

VARRONIANUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD ITALIAN TRIBES CONSIDERED AS RELATED TO EACH OTHER.

§ 1. Elements of the population of Rome. § 2. The LATINS—a composite tribe. § 3. The Oscans, &c. § 4. Alba and Lavinium. § 5. The SABINES—how related to the Umbrians and Oscans. § 6. The Umbrians—their ancient greatness. § 7. Reduced to insignificance by Pelasgian invaders. § 8. The PELASGIANS—the differences of their position in Italy and Greece respectively. § 9. They preserve their national integrity in Etruria. § 10. The ETRUSCANS—the theory of Lepsius, respecting their Pelasgian origin, adopted and confirmed. § 11. Meaning and ethnical extent of the name “Tyrrhenian.” § 12. “Rasena” only a corruption of the original form of this name. § 13. The Etruscan language—a mixture of Pelasgian and Umbrian, the latter prevailing more in the country, the former in the towns. § 14. The Pelasgian origin of the Etruscans further confirmed by the traditionary history of the Luceres. § 15. Conclusion.

THE sum of all that is known of the earliest history of Rome is comprised in the following enumeration of particulars. A tribe of Latin origin, more or less connected with Alba, settled on the Palatine hill, and in the process of time united itself, by the right of intermarriage and other ties, with a band of Sabine warriors, who had taken up their abode on the Quirinal and Capitoline hills. These two towns admitted into fellowship with themselves a third community, established on the Cælian and Esquiline hills,

§ 1.
Elements of
the population
of Rome.

which seems to have consisted of Pelasgians, either from the Solonian plain, lying between Rome and Lavinium, or from the opposite side of the river near Cære; and the whole body became one city, governed by a king, or *magister populi*, and a senate; the latter being the representatives of the three original elements of the state,—the Latin or Oscan Ramnes, the Sabine Titienses or Quirites, and the Pelasgian Luceres. It appears, moreover, that the Etruscans, on the other side of the Tiber, eventually influenced the destinies of Rome in no slight degree, and the last three kings mentioned in the legendary traditions were of Etruscan origin. In other words, Rome was, during the period referred to by their reigns, subjected to a powerful Etruscan dynasty, from the tyranny of which it had, on two occasions, the good fortune to escape. What Servius planned was for the most part carried into effect by the consular constitution, which followed the expulsion of the last Tarquinius.

As these facts are established by satisfactory evidence, and as we have nothing else on which we can depend with certainty, it follows that in order to investigate the ethnical affinities of the Roman people, and the origin and growth of their language, we must in the first instance inquire who were the Latins, the Sabines, the Pelasgians, and the Etruscans, and what were their relations one with another. After this we shall be able with greater accuracy to examine their respective connexions with the several elements in the original population of Europe.

THE LATINS.

§ 2.
 The LATINS—
 a composite
 tribe.

The investigations of Niebuhr and others have made it sufficiently certain that the Pelasgians formed a very important element in the population of ancient Latium. This appears not merely from the primitive traditions, but

also, and more strongly, from the mythology, language, and architecture of the country. It has likewise been proved that this Pelasgian population was at an early period partially conquered by a tribe of mountaineers, who are called *Oscans*, and who descended on Latium from the basins of the Nar and the Velinus. The influence of these foreign invaders was most sensibly and durably felt in the language of the country; which in its earliest form presents phenomena not unlike those which have marked the idiom spoken in this country since the Norman conquest. The words relating to husbandry and peaceful life are Pelasgian, and the terms of war and the chase are Oscan.¹

As it is this foreign element which forms the distinction between the Latins and the Pelasgians, let us in the first place inquire into the origin and affinities of these Oscan conquerors, in order that we may more easily disentangle the complexities of the subject.

The Oscans were known at different times and in different places under the various names of Opicans, Opicans, Ausonians, and Auruncans. The primary denomination was *Op-icus*, derived from *Ops* or *Opis*, the Italian name of the goddess *Earth*; and these people were therefore, in accordance with their name, the *Autochthones*, or aboriginal inhabitants of the district where they are first found. The other denominations are derived from the same word, *Op-s*, by the addition of the endings *-si-cus*, *-sunus*, and

§ 3.
The Oscans,
&c.

