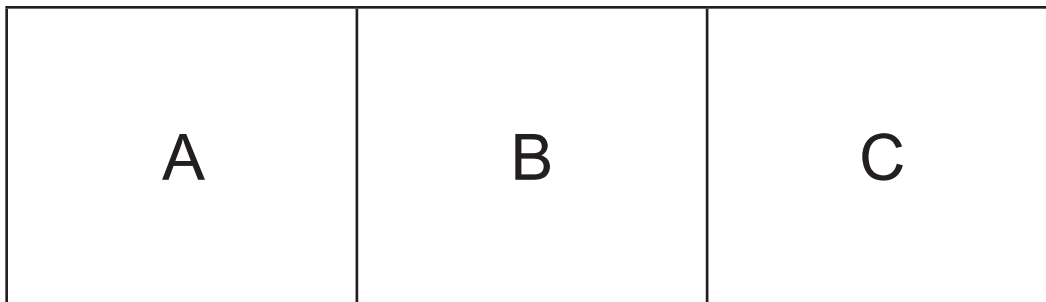
(culminating in the Battle of Sentinum in 295 B.C.), it was too late to make a difference. Nevertheless, Sentinum was a close call.

If Latium was Rome's original central place location it now planned to develop this advantageous position by building a political and military barrier all the way across the Italian peninsula from the Tyrrhenian to the Adriatic Sea. The work on this project began immediately after the humiliation of Caudine Forks, but was not complete until 266 B.C. By expanding to the Adriatic, Rome could accomplish the dual task of making a two-front war unlikely or at least manageable if it occurred, and secondly of defeating Samnium through the Apulian strategy.

THE ADRIATIC-APULIAN STRATEGY   The plan was marvelously conceived, but difficult to execute. When Germany and the United States built their internal lines of communication—their network of roads and railroads—they were doing so in peacetime, with huge resources, and in territories that were under their direct control. The Romans, on the other hand, had to accomplish their task over generations, while engaging simultaneously in war and diplomacy with the Samnite Federation, bands of Celts, Etruscan cities, and literally dozens of tribal peoples in the mountainous interior of Italy. Unfortunately we lack the kinds of records that would allow us to bring these events to life in any detail. We can only imagine the kind of discussions that must have taken place in the Senate, in the homes of commons and elite, among Romans, Latins and their allies. Every technique of cajolement and intimidation must have been used. Some potential enemies were no doubt bought off, while others were brow-beaten. The amount of detailed knowledge of Italy's geography, languages, peoples and cultures acquired by Roman senators and ordinary people during this process must have been huge. Fortunately for Rome, there were none of the rapid changes in the make-up of the Senate that occur in democratic modern governments, where it is difficult to pursue consistent strategies from year to year let alone from generation to generation, and where institutional knowledge and memory is shallow.

THE EXECUTION OF THE STRATEGY   Except for occasional notices in the sources, we can only follow the general course of Rome's Adriatic strategy. From the start it was successful. We know, for instance, that in 319 B.C. the Frentani made an alliance with Rome, and there followed other alliances with states in Apulia which were looking for help against infiltrating Samnites. By 315 B.C., Roman armies were operating in Apulia, and a major success was achieved that year when the key strategic site of Luceria, a Samnite stronghold, was captured. It was immediately converted into a large Latin colony. By this move Rome established an important fortress from which attacks could be launched on the vulnerable rear of Samnium. In case of disaster, Roman armies could retreat to the defenses of the colony.

But even while Roman armies were having success in Apulia, they were having difficulties in their home territories. They suffered a crushing defeat at Lautulae, a few miles from Terracina, and the victorious Samnite army marched to within 25 miles of Rome, as far as the colony of Ardea, which blocked its progress into Latium. The following year, 314 B.C., saw yet another reversal of fortunes. This time the Samnite army was heavily defeated near Terracina, and Rome was able to reestablish its colonies at Cales and Fregellae and create four new colonies at Saticula, Suessa, Interamna and on the island of Pontiae off the coast of Campania. The aim of this latter colony was to provide sea access to Campania in case the land routes were severed again. One scholar has rightly called Luceria and these new colonies the fetters of Samnium. The Second War with Samnium came to an end in 304 B.C.
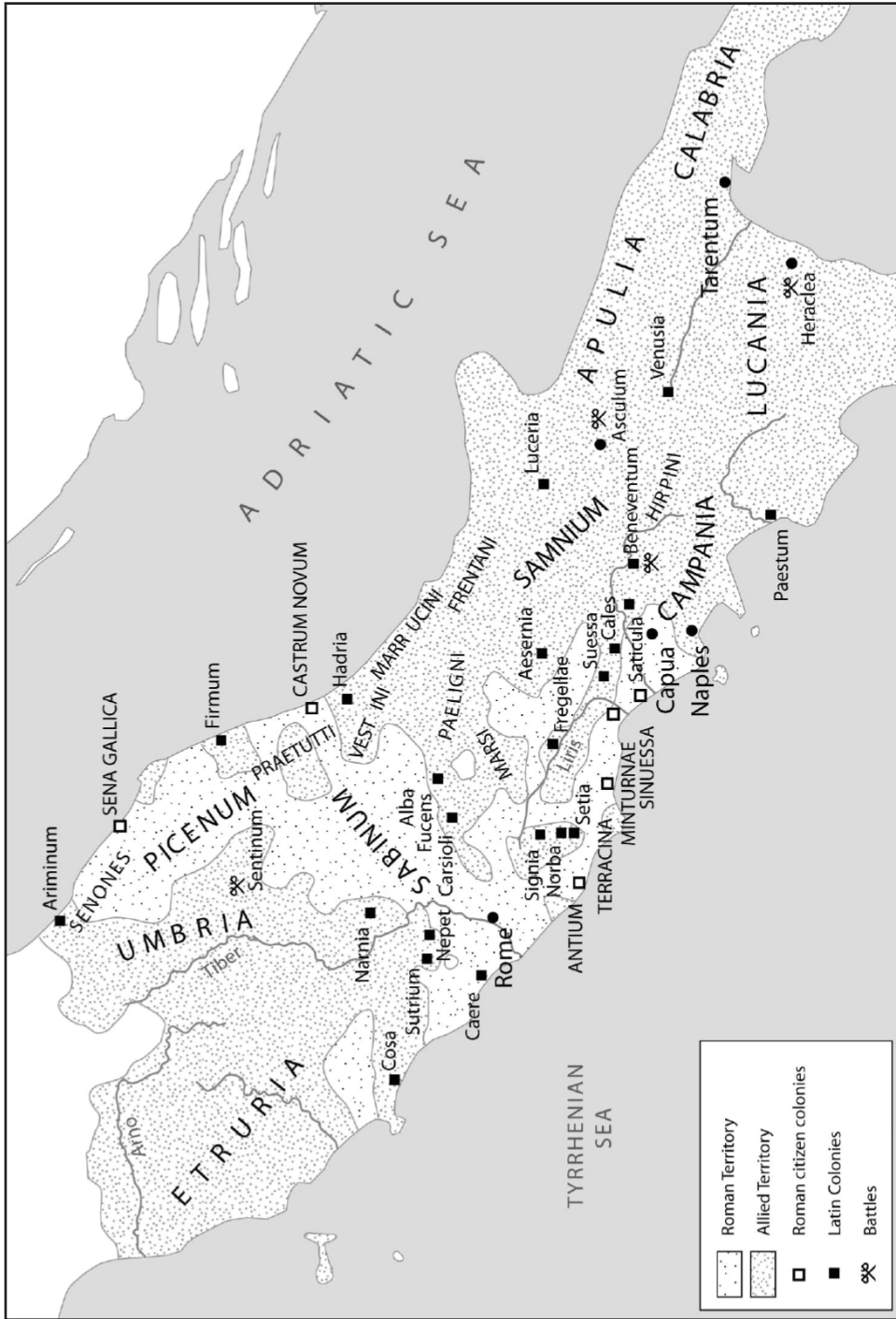
Battlefield Italy

THE FINAL ROUND: THE THIRD SAMNITE WAR   Rome now set out to consolidate its hold on the three routes across central Italy to the Adriatic. Large Latin colonies were established at Narnia in Umbria to secure the Via Flaminia route (299 B.C.), and at Carseoli and Alba Fucens to secure the Via Valeria (302 and 303 B.C.). Sora was sent out to protect the all-important connecting route to Campania, the Via Latina, from incursions from the north (303 B.C.).

It was fortunate that the Rome took such actions to secure its grip on central Italy. In 298 B.C. the most dangerous round of the three wars with Samnium broke out, and Rome's nightmare scenario of Samnites teaming with Celts, Umbrians and Etruscans in the north became real. Rome had to fight a two-front war after all. In 296 B.C., the Samnite general Gellius Egnatius managed to march an army north through Rome's central Italian barrier and join up with the northern alliance at Sentinum near the Via Flaminia route to the Adriatic. Unfortunately for Egnatius, his army did not receive all the support he expected as he marched north. Rome's new colonies and alliances managed to hold down local populations who might otherwise have joined him. Roman armies were then able to concentrate their forces at Sentinum and crush the Samnites and their allies in one of the most crucial battles in Rome's history (295 B.C.). Two years later the Roman armies defeated the Samnites at Aquilonia in their own homeland. Nevertheless, in the closing years of the war Rome was still heavily engaged in the northwest with central Italian peoples who had risen to join the Samnites. This remained the case until 290 B.C., when one of Rome's legendary heroes, M'. Curius Dentatus, put down the remnants of the revolt and added large areas of Sabine and Praetuttian lands to the *ager Romanus*, Roman territory.

CONSOLIDATION   The war with the Samnites ended in 290 B.C., but the Celts were still in the field and a Roman army was badly beaten at Arretium in northern Etruria in 284 B.C. The Celtic forces managed to reach Lake Vadimon, just 50 miles from Rome before being finally defeated.

