The Roman Republic, History, Myths, Politics, and Novelistic Historiography

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By

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INTRODUCTION

The ancient Romans expanded their power and influence by forging treaties and alliances and by wars and conquests, eventually controlling the Italian Peninsula, assimilating the neighboring Etruscan and Greek cultures in the northern and southern parts of the peninsula respectively. From Italy, the Roman power extended over the littoral Mediterranean, gradually incorporating a large part of Europe, Asia Minor, and much of the North African coast, impressive conquests on three continents from the British Isles to the Middle East.[1-3]

The Romans reached a pinnacle of civilization early, disseminating a Graeco-Roman and Latin culture from the West and later a Judeo-Christian legacy from the East—the two major pillars of Western culture and civilization. Moreover, "the Roman Empire was the highest achievement and the crowning glory of ancient civilization…Fifteen hundred years after the fall of Rome, Latin culture is still a vital force in the world…and the Latin language still lives wherever Italian, French, Spanish, or Portuguese are spoken."[1]

The Glory and Legacy of Ancient Rome

I go further than giving credit to ancient Rome and Graeco-Roman civilization not only to Latin nations but also to non-Latin nations of the West in the Anglo-American world, particularly Great Britain and specifically the United States. The United States' system of laws and jurisprudence were borrowed heavily from ancient Rome in both form and substance, not to mention architecture. For example, I was marvelously surprised the very first time I visited Washington D.C. in the early 1980s—the American Founders' "new Rome on the Potomac." It was as if there had been a wonderful rebirth of the imposing buildings of ancient Rome and the Roman Forum at the time of such emperors as Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius—reborn in the modern world.[4] The enduring influence of ancient Rome was quite visible as far as the style of architecture of the government buildings in the city—the glorious classical Graeco-Roman domes, columns, and arches as well as the sculpturing of the public buildings, such as the Capitol, the U.S. Supreme Court building, the Lincoln Memorial, the various museums, and Union Station.

Moreover, I was not alone in my assessment and observation. Mortimer Sellers, Professor of Law at the University of Baltimore, wrote a book detailing how the ancient Romans contributed not only to modern languages, political science, government, and technology but also to art, literature, architecture, and engineering.[5]

In government, rather than establishing a democracy ("majoritarian people's rule"), ancient Rome created the *res publica* ("in the public interest") form of governance—a distinct form of government that served as an inspiration for true representative democracies and modern republics, especially the United States of America. Roman civilization preserved and disseminated Greek culture and civilization, including the arts, aesthetics, literature, history, and philosophy. In religion, the ultimate contribution was immense—namely the assimilation and dissemination of Christianity, perhaps arguably Rome's biggest and most enduring contribution.[2,6]

Rome laid the foundation for the system of jurisprudence that later formed the basis of civil law in Latin nations like France, Spain, and Portugal, and in countries of North America (Mexico), and Central and South America. Even English-speaking countries, such as the United States, England, Australia and New Zealand, whose laws were based on evolving English common law, were influenced by the Roman civil system. World historians Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher, and Robert Lee Wolff noted, "...[English-speaking countries] have also shared in the enduring ideals of equity and natural law bequeathed by Rome."[2] They correctly pointed out that the "tradition of deciding cases according to the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law" was a Roman concept. Influenced by the Stoics and the jurist and statesman Cicero, the Romans came to believe in the concept of "natural law"—a higher law, above those created by the state, a law that was divinely inspired and applied to all men in all states by virtue of their humanity.[7]

And if we look more pointedly at the American form of government, we find more remnants of the great Roman legacy of republican government. We find not only the idea and worth of citizenship, separation of and balance of powers, and the creation of the United States Senate in its original form as well as qualifications for holding public office enshrined in the United States Constitution, but also, as I wrote in *Contrasting Ideals and Ends in the American and French Revolutions*, "The idea of the veto was developed from the tribunician power of the tribunes of the plebs of the Roman Republic."[8] The power of the Senate, both in foreign and domestic affairs, stemmed from the august power and prestige inspired by the Senate of the Roman Republic.[9]

It is therefore with good reason that objective historians have with zeal and ample documentation described the glory that was Rome, the Eternal City founded on the Seven Hills by the Tiber River, which set down the moral and ethical standards that influenced developing Western thought and in later centuries, preserved, fortified, and disseminated the Judeo-Christian legacy that was evolving in Western civilization.

