

# Early Roman History to the Fall of Tarquin

## I. Latium and Rome – the site of Rome

The plains of Latium were fertile, being composed of a thick layer of alluvial clay with a covering of volcanic lava. The lowlands of were liable to become waterlogged, but by the period of the dawn of Roman history they were systematically drained. The surrounding hillsides were pleasantly wooded with beech trees. Latium was separated from the eastern face of Italy by the Apennine range, which was only easily traversable via a road through the Anio valley and the Lacus Fucinus. The Tiber is not a long river, but it carries a lot of water, particularly in summer, when it is not fordable below the position of Rome. Rome was situated at the last point where the river could be forded.

Rome lies on the border between Latium and Etruria and is fifteen miles from the estuary of the Tiber. The West bank of the Tiber has two separate ridges, the Janiculan and the Vatican. The East bank is contained within a single arc of high ground with four spurs – the Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline and Cealian. Inside this arc lie three main hills – the Capitoline, the Palatine and the Aventine. Of these the Capitoline was the smallest, but also detached from the lower ground on all sides, so the most defensible.

The ancient Latins kept no records of their origins. According to later Roman and Greek authors the Latins originated from a mixture of Aboriginees, Ligurians and Sicels. During the early Iron Age the region was only thinly cultivated. The inhabitants developed a form of the Villanovian culture that also flourished in Etruria before the Etruscans. It is now called the Latial culture by archaeologists. Latial culture began to develop after 800 BC. The Latins originally inhabited villages (*vici*) located on hills for protection and were farmers and herdsmen. Some ancient writers suggest that the number of separate communities was fifty; the *Prisci Latini* (“Original Latins”) are given as thirty. They had a common language and were organised by clans (*gentes*). However, the family unit (*familia*) was very important and the eldest male (*paterfamilias*) had a position of near absolute power within it. It is possible that the villages were organised into cantons (*pagi*) which shared a religious cult. The main cult of the region was that of Jupiter, whose centre was the village of Alba Longa.

## II. The problem of sources

By *primary source* is meant firsthand evidence of historical events. The problem is that there are with very few exceptions virtually no written primary sources for early Roman history. The results of archaeological work provides primary sources – excavations, pottery, metalwork, weapons; however, unless accompanied by inscriptions these to do provide a chronology. Their significance also has to be



interpreted. Writing was introduced to Italy via the Greek colony of Cumae during the seventh century BC. If written records were kept during the period of the Roman kings, then they did not survive. One exception is the discovery of a broken stone pillar under the Lapis Niger in the Roman Forum bearing an inscription in archaic Latin that may contain the word for a king and a dedication to an unknown deity. In c. 390 BC Rome was sacked and subsequently burnt by the Galls; according to tradition various cult objects and records survived, but this event will have created difficulties for subsequent Roman historians. Virtually everything we know about early Roman history comes from the work of later Roman historians and annalists. However, even this work has not come to us directly. Many of these works have also been lost, and their contents may only be partially reconstructed from surviving fragments or references in the works of other later writers. The standards of these historians do not match the standards of modern historiography. Their work is heavily influenced by bias. Myth-making serving later emotional and cultural needs is also evident. The inevitable conclusion is that nothing is known for certain about early Roman history. However, some events are more probable than others; in some cases we can speak with a high degree of confidence.

Roman historians started working on Roman history in the third century BC. Fabius Pictor and Cincius Alimentus wrote histories of early Rome. The poets Naevius and Ennius created literary works based on traditions. Pictor and Alimentus wrote in Greek and Cato the Elder was the first Roman to write in Latin and his *Origines* contained an account of the early history of Rome and Latium, the early Republic and the First Punic War. All these works only exist in fragments or later references and are substantially lost.

There followed a number of “annalists”. An “annalist” is someone who embroiders historical events as opposed to someone we might regard as a historian, who exercises judgment over his use of sources. Thus, the annalists added material for which they had doubtful sources and allowed myth-making to predominate in their accounts. As the years progressed the work of successive annalists grew longer, indicative of the accretion into the original account of extraneous material. The first annalists were Cassius Hemina, and Calpurnius Piso. However, the *Annales Maximi* were published by Mucius Scaevola c. 131 BC, is a work of another kind, as will be discussed below. Another annalist was Cn. Gellius who wrote twenty books covering the period 500 – 300 BC. The work of annalists Valerius Antias and Licinius Macer are regarded as mainly works of fiction and their historiography is at a very low level. The annalists of the first century BC, Livy and the Greek, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, are credited with adding no more fiction, but they also did not apply rigorous standards of criticism to their material.

