Fifth Edition

ROMAN PEOPLE



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ROBERT B. KEBRIC

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Roman People

Fifth Edition

Robert B. Kebric

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Preface

The Individual in History

People make up societies, comprise civilizations. We may formulate and embrace as many theories and compile as many timetables or lists of significant events as we wish to help us understand the past, but we must always return to the simple reality that people are at the foundation of our inquiries.

So often in studies of eras before our own, people have been forced into the background, assigned a role secondary to theories and events. Their humanness has been forgotten. We tend to race over their names—especially if they sound or appear foreign—to discover what happened. Who they were as individuals within the context of their own times has mostly gone unnoticed.

No "great people" theory or biographical approach to history is being argued here. There have, of course, always been the Caesars and the Constantines; they are too closely tied to the events of their times not to have been given extensive coverage. But most modern texts have developed little more than their political *personas;* and as for the less prominent individuals in ancient society, we have seldom heard of them at all. Characters of lesser note are nonetheless still important for whatever contribution they made to their society. The study of people from many walks of life adds depth to our understanding of the ancient Romans and, ultimately, of ourselves.

Audience and Approach

Roman People should prove a useful alternative to more traditional event-and-theory books. It is another option for those who enjoy the positive response usually evoked by the biographies of Plutarch and Suetonius and who have had previous success with *Greek People,* the companion to this volume, and the few other modern works that have emphasized people.

Intended for anyone interested in ancient Roman society, *Roman People* attempts to present some ancient Romans as they were, not cardboard figures who lived in a past so distant that it seems they could never have any meaning for us today. The general historical background necessary to understand developments in antiquity is provided, but the emphasis is on people. The choice of the men and women presented here is necessarily limited. Our knowledge of the past extends only as far as our surviving sources allow. Some names will be familiar; others will be more obscure. Interestingly, many of the most memorable figures in Roman history were not Romans

at all. Through war or politics—or because they resided, by force or free will, within Rome's Empire—they became indelibly linked with Rome. Several of these "Romans" are also discussed.

Some eras provide more interesting personalities than others. It can be a challenge to match the peculiar circumstances of a particular period with an individual (or individuals) who might best represent some historical or cultural aspect of that period. Because of the long history of Rome, it is especially difficult to provide a successful balance of personalities and continuity. Also, Rome *was* a political society, and discussion of prominent politicians is both inevitable and desirable. Rome provided some of the most fascinating political figures in history. Nonetheless, individuals have been included who illustrate some aspect of human activity or behavior that might have been neglected or only touched upon in more general works. The resultant cross section of people should provide a better understanding of Roman life and the "Roman personality."

Many quotations and extracts from ancient writers—sometimes the subjects themselves—have been incorporated so that the people, as much as possible, can tell their own stories. Numerous maps and illustrations, a chronological table, and a glossary and pronunciation guide also make *Roman People* a more useful book.

A Concluding Observation

When human beings began to keep track of themselves, the question they first asked was "Who am I?" and then, "What did I do?" Their own individual existence was foremost in their thoughts. In our complex and, some would say, impersonal society, the "doing" often seems to take precedence over the "being." *Roman People* tries to keep both in mind—the person *and* his or her accomplishments. It offers the lives and the world of a few people from the distant past in the hope that the gulf of years that separates us from the people of Ancient Rome will begin to diminish.

Acknowledgments

The Second Edition and Acknowledgments

I welcomed the opportunity to prepare a second edition of *Roman People* because the book had been well received and had achieved a wide audience.

Inevitably, the modern publishing process and all its ramifications contribute to error, and I have attempted to correct, revise, or add to any portion of the text that needed such, remaining grateful to those who pointed out any oversight by me or the publisher. The readings at the ends of chapters have been enlarged significantly and reflect the most recent work. An expanded illustration program with many new photos further complements the book's specific content and should increase reader interest. A geographical map of Italy has been added to the map selection, and all maps have been redrawn. New material on women, the family, Roman views on multiculturalism, the Etruscans, the Roman baths, and weather in Rome has also been incorporated. The revised book should, like the new edition of *Greek People,* remain a viable resource through the turn of the century.

I reiterate my appreciation to Professors Thomas W. Africa, Erich S. Gruen, and Frank W. Walbank for reading the original draft of *Roman People,* and to the reviewers of the first edition. Thanks go as well to my previous editor, Lansing Hays; and to Bill Karlen, whose photographic work herein helps to preserve his memory. Special thanks go to users of the first edition.

For the second edition, I would like to express my gratitude once again to Professor Walbank, who, as usual, is always ready and willing to spend the time to comment on and encourage a colleague's work; to the following people who reviewed the manuscript for Mayfield: Richard C. Frey, Southern Oregon State College; R. L. Hohlfelder, University of Colorado at Boulder; Timothy Long, Indiana University; C. Renaud, Carthage College; and C. A. Sneddow, University of Utah; to Dennis Korbylo for additional photographic work; to Mayfield Publishing Company for the opportunity to revise *Roman People;* to my editor, Holly Allen, who has overseen the preparation of the new edition; to April Wells-Hayes, my production editor; and, especially, to my wife, Judith Kebric, for her assistance and continued interest in my work.

I am grateful to the various authors, presses, museums, and other photo sources for their permission to use copyrighted material. Specific acknowledgments for translations and the full references for all photos, maps, and other illustrations are listed at the end of the book.

Finally, I wish to thank all the others who in some way assisted me in the preparation of *Roman People.*

The Third Edition and Acknowledgments

Recently, while the downstairs of our house was being finished, I mentioned to the carpenter, Jim Lund, that he had done such a good job that he should "sign" his work somewhere. To my surprise, he answered that he already had—inside the casing of one of the ceiling beams he had constructed. He also said he had written the date, mentioned the weather, and left a dollar bill in it. When I asked him why he had done so, he replied that when the house was remodeled or torn down in the future (the not-too-near future, I hope!), the person doing the work would know he was the one who had built it, the date, and what kind of day it was and would also have something personal of his from the time to hold. He then told me that he began the practice because when he was young, he used to accompany his father, also a carpenter, on his projects. Whenever they did remodeling jobs in older neighborhoods on houses built in the early part of the century, they would find the same kind of messages. He said he was fascinated to find the name of a carpenter like himself from the 1920s, or that on a particular date the weather had been "sunny," or a penny or nickel put there by someone now long dead. In that manner, he added with a touch of emotion, he felt a kinship with that person and that his profession was literally being passed down from generation to generation by craftspeople who had preceded him. Now he wanted to be remembered in the same way fifty or seventy-five years down the road. I told him that without really knowing it, he was enacting what history is really all about: who I am, what I did, and how I pass on information about my own time to those in the future. I can think of no more apt example to convey, simply, what history is all about than this one that just "fell into my lap." People seem to have the idea that the study of history is something separate from what they do every day—when in fact, like Jim, they are exercising the historical process with everything they do. It was with this kind of thought in mind that I originally set out to write this volume, and I am gratified that it continues to attract new readers and keep previous ones interested. I am pleased to prepare this third edition.

I have added new sections on Roman women, including Nero's mother, Agrippina, who was murdered by her conniving son, and a birthday invitation sent from one friend to another while living a rather monotonous life on the Roman frontier in north Britain as wives of officers stationed there. Pliny's loving and thorough description of his villa, Josephus' eyewitness account of a Roman imperial military triumph, and comments about the millennium, Dionysius Exiguus, and time-reckoning complete the major text additions. I have also added new photographic material, much of it about women, and recent supplemental bibliography, which has been appended to the existing bibliographical sections.

Most of those who have assisted me in the past with the creation and production of this volume have already been mentioned in previous prefaces. I thank them again and express my appreciation. I would also like to add specific thanks to Professor Gerald E. Kadish for advice on

Egyptian-related material and Professor Arthur J. Slavin and Professor Kerry E. Spiers for their input and help over the years. I mention Glenn Bugh, Virginia Technical Institute and State University; Kevin Carroll, Arizona State University; Robert L. Hohlfelder, University of Colorado at Boulder, and Myra Levin, Towson State University, as readers for this edition and am grateful for their input. I also wish to thank Nikki Lewis and Gene Johnson for their assistance in preparing additional photographs. I remain indebted to the various authors, presses, museums, and all others who have contributed in some way to the success of this work—especially my wife, Judith.

The Fourth Edition and Acknowledgments

For the fourth edition, I have reduced the bibliography significantly. It was expanding too fast and was never intended as a primary purpose of the book. High permission fees for visual material have required that some illustrations be eliminated—but much of interest has also been added from personal photo archives. I have also removed some individual boxes in the text in order to make room for new material without significantly increasing the size of the volume. Selecting what to omit was not easy, and I hope the deleted selections do not inconvenience anyone who had found them useful (all is not completely lost, for I have included short references to persons in the excised material where appropriate in the text). In their place, I have added a series of *"Reel" Looks,* which deal with how Rome and Roman people have been treated by Hollywood. As modern society continues to become more visually oriented, historical films have emerged as a primary influence in shaping public perceptions about history. Since Hollywood's fascination with Rome has lately renewed and popular interest increased, these short glimpses from well-known epics will establish how poorly Roman history has been served by them. Finally, I have dealt with a topic common to every individual in a civilization—squaring nicely with this book's emphasis on Roman *people:* a new appendix demonstrates the previously unanswered question about what direction traffic flowed in Rome.