¹ Niebuhr, *H. R.* i. p. 82. Müller, *Etrusker*, i. p. 17. This observation must not be pressed too far; for it does not in fact amount to more than *prima facie* evidence. The Opican or Oscan language belongs to the Indo-Germanic family no less than the Pelasgian; the latter, however, was one ingredient in the language of ancient Greece, and it does not appear that any Hellenic tribes were connected with the Oscans; consequently it is fair to say that, as one element in the Latin language resembles the Greek, while the other does not, the Græcising element is Pelasgian.

-sun-icus. The labial is absorbed in *Oscus* and *Αῦσων*, and the *s* has become *r*, according to the regular process, in *Auruncus*.¹

These aboriginal tribes, having been in the first instance, like the Arcadians in the Peloponnese, driven by their invaders, the Pelasgians, into the mountain fastnesses of the Apennines, at length descended from the interior on both sides, and conquered the people of the plains and the coast. One tribe, the *Ap-uli*, subdued the Daunians and other tribes settled in the south-east, and gave their name to the country; they also extended themselves to the west, and became masters of the country from the bay of Terracina upwards to the Tiber. In this district they bore the well-known names of *Volsci* (= *Apulisici*) and *Æqui* (comp. ἵππος, *equus*, &c.), names still connected with the primary designation of the aborigines.

A more important invasion was that which was occasioned by the pressure of the Sabines on an Oscan people settled in the mountains between Reate and the Fucine lake. These invaders came down the Anio, and conquered the Pelasgians of northern Latium. Their chief seat in the conquered country seems to have been Alba, the *Alpine* or mountain city, where they dwelt under the name of *Prisci Latini*, "ancient Latins;" being also called *Casci*, a name which denotes "ancient" or "well-born," and which, like the connected Greek term *χαοί*, implies that they were a nation of warriors (*N. Crat.* p. 402).

§ 4.
Alba and Lavinium.

The district of Latium, when history first speaks of it, was thus occupied by two races; one a mixed people of Oscan conquerors living in the midst of the Pelasgians whom they had subdued, the other a Pelasgian nation not yet conquered by the invaders. These two nations

¹ See Niebuhr, i. 69, note. Buttmann, *Lexilogus*, i. p. 68, note 1 (p. 154, Fishlake).

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formed at first two distinct confederacies: of the former *Alba* was the head, while the place of congress for the latter was *Lavinium*. At the latter place, the *Penates*, or old Pelasgian *Cabeiri*, were worshipped; and even after the Pelasgian league was broken up by the power of *Alba*, and when *Alba* became the capital of the united nation of the Latins and sent a colony to *Lavinium*, the religious sanctity of the place was still maintained, the *Penates* were still worshipped there, and deputies still met in the temple of *Venus*. The influence of *Alba* was, however, so great, that even after its fall, when the Pelasgian Latins partially recovered their independence, there remained a large admixture of foreign elements in the whole population of *Latium*, and that which was purely Pelasgian in their character and institutions became gradually less and less perceptible, till nothing remained on the south of the *Tiber* which could claim exemption from the predominating influence of the *Oscans*.

That the name *Lavinium* is only a dialectical variety of *Latinium* has long been admitted. The original form of the name *Latinus*, which afterwards furnished a denomination for the language of the civilised world, was *Latvinus*; and while the Pelasgian Latins preserved the labial only, the mixed people retained only the dental. The same has been the case in the Pelasgian forms, *liber*, *libra*, *bis*, *ruber*, &c., compared with their Hellenic equivalents, *ἐ-λεύθερος*, *λίτρα*, *δῖς*, *ἐ-ρυθρός*, &c.

THE SABINES.

It has been mentioned that the Sabines dispossessed the *Oscans*, and compelled them to invade *Latium*. Our next point is, therefore, to consider the relation in which the Sabines stood to the circumjacent tribes.

The original abode of these Sabines was, according to

§ 5.

The SABINES
—how related
to the Umbri-
ans and Os-
cans.

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Cato,¹ about Amiternum, in the higher Apennines. Issuing from this lofty region, they drove the Umbrians before them on one side and the Oscans on the other, and so took possession of the district which for so many years was known by their name.

