

# The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School

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## WHY DID ROME RISE?

Christopher Joyce

Teacher

Joyce\_C@habsboys.org.uk

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### WHY DID ROME RISE?

**Abstract:** This essay explores the early centuries of Roman expansion when Rome became the dominant force within the Italian peninsula. It proceeds in four independent stages: 1) the source material; 2) pre-Roman Italy and the foundations of Rome as a political community; 3) Rome's self-establishment as the head of an alliance in central Italy; and 4) Rome's rise to become mistress of peninsular Italy. The period covered ranges chronologically over approximately four centuries, from the traditional foundation of Rome in c. 753 BCE on the banks of the river Tiber, to the conclusion of the Third Samnite War in 290 BCE. Its main argument is that Rome's secret as a successful nascent imperial power lay in the fluidity of her political institutions and national self-awareness, which gave her a cutting-edge advantage over her local Italian rivals and, later, the Hellenistic kingdoms to the east.

#### 1. Preliminaries

Writing in the second century BCE, at a time when the cities, tribes and nations inhabiting the Mediterranean basin fell beneath the undisputed mastery of Rome, the Greek historian Polybius set about the formidable task of describing how, over a period of fifty-three years, the city of Rome had risen to become the mistress of the known world.<sup>1</sup> Polybius himself was a political hostage from Achaia in southern Greece, private tutor to the young Roman aristocrat Scipio Aemilianus, and erstwhile orator, statesman and activist who had seen the fortunes of his fatherland dwarfed by a rising new power whose first language was not Greek, but Latin. The choice of fifty-three years was quite arbitrary, since Rome's power had been expanding long before the year which Polybius selected as the start of his narratological subject, the year 220 BCE, marking the conclusion of the so-called Social War between the city-states of the Greek mainland and the hegemonic kingdom of Macedon on their northern flank. During that period, claimed Polybius, which ended in 167 BCE with the defeat of Macedon to Rome in the Third Macedonian War, Rome successfully transformed itself from a provincial power to the mistress of the inhabited world. Perhaps the most significant victory for Rome

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all dates referred to are BC(E). By 'known world' - in Greek, the οἰκουμένη, from which we derive our English word 'ecumenical' - the writers of antiquity meant specifically Greece, Italy, Spain, northern Africa, Egypt, Asia Minor, the Black Sea, the Levantine Coast, Syria, and the southern stretches of Gaul and Thrace. Of course, Greek and Roman authors were aware of the existence of lands that lay beyond what they called 'the world', including Persia, Arabia, India, China, Scythia, Britain, Germania, and the interior regions of the African continent, which they called 'Libya', but for them those places were so far distant that they lay beyond the frontiers of what they could term the 'inhabited world', or the οἰκουμένη. They knew nothing of America.

in that interval was the defeat of the Carthaginian general Hannibal in the Second Punic War (218-201 BCE), which resulted in the crippling of Carthage as a serious contender for Mediterranean dominance and gave Rome sway over southern Gaul, the Iberian peninsula, and the north African coastline. In the East, the defeat of Philip V of Macedon at Cynoscephalae in 198 BCE removed Macedon as a threat to Roman expansion and saw Rome flex its diplomatic, political and military muscle in the Balkan peninsula in the decades that followed. Yet, as Polybius conceded, the years that followed the Battle of Pydna in 167 BCE were decisive in establishing Rome at the helm of European affairs, since they led to the final destruction of Carthage and Corinth in the same year, in 146 BCE. From that point, all effective resistance to Rome in Spain, North Africa, and the Balkans had finally been annihilated, and Rome was free to pursue her interests eastward.

Why Polybius chose the year 220 BCE as his starting point is not entirely clear. Rome's struggles with Carthage dated back at least to 264 BCE, when the interests of the two imperial powers clashed on the disputed island of Sicily, and her first major standoff with a Greek foe occurred two decades before that in 282 BCE, when the Greek tyrant Pyrrhus of Epirus led an expedition westward across the Ionian Sea into the heel of Italy and came to blows with Roman armies as a result of internal meddling in the affairs of the southern Italian town of Tarentum (modern Taranto), originally a Greek colony. Even then, Rome had been steadily expanding as a major player in foreign affairs for at least two centuries previous to the Pyrrhic War, and as early as the fifth century BCE, was already asserting herself as head of a political and military alliance in central Italy which, over time, would become dominant in the Italian peninsula. As a Greek writer, historian and scholar, however, Polybius was heir to a well-established literary tradition dating back to Herodotus of Halicarnassus in the fifth century BCE, which loved to periodise history and proclaim the period under investigation as worthiest of attention. The best noted of Polybius' predecessors was the fifth-century BCE Athenian historian Thucydides, who invented the genre of contemporary historiography and compiled a year-by-year account of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE) between the two great powers of the Greek mainland, Sparta and Athens. Thucydides believed that his subject matter was greater than any which had ever been dealt with previously, including the Trojan War, first because of its scale - no known war had ever been greater in size, magnitude, or scale of devastation -, and secondly, because of his autoptic knowledge of the events which he described. As a prologue to the main body of his narrative, Thucydides appended an account of the fifty or so intervening years, known in subsequent reception as 'the *Pentekontaetia*', stretching from the tail-end of the Persian Wars in 479 BCE down to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War almost half a century later. That intervening period was commemorated by later historians, orators and biographers as Athens' golden age, a period of political greatness and intellectual flowering which would never again be matched in Greece. Such pronouncements were exaggerated, but 'fifty years of greatness' became household terminology. It is not surprising that Polybius would take over the notion of a fifty-or-so-year period and apply it to Rome, with the important proviso that his subject matter was even greater than that of his predecessor Thucydides: Whereas the latter concerned only Greek affairs, the former set about recounting how the entire known world - in Greek, the *οικουμένη* - was woven together as a single, coherent, organic and unified whole. In contrast, however, whilst Thucydides treated the fifty years, the *Pentekontaetia*, as a narratological appendage, Polybius made the fifty-three years from 220-167 BCE his focus,

treating the contemporary decades known first-hand as an afterthought perhaps in a revised edition.<sup>2</sup>

Modern scholars of Classical historiography disagree on Polybius' motives for writing, some claiming that his aims were didactic, that is, to outline to a Greek readership the perils of vain resistance to Rome's ineluctable rule, others casting him as a partisan advocate of the family of his patron Scipio Aemilianus principally for a Roman readership, others discerning in his narrative an attempt to denigrate his Greek rivals, in particular the Aetolian League which for over a century had been a rival menace to his native Achaëa.<sup>3</sup> Though Polybius' *Histories*, only partially surviving as they do, represent an indispensable source for the period he narrates and were a vital reference point for the later first-century Roman historian Livy, like all ancient historiography they cannot, and must not, be treated as an impartial or factually unimpeachable benchmark of evidence from which to reconstruct an historically reliable narrative. Whilst the *Histories* of Polybius were the first of their kind to address the monumental matter of Rome's rise to greatness, it is nevertheless clear from the style of their composition that, as a project, they were conceived with a specific literary agenda in mind, to trump every Greek historian to date as an authority for world history.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Polybius chose to confine the main body of his narrative to fifty-three years admits more of a literary than an historical explanation. To be sure, during that period the Mediterranean world emerged from being a discordant plethora of rival claimants to leadership to one where there was only one indisputable world leader, but it would be otiose to suggest that Rome's rise to world pre-eminence began in the year which Polybius' earmarked as the launching point of his *Histories*. The year 220 BCE in various ways held greater significance for a Greek than for a Roman reader, even though it marked the eve of the longest and most formidable war Rome had ever fought. From a Greek point of view, cracks had begun to appear in Macedonian hegemony over the Hellenic mainland, and from that point the possibility of an alternative to Macedon, though still remote, was beginning to emerge. Still, to imagine that Rome in that year was all but an insignificant power would be to underestimate the scale and length of time wherein Rome had, bit by bit, acquired hegemony in the centuries prior to the year which the Greek historian Polybius demarcated as a watershed. Polybius was by no means ignorant of earlier Roman history or of the painstaking process by which Rome had, in previous centuries, risen to her position as mistress of peninsular Italy, but for the purposes of his own narrative, he chose to side-line it as a focal point of concern. Unlike earlier as well as later historians who chronicled the early centuries of Rome's rise, Polybius did not write in the annalistic tradition, that is, by a narrative structure which recorded history year by year against lists of names of annual eponymous magistrates. Instead, his narrative had a topological format, treating the affairs of the different regions and theatres as individual sub-narratives, knitted together into a single overarching structure to reflect his subject matter.