I reiterate my thanks to individuals and institutions whose assistance in the preparation of this and previous editions is greatly appreciated. I add specific recognition to Harlan J. Berk, Ltd. of Chicago, who generously provided numerous coin images for this edition. James E. Packer and Marina Milella contributed their expertise on Trajan's Column at Rome, while Kerry Spiers and William J. Batson Jr. provided invaluable assistance at Pompeii. I thank the following reviewers of this edition and am appreciative to those who offered constructive input:

Paul Crawford, Alma College
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Bob Hohlfelder, University of Colorado, Boulder
Ellen Millender, Reed College

I also wish to thank Nikki Bronke, Christine Howard, Jessica Spayd, Dennis Korbulo, Renee Shumate, and Gene Johnson for their assistance in the preparation of additional photographic material. Monica Eckman, my editor, has done all she could to make my transition to McGraw-Hill a good experience. As ever, I remain grateful to Frank Walbank, Tom Africa, Joe Slavin, and, most especially, my wife, Judith.

The Fifth Edition and Acknowledgments

The wide acceptance of the fourth edition of *Roman People* (2005) resulted not only in an independent study guide by a press specializing in such works but also in its unanticipated publication in China. Beijing World Publishing contracted a Chinese university professor to translate *Roman People* for exclusive use in China with an initial run of 10,000 copies—an action many might consider atypical for that country and further indication of the appeal of *Roman People*. *Roman People* also influenced Time Life's *What Life Was Like When Rome Ruled the World* (1997), for which I was a historical consultant.

This new, enlarged fifth edition is published by Cognella Academic Publishing in their Antiquity Series. Cognella is an innovative press with a personalized approach that successfully strives to embody the most recent changes in academic publishing, both in print and digital formats. Visually, the content improves upon previous editions, with additions such as a greatly enhanced color photo program—including maps redone in color, an overhaul of images from previous editions, and the inclusion of many new images not found in current texts. There is also a greater emphasis on Roman women and expanded coverage of gladiators, which have especially attracted attention since the film *Gladiator* (2000), discussed in Chapter 9, appeared some years ago. Charioteers at Rome, who risked life and limb racing in the greatest spectator facility ever built, the Circus Maximus, have become another of today's favorites. They are highlighted on the book's cover and in Chapter 10, where the historical accuracy of the dramatic chariot racing scene in the film *Ben-Hur* is also thoroughly discussed.

Boxed elements on subjects related to chapter content that appear throughout the volume have been added or enlarged. These elements now include a seldom-seen look at Roman Spain, the westernmost part of the Roman Empire; updated information about the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii; and a rare insight into the life of a senior Roman centurion, the mainstay of Roman armies on the battlefield. More "*Reel*" *Look* elements highlight how Hollywood has treated the Romans in films such as *Pompeii* (2014), and the "Suggestions for Further Reading" at the end of each chapter are also updated. Each chapter of *Roman People* may stand alone and be used independently. Overall, the updated elements provide a unique and more engaging view of the Romans and their society for those who wish to encounter the variety of ancient Romans on a more personal level.

Cognella's personalized approach to publishing distinguishes its staff. I have never experienced such cooperation from a press in working to accommodate both the author's and publisher's wishes for the best possible final product. I thank everyone at Cognella involved with the

production of *Roman People*, and especially those with whom I worked most closely. David Miano, Ph.D., Senior Specialist Acquisition Editor for History and Religion, first approached me about Cognella's desire to publish a new edition of *Roman People* and, once I committed, his early comment, "You're in good hands," turned out to be a realistic one. David also lent his expertise to ensure the accuracy of the text during the final stages of production when mistakes in printing are often made, and in determining each chapter's suggested readings. Michelle Piehl, Senior Project Editor, and Abbey Hastings, Production Editor, also made every effort to accommodate my wishes—whatever proved impossible to do because of production reasons was fully explained. Every new photo I submitted to Michelle for possible inclusion in the fifth edition was used in the final photographic program. Usually, authors are asked to remove, rather than add, content to make room for fresh material. Abbey's meticulous work in framing the individual pages to make *Roman People* a more readable and visually attractive volume has greatly enhanced its overall appeal. Abbey was extraordinarily attentive in rectifying any errors found during the volume's final production stages.

A number of translations had to be changed in the new edition—not by choice but by necessity. Many in earlier editions of *Roman People* are now excessively costly, or their use has been denied forthright by their rightsholders. What were considered the most suitable alternative translations were chosen by Cognella's licensing team. The text has been carefully reviewed for errors, but some oversights are always possible. The process of coordinating everything correctly for this edition was also complicated by the multiplicity of difficulties caused by COVID-19 affecting the world at the time of publication.

It has been almost three decades since the first appearance of *Roman People* in 1993, and many individuals and institutions have lent their expertise in helping prepare the four earlier editions. They have been mentioned in previous prefaces, and I thank them again for their assistance. Special thanks, however, must again be expressed to Harlan J. Berk, Ltd. of Chicago, who has generously continued to provide Roman coin images needed in the new edition. The continued influence of Frank Walbank, Tom Africa, and Joe Slavin—a most formidable triumvirate of senior scholars and friends—on my work remains indelibly fixed.

My wife Judith's irreplaceable support, assistance, and continued interest are—as usual—at the heart of any success my work enjoys. This fifth edition of *Roman People* is dedicated to her.

About The Author

Robert B. Kebric, now retired, taught Ancient Greek, Roman, and Egyptian history, history of the Olympic Games, history and film, and humanities courses at the University of Louisville. He has authored numerous articles, most recently a series on the actual location of the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, as well as a number of books, including *Greek People*, the companion volume to *Roman People*. Both books were translated into Chinese and distributed in China in 2015. They were the first books on Greece and Rome published in China in the decades since Mao.

Dr. Kebric was born in Palo Alto, California. He graduated from the University of Southern California (USC), where he was Phi Beta Kappa, a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, and the recipient of other academic awards. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. from Binghamton University in New York.

Kebric is a frequent participant in international conferences. In 2010, the University of Paris organized a conference on Duris of Samos, centered largely on Kebric's 1977 pioneering work on the Hellenistic historian. He has been a historical consultant or contributor to various projects, including Time-Life's *When Rome Ruled the World* and *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*. He is also a published photographer.

Kebric's experience on the USC track team, when he competed in the L.A. Coliseum, led to a revival of interest at the 1984 L.A. Olympics, also held at the Coliseum. He has attended many Olympic Games since, written extensively on the Olympics, sponsored Olympic exhibits, and has contributed Olympic material to the Much Wenlock Olympic Museum in England. Much Wenlock was the home of William Penny Brookes, now acknowledged as the re-founder of the Olympic Games in 1850.

Kebric has directed and lectured in programs in Greece, Italy, Egypt, Turkey, and Israel, and spends extended periods in England, Australia, Hawaii, and Scottsdale, Arizona. He lives with his wife, Judith Hartung Kebric, in Louisville, Kentucky. Contact him at robert.kebric@louisville.edu.

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Chronology

The following chronology emphasizes the major events and people discussed in this volume.

Date	Events and People
Monarchy (753–509 B.C.)	
753	Traditional date Rome is founded by Romulus
753–509	Rome ruled by seven kings
6th century	Period of Etruscan domination
Republic (509–31 B.C.)	
508	Horatius at the bridge (Chapter 1)
5th century	Conflict between *patricians* and *plebeians;* local wars with Latins, Aequi, Volsci, and Veii
494	*Concilium plebis* and office of tribune of the plebs established
451–449	Rome's first law code, the Law of the Twelve Tables, established
387	Gallic sack of Rome; heroics of Camillus (Chapter 1)
367	Licinio-Sextian law established that one consul elected each year be plebeian
340–338	Latin League defeated and disbanded
327–304	War with the Samnites; Appian Way built
300	Ogulnian law makes plebeians eligible for all religious offices—last barrier to their holding any office removed

287	*Lex Hortensia* makes decisions of the *concilium plebis (plebiscita)* binding on all Romans
280	Date by which Etruscans, Gauls, and Samnites had been subdued
280–275	War with Pyrrhus of Epirus, Rome's first international foe
272	Date by which Rome extends influence over all of Italy
264–241	First Punic War with Carthage over control of Sicily (which became Rome's first province)
250	
c. 240–c. 207	Livius Andronicus, founder of Roman literature, writing his works
237	Sardinia and Corsica occupied; made second Roman province in 227 B.C.
229	Rome established protectorate on Illyrian coast; first presence in Greek East
218–201	Second Punic War; Hannibal (Chapter 1) invades Italy
216	Roman disaster at Cannae
212–205	First Macedonian War with Philip V
213–211	Roman siege of Syracuse; Archimedes and Marcellus (Chapter 1)
202	Scipio Africanus defeats Hannibal at Zama; Carthage surrenders in 201 B.C.; Fabius Pictor composing first Roman history (in Greek)
200	
200–197	Second Macedonian War with Philip V
197–133	Spanish Wars
191–188	Syrian War against Antiochus III
184	Cato the Elder is censor
171–167	Third Macedonian War with Perseus; Aetolians butchered; 1,000 Achaeans deported, including historian Polybius; 150,000 Epirotes sold into slavery
150	
149	Permanent court established to deal with extortion in provinces; death of Cato
149–146	Third Punic War; Scipio Aemilianus destroys Carthage; North Africa annexed as province
148–146	Fourth Macedonian War; Achaean League crushed, Corinth destroyed; Macedonia becomes Roman province; end of Greek autonomy
135–132	First Sicilian Slave Revolt; Eunus (Chapter 2)
133	Spanish Wars end; Roman mastery of Mediterranean world completed

The Late Republic (133–31 B.C.): Internal problems replace external ones; the "Roman Revolution"—the gradual breakdown of the Republic and its replacement with one-man rule—takes place.

