

## CHAPTER I

### THE FOUNDING OF ROME

**Introduction.** Why are you asked to read about the history of Rome? The Romans are only one of many nations which have perished, and why do we read their history rather than that of other peoples? History, whether ancient or modern, is the tale of men like ourselves in their nature but different from us in their circumstances and surroundings; and it is only by seeing the same human nature under far different circumstances that we understand what human nature is and what it is capable of, how much of our ways and methods of living and acting as members of a state is due to natural inborn qualities and how much is due to environment.

The history of Rome is one of the few which we can read. For the Romans wrote of their own doings and have left us in the pages of Livy and Caesar and Tacitus a fuller and more interesting account of themselves and their deeds than we have of almost any other nation. The history of Rome has too a special interest for the Modern World, because many of our laws and institutions are based on those of Rome. When the barbarians, our ancestors, at last overthrew the power of Rome in 410 A.D., they did not destroy all her influence but slowly learnt her spirit and adapted her institutions to their needs, so that the civilization of Western Europe is still largely based on the civilization of Rome. But perhaps the greatest interest

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of our subject lies in the fact that the Romans at their best were men of strong resolute character with the deepest sense of duty and patriotism, ruling themselves and therefore born to rule the world. Their example of strength and duty and determination is not one of which we can afford to be ignorant. To the Jew the world is indebted for Religion, to the Greek for all that is beautiful in Thought and Art, to the Roman for Law and Order and the sense of Duty. Vergil gives the true spirit of Rome when he writes :

Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento,—  
Hæc tibi erunt artes,—pacificque imponere morem,  
Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.

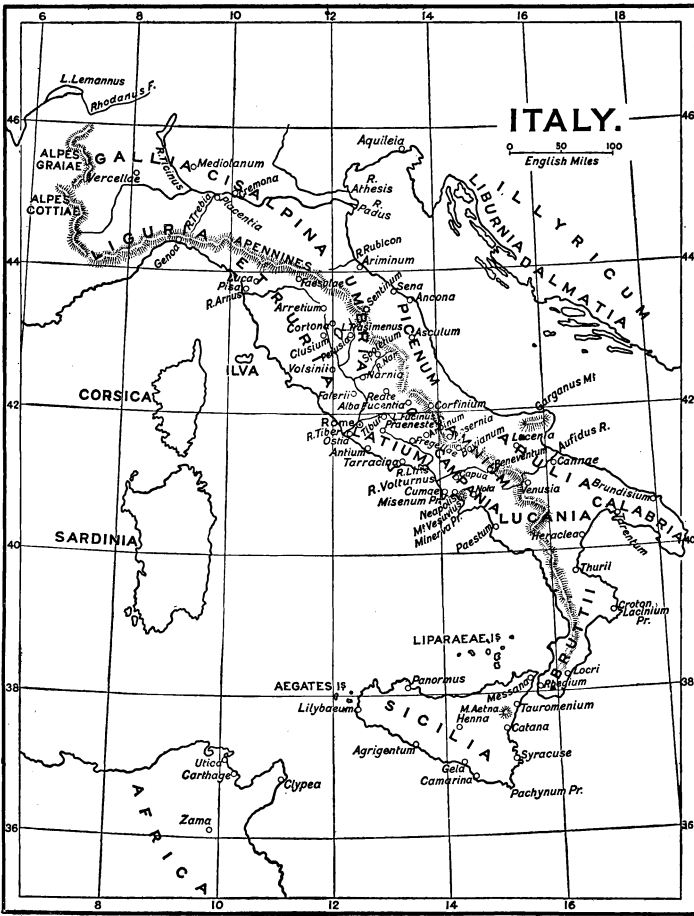
The history of Rome may be divided into five periods, of which the last looks forward to modern history:

- (a) 753–510 B.C. A small state under kings.
- (b) 510–270 B.C. Establishment of the Republic.  
Conquest of Italy. Struggles  
of Patres and Plebs.
- (c) 270–133 B.C. Conquest of Mediterranean Coast.  
Rule of the Senate.
- (d) 133–23 B.C. Break up of the Constitution.  
Power of great generals.
- (e) 23 B.C.–410 A.D. Empire. Luxury and decay.