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<sup>2</sup> For a topical overview of the intellectual contribution of the historian Polybius to Greek political thought, see F.W. Walbank, *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World: Essays and Reflections*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> For contrasting views as to Polybius' main motives in writing, see P. Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age*. University of Californian Press, 1993; R.J. Mellor, *The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings*. Routledge, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> For the habit of Greco-Roman historiography to override tradition with weightier claims to authority, see J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Greco-Roman Historiography*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Here, we run up against our most important methodological problem. Until Polybius, we have at our disposal no historical narrative even in near completeness which can inform an understanding of the earliest centuries of Rome's rise. That is not to say, however, that there were no Roman historians before Polybius. The earliest known Roman chronicler was Quintus Fabius Pictor, a senator who had served in the Gallic War of 225 BCE, whose work survives in later citations. Later descriptions of the work clarify that Fabius Pictor wrote in Greek and told the history of Rome from the city's foundation in 753 BCE down to the First Punic War (264-261 BCE).<sup>5</sup> The *History* was probably conceived in annalistic format, though we do not know how much of the intervening period was covered, and modern scholars have speculated, though without universal agreement, that Fabius Pictor drew on the historical records of the pontifical college which had kept notes of annual historical events since time immemorial.<sup>6</sup> Whether or not there was ever an official state chronicle of Rome is a matter of contention. The older view was that perhaps from the second decade of the fourth century BCE, the pontifical college at Rome produced a comprehensive narrative covering events back to the dawn of the city, but the problem is that we have no conclusive evidence that such a record was ever produced.<sup>7</sup> In fact, before Fabius Pictor we know for certain of no literary chronicle of Rome, and it seems likely that Fabius Pictor composed his *History* in a Greek, rather than a Roman, tradition. But once the genre was established, Fabius Pictor was succeeded by third- and second-century historians who wrote in the same vein, notably Lucius Cincius Alimentus and Aulus Postumius Albinus, who also wrote in Greek, and, in Latin, Marcus Porcius Cato (known more generally as Cato the Elder or Censor), Cassius Hemina, Calpurnius Piso, Licinius Macer, and Valerius Antias. None of these writers' works survives in anything close to completeness, and of them the most widely and extensively quoted is Cato the Elder, who departed from the annalistic tradition by writing thematically rather than chronologically.<sup>8</sup> Cato departed from tradition in another important respect, that he

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<sup>5</sup> For ancient descriptions of Fabius Pictor's work, see Dion. Hal. 1.6.2; Polyb. 1.14.1; App. *Hann.* 116. For up-to-date modern overview and discussions, see J. Dillery, 'Quintus Fabius Pictor and Greco-Roman historiography at Rome', in J.F. Miller, C. Damon and K.S. Myers (edd), *Vertis in usum: Studies in Honor of Edward Courtney*. K.G. Saur München-Leipzig, 2002, pp. 1-23; A. Mehl, *Roman Historiography: An Introduction to its Basic Aspects and Development*. Wiley Blackwell Press, 2014; translated by Hans Friedrich Mueller from the original German, *Römische Geschichtsschreibung*. W Kohlhammer GmbH, Stuttgart, 2001, esp. pp. 43-47.

<sup>6</sup> The relationship of the Roman annalistic literary tradition to earlier historical documentation is hotly disputed. In the late nineteenth century, it was widely believed, thanks to the theories of the great German Classicist Th. Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte* fasc. I vol. 1 (1854), pp.302-4; fasc. II. vol. 1 (1856), pp. 432-8; vol. 2 (1857), pp. 453-4, that soon after the establishment of the Roman Republic in 509 BCE the pontifical college began to compile notes summarising key events alongside the names of eponymous yearly officials comprising the religious *fasti*, or the sacrificial calendar, and the eponymous *fasti*, or the names of the annual magistrates, and that this resulted in the publication of an official priestly chronicle at some point after the Gaulish sack in 386 BCE. This idea has, however, been challenged more recently; for a modern overview of the problem with a list of relevant scholarship, see T. Cornell, 'Annals and annalists', *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> For a summary of earlier scholarship and a more modern critical response, see B.W. Frier, *Libri Annales Pontificorum Maximorum: The Origins of the Annalistic Tradition*. University of Michigan Press, 1999, pp. 107-179 and 285-297.

<sup>8</sup> For a general overview of Cato as a senatorial politician, see A.E. Astin, *Cato the Elder*. Oxford University Press, 1978. For Cato as a literary figure, see U. Gotter, 'Cato's *Origines*: The Historian and his Enemies', in A. Feldherr (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians*.



chose Latin rather than Greek, which is often seen as the cornerstone of an emergent cultural confidence which began at Rome in the second century BCE and which would continue to blossom in the two centuries which followed.

Later literary references attest to the existence of a long-standing tradition going back as far as the third century BCE, if not further. The difficulty for modernity, however, is that we know nothing of those early writers outside chance citations in later sources. What we can be confident about is that those authors wielded a very profound influence on later works which do survive in greater quantities and which inform more completely our understanding of the early history of Rome. The most important of them, Livy, lived two centuries after Cato, in the age of Emperor Augustus, and composed a monumental history of Rome in 142 books, from her legendary foundation in 753 BCE down to his own day. Of that gigantic output, we have the first ten books surviving in entirety as well as books 21-45, and other portions surviving in digested summaries. The first ten books are invaluable for the history of Rome down until the fifth century BCE, and the second surviving chunk, which begins with Hannibal's invasion of Italy in 218 BCE, vitally supplements the narrative of Polybius with material not found in the work of Livy's greatest second-century literary predecessor. In their analysis of the hidden sources (*Quellenforschung*), Livian scholars have tended to divide the tradition into two main streams, between that part which comes directly from Polybius and that from non-Polybian, presumably annalistic, sources. The latter, no doubt, included the annalists of the third century BCE, but in all probability incorporated documentary material derived from the *pontifices maximi* of earlier times.<sup>9</sup> Livy's work is much a showpiece in a fervently nationalistic vein, telling the glories of the rise of Rome to greatness for the gratification of a senatorial Augustan readership. Though much of the narrative is polished and almost certainly influenced by senatorial ideology, there is no good reason to doubt that the bare bones of the narrative are built on a solid historical tradition dating back to early times. Livy made use of earlier sources, as he often cites Polybius in a complimentary way but equally shows a critical disposition to historians such as Valerius Antias and Licinus Macer. A contemporary of Livy, a Greek called Dionysius of Halicarnassus, wrote a history of Rome from its foundation to 264 BCE, the date of the outbreak of the First Punic War, the *Roman Antiquities* (*Antiquitates Romanae*), which among other things sought to prove that Rome was, in origin, a Greek city. Unlike Livy's work, which was more concerned with war and politics, Dionysius dealt with religion, cult, and other social institutions which he likened to those of his native Greece. Like Livy, however, Dionysius was critical in his use of sources and was not sparing in *Quellenangaben*, or source citations, as well as cross-references to documentary sources such as the Cassian treaty of 493 BCE. The other Augustan historian worthy of note was another Greek, Diodorus of Sicily, who composed a Library or 'Universal History' purporting to be a history of the known world in forty books. Only portions of the narrative survive, and often the dating is suspect. Unlike Dionysius or Livy, we know less about Diodorus' Roman sources, but one of them

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Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 108-122; E. Sciarrino, *Cato the Censor and the Beginnings of Latin Prose: From Poetic Translation to Elite Transcription*. Ohio State University Press, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> On the disputed question of Livy and his sources, see P.G. Walsh, *Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods*. Cambridge University Press, 1961; C.S. Kraus and A.J. Woodman, *Latin Historians*. Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 51-81. For the reliability of Livy as a source for early Rome, see G.B. Miles, *Livy: Reconstructing Early Rome*. Cornell University Press, 1995.

seems to have been a chronographer whose dates diverged from those of other contemporary authors.<sup>10</sup>

At a glance, therefore, it is evident that in order to access the early history of Rome we are inseparably dependent upon literary sources which postdate the period they describe by a handful of centuries. For an historian of early Rome, this poses an insuperable difficulty, *viz.* that it is possible to glean a perspective on the early centuries of Rome's rise only *via* sources which are not contemporary with the period which they narrate. This is no reason to despair completely: Later narratives depend on earlier sources which do not survive to us, and unless there is a special reason to doubt the authority of a later source (*e.g.* where we have other, more contemporary, archaeological material which throws the opinions of a later source into doubt), the authority of that source should be respected. Nevertheless, modern Classical scholars divide over the vexed issue of historical reliability. Some believe that the writers of the Augustan age had access to reliable material of genuine age and antiquity.<sup>11</sup> Others, in contrast, adhere to the view that even the earliest known Roman chronicler, Fabius Pictor, drew on material embedded mainly in myth and legend, and could not have known anything substantial about the history of Rome predating the fourth century BCE.<sup>12</sup> In the absence of evidence one way or the other, it is difficult to make any decisive assertion, yet the fact that Greek authors as early as the fifth century BCE allude to a city in the centre of Italy called Rome must indicate that local traditions existed at that time and were in some way transmitted. The art of writing was known in Greece as early as the seventh century BCE, as inscribed texts illustrate, and from an early stage Rome was progressively bombarded by Greek cultural influence. Thus, though there is no conclusive proof, it is still reasonable to believe that written records, however rudimentary, were preserved from an early date and that the literary tradition which survives in later narratives, although extensively elaborated and embellished, was nonetheless spawned from a documentary record which dated back to the archaic period (the sixth to the fourth centuries BCE).<sup>13</sup>

In what follows, I survey the history of Rome in *précis* from the very beginnings of the city, as far as they can be traced archaeologically, to the conclusion of the Third Samnite War (290 BCE). The period under surveillance predates that covered by the first and indeed greatest historian of early Rome, the Greek Polybius, by at least five centuries at its starting point. The period narrated by Polybius was crucial in seeing Rome rise from an Italian to a Mediterranean power, but first Rome had to emerge as the most important and powerful city in

<sup>10</sup> On Dionysius, see E. Gabba, *Dionysius and the history of archaic Rome*. University of California Press, 1991; A.B. Gallia, 'Reassessing the 'Cumaean Chronicle': Greek chronology and Roman history in Dionysius of Halicarnassus. *Journal of Roman Studies* 97 (2007), pp. 50–67. On Diodorus, see C. Rubincam, 'The Organization and Composition of Diodorus' *Bibliothèque*, *Échos du monde Classique* 31 (1987), pp. 313–328; I. Sulimani, 'Diodorus' Source-Citations: A Turn in the Attitude of Ancient Authors Towards their Predecessors?' *Athenaeum* 96.2 (2008), pp. 535–567; C.E. Muntz, *Diodorus Siculus and the World of the Late Roman Republic*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, T.J. Cornell, 'The value of the literary tradition concerning archaic Rome', in K. Raaflaub (ed.), *Social Struggles in Archaic Rome*. University of California Press, 1986, pp. 52–76; S. Oakley, *A Commentary of Livy, Books VI–X*, 4 vols. Cambridge University Press, 1997–2005; G. Forsythe, *A Critical History of Early Rome: From Prehistory to the First Punic War*. University of California Press, 2006; A. Carandini, *Rome: Day One*. Princeton University Press, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> T. P. Wiseman, *The Myths of Rome*. Exeter University Press, 2004; *Unwritten Rome*. Exeter University Press, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> This is the view taken most recently by K. Lomas, *The Rise of Rome From the Iron Age to the Punic Wars 1000 BC to 264 BC*. Profile Books, 2018, pp. 344–5.