133	Tribune Tiberius Gracchus's land reform bill and his assassination
123–122	Tribunates of Gaius Gracchus; popular cause at Rome elevated to serious political movement
121	*Senatus consultum ultimum* evoked for first time; death of Gaius Gracchus; Cornelia (Chapter 2)
112–105	Jugurthine War
109–101	Wars with Cimbri and Teutones
107–100	Marius consul six times; Roman army reformed
104–100	Second Sicilian Slave War
91–88	Rome's war with Italian allies; Italians granted citizenship (89 B.C.)
88–82	Rome's first civil war
88	Consulship of Sulla; quarrels with Marius over Eastern command against Mithridates of Pontus; Sulla seizes Rome; Marius escapes
88–85	Sulla wars with Mithridates
87	Marius retakes Rome; dies in 86 B.C. during seventh consulship
82–78	Sulla dictator; reforms Rome along conservative lines; death of Sulla
75	
73–71	Spartacus's slave revolt (Chapter 2)
70	Crassus and Pompey consuls; Cicero gains prominence through prosecution of Verres for extortion
67	Pompey commissioned to clear the seas of pirates; given Eastern command in 66 B.C. to defeat Mithridates (d. 63 B.C.) and reorganize Eastern provinces
63	Cicero's consulship; Catilinarian conspiracy; Cato the Younger emerges as powerful conservative; Caesar (aedile in 65 B.C.) elected *pontifex maximus*
62	Catiline defeated and killed; Pompey returns triumphant from East; Caesar is praetor
60	Caesar, Crassus, and Pompey form "First Triumvirate"
59	Caesar is consul
58–49	Caesar in Gaul; invades Britain in 55 B.C. and 54 B.C.
58–52	Civil disturbances in Rome led by Clodius and Milo
56	Triumvirs renew pact at Luca; Crassus and Pompey consuls for 55 B.C.

54	Death of Julia, Caesar's daughter and wife of Pompey; links between triumvirs weaken
53	Crassus killed at Carrhae in Mesopotamia; "Triumvirate" ends
52	Clodius killed by Milo; Pompey made sole consul to restore order; Milo exiled
51–49	Gaul annexed; attempts by Caesar's enemies to disarm him fail; negotiations break down
50	
49	Caesar crosses Rubicon; civil wars erupt; Pompey flees to Greece with army
48–44	Caesar is dictator
48	Pompey defeated at Pharsalus and slain in Egypt; Caesar meets Cleopatra
47–45	Caesar's victories in Pontus, Africa, and Spain; Cato's death in Africa (46 B.C.)
45	Cicero entertains Caesar in December (Chapter 3)
44	Caesar assassinated on March 15; Cleopatra flees Rome; Octavian designated Caesar's legal heir
43	Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus form "Second Triumvirate"; Cicero executed in proscriptions; death of Brutus's wife, Porcia (Chapter 3)
42	Brutus and Cassius defeated at Philippi
41–30	Cleopatra's relationship with Antony
40	Death of Antony's wife, Fulvia (Chapter 4); Pact of Brundisium; Antony and Octavian divide up Roman world; Antony marries Octavia
38 or 37	Horace's journey (Chapter 4); "Triumvirate" renewed at Tarentum (37 B.C.)
37–31	Tensions between Antony and Octavian; Antony with Cleopatra in East
34	"Donations of Alexandria"
31	Battle at Actium; Antony and Cleopatra commit suicide in 30 B.C.; Octavian seizes Egypt

The Roman Empire (31 B.C.–A.D. 476)

27 B.C.	The Principate begins; Octavian, now Augustus, made ruler of Roman world
13 B.C.	Divorce of Zois and Antipater (Chapter 9)
6 B.C.–A.D. 2	Tiberius retires to Rhodes; meets Thrasyllus (Chapter 5)
2 B.C.	Forum of Augustus with Temple of Mars dedicated; Julia banished for adulteries (Chapter 5)
A.D. 4	Augustus adopts Tiberius as heir
A.D. 8	Ovid (Chapter 10) banished by Augustus

A.D. 9	Teutoburgian Wood massacre (Chapter 6)
A.D. 14	Death of Augustus; death of Julia

The Julio-Claudian Dynasty

Tiberius (A.D. 14–37)

	Apicius active (Chapter 6)
14–31	Period of Sejanus's influence on Tiberius
19	Death of Germanicus; astrologers, Jews, and others expelled from Rome; Paulina (Chapter 5)
26	Tiberius leaves Rome for Capri
27	Atilius's debacle at Fidenae (Chapter 6)
c. 30	Jesus crucified in Judaea
36	Death of Thrasyllus

Gaius or Caligula (A.D. 37–41)

Claudius (A.D. 41–54)

Nero (A.D. 54–68)

54–62	Seneca influences Nero; heads literary circle that includes Petronius (Chapter 5)
c. 61–113	Lifetime of Pliny the Younger; Larcius Macedo murdered by his slaves (Chapter 2); Ummidia Quadratilla and Domitius reach old age (Chapter 7)
62	Tigellinus (Chapter 10) becomes Nero's favorite; end of Seneca's influence
64	The Great Fire at Rome; first Christian persecution
65	Plot to overthrow Nero fails; suicides of Seneca and Petronius (d. A.D. 66)
66–73	Jewish revolt; Vespasian in Judaea; destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70); Josephus (Chapter 6)
69	Year of the Four Emperors: Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian

***Flavian Dynasty* (A.D. 69–96)**

Titus (A.D. 79–81)

October 25, 79	Eruption of Mount Vesuvius destroys Pompeii and Herculaneum; death of Pliny the Elder; Pliny the Younger eyewitness to eruption (Chapter 6)
80	Colosseum dedicated

Domitian (A.D. 81–96)

90	Cornelia's execution (Chapter 9)

***Reign of the Five "Golden Age" Emperors* (A.D. 96–180)**

Nerva (A.D. 96–98)

97 Last recorded action by Rome's assemblies; death of Verginius Rufus (Chapter 7)

Trajan (A.D. 98–117)

100–112(?) Tacitus composing *Histories* and *Annals*

101–106 Trajan's war against Dacians

105 Death of Spurinna (Chapter 7)

111–113 Pliny the Younger governor of Bithynia–Pontus; correspondence with Trajan about Christians (Chapter 9); Pliny dies in office

114–117 Trajan's campaign against Parthia; annexation of Armenia and Mesopotamia; Empire reaches greatest geographical limits

Hadrian (A.D. 117–138)

Hadrian's Mausoleum, Hadrian's Wall, and Hadrian's Villa built; Suetonius, Juvenal, and Appian active

122–146 Career of the charioteer Diocles (Chapter 10)

132–135 Revolt of Bar-Cochba in Judaea; defeat and dispersal of Jews

Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138–161)

144 or 145 Marcus Aurelius's letter to Fronto (Chapter 9)

150 Philoe's horoscope (Chapter 5)

Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161–180)

Lucius Aurelius Verus (A.D. 161–169)

165–167 Plague ravages Italy and Empire; Christians persecuted

167–180 Period of Marcus's wars with Germans; Christian persecution at Lyons, A.D. 177

Commodus (A.D. 180–192)

Pertinax (January 1–March 28, A.D. 193)

Didius Julianus (March 28–June 1, A.D. 193)

***The Severan Dynasty* (A.D. 193–235)**

Historians Herodian and Dio and Christian writer Tertullian active

Septimius Severus (A.D. 193–211)

Julia Domna (A.D. 193–217)

Son of Arion writes home (Chapter 8)

194–197 Civil wars with Pescennius Niger and Clodius Albinus

198 Septimius's victory over Parthia

March 7, 203 Martyrdom of Vibia Perpetua (Chapter 9)

203 Arch of Septimius Severus dedicated

205 Death of Plautianus; suicide of Baebius Marcellinus (Chapter 8)

206–207 Bulla the bandit (Chapter 8)

208–211 Septimius's campaigns in Britain and death at York

Caracalla (A.D. 211–217)

Geta (A.D. 211–212)

212 Caracalla executes Geta; extends citizenship to all free residents within the Empire

Macrinus (A.D. 217–218)

217–235 Period of activity of Julia Maesa, Julia Soaemias, and Julia Mamaea

Elagabalus (A.D. 218–222)

Severus Alexander (A.D. 222–235)

Period of the "Barracks Emperors" (A.D. 235–284)

During this period of military anarchy, many generals were literally raised to the throne by their troops from the "barracks." There are over twenty emperors, some ruling jointly, during these fifty years, and many pretenders.