There are references to Rome in Greek works dating from the fifth century BC which are referenced by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Greek writers mentioned include Hellanicus, Theopompus, Aristotle, Callias, Theophrastus, Hieronymus of Cardia, Timaeus. The *Chronicles of Cumae* may have referred to Rome and Latium. The emperor Claudius is known to have used Etruscan sources for his work on Etruscan



history. Claudius's work, now lost, was used subsequently by Tacitus as a source. The work of the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, active in the first century BC, probably used Fabius Pictor as a source.

Whilst the work of the annalists tended to obscure the story, they based their accounts on the work of the earlier historians, Fabius Pictor and Cincius Alimentus, and may also have drawn on other primary sources still available to them at the time of writing. Therefore, we do know of primary sources that were available to these writers and can infer something of their contents from their works. So we can to a limited extent reconstruct some of the primary source material for the period. The primary sources for the period may be listed in order of decreasing reliability as follows:

(1) *Consular Fasti*. These are official lists of the chief Roman magistrates and were compiled into single publications by Mucius Scaevola, Pontifex Maximus in 130 BC in a record known as the *Annales Maximi*, and later by Atticus, a friend of Cicero, into a book called the *liber Annulis*. These lists were also published in calendars set up in temples. The consular Fasti are taken as authoritative from the third century onwards, but their authority is contested for dates prior to that, especially as they contain the names of some consuls of plebian origin, which is contrary to the tradition that no plebians held that office before 450 BC. However, it is not certain that plebians did not act as consuls prior to 450 BC and the traditional Roman dates from the consular Fasti are consistent with dates drawn from Greek history.

(2) *Foreign Treaties*. Texts of foreign treaties between Rome and other powers survived to the first century BC – for example, the treaty with Gabii, and the Foedus Cassianum (a treaty with the Latins, 485 BC) and the treaty with Carthage (509 BC).

(3) *Tabula Pontificum*. The work of Scaevola, the *Annales Maximi*, also contained records of the religious calendar that had originally been written on a whitened board (*tabula pontificum*) and stored in the Regia. It is believed that these records stretched back to at least 400 BC as Cicero tells us that they contained a record of a direct observation of an eclipse that is known to have happened in this year. Livy refers to an incomplete set of *tabulae* from the period 509 – 390 BC.

(4) The Code of the Twelve Tables was made around 450 BC. The original was lost, but the content was preserved down to the period of Cicero, and we can be reasonably confident that what we have is a good account of the original.

(5) Census records. The figures quoted by Roman writers for the various censuses are creditable. It seems that Roman authors used these and other similar executive records. Figures for the period prior to 300 BC are subject to scholarly dispute.

(6) *Acta populi*. Enactments of the popular assemblies were subsequently engraved on bronze tablets and stored in the temple of Saturn. However, Roman writers were not rigorous when referring to these sources, and it is also not likely that any of the



legislation attributed to the fourth century BC was enacted then, so as a source the *acta populi* are not generally reliable.

(7) *Senatorial records*. Records of senatorial meetings were from 449 BC onwards stored first in the temple of Ceres and then in the temple of Saturn. However, Roman writers made little use of these and as sources these have been generally lost.

(8) Oral tradition. Individual Roman aristocratic families preserved legends about their family history and these were passed down orally and sung in ballads at feasts. However, Roman writers probably did not use these as sources and they would be unreliable anyway.

### III. The traditional account

The traditional account, which now follows, was the version of Rome's early history that came down to Republican Romans. The story that follows, which must be taken wholly with several pinches of salt, is that found in Livy.