Once again Rome set about consolidating its gains by planting colonies at strategic locations. Along the Adriatic coast, Hadria, Castrum Novum, Sena Gallica, Ariminum, and Firmum were established as colonies between 289 B.C. and 264 B.C. Large numbers of individual Romans were settled on land confiscated by Dentatus in Sabine and Praetuttian territory. A large Latin colony was established in Apulia at Venusia in 291 B.C. With these fortresses in place, the Romans had made good on their strategy of severing Italy in half—or so they hoped. Their planning was quickly put to a test by the invasion in 280 B.C. of southern Italy by a Hellenistic king, Pyrrhus of Epirus, at the head of a powerful professional Macedonian-style army, and toward the end of the century by the great Carthaginian general Hannibal.

UNANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES   It is commonplace to say that victories in war often generate unanticipated and unwanted consequences for the victors. After a generation or more of almost continuous warfare, the Rome that emerged in 290 B.C. was a different one from the Rome that found itself involved with Samnium 350 B.C. Early in the wars with Samnium, Rome had difficulty holding onto its fortress colony at Fregellae in the Liris valley, a mere 60 miles from Rome. Much of the early campaigning took place within a few days march from Rome. The decisive battle of the Second Samnite War was at Terracina in 314 B.C., also only 60 miles from Rome and directly on the Via Appia. Yet, by the end of the Third Samnite War in 290 B.C., Roman armies were regularly deployed far from Rome, and Roman fortresses—principally its Latin colonies in Apulia, Samnium, and on the Adriatic coast—were hundreds of miles distant from Rome. The presence of these centers of Roman power far from the metropolis, often in the heart of hostile territory and difficult to reach, was a new development. The dispersion of Romans, their separation from their homeland, and their oversight was to be at the heart of the constitutional crisis that was to confront Rome over the next couple of generations. By this early date, however, it was evident to at least some percep-

The Importance of Colonies: Fortresses of Empire

"Is every place of such a kind that it does not matter to Rome whether a colony is founded there or not, or are there some places which demand a colony, some which clearly do not? In this affair as in other matters of our state it is worth remembering the care of our ancestors who located colonies in such suitable places to ward off danger that they seemed not just towns in Italy, but fortresses of an empire." (Cicero, *de lege agraria* 2.73)

tive Romans that the city had already outgrown its traditional city-state or *polis* constitution, and resistance was building to the further expansion of Roman territory.

The War with Pyrrhus

There was another consequence of Roman expansion in Italy that became apparent much more quickly than the brewing constitutional crisis. Involvement with Campania led to the wars with Samnium, but once Rome was victorious in that conflict it found itself involved with new neighbors and new sets of problems.

Rome's founding of two major colonies in Apulia put it into competition with the Greeks of Tarentum and the protectorate they attempted to maintain over the other Greek cities of the south. Given the usual feuding—both within Greek cities between upper and lower classes and among Greek cities themselves—it was inevitable that some internal party would supply the impetus or at least the pretext for Rome to intervene directly and displace Tarentum's protectorate with its own.

The occasion was supplied when the Greek city of Thurii found itself under attack from the Oscans of Lucania and appealed for help not to Tarentum but to Rome. The Romans obliged and provided Thurii with a garrison of Roman troops. About the same time three other Greek cities, Locri, Rhegium, and Croton, were also garrisoned by Rome. In retaliation, Tarentum sank part of a Roman flotilla that had supposedly entered its territorial waters, expelled the Roman garrison at Thurii, and installed a democracy in place of the oligarchy Rome had been supporting. When the Romans protested, their ambassadors were grossly insulted publicly in the theater by the people of Tarentum. After Rome declared war, the Tarentines appealed for help to one of the great military adventurers of the post-Alexander the Great world, Pyrrhus of Epirus (modern Albania).

"PYHRRIC VICTORIES"   Pyrrhus imagined he could duplicate in the west the victories of his relative Alexander the Great over Persia. In 280 B.C. he arrived with a force of 25,000 men and 20 elephants. To justify his war he claimed that as a descendant of Achilles he was waging a second Trojan War on behalf of the Greeks against the (Trojan) Romans. At Heraclea he won a battle against the Romans, but not before suffering heavy casualties. He offered peace but the Senate rejected his proposal, saying Rome would not treat with an enemy as long as he was on Italian soil. Pyrrhus marched on Rome and reached Anagnia, just 35 miles from Rome, before turning around and returning to southern Italy. He won a second battle at Asculum in 279 B.C. but again suffered heavy casualties. After this defeat he was supposed to have replied when someone congratulated him on his victory: "Another win like this and I'm finished" (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 21.9). Hence the proverbial term "Pyrrhic Victory." A proposal to create a federation in southern Italy with Tarentum at its head was rejected by the Romans, who were backed by their Carthaginian allies. Never known for his ability to devote himself for long to any one task, in 278 B.C. Pyrrhus left Italy to help the Sicilian Greeks clear their island of Carthaginians. When this expedition failed, he returned to Italy, where in his third battle with the Romans, near Malventum in 275 B.C., he was held to a draw.

Annoying Greeks: "Incompetent to manage their own affairs but thinking themselves competent to dictate war and peace to others."

The event recorded here occurred in 320 B.C. when the Romans were campaigning in Apulia to the north of Tarentum. The spin, on the event, however, is purely Roman. The time for Greek feckless-ness was over. The Greeks had had their shot at hegemony; now it was Rome's.

Just at that moment, as both sides were getting ready for battle, ambassadors from Tarentum arrived and ordered both Samnites and Romans to stop fighting. They threatened that which-ever army was responsible for preventing an end of hostilities they would take on themselves on behalf of the other. The consul Papirius listened to the envoys as if he were persuaded by what they had to say and replied that he would have to confer with his colleague. He sent for Publilius [*the second consul commanding the other Roman force*], but went about getting ready during the interval. Then, after he had discussed the situation with Publilius, he gave the signal for battle.

The two consuls were involved in the usual matters that occurred before battle, both reli-gious and practical, when the Tarentine envoys appeared again, hoping for an answer. "Men of Tarentum," Papirius said, "the keeper of our chickens [*the augur*] tells us that the auspices are favorable and that the omens from the sacrifice are also good. So, you see, the gods are with us as we go into action." With that he gave the order for the standards to advance and led out his troops, commenting on the folly of a people which was incompetent to manage their own affairs because of internal strife and discord, but thought themselves qualified to dictate limits of peace and war for others (Livy 9.14)

That was enough, and Pyrrhus withdrew from Italy. To celebrate their win, the Romans changed the name of the city from the evil-sounding Malventum to Beneventum. Three years later Pyrrhus removed his garrison from Tarentum, and the city fell to the Romans.

THE FINAL CONQUEST OF PENINSULAR ITALY   Pyrrhus' invasion encouraged a revolt by the Sam-nites and Lucanians that lasted for 10 years. When finally put down, the Romans acted decisively to break up the Samnite Confederation by founding powerful colonies at key sites in their midst, at Beneventum in 268 B.C. and at Aesernia five years later. With the fall of Tarentum and the estab-lishment of these new colonies, Rome's conquest of the peninsula, except for the Celtic north, was complete. No power remained to challenge Rome. Its defense of the urban, settled populations of the peninsula against their traditional enemies—the Oscans and the Gauls—won Rome credit in the eyes of Greeks throughout the world. Pyrrhus was one of the most colorful characters of the period, and was respected for his military abilities. Roman success against him was evaluated accordingly. The Macedonian king of Egypt, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, sent a delegation bearing gifts to Rome in 273 B.C. Greek historians, ever on the lookout for something to write about, took note of the new power rising in the west. Timaeus, a Sicilian Greek historian, identified Rome as a defender of Greek liberties against Carthage, another traditional enemy of the Greeks. To lend dramatic empha-sis to his point he made a synchronism between Rome's and Carthage's founding dates.

This chapter has briefly set out the story of the rise of Rome to dominance in Italy, but it has not addressed the question of how it happened from an internal Roman viewpoint. The formal tech-niques by which Rome made its conquests, such as the incorporation of conquered peoples into its commonwealth, the building of roads, and the establishment of colonies, have been discussed. We have now to deal with the specific mechanisms Rome used to achieve its hegemony. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

3

The Rise of Rome: How Did it Happen?

This chapter attempts to account for the remarkable growth of Rome discussed in the previous chapter. There we saw how all through the fifth and early fourth centuries (ca. 400—380 B.C.), Rome had difficulty merely coping with its immediate neighbors and invaders from the nearby hill country. In 390 B.C. it suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Celts, during which Rome itself was captured and burned. Yet by 290 B.C. it had achieved sovereignty over the whole peninsula of Italy, vanquishing in the process its old Celtic enemies as well as the powerful Samnite confederation. A few years later it was able to take on and drive from Italy a professional Hellenistic army led by Pyrrhus, the capable king of Epirus. How did it manage to achieve this spectacular turn around?

1.   THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL EXPLANATION: THE NATURE OF THE POLIS

MILITARY PARTICIPATION RATIOS   At its most fundamental level, Rome's success depended on its *polis* constitution. It was argued in the introduction that the Greek *polis* was a revolutionary breakthrough in human social and political engineering which produced a new type of state. Relative to its population, more people were involved in its civic and military affairs than any previous form of society. As a consequence, more talent was tapped and more human energies and loyalties were released than was possible, for example, in the much larger but less free empires of the Middle East.

When functioning properly, *polis*-type societies were extraordinarily efficient institutions. Major policy matters such as decisions for war could be made quickly and had the advantage that those who were going to execute them—pay the bills or fight the wars—were directly involved in the decision-making processes. They therefore had only themselves to blame if things went wrong later. *Polis* armies were made up of well trained and motivated citizen militias, not unwilling draftees who had no share in the government of their states. In proportion to their populations, a very high

number of citizens were directly involved in the military. The high Military Participation Ratios of *poleis* allowed them to achieve an unusual degree of military success and sustain their political independence despite the presence of powerful neighbors. This combination of being able to establish political consensus and high levels of citizen participation in the military gave *poleis* potency out of proportion to their population. Small colonies of Greeks were able to carve out territories for themselves in hostile lands from Georgia in the Black Sea to the western end of the Mediterranean. A handful of them were able to fend off the might of the Persian Empire during two invasions of the Greek homeland.

