

ROME (PLACE) [Gk *Rhōmaios* Ρηωμαίος, *Rhōmē* Ρηωμη]. ROMANS. The Italian city-state (Lat *Roma*) which by the 2d century B.C. ruled an empire encompassing the Mediterranean basin and much of its hinterland. References to Rome occur throughout the book of 1 Maccabees and the NT, especially the book of Acts. See also ROMANS, EPISTLE TO THE.

- A. Archaic Rome
 - B. Republican Rome
 - C. Late Republican Rome
 - D. The Empire
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A. Archaic Rome

The foundation of Rome is obscured by legend and the lack of adequate archaeological material to form substantive hypotheses. Tradition accepts the 753 B.C. founding date proposed by the 1st-century B.C. antiquarian, M. Terentius Varro, and links Rome's origin with the legend of its eponymous founder, Romulus (Bloch 1960: 11–92; Alföldi 1965: 101–76). That Rome began as a small pastoral, agricultural settlement of Latins at a ford across central Italy's most important river, the Tiber, seems clear enough. Legends of early conflict with a neighboring village of another early Italic people, the Sabines, are also relatively well confirmed by archaeological evidence (Scott 1929: 21–69; Poucet 1967: 5–136). The synoecism of Latin and Sabine villages produced the town, *Roma quadrata*, ruled by kings. The social system there developed was strongly patriarchal and organized on the basis of families and clans, with their headmen forming an advisory council to the kings, known as the Senate. All Roman citizens, *Quirites*, comprised an assembly called the *Comitia Curiata*, as much a religious body as a civic council. The governmental and societal structure of the monarchical period is best elucidated in the works of Palmer (1970: 67–287) and de Francisci (1959: 25–624).

The transformation of Rome from rustic village to city proper must be credited to Etruscans who seized the Tiber crossing around 600 B.C. and proceeded to drain the marshy land between Rome's hills, pave extensive areas, build a city wall, and construct large brick, stone, and masonry public buildings and private edifices. Territorial expansion was effected by its Etruscan rulers and Rome developed into the leading city-state of central Italy. In addition to Rome's physical development as a city, the formulation of its legal and religious systems must in large part be attributed to Etruscans. Etruscan influence continued long past the termination of the

Etruscan monarchy as many of the leading men of Rome's new republican government were nobles of Etruscan origin (Alfoldi 1965: 176–419; Scullard 1967: 243–84; Ogilvie 1976: 9–124).

B. Republican Rome

Traditionally established in the year 509 B.C., the Roman Republic, in Latin *res publica* signifying simply “government” or “public thing,” was in essence an oligarchy of nobles whose rule continued with little interruption for almost five centuries. After resolving a long protracted struggle between patrician aristocrats and plebeian commoners by temporarily opening in 366 B.C. the ruling oligarchy to the wealthiest and most influential plebeians, an internally unified Rome was able to turn its attention to the rest of the peninsula (Heurgon 1973: 156–221; Raaflaub 1986: 1–377). In rapid succession, Latium, Campania, Umbria, Etruria, and finally an ever resistant Samnium fell to Rome through treaty of alliance or military conquest, and a unified Italian peninsula was prepared to face the growing power in the western Mediterranean of Phoenician Carthage (Salmon 1982: 1–90; Sherwin-White, 3–133).

Rome's conflict with Carthage spanned a century and was resolved in three bitterly contested Punic wars (I, 264–241 B.C.; II, 218–201 B.C.; III, 149–146 B.C.). The system of alliances and citizenship grades established by Rome for its Italian subjects and allies weathered the test of Carthaginian invasion and Hannibal's efforts to foment rebellion. Italian unity and extensive manpower resources overcame Carthage, and at the beginning of the 2d century B.C., Rome possessed an empire in the W Mediterranean including Spain, NW Africa, S Gaul (France), and the islands of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica (Scullard 1980: 146–239; Toynbee 1965: 247–82, 505–55).

For administrative purposes these territories were organized into provinces governed by senatorial proconsuls and propraetors, whose responsibilities entailed the maintenance of peace and order, the adjudication of disputes, and the supervision of tax revenue collection (Stevenson 1939: 1–93; Badian 1972: 11–118). This pattern of provincial administration prevailed as the primary mode of organizing Roman territory, including expansive regions acquired by Rome in the E Mediterranean. Some areas were organized into provinces, but others were governed in Rome's behalf by local dynasts who became client kings ultimately subject to Rome's Senate (Badian 1958: 55–115).

Questions related to Rome's involvement in E Mediterranean affairs and gradual domination of the region are complex. Imperial versus economic concerns as cause for Roman expansion continue to be debated (Hatzfeld 1919: 17–50, 192–382; Harris 1979: 54–131). Gruen's recent work (1984) offers a thorough treatment of the Roman conquest of Hellenistic

monarchies, providing much useful information on political motivation and the effect exerted by philhellenism initially as a motivating factor and later as a determinant of Roman cultural and societal development. In addition to his discussion of Hellenistic influences on the Near East, Peters (1970) provides an excellent outline not only of Roman conquest and subsequent provincial organization, but also of the Roman cultural impact upon the region.