The Greeks after the sack of *Troy* (1184 BC) *permitted Aeneas and Antenor to leave with their followers unmolested as they had always been in favour of peace. Antenor settled in the land now known as Venetia, having expelled the Eugenei from this region. Aeneas, son of Anchises and Venus, landed in Latium and fought with the Latins and defeated them. But subsequently the Latin king, Latinus, came to terms with Aeneas and gave him his daughter, Lavinia, in marriage. Aeneas built a settlement called Lavinium after his wife. A war ensued with Rutuli under Turnus. Although the Rutuli were defeated, Latinus was killed. Turnus called on the help of the Etruscan king of Caere, Mezentius. The Latins chose Aeneas as king, and he gave his supporters the name of Latins, so Trojans and Latins became one people. The Rutuli-Etruscan alliance was defeated but Aeneas died in battle and lies buried on the river Numicus.*

*Lavinia ruled as regent until Aeneas's son Ascanius was of age. Ascanius founded Alba Longa in the Alban hills – thirty years after the foundation of Lavinium. Ascanius's son Silvius succeeded, who was succeeded by Alba, Atys, Capys, Capetus, Tiberinus, Agrippa and Romulus Silvius each in their turn. Romulus Silvius was struck by lightning and was succeeded by Aventius. Aventius was succeeded by Proca. Proca's younger son, Amulius, usurped the throne from his elder brother, Numitor, and put Numitor's male children to death.*

*Amulius forced Numitor's daughter, Rhea Silvia, to be a Vestal Virgin, but she was raped and gave birth to two sons. She claimed Mars was the father. The mother was imprisoned and the boys were condemned to be drowned, but they were saved by a she-wolf who suckled them. A shepherd called Faustulus took them up and reared them. After Remus was captured at the Feast of Lupercalia on the Pallentine hill.*



*Faustulus told Romulus that he was of royal blood. Romulus and Remus killed Amulius and were jointly proclaimed king by the people. Both sons decided to found a settlement. They decided also to settle the question of which of them is the eldest by augury. One story says that Romulus killed Remus after Remus jumped over his half-built wall on the Aventine.*

*Romulus founded a fortified settlement on the Palatine (c. 750 BC) and founded Rome there. Romulus then summoned the people and gave them laws. He adopted rituals of the Etruscan type – the State Chair, purple-bordered toga and twelve attendants. Romulus welcomed asylum seekers into the town which rapidly grew in size. He created a hundred senators, named “Fathers” (patres) or the heads of clans. There was a shortage of women and no local communities would permit intermarriage with the Romans. A festival was held at Rome to which the locals came. The Romans raped the Sabine women. These girls subsequently negotiate a peace between the Romans and the Sabines, who were led by Titus Tatius.*

*Men from Caenina invaded Roman territory but Romulus killed their leader in personal combat and dedicated the dead chief’s armour to Jupiter as the “spoils of war”. Romulus fought successful wars against Antemnae, Crustumium and the Sabines. The Sabines actually took the Capitol and the heroic Roman warrior Hostius Hostilius was killed, but Romulus rallied the Romans and took it back. It was at this point that the Sabine women intervened and parted the two armies, and peace was concluded. The Romans called themselves Quirites in honour of the Sabine town Cures. Romulus created three centuries of knights. Rome was then attacked by the men of Fidenae, but once again Romulus overcome Rome’s enemies. He also defeated Veii in battle but did not take the city because of its impregnable position. Legend has it that Romulus was subsumed directly into heaven and became immortal. Romulus reigned for 37 years.*

*Following his death the senate proclaimed an interrex for year and ten of their number took it in turns to govern. The senate acknowledged that the people were supreme but reserved the right of veto.*

*c. 510 BC. Numa Pomplius, a Sabine, was elected king; his election was confirmed by augury. Numa founded the temple of Janus. He established a religious calendar, dividing the year into twelve calendar months and establishing on which days it was lawful to transact business. He established priests of Mars and Quirinus and virgin priestesses for Vesta, which was a cult originating from Alba. He introduced the twelve Salli, or Leaping Priests, in the service of Mars Gradivus. He appointed Numa Marcius as pontifex. He established an altar on the Aventine to Jupiter Elicius. It is said he conversed directly with the goddess Egeria. Numa reigned for 43 years.*

*c. 670 BC. After another interrex Tullus Hostilius was elected king. Conflict arose between Rome and Alba. However, the Alban king, Mettius, proposed that sovereignty should be settled by trial by combat between three champions on each side, so as to avoid bloodshed that would weaken the nation and expose them to*



*Etruscan aggression. The Curiatii represented Alba and the Horatii Rome. In the fight the young Horatius was the only man left standing. However, his sister had been betrothed to one of the Curiatii and he killed her in rage when she was mourning her dead lover. Tullius arrested Horatius but contrived to have Horatius tried by the people, who acquitted him.*