Polybius was thinking along these lines when he said, while analyzing Rome's rise to hegemony, that "the most powerful agent for success or failure of any state is its constitution" (6.1). By constitution (or *politeia*, the Greek term), he meant something much more than our limited idea of a constitution as a written document setting out a government blueprint. A *politeia* included the whole way of life of a state—its combined religious, social, cultural, military and political traditions—even its music, its art, and architecture. Every *polis* had its own characteristic *politeia* which defined its identity in contact with other *poleis* and especially non-*poleis.* This chapter will attempt to describe Rome's *politeia* in approximately these terms.

Roman Exceptionality?

While the constitutional approach is a useful place to begin with, we come up immediately against the challenge: So what? What was special about Rome? After all, Rome was only one of many *poleis* in the Mediterranean, so that making the claim that Rome's success was due wholly to its generic *polis* character will not get us far. There were many successful *polis*-states in Italy itself, such as Tarentum and Naples in the south, and many in Etruria to the north. Not far away across the Tyrrhenian Sea was the prosperous city of Carthage. Yet none of these *poleis* ever achieved anything near Rome's power, though Tarentum and Carthage certainly tried. Nor, for that matter, did any of the *polis*-states of Greece or Phoenicia. Again, it was not for want of trying. Athens and Sparta each had large ambitions of hegemony over other Greek states. Their rule, however, was short lived and unpopular. Rome, as Polybius (among others) recognized, had or developed something these other states did not possess or could not develop.

THE ROMAN DIFFERENCE: ITS KILLER APP   What that "something" was will be discussed in detail in this chapter. In brief, however, the argument is that the "something" that made Rome different was its success in transforming its basic, generic *polis*-format, its *politeia*, into a hybrid form of the *polis* that preserved the best features of the traditional city-state while overcoming most of its inherent disadvantages. Specifically Rome created two states, one of which served the interests of the elite, thus binding the elite to the state, and the other which served the rest of society and assured that its interests were also satisfied. In this way Rome managed to solve the problem that plagued many—if not most—*poleis*, namely, the tendency of factions within a state, at moments of internal crisis, to seek outside help to settle their differences.[1] These factions, whether oligarchic, aristocratic, or democratic, were, in effect, willing to betray their states to their enemies for their own narrow purposes. Rome solved this problem and created a powerfully unified, although complex, state. The process by which its social and political consensus was achieved took over a century to complete. Unfortunately, the development is poorly documented, which may explain why it has

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[1]For the historian Polybius, treason in Greek states was such a big issue that he devoted an entire essay to the subject, 18.13–15. Rome, by contrast he noted, avoided this problem.

not received the attention that later periods have been given. Furthermore, historians disagree over many factual matters as well as their interpretation.

2. THE MAKING OF ROME'S HYBRID POLIS STAGE I: HOW ROME ATTACHED THE ELITE TO THE STATE

The Aristocratic State

The group that benefited from expulsion of the kings at the end of sixth century B.C.—however that actually happened—was an aristocratic elite made up of two groups of wealthy, land-owning families. The first were the patricians, who claimed descent from clans who joined Romulus at the time of the founding of Rome as well as select others who joined the patriciate later. An example of this latter group was the Iulii (the *gens Iulia*) who were supposed to have come to Rome after the defeat of their hometown, the nearby city of Alba Longa. This was the *gens* or clan lineage to which the famous Julius Caesar belonged. The heads of these clans were the *patres*—the Fathers or Elders—of Rome—hence the term "patrician."

THE BASIS OF ELITE POWER　Whatever their origins, patricians possessed important religious prerogatives and their political power rested on this basis. They had an exclusive hold on all the main religious offices and claimed to have provided the membership of the advisory council of the kings, the Senate. The auspices, the right to consult the gods, was said "to return to the Fathers" during an interregnum, after a king died. Only a patrician could be an *interrex*—the office holder who presided over the process of selecting the new king. When confirmed, the king then received the power to take the auspices. These powers passed over into the new state and were jealously guarded by the patricians. Thus, ultimately, political power in the new Republic had religious roots.

The second group among the elite was made up of wealthy land owners who could not claim patrician privileges or origins, and were designated historically as "plebeian"—belonging to the masses. This segment of the elite, despite its non-patrician origins, was indistinguishable economically and culturally from the patricians. Although the term plebeian was derogatory, it did not have the implications of a lower cultural class or caste. The term in its broad sense applied to all those—rich, poor or in between—who belonged to the *populus Romanus*, the Roman people, but who did not have patrician status. Initially in the Republic it seems both plebeians and patricians shared high office, but during the fifth century (when is uncertain), patricians managed to establish exclusive control over the magistracies, the most important priesthoods, and the Senate.

THE PROBLEM OF ARISTOCRATIC RULE　The problem faced by the patricians was characteristic of all aristocratic or even oligarchic city-states.[2] This was the problem of deciding who was in fact the best and thus entitled to rule among a competing mob of touchy, arrogant and often incompetent aristocrats. It might have been possible once in a great while for aristocrats to have agreed among themselves that some one of them was an outstanding individual, but aristocracies have generally solved the problem by arranging for political power and honors to circulate among their membership. The Roman method involved the creation of a system of magistracies and honors which were open to all qualified aristocrats, thus enabling the highest prizes to be won—and then exchanged—

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[2]"Aristocracy" was the rule of the supposed or claimed "best," meaning best in terms of noble lineage, wealth and, theoretically, talent. "Oligarchy" was the rule of a small number of wealthy, not necessarily aristocratic, individuals.

in a fair manner. The rules of the game were generally straightforward. Qualifications for entry included good birth, wealth, excellence in battle and civic affairs in general, and an ability to speak convincingly in public and offer wise council. A physically imposing presence and good looks could also be important.

How to Succeed in the Roman Aristocracy: The Ideology of Virtue

The performance of great deeds for the state—civilian as well as military—which in turn led to personal glory and fame for the individual, was the essence of Roman virtue (*virtus*), and the basis of political power. The private cultivation of personal virtue apart from public service was not regarded as a fit activity for an aristocrat, whose main function was to provide leadership for the state as commander, orator, senatorial councilor, and legal defender of his friends and clients. Wealth was necessary for the aristocratic lifestyle, but it was not its object.

VIRTUS *Virtus* is a difficult term to translate and has little in common with the English term "virtue." Perhaps "manly excellence" would be a translation that comes nearest the Roman understanding of the term. *Virtus*, however, was a broad, umbrella term that contained under it all the other Roman markers of quality that were expected to be found in males of the elite class. These included: *fortitudo* (bravery, steadfastness, especially in battle, but also in civic affairs which often required the much less common quality of moral courage); *gravitas* (weightiness, seriousness— as opposed to *levitas*—lightness, inconstancy, undependability); *severitas* (sternness, strictness— Roman fathers were supposed to maintain strict discipline in their households and their military units); *comitas* (affability) and *amicitia* (friendship) balanced *severitas* and led to the making of many friends which was essential to an active, political life. Individuals who remembered their friends and repaid favors (*beneficia*), were said to possess *gratia* (esteem, personal influence, grace). Other qualities included *industria* (activity, devotion to work in the public realm as opposed to *inertia*, avoidance of public responsibilities); *fides* (faith in English, but for Romans it mean something more like trust, dependability, solidity; its opposite would have been untrustworthiness, undependability, flakiness if the Romans had had such a word; *levitas* would have come close); *prudentia* (a weak English translation is prudence; in Latin it meant sound practical judgment, the ability to sort out the important from the unimportant in complex situations); *pietas* (reverence for the gods, one's parents and ancestry, one's country). Success in battle led to glory (*gloria*) and an increase in the individual's reputation (*fama*), which in turn led to higher levels of earned *honos* (honor as in English, but also a burden, an office, a public responsibility)*, dignitas* (dignity), and *auctoritas* (authority, influence).

In concrete terms these qualities were made visible to the Roman community at large by the successful holding of public office, the command of armies, the defense of friends and clients in court, and the possession of a large following of friends and clients. *Virtus* was displayed by the recirculation of booty won in war in the form of gifts to the gods (temples, sacrifices, statues, shrines. and altars), entertainment for the people, and gifts to friends, relatives, and clients.

THE TRIUMPH To conduct a triumph was the ultimate public manifestation of *virtus*. The triumph was a ritual of thanks to Jupiter and the other gods of Rome for success in war. It was a stunning piece of theater, a ritual of community affirmation which assured the people of Rome that the gods favored them over their enemies, that their leaders were brave, and that the Senate which directed Rome's wars and diplomatic activities was worthy of their trust. The triumphing general's

name was added to the *fasti triumphales*, the very select list of those who, over the centuries, had been granted this signal honor. The names on the *fasti triumphales* were carved into the marble of the Regia, the house of the *pontifex maximus* on the Via Sacra in the Forum, where they could be read by all who passed by. Later the *fasti* were inscribed on an arch in the Forum, whence they have come down to us. A triumph required a special vote of the people to allow the general to retain his military *imperium* within the city and could only be awarded to one who had achieved a victory in which at least 5,000 of the enemy had been slain.

The triumphal procession began outside the *pomerium* in the Campus Martius and made its way by a circuitous route to the Capitol. The procession was led by the triumphing general's attendants or lictors. He rode in a four-horse chariot dressed as Jupiter with his faced painted red, as was Jupiter's statue. A slave at his shoulder whispered, "Remember, you are but a man." In attendance were the magistrates of the year and the entire Senate. The rest of the procession was made up of important prisoners of war, captured booty piled in carts, musicians, the triumphing general's army singing bawdy songs, and animals to be sacrificed and eaten. The route was lined by cheering spectators. Large open spaces such as the Circus Maximus provided ample space for the crowds to gather. Temples and streets were decorated with banners and paintings of the battles and sieges that took place during the successful campaign.

THE HOUSES OF THE ELITE   There was nothing subtle about Roman elite display. In a particularly concretely form, *virtus* was made manifest for all to see in the great houses of the elite. Remains of four such houses of the early Republic have been discovered overlooking the Forum on the northern slope of the Palatine Hill in Rome. These huge houses, built of stone, some of them two stories high, had enough space in their reception halls (*atria*) for as many as 500 people to meet comfortably at a time. The houses were continuously occupied from the late sixth to the second centuries B.C.