Italy. The following survey will consist of three sections: (1) Pre-Roman Italy and Roman origins (c.1000-500 BCE); (2) Rome's rise in central Italy (509-350 BCE); and (3) Rome's rise to dominance in peninsular Italy (350-290 BCE). The centuries which followed mark the transition of Rome as a provincial to an international power, but that is for a separate study.

## II: Pre-Roman Italy and the origins of Rome (c.1000-500 BCE)

According to tradition, Rome was founded in the year 753 BCE in the wake of a feud between the twin brothers Romulus and Remus, the former of whom won and became the eponymous founder of the city. Rome was by no means unique in having a foundation legend. Most of the Greek city states of the Mediterranean world at various stages developed foundation narratives which attributed their origin to a founding hero. What is striking about Roman stories, however, is their blood-drenched character: At the very heart of Roman national consciousness was the recognition that the city had been forged in struggle.<sup>14</sup> Equally, the Romans acknowledged the ethnically complex nature of their origin. Rome was not a single nation or tribe, but a composite of ethnically diverse peoples who had come together under varying circumstances at different points in history. Politically speaking, the Roman nation referred to itself in the singular as the *populus Romanus*, or the 'Roman people', but ethnically they never referred to themselves by any singular designation. In their self-understanding, they were not one tribe or clan (*gens*) but a plurality of clans or noble families (*gentes*). As early as the fifth century BCE, it is clear from fragments of Greek historical writings that the Romans believed that they were a combination of migrants from Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and native Italian peoples, and that the tradition of ethnic coalescence long predated the fleshing out of that self-belief in the greatest of Rome's national epics, the *Aeneid* of Vergil, published posthumously after the poet's death in 19 BCE, during the early years of the Augustan era.<sup>15</sup> The tradition stated that a band of exiles from Troy escaped the Greek sack of c. 1184 BCE and, under the leadership of a Trojan prince called Aeneas, made their way across the Mediterranean, *via* Carthage, to central Italy, where they settled after beating the local peoples into submission. Aeneas was not so much the founder of Rome as the founder of the Roman people, which inhabited the nearby city of Alba Longa for over four centuries until the foundation of Rome itself under Romulus.

Implicit in the national legend is the belief that the Roman people was a genetic hybrid of different racial strands or influences. At the start of Vergil's *Aeneid*, which consists of twelve books (just a quarter of the length of Homer's

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<sup>14</sup> For ancient re-telling of the legend of Romulus, see Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.71 (p.235); Liv. 1.4-6; Plut. *Rom.* 2-10. The story is attested archaeologically in a number of famous works of art, the oldest surviving being *La Lupa Capitolina* ('The Capitoline Wolf'), the oldest portions of which are thought to be Etruscan and to date back to the fifth century BCE, though there is some speculation that even the she-wolf is a later medieval forgery; for this revisionist theory, see A. La Regina, , "[La lupa del Campidoglio è medievale: la prova è nel test al carbonio](#)". *La Repubblica*. 9 July 2008. The Ara Martis, or Altar to Mars, originally situated at Roman Ostia, depicted the twins Romulus and Remus suckled by a she-wolf, and there is also numismatic attestation as early as the third century BCE in the form of a silver didrachm represented the rearing of the twins.

<sup>15</sup> The earliest known literary attestation of the legend of Aeneas reaching Italy is to be found in a fragment of the fifth-century BCE historian Hellanicus of Lesbos, preserved in a quotation by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*FGrHist* 4 F 84 = Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.72.2). For a modern discussion of this reference, see F. Solmsen, 'Aeneas founded Rome with Odysseus', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 44 (1986), pp. 93-110.



*Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined!), the king of the gods on Olympus, Jupiter, delivers a prophesy foretelling that one day, the whole world should fall beneath the *gens Romana*, or Roman nation.<sup>16</sup> Vergilian scholars have often pointed out that this is the first time in Roman literary history when the idea of a single Roman family, or *gens*, was ever formally expressed. To understand why, it is worth reflecting that when Vergil was writing, a convulsive and unprecedented political shift had taken place whereby the Roman Republic, which for five centuries had stood under the tutelage of rival aristocratic familial groupings (*gentes*), now for the first time sat under the dominance of one imperial clan, or *gens*, the Julian, later to become the Julio-Claudian, clan. Family tradition held a belief in a direct descent from Iulus or Ilus, also known as Ascanius, the son of the Trojan Aeneas. The *Aeneid*, patronised by Maecenas, the cultural attaché under the Julian emperor Augustus, was written in the overt political conviction that the Julian clan embodied all that was Rome, a claim which would have been directly offensive to traditional Republican aristocratic sensibilities. Here, we witness a decisive watershed in the development of the Roman national consciousness, where a traditional pluralistic belief started to give way to belief in singularity, reflecting the transition from an older Republican, or pluralistic, political system, to one which, in all but name, became a monarchy under Augustus and his dynastic successors. Archaeologically, this shift can be documented in the construction of the Julian Forum adjacent to the older *Forum Romanum*, to honour the Julian family which, in the ideology of the Principate, was unrivalled in its pre-eminence.<sup>17</sup> The older, more pluralist, belief was deeply entrenched in the aristocratic mindset and did not die with the death of the Republic after 27 BCE, the year of Augustus' accession. Rome was from the outset an amalgamated nation, and this reality had its origins in the political conditions of late Bronze Age and early Iron Age Italy, the crucible of Rome's birth as a city.

One of the most divisive issues among modern historians of early Rome is how far the foundation legends can be believed. One school of thought holds that these legends, although certainly embellished in later times, were built on a sound historical kernel and that we should not doubt that Rome was established, as tradition stated, by a single founder.<sup>18</sup> Others argue in contrast that the tradition does not have to be true in order to be important to the community, and that there is therefore no sound historical basis to the stories about Aeneas or Romulus.<sup>19</sup> The evidence of archaeology tends to support the second of these two contentions, as it shows a process of long development rather than a single act of foundation in Latium in the mid eighth century BCE. Even in the Middle Bronze Age, the site of the future city of Rome seems to have been settled, and the strategic advantage of Rome, situated as it is along the river Tiber, makes it likely that early peoples would have seen it as a beneficial location to inhabit.<sup>20</sup> The current state of archaeology indicates three separate settlements on the banks of the Tiber predating the Iron

<sup>16</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 1. 257-296. For a recent discussion of the significance of this passage as Julian propaganda, see now A. Rogerson, 'Virgil's Ascanius: Re-imagining the Future in the *Aeneid*'. *Cambridge Classical Studies*, 2017, esp. pp. 32-5.

<sup>17</sup> For a recent overview of the Julian propaganda attested archaeologically in the Forum and beyond, see G.J. Gorski and J.E. Packer, *The Roman Forum: A Reconstruction and Archaeological Guide*. Cambridge University Press, 2015, esp. p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> A. Carandini, *La nascita di Roma*. 2 volumes. Turin, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> T.P. Wiseman, *The Myths of Rome*. Exeter, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> For a general survey of the archaeology, see F. Fulminante, *The Urbanisation of Rome and Latium Vetus: From the Bronze Age to the Archaic Era*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Age, one from the Middle Bronze Age (c.1700-1350 BCE), a second from the Recent Bronze Age (c. 1350-1200 BCE), and a third from the Final Bronze Age (c. 1200- 975 BCE). By the early Iron Age, known to archaeologists as Latial Culture IIA (c. 900 BCE), there is archaeological indication of early settlements around what would later be the Roman Forum, near the later Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, and of a burial site near the Capitoline hill. There is additional evidence of burial sites on the Esquiline, Quirinal and Viminal hills. The best excavated of these is the Capitoline, in what is today the Giardino Romano.<sup>21</sup> In the two centuries leading up to the legendary foundation of the city under Romulus, there is further evidence of mud-brick structures near the Palatine hill. By the start of the eighth century BCE, a nascent settlement appears to have emerged in the Palatine, Capitoline, Quirinal/Viminal and Caelian/Oppian/Velia areas, and the area of the later Forum was no longer used as a cemetery. The picture is one of a community which was becoming urbanised, but which was still a far cry from the urbanised city of Rome which would emerge in successive centuries.

The Romulus legend, according to which the two grandsons of king Numitor from neighbouring Alba Longa were suckled by a she-wolf and grew up to fight a fratricidal war resulting in the death of Remus at his brother's hand, is by no means unique or specific to Rome. Archaeology shows that wolf legends were very common throughout Etruria, as Etruscan artistic depictions of wolves show.<sup>22</sup> An Etruscan bronze mirror from Bolsena may represent elements of the story of Faustulus, the wolf and the twins. If archaeology is a reliable guide, it seems that the tale of the twins Romulus and Remus was told in various guises throughout Tyrrhenian Italy, and that there was nothing especially Roman about it. As with the Romulus story, so with Aeneas and the settlement of Trojans on Italian soil in the twelfth century BCE, the so-called 'prequel' to the foundation legend of Romulus, for which there are earlier references in Greek literature and even in Etruscan art.<sup>23</sup> The perennial question as to whether Romans themselves believed these stories is, of course, impossible to answer and, in an important sense, begs the question: Which Romans do we mean? For ordinary Romans, the historicity the legends may never have been questioned, but educated Romans are known to have expressed scepticism, as the Augustan historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus attests (*Roman Antiquities*, 1.45.5-48.1). The significance of the stories is to be found in the sacrificial calendar and the local topography into which these stories were woven. A hero-shrine to Romulus stood in later times on the Palatine, and festivals connected with the foundation of Rome under Romulus played out well into late antiquity.<sup>24</sup> It is therefore probable that these and similar stories belonged to the collective consciousness of early communities throughout central Italy, and that Rome was one of many cities which from an early stage entertained the idea of foundation out of a group of foreign immigrants and, later, civil conflict. The truth behind these stories is ultimately unknowable, but even if they had no or little foundation, they remain significant in piecing together the self-belief of the Roman city and its relationship to other cities and communities in the same region. Over

<sup>21</sup> See C. Holleran and A. Claridge (eds), *A Companion to the City of Rome*. Wiley Blackwell, 2018, p. 100.