Now, before turning the page and beginning your journey through ancient Rome, a brief notation regarding the illustrations contained herein is appropriate. Certain illustrations made from antiquity that more or less depict individuals, such as coins, sculptures, or scenes contemporaneous with events described in the text, are both instructive historically as well as artistically. More modern illustrations, however, particularly stylistic paintings carried out centuries later after the events, for instance during the Renaissance and the Romantic Period, may be overly romanticized or even anachronistic. Nevertheless, some of these works of art are included in this book, particularly in the glossy insert, for their illustrative and aesthetic value that the historical events or heroic personages inspired centuries later. I have tried to avoid excessively anachronistic or fanciful illustrations, but a few were just too artfully executed to omit.

Miguel A. Faria, Jr., M.D.
Milledgeville, Georgia
February 13, 2025

Part I

THE LEGENDARY ROMAN KINGDOM AND THE EARLY REPUBLIC

CHAPTER 1

ANCIENT ROME, FOUNDED IN MYTH AND LEGEND, 753–509 BC

The history and culture of the ancient Romans commenced as a distinct Italic linguistic group, which was part of the Indo-European migrant settlement on the Italian Peninsula. The historiography of ancient Rome chronicles the traditional date of the founding of the city in 753 BC; followed by the era of kings or the Roman Kingdom, from 753 to 509 BC; the Roman Republic from 509 to 27 BC; and the Western Roman Empire from 27 BC until its collapse in AD 476. The Eastern Roman Empire or the Byzantine Empire, with its magnificent capital at Constantinople straddling Europe and Asia, continued until 1453 when it succumbed to the conquest of the Islamic Ottoman Turks. But that portion of history is not part of the narrative of the present book. This tome deals with ancient Rome exclusively—from the legendary founding of the Eternal City by Romulus to the fall of the Republic in the 1st century AD and the inception of the Roman Empire ushered in by Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor.

The Trojan War and the Voyage of Aeneas

The founding of Rome is wrapped in the trappings of myth and legend as well as history. Much of Rome's historic past has been obscured by the mist of time. The Romans were aware of such Greek epic poetry as the *Iliad*[1], the *Odyssey*[2], and other mythological Hellenic literature in addition to works of history and philosophy. They admired Greek civilization. But by the time the Romans reached their heyday, the Greek civilization had waned, and the Greek city-states were no threat to Rome. Roman poets and historians weaved a little history with a lot of myth, and the created legends became inextricably intertwined in formulating the early history of Rome.

The Trojan War that was recounted in parts of Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* became the initial centerpiece of the legendary tale of the founding of Rome. In this light, the great Roman poet Virgil (Publius

Vergilius Maro, 70–19 BC) wrote the epic poem, the *Aeneid*[3], while the historian Livy (Titus Livius, 59 BC–AD 17) wrote a majestic series of books on the history of Rome in eloquent prose that related the events of early Rome up to nearly his own time.[4-7] Fortunately, many of his books have survived, including those on the early chronicles of Rome—*Ab Urbe Condita* ("from the Founding of the City") in 753 BC—legends and history which have also been attested to by other writers.[8-11]

And it was also out of the mist of history and legend that the mighty mercantile city of Troy rose, where men battled for the supremacy of the city, its commerce and wealth, and for possession of the most beautiful women in the world, Helen, the wife of Menelaus, the king of Sparta. Helen's beauty was legendary. When she was taken to Troy by the seduction of Paris—the prince of Troy and the son of Priam and Hecuba, the king and queen of Troy—her face "launched a thousand ships."