The size and prominence of the houses of the elite are such to challenge the distinction between public and private, because in many respects the houses competed with and overshadowed ostensibly public buildings. They are suggestive, however, of the kind of power the elite in Rome possessed and what a huge investment that elite had in the city from early times onward.[3] Although technically

Ground Plan of Roman Houses on Palatine
The Old Roman house reflected the hierarchical structure of the Roman family itself. The blank exterior walls were a protective cocoon around a rigorously ordered interior world where the authority of the father was absolute. The essential features of the house were a broad entrance passage and a sky-lighted hall or atrium with rooms ranked around it in terms of importance. The spatial clarity of the house articulated the clarity of the social structures of the family. It "expressed and guided duty, discipline, and decorum." (Frank E. Brown, *Roman Architecture* (New York 1961), 14)

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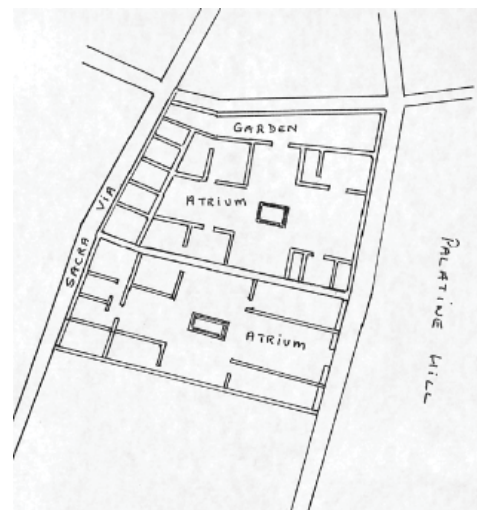
[3]These houses were not exceptional. In the late Republic the prominent aristocrat M. Aemilius Scaurus had a house whose atrium has been estimated could hold 2,000 people.

private, elite mansions were both public symbols of their owners' status and practical, well-located bases for the individual owner's exercise of power. Here, it is true, he lived with his family, but here also he conducted his public life. His house was a combined private residence, sacred dwelling, political office, rallying place, theater and permanent advertisement of his family's place in society and the state. When he died his body was laid out in the atrium for up to a week and heralds were sent throughout the city to invite the citizenry to visit the house and pay their respects to the dead man.

A *domus frequentata*, a house full of people, was an easily understood visible proof of social and political power. Every morning crowds of friends and clients gathered to greet a distinguished man at his house in a ritual known as the *salutatio*, the greeting. At the *salutatio* gifts were presented, favors begged, information exchanged, contacts made. These grand houses were key exchange nodes in the information and social networks of Rome. When the owner went out to the nearby Forum, his friends, clients, family members and slaves accompanied him in a great swarm, a marvelously staged work of public relations. The larger the group and the more prominent the individuals who made it up, the higher the status and power of the individual.

As a combination of personal residence, archive, shrine, and museum, the house itself played an important role in Roman elite display. Take for example the main reception room, the atrium, of an elite house. Partially roofed, the atrium allowed a large number of people to meet in some comfort no matter what the weather was like. In it were lodged the household gods (the *lares*) and their altars where the head of the household, the *paterfamilias*, performed daily rituals in their honor and that of the ancestors (the *maiores*). To help sort out these latter for the benefit of visitors, the walls were festooned with masks and busts to which were attached helpful inscriptions (*tituli*). These told of the deeds of the ancestors and the positions of note they held in the state. Family genealogies painted on the walls allowed viewers to determine where the individual belonged in the family whose origins sometimes, allegedly, went back not just to the establishment of the Republic but to the founding of the city. Weapons taken from defeated enemies were hung prominently on the walls to remind the crowds of visitors of the services rendered by the family over the centuries. When a great family died out and a new owner bought the house, he was not allowed to remove the

Roman Noble Holding Busts of Ancestors

A nobleman holds the wax busts of his ancestors. The Roman nobility exploited every opportunity to promote the status of their family and simultaneously their own careers. Funerals offered a particularly rich opportunity for self-promotion. Actors wearing realistic looking wax masks and appropriate garb impersonated ancestors who held political office. The dead man himself, represented by an actor, walked immediately in front of the bier. When the "ancestors" reached the Forum they sat on the ivory chairs of offices they had used during their time as magistrates. The eulogy praised not only the dead man but also the great deeds of his ancestors. In the late Republic women, too, were honored in this way.

memorabilia of the old occupants. The house was a sacred place, possessed its own spirit (the *genius loci*) and, where the family, in the words of a later Roman writer, "eternally celebrated their triumphs even after their owners had changed."[4] When such a house was razed by public decree because of the outrageous behavior of its owner, it was regarded as the symbolic annihilation of the family, its lineage, prestige, and influence in the state. One writer, describing the destruction of the house of the accused revolutionary Spurius Cassius, commented that the "Senate and the people of Rome, not content to execute Sp. Cassius, also destroyed his house so that he would also be punished by the trashing of his household gods" (Valerius Maximus 6.3.1). Located in key sectors of Rome, not just concentrated in particularly favored areas, these great mansions were the visible manifestation of the elite character of the early Republic as well as an affirmation that the elite was an integral part of the state. The elite were not above, beyond or apart from the state.

Roman Honors: The Magistracies

While their great houses provided the elite with the basis for the physical display of their lineage and power, it was the offices of the state conferred by vote of the Roman people that constituted their true prestige and sustained their place in society.

The offices that conferred the highest level of honor and dignity were the consulate and censorship. The ultimate mark of recognition was to be declared the *princeps senatus*, First Man of the Senate, by the censors who every five years drew up the list of eligible senators.

THE EXECUTIVE   The state set up in 509 B.C. to replace the monarchy was rigged to suit the needs of a highly competitive aristocracy. The kings were gone but executive power had to be wielded by someone or some group of people. Since, as we have seen, there was no effective method of choosing a single "best" man to rule, the Romans opted for two general principles to ensure that no single individual ever achieved super eminence over his fellow aristocrats, but nevertheless could effectively wield executive power. These were collegiality and annuality. Collegiality meant the sharing of power with one or more equal colleagues, and annuality simply meant that after a year in office the office holder was automatically out of power.

The first officers of the new state seem to have been a group of magistrates called praetors, ruling in collegial fashion and presided over by a *praetor maximus*. Later, two of the group were given preeminence as *praetores majores*, who exercised power jointly. During the later fifth century and early fourth centuries, officers called military tribunes with consular power were chosen, first in groups of three or four and eventually six. These magistrates had the power to take the auspices to determine the will of the gods, raise and command armies, call assemblies of the people for electoral and legislative purposes, and convene the Senate. By exercising these powers, what was later known as the "Consulate" was gradually elaborated. The term "consul" did not come into general use until after 367 B.C. It is unlikely that the Romans, as was once thought, invented the consulship at the start of the Republic in 509 B.C. as it existed in later times: a collegial body of two magistrates, elected annually, with equal powers. Instead, the stress of events, particularly the demands of warfare, probably dictated the selection of two individuals from among the magistrates to provide leadership. During the following half-century, the constitutional aspects of the complicated working of two individuals—each holding supreme power but working closely together—were worked out. To carry on the religious duties of the kings, the Romans created the King of Sacrifices (*rex sacrorum*),

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[4]Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 35.7.

posed to it by the presiding officer. Thus, once a bill had been presented it could not be amended or otherwise modified; the voters could only to say yes or no.[5] Magistrates, however, could hold informal meetings (*contiones*, sing. *contio*) to discuss bills before they went to the assemblies for a vote.

The Senate

A FINE TALENT POOL   The Senate was originally a council of the most important clan heads. It advised the kings, probably on an ad hoc basis; that is, the king called it when he thought he wanted advice or needed to drum up support among the people. Although it had no formal or constitutional power it had a great deal of informal influence. When the ruling king died, the all-important auspices were said to return to the Senate, which meant that it had the job of finding someone acceptable—to both the gods and the Senate—to replace him. Another ancient source of authority, summed up in the phrase, the "authority of the fathers" (*auctoritas patrum*), was the Senate's claim to have the power to ratify resolutions of the Centuriate Assembly before they were enacted. Under the Republic, the Senate, consisting of about 300 ex-magistrates, continued its advisory role, and its influence increased as the power and complexity of the state expanded. By the third century B.C., in practice, if not by law, consuls and other magistrates were obliged to seek its advice on all major internal and external policies, but how this came about is part of the evolving history of Rome. Just getting into the Senate was a mark of honor but membership in the Senate was not hereditary. From an institutional viewpoint, the presence of ex-magistrates, especially former consuls, in the Senate guaranteed that there was always a well-informed, talented leadership pool present at Rome. Institutional memory was also strong in the Senate as there was no rapid change-over of membership after elections. Romans would have been appalled at Jefferson's idea of intermittent revolutions to purge the body politic, or other less violent modern versions of "tossing out the rascals."

A Winning Formula for the Elite

From the perspective of Rome's aristocratic elite families (mostly, but not exclusively, made up of families belonging to the ancient patrician order), the founding of the Republic was success. Under the kings the most ambitious members of the leadership class were denied the exercise of supreme power; as senators they were mere advisors to the kings. All glory, honor, authority and dignity belonged to the monarchs, but with the institution of the Republic the truly able, ambitious, and well-connected could make it to the pinnacle of the state at least for short periods of time. They too could achieve *virtus*, and their success in this endeavor would in turn cast luster on their families, friends, and clients. In addition to honor and glory there were the spoils of victory in warfare: land, movable goods, and slaves.

If the constitution of early Republic was a winning formula for the elite and embedded it firmly in the state, what of the rest of society? What did the less well-off but still prosperous land-owning classes get out of the expulsion of the kings? Were the poor and the truly destitute any better off because the kings were gone? Did they care as much about the welfare of Rome as did the elite?