**Italy and its inhabitants.** Italy, as we know it, is bounded on the north by the Alps; but to the Ancient World the Apennines, where they come across from the Gulf of Genoa to the Adriatic, formed the Italian frontier; and the basin of the Padus or Po between the Apennines and the Alps was regarded as part of Gaul. Southward the Apennines form the backbone of this peninsula, which measures roughly the same number of square miles as England, Scotland and Wales together. There are many easy passes from west to east in the mountains,

i] THE FOUNDING OF ROME 3

while the widest stretches of fertile lowlands are found on the west in Etruria, Latium and Campania. As moreover the chief harbours lie on the western coast,



Italy

the growth of civilization was in this district first. Italy looks westwards, turning its back on Greece which faces east with Athens and the Aegean as the centre of its life.

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## 4 THE FOUNDING OF ROME [CH.

The inhabitants of the peninsula were of three main stocks—Iapygian, Etruscan, and what for lack of a better name we will call Italian. Of the Iapygians little can be said. They were a dark race, the aborigines of Italy, akin perhaps to the Iberians of Spain and the Ligurians of the north-west coast of Italy. The origin of the Etruscans is uncertain. They were unlike the Latins and stand apart in history as a people whom we cannot connect with any other. The fragments of their language which remain cannot be translated. Yet they were great sailors and traders, rich and skilled in architecture and art, especially in vase-making. Their religion was dark and gloomy, dealing with sacrifice and offerings for the dead; and from them the Romans learnt the art of divination and the custom of gladiatorial shows, which in their origin go back to the primitive idea of providing a dead chieftain with servants to bear him company in the other world. From Etruria too the Romans derived their twelve lictors, the purple-bordered *toga*, the curule chair of ivory and many other of their marks of office. The Etruscans were not a single united nation but separate communities linked loosely together in leagues of twelve cities. Volsinii was the metropolis of Etruria proper, but at the height of their power the Etruscans included in their dominions the valley of the Po and the coasts of Campania.

The Italians were a branch of the great Aryan family, to which almost all the peoples of modern Europe belong. These Aryans or Indo-Europeans seem to have wandered over Europe and parts of Asia, off-shoots of them settling, as they went, in India, Germany, Greece and Italy; and the kinship of one branch with another is shown most clearly in similarity of language and customs. When the particular branch which settled in Italy broke off from the main body is not known, but the Italians were at

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1]

## THE FOUNDING OF ROME

5

any rate very close relations of the Greek branch. Coming into Italy they divided into two families; the Latins occupying the western lowlands of Latium; the Sabellians, from whom came the Sabines, Volscians, Umbrians and Samnites, turning to the more mountainous centre of the country. The Romans were one section of the Latins and their gradual conquest of their cousins is the union and consolidation of all the Italian stock under one head.

In addition to these three main races there were Greek colonies in Italy. Cumae on the Bay of Naples is said to have been founded in 1050 B.C. and to have given the Romans their alphabet. But the chief Greek colonies were in South Italy and Sicily, and from them this district got its name of Magna Graecia. Tarentum, founded from Sparta before 700 B.C., caused an important war at a later period, but the Greeks in Italy were outside the Roman world for the first few centuries.

**The Beginnings of Rome.** The Latins were a race of farmers, living to the S.E. of the Tiber in small cantons or country districts round a stronghold, to which they could retire with their cattle on the approach of an enemy. This *arx* or stronghold was also the centre of their religion and on it was the shrine and altar of their god. The cantons were independent of one another but were loosely united round the central stronghold of Alba Longa on the Alban Mount, where yearly sacrifice was offered to Jupiter Latiaris, the god of the Latins, and matters relating to the whole league were discussed. Tradition tells us that in 753 B.C. a colony from Alba Longa was founded on the Palatine hill, overlooking the Tiber and about fifteen miles from its mouth, and received the name of Rome. The place was well chosen in spite of the unhealthy marshes which extended round the Tiber. It was sufficiently far from the sea to be safe from the raids of pirates; the hilly ground was a refuge from robbers and at the same time