*Despite this the Alban king, Mettius, planned to betray Rome when Veii and Fidenae started a war against her. Nonetheless, with Alban assistance Tullus defeated the men of Veii and Fidenae. Afterwards, Tullus transferred the entire population of Alba to Rome. He executed Mettius by having him torn apart by teams of horses yoked to chariots. Tullus increased the number of senators by adding noble families of Alban origin to it. Tullus invaded the Sabine country and won a battle owing to his superior cavalry. Tullus contracted plague and was burnt to death in a badly performed ritual to Jupiter Elicius which resulted in the temple being struck by lightning. He reigned thirty-two years.*

*After an interrex Ancus Marcius was elected king. He is credited with adopting moral scruples in regard to the waging of war and the correct ritual for a formal declaration of war. Ancus took the Latin town of Politorium and transferred its population to Rome. Ancus reigned twenty-four years.*

*Meanwhile a wealthy Corinthian called Demaratus had been forced to leave Corinth on account of political troubles there and he settled in Tarquinii. His property was inherited by his surviving son, Lucomus, who moved to Rome with his mother, an ambitious woman, and where he took the name Lucius Tarquinius Priscus.*

*c. 600 BC. Tarquinius Priscus was elected king of Rome. Tarquin conducted a successful campaign against the Apiolae.*

*c. 570 BC. Tarquinius was murdered by the sons of Ancus. However, Tarquinius's wife managed to get Servius Tullius elected king; the parentage of Servius was unknown, but he seems to have been an adopted son of Tarquinius. Servius established himself by conducting a successful war against Veii. He reorganised the army on the basis of citizen militia infantry, and categorised the property owning population into five classes based on wealth. In addition the most wealthy families served in the cavalry in eighteen centuries. He conducted the first census. The poor were not called upon to serve in the army, and the cost of war was born by the rich. Servius extended the city boundaries to include the hills of the Quirinal and the Viminal. He transferred the common Latin cult of Diana to Rome.*

*Servius's daughter, Tullia, married the son or grandson of Tarquinius Priscus, Lucius Tarquinius. c. 530 BC. After a series of murders, Tarquinius seized the monarchy from Servius, and Servius was killed by Tarquinius's henchmen. There is a story that Tullia drove in a carriage over the dead body of her father. Servius reigned for forty-four years. Tarquinius (now surnamed Superbus) ruled by means of terror, executing those senators that had supported Servius. He started trying capital cases without*



*consultation. He appointed senators of his own choice, and sought to govern without consultation with the Senate. He started punishing his opponents by condemning them to death by drowning with a weight tied around them. As a war leader he had some accomplishments – starting the war with the Voscians and taking the town of Gabii by a stratagem in which his youngest son pretend to be a defector. He made a peace treaty with the Aequians and also with Etruria. He started the building of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, requiring freemen to labour in this enterprise just as if they were slaves.*

*c. 510 BC Anger was festering among the nobility, and when the king's son, Sextus Tarquinius raped Lucetia, the wife of the noble Collatinus and she subsequently killed herself, Brutus took advantage of the fact that Tarquinius Superbus was with the army at Ardea to initiate a revolution. A new constitution was adopted under which there is a dual magistracy of two consuls. The first two consuls elected were Lucius Junius Brutus and Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus. Brutus made the people swear never to have a king again. Brutus forced Tarquinius Collatinus to resign his consulship and go into exile. The vacant consulship was filled by Publius Valerius. Brutus detected and crushed an early conspiracy to restore Tarquin to the throne. Tarquin then raised an army using his own resources and support from Tarquinius and Veii. The subsequent battle was indecisive, but Tarquin was not successful in his attempt.*

*c. 506 BC. Tarquin enlisted the support of the Etruscan king of Clusium Lars Porsenna. Rome was weakened by food shortages and the Roman army withdrew within the city. The Etruscans nearly got into the city by crossing the bridge but one man, Horatius Cocles, held them up for sufficient length of time for the attempt to fail. Porsenna effectively laid siege to Rome. The consul Valerius successfully executed a stratagem to convince Porsenna that Rome is well-supplied, when it is not. However, Porsenna eventually decided to withdraw when he learnt that a band of young Roman nobles had vowed to attempt to assassinate him. Having decided to withdraw from Rome, Porsenna sent a force under his son, Arruns, to attack Aricia, but the force was almost totally destroyed and Arruns was killed. Porsenna made one more attempt to restore Tarquin by diplomacy, but this also failed.*

#### **IV. Rome, Latium and the foundation of Rome c. 1200 BC – c. 750 BC**

In the subsequent sections we will assess how much of the traditional story may be true. We will also analyse early Roman history and look for causes and trends.