It is rare in history that a ruling class willingly gives up power and advantage to help the less well-off in society. Generally advantages for others have to be pried from elites by various means, some brutal, some less so. In the case of Rome after the initial success of the founding of the Republic, what followed was nearly two centuries of mostly non-violent give-and-take among elites and between elites and non-elites, the result of which was the completion, by 287 B.C. of the classical

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[5]See table on page 76 for a chart of assemblies and their competence.

constitution of the Roman state in which a satisfactory balance of power between all involved parties was achieved.

3.   THE MAKING OF ROME'S HYBRID POLIS STAGE II: THE PLEBEIAN STATE

The Crisis of the Fifth Century

As we saw in the last chapter, the fifth century was a period of extreme crisis for Rome. Highland tribes moved into the plains of Latium and the Monti Lepini, and there was extended warfare of a local nature for most of the century. Patricians and plebeians alike lost property and land to the invaders, but generally it seems that the major losers were those who were less able to defend their land, namely the plebeians, especially the poorer members of this group. One result was that the patricians were able to strengthen their hold on the state, and rich plebeians who had previously had access to high political office were excluded from power. Some, and perhaps many small landowners lost their farmsteads and became indebted to the major land holders. Debt bondage, *nexum*, became a desperate alternative for many free Romans. By means of *nexum*, a property owner obtained a loan in which the collateral was the debtor himself. In the event of failure to repay the loan, the unfortunate debtor was obliged to pay off the debt by self-enslavement to the creditor. The overall result of the fifth century crisis was to create an unstable mix of powerful, rich patricians and unhappy, frustrated, but well-off plebeians now excluded from high office, and a much larger number of poor plebeians, forever in debt to their richer neighbors. Inevitably, the power of the state declined along with its military effectiveness. There was an intrinsic reason for this decline in military power.

THE MILITARY CRISIS   Rome, like other *polis*-type societies, depended for its defense on heavily armed infantrymen fighting in a closely packed unit, the phalanx. These infantry men (hoplites) were expected to supply their own arms, armor and whatever food was necessary to sustain them on campaign. The patricians and other members of the elite provided the officers, commanders and the cavalry. The economic foundation of the hoplite infantryman was, however, land; without it he was unable to sustain his membership in the phalanx. Hence the problem for the patricians. As they gained in power and wealth at the expense of the smaller property owners, there were fewer plebeian families who could produce or sustain hoplites for the phalanx. In conditions of peace the narrow patrician oligarchy could probably have sustained itself indefinitely without making concessions, but in the dangerous circumstances of the fifth century, when war was almost constant, this was impossible. In many *poleis* the crisis might have led to a popular uprising in which either the aristocrats were driven out or, less often, slaughtered; or the plebeians were put down and their leaders driven out or, quite often, slaughtered. That this did not happen is a measure of the political maturity of Rome even at this early date. The patricians were not as stupidly obstinate as they might have been and the plebeians were not driven by desperation to extreme measures. In addition, the plebeians had important leverage and good leadership which they used to good advantage. In the end a compromise was worked out, but it took over a century of agitation for it to be completed.

Rome's Response to the Crisis

SOURCE PROBLEMS   The Struggle of the Orders is the term given by most historians to the two hundred years of constitutional development in Rome between approximately 509 B.C. and 287 B.C. Unfortunately, as for most of Rome's early history, the sources are meager and difficult to interpret

and there are almost as many interpretations as there are scholars writing on the subject. Most agree that the social problems of the later Republic (from about 150 B.C. to 30 B.C.) have been projected backward into accounts of fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Rome, thus contaminating the accounts of the earlier struggles. Scholars rightly protest that the social and economic difficulties of the late Republic may have been quite irrelevant to those of earlier periods and that it is wrong to assume that the problems of 450 B.C., for instance, were necessarily the same as those of a hundred years later. It is reasonable to assume, however, that because of the overwhelmingly agrarian character of the Roman economy throughout its history, the themes of debt, loss of land and land hunger were likely to be present to some degree in all periods as were, naturally, ambition, greed, hunger for power, and venality.

PLEBEIAN DIVERSITY The plebeians of the fifth century were a heterogeneous collection of prosperous, ambitious landowners, small holders, and an indeterminate number of landless peasants, many of whom had previously been landowners. Many were debt slaves to the wealthy. Understandably, not all plebeians had the same goals. As a category, all plebeians would have benefited from some kind of legal protection from the arbitrary actions of the powerful patrician magistrates who had the authority to flog and execute those they deemed wrongdoers. Perhaps for some, this form of protection along with economic security would have been sufficient. But at least one group, the well-off plebeians, resented their exclusion from the exercise of political power and chaffed at patrician arrogance. Altogether this was a volatile mix of competing and often antagonistic goals, so it says something about the leadership of the plebeians that it was adroit enough to give a focus to these demands while at the same time finding effective tactics to compel the patricians to pay attention and eventually make concessions. We know little of these leaders, although some of their names are preserved in the titles of the laws that were passed during the Struggle of the Orders.

THE TWELVE TABLES: ROME'S FIRST LAW CODE After years of agitation the plebeians were finally able, by mid-fifth century, to pressure the patricians into making public the ancient traditions by which Rome was governed. In 451 B.C. the work of codifying these laws was given to a body of ten men (the *decemviri* or decemvirs). Tradition regarding who they were and what precisely their responsibilities were is murky. The sources say that for two years the decemvirs worked to produce the laws as demanded, but at the end of the period refused to step down. This prompted a secession (see below) of the plebeians and eventually the decemvirs gave up. The consuls of 449 B.C., L. Valerius Potitus and M. Horatius Barbatus, managed to work out a general settlement that included the publication of the decemvirs' law code (the Twelve Tables) and possibly modifications to the law of appeal (the *lex de provocatione*).

THE RULE OF LAW The Twelve Tables was considered by the Romans of subsequent generations to be the source of all law, private and public, governing such matters as the rights and duties of families, forms of marriage, inheritance, the definition of some crimes and their punishments, and the right of appeal. It was learned by heart by children and played a role analogous to the Magna Carta or the Bill of Rights. The laws themselves were not favorable to the plebeians, and for a long time the administration of the law itself remained under the control of the patricians. Nevertheless, the fact that some aspects of the law had been made public was an achievement, and the general principle of establishing a single code that applied to all members of society by a uniform, universally known process was a step of major importance. It represented a continuation of the conscious molding of institutions to serve the needs of the people rather than the tacit assumption that the law was divine and outside human control, requiring a sacred priesthood to administer it, or in this

instance, a tiny select group of political figures. This came to be reflected in the use of language, where *ius*, the term for the secular concept of law, came to be applied to one body of law, and *fas*, which was reserved for sacred law, was applied to another.

In other respects the Twelve Tables show attempts to bridge the gap between the conflicting elements of the state. For example, the ostentatious display of luxury at funerals, a practice the patricians shared with the Etruscan nobles, was restricted. Various crimes were mentioned and assigned specific penalties—another step toward curbing the arbitrary actions of aristocratic judges.

APPEAL: *PROVOCATIO* Perhaps as a way of relieving plebeian frustration, the consuls of 449 B.C. passed legislation restraining the power of the magistrates.[6] According to this law, Roman citizens were granted or acknowledged to have the right of appeal to the people (*provocatio*), i.e., to demand a trial before an assembly of the people, if they were threatened with flogging or execution by a magistrate. Magistrates henceforth could not summarily flog or execute Roman citizens within the *pomerium*, the sacred boundary of Rome, though outside it they had unrestrained power over citizens. It is hard to estimate how much practical use this law was to ordinary citizens because the majority of them lived outside the *pomerium*.[7] Perhaps it benefited well-to-do plebeians who, like their patrician counterparts, had town-houses as well as country villas and could at least benefit from *provocatio* while they were in the city. From a political viewpoint, however, *provocatio* represented an important step in the protection of individuals against the use of magisterial powers for political purposes. It helped deter magistrates tempted to use their powers as ways of weakening or destroying their political enemies.

SECESSION AND TRIBUNES The method used by the plebeians to extract concessions from the patrician elite was a cultural device traditional among Italian peoples: the formation of a Sacred Band. In times of crisis, armies were raised and the soldiers would take an oath to follow their leaders to death. Anyone who broke the oath was declared accursed or dedicated to the gods (*sacer*), together with his family and property. On a number of occasions the plebeians organized themselves as a Sacred Band, took an oath to their leaders, and withdrew to a hill outside Rome known as the Sacred Mount. Three secessions are recorded: 494 B.C., 450 B.C. and 287 B.C., but more were threatened. The historicity of these events is much discussed among historians and only a general picture of the process and its outcome can be given.

By invoking the protection of the gods and acting as a religious community, the plebeians legitimated their activity, and by timing their secessions to coincide with moments of crisis when the defense of the city depended on the phalanx, they were able to bring maximum leverage to bear on the patricians. The plebeians as a Sacred Band were able to assume the authority to hold their own meetings and choose their own leaders. These officers were known as tribunes of the plebs. To oppose the two patrician consuls the tribunes were initially two in number, but the numbers grew to become a college of ten by the middle of the fifth century. Protected only by the oath of the Sacred

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[6]The sources record three laws of appeal: 509 B.C., 449 B.C. and 300 B.C., all of them passed by a magistrate with the name of Valerius (hence designation *lex Valeria de provocatione*). Scholars have been understandably suspicious about their authenticity and have discussed the question at length. There may well have been more than one law on the complicated subject of the right of appeal. As is frequently the case, loopholes discovered after the passage of a law are remedied or modified by the passage of another law on the same subject.

[7]*Provocatio* was extended to citizens outside the *pomerium* in the second century by the *leges Porciae.* Assembly trials were not usually used for common criminals, who were more often dealt with on a self-help basis by kin, neighbors or passers-by. In later Republican history a board of minor officials known as the *tresviri capitales* or *nocturni* (three men for capital cases/the night watch) seem to have had the powers of summary execution of criminals caught in the act.