Philip I (A.D. 244–249)

247 1,000th anniversary of Rome

Decius (A.D. 249–251)

249–250 First Empire-wide persecution of Christians

251 Goths and other barbarians begin large-scale invasions of the Empire

Aurelian (A.D. 270–275)

271–275 Aurelian Wall built around Rome; unity restored to the Empire

272 Defeat of Zenobia of Palmyra (Chapter 8); Palmyra destroyed (A.D. 273)

The Later Roman Empire

Diocletian (A.D. 284–316; abdicated A.D. 305)

In A.D. 286, Diocletian divided rule of the Empire and appointed Maximian (A.D. 286–305) his co-ruler. Diocletian ruled the East and Maximian ruled the West. In A.D. 293, Diocletian created the "Tetrarchy" (four-man rule) by appointing two additional junior emperors, called "Caesars," who shared the administrative duties with himself and Maximian.

301 Diocletian's edict on price and wage controls

303–311 Persecution of Christians

Galerius (A.D. 305–311)

Galerius, Diocletian's former Caesar, raised as Eastern Emperor

Constantius (A.D. 305–306)

Constantius, Maximian's former Caesar, raised as Western Emperor

306–337 Career of Constantine

308 Civil wars; Diocletian comes out of retirement to restore order to the Tetrarchy

Licinius (A.D. 308–324)

308 Licinius confirmed as Emperor of the West; Constantine becomes his Caesar; Galerius remains Eastern Augustus

311 Galerius issues deathbed edict ending Christian persecution; civil wars renewed

312 Constantine seizes Rome at battle of Milvian Bridge

313 Edict of Milan; Christianity becomes official religion of the Empire

315 Arch of Constantine

316 As co-emperors, Constantine rules the West and Licinius rules the East

324–337 Licinius executed; Constantine sole ruler of Roman Empire

325 First ecumenical council held at Nicaea

330 Capital moved to Constantinople

Julian the Apostate (A.D. 361–363)

Julian disavows Christianity; tries to restore old Roman religion

378 Goths defeat Rome at Adrianople

Theodosius I (A.D. 379–395)

Last great emperor of East and West; bans all non-Christian practices

410 Sack of Rome by Visigoths; first sack of city in 797 years

450 Consentius's chariot race (Chapter 10)

451 Defeat of Attila the Hun

455 Sack of Rome by Vandals

476 Final "barbarization" of the Western Empire

493–526 Reign of Theodoric the Ostrogoth

527–565 Justinian is first great ruler of Byzantine Empire

1453 Constantinople falls to the Turks; "Roman Empire" ends



MAP 1 Ancient Italy



MAP 2 Geographical Map of Ancient Italy

A Roman Professor

Lucius Orbilius Pupillus was born in Beneventum.... First he obtained a job as a menial servant for the town magistrates. Then he joined the army, was decorated, and eventually was promoted to the cavalry. When he had completed his years of service, he returned to his studies and thus fulfilled an ambition he had had since boyhood.

For a long time he lived as a teacher in his hometown, but then in his fiftieth year ... he moved to Rome and taught there. However, he earned more fame than money. In one of his books, written when he was an old man, he complains that he is "a pauper, living in an attic." He also published a book called *My Trials and Tribulations* in which he complains about the insults and injuries done to him by negligent or ambitious parents [of students].

He had a fiery temper which he unleashed not only on his rival teachers, whom he castigated on every occasion, but also on his students ... . Even men of rank and position did not escape his scathing sarcasm ... .

He lived to be almost 100 years old ... .

(Suetonius, *On Teachers* 9; trans. J. Shelton)



Clio, the Muse of History, Palazzo Massimo, Rome.

CHAPTER 1

Rome, Expansion and Conquest

The Siege of Syracuse (213–211 B.C.); Marcellus the Warlord; Archimedes the Weapons-Master

> *There can surely be nobody so petty or so apathetic in his outlook that he has no desire to discover by what means and under what system of government the Romans succeeded in ... bringing under their rule almost the whole of the inhabited world.*
> (Polybius, *Histories* 1.1.5)

"Friend I have not much to say; stop and read it," begins the earnest plea on the tombstone of a Roman woman named Claudia, who lived in the second century B.C. It continues:

> This tomb, which is not fair, is for a fair woman. ... She loved her husband in her heart. She bore two sons, one of whom she left on earth, the other beneath it. She was pleasant to talk with, and she walked with grace. She kept the house and worked in wool. That is all. You may go.
> (*Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae* 973: *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 8403)

In a letter sent to his mother from Egypt sometime during the period of the Roman Empire, a young soldier wrote:

> My dear mother,
>
> I hope this finds you well. When you receive my letter I shall be much obliged if you will send me some money. I haven't got a bit left, because I have bought a donkey-cart and spent all my money. Do send me a riding coat, some oil, and above all my monthly allowance. When I was last home you promised not to leave me penniless, and now you treat me like a dog. Father came to see me the other day and left me nothing. Everybody laughs at me now, and says "His father is a soldier, his father gave him nothing." Valerius' mother sent him a pair of pants, a measure of oil, a box of food and some money. Do send me some money and don't leave me like this. Give my love to everybody at home.
>
> Your loving son.
>
> (*Berliner Griechische Urkunden* [*Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin* 13.15.1])

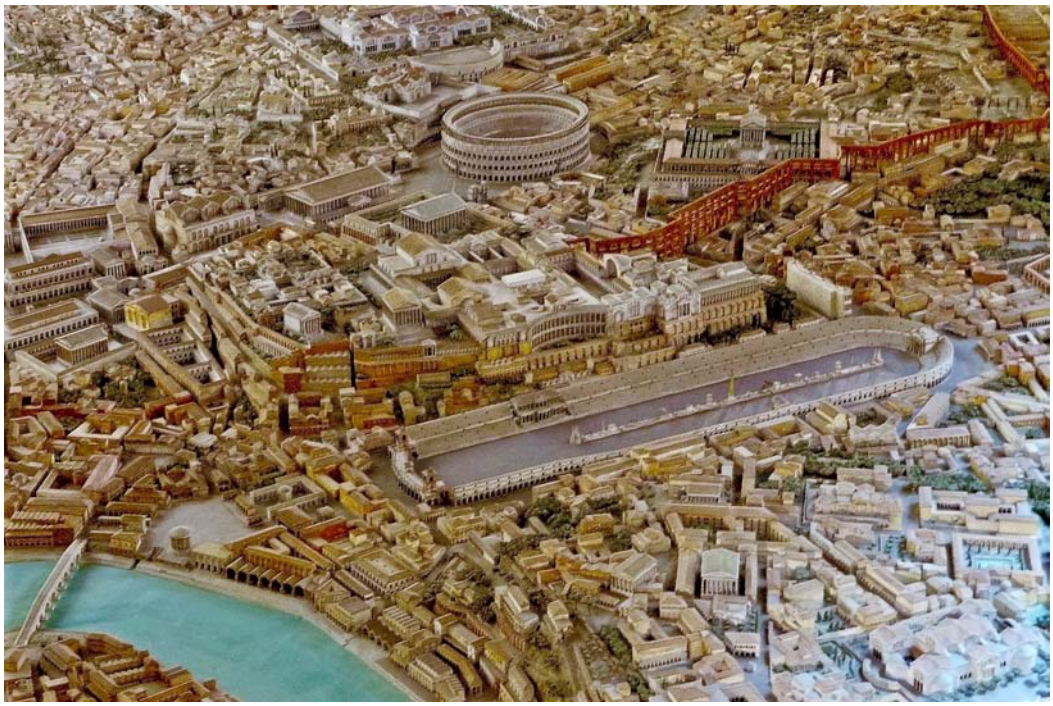


FIGURE 1.1 This room-size reconstruction of Rome at the Museum of Roman Civilization (Rome) is a striking reminder of the city's size and grandeur during the later Roman Empire when its population was well over a million people. The model, based on modern excavations, displays the impressive architecture of the most spectacular city in the world at the time, reinforcing the political power and cultural accomplishments of Rome. From its humble origins on the banks of the Tiber River (bottom), the urban landscape grew to become a great capital, dominated by the sprawling Imperial Palace on the Palatine Hill (center), flanked (top) by the famous Colosseum where gladiators fought and by the great chariot racetrack of the Circus Maximus. Below the Palatine was the Roman Forum, nerve center of ancient Rome. The concentration of massive public buildings, gigantic baths, and other temples and spectator facilities embodied a sense of energy, urgency, and excitement about the city. An unrivalled road system and ports continued to bring merchants, travelers, and those seeking livelihoods to the world's capital of industry and commerce. The uninterrupted influx of so many people increasingly added to the urban density of the city depicted in the diorama, packing Rome with countless apartments and tenements, most multistory, and exacerbating problems similar to many that afflict major urban centers today.