Much of the traditional account is fiction – the result of imaginative speculations on the part of Greek authors in the fifth and fourth centuries. There is a myth linking the name of the Palatine Hill to the Arcadian leader Evander, on account of the similarity between the name of the Palatine and Evander's native town of Pallanteum, and this may be discounted as mere story-telling. According to some Greeks, Romulus was the son of Odysseus by Circe; in another story Tusculum was founded by a second son of Odysseus.



The Greeks are responsible for the invention of the myth that Rome was originally founded by Aeneas. The Sicilian poet Stesichorus recorded the myth of Aeneas's wanderings in the west in the seventh century BC. The myth of Aeneas was already known in Etruria by the late sixth century and there are votive statues to Aeneas carrying his father Anchises from Troy found in Veii from this time as well as more than a dozen survival vases depicting the same scene also from Veii, dated 525 – 460 BC. The Greek writer Hellanicus identified Aeneas as the founder of Rome in the fifth century. However, whilst Eratosthenes dated the fall of Troy to 1184 BC, another Greek historian called Timaeus dated the foundation of Rome to 814 BC. By 300 BC the Romans had accepted the myth of Aeneas and were seeking ways of combining it with other accounts of the foundation of the city. The historian Fabius Pictor and the poets Naevius and Ennius developed the myth into the form later recorded by Livy – with the dual foundation of Alba Longa and Roma separated by a period during which the descendants of Aeneas reigned by hereditary right.

The traditional story of the founding of Rome is contained in the myth of Romulus. This myth was already current by the fourth century BC. In 296 BC a bronze statue of a wolf suckling two human twins was set up in the Forum. However, there is no evidence to support the view that Romulus was a historical figure. His story contains many elements that are reminiscent of fertility rituals. It is probable that Romulus was the name of a hero that was the subject of a fertility cult that was venerated on the Palatine hill. The subsequent settlement took his name, and Romulus was historicized into a legendary figure of military prowess, a worthy founder of the city destined to rule an empire.

The summit of Mont Cavo in the Alban Hills was the centre of the shrine of Jupiter Latiaris, the most important of the common cults of the Latin peoples. According to tradition thirty Latin communities worshipped at Mont Cavo, with the Roman people being just one of these. It was regarded as the Holy Mountain of the Latin peoples. The term *Latinum* was established in Italy around 1000 BC according to tradition. The Latin people were a Villanovan culture – they lived mainly in villages and cremated their dead preserving the ashes in round hut-urns. They were mainly a pastoral people. They used bronze and iron extensively. Their language was of Indo-European origin and is believed to have been a form proto-Latin. By the Lake of Nemi (meaning Diana's Mirror) there was the centre of the cult of the Goddess of the Grove. The Albanus Lake was another important site because it was connected with Alba Longa, which in Roman tradition was the mother of Rome.

According to Roman tradition Rome was founded on the Palatine Hill on 21 April 753 BC. The date is uncertain, however, the day links the foundation to Palilia, a sacred festival in honour of Pales, the divine protector of shepherds and their flocks. The archaeological record confirms that a settlement was established on the Palatine Hill around 750 BC. Post-holes for timber huts have been excavated there, and, indeed, a hut with a thatched roof was a Roman national monument right up to Imperial times. The later Forum Romanum was the site of their cemetery, which was used as such up



to c. 600 BC. Other Iron Age settlements have been found on the Esquiline and Quirinal hills; there has also been found one at the site of the Forum Boarium.

Regarding the myth of the Sabine women – whilst there is no historical evidence to support the legend of the rape of the Sabine women and the subsequent events, it is likely that there was some influx of Sabines into Rome at some stage, since there are Sabine words in the Roman vocabulary; however, the Sabine influence has not been confirmed by archaeological evidence. Nonetheless, Quirinus is also a Sabine deity that the Romans identified either with Mars or with the deified Romulus. The Romans sometimes called themselves the Quirites.