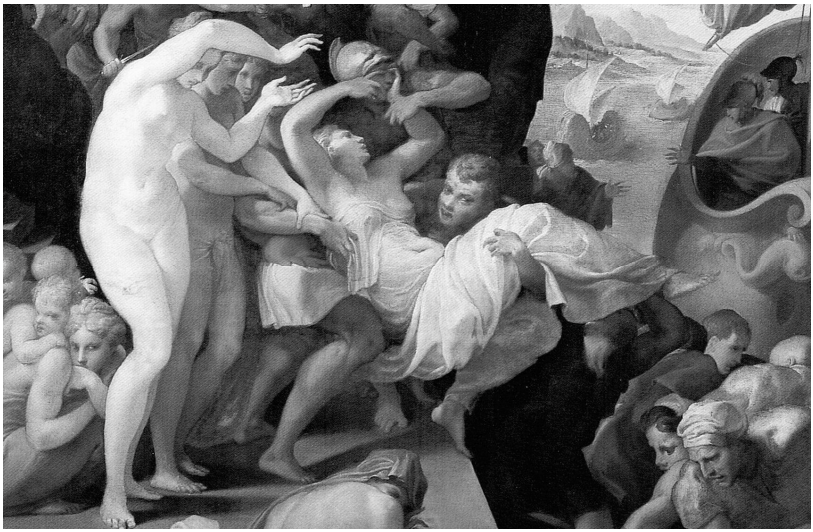

Figure 1: *The Abduction of Helen* with Aphrodite directing the abduction (or seduction). Painting by Francesco Primaticcio, c. 1530–1539. Bowes Museum, England

The ships were loaded with mythic warriors, including Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, Achilles, Ulysses, and dozens of other Greek heroes created by the literary genius of the legendary, blind poet Homer (fl. 8th century BC). According to Greek mythology, the goddesses Hera and Athena and the gods Hermes (the Roman god Mercury) and Poseidon

(Neptune) assisted the warriors who set sail to retrieve Helen from Troy. On the other hand, Aphrodite (Venus), Apollo, and Ares (Mars) supported the Trojans. After ten years of fighting, Troy was taken by the Greeks "bearing gifts" with the artful subterfuge of the Trojan Horse. So, the formerly wealthy and impregnable city of Ilium in the Hellespont—glorious Troy—fell.

Figure 2: Painting titled *Aeneas Flees Burning Troy* by Federico Barocci, 1598. Galleria Borghese, Rome

The Greeks sacked Troy in about 1200 BC. Aeneas, a prince and one of the greatest of the Trojan heroes, escaped from the doomed and burning city with a band of his followers. They sailed away in twenty ships in search of land where they could build a new city. The *Aeneid* traced the saga of the indomitable Aeneas and his compatriots over strange lands and seas. After numerous travails and adventures, they landed in North Africa near the city of Carthage, which was founded by the Phoenicians and where Queen Dido ruled. Dido fell in love with the intrepid Aeneas, who was very strong and handsome and claimed descent from Aphrodite (Venus). Dido pleaded with Aeneas to stay and rule together as king and queen of Carthage. But Jupiter decided otherwise. He sent Mercury, the messenger god, to tell Aeneas that he had to leave and resume his journey in order to fulfill his destiny. Aeneas hastily departed. Feeling deserted and broken-hearted, Dido killed herself with a sword.[3] Thus, one can suppose that the seed of future enmity between Carthage and Rome was planted.

Figure 3: Aeneas lands on the shores of Latium with his son Ascanius, while a sow tells him where to establish his city (from the 8th book of the *Aeneid*). Roman marble bas-relief, c. AD 150. The British Museum

Aeneas and his indomitable companions eventually reached the southwest coast of Italy, where King Latinus ruled. It was this mythological king who supposedly gave the name Latin, Latins, and Latium to the language, the people, and the region. Aeneas was well received by the king and since he had lost his wife Creusa during the sack of Troy, he married the king's beautiful daughter, Lavinia. Aeneas ruled Latium after the king died. A generation later Aeneas' son, Ascanius, who was also known as Iulus or Julius and who accompanied his father from Troy, founded the nearby city of Alba Longa. Many generations later, Julius Caesar and the Julian clan would claim, through Iulus-Ascanius, their patrician lineage and descent from Aphrodite.[4]

Rhea Silvia, the Twins, and the She-Wolf

The descendants of Ascanius formed a long line of kings in the Latin city of Alba Longa. According to this mythology, both Romulus and Remus were descended from Aeneas through their mother Rhea Silvia.[3] The maiden was the daughter of Numitor, the son of Procas, the king of Alba Longa (and thus a descendant of Aeneas and Ascanius).