When one thinks of Ancient Romans, the sentiments reflected above are not what first come to mind. Rome inevitably conjures up images of armies, oppression, unrivaled grandeur, and spectacle. Stereotypes aside, the million or so Romans who populated the city of Rome by the Early Empire had to cope with the same kind of everyday problems faced by citizens of great capitals at any time. Still, there was no place quite like Rome:

Around [the Mediterranean] lie the continents far and wide, pouring an endless flow of goods to [Rome]. There is brought from every land and sea whatever is brought forth by the seasons and is produced by all countries, rivers, lakes, and the skills of Greeks and foreigners. So that anyone who wants to behold all these products must either journey through the whole world to see them or else come to this city. For whatever is raised or manufactured by each people is assuredly always here to overflowing. So many merchantmen arrive here with cargoes from all over, at every season, and with each return of the harvest, that the city seems like a common warehouse of the world. One can see so many cargoes from India, or, if you wish from Arabia Felix, that one may surmise that the trees there have been left permanently bare, and that those people must come here to beg for their own goods whenever they need anything. Clothing from Babylonia and the luxuries from the barbarian lands beyond arrive in much greater volume and more easily than if one had to sail from Naxos or Cythnos to Athens, transporting any of their products. Egypt, Sicily, and the civilized part of Africa are [Rome's] farms. The arrival and departure of ships never ceases, so that it is astounding that the sea—not to mention the harbor—suffices for the merchantmen ... and all things converge here, trade, seafaring, agriculture, metallurgy, all the skills which exist and have existed, anything that is begotten and grows. Whatever cannot be seen here belongs completely to the category of nonexistent things. (Aelius Aristides, *To Rome* 11–13)

While all roads may have led to Rome, the noise, the bustle, the stench, and the mass of humanity that they dumped at the city's doorstep made living there a struggle. As one Roman writer described it: "Rome is perched on

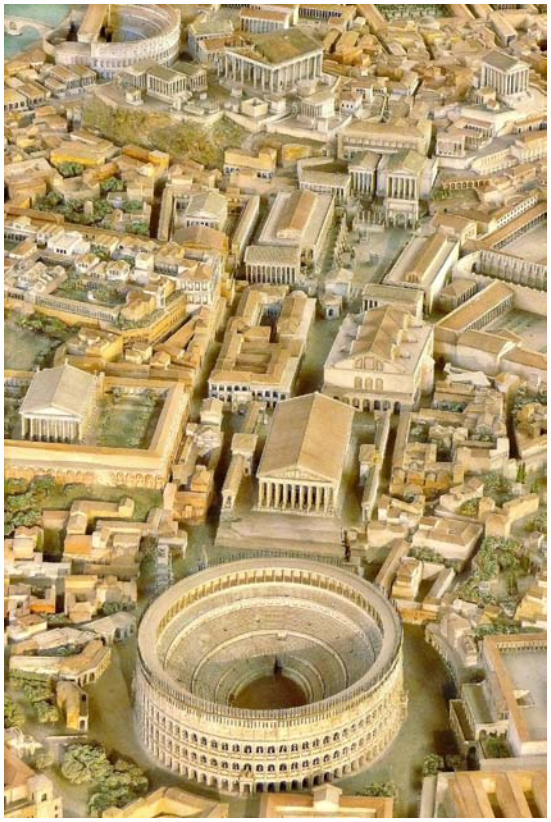


FIGURE 1.2 The Roman Forum (*Forum Romanum*) was the nerve center of the ancient city and nucleus of the Empire's political, religious, economic, and cultural life. This view, an enlarged portion of the city model in Figure 1.1, shows the monumental Temple of Jupiter (top), the god's greatest center of worship and a city landmark from its earliest days. From its perch on the Capitoline Hill, it overlooked the vast array of temples, basilicas, public buildings, and triumphal arches and monuments (see Map 3) that once helped define the Roman character. These included the Senate, the Rostra (platform for important public orations and speeches), Temple of Saturn, which housed the Roman treasury, the Basilica Aemilia, Basilica Julia, the Temple and House of the Vestal Virgins, the Regia (or office) of the Pontifex Maximus, the Basilica of Constantine, and the Tabularium, where important Roman records were kept. The Forum's far end was bordered by the Colosseum and above the Forum on the Palatine Hill was the Imperial Palace. The Forum, originally a marketplace, provided the prime location for such activities as important speeches and orations, processions, trials, and victory parades known as Triumphs. By Caesar's time, the original Forum was overcrowded, and he built the first of several neighboring forums, the last completed by the Emperor Trajan (A.D. 98–117).

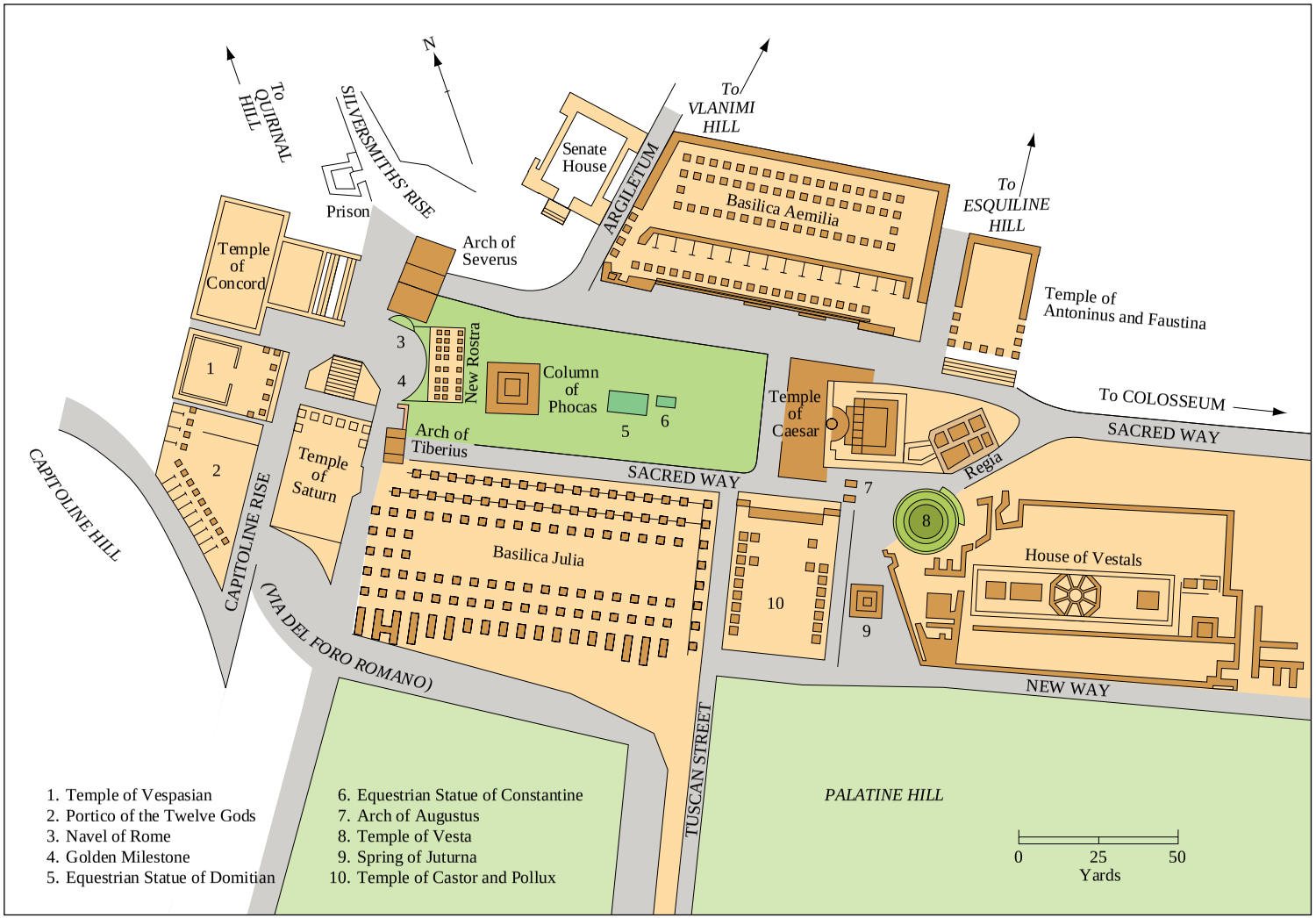
hills and propped in valleys, its tenements hanging aloft, its roads terrible, its alleys narrow!" (Cicero, *Contra Rullum: De Lege Agraria* 2.96). Even the privileged frequently escaped to seaside villas for relief from the urban misery.