<sup>22</sup> C. Mazzoni, *She-Wolf: The Story of a Roman Icon*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> See G.K. Galinsky, *Aeneas, Sicily and Rome*. Princeton University Press, 2015 (re-printed), p. 131.

<sup>24</sup> For a general discussion of the social and mythical importance of these legends, see J.A. Rea, *The Locus of Political Power: Sacred and Social Spaces on the Palatine*. University of Wisconsin, 1999.

time, as Rome emerged as the dominant power in Italy, the early legends came to be attached specifically to Rome, and by the time of Emperor Augustus at the end of the first century BCE, were retold exclusively in connection with Rome and its foundation. However, archaeology indicates that Rome was perhaps not the birthplace of the early legends but may have borrowed them from elsewhere. Their appearance throughout Etruria suggests cultural assimilation, though in which direction is up for grabs.

The conditions of Italy in the late Bronze Age are known archaeologically. To the north of Rome lies Etruria, modern Tuscany, which from an early stage exerted a profound cultural and political influence on the emergent Roman nation. Between the twelfth and tenth centuries BCE in that region of Italy changes appear in settlement development, from a community built around transhumant livestock to one which depended on a more settled agricultural method of subsistence. These shifts are illustrated in two intensively excavated settlements at modern-day San Giovenale and Muni sul Mignone, near Viterbo where, by the late Bronze Age, there is evidence of construction of large stone edifices in place of the smaller mud-brick structures of earlier times. Further to the south, in Calabria, village settlements by the tenth century BCE had become increasingly impressive in size. This expansion, which must reflect a growing population, was accompanied by increasing polarities of wealth, as can be seen from examination of archaic burial sites, wherein grave goods by the end of the Bronze Age appear to have become much more lavish and expensive. Perhaps the most extensively known and excavated of the prehistoric Italic cultures is the Villanovan in Etruria, which shows that by the middle of the eighth century BCE the communities in central northern Italy were becoming increasingly militarised. Grave goods from a cemetery at Quattro Fontanili dating from about this period comprise pottery, jewellery, a bronze shield, a crested helmet, weapons and a horse's bridle, all of which indicate the emergence of a social elite in these early communities which identified themselves by military fighting prowess.<sup>25</sup> Another archaeological excavation at nearby Nepi (ancient Nepes) suggests that clans had begun to take shape which controlled local areas of land dominated by a village and cemetery.<sup>26</sup> These and other material data have led historians and archaeologists to infer that in Etruria at this period a social elite had begun to take shape which, in turn, had begun to develop a taste for luxury and imported goods, probably via the Phoenician traders from the Levant who had settled in nearby Sardinia.

To the south, in neighbouring Latium (modern Lazio), archaeological finds indicate that as early as the eighth century BCE, trade routes had been established with foreign peoples. In a female cremation of the period, there is evidence of Greek writing on a one-handled urn dated to around 775 BCE.<sup>27</sup> The vessel comes from a horde at Osteria dell' Osa, on the shores of Lake Castiglione, yielding evidence that cremation and inhumation were practised side by side, with cremation being

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<sup>25</sup> J. Toms, *The Relative Chronology of the Villanovan Cemetery at Quattro Fontanili at Veii*. Naples (Istituto universitario orientale), 1986. For the association between horse possession and the emergence of a warrior elite, see T. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c.1000-264 BC)*. London, 1995, p. 250.

<sup>26</sup> F. di Gennaro, O. Cerasuolo, C. Colonna, U. Rajala, S. Stoddart, N. Whitehead, 'Recent research on the city and territory of Nepes', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 70 (2002), pp. 29-77.

<sup>27</sup> G. Boffa, 'Il vaso ben levigato. Una proposta di lettura per l' iscrizione più antica dalla necropoli di Osteria dell' Osa.' *Parola del Passato: Rivista di studi antichi* 70/1 (2015), pp. 153-190.

reserved for the richer and more important members of society.<sup>28</sup> During the eighth century BCE, richer grave goods in the region increase in number. One example is a female burial at Castel di Decima which yields extravagant amber and glass ware unknown in earlier centuries.<sup>29</sup> The expanding settlements at this period would indicate a more extensive use of cultivation, and the increase in ceramic manufacture suggests that a specialised industry was starting to establish itself with the emerging division of labour. As time progressed, burial excavations show the emergence of a wealthy aristocracy in Tyrrhenian Italy. This is noticeable in Etruria, where burial sites in the seventh century BCE reveal less of an emphasis upon military prowess and a greater emphasis upon lavish displays of wealth. Perhaps the most famous example is the Regolini-Galassi tomb close to the Etruscan town of Caere, to the north of Rome, containing exquisite grave offerings of furniture, pottery, rare precious metals such as gold, and jewellery, as well as orientalisng influences.<sup>30</sup> Similar changes are in evidence during this period further to the south in Latium.<sup>31</sup> Extravagant burials in the seventh century BCE and later make the family the main focus as well as the eponymous founder of the clan. At Praeneste (modern Palestrina), the Bernadini and Barberini tombs yield evidence of great opulence, presumably as a way of showing off the wealth and prestige of powerful families.<sup>32</sup> Many of these sites contain goods imported from Greece and Egypt, and indicate the rise of an aristocracy with trading connections across the Mediterranean.

Mention has been made already of the Phoenicians, a trading people who came from what is now Lebanon on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean, mentioned in Greek and Hebrew sources. In the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), it is written that the Phoenicians whose homeland was Sidon and Tyre exported ivory, precious metals and exotic animals all over the Mediterranean world (2 Chronicles 9.21; 1 Kings 10.22) as early as the tenth century BCE, and that their reach extended as far as Spain, Sardinia and western Sicily. Hebrew sources are confirmed by an important archaeological find from Nora in Sardinia, known as 'The Nora Stone', commemorating a pact between the local Sardinian ruler and the Phoenician king Pummay (r.831-785 BCE).<sup>33</sup> The proximity of Phoenician traders to Latium in central Italy may well explain, at least in part, why materially both Latium and Etruria from the eighth century BCE become richer and more prosperous than they had been previously. The earliest known Greek settlement in Italy was at Pithecusae on the island of Ischia in the Tyrrhenian Sea, which the Roman historian Livy and the Greek geographer Strabo attest was founded by refugees from Euboea (modern Evvia) in the Aegean Sea around 750 BCE (Liv.

<sup>28</sup> M. Mogetta and J.A. Becker, 'Archaeological research at Gabii, Italy: The Gabii projects excavations, 2009-11', *American Journal of Archaeology* 118 no.1 (2014), pp. 171-188.

<sup>29</sup> R. R. Holloway, *The Archaeology of Early Rome and Latium*. Routledge, 2014, pp. 114-127.

<sup>30</sup> For a virtual tour, see

<http://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/museo-gregoriano-etrusco/sala-ii--tomba-regolini-galassi/tomba-regolini-galassi.html>

<sup>31</sup> S.L. Willemsen, 'A changing funerary ritual at Crustumerium (ca. 625 BC)', in A.J. Nijboer, S. Willemsen, P.A.J. Attema and J. Seubers (eds.), *Research into pre-Roman Burial Grounds in Italy*. Leuven, 2013, pp. 35-50.

<sup>32</sup> C. Densmore Curtis, 'The Bernadini Tomb', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 3 (1919), pp. 9-90.

<sup>33</sup> For a reconstruction of the text and a general survey of scholarship surrounding the inscription, see R. E. Gmirkin, *Berosus and Genesis, Manetho and Exodus: Hellenistic Histories and the Date of the Pentateuch*. New York and London, 2006, Appendix E.

8.22; Strab. *Geog.* 5.4.8).<sup>34</sup> Though Strabo claims that the Greeks were seeking to establish a self-supporting colony, it appears likely that their true motive was to fix a trading route to the western Mediterranean, and particularly to Tyrrhenian Italy, rich in metal ore which was lacking at home. The excavated cemetery at Pithecusae shows a modest quantity of grave goods but fine in quality, with exquisite pottery from all over the Greek world, drinking cups, perfume bottles (*aryballoi*), Egyptian scarabs, Phoenician seal stones, and other inlaid jewellery. The most famous of the finds is nicknamed ‘Nestor’s Cup’ after an inscription on its handle referring to the great Homeric warrior (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 14.604). With a wealthy neighbour in the Tyrrhenian, it is unsurprising that central Italy also grew in wealth.

Southern Italy during this period was undergoing colonisation by Greek settlers.<sup>35</sup> Why this process happened is open to speculation. The traditional explanation has been that Greece in the eighth century experienced a population explosion which drove surplus populations to seek lands beyond the confines of Greece, but that theory is vulnerable to the objection that land in Greece itself was not in short supply, and furthermore, not all colonies which Greeks established abroad had land acquisition as a prime motive, many of which, like Pithecusae, were established through trade and pursuit of wealth. With the Greek settlement of southern Italy underway, Italy came under Greek cultural influence, as the archaeology from the period shows. The excavated ancient cemetery of Pantanello at Metapontum reveals a curious mixture of Greek inhumation practices and local Italian grave goods, but by the start of the sixth century BCE the Greek cultural footprint became more pronounced.<sup>36</sup> Thanks to later writers, such as Diodorus (8.21.3), it is tempting to imagine that Italy began to ‘civilise’ itself in the wake of the presence of Greeks in the south, but that would be a misjudgement. As the archaeology of Villanovan Italy shows, small-scale communities had already begun historically to develop in Etruria and Latium well before the foundation of the first Greek-speaking colony on Ischia, and while it is unmistakable that the first civilised communities of central Italy felt the impact of Greek culture even as early as the eighth century BCE, there is not enough evidence to assert that Italy became settled because of Greek influence. What can be stated with some confidence, however, is that because of trading links to the south and west, Tyrrhenian Italy experienced an increase of material prosperity which, in all probability, led to a greater social and economic stratification among the early communities and an emergence of familial clans and kinship groupings controlling wealth, as well as martial expertise. The steady economic polarisation and militarisation of communities in Tyrrhenian Italy in the eighth century BCE might give an historical backdrop to the foundation of Rome in 753 BCE, which legend ascribed to a dynastic feud between two rival warlords, each jockeying for power in a militarised warrior society.