As claimed by Livy, Numitor's younger brother Amulius killed the king and seized the throne. To prevent Rhea Silvia from having children who could challenge his rule, Amulius forced Rhea Silvia to become a

Vestal Virgin, the sacred priestesses of the goddess Vesta that were sworn to celibacy. However, when Rhea Silvia went to a grove to fetch water for the temple, she was raped by the god of war, Mars, and became pregnant with twins.[3,4,9,10] The Roman poet, Ovid, further romanticized the story of Rhea Silvia writing that when Rhea Silvia had tired of her walk, she laid down while braiding her hair, loosened her clothes, and fell asleep at the river's edge. The Roman god, Mars (Greek: Ares), saw the damsel and was filled with desire. He also had wished to establish a city worthy of glory and greatness. Both desires were immediately consummated. The god left unseen. Rhea Silvia thought she had had a dream, but instead she had become pregnant with the future founder of Rome.[8]

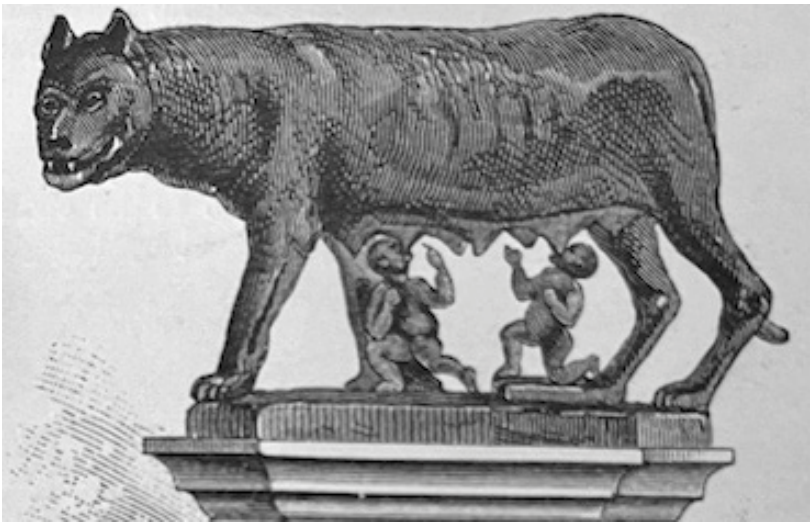

Figure 4: Lupa (she-wolf) nursing infants Romulus and Remus. From *Barnes' History of Rome* by Joel Dorman Steele and Esther B. Steele, 1885. Author's private collection

Amulius learned of the birth of the twins and ordered their death. The servant ordered to carry out the crime showed compassion and set them adrift in a basket on the bank of the Tiber River. The twins drifted and landed near the Palatine Hill where they were saved by a she-wolf that suckled them. Later Rhea Silvia died by throwing herself into the river.[4] The baby boys were nurtured by the she-wolf during their vulnerable infancy. After they grew up, they overthrew the usurper Amulius and reinstated Numitor as king in 752 BC. Their good deed accomplished,

Romulus and Remus decided to build a new city.[4,11] That city would be Rome which would in time be known as the City of Seven Hills and the Eternal City.[12,13]

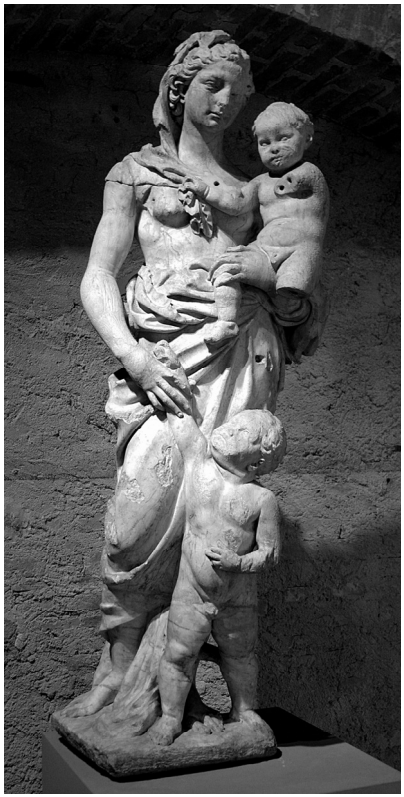

Figure 5: Statue of Rhea Silvia, Romulus, and Remus by Jacopo della Quercia. Fonte Gaia, Piazza del Campo, Siena, Italy. José Luiz Bernardes Ribeiro