As late as the second century B.C., "Some made fun ... of the city ... not yet beautiful in either public or private domains" (Livy, *History of Rome* 40.4.7). Apparently, little had changed until the time of Augustus (27 B.C.–A.D. 14) when, as this glowing line from Suetonius's biography asserts, Rome's first emperor found "a city of brick and left it one of marble" (*Augustus* 28.3). Augustus must have somehow overlooked the old, dilapidated part of the city that Juvenal describes in his *Third Satire* (194–305):

> Rome is supported on pipestems, matchsticks ... it's cheaper, so, for the landlord to shore up his ruins, patch up the old cracked walls, and notify all the tenants they can sleep secure, though the beams are in ruins above them.

Then, too, there was always the danger of fire:

> ... I prefer to live where
> Fires and midnight panics are not quite such common events.
> By the time the smoke's got up to your third-floor apartment
> (And you still asleep) your downstairs neighbor is roaring
> For water, and shifting his bits and pieces to safety.
> If the alarm goes at ground-level, the last to fry
> Will be the attic tenant, way up among the nesting
> Pigeons, with nothing but tiles between himself and the weather.



MAP 3 The Roman Forum (Fourth Century A.D.)



FIGURE 1.3 Remains of the Roman Forum

Juvenal lists insomnia, ulcers, and indigestion as other urban "advantages." As if they were not enough, there were always the congested and noisy streets:

> The wheels creak by on the narrow streets of the wards, the drivers squabble
> and brawl when they're stopped ... . Traffic gets in our way, in front, around
> and behind us ... . Mud is thick on my shins, I am trampled by somebody's
> big feet. Now what?—a soldier grinds his hobnails into my toes.

Nighttime, however, is the setting for Juvenal's most vivid impression of life in Imperial Rome:

> You are a thoughtless fool, unmindful of sudden disaster,
> If you don't make your will before you go out to have dinner.
> There are as many deaths in the night as there are open windows
> Where you pass by; if you're wise, you will pray, in your wretched devotions,
> People may be content with no more than emptying slop jars.

Juvenal also warns that roof tiles can fall on your head, you may be hit by the trash that people throw out their windows—or, worst of all, you can be confronted by some drunken hoodlum who, made bolder by the dark, has nothing but contempt for your humble status:

> If you try to talk back, or sneak away without speaking,
> All the same thing; you're assaulted, and then put under a bail bond
> For committing assault. This is a poor man's freedom
> Beaten, cut up by fists, he begs and implores his assailant,
> Please, for a chance to go home with a few teeth left in his mouth.



FIGURE 1.4 Rare remains of a Roman multistory apartment of the kind Juvenal mentions in his comments about living at Rome. This complex is still in place at the base of the northwest side of the Palatine Hill.

Juvenal concludes:

> This is not all you must fear. Shut up your house or your store.
> Bolts and padlocks and bars will never keep out all the burglars.
> Or a holdup man will do you in with a switch blade.

Other Roman writers also depicted the shortcomings of Rome. The early comic playwright Plautus (c. 254–184 B.C.) served up this impression of the Roman Forum, the nerve center of the city. It must have made his audience nod knowingly and chuckle:

> ... I'll fill in time by telling you where you can find any type of man you want—perverted or virtuous, honest or dishonest—where you can look to save yourselves time or trouble.



FIGURE 1.5 This well-preserved street of buildings in Ostia (Rome's seaport) is probably a good indication of what portions of ancient Imperial Rome looked like.

> If it's a perjurer you want, go straight to the law-courts! A liar and a braggart?—the temple of Venus the Purifier! Look for wealthy husbands on the loose in the Basilica. That's where you'll see clapped-out old tarts, too, and the men who haggle over them! Want to make up a bottle party? Look in the Fishmarket. At the lower end of the Forum the real gentlemen stroll about, the ones with money; in the middle, near the Canal, you get the dandies, who just like to be seen. Above the lake, the know-all gossips congregate—malicious types who run down other people mercilessly, and really ought to hear some home truths about themselves! Below the Old Colonnade you'll find the money lenders, putting out and borrowing money on interest. Then, behind the Temple of Castor are types you'd be ill advised to trust on a brief acquaintance. In the Tuscan Quarter you get the male prostitutes, who'll turn their hands to anything—or anyone! In the Velabrum, butchers and bakers and oracle makers. And of rich husbands on the rampage, look in the house of Oppian Leucadia! (*Curculio* 4.1)

Seneca, the Stoic philosopher and advisor to the Emperor Nero, also took time to poke fun at Rome. Picturing himself as living above a public bath in a less fashionable neighborhood, he enumerates the seemingly endless problems:

> So picture to yourself the assortment of sounds which are strong enough to make me hate my very powers of hearing! When your strenuous gentleman, for example, is exercising himself by flourishing leaden weights; when he is working hard or else pretends to be working hard, I can hear him grunt; and whenever he releases his

imprisoned breath, I can hear him panting in wheezy and high-pitched tones. Or perhaps I notice some lazy fellow content with a cheap rub-down, and hear the crack of the pummeling hand on his shoulder, varying in sound according as the hand is laid on flat or hollow. Then, perhaps, a professional [athlete] comes along, shouting out the score; that is the finishing touch. Add to this the arresting of an occasional roisterer or pickpocket, the racket of the man who always likes to hear his own voice in the bathroom, or the enthusiast who plunges into the swimming-tank with unconscionable noise and splashing. Besides all those whose voices, if nothing else, are good,



MAP 4 Imperial Rome

> imagine the hair-plucker with his penetrating, shrill voice—for purposes of advertisement—continually giving it vent and never holding his tongue except when he is plucking the armpits and making his victim yell instead. Then the cake-seller with his varied cries, the sausage-man, the confectioner, and all the vendors of food hawking their wares, each with his own distinctive intonation.... Among the sounds that din round me without distracting, I include passing carriages, a machinist in the same block, a saw-sharpener nearby, or some fellow who is demonstrating with little pipes and flutes at the Trickling Fountain, shouting rather than singing. (*Epistle* 56.1–4)

Seneca's literary contemporary, Petronius, reflected the "seamy" side of city life by representing Roman "counterculture" in his racy and imaginative farce the *Satyricon*.

On the more serious side, the weather in Rome and environs could be an additional headache, as Pliny the Younger complains to a friend:

> Can the weather be as bad and stormy where you are? Here we have nothing but gales and repeated floods. The Tiber has overflowed its bed and deeply flooded its lower banks, so that although it is being drained by the canal cut by the Emperor, with his usual foresight, it is filling the valleys and inundating the fields, and wherever there is level ground there is nothing to be seen but water. Then the streams, which it normally receives and carries down to the sea, are forced back as it spreads to meet them, and so it floods with their water the fields it does not reach itself. The Anio, most delightful of rivers—so much so that the houses on its banks seem to beg it not to leave them—has torn up and carried away most of the woods which shade its course. Where the banks rise high they have been undermined, so that its channel is blocked in several places with the resultant landslides; and in its efforts to regain its lost course it has wrecked buildings and forced out its way over the debris.
>
> People who were hit by the storm on higher ground have seen the valuable furniture and fittings of wealthy homes, or else all the farm stock, yoked oxen, ploughs and ploughmen, or cattle left free to graze, and amongst them trunks of trees or beams and roofs of houses, all floating by in widespread confusion. Nor have the places where the river did not rise escaped disaster, for instead of floods they have had incessant rain, gales, and cloudbursts which have destroyed the walls enclosing valuable properties, rocked public buildings and brought them crashing to the ground. Many people have been maimed, crushed, and buried in such accidents, so that loss of life is added to material damage. (*Letters* 8.17)

Such insights about Rome provide a sobering counterbalance to one-dimensional modern conceptions about the city, a city that was not without its faults but was still impressive by any standard—as this first-century A.D. description attests:

... the walls of Rome, embracing the seven hills, measured 13.2 miles in circumference. The city itself is divided into fourteen districts, and has 265 intersections.... A measurement running from the milestone set up at the head of the Roman Forum to each of the city gates—which today number thirty-seven ... gives a total of 20.765 miles in a straight line. But the measurement of all the thoroughfares block by block, from the same milestone to the outermost edge of the buildings including the Praetorian Camp, totals a little more than sixty miles. And if one should consider in addition the height of the buildings, he would assuredly form a fitting appraisal and would admit that no city has existed in the whole world that could be compared with Rome in size. (Pliny, *Natural History* 3.5.66–67)



FIGURE 1.6 An Altar of Mars and Venus from Ostia. While a late representation (second century A.D.), the Altar reflects the traditional story of the beginning of Rome with a personification of the Tiber River, the she-wolf nursing Romulus and Remus, the eagle symbolically reflecting that events were unfolding as divinely foretold, and two shepherd figures, representing Faustulus, the adoptive father of the twins, and his brother, Faustinus. Both Mars and Venus were viewed as "ancestors" of the Roman people. Palazzo Massimo, Rome.