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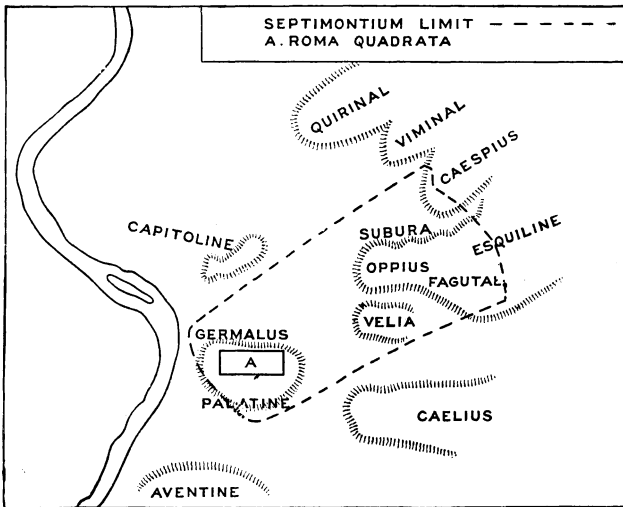
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## 6 THE FOUNDING OF ROME [CH.

commanded the ford, which crossed the river by way of the Tiber island and was the means of communication with the rich industrial cities of Etruria; the river was at once a defence against northern neighbours and the natural outlet for the produce of Latium, while up the stream from Ostia sailed small sea-going boats bringing in exchange the merchandise of Campania or Magna Graecia and salt, one of the chief necessities of life, from the salt pans near the mouth of the Tiber.



Roma Quadrata and the Septimontium

The Alban settlement was but small, situated on the Palatine alone and known as *Roma Quadrata* or square Rome from the shape of the hill-top. But it soon grew and took in six other districts, the Velian hill, the Esquiline with its three summits, the Germalus and Subura; and the festival of these Seven Mounts, *Septimontium*, recorded the formation of this sevenfold city, though we must remember that the name of the festival does not

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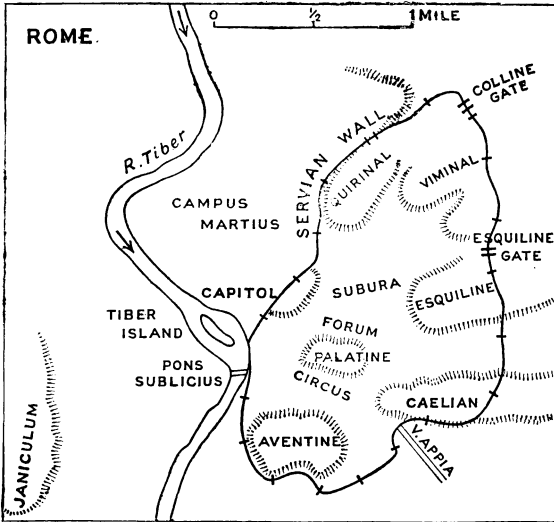
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## 1] THE FOUNDING OF ROME

7

refer to the "Seven Hills" of Rome. It was later that a union was made with the Sabine settlements on the Quirinal and Capitoline hills and Rome at last was the "City of the Seven Hills"—the Capitoline, Palatine, Aventine, Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline and Caelian. The Capitoline as being the steepest was chosen as the *arx* and seat of worship for the united city; the marshes of the Tiber were drained; a wooden bridge, *Pons sub-*



"The City of the Seven Hills"

*licius*, was built across the Tiber, and the Janiculum on the further side was fortified to guard the bridge. Between the Palatine and Quirinal the low ground became the *Forum* or place of business, and part of it was set aside for the *Comitium*, the meeting-place of the Assembly or *Comitia* of the People, with the *Curia* or Senate House close at hand. This gradual extension of Rome and incorporation of other settlements are to be traced in the three primitive

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tribes of the city, the Ramnes, Tities and Luceres. Probably the Ramnes were the original Palatine settlers, the Tities the Sabine settlers from the Quirinal; the origin of the Luceres is quite uncertain, though they may have been Etruscans.