Romulus and Remus and the Founding of Rome

Most textbooks cite 753 BC as the traditional date for the founding of Rome (*Ab Urbe Condita*) by Romulus and Remus. But it was not a cordial founding. The boys, unfortunately, soon quarreled after arriving at the seven hills. Romulus wanted the new city built at the Palatine Hill, but Remus desired the Aventine Hill. To settle the dispute, the twins resorted to augury. Remus saw six auspicious birds, but Romulus saw twelve and

claimed divine favor. The story related that Remus jumped over the furrow that Romulus was plowing around the Palatine Hill to demarcate the city wall of Rome, mocking his brother's effort and insulting Romulus about the inadequacy of the city "wall" against invaders. In anger, Romulus, or one of his followers, struck Remus and killed him.[4,8-11]

Imbued with antiquity's usual philosophic duality of myth and prophecy, the story presaged that as punishment for the sacrilegious act of fratricide, nascent Rome, built upon the Palatine Hill, would grow and prosper to become a mighty and dazzling city that in due course would rule an impressive and glorious empire—but as atonement for the unspeakable crime, the power of Rome would only last a thousand years. The unforgivable sin of fratricide would ultimately bring down the City of Seven Hills, which otherwise had been destined for glory.

Despite their many conquests, the Romans remained Stoic at heart and imbued with a pessimistic philosophy of fate. It did not come as a total surprise to many of the educated citizens of the Roman Empire when, nearly a millennium after the founding of Rome, the feared Attila the Hun, King of the Hunnish hordes (r. AD 434–453), prepared to march on the Eternal City. Roman citizens braced themselves for the worst and expected nothing less than divine retribution from the "Scourge of God" as Attila had been christened by a bemoaning priest who had witnessed the pillaging and plundering of the marauders on the outskirts of the Empire.[14,15]

The Roman Kingdom and Its Seven Kings (753–509 BC)

According to most scholars, during its first two and a half centuries, Rome was ruled not by Latin Romans but by the Etruscans.[16,17] Some earlier and ancient Roman historiographers dispute that assertion, but as we have stated, ancient Rome was founded in myth and legend. Be that as it may, in the early 6th century BC, the Etruscan royal family ruling Rome was headed by Lucius Tarquinius Superbus ("Tarquin the Proud"). But in 510 BC, the subjugated Romans overthrew the king, abolished the monarchy, and founded the Roman Republic.

Romulus (753–716 BC)

From the Palatine Hill by the Tiber River, where Rome was founded by Romulus, the city or rather the settlement, began to spread to the adjacent seven hills. During Romulus' time, the city spread to the Capitoline and Quirinal Hills. Romulus was also responsible for forming

the Roman Senate, the Roman army, and the initial cults of the Roman religion.

The cults of the Lares and Penates were supposedly brought from Troy by Aeneas.[3] The Lares presided over major life events, including birth, the passage of childhood to adulthood, the freeing of slaves, disease, and death. The Penates purportedly protected the Roman family spiritually as well as practically, ensuring that there would be enough food in the home to support the family.[18,19]

To attract men to the new city, Romulus created an asylum where fugitives, slaves, or even freemen from other areas could seek refuge.

The first battle Rome fought was against the neighboring Sabines and their Latin and Etruscan allies. The men of Rome needed women, but the other tribes refused to provide mates. Thus, the subsequent noted event of the Roman seizure of the Sabine women, known as "the rape of the Sabine women," prompted a war.[13,15,16] In that first encounter, Romulus slew a Sabine-allied king in single combat and stripped the body of its armor, establishing the first example of *spolia opima* ("rich spoils"). From that time on, victorious Roman generals were allowed the honor of seizing the armor and effects of opposing commanders who were slain in single combat.

As Latin towns were conquered one after the other, the Sabines advanced on Rome and surrounded the city led by their king Tatius Sabinus. During the Sabine siege of the Capitoline Hill, Tarpeia, the daughter of the Roman commander charged with protecting the city defenses, offered to betray the Romans. When her treason was uncovered, she was thrown from the promontory that bears her name—the Tarpeian Rock. From that place, future traitors of Rome would be hurled to their death during execution.

The Sabine women, who had married Romans and established families, soon tired of the war and negotiated peace. The Sabines and Romans joined together, and the two nations ruled in Rome, alternating kingship. Incidentally, the act of a husband carrying his bride over the threshold of their home was derived from the legendary act of the Roman seizure of the Sabine women.

To create the Roman Senate, Romulus chose one hundred men from among the leading families of the city. These "conscripted fathers" of the city and their families became the patricians, the ruling class of families in ancient Rome. The rest of the populace became the plebeians or plebs, including the asylum seekers and prisoners who in time gained Roman citizenship.