## V. The early Kings: c. 750 BC – c. 600 BC

It is thought that these separate communities underwent a process of synoecism, that is, they coalesced into a single community. Roman tradition ascribes to Romulus the honour of this achievement but the date of 750 BC is probably too soon for this. Originally the communities of the Palatine, Esquiline and Quirinal were distinct and separated by the marshy area of the Forum. The feast of the Septimontium (*septem montes*) relates not to the Seven Hills of Rome, but to the Caelius, together with three hills on the Palatine (Cermalus, Palatinus, Fagutal) and three on the Esquiline (Oppius, Cispius, Fagutal). The feast probably celebrated the union of these communities into one. The festival of the Lupercalia in which naked young men run around the Palatine hill may have a similar origin. Subsequently, the communities of the Palatine and Quirinal were unified, and this was also reflected in the fact that the dancing priests (the Salli) were divided into the Salli Palatini and the Salli Collini at some stage; similarly, the Luperci were divided into two. The city was divided into four regions, which probably reflects a time when the villages of the Palatine, Caelius, Esquiline and Quirinal were separate. Later there were four urban tribes. The enlarged community were linked by the common worship of Vesta, and the ritual of the Argei in which 24 (or possibly 27) puppets were taken from each of the *sacella* of the four ancient districts of Rome probably dates from this period and was part of the process of synoecism.

Livy's list of the first three kings is suspect – their reigns are unnaturally long. The popular history of Rome at this time and its continual wars with its neighbours cannot be relied upon, and is likely to have been a myth that served the purpose of glorifying Rome's early history at a later time. Between the different Italic peoples there emerged certain traditional rules for the making of war and governing relations. Within Rome the maintenance of these rules was delegated to a college of Fetiales (priests representing Rome in diplomacy). In the case of a dispute, four Fetiales would be sent to demand restitution and only if restitution was denied and after a period of thirty days could war be declared. Fetal priests existed in other Latin towns and among the Samnites. It is not likely that early Rome was as heavily involved in constant war as the tradition maintains. However, it is likely that Rome did capture and destroy Alba Longa before the period of the Etruscan kings. Wars may have



been fought with Fidenae and Nomentum, but these are not likely to have fallen to Rome.

Nonetheless, the figure of Numa, a Sabine, is possibly historic. He is regarded as having established the first calendar of Roman religious ritual and appears to have been a Priest-King. According to legend one of the early kings came from the Sabines, and Roman tradition asserts that the Sabines formed part of the early community at Rome.

Originally Rome had three tribes, the Ramnes, Tities and Luceres. These are Etruscanised forms of originally Latin names. Later these were replaced by different tribes and the community was organised into thirty *curiae* (divisions). The assembly of the people was called the Comitia Curiata and was called to ratify the choice of the king, nominated by the Senate, to confirm a sentence of death, or to pledge loyalty at a time of war or crisis. The Comitia Curiata was originally called at the discretion of the king and had no power to originate legislation. The Senate, comprising leading the heads of the leading families (*patres*), originally had an advisory role. However, when the king died they assumed leadership during an *interrex*.

The monarchy was elected, but once elected the king had almost absolute authority. He administered justice from an ivory chair on a chariot (*stella curulis*) and was attended by *lictors* carrying *fascēs*, which were bundles of rods and axes. After a victory in war a king would celebrate a triumph. During this his face was painted vermilion (after the statue of Jupiter in the Capitoline) and he wore garments of purple and gold. He was the high priest of the city; but delegated priestly offices to *falmines*, who were selected exclusively from patrician families. Six daughters of leading families were selected as priestesses of Vesta and had the job of keeping the fire of Vesta constantly burning. Five *pontifices* had the task of interpreting state ritual and three *augures* were responsible for interpreting signs.

## VI. The period of the Etruscan preponderance: c. 600 BC – c. 510 BC

According to Roman tradition the Etruscans held political ascendancy in Rome from 616 to 510 BC. However, only three kings are named: Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius and Tarquinius Superbus. Roman tradition paints the two Tarquins as “bad kings” and Servius Tullius as a “good king”. However, the Emperor Claudius identified Servius Tullius with the Etruscan king Mastarna, whose reputation was not so good. The general view is that there were more than three Etruscan rulers of Rome, and that the date of their ascendancy may have been earlier than 616 BC. Gjerstad claims that the end of the Etruscan monarchy occurred as late as 450 BC, but this has not been generally accepted.