The Emergence of Rome

Rome paid a high price to become a great city with an empire. The long, hard road to Mediterranean domination was set upon unconsciously. From its humble beginnings as a collection of huts along the Tiber River sometime in the eighth century B.C. (traditionally, 753 B.C.), Rome had first gone through a period of monarchy. Seven "kings" (initially, more like village chiefs) oversaw the growth of the fledgling community. The first was Romulus, the legendary founder and namesake of the city. Reputedly fathered by Mars and descended from the Trojan prince Aeneas, Romulus survived a harrowing basket ride down the Tiber, was rescued and nurtured by an attentive she-wolf, and killed his twin brother Remus before fulfilling his destiny by founding Rome. Others of these shadowy kings, though obscured by a nonhistorical haze, lent their names in later times to institutions whose actual origins had been forgotten. Hence, it was believed that Rome's second king, Numa, had established the state cult and given Romans their religion, while the organization of Rome's citizen-assemblies began with Servius Tullius, the fifth king of Rome.

Upon the overthrow of the monarchy in 509 B.C., indelibly remembered as the work of a patriot named Brutus, Rome became a republic for almost five centuries. A form of government that was characterized by regularly elected magistrates, the Roman Republic included three assemblies with electoral and legislative powers and the Senate, which was the guiding body of the new regime (see Chart 1, page 14).

From the beginning, Rome had to fight for its existence. The small community was initially dominated by Etruscans, a powerful, advanced people from northern Italy whose civilization still remains largely a mystery. There exist few physical remains of their society, and much of what we do know about them is based on their tombs and funerary practices (see Figures 1.10 and 1.11). They appear to be a combination of Italic and Asian elements (the area of Asia Minor, not modern Asia), and, unlike the Romans, they spoke a non-Indo-European language. They were a major land and sea power before Rome became significant. Prominent Etruscan cities such as Tarquinii, Veii, and Caere were independent, and each was ruled by a king, or *lucumo;* but the twelve leading cities formed an "Etruscan League" that met at a common religious center at Volsinii and promoted cooperation among them, especially during times of war. Technologically superior, particularly in metalwork, the Etruscans provided the earliest major cultural influence upon the developing Romans, and even many Greek practices embraced by the Etruscans found favor at Rome. For example, although gladiatorial contests are most associated with Rome, they actually originated at Greek funeral games. In art, architecture, and religion—largely in practices such as augury—the Etruscan influence can be seen. Some symbols of political authority, such as the *fasces* (bound bundles of rods with axe blades projecting; see Figure 1.9), which were carried upright before Roman magistrates by lictors, are Etruscan in origin; and an Etruscan king, Tarquin the Proud, was ruling Rome when the monarchy was overthrown.



FIGURE 1.7 A remarkable early inscription discovered in the Roman Forum from the end of the sixth century B.C., on which appears the Latin word for *King*, "REX." It could actually be from a bowl that was owned by one of the last kings of Rome. National Roman Museum, Rome.



FIGURE 1.8 Republican denarius showing Romans casting their votes in an election.



FIGURE 1.9 Republican denarius showing a curule chair between fasces. The chair was symbolic of curule magistrates (censors, consuls, praetors, and aediles), while fasces, ax heads enclosed in a bundle of rods, represented the power of consuls, praetors, and dictators to scourge and execute.

CHART 1 Roman Republican Government (after 287 B.C.)

SENATE

Membership: about 300
Functions: finance; provincial administration and foreign policy; assignment of military commands; advisory body to magistrates; administration of public lands; on rare occasions, declarations of states of emergency (***senatus consultum ultimum***)

ASSEMBLIES

Centuriate (*comitia centuriata*)
Membership: all adult male citizens
Functions: elect censors, consuls, praetors; declarations of war and peace; ratification of treaties; appellate court for capital charges; legislative functions

Tribal (*comitia tributa*)
Membership: all adult male citizens
Functions: elect aediles, quaestors, holders of lower offices, and members of special commissions; legislative functions (see ***concilium plebis***)

Plebeian (*concilium plebis*)—Often identified with the Tribal Assembly
Membership: plebeians only
Functions: elect tribunes and plebeian aediles; chief legislative body by 287 B.C. Laws (***plebiscita***) passed in the plebeian assembly, henceforth binding on all citizens

OFFICERS

By the Late Republic, all officers listed below could enter the Senate.

censor, consul, praetor, quaestor } ***cursus honorum*** (mandatory sequence of offices)

aedile, tribune } optional offices

Functions:
censors—Highest political office in Rome. Two elected every five years from ranks of ex-consuls. Held office for eighteen months. Took census; dispersed state funds; oversaw public morals.

Annually elected officers:
consuls (2)—The chief civil and military officers of Rome. Presided over Senate and general assemblies; also proposed laws.
praetors (8)—Judicial officers; provincial governors; could hold military commands; also proposed laws.
quaestors (20)—Primarily financial officers.
aediles (4)—In charge of public entertainment and games, city management.
tribunes (10)—The officers of the plebeians. Proposed laws and presided over the ***concilium plebis***. An individual tribune could veto any piece of legislation.

*dictator—Extraordinary supreme magistracy in military and domestic crises, normally authorized by the Senate and nominated by the consul for a six-month duration.

The Romans not only successfully fended off subsequent Etruscan attempts to regain the city (see box, page 16–18) but also had conquered and absorbed the Etruscans by the early third century B.C. Ultimately, the Etruscans combined with earlier Latin and Sabine elements to form the main fabric of the Roman people—a far more humble beginning than the time-honored, albeit false, Roman tradition that they were descended from the Trojans. (The Romans, it appears, were not the first—or the last—society to embrace wholeheartedly a completely erroneous idea about themselves.)

During the same period, Rome's chief local rivals succumbed after lengthy struggles; the neighboring Latin cities in Latium (the area of Italy where Rome was located) were brought under control with the defeat of the Latin League (340–338 B.C.); and successful wars were completed against the Gauls and Samnites, two of the city's most formidable and destructive enemies.



FIGURE 1.10 Etruscan tomb. During the sixth–fifth centuries B.C., Caere (Cerveteri) was a prosperous Etruscan center, and aristocrats interred their dead in large tumuli like the one pictured here. Typically, each tumulus contained groups of chamber tombs, whose interiors were carved so as to resemble the insides of their dwellings.



FIGURE 1.11 Terra-cotta sarcophagus of a prosperous Etruscan woman, c. 150–130 B.C. Although the Etruscans had been absorbed into Roman society by this time, they remained an identifiable "minority." The practice of representing the dead reposing on their sarcophagi dates from the "glory days" of Etruscan society.

HORATIUS AT THE BRIDGE

The early history of Rome, at least before the fourth century B.C., is an unsettled area of inquiry with problems lurking at every turn. The sack of Rome by Gauls in 387 B.C. destroyed most records up to that time, and even Roman writers frequently comment about how they are at a loss to understand this period. Names, dates, and places are difficult to reconstruct and are based mostly on traditional records, whose legitimacy can often be questioned. Nonetheless, tradition is all that we have, and even though the prominent figures who supposedly guided Rome's fortunes during these centuries may not be entirely historical and accurately portrayed, we can still learn much about the Romans through their example. Just as the Founding Fathers of America are wrapped in myth and legend—and the actual historical circumstances of their lives *are* well known—later generations of Romans looked back to their early days and built the kind of heroes they wanted from the scraps of personalities handed down to them. Eventually, Roman historians and poets stitched together an orthodox tradition of their people from the very beginning, and whether true or not, it became the Roman experience.

One of the historians most responsible for imposing unity on the early tradition of Rome was Livy, who wrote under the first Roman emperor, Augustus. Livy complained about how little one could actually know about the beginnings of Rome, yet it did not prevent him from devoting five books of his history to it! At the time Livy was composing his chronicle, Augustus was trying to restore what were perceived as the old-time values and character of Rome. It is a well-known device for politicians of any age to hark back to the "good old days," calling up time-honored images of great figures from the past to use as examples for their own programs. For the Romans, it was Romulus, Coriolanus, Camillus, Scaevola, Cincinnatus, and, of course, Horatius Cocles (the "One-Eyed").