It will not be necessary in this place to point out the successive steps by which the Sabine colonies made themselves masters of the whole south and east of Italy, nor to shew how they settled on two of the hills of Rome. It is clear, on every account, that they were not Pelasgians; and our principal object is to inquire how they stood related to the Umbrians and Oscans, on whom they more immediately pressed.

Niebuhr thinks it not improbable that the Sabines and Oscans were only branches of one stock, and mentions many reasons for supposing so.² It appears, however, that there are still stronger reasons for concluding that the Sabines were an offshoot of the Umbrian race. This is established not only by the testimony of Zenodotus of Trœzen,³ who wrote upon the Umbrians, but also by the resemblances of the Sabine and Umbrian languages.⁴ It is true that this last remark may be made also with regard to the Sabine and Oscan idioms; for many words which are quoted as Sabine are likewise Oscan.⁵ The most plausible theory is, that the Sabines were Umbrians, who were separated from the rest of their nation, and driven into the high Apennines, by the Pelasgians of the north-east; but that, after an interval, they in their turn assumed an offensive position, and descending from their highlands, under the name of *Sabini*, or “worshippers of Sabus the son of Sancus,”⁶ attacked their Umbrian brethren on the one

¹ Quoted by Dionys. i. 14, p. 40; ii. 49, p. 338. Reiske.

² *Hist. Rome*, i. p. 103.

³ Apud Dionys. ii. 49, p. 337.

⁴ Servius ad Virg. *Æn.* iii. 235.

⁵ Niebuhr, *ubi supra*.

⁶ That this *Sancus* was an Umbrian deity is clear from the Eugubine

side, and the Oscan Latins on the other. At length, however, they sent out so many colonies to the south, among the Oscan nations, that their Umbrian affinities were almost forgotten; and the Sabellian tribes, especially the Samnites, were regarded as members of the Oscan family, from having adopted to a considerable extent the language of the conquered tribes among whom they dwelt.

The Umbrians are always mentioned as one of the most ancient nations of Italy.¹ Though restricted in the historical ages to the left bank of the Tiber, it is clear that in ancient times they occupied the entire northern half of the peninsula, from the Tiber to the Po. Their name, according to the Greek etymology, implied that they had existed before the great rain-floods which had destroyed many an earlier race of men.² Cato said that their city Ameria was founded 381 years before Rome.³ All that we read about them implies that they were a great, a genuine, and an ancient nation.⁴ There are distinct traditions to prove that the country, afterwards called Etruria, was originally in the occupation of the Umbrians. The name of the primitive occupants of that country was preserved by the Tuscan river *Umbro*, and the tract of land through which it flowed into the sea was to the last called

§ 6.
 The Umbrians
 —their ancient
 greatness.

Tables. Indeed, both *sabus* and *sancus*, in the old languages of Italy, signified “sacred” or “revered,” and were probably epithets regularly applied to the deity. In the Eugubine Tables we have the word *sev-um*, meaning “reverently” (i. a. 5); and *Sansius* is an epithet of the god *Fisus*, or *Fisovius* (vi. b. 3, 5). Comp. the Latin *sev-erus* (σέβ-ω), and *sancus*. According to this, the name *Sabini* is nearly equivalent to *Sacraui*. The Tables also mention the *picus Martius* of the Sabines, from which the *Piceni* derived their name (*piquier Martier*, v. b. 9, 14); comp. Strabo, v. p. 240.

¹ Niebuhr, i. note 430.

² See Plin. *H. N.* iii. 19: “Umbrorum gens antiquissima Italix existimatur, ut quos *Ombrios* a Græcis putent dictos, quod inundatione terrarum imbris superfuissent:” and compare, for the idea, *Psalm* xxix. 10.

³ Pliny, iii. 14, 19.

⁴ Florus, i. 17. Dionys. i. 19.

Umbria.¹ It is expressly stated that Cortona was once Umbrian;² and Camers, the ancient name of Clusium,³ points at once to the Camertes, a great Umbrian tribe.⁴ It is certain also that the Umbrians occupied Picenum, till they were expelled from that region by their brethren the Sabines.⁵

§ 7.
 Reduced to in-
 significance by
 Pelasgian in-
 vaders.