The extension of Etruscan influence over Rome was a natural consequence of the increasing power of the Etruscans, who were expanding generally into Latium and further south into Campania, where they founded the city of Capua c. 650 BC.



Rome's close neighbour, and historic enemy, was the Etruscan city of Veii, founded 600 BC.

It was under Etruscan influence the communities coalesced, especially after the marshes were drained and the Forum was built. From c. 625 BC onwards Etruscan metalwork and pottery from Veii, Caere and elsewhere could be found in Rome, and the Romans ceased living in huts and started building houses. The Etruscans introduced their style of temple architecture to Rome, and probably to Latium as a whole. Temples at Satricum, Velitrae and Lanuvium are similar in style to those found in Etruria. Tradition ascribes to Tarquinius Priscus the draining of the Forum, sometime around 625 BC. This would have been an essential step in the process of synoecism. Agriculture, industry and commerce flourished. It is probable that during this period several of the traditional labour guilds were established – those of bronze-smiths, potters, goldsmiths, carpenters, dyers, leather-workers, tanners and flute-players. The Latins acquired the alphabet, though it is not known whether they acquired directly from the Greeks or indirectly through the Etruscans. (Writing was brought to Italy from Greece via the Greek colony of Cumae.) The effect of Etruscan rule on Rome was to urbanize the population. The marshes of the Forum were drained by sewers and the area was paved to become the Forum Romanum, a religious and political centre. The Lapis Niger is a relic of this construction – it bears an archaic inscription. The Scara Via and the Vicus Tuscus were also laid down during this period. The *pomoerium*, a sacred furrow, was laid down. The city was walled and gates were built. However, the so-called Wall of Servius has been shown to have been built after the Gallic sack of Rome (c. 390 BC). During the Etruscan period some of the main streets of Rome were built, particularly the Via Sacra and the Vicus Tuscus. The Forum Boarium (Cattle market) was also established c. 575 BC. The early temple of Vesta was situated on one side of the Via Sacra and was probably built c. 575 – 550 BC. The assembly point of the people, the Comitium, was situated at the north-west end of the Forum. The tomb of Romulus was situated nearby where the Lapis Niger may be found. The Forum also contained a shrine to an unknown deity and had a platform inside the sanctuary of Volcanus from where the people were addressed by the king. Under the Etruscans Rome became an important trading centre. Greek pottery was imported, and some may have been re-exported. Later at the Ara Maxima in this area Heracles was worshipped as patron of traders. It is probable that the Carthagians also had a trading post in Rome at this time.

Thus, it is agreed that the Etruscans ruled in Rome during the sixth century and at this time the conglomeration of villages there were amalgamated into one town with a large temple built on the Capitoline hill. It is not known for certain that the Etruscans ruled in other cities of Latium, but this is likely. It is probable that Tusculum and Satricum had Etruscan kings. There is considerable archaeological evidence at the Latin town of Praeneste (Palestrina) for Etruscan penetration there. Evidence from the tombs left there suggests that Etruscan nobles were important in the community. Other Latin towns bear Etruscan sounding names, such as Tusculum, Velitrae and Tarracini. Although from 650 BC onwards Latium was dominated politically by the Etruscans, the common Latin language was not lost. Furthermore, Latium was also



subject to Greek influences. It is now thought that the cult of Castor and Pollux (the Dioscuri) was introduced to Latium by the Greeks to the south rather than via the Etruscans to the North. A series of thirteen huge stone altars dedicated to the Dioscuri has been discovered at Lavinium; they have inscriptions in archaic Latin on them.

The region over which Rome had control (the *aeger Romanus*) is believed to have been about 250 square kilometers; an impressive area, but inferior to the area controlled by Veii and a quarter of that controlled by Tarquinia, thus giving us some idea of the relative importance of these cities at that time.