Nevertheless, though grave sites at this time become more impressive than in the Iron Age, public buildings tended to be less so. One exception is Poggio Civitate in northern Italy, dating from the second quarter of the seventh century BCE, containing terracotta sculptures, imported pottery from Greece, and *objets*

<sup>34</sup> D. Sacks, O. Murray, L.R. Brody, *Encyclopaedia of the Ancient Greek World*. Revised Edition, Facts on File, 2005, p. 289.

<sup>35</sup> For ancient accounts of Greek colonisation in southern Italy and Sicily, see Hdt. 1.163-5; Thuc. 6.1-5; Strab. *Geog.* 5-6.

<sup>36</sup> For a survey of the horde, see M.D. Stanbury-O’Donnell, *A History of Greek Art*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2015, p. 337.



*d'art* made of bone and ivory.<sup>37</sup> Archaeologists disagree on the function of the building, some identifying it as a palace, others as a religious precinct. Whatever it was, its discovery discourages more traditional generalisations about the austere nature of life in pre-Roman Italy which, as archaeology abundantly shows, by the seventh century BCE was beginning to enjoy the fruits of trade with an international elite. Private dwellings during this period seem also to have become more substantial, with traditional thatched mud huts giving way to more spacious solid structures with tiled roofs.<sup>38</sup> The enlargement of private houses went hand-in-hand with the development of urban centres, which at this time show a more elaborate system of street planning and public endowments, as the case of Tarquinii in Etruria shows.<sup>39</sup> Religious centres became more important in seventh-century BCE communities, one of the most prevalent being the cult of Mater Matuta.<sup>40</sup> However, there is little evidence in this period of large monumental religious buildings of the kind witnessed in later centuries, with the majority of religious sites at this time being open-air structures. As the aristocracies of the period became more visible by wealth, it is reasonable to imagine that territorial boundaries became more entrenched. As aristocratic families became more powerful, there is evidence of the emergence of family cults with a belief, fictitious or otherwise, in an eponymous founder. Inscriptions from the period show that families were acquiring clan names, such as the Velthur Talumnes and Pasma Nuzinaie from Veii, or the Laris Velthie and Laucies Mezenties from Caere. In addition, archaeology yields evidence of alliances emerging between noble families, such as a collection of ivory tablets at Murlo with an engraved lion on one side and a name on the reverse.<sup>41</sup> Excavated grave deposits in central Italy indicate that aristocrats wore badges of honour, such as sceptres and enlarged headwear.

Etruscan reliefs give a glimpse into the style of living to which aristocrats of the period were accustomed. The Benvenuti situla dated to approximately 600 BCE, excavated at Este in the region of Veneto, yields an elaborate image of animals, warriors, and, on the outer rim, a feasting party. The hats worn by the dinner guests symbolise social status, and a similar picture is provided by the Murlo friezes.<sup>42</sup> The status of women in these societies was higher than often credited. A bronze rattle (*tintinabulum*) from Bologna dating from the same period depicts the women of aristocratic society weaving, the model of aristocratic female activity which later the Emperor Augustus would hold up for the senatorial elites of Rome.<sup>43</sup> Not enough is known of the structure of society at this time to determine the relationship between the aristocratic elites of Etruria with the ordinary people. The

<sup>37</sup> K. Kreindler, A. Tuck, S. Kansa, E. O'Donoghue, '2016 excavations at Pioggio Civitate and Vescovado di Murlo', *Etruscan Studies* 20 (2) (2017), pp. 35-57.

<sup>38</sup> E. Colantoni, 'Straw to stone, huts to houses: transitions in building practices and society in protohistoric Latium', in M. Thomas and G. Meyers, *Monumentality in Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture: Ideology and Innovation*. Austin TX, 2012, pp. 21-40.

<sup>39</sup> R. Leighton, *Tarquinia, an Etruscan City*. London, Duckworth, 2004.

<sup>40</sup> D. Mantzilas, 'Mater Matuta: an overview of her cult', in *Myrema: 30 Articles and Essays*. Ioannina: Carpe Diem Publications, 2018, pp. 487-540.

<sup>41</sup> L. Bonfante, (ed.) *The Barbarians of Ancient Europe: Realities and Interactions*. Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 246.

<sup>42</sup> On the situla, see E. Perego, 'The other writing: Iconic literacy and situla art in pre-Roman Veneto', in K.E. Piquette and R.D. Whitehouse (eds.), *Writing as Material Practice: Substance, Surface and Medium*. London: Ubiquity Press, 2013, pp. 253-270. On the Murlo friezes, see A. Rathje, 'Murlo, Images and Archaeology', *Etruscan Studies: Journal of the Etruscan Foundation* 10 (2007), article 14.

<sup>43</sup> S. Bell, A.A. Carpino, *A Companion to the Ancient Etruscans*. Wiley Blackwell, 2016, p. 313.

Augustan writers Diodorus and Dionysius likened the status of ordinary Etruscans to that of poor people in archaic Thessaly (Diod. 5.40; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.4.; 4.7), but that may well be anachronistic. In the face of a dearth of good evidence, it is impossible to assert with any degree of certainty how far archaic Etruscan society was split down lines of wealth and status. However, evidence for martial organisation reveals a sharp divide between the elite and ordinary soldiers, who fought with bronze helmets and a round shield in close-knit military formations, much like a Greek phalanx. A carved decoration on a wine-pourer, or oinochoe, found near Tragliatella near Caere and dating from the late seventh century BCE, inscribed with ‘Mi Mamerce’ (‘I belong to Mamercus’), shows close formations of warriors in battle at this period. The archaeology shows that by the start of the sixth century BCE, the societies of Latium and Etruria had become fully militarised and were prepared to exert their influence within and even beyond their immediate territorial domains.

As for the city of Rome itself, archaeology demonstrates that it was becoming steadily more urbanised from the seventh century BCE onward. On one estimate, the end of that century Rome had grown to 790 acres.<sup>44</sup> At this time there seem to have been significant changes to the Forum Romanum which, increasingly, was developing into the urban centre which it was in later times. This is evident from the raising of the ground of the central part of the Forum, where the older mud-huts were demolished to make way for more substantial structures and for better drainage. Around the site of the future Comitium, where Roman citizens gathered to cast votes, archaeology reveals in the mid seventh century BCE evidence of a triangular depression in the soil which would indicate the foundations of a building structure. Further to the western end, there is evidence of the early phases of the Regia, or ‘Palace’, and the House of the Vestals, where older eighth-century BCE structures were demolished and replaced with larger buildings with tiled roofs. Later tradition connected the Regia with the residence of the Alban kings of Rome, who reigned in the early centuries of the city’s existence before Rome established herself as a Republic in 509 BCE.<sup>45</sup> During these times, the burial centres were moved outside the city centre to the more outlying regions. We do not know for certain the population size of Rome at this point, and demographic estimates for the ancient world even for those periods where the evidence is at its most abundant can only be speculative, but some recent estimates place the population levels in the seventh century BCE as high as 5,000 citizens. However, what is certain is that by c.600 BCE Rome had grown from a collection of huddled hamlets to a unified city which was growing in both size and self-confidence. The impression from this early pre-historic era is one of Italy becoming increasingly wealthy and internationally connected. The story of Rome’s emergence in this larger fabric is a small piece of a far larger picture of a Mediterranean world which was becoming ever more literate and culturally sophisticated. The fact that Rome enjoyed contact with the outside world even at this early stage explains why it was able to emerge from a small nascent community of mud-huts along the banks of the Tiber to a political community with a sense of growing self-confidence, able to connect with communities within its hinterland and to forge both diplomatic, military, and economic ties which later were to become an essential component of its imperial growth.

<sup>44</sup> F. Fulminante, *The Urbanisation of Rome and Latium Vetus: From the Bronze Age to the Archaic Era*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Ov. *Fast.* 6.263; Tac. *Ann.* 15.41; Plut. *Num.* 14; Fest. 346-8.

### III: Rome's rise to dominance in central Italy (c. 500-350 BCE)

According to ancient tradition, Rome for the first two and a half centuries of her existence as an independent city state was ruled by local kings, the last of whom, Tarquinius Superbus, was expelled in 509 BCE at the hands of a nobleman called L. Junius Brutus, the forbear of the man Brutus who five centuries later assassinated Julius Caesar. These kings were of Etruscan origin. The regal period of Rome's early history is narrated in Livy's first book and consists, it seems, of myth and legend. Nevertheless, archaeological evidence gives some weight to the much later literary attestations to the period under investigation. Centuries later, Emperor Claudius urged the Senate to admit new members from Gaul, referring to historical examples where Rome had admitted foreigners to positions of high office. One such example was Servius Tullius, fourth king of Rome, whom Claudius identified with the Etruscan warlord Mastarna. The speech is recorded in an inscription from Lyon in modern France (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 13. 1668) and is further bolstered by artistic representations from the François Tomb at Vulci of a group of captured Etruscans who were later rescued by Mastarna.<sup>46</sup> The scenes depict military skirmishes between the Vibennas of Vulci and a group of supporters from Rome and other allied cities. One strand of the tradition records that the Caelian Hill in Rome derives its name from that of Caelius Vibenna, though there are other conflicting traditions.<sup>47</sup> Whatever the truth, the evidence of the Vulci Tomb, dating from around 300 BCE, indicates that the stories preserved in later literary sources about the pre-Republican period of Rome are not without foundation, and while modern historians debate the identification of King Servius Tullius, the founding father of the voting system which endured down to the end of the Republic, with the Etruscan Mastarna, it cannot be asserted that these traditions were simply later fiction.