In the later years of Romulus' reign, trouble between the Romans and the Etruscans again flared. The Etruscans of the city of Veii had been raiding Roman territories. Although Romulus fought them, he was unable to capture the city. Animosity between the Romans and Etruscans at this time foreshadowed major wars between them in the future.

After thirty-seven years of ruling Rome, Romulus was lost in a divine whirlwind during a storm. According to Roman mythology, it was believed that he was taken by the god Mars as a sign of favor to the Romans for their conquests and expansion.[12] Additionally, this early event was later assimilated with the Cult of Quirinus.[11,17]

Figure 6: Silver denarius minted in 89 BC, Rome. Obverse: Head of Tatius Sabinus, legendary king of the Sabines, 8th century BC, later co-ruler of Rome. Reverse: Two Roman soldiers each abducting and bearing a Sabine woman. Author's private collection

Numa Pompilius (715–672 BC)

Numa Pompilius, a religious Sabine, became the next king of Rome. He initiated the worship of Janus, the god of doorways and beginnings (thus the month January) and endings. The word janitor is also derived from the actions of this god. The gates of the temple of Janus were opened whenever Rome was at war and closed when Rome was at peace. The doors of the temple remained closed during the entire reign of Numa Pompilius.

Numa Pompilius also formulated many of Rome's most important religious institutions and introduced the twelve-month solar calendar. He authored a number of sacred books and created several orders of

priesthood, including the *flamines*, *pontificies*, and *fetiales*.[16,17] The words *numen* and *numinous,* referring to a spiritual quality or the presence of a divinity, were probably derived from this religiously devoted Sabine king of Rome. Numa Pompilius also created the Cult of the Vestal Virgins and the office of pontifex maximus.[4,17,20]

Tullus Hostilius (672–640 BC)

Tullus Hostilius was the third legendary king of Rome elected by the people. He was Roman, and by his name Hostilius, one can divine his bellicose nature. Under his kingship Rome spread to the fourth hill, the Caelian Hill. Rome was now prospering via trade with other communities, including with the Etruscans just across the Tiber to the north. Nevertheless, powerful enemies still surrounded Rome. In order to survive and defend its territories, it was necessary for the city to adopt a bellicose tradition. And it now had a belligerent king in Tullus Hostilius.

Alba Longa, the leading city in Latium, not only had become suspicious of Rome but also envious of its prosperity. War broke out several times between the two cities. In 667 BC, the cities agreed to a duel to settle the matter. Rome chose the three Horatii brothers; Alba Longa selected the Curiatii brothers.[16]

In the battle that followed, all three of the Curiatii were wounded and bleeding. In the opposite camp, two of the Horatii had been killed but the remaining brother was alive and completely unhurt. He feigned retreat, and the Curiatii pursued him ferociously, unwisely separating themselves from one another in the pursuit. At a precise moment, Horatius turned around to face and finish off, first the least wounded of his adversaries, then the next, and finally the most seriously wounded adversary last. His strategy paid off and one after the other he eliminated all three of the wounded Curiatii.

Horatius returned in triumph only to find his sister Horatia distraught by her brother's victory since she was betrothed to one the Curiatii. In a fit of rage, he dispatched Horatia with his sword and the warning, "So perish every Roman who bewails a foe."[16] This heroic but tragic event exemplified the "Roman virtue" of placing Rome and the state above personal feelings and family. But in reality, as we shall see, Romans also placed a high value on the family and on family connections.

Although Alba Longa submitted at this time, it rebelled again two years later. At that time, the city was completely destroyed by Rome. During the reign of Tullus Hostilius, two notable events took place. The first event was the defeat and destruction of Alba Longa, and the second

event was the creation of the original senate house, the Curia Hostilia. The senate house was needed because the aristocracy had expanded to accommodate the assimilated leaders of Alba Longa.[4,17,21]