Band tribunes could step in between victim and persecutor and interpose their veto in judicial or legislative affairs (*intercessio*) or, more generally, offer protection (*auxilium*). The historian Livy tells of patrician magistrates being brought to trial before plebeian assemblies and even being condemned to death. It is hard to know what the reality behind this memory was. One possibility is that it referred to the lynching of patricians who had violated the sacred character of the tribunes.

As part of the secession movement, the plebeians established their own temple to the goddess Ceres on the Aventine as a counter balance to the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill, the religious center of the patrician state. Custodians called aediles (*aedes* is term for what we would call a "temple") were elected to care for it. Both tribunes and aediles were protected by the Sacred Band's *lex sacrata* which endowed them with *sacrosanctitas* (i.e., made them personally "sacrosanct"). Technically, things that were *sacer* belonged to the gods so that anyone who injured either a tribune or an aedile could be held to be "devoted" or "consecrated," meaning that anyone who violated tribunician or aedilican *sacrosanctitas* was by that very act handed over to the gods for vengeance. They could then be killed in a form of extra-judicial homicide without fear of retribution, either divine or human.

THE COUNCIL OF THE PLEBS   In the early stages of the struggle between patricians and plebeians, the objectives of the plebeians were largely defensive and protective, and their method of procedure was informal. Gradually, however, the plebeians developed a sense of political identity and began to see themselves as constituting a quasi-independent political community within the Roman state. From this consciousness derived the second major assembly of Rome after the Centuriate Assembly, the Council of the Plebs (*concilium plebis*), a parallel and alternative meeting to the patrician-controlled Centuriate Assembly. By tradition it came into existence in 471 B.C. at the instigation of the tribune Publius Valero. Patricians were not allowed to attend.

The organization of the *concilium plebis* was based on the tribes into which the Roman population had been divided since the time of the kings. Originally there were three of these, broken down into units called *curiae*. By the time of the Republic, however, the tribes had become territorial units and had nothing to do with kinship, ethnicity or national origin. By 495 B.C. they numbered 21, four urban and 17 rural. After the conquest of Veii four new tribes were created out of the newly conquered territory. Over the next century and a half, ten more tribes were added as new territory in Italy was conquered. By 241 B.C. the number of tribes reached 35 and it remained at that number thereafter.

The convening officer of the *concilium plebis* was a tribune of the people, and the assembly elected tribunes and aediles, passed resolutions (*plebiscita*, plebiscites) and conducted trials. Some years after the formation of the *concilium plebis* the Tribal Assembly or the *comitia populi tributa* was created in imitation of the *concilium plebis*. It too was based on the 35 tribes but could be called into session by consuls (and later praetors), and patricians were allowed to attend. It had electoral, legislative and judicial functions.

4.   PROGRESS—AT LAST

The reforms mentioned above had the effect of improving but not solving the embittered social relations of Rome. Rome's situation in external matters also improved. Alliances with the Latins allowed the Romans to fare better militarily against their joint enemies, the Oscans. Gradually land lost to the invaders was recovered, the numbers of small property owners began to rise, and thus the manpower pool for the phalanx expanded. Between 445 B.C. and 367 B.C., military tribunes with consular power in number ranging from three to six replaced the two consuls, and plebeians were

Roman Assemblies in the Republic

	Comitia Curiata	*Comitia Centuriata*	*Comitia Tributa*	*Concilium Plebis* also called *Comitia tributa*
Number of voting units	30 *curiae*, 10 each from the ancient Tities, Ramnes and Luceres clan tribes	193 centuries: 18 *equites*, 170 *pedites* divided into 2 age groups and 5 property classes, plus 5 unarmed centuries	35 tribes, classified into 4 urban and 35 rural tribes	35 tribes, classified into 4 urban and 35 rural tribes
Presiding Officer	Consul, praetor, or pontifex maximus for religious matters	Consul, praetor, dictator. If no consuls an *interrex* for consular elections	Consul, praetor, or curule aedile for judicial matters	Tribune or plebeian aedile
Membership	People not present. In late Republic one lictor represented each *curia*	All citizens	All citizens	Plebs only, no patricians
Elections		Consuls, praetors, censors	Curule aediles, quaestors, lesser magistracies, special commissions	Tribunes, plebeian aediles, special commissions
Legislation	The *lex curiata* confirmed the *imperium* of magistrates; adoptions	Declarations of war, treaties of peace, confirmation of legislation	Legislation	Legislation. After 287 B.C. *plebiscita* had the force of laws.
Judicial		Capital charges	Crimes against the state punishable by fines.	
Place of Meeting	*Comitium* in the Forum or on the Capitol.	Usually the Campus Martius outside the *pomerium*.	For elections: Campus Martius For legislation: the *comitium* or the Capitol	

allowed to stand for the office. As was to be expected, few were elected, at least until after 400 B.C., but the principle of plebeians standing for, and on occasion holding supreme office, was established once again. Pay (*stipendium*) for service in the army to cover food and equipment costs may have been introduced in 406 B.C. when Rome began its siege of its most threatening Etruscan neighbor, Veii, and soldiers could expect to be away from their homes for longer than the usual short summer campaign. Possibly at the same time the single class (*classis*) was divided into five classes, each with a different census designation depending on wealth. The point of the reform of the *classis* was to provide a census basis for the imposition of the tax (the *tributum*) which made the *stipendium* possible.

The Importance of Pay

The effect of the introduction of pay and the division of the *classis* was to expand further the manpower pool of the army because now more citizens became eligible for service as hoplites and light infantry. Pay was an enormously important change since it fundamentally altered the character of the Roman military, shifting it from a restricted, hoplite citizen militia serving strictly at its own expense to a much larger army sustained by the whole community. The overall result was a much more efficient use of available resources. This point will be developed further in section 5 below on the military revolution that occurred around this time.

TAXING THE RICH   The slow movement of reform that can be seen in the events listed above suggested that Rome, despite its social problems, was by 400 B.C. sufficiently united that it was possible to impose a tax on everyone, not an easy task at any time, especially since the *tributum* fell most heavily on the propertied classes. This surely reflects a willingness of the elite, plebeian and patrician alike, to set aside their quarrels on behalf of the larger needs of the community, not to mention their own long-term interests. As was the admission of plebeians to candidacy for the highest offices of the state, the introduction of pay, even if only on an ad hoc basis, was an important concession and must have been recognized as such by the plebeian majority. Plebeians knew that with increased participation in the military their influence would grow, a consequence that would naturally have been clear to the patricians too. It was a price the patricians were apparently willing to pay. As noted before, the Roman aristocracy, unlike many in history, was not self-destructive. Throughout its history it opened its ranks periodically to talented newcomers and made concessions when it thought such action was necessary for the preservation of the state and its own political dominance.

Land Shortage and Debt

Contributing to the improvement of social relations in Rome was the beginning of the solution of the problem of land shortage and debt. The battle against the invading hills men had gone on throughout most of the fifth century, and toward the end Rome and the Latins began to gain the upper hand. As they did so, they recovered lost land and made new conquests. Colonies were sent out jointly: Circeii (432 B.C.), Labici (418 B.C.), Vitellia (395 B.C.), Conca (385 B.C.), Setia (383 B.C. or earlier), Sutrium and Nepet (ca. 382 B.C.). The conquest of Veii by Rome (the Latins were not involved in this event) in 396 B.C. resulted in a huge expansion of Roman territory, which increased by a gigantic 60 percent. The land won from Veii was distributed in individual allotments (*viritim*) to needy Roman citizens (see Chapter 2, pp. 43–44). Colonies and viritane distributions such as that of Veii must have gone a considerable distance toward answering the need for land while at the same time providing more small holders for service in the army.

A PATTERN OF CONQUEST   At this point a pattern begins to emerge in Roman social and political relations as a result of conquests. The great landowners found in slaves a substitute for unwilling, unhappy Roman debt-bondsmen. Debt bondsmen escaped their servitude to the rich by migrating to colonies or to individual allotments on newly conquered territory. In this fashion the poor were elevated to hoplite status and those who had lost their land and their status regained both. Elite and non-elite thus developed a vested interest in conquest. The downward spiral of the fifth century, in which as land was lost small farmers suffered and became reluctant—or ineligible—warriors, was reversed. Another bonus of military success was that as Rome found ways of incorporating the inhabitants of newly conquered lands in its commonwealth, the defeated too began to discover the rewards of joining the victor in further conquests. Yet another consequence of the constant warfare of the fifth century was the creation of an experienced cadre of plebeian leaders who were willing to challenge the political monopoly of the patricians. With their experience came the prestige and qualifications necessary to press home successfully their demands.

LICINIAN SEXTIAN LAWS   The Celtic or Gallic invasion and sack of Rome 390 B.C., if anything, accelerated the development of a unitary Roman state. The unreliability of the Latin League was made clear and at least some at Rome must have come to the conclusion that a unitary state rather than a federation of allied, independent city-states offered the best solution to both internal problems and external threats. These external developments added to the pressures for internal reform and reconciliation between the contending interests of patricians and plebeians. In 376 B.C. two tribunes, C. Licinius Stolo and L. Sextius Lateranus proposed that the consulship be restored in place of the military tribunes and that one of the consuls should be plebeian. Not until 367 B.C. were these measures enacted into law, along with restrictions on the amount of public land (i.e., land won by the state in war) that an individual could own. Plebeian access to public land was guaranteed. The Licinian-Sextian laws addressed the problem of debt by decreeing that interest already paid should be deducted from the principal. The whole amount was then to be paid in full in three years. Subsequently attempts were made to cope with debt and high interest rates, but it was not until the *lex Poetelia* (326 or 313 B.C.) described by Livy as "a new beginning for liberty," that imprisonment for debt was prohibited.

The New Patrician-Plebeian Nobility

The admission of non-patricians to the consulship in 367 B.C. under the Licinian-Sextian laws did not involve the repeal of a law against their admission because no such law existed—plebeians had in

The Five Classes of Centuries		
Class	Number centuries of seniores	Number of centuries of iuniores	Total
I	40	40	80
II	10	10	20
III	10	10	20
IV	10	10	20
V	15	15	30
Cavalry			18
Engineers and Musicians			4
Proletarii			1
Total			193

fact been elected to the consulship in the early Republic—but rather the breaking of what had become a fixed custom. Slowly plebeians once again began to make their way into the highest offices, and a new elite, known by historians as the patrician-plebeian nobility, emerged. Some of the old patrician families cooperated with their rising plebeian counterparts. Among these the Aemilii, Fabii, Servilii, and Sulpicii found willing partners in the Licinii, Plautii, and Sextii. The name of these great families appeared regularly in the lists of Republican magistrates for the next three and a half centuries.