The most important literary source for the transition from the archaic regal period of Rome to the Republic is the second book of Livy's *History of Rome*. If Livy's account is to be believed, when the last of the kings, Tarquinius Superbus, was expelled in 509 BCE, the regal period was replaced by a system of republican government which came complete with the essential machinery of government known at Rome in later times (Liv. 2.1-2). This is almost certainly simplification, but if the story is taken at face value, the rule of one man (the *rex*, or king) was replaced by annual government of two annually elected consuls who were advised by a body of elders known as the *senatus*, or Senate. According to tradition, the Senate began as a king's council and as an institution long predated the Republic itself. The consuls, in turn, might be regarded as a continuation of the older regal office, with the important exception that instead of one king there were always two consuls, and the office could only be held for a year. The consuls had the right to wear the purple-rimmed *toga praetexta*, to sit on an ivory chair known as the curule chair, and to be escorted by a personal bodyguard known as *lictors*. How many annual magistrates there were in early times is a matter of dispute: Some later authors thought that in early Rome there was only one senior magistrate and many co-ruling junior magistrates (Dio *ap.* Zon. 7.12), which, if true, sheds doubt on the tradition which survives in the Livian narrative, whereas others claimed that the senior magistrates were not the consuls but praetors (Fest. 2.49) who in later times

<sup>46</sup> M.G. Bloom, *The François tomb at Vulci, an Etrusco-Hellenistic monument*. Thesis/dissertation, University of Pennsylvania. 1974.

<sup>47</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 4.65; Varr. *LL.* 5.46.

were junior magistrates to the consuls themselves, and Livy refers to a ritual whereby the *praetor maximus* drove a nail into the wall of the Capitoline to mark the passing of the year (Liv. 7.3). In truth, the early constitution is shrouded in mystery, and the system which emerged (two consuls, six praetors, twelve quaestors, ten tribunes, etc.) may have been in progress. Indeed, rule by two consuls (at least one of whom had to be plebeian) was not firmly established until the Licinio-Sextian reforms of 357 BCE.

The structure of Roman society at this period is a matter of contention. According to our sources, the Roman citizenry was divided into two groups, the patricians and plebeians, the second of which was in early centuries excluded from political office. Livy (1.4) and Cicero (*Rep.* 2.14) claimed that the first king of Rome, Romulus, had established the patriciate out of a hundred men who were heads of the leading families (*gentes*) of the nascent city. This led to the so-called Struggle of the Orders which began from 494 BCE and lasted until the start of the third century BCE, during which the plebeian order rose up against its patriciate overlords and established a power-sharing arrangement according to which at least one annual consul had to be plebeian, and where the power of the curule magistrates was curtailed by the tribunes. The exact course and nature of the Struggle of the Orders has been written about since the nineteenth century, and to this day historians of early Rome disagree on its causes and shape.<sup>48</sup> Much of the problem lies in identifying the patrician families, and some have argued that as a group the patricians emerged not in the regal period but later, perhaps in the fifth century BCE when the tenure on magistracies was dominated by a small clique of aristocratic families who self-identified as *patricii*. Be that as it may, the archaeology of the fifth century BCE indicates that trade was in decline and that Rome, by comparison with a century earlier, was undergoing a period of extreme austerity. There is a decrease in the quantity of imported Athenian pottery found at Rome at this period, as well as in local Etruscan luxury imports such as fine pottery and bronze vessels. In its stead, we witness an increase in local trade with surrounding Latium which can be explained by the treaty between Roman and the surrounding Latin towns in 493 BCE granting commercial rites to Rome's Latin neighbours. This is accompanied by a decrease in the number of lavish burials in the region around the Esquiline in the city of Rome itself. Concomitantly, there is evidence of increased public building in the Forum, the Palatine and the Forum Boarium in the very early decades of the fifth century BCE which might be read as an index of social stability and a thriving economy, but in the decades which followed there appears to have been a tapering off of public building works in the centre of Rome. This has led historians to infer that much of the fifth century BCE was a time of economic contraction for Rome which was accompanied by food shortages. This led to outbreaks of rioting, which might explain why the poorer citizens rose against the elites in a bid to establish power.<sup>49</sup>

The widely acclaimed Struggle of the Orders has seized the imagination of historians and political theorists well into modern times and was the subject of Karl Marx's doctoral thesis, from which he developed his monumental theory of class struggle which has since been a cornerstone of Marxist and neo-Marxist thinking. Notwithstanding its vast appeal, relatively little is known about this elusive but long

<sup>48</sup> For a summary and overview, see K. Raaflaub, *Social Struggles in Archaic Rome: New Perspectives on the Conflict of the Orders*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>49</sup> An official record of grain shortages was kept by the *pontifex maximus* according to Cato the Elder (*FRHist* 5 F 80). For a summary of the archaeology, see Lomas, *Rise of Rome*, pp. 183-6.

drawn out episode which raged on until 287 BCE. Casually, many modern interpreters have assumed that it was a political contest between the haves and have-nots, but in recent scholarship it has come to be recognised that, in essence, it was a struggle not between rich and poor, but between two sub-groups within the Roman aristocracy. The first episode, known as the First Secession, occurred in 494 BCE and may have been a response to a debt crisis, resolved by Menenius Agrippa who persuaded the plebeians to re-enter the city in the interest of solidarity. This led to the creation of the *tribunus plebis*, or tribune of the plebs, whose job was to represent the interests of the plebeians and to protect them from arbitrary punishment by curule magistrates. Perhaps more importantly, the plebeians gained the right to convene in a legislative capacity.<sup>50</sup> The legislation which came out of the plebeian assembly, known as a *plebiscitum* (or ‘plebiscite’) originally did not carry the same authority as a *lex* (or ‘law’), but by the end of the Struggle that distinction had been eroded. There were ten annual tribunes each of whom had the right to interpose a veto (*intercessio*) to prevent a motion from passing into law. Under ordinary circumstances this was respected, the one notorious exception being 133 BCE, when the tribune Tiberius Gracchus famously ignored the veto of his colleague Octavius and had him deposed unconstitutionally. As the plebeian assembly could consist only of plebeians, it is yet unclear whether its verdicts were binding upon the whole of the citizen body or just part of it. By 287 BCE, the year of the end of the Struggle, the Lex Hortensia elevated the *plebiscitum* to a place of equality with that of the *lex*, and from that point the distinction was at best nominal. What the Struggle illustrates, however, is a city coming to terms with an array of social and political problems and building a constitution which was both flexible and in state of continual evolution.<sup>51</sup> That Rome was able to face existential crisis at home and to overcome it nevertheless is a further clue to its extraordinary survivalist instinct and capacity to absorb and overcome insurmountable threat.

From a legal perspective, the important consequence of the Struggle of the Orders was a written law code. Though there may be some evidence of written laws before the Struggle, such as the inscription on the *Lapis Niger* dating from the sixth century BCE, we have no evidence until the fifth century BCE that Rome had a systematised collection or compilation of law.<sup>52</sup> That would have meant that many were at the mercy of the arbitrary jurisdiction of magistrates who could pass verdicts without reference to an established legal principle, even if there was at that time a body of customary or unwritten law. The first movement toward a written code of laws came in 462 BCE and went hand in hand with a process of development which is witnessed in many Mediterranean city-states of the period. The sources even suggest that Rome sent envoys to Athens and other Greek city-states to research their systems of law which by that stage were well over a century old. In 451 BCE the patricians voted to suspend the entire constitution while a code of laws was drawn up by a commission of ten entitled the *decemviri legibus scribundis*.<sup>53</sup> This process resulted in laws inscribed on ten bronze tablets, later supplemented by a further two, known subsequently as the Twelve Tables.<sup>54</sup> The fifth-century

<sup>50</sup> See Aul. Gell. *Attic Nights* 15.27.

<sup>51</sup> On the Struggle of the Orders, see the collection of essays in K. Raafaub (ed.), n. 48.

<sup>52</sup> For a reconstruction of the text of this monumental stone, see J. Stroux, ‘Die Foruminschrift beim Lapis niger’, *Philologus* vol. 86 (1931), p. 460.

<sup>53</sup> Cic. *Rep.* 2.61; Liv. 3.31-55; Dion. Hal. 10.55.

<sup>54</sup> For the text of these laws as reconstructed from later literary quotations, see M.L. Crawford, *Roman Statutes*. London, 1996, pp. 555-72.



codification was a landmark in the evolution of Rome's legal and political system, as it imposed restraints on the arbitrary jurisdiction of magistrates and, in various ways, was a precondition for the flourishing of Rome's nascent democratic (or republican) system.<sup>55</sup> The codification marked the end of the First Secession and heralded the passage of the Valerio-Hortensian laws which recognised the powers of the plebeians and the right of appeal to the tribunes (*provocatio*).<sup>56</sup> Though the constitutional pre-eminence of the consulship seems to have been challenged at this time, what is clear is that the patriciate yielded to the plebeians in allowing them to occupy curule magistracies. By the end of the Struggle, it was required that at least one of the two annual consuls had to be plebeian, so that by the late Republic it was indeed advantageous to be a plebeian if one wished to gain entry to the highest office.