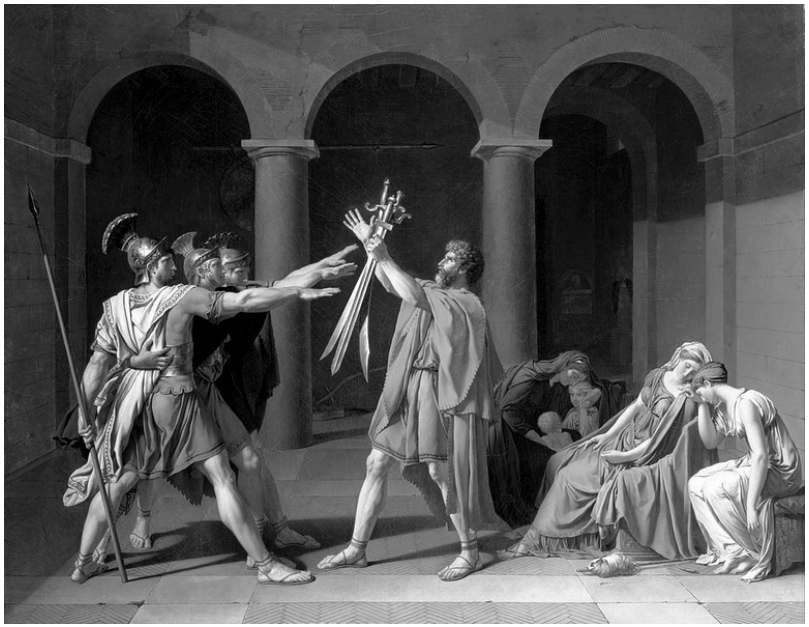

Figure 7: Painting of the *Oath of the Horatii* after Jacques-Louis David and his pupil Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson, 1786. Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio

Ancus Marcius (640–616 BC)

When Tullus Hostilius died in 640 BC, the assembly of the Roman people elected Ancus Marcius to be the fourth king of Rome. A pious and virtuous man, Ancus sought advice from the expanded senate and waged war like Romulus, but he also promoted religion like his grandfather Numa Pompilius. For example, he had the pontifex maximus copy religious texts so that the public could no longer neglect the rituals. The king also established the port of Ostia, expanded the city and its territories, and brought in new settlers who were attracted by the prosperity of the city.

Emboldened by the piety of the king, which they misinterpreted as martial weakness, several Latin cities invaded Roman territories. Ancus

responded by declaring war and invoking the rites of the *fetiales*, the priesthood that served the supreme god Jupiter as the patron of good faith. Rome promptly won the war, and the people of the conquered Latin cities were settled as citizens on the Aventine Hill, the fifth hill of Rome.

Figure 8: Silver denarius minted by Marcius Philippus, 56 BC, Rome. Obverse: Diademed head of King Ancus Marcius, a lituus behind. Ancus Marcius was the fourth king of Rome, who according to legend was the first to employ an aqueduct to bring water to the city. Reverse: Equestrian statue that depicts an ancestor of Q. Marcius Philippus, who repaired Rome's aging aqueducts and built the Aqua Marcia in 144 BC. Author's private collection

Lucius Tarquinius Priscus ("Tarquin the Elder," 616–578 BC)

At the same time that Rome was growing and prospering under the rule of its legendary kings, the Etruscan realm was also blossoming with even larger and wealthier cities just north of the Tiber. As it happened, the fifth king of Rome was of Etruscan origin. Scholars are not in agreement as to how Lucius Tarquinius Priscus gained ascendency in Rome. The veil of history shields us from the knowledge of whether he gained power by conquest, intimidation, or election. The controversy continues.

Roman legend assures us that Tarquinius was the son of a Greek immigrant, who had settled in Etruria (the Etruscan territory) and married an Etruscan lady. He was born in the major city of Tarquinii on the Etruscan coast, and hence his name. Tarquinius grew up and moved to Rome, serving Ancus Marcius as warrior and counselor, and in time became regent.[4] When Ancus died in 616 BC, Tarquinius ascended the throne peacefully but not uneventfully since the sons of Ancus Marcius also coveted the throne.

Figure 9: Etruscan fresco of dancers and musicians from the Tomb of the Leopards, Monterozzi necropolis, 5th century BC, Tarquinia, Italy

Under Tarquinius, Rome expanded hegemony over surrounding areas in Latium, and the city prospered even more under Etruscan influence. For example, the Circus Maximus was built so that the Romans could enjoy chariot races in the Etruscan style. Athletic games were introduced into the arena along with gladiatorial contests fought with swords (*gladius*). The Roman Forum was constructed by draining the swampy area between the Capitol and the Palatine Hill. Tarquinius also built the Cloaca Maxima, the "great drain," to drain the waste from the city. He doubled the size of the senate from 100 to 200 members to accommodate new senators from the assimilated territories.[4,16,17]

Tarquinius fought and led Rome to victory in wars against the Latins, Sabines, and Etruscans, thereby enriching the city with territory and plunder. The victories began to be celebrated in the Etruscan fashion with ceremonial triumphs whereby winning generals marched into the city accompanied by their troops parading with great fanfare. And in 585 BC, following his victories against a number of Latin cities, Tarquinius Priscus celebrated the first Roman triumph himself.