## VII. The reign of Servius

As already indicated, Emperor Claudius identified Servius Tullius with the Etruscan king Mastarna, and as such Servius appears to be a historic figure. Servius is credited with the reorganisation of the army on a timocratic basis – that is service in the army would be based on ownership of property. He is also credited with building a wall. Finally, he is believed to have established a cult of Diana on the Aventine hill, which was a plebian quarter. Some of the neighbouring Latin towns accepted this as their federal sanctuary.

The new military comprised 6000 infantry in sixty *centuriae*. At this time the round shield and the sword were adopted as standard military equipment. This military reform was to bring the Roman defence into line with the Greek invention of the hoplite – heavy-armed infantry. The military reform may have been one of the causes of the downfall of the Etruscan monarchy in Rome. It is likely to have strengthened the position of the middle-classes at the expense of the aristocracy. The downfall of Tarquinius Superbus was a revolution led by the aristocracy.

Owing to the increase of the urban population a reorganisation was required. The three original tribes were abolished and twenty new ones created, with four city tribes named after the hills of Sucusana, Esquilina, Collina and Palatina. The country population was divided into sixteen tribes named after *gentes* – leading families. The census of Servius divided the people according to their property – those whose property was below the minimum level for military service were classed as lesser class citizens or *proletarii*. At the same time the classes were divided into centuries. There were 193 centuries in all. A new form of Assembly, the Comitium Centuriatum, was instituted, which was summoned by trumpet and met on the Campus Martius. Whilst the Comitium Curiatum continued to function for a while, the Comitium Centuriatum gradually became the more important of the two Assemblies. The centuries voted in order of precedence, starting with the *equites*, and down through the classes. The centuries of cavalry, numbering 18, and those of the first class, numbering 98, gave them a majority in the Comitium Centuriatum.



## VIII. The reign of Tarquinius Superbus

Whilst the account of Tarquinius Superbus's tyranny is influenced by later Greek sources, he is a genuine historical figure. To him are attributed the building of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and Cloaca Maxima. He is said to have increased Roman influence in Latium and to have captured Gabii and then made peace with it. This is very probably historic. To Tarquinius Priscus is ascribed the vow to build the great temple of Jupiter Optimus, with *cellae* for Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, who together form the Capitoline Triad; it was actually constructed by Tarquinius Superbus. The terracotta statue of Jupiter was made by Vulca, the master from Veii. The temple was destroyed by fire in 83 BC. Whilst parts of the structure have been discovered, the only major relic of the period is the great bronze Capitoline Wolf. Following the fall of Tarquin in 510/509 BC Etruscan influence in Rome did not cease, and Etruscans were not evicted from the city wholesale. Some of the elected magistrates had Etruscan names, and Etruscan art continued to flourish in Rome.

## VIII. The foundation of the Republic

It is not universally accepted that Tarquin fell in 510/509 BC, so even in this matter there is considerable scope for scholarly debate. On the whole the traditional date seems to be upheld and it is consistent with the Fasti, which is the list of Roman magistrates starting with the first consuls of the Republic.

A treaty of 509 BC between Rome and Carthage implies that at that time the Romans had some form of local hegemony in Latium. Polybius ascribes Rome's first treaty with Carthage to the first year of the Republic, and at this time Rome was speaking for a league of Latin cities including Ardea, Antium, Circeii, Tarracina and possibly Lavinium. By this time Rome had transferred to itself the cult of Jupiter Latiaris from Alba Longa, but the common Latin worship was still centred at the shrine of Diana at Aricia, and met at Lucus Ferentinae. This was the centre of the Latin religion from the sixth to fourth centuries.

The overthrow of the Etruscan monarchy was not an isolated act of nationalism. Other Etruscan kings in other cities were also overthrown by aristocracies. There are parallels in Greek history, and the Peisistratids were overthrown in Athens in the same year of 510 BC. The aristocracy was the victor in this struggle, and it may be inferred that the Etruscans had political support within the city before and after their downfall. According to tradition there were two attempts by the Etruscans to recapture Rome and reimpose Tarquin, the first supported by Veii and Tarquinia, and the second led by Lars Porsenna of Clusium. According to Livy, the attack by Porsenna was repulsed, but the more reliable Tacitus says the city surrendered to Porsenna, which is generally accepted as the truth. However, when the Etruscans were defeated by Aristodemus at Cumae at the battle of Aricia in 505 BC this put an end to Etruscan power in Latium, and thereby prevented the restoration of Tarquin.