CONCORD NOT DEMOCRACY   Plebeians succeeded in obtaining access to other magistracies. The same year that the Licinian-Sextian laws were passed (367 B.C.), the board of commissioners which regulated some key religious functions was expanded from two to ten, and five of them were to be plebeians. These were the *decemviri sacris faciundis*. In 367 B.C. the patrician curule aedileship was created to share in the administration of the city with the plebeian aediles. It was soon opened to plebeians, and the important new office of praetor (established in 366 B.C.) was opened to them in 336 B.C. The praetorship was established to relieve the consuls of their civil jurisdiction over the city. The dictatorship (a temporary emergency magistracy) was opened to plebeians in 356 B.C. and the censorship (which conducted the census and examined the membership of the Senate) in 351 B.C. Plebeians did not, however, gain admission to the important priesthoods of the pontiffs and augurs until the passage of the *lex Ogulnia* in 300 B.C. At that time the number of pontiffs was raised from five to nine, and the number of augurs from four to nine. In both cases the additions were all plebeians. In 300 B.C. the right of appeal in capital cases under the *lex Valeria* was established, confirmed, or modified. It should not be imagined that the plebeians who sought entry into these magistracies, priesthoods, and offices were doing so as representative of the people as though they were motivated by modern liberal, egalitarian sentiments. Quite the contrary. They were merely seeking entry into the *cursus honorum* with the aim of ennobling their families, increasing their prestige, and building their wealth. There was only one prevailing ideology in Rome and it was not based on principles of equality. The amalgamation of patricians and plebeians in a new and wider aristocracy was not a victory for democracy but it was a moment of *concordia* and *consensus*—concord and agreement. The entry of plebeians into high office coincided with the emergence of the Senate as the dominant institution in Rome and the reduction of the assemblies, for the time being, to impotence.

Appius Claudius Caecus

Appius Claudius Caecus (the Blind) is the first major Roman statesman about whom we know enough to call him a real historical personality rather than the kind of cardboard figure who appears in traditional Roman biographies and histories. He seems to have had a hand in furthering opportunities for plebeians. His censorship in 312 was as spectacular as it was controversial. He distributed the poor among all the tribes, thus increasing their influence. This move, however, was reversed by the censors of 304. In drawing up the list of senators he included the sons of freedman while passing over others deemed worthy by the elite. He contracted for Rome's first aqueduct, the aqua Appia, and had a highway from Rome to Capua constructed (the via Appia).

In 304 B.C. the aedile Cn. Flavius, the son of a freedman of Caecus, took further steps toward breaking down the exclusivity of the patricians. He made public a handbook of legal phrases and procedures (*legis actiones*) and he posted a calendar in the Forum that showed days on which public business could be transacted. These measures were significant because they expanded on the reforms introduced by the Twelve Tables. They made public the techniques by which the law could be actually put into practice and how it was manipulated by the elites.

THE LEX HORTENSIA   One of the most important and final steps in the creation of the patrician-plebeian state came in 287 B.C., when the plebiscites (*plebiscita*) or decrees of the Plebeian Assembly (*concilium plebis*) acquired the force of law and became binding on the whole state, not just on plebeians. From 287 B.C. onward the decisions of the Plebeian Assembly had the same weight as those of the Centuriate Assembly. One practical result of the *lex Hortensia* was that the Tribal Assembly, which had the same organizational structure as the Plebeian Assembly, became the principal legislative body of the state rather than the more difficult to organize Centuriate Assembly. Around about this time the Tribal Assembly also became a court of appeal and acquired the right to ratify treaties with foreign powers.

5.   THE MILITARY REVOLUTION OF THE FOURTH CENTURY B.C.: ROME'S HYBRID ARMY

The next item in the interlinked list of causes being marshaled in this chapter to explain Rome's rise to power is the military revolution of the fourth century. It might be thought that, given Rome's reputation as a hyper-militarized state, the development of its lethal military would have been listed first, but it is not, for good reason. Rome's military transformation was a by-product, not the cause of the great internal social, political and economic upheavals of the same period. Without them the military revolution could not have taken place.

Military revolutions are not just the result of changes in military technologies, equipment, or formations, although these elements are almost always involved. They are, rather, the product of, and accompany, the transformation of a state's social, political, economic, and military relations. As argued above, by the mid to late fourth century (ca. 350–325 B.C.) Rome either had already transformed, or was well on the way to transforming these. Once it had achieved a stable inner equilibrium it could direct its abundant energies outward, conduct major military campaigns and, most importantly, sustain catastrophic defeats without losing its internal cohesion. What follows is, briefly, an analysis of the military side of this development.

The Limitations of the Phalanx

There were a number of built-in limitations to hoplite or heavy infantry style warfare, the dominant form of warfare in fifth and fourth century Italy.

1. A single battle could practically wipe out an entire generation of heavy infantrymen, and a city could be rendered essentially defenseless until the next generation grew up. As a result, hoplite battles between *poleis* were often rather carefully choreographed, inconclusive affairs.

2. Hoplite warfare required that the individual infantryman, sustained by his own economic resources, provide his own weapons, armor and food while on campaign. Needless to say this convention limited by definition the number of possible candidates for the phalanx to only those land owners who had sufficient resources to finance their role in the phalanx. All things considered, the larger and richer the territory and the more equitably agricultural land was distributed, the larger (and more motivated) the phalanx.

3. A phalanx depended for its success on its cohesion at the moment of collision with the enemy phalanx. Training and experience was the key here. For example, in Greece the Spartan phalanx was famous for its steadiness in battle, but the price of this was constant, life-long

training. This kind of training was, in turn, made possible only by the existence of a huge subject population which freed the Spartan hoplite from the usual round of farm work. No ancient state matched the level of training achieved at Sparta nor, for that matter, was any ancient state willing to do what it took to reach that level of expertise.

4. The distance at which campaigns could be fought was limited. Most phalanxes on the march could carry enough food for only a few days. If the aim was not to devastate an enemy's territory, raiding for food could alienate otherwise friendly local populations. A supply train was both expensive and vulnerable, as at each depot troops had to be left behind for its defense. In a campaign using a supply column, the number of soldiers actually available when battle with the enemy was joined proportionately declined.

5. As a tactical unit the phalanx was supreme on level ground but had difficulty when attacking over broken ground or in hilly or mountainous terrain. Its strength lay in its weight rather than its flexibility. It was vulnerable when it lost its cohesiveness.

ROME SOLVES THE PHALANX PROBLEM   All of these problems were alleviated or solved by the military revolution of the fourth century. The first problem, shortage of manpower, was resolved by Rome's unconventional method of incorporating conquered peoples in its commonwealth. In 338 B.C. it had access to a total free population of nearly 350,000 and by 264 B.C., on the eve of the great wars with Carthage, that figure was around 900,000. Instead of depleting Rome's resources, conquest increased them. Pay helped here too by defraying the expenses of legionaries and making it possible for even smaller landowners to go on long campaigns. The whole community subsidized the war effort, not just the landowners with the necessary resources.

Training and experience was provided by the constant warfare of fifth and fourth centuries. Initially this was local, but as time went on campaigns took place farther and farther afield. By the late fourth century Roman armies were campaigning regularly for months on end in Apulia on the Adriatic side of Italy, hundreds of miles from home. Again, manpower resources and a large tax paying population allowed for proportionately more Roman soldiers to gain the kind of experience that led to superiority in stand-up fights. Pay alleviated the problem of collecting food from an unwilling population. The size of the army's supply column was reduced making it more mobile.
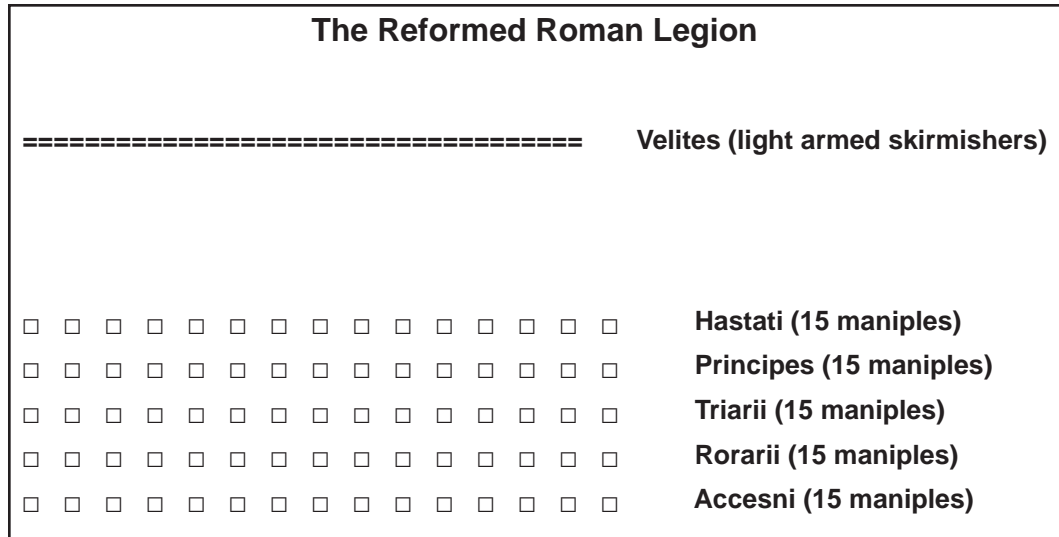
The New Modular Legion

The old Roman army had been modeled on the massed phalanx characteristic of Greek armies. The Romans were long familiar with the disadvantages of the phalanx as a tactical unit, especially as a result of their experiences campaigning in the difficult terrain of central Italy.