While Rome was encountering crisis at home, the fifth century BCE was also a period of military expansion. The most pressing political difficulty for Rome at the time lay not with her immediate Latin neighbours but with the Etruscan empire to the north, which resented the overthrow of the Tarquin kings and saw the emergent Roman Republic as an enemy. The first battle with the Etruscans on record was at Aricia in 505 BCE and with the Latins a few years later at Lake Regillus, which put Rome in a stronger military position than previously (Liv. 2.21.3-4). The latter resulted in a treaty between Rome and its Latin neighbours negotiated by Spurius Cassius known as the Cassian Treaty of 493 BCE, a bronze copy of which was available to be read in the Forum even in the time of the orator Cicero five centuries later (Dion. Hal. 6.95). This was a common alliance which guaranteed not only internal peace between Rome and its neighbours but a commitment to help one another in times of war and established what later came to be known as the Latin League, which appears to have set Rome upon an equal footing with the rest of the surrounding cities of Latium. The establishment of a military alliance in the centre of Italy allowed the cities of that region to pool their resources to resist outlying hostile tribes such as the Sabines, Aequi and Volsci, with whom Rome was in a state of continual warfare between 490 and 458 BCE. That desultory period of warfare came to an end when the Roman general and dictator Cincinnatus inflicted a crushing defeat on the Aequi within fifteen days (Liv. 3.31-37). The wars against the outlying tribes provide the historical background to the story of the Roman nobleman Coriolanus, commemorated in the English language most famously by Shakespeare, who switched sides and led a Volscian force up to the gates of Rome itself. Since the nineteenth century, scholars and historians have contested the historicity of these episodes, with a substantial body of opinion claiming that Cincinnatus was exemplary of the early Roman aristocrat farmer, Coriolanus as the typecast anti-hero.<sup>57</sup> There have been others in recent years who have argued that Rome in the early decades of the fifth century BCE cannot have been in a state of continuous war and that only fourteen or so of the campaigns mentioned in the literary sources can be regarded as historically sound.<sup>58</sup> Whilst it cannot be doubted that Rome would have had to deal with

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<sup>55</sup> For the claim that democracy and rule of law went hand in hand, see the parallel case of democratic Athens; E.M. Harris, *Democracy and the Rule of Law in Classical Athens*, Durham 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Liv. 3.55; Diod. 12.24.

<sup>57</sup> For a summary of modern scholarly views, see G. Forsythe, *A Critical History of Early Rome: From Prehistory to the First Punic War*. Berkeley, 2006.

<sup>58</sup> J.W. Rich, 'Warfare and the army in early Rome', in P. Erdkamp (ed.), *War and Society in the Roman World*, London 1993, pp. 38-68.

surrounding tribespeople, the real threat to Rome came not from her southern or eastern neighbours but from Etruria.

The most serious of these menaces was that of Veii, an Etruscan town only nine miles to the north of Rome controlling trade routes to Etruria and along the Tiber valley. The first Veientine war marked a significant military setback for Rome (Liv. 2.42-52) and resulted in the establishment of a Veientine stronghold on the left bank of the Tiber. In 437-5 BCE a second war with Veii broke out following the murder of a group of envoys by the Veientine ruler Lars Tolumnius. This resulted in a counter-offensive by Rome which cut off Veii's access to the salt beds at the mouth of the Tiber. The Third Veientine War (406-396 BCE) ended in the Roman defeat and capture of Veii under the leadership of the general Camillus, after which time Veii was annexed within Roman territory, along with her allies, Caperna and Falerii (Liv. 4.60-5.18). The conclusion of the wars with Veii were a milestone in Roman imperial history, in that it took Rome's power beyond the confines of Latium and into Etruscan territory. In various ways it was the turning point in Rome's fortunes, in that for the first time the city found itself in a position of suzerainty over her Etruscan neighbours, rather than in one of political or military inferiority. The capture of Caperna, Fidenae and Falerii opened for Rome control of the Tiber valley which gave her control of trade between Etruria and Latium, placing Rome at an incomparable economic advantage over its neighbours. The century of warfare between Rome and Veii resulted in Rome gaining a major foothold in non-Latin territory and saw Rome for the first time emerge as a serious power beyond her own immediate hinterland. Once Veii lay within Roman control, it was possible for Rome to start to look outward into Etruria.

Yet despite these important advances, Rome at the start of the fourth century BCE had to encounter one major setback, the famous Gallic sack of 390 BCE (Liv. 5.36-47; Polyb. 2.18-22). In that year, an army of marauding Gauls passed through northern Italy to occupy the city of Rome and lay siege to the Capitol. The Battle of Allia was commemorated in later times as one of the darkest and most inauspicious days in the Roman calendar. It may well be that the effects of the sack were wildly overstated and that the Gauls were on little more than a raiding mission. Our two principal sources, Livy and Polybius, conflict over the extent of the damage done. The former reflects a proudly nationalist tradition which maximised the importance of the episode and eulogised the bravery of the general Camillus in saving the Capitol, whereas the latter took a more reserved view, according to which the Gauls occupied the city for seven months before making a treaty because they were threatened by an invasion at home. Livy's account is one of the most haunting passages of ancient historiography, representing the Gauls as bloodthirsty savages who practised human sacrifice and committed the most unspeakable sacrilege of smearing the altars of the gods with human blood. There is bound to be a strong element of rhetorical exaggeration in this, not least since in Livy's time Rome had recently conquered Gaul and was engaged in the process of Romanising its peoples. The idea of Gallic savagery occupied the imagination of Romans and no doubt must have influenced the way in which Livy narrated the sack of 390 BCE. If, however, Polybius' version is preferred, this was a less significant event than the Roman tradition presented it to have been, and while the city would have been dealt a serious military blow, it is unlikely to have shaken Rome to its very foundations to the extent that Livy and the senatorial tradition may have claimed.

One of the reasons for preferring Polybius is that Rome recovered quickly and by the middle of the fourth century appears to have regained control over her

neighbours. The extent of recovery is itself open to dispute. In his historical summation of the political treaties sworn between Rome and Carthage, Polybius cites the second of the treaties (c. 348 BCE) which distinguished between those Latin cities which were loyal to Rome and those which were not (Polyb. 3.24). There is independent evidence at this time of fighting between Rome and her immediate neighbours both in Latium and Etruria, and by the middle of the fourth century BCE Rome had waged wars with Praeneste (modern Palestrina), Tibur, Tarquinii, Falerii, and Caere. When the Gauls invaded a second time in 350-49 BCE, Rome by now was widely recognised to be a major force to be reckoned with in central Italy. One famous anecdote preserved by Livy records that a Greek fleet from Sicily turned up to observe the fighting between Rome and the Gauls from a distance. The Latin League at that time refused to assist Rome which, despite the desertion of allies, defeated the Gauls singlehanded. Rome's victory is a testament to her incomparable political position in central Italy, and by now Rome was recognised on the international stage as a power to be reckoned with, as the renewed treaty with Carthage of 348 BCE (Polyb. 3.24; Diod. 16.69) indicates. As Roman power grew, much of the territory of her conquered neighbours was redistributed and used to settle Roman citizens in colonies. An early example is the Cassian law of 486 BCE which settled Latins and Hernici together in a joint settlement. By 382 BCE Rome had established at least fourteen colonies. The purpose of these colonies was no doubt manifold, but one of the principal aims was to ensure that Rome had a strategic network of defences to protect her imperial acquisitions. One of the difficulties we face in assessing Roman colonisation is that in many cases, it is unclear whether a colony was set up according to state or to private initiative.<sup>59</sup> It would be rash to make any general assertion, and though many would have served a military purpose, it is also likely that the motives for different colonial enterprises would have varied according to individual circumstances.

Because of the poverty of the sources, it is impossible to speculate into the nature of Roman military methods at this early stage of her development. By 198 BCE, the year of the Battle of Cynoscephalae, when Rome dealt Macedon a crippling military defeat in northern Greece, Rome had developed an advanced legionary warfare which was capable of overcoming the formidable Macedonian phalanx, which until that time had remained the most indomitable military machine known to the Mediterranean world. How far the Roman legion had developed by this stage is unknown. Tradition records that Rome at this point relied upon a citizen army which fought according to the seasons, but it is not improbable that even at this early stage professional soldiers would have been required to sustain Rome's military position in her hinterland. By the second half of the fourth century BCE, Rome found herself at the helm of a growing alliance in central Italy which incorporated Latium and much of Etruria, and which was starting to incorporate some of Campania to the south. The period from c. 500-350 BCE thus brought Rome from a powerful independent city, capable of resisting erstwhile Etruscan overlords, to an imperial power at the centre of the Italian peninsula which dominated Latium and much of Etruria itself. By the middle of the fourth century BCE, Rome was internationally recognised by the greatest naval and commercial power of the day, Carthage, as a serious power with both military and diplomatic clout. What brought Rome to this new platform is of course debatable, but a

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<sup>59</sup> For a recent argument on the latter side, see G. Bradley, 'Colonisation and identity in Republican Italy', in G. Bradley and J.-P. Wilson (eds.), *Greek and Roman Colonisation: Origins, Ideologies, Interactions*. Swansea, 2006, pp. 161-188.

recurring theme is her ability to recover from crisis inflicted from within or from without and to rebuild her position in a short interval of time. This quickness to respond to crisis must provide one of the key explanations as to why Rome rose from an insignificant town in the centre of Italy to the head of a military and political alliance which would eventually absorb the entire Italian peninsula. By 350 BCE, the question was no longer which of the Latin cities would control the alliance, as Rome had proven herself beyond all reasonable doubt to be the only serious contender for pre-eminence within her own hinterland, but which of the regional powers within Italy would eventually emerge as the sole ruler of the entire peninsula.