**Early Organization of Rome.** Our city of Rome is now founded. How was it organized? Like all other Latin or indeed Aryan communities the state was just a family on a large scale. Very strong was the idea of family life among them. The father was the head of the family with power of life and death over his children; he decided whether the new-born babe should be reared; and when his sons grew up, their property belonged to him, though they might be allowed to enjoy on sufferance some little *peculium* of their own. He was a priest too, responsible for the worship of the *Lares* or family ancestors, whose number he would join at his death. As in succeeding generations the family broadened into the clan or *gens*, the chief honour belonged to the head of the *gens*. He was the father of the clan. These clans or *gentes* were combined in wards or *curiae* under one headman, and from the *curiae* were formed three tribes under the father of the nation or *rex*. The *Patria Potestas* was the foundation stone of the organization of the Roman state.

The father of the family had been expected to consult the grown-up sons on important questions; so too the King by custom asked the advice of the old men of the nation, the *Senatus*, originally the *patres* or fathers of the different *gentes*, though he was not bound to do so. And to the Assembly of the People voting by *curiae* (*Comitia Curiata*) questions were submitted on which they could only vote Yes or No. We have thus a King, a Senate and an Assembly. The King was nominated by his predecessor or by an *inter-rex* appointed by the Senate, and the *imperium* or supreme power was conferred on him by



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[More information](#)

1]

## THE FOUNDING OF ROME

9

the Assembly. He was supreme judge, the leader in war, head in all matters of religion and civil administration, but head as a father not as a despot.

Wars were frequent, raids made on or by a neighbouring town, and every *juvenis* or man between 17 and 45 fought in the *legio*. Each tribe furnished 100 horsemen and the men of each tribe were under their own tribe officer or *tribunus*.

Religion was a family matter with the Romans. The interpretation of the flight of birds (*avi-spicium*, *auspicium*) and the inspection of the entrails of victims may have come from Etruria, but the real religion of the Romans consisted in the worship of Lares and Penates and Vesta, the Spirits of Ancestors, the Household Gods and the Home. The hearth was an altar on which the fire must never go out; the offerings and gifts to the ancestors must never be omitted. Every occupation of the home life had its own special god, and all the real deep feeling of a Roman centred round his hearth and home, in whose worship none but members of the home must share. There lay the real strength and bond of union in Roman life. Each *gens* too had its common worship, and Jupiter Latiaris, the god of the Latins, was the All-Father of the race, the god of the Latin family. Later the Romans identified many of their gods with those of the Greeks and took over with the Greek gods the stories of Greek mythology. But the worship of ancestors and the power of the family bond were the inspiration of Rome at her best.

**The position of strangers in Rome.** With its close family life Rome could not admit strangers into an equality with the citizens or into the old *gentes*. Yet many came attracted by the strength and commercial importance of the new town. They formed a new class called, as time went on, Plebeians as opposed to the Patricians or

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## 10 THE FOUNDING OF ROME [CH.

sons of a true Roman father. These Plebeians were of mixed origin. Some were members of towns which had been conquered by Rome ; others were traders and craftsmen attracted to the place ; others were refugees and outcasts of other towns who had fled to the *asylum* of Rome as to a cave of Adullam ; others again were slaves who had been granted their freedom. Many put themselves under the protection of a Patrician family, as *clientes* under a *patronus*, getting protection in their business in return for certain services ; others were loosely under the protection of the king. Probably in course of time the bond connecting them with their patron often grew weak, and children did not feel the same debt of gratitude, which their fathers had felt towards the Patrician who had befriended them ; or the family of the Patrician, to whom they owed their welfare, may have been exterminated in one of the many wars. But at any rate the Plebeians grew into a distinct class, large in numbers but regarded as outside the state, not allowed to intermarry with the Patricians or to share in the government. In time Rome came to be almost two cities in one, the Patrician city, or community of true citizens, on one side, the Plebs on the other. We shall see later that it took two centuries of wrangling before the two bodies could be blended into a united whole.

**Legends of Early Rome.** Livy gives us a graphic account of the early years of Rome, full of names and incidents, stories which will never be forgotten ; stories of Romulus and Remus, the 'she-wolf's litter' ; of the Rape of the Sabine women, of Tarpeia and the joint rule of Tattius the Sabine king with Romulus ; of Numa Pompilius and the laws which he learnt from the nymph Egeria ; of the fight of the Horatii and Curiatii which decided the supremacy question between Rome and Alba. What truth is there in them ? Livy was in some ways a