Additionally, Tarquin the Elder was credited with introducing many of the ceremonial symbols and military implements that the Romans treasured in later years and over the centuries. These included such items as the gold-embroidered toga that generals wore while celebrating a triumph and riding in a chariot drawn by four horses; the fasces carried by the lictors, who served as bodyguards for Roman magistrates; the curule chair that signified the military power of the magistrates, generals, and later consuls and proconsuls; the rings worn by the senators; and the

phalera, which were the discs of metal worn on the breastplates by Roman soldiers.

Nonetheless, men who were hired by the sons of Ancus Marcius assassinated the king in 578 BC. As previously noted, the sons of the former king had coveted the throne for some time and felt that they had been sidelined when Tarquinius Priscus ascended the throne. [4,11,16,17,21]

Figure 10: The Cloaca Maxima in Rome. *Rome, Ancient and Modern, and Its Environs* by Jeremiah Donovan, engraving print, 1842. The British Library

Servius Tullius (578–535 BC)

Neither of the Marcii brothers ascended the throne following Tarquin the Elder's assassination. The sixth king of Rome, Servius Tullius, was probably an Etruscan of servile origin. He married the daughter of Tarquinius Priscus and ascended the throne without election but with the support of the senate.[4] Under his reign, Rome continued to flourish, and the city expanded to the Esquiline and Viminal Hills, the sixth and seventh hills of Rome.

Servius Tullius re-organized the Latin League, the military alliance that previously had fought against Rome but was now assimilated, led, and dominated by the City of Seven Hills. He also built a new defensive wall, the Servian Wall, which surrounded and protected the city. This legendary boundary was later said to also include the religious boundary of the city of Rome itself—that is, the *pomerium*.[16] Although the wall enclosed the

Palatine Hill, it did not encompass the Aventine or the Capitoline Hills, which remained outside the boundary of the city until five centuries later, when Lucius Cornelius Sulla (138–78 BC) enlarged the *pomerium* to incorporate those two hills into the city as well.[22]

Servius was a popular king who built the Temples of Diana and Fortuna, expanded the Roman franchise, established the Servian tribes, and organized the Centuries. The Centuriate Assembly, one of the three Roman voting assemblies, divided Romans into groups of one hundred based initially on military and subsequently on economic status (classes). This king also instituted the Compitalia, the annual Roman religious festival held in honor of the Lares Compitales, the household deities of the crossroads, a primeval cult brought by Aeneas from Troy and expanded by the Romans to include places where two or more roadways intersected.

In 534 BC, Servius Tullius was assassinated by his son-in-law, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus ("Tarquin the Proud"). Tarquin was probably the grandson of Tarquinius Priscus and had married Tullia, Servius' daughter. The assassin became the seventh and final king of Rome.

Lucius Tarquinius Superbus ("Tarquin the Proud," 534–509 BC)

Tarquin the Proud was the third Etruscan to assume the throne as king of Rome. He was not only proud but also tyrannical, a cruel king that disdained the plebeians and imperiously cowed the senate.

He fought and subjugated several Latin cities and established Roman colonies. He was credited with building the great Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus ("the Capitol") on the Capitoline Hill, which became the fortress of the city.

An interesting story has been handed down from generation to generation relating to Tarquinius Superbus and the Cumaean Sibyl. According to the legend, the Cumaean Sibyl offered Tarquin the nine books of prophecy, the Sibylline Books, for the price of 300 pieces of gold. Tarquin promptly refused the offer. The Sibyl then burned three of the volumes and repeated the offer at the same price for the remaining six books. Tarquin again refused. She burned three more books, at which point Tarquin accepted the offer and obtained the three remaining Sibylline Books.[11,16,23] The books would be consulted time and again by the Roman priests and magistrates during periods of crisis.

Tarquin and his sons were imperious, arrogant, and brusque with the populace, and both the patricians and plebeians became angry and rebellious. Tarquin was also belligerent and imprudent. For instance, he