#### **IV: Rome's rise to dominance in peninsular Italy (c. 350-290 BCE)**

By the middle of the fourth century BCE Rome had emerged as the unquestionable power in central Italy. This inevitably placed her on a collision course with her neighbours to the south, the Samnites, over control over the fertile Liris and Volturnus valleys in Campania.<sup>60</sup> In 354 BCE the Romans and Samnites concluded a treaty which demarcated the River Liris as the boundary between their respective spheres of influence, but by the 340s BCE this boundary had been violated by the presence of Roman interests to the south. The First Samnite War is a sketchy affair, related by Livy (7.29-8.5), lasting from 341 to 338 BCE, resulting in a Roman victory over the Volscian city of Privernum and a series of defeats for the Latin and Campanian forces. The long-term consequence was the dissolution of the Latin League in 338 BCE, thus establishing Rome on a different political footing in relation to her Latin neighbours. Whereas previously, the Latin states had been on a theoretically equal platform with Rome, expressing their identity through a common council in which each had an equal say, from this point onward all relationships between the Latin states were contracted in terms of their relationship with Rome as the superior ally, resulting in a bicameral alliance with Rome at the geopolitical centre. There were two further consequences, each of which had significance in the evolution of the Roman understanding of citizenship. The first was the extension of Roman citizenship to a wider number of Latin satellite states, thus removing the idea that to be 'Roman' in a legal sense necessitated residence in, or origin from, Rome itself. The second was the creation of a new 'Latin status' known as the *ius Latinum*, inferior in its range of privileges to full Roman citizenship (*civitas Romana*), but nevertheless an important legal bridging point between the full rights of a Roman citizen and the near complete lack of rights endured by those who did not Latin status. Like Roman citizenship, the new Latin status did not necessarily imply Latin origin, and well into late antiquity it remained as a legal concept granted as a second-best to the full grant of Roman citizenship. This fluid extension of rights and privileges, which could incorporate outlying communities regardless of language or ethnic composition, was key to Rome's future success in building a lasting imperial structure. Unlike the Hellenistic empires, which always retained a jealous distinction between Greek and non-Greek, Rome's willingness to extend the boundaries of *Romanitas* outward was essential to the durability of her empire.

The Second Samnite War began in 327 BCE under murky circumstances. Rome had recently established the colony of Fregellae in the Liris valley, which the

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<sup>60</sup> On the Samnite wars in general, see Liv. 9-10; Diod. 10.104; Dion. Hal. 15-20; Plut. *Pyrrh.*; App. *Samn.* 7-12; Dio 9.39-41; Polyb. 3.24; E.T. Salmon, *Samnium and the Samnites*. Cambridge University Press, 1965.

Samnites interpreted as a threat. According to Livy (8.22-29) the Greek city of Naples was enlisted on to the Samnite side, and further promises of support came from as far south as Tarentum. This conflict resulted in Naples installing a pro-Roman government after the Roman commander Q. Publilius Philo lay siege to the city in a stalemate. The next few years saw desultory warfare in Samnium, but in 321 BCE Rome suffered a major defeat in the Caudine Forks, a mountainous region in Samnite territory (Liv. 9.1-12); under truce, Roman armies returned to Rome at the cost of Rome surrendering the colonies at Fregellae and Caes. The Roman Senate replied with fury, and in the years that followed Rome delivered crushing defeats to Samnite forces in the south of Italy as far afield as Apulia (modern Puglia), resulting in a truce in 319/18 BCE. Hostilities recommenced in 315 BCE, and by 312 BCE Roman influence had been extended over most of Campania and into the heel of Italy, isolating Samnium as an imperial power. The Second Samnite War drew to a close in 304 BCE with the capture of Bovianum, one of the main capitals of the Samnite power, and the crushing of the Hernici and Aequi who had risen against Rome during the period and who lost their Latin right as a consequence of their treachery.

While the Second Samnite War was being fought, Rome faced a war on a second front in the north, brought about by Etruscan meddling in the Latin colony of Sutrium about fifty kilometres to the north of Rome. Following the Battle of Lake Vadimon and Perugia in 311 BCE, the Etruscan towns of Clusium (modern Chiusi), Arretium (modern Arezzo), and Perugia (modern Perugia) made peace with Rome. During this time Rome made inroads into Umbria which culminated in a treaty with Camerinum and an alliance with Oriculum, towns both in Umbria. The Etruscans and Umbrians united in alliance against Rome, in response to which the Roman general Q. Fabius Maximus was called from Samnium north to resist a united effort against Rome from her northern neighbours. A few years later, Rome faced in battle the tribes in the central Apennine region, the Aequi who were defeated in 304 BCE, followed by the Paeligni, Marsi, Marruscini and Frentani. As a result of these military campaigns Roman power extended further up the Tiber towards its source in the mountainous regions, and the land which Rome conquered was divided up into colonies both for Roman citizens and those with the Latin right. In 298 BCE, the Third Samnite War broke out because the people of Lucania in the south of Italy, who had been threatened by the Samnites, appeals to Rome for assistance (Liv. 10.11-12; Dion. Hal. 17/18.1.1-3). The literary sources for the period are supplemented by evidence of a surviving inscription honouring L. Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, the consul of 298 BCE, for his role in subduing Lucania.<sup>61</sup> This inscribed text comes from the *sepulcrum Scipionum*, or Tomb of the Scipios, founded around the turn of the third century BCE, located along the Via Appia which connected Rome with the south of Italy. The problem with this evidence is that it contradicts the testimony of Livy, who claims that Barbatus was busy fighting in Etruria at the time. Rome's military progress in the south led to the united resistance of Samnites, Umbrians, Etruscans and Gauls, who confronted the Roman army at Sentinum in Umbria in 295 BCE (Liv. 10.24-31). The Roman army under the joint command of P. Decimus Mus and Q. Fabius Maximus crushed the anti-Roman coalition, and though fighting continued intermittently over the next few years the Samnites were defeated decisively at Aquilonia in 293 BCE (Liv. 10.32-45), resulting in a final peace treaty between Rome and Samnium in 290 BCE.

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<sup>61</sup> *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* VI 1284 and 1285



By the end of the first decade of the third century BCE, a period of convulsive change across the Mediterranean world when the great Hellenistic kingdoms were being carved out of the eastern conquests of the late Alexander the Great, most of peninsular Italy had fallen beneath Roman control. In the space of just half a century, Rome had risen from leader of Latin League to mistress of Italy itself, and drew the attention of her first foreign foe, Pyrrhus of Epirus, who crossed over from Greece to confront Roman power on the heel of Italy. The intriguing question is how a single city-state with limited manpower and resources could have conquered and then controlled such a vast area. The secret to Rome's imperial success lay in her ability to administer her territory from a distance through indirect methods of control. By extending the rights and privileges of Roman citizenship outwards, it was possible for Rome to rely on government by proxy in those areas which were geographically distant from Rome but nevertheless politically dependent. Roman citizenship came in two varieties: (1) *civitas optimo iure* which conferred full political and civic rights on beneficiaries, and (2) *civitas sine suffragio*, whereby beneficiaries enjoyed civic rights such as the right of intermarriage, trade, and access to justice, but not the right to participate in political decision making. With these rights and privileges came other duties and responsibilities, the most important of which were military service and taxation. Thus, by extending grants of citizenship to conquered peoples, Rome not only could build up a nexus of support and goodwill in allied communities but, more importantly from the point of view of manpower, could call upon Italians to man the legions. This gave Rome an indomitable advantage over her local rivals, who even in confederation would not have been able to muster the levels of military support needed to resist Rome's ever increasing strategic and military orbit. Latin status was inferior, but those to whom it had been granted enjoyed right of trade (*commercium*) with Rome and legal protection in all financial dealings with Roman citizens. Though Latins did not have full protection under the law, like citizens they could be called upon to support Rome's military endeavours, not as part of the legion but as separate military contingents. The beauty of this system was that while Rome was able to summon up military support from her Latin states, those same communities at the same time enjoyed a considerable degree of political and constitutional freedom in that they were not directly ruled or administered by the imperial city. Rome was careful to avoid sullyng its reputation by meddling unnecessarily in the internal affairs of allied cities, provided of course there was no imminent need to do so. In addition to citizen and Latin communities, Rome also built up a network of allies (*socii*) throughout Italy who did not have Roman or Latin status, but upon whom Rome could call in time of military exigency. Thus, Rome sat at the helm of an ever-widening political orbit which drew subject cities and peoples into its compass, without incurring the resentment of those over whom it held sway. It was this ingenuity which laid the foundations of what would later become the greatest empire the Mediterranean world knew.<sup>62</sup>

Why did Rome rise? There can be no simple or straightforward answer to the question, but a key ingredient of her success as a military power was the flexibility of her political system to adjust to new and unprecedented circumstances, and her willingness to extend beyond her own borders the prized concept of Roman nationality which was not limited by ethnic or linguistic barriers of the kind that

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<sup>62</sup> For an analysis and overview of the imperial methods by which Rome governed her empire, see A.W. Lintott, *Imperium Romanum: Politics and Administration*. Routledge, 1993.

Greek national self-definitions constructed. Rome possessed the unique ability to meet crisis, respond, morph, and then transform into something better and greater than what had gone previously. In these centuries we see a persecuted community of settlers huddling around the Tiber for protection against a formidable Etruscan enemy emerge as a confident nation, imposing its will and rule on those at whose hands it had once feared. Most crucially, Romans were willing to sacrifice something of their own sense of nationhood for a cause which was much larger and greater than the city of Rome itself. In order to become an empire, Rome had to relinquish the idea that to lead Italy, it could limit nationhood to those within its walls. With the growth of empire came the development of a new sense of what it meant to be Roman, which was neither geographically nor ethnically delimited. The elasticity of Roman identity is the key to understanding why and how Rome rose to become the leader of peninsular Italy, against all the rivals and odds which she faced. Though military battles would have been cruel and brutally fought, Rome from an early stage understood that to govern and maintain control of an empire, she could not twist the knife in the same way that Athenians and Spartans had done in their respective spheres of influence some centuries before. To rule an empire meant much more than bullying conquered people into submission, even if this was a necessary precondition to start with in a great many cases. Peaceful methods of maintaining order through alliance and friendship were the glue which held the structure together. It would be some centuries yet before Rome became the global civilisation it later became. But without appreciating the early centuries of its rise in Italy, it would be impossible to understand or see how Rome was able to build the fortress civilisation across the Mediterranean basin which, in one form or another, would persist as a political form until its last vestige, the great city of Constantinople, was eventually sacked in 1453 CE by the newly emergent Ottoman Empire.