Since history, then, exhibits this once great nation expelled from the best part of its original possessions, driven beyond the Apennines, deprived of all natural barriers to the north, and reduced to insignificance, we are led at once to inquire into the cause of this phenomenon. Livy speaks of the Umbrians as dependent allies of the Tuscans;⁶ and Strabo tells us that the Etruscans and Umbrians maintained a stubborn contest for the possession of the district between the Apennines and the mouth of the Po.⁷ The people which thus ruled and strove with them in the latter period of their history, when they were living within the circumscribed limits of their ultimate possessions, was that which deprived them of a national existence within the fairest portion of their originally wide domains.

There can be no doubt that the Umbrians were invaded and conquered by a stream of Tyrrhenian Pelasgians from the north-east. Before we proceed to shew how these invaders, combined with the conquered Umbrians, made up the great Etrurian nation, it will be convenient to examine generally the course of the Pelasgian invasion of Italy.

¹ Pliny, iii. 5 (8).	² Dionys. i. 20.
³ Liv. x. 25.	⁴ Liv. ix. 36.
⁵ Pliny, iii. 13, 14.	⁶ In books ix. and x.
⁷ P. 216.	

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THE PELASGIANS.

Without stopping to inquire at present who the Pelasgians were out of Italy, let us take them up where they first make their appearance at the mouth of the Po. We find that they started from this district, and having crossed the Apennines, wrested from the Umbrians the great city Camers, from whence they carried on war all around. Continually pressing towards the south, and, as they advanced, conquering the indigenous tribes, or driving them up into the highlands, they eventually made themselves masters of all the level plains and of the coasts. Though afterwards, as we have seen, invaded in their turn, and in part conquered by the Oscan aborigines, they were for a long time in possession of Latium; and, under the widely diffused name of CEnotrians, they held all the south of Italy, till they were conquered or dispossessed by the spread of the great Sabellian race.

To these Pelasgians were due the most important elements in the ancient civilisation of Italy. It was not their destiny to be exposed throughout their settlements, like their brethren in Greece, to the overruling influence of ruder and more warlike tribes. This was to a certain extent the case in the south; where they were not only overborne by the power of their Sabellian conquerors, but also Hellenised by the Greek colonies which were at an early period established among them. But in Etruria and Latium the Pelasgian nationality was never extinguished: even among the Latins it survived the severest shocks of Oscan invasion. In Etruria it remained to the end the one prevailing characteristic of the people; and Rome herself, though she owed her military greatness to the Sabellian ingredient in her composition, was, to the days of her decline, Pelasgian in all the essentials of her language, her religion, and her law.

§ 8.
The PELAS-
GIANS—the
differences of
their position
in Italy and
Greece respec-
tively.

§ 9.
 Preserve their
 national inte-
 grity in Etruria.

It is easy to see why the Pelasgians retained their national integrity on the north-western coast so much more perfectly than in the south and east. It was because they entered Etruria in a body, and established there the bulk of their nation. All their other settlements were of the nature of colonies; and the density of the population, and its proportion to the number of the conquered mingled with it, varied, of course inversely, with the distance from the main body of the people. In Etruria the Pelasgians were most thickly settled, and next to Etruria in Latium. Consequently, while the Etruscans retained their conquest, and compelled the Sabines, the most vigorous of the dispossessed Umbrians, to direct their energies southwards, and while the Latins were only partially reconquered by the aboriginal tribes, the Pelasgians of the south resigned their national existence, and were merged in the concourse of Sabellian conquerors and Greek colonists.

We have here presumed that the Etruscans were Pelasgians mixed with conquered Umbrians. The next step is to prove this.

THE ETRUSCANS.

§ 10.
 The ETRUS-
 CANS—theory
 of Lepsius, re-
 specting their
 Pelasgian ori-
 gin, adopted
 and confirmed.

To determine the origin of the Etruscans, and the nature of their language, has for many years been considered the most difficult problem in philology. This enigma, however, seems at last to have been solved by Dr. Richard Lepsius,—a worthy pupil of James Grimm and Ottfried Müller,—who has advanced many satisfactory reasons in favour of his hypothesis, that the Etruscans were after all only Tyrrhenians, or Pelasgians, who, invading Italy from the north-east, conquered the Umbrians, and took possession of the western part of the district formerly occupied by that people, but could not protect their own language from the modifying influences of the cognate