At some point in the fourth century, the phalanx was abandoned in favor of a new, flexible arrangement which distributed infantrymen in 30 units called maniples ("handfuls," from *manus*, a hand). The maniples fought in quincunx formation (see diagram), in three lines of 10 maniples each, each maniple separated from its neighboring maniple by a distance equal to its own front. The first line, the *hastati*, was made up of the younger men; the second was the *principes,* made up of the next age group, and the third line, the *triarii*, was made up of the older men. The second and third lines arranged their maniples to cover the gaps in the lines in front of them. Precisely how the manipular legion functioned in combat is uncertain but there is agreement that a system existed that enabled individual maniples to move back and forth through the gaps in the line, reinforcing or relieving units that needed help as the battle progressed. The *hastati* were first fed into the battle. Then, if

necessary, the second line could advance to take their place while the first line retired. Finally the last line, the *triarii*, would take part in the battle.

THE *GLADIUS* Each maniple was made up of two centuries of 60–80 men commanded by centurions. Throwing javelins replaced the old thrusting spears. Breast plates and greaves were discarded. Legionaries were equipped with a more open helmet that allowed for better lateral vision. These changes conceal an important shift that accompanied the abandonment of the phalanx. Spears killed at a distance and their use was relatively easily mastered. The new and more efficient—but more demanding—method of killing involved the introduction of the short (18 inch) stabbing sword, the extremely sharp carbon steel *gladius*. The use of this weapon involved a change in psychology as well as in training tactics. For one, it took longer to master the use of the *gladius* than the spear—and it took more courage.

The old phalanx consisted of men packed in ranks who stood literally shoulder to shoulder displaying a wall of shields and spear points to the enemy. Its aim was to seize and hold ground by pushing back the enemy unit—whether another phalanx or something less organized—until it broke and fled. The new system changed all that. Instead of relying on the close order of the phalanx, which limited movement, Roman infantry men were now separated from each other by six or more feet. They became individual combatants whose capacity rested on their initiative, their ability to handle their *gladius* and their courage in being willing to move to within inches of their opponent to engage him. In skilled hands the *gladius* was a deadly weapon. It was not a slashing sword—the

The Reformed Roman Legion

=================================== **Velites (light armed skirmishers)**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ **Hastati (15 maniples)**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ **Principes (15 maniples)**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ **Triarii (15 maniples)**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ **Rorarii (15 maniples)**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ **Accesni (15 maniples)**

The Reformed Roman Legion

The manipular legion of about 340 B.C. according to Livy 8.8. The maniples of the hastati *were made up of young men; those of the* principes *of more mature experienced soldiers; the* triarii *were older veterans. The* rorarii *and* accensi *were less dependable, back-up troops. Each maniple was made up of two centuries of varying size from 60 to 70 men. Each century was commanded by a centurion. Total strength of the legion varied from 4,200 to 5,000 men. There was 300 cavalry.*

kind used by Celts and medieval knights—which tended to wound rather than kill, but a thrusting weapon which was aimed at the groin or stomach in an upward movement. Not much penetration was required for lethal results, and it saved energy, an important factor in all combat situations. A line of Roman legionaries, protected by their curved, oblong shields scythed without wasted effort through enemy lines, stabbing and thrusting methodically. As they tired they were replaced by fresh soldiers.

All of this took more training. Open order fighting is, by definition, more demanding than combat in massed formations where men on either side, behind, and or in front, provide physical and moral support, and where the key to success is cohesion. By contrast, the new style of fighting demanded initiative on the part of both individuals and their units, the maniples. It was much easier to train soldiers for the phalanx where basic discipline could be reduced to a few commands, the most basic being: "Keep your place" in the file. Much more time was required for the individual legionary to reach the proficiency necessary for the manipular legion. That Rome could afford to field such sophisticated tactical units is indicative of its experience in warfare, its flexibility, its wealth and the serious thought that went into developing the new fighting unit.

Numbers and Leadership

The key age cohort in all wars involving massed infantry units is the 18–25 old age group. The larger that age-cohort, the larger is the recruiting pool for the state. There are many advantages to using young men from the 18–25 age cohort rather than older men. Men of this age are frequently unmarried (as was the case at Rome where late marriages for males were common), and so unencumbered by the emotional attachment of wives and children. They bond more easily with the men of their immediate units. They are more impressionable, more susceptible to strict group discipline, more conscious of peer expectations, and perhaps in better physical condition. Because of Rome's huge general population pool it had, relatively, more men in this age cohort than any other ancient *polis*-state.

MOTIVATION   Motivation, an essential factor in successful campaigns, was sustained by strong unit cohesion, good leadership, the expectation of victory and booty, and, finally, the improving social and economic situation at Rome. Even an ordinary soldier, the *gregarius*, might come home with a significant amount of loot along with an enhanced local reputation and the bragging rights that came with successful campaigning. Attention was given by the leadership to formalizing the ideology of war and victory. The innovating censor Appius Claudius Caecus gave prominence to the old Roman war goddess Bellona ("The Frenzy of Battle") by building a temple in her honor in the Campus Martius outside the *pomerium* and promoting the public worship of the hero Hercules. The cult of victory (*Victoria*, the Roman equivalent of the Greek goddess Nike) was borrowed from the Hellenistic east and a temple was erected to her in 294 B.C., high on the Palatine Hill where it overlooked the Forum.

There were other factors that contributed to the strength of the new legion. In the traditional *polis* the phalanxes were small and made up of citizens who already knew each other. Motivation was provided principally by the desire not to let down one's neighbors and kinsmen. By the fourth century Rome's army had long passed the point where it could be assumed that citizens were also comrades who knew each other from civilian life. Comradeship was now developed artificially at the level of the maniple which, at a size of 120 to 160 men, was small enough for everyone to know each other, at least by sight. In such units it did not matter where in the territory of Rome the individual soldier originated.

THE CENTURIONS   Discipline and professionalism were provided largely by the centurions. These men were drawn from the ranks, not from the elite classes, which provided the higher officers such as military tribunes, quaestors (financial officers), and consuls. Centurions were thus not officers in the traditional sense of being outsiders from a different class who represented a potentially different set of interests from those of the enlisted men. They were instead rankers promoted on the basis of competence and trust. Unlike the officers who belonged to the legion as a whole, centurions were attached directly to the individual maniples, the tactical units of the legion. They had vast experience and, like modern NCOs, were the backbone of the army. They maintained discipline and engendered confidence in the ranks, but unlike modern NCOs they had greater authority in the legion as a whole and greater access to the commanders.

THE OFFICERS   The quality of leadership among the officers was high. Roman commanders and officers had as great if not a greater interest in victory as did the ordinary troopers. Motivated by a highly competitive aristocratic ethic that put the highest premium on *virtus*, *gloria*, and *fama*, Roman generals and officers were aggressive if not always well trained or overly talented.

The political necessity of rotating commands tended to work against competence, although most officers would have had a considerable amount of experience from their many previous campaigns. Yet Romans were not fools. They calculated that in the end a rotating system of command was essential to keeping the elite content and attached to the state, not working against it, and it had the added benefit of weeding out incompetent generals. It was an expensive method, but it generally worked. Besides, there were other ways around the system of rotation. In times of truly great danger to the state, successful commanders were often reelected (*iteratio*) or kept in office (prorogation, *prorogatio*), a legal fiction which preserved both political principle and military competence. In the fourth century, during the wars for control of Italy, a majority of consuls held office more than once. In the 72 years between 366 and 291 B.C., 54 consulships were held by just 14 individuals and 38 by 8. At the great battle of Sentinum in 295 B.C., the two consuls present could boast 9 consulships between them: Fabius Maximus Rullianus had five and P. Decius Mus had four. After that the number of repetitions declined as new systems evolved to distribute honors more widely and evenly among the competing aristocrats, and the Senate began to exercise controlling power over the individual magistrates and commanders. The dictatorship, an office that lasted a maximum of just 6 months, was another important fallback in case of military emergency. Between 367 and 300 B.C. dictators held office in two out of every three years, suggesting, as did the iterations of consulships, the level of danger Rome experienced during these years of wars with the Samnites.[8] Later, prorogation took the place of the dictatorship in most instances.

OPENNESS TO INNOVATION   The manipular legion (and its later descendant, the cohort legion) was the final and ultimate development of heavy infantry style fighting perfected originally by the city states of Greece. Heavy infantry units of one kind or another were supreme on the battlefields of the Mediterranean and Europe from the seventh century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. The evolution of the legion shows a typical tendency of Romans to borrow and perfect. They did not hesitate to borrow from friends or enemies, and had the self-assurance to integrate these borrowings into an overall, more effective political, social or military entity. The *polis* was not a native Italian institution; it was borrowed. Yet in borrowing the *polis* the Romans were not wedded rigidly to its format. Their innate conservatism made them cling to many of its institutions while at the same time they were willing to make bold innovations to improve it.

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[8]Numbers from T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome* (London: Routledge), 1995, p. 71-72

Summary and Conclusion

With the passage of the *lex Hortensia*, the blending of the two predominant political and social elements of the state was formally completed. A highly competitive, mostly talented, and enlightened elite was guaranteed sole access to the high secular and religious offices of the state. In return, the patrician-plebeian nobility guaranteed the loyalty of the elite to the state. Even in the worst days of the war against Hannibal, the elite never weakened. In any state, ancient or modern, the depth of the loyalty of this group is of critical importance to the state's existence, not to mention its morale and flourishing. On the other hand, the non-elite element in the state also had its guarantees. It received or could expect to receive the legal security of persons and possessions, consultation to some extent on major policy and legislative issues, and a share in the loot of war. This consensus or compact was to hold for over a century before the Republic's success in war undermined it.

The military developments of the fourth century, although important, were only part of the larger transformation of Roman society that took place during that little known century. Rome's openness to outsiders, a characteristic it had from the beginning, its capacity to absorb and adapt them to its own political and military needs, its inner flexibility and ability to find ways for the different classes to interact were the essential foundations for its success in this and succeeding centuries. There were, however, as we shall see in the next two chapters, deeper foundations for Rome's cohesion.