According to the traditional accounts, it was not long after the overthrow of Rome's monarchy in 509 B.C. that an Etruscan king named Lars Porsena attacked the city. He probably would have succeeded in capturing it if, as the ancient record indicates, his efforts had not been thwarted by Horatius at the bridge. Livy provides the appropriate heroic description:

> On the approach of the Etruscan army, the Romans abandoned their farmsteads and moved into the city. Garrisons were posted. In some sections the city walls seemed sufficient protection, in others the barrier of the Tiber. The most vulnerable point was the wooden bridge, and the Etruscans would have crossed it and forced an entrance into the city, had it not been for the courage of one man, Horatius Cocles—that great soldier whom the fortune of Rome gave to be her shield on that day of peril. Horatius was on guard at the bridge.... The enemy forces came pouring down the hill, while the Roman troops, throwing away their weapons, were behaving more like an undisciplined rabble than a fighting force. Horatius acted promptly: as his routed comrades approached the bridge, he stopped as many as he could

catch and compelled them to listen to him. "By God," he cried, "can't you see that if you desert your post escape is hopeless?" ... Urging them with all the power at his command to destroy the bridge by fire or steel or any means they could muster, he offered to hold up the Etruscan advance, so far as was possible, alone. Proudly he took his stand at the outer end of the bridge; conspicuous amongst the rout of fugitives, sword and shield ready for action, he prepared himself for close combat, one man against an army. The advancing enemy paused in sheer astonishment at such reckless courage.... For a while they hung back, each waiting for his neighbor to make the first move, until shame at the unequal battle drove them to action, and with a fierce cry they hurled their spears at the solitary figure which barred their way. Horatius caught the missiles on his shield and, resolute as ever, straddled the bridge and held his ground. The Etruscans moved forward, and would have thrust him aside by the sheer weight of their numbers, but their advance was suddenly checked by the crash of the falling bridge and the simultaneous shout of triumph from the Roman soldiers who had done their work in time. The Etruscans could only stare in bewilderment as Horatius, with a prayer to Father Tiber to bless him and his sword, plunged fully armed into the water and swam, through the missiles which fell thick about him, safely to the other side where his friends were waiting to receive him. (*History of Rome* 2.10)



FIGURE 1.12 This remarkable armor from the tomb of a Latin warrior from Lanuvium (c. 475 B.C.) belonged to a military commander—buried with arms and athletic equipment and pointing to continued Greek cultural influence on the aristocrats of Italy at this time. It is as close an example to the kind of protective gear someone like the traditional figure of Horatius defending the bridge to Rome from Etruscans not long after 509 B.C. would have worn. National Roman Museum, Rome.

Livy concludes his account with the observation, "It was a noble piece of work—legendary, maybe, but destined to be celebrated in story through the years to come."

Polybius, an earlier and far less dramatic historian who lived and wrote in the second century B.C., provides quite a different ending to the same story:

> Once the bridge was cut the enemy's advance was halted, whereupon Cocles threw himself into the river still wearing his armor and weapons. He deliberately sacrificed himself because he valued the safety of his country and the glory which would later attach itself to his name more than his present existence and the years of life that remained to him. (*Histories* 6.55)

Who the real Horatius was we will never know, but his heroic example was held up to countless generations of Romans. He was what they were supposed to be. For Polybius, it was necessary that Horatius sacrifice himself in order to provide proper inspiration. For Livy a century later, one still was expected to defend his country to the best of his ability—but what good was a dead hero? He could live to fight again another day. Clearly, the traditional accounts of heroes were malleable and could be molded to fit the needs of the times.



FIGURE 1.13 According to tradition, Aeneas, prince of Troy shown here carrying his aged father, was directed by the gods to flee the fallen city and fulfill his destiny by founding the Roman people in Italy. This denarius was issued by Caesar, who considered himself a descendant of Aeneas, son of the goddess Venus.

Soon after the monarchy had ended, internal disorders disrupted Rome. *Patricians,* members of the noble families who dominated the Early Republic, sparred incessantly with the city's restive commoners, who made up most of the population and were called *plebeians*. This patrician–plebeian conflict—or "Struggle of the Orders," as it is often called—eventually abated in the third century B.C.; but before it did, Rome had to learn how to juggle successfully its external military problems with social upheaval at home. The sack of the city by Gauls in 387 B.C. almost put an end to such problems altogether, but out of the ashes, Rome was rebuilt (see box, pages 23–24). The resolve among its citizens never to let such a thing happen again is a major consideration in understanding Rome's ultimate success in Italy and the Mediterranean. A growing "defensive imperialism" began to characterize Roman policy toward neighbors and foreigners; and suspicions, legitimate or not, often led Rome to embark upon preventative wars to protect itself from potential harm.

By 275 B.C., Rome had mostly subdued northern and central Italy. In the south, the Greeks had also fallen under Rome's control, even after calling in a formidable champion from the Hellenistic East. King Pyrrhus of Epirus, a kinsman of Alexander the Great, had arrived in Italy in 280 B.C. to defend Greek interests. Pyrrhus was Rome's first international foe, a soldier of fortune who had been involved in the wars of the Successors of Alexander, during which he had even briefly been king of Macedonia. Undoubtedly, Pyrrhus initially viewed the Romans as easy prey, but after five years without a conclusive victory, he was finally driven out. His defeat established Rome's credentials as master of Italy and a legitimate Mediterranean power. As such, Rome soon found itself involved in a war with Carthage over the island of Sicily. Carthage, located in North Africa, was the most powerful city in the western Mediterranean; and its military presence on Sicily, only a few miles from Italy, was too great a threat for Rome to ignore.



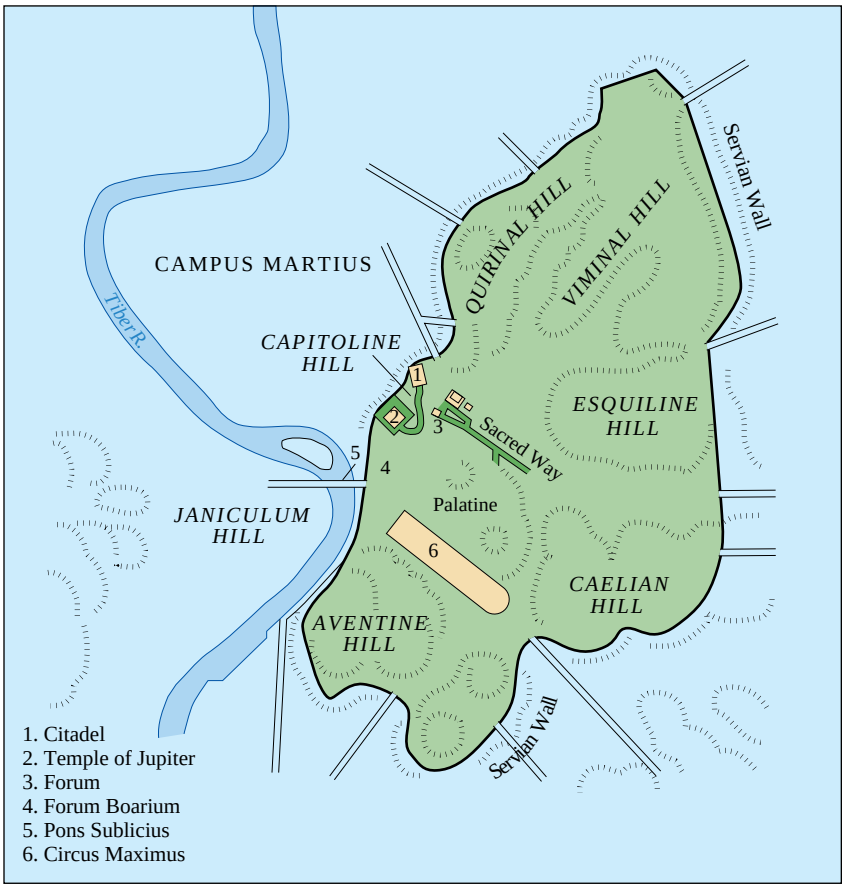
FIGURE 1.14 This rare fragment of a military scene dates from the period of the Samnite Wars in the third century B.C. and commemorates an important moment in those wars for one of the two central figures shown in the painting (fresco), Q. Fabius or M. Fannius. This pictorial "narrative" decorated the walls of one of these men's tomb, but it is also representative of a kind of Roman art that often found expression in large paintings carried in Roman triumphal processions after great victories (see Chapter 6, pages 185–189). Capitoline Museums [Montemartini], Rome.

The First Punic War, or war with Carthage, erupted in 264 B.C. and lasted until 241 B.C. The twenty-three-year conflict was costly for both sides, but ultimately Rome was victorious, and Sicily became the first of its many provinces. The hatred and tensions between the two powers continued to fester, and war erupted again in 218 B.C. Hard pressed in the first war, the Romans would never face a challenge as serious as that offered by Hannibal, the leader of the Carthaginian forces in the Second Punic War (see pages 25–27).

Bent on revenge, Hannibal marched an army of about twenty-six thousand men from his base in Spain, which had become a part of the Carthaginian Empire. He moved across the Pyrenees, through southern Gaul, and over the Alps into northern Italy. After inflicting humiliating defeats on the Romans at the Trebia River in 218 B.C. and Lake Trasimene in 217 B.C., Hannibal prepared to meet the largest Roman army yet fielded against him at Cannae in southeastern Italy. There, in 216 B.C., he engineered Rome's worst defeat. Caught in a classic envelopment

maneuver, as many as seventy thousand Roman troops may have perished at Cannae. The prospects looked dim as Rome entered its darkest hour since the Gallic sack of the city in the previous century.

With a Carthaginian victory appearing imminent, anti-Roman sentiment spread rapidly through hostile parts of Italy, and even some former allies expelled pro-Roman officials and declared for Hannibal. Foremost among these was the great Greek city of Syracuse in Sicily.



MAP 5 Early Rome