With the acquisition of the greater part of the Mediterranean and its hinterland, wealth flowed to Rome from its provinces and subject peoples. A cosmopolitan city developed that began to rival even Alexandria as an economic and mercantile center. From throughout Italy individual Romans and Italians, many exposed to the luxuries of the East through soldiering in the campaigns that had brought [Vol. 5, p. 831] the area under Rome's dominion, sold farms and property to move to the capital and partake in the "good life" which slowly deteriorated the old-fashioned upright mode of life earlier Romans had practiced and honored as *mos maiorum*. By the mid-2d century B.C., Rome was a city with serious problems that would ultimately prove detrimental to its entire empire (Alfoldy 1988: 29–65). In addition to crime and lawlessness, a new landless proletariat comprised of those who had used up personal fortunes in pursuit of pleasure, constituted for Rome's ruling senatorial order the necessity of a public welfare system to provide for the ever-increasing indigent and unemployed, who without their small farms to work and untrained for other tasks, were unemployable. Indeed, for survival the mob had recourse only to its citizen rights and sold to politicians in exchange for support of social programs or other favors, their one commodity of value: votes and political support. Such goods of trade were welcome to the ruling elite who had not only enriched themselves as a result of overseas conquests and private land acquisition at home, but who had developed among one another intense political rivalries for office, power, and influence (Brunt 1971: 1–73).

C. Late Republican Rome

The nobility's battles for prestige and political preeminence were initially waged in three arenas, the Senate, the electoral and legislative assemblies, and perhaps most importantly in a reorganized court system whose complex structure lent itself more to the manipulation of political factions than to the determination of justice. Here many political careers began and ended as the false accusation was developed as a potent political weapon, while the skilled orator plied the legal trade first as attacker or defender of senatorial nobles, and finally as participant in both the senatorial order and its political combinations (Gruen 1968: 8–278).

During the last century of the Roman Republic, political factions were many and varied. Whether a particular senatorial faction supported increased rights and largesse for the commons

and sought to obtain these through legislative means within the popular assembly, or instead opposed the extension of such privileges through obstructing the people's institutions and protecting closed senatorial prerogative, determined inclusion among the broad categories of people's supporters, *populares*, or supporters of the aristocracy, *optimates* (Taylor 1949: 1–70). All segments of Rome's citizen body, whether residents of the city proper or citizens living throughout Italy, took greater interest in public affairs and played a more direct and active role in the politics of the time. Heightened political awareness produced strident demands among particular parts of the population. The urban poor clamored for more government supports; Italian allies claimed citizen rights; soldiers insisted upon mustering out benefits; equestrian businessmen sought a more extensive role in determining fiscal policy, etc. Roman society of the 1st century B.C. was segmented into special interest groups whose dictates threatened to destroy the entire community and nearly did (Alfoldy 1988: 65–93; Brunt 1971: 74–156; Beard and Crawford 1985: 1–87).

Military reform abolished induced military service on the part of land-owning citizens, instituting instead a professional army in which could serve anyone for whom the pay might be sufficient. Soldiers' allegiance underwent transferral from the state to individual commanders who were careful to maintain their troops' loyalty with rewards of money and booty (Gabba 1976: 1–69). Natural results of these changes were greater military involvement in the political arena and the ultimate resort to force as a mode of political determination. Consequently, three civil wars were fought in the last century B.C. to settle political problems or disputes. The first, the so-called Social War or "war of the allies," saw the defeat of a segment of Italian allies (Lat *socii*) who seceded when repeated petition for full Roman citizen rights went unheeded, but were in defeat ultimately granted citizenship as soon as the necessity of politically incorporating the whole of Italy was realized at Rome. The other two conflicts were fought over control of the Roman political system and rule of the Roman world by rival politicians and their followings: Marius versus Sulla in the 80s B.C. and Caesar against Pompey and a few senatorial oligarchs in the 40s (Gabba 1976: 70–130; Taylor 1949: 71–255). The complex historical problems of the era are best analyzed and elucidated in Gruen's thorough treatment of 1st century B.C. politics (1974: 1–596).

The city itself witnessed tremendous growth during the period, both in terms of population increase and in physical structure. Politically motivated government construction projects resulted in a record number of new public buildings and temples. Dudley (1967) and Coarelli (1974) provide the most complete physical description of the city for this period of the late Republic as well as for that of the early empire which accounted for even greater expansion

and construction.

D. The Empire

Caesar's military triumphs not only added much of W Europe to Rome's empire and brought to an end the political conflicts and wars of rivalry between *optimates* and *populares*, but more importantly produced a political stability which coincided with Caesar's governance of Rome as *dictator perpetuus*—king in all but name. His reign was a benevolent sort of monarchy that oversaw much needed reform in many spheres, but assassins' knives cut it short and hurled the state once more into political chaos (Gelzer 1968: 102–335).

Leaders of the conspirators, Caesarian political lieutenants, and Caesar's posthumously adopted son and heir, Octavian Caesar, either struggled to succeed to Caesar's power or to protect themselves from those who attempted to do so. After several civil wars the protracted military and political struggle came to an end with the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra by Octavian who remained sole claimant to his father's authority. Hailed as deliverer and restorer of peace and order by a Senate now filled with his own supporters, Octavian established a new government with monarchical powers cloaked in traditional constitutional trappings. In return for sharing power with a grateful Senate happy to oversee peaceful non-military provinces while the *princeps* or emperor retained control of frontier provinces with their troop concentrations, Octavian was rewarded with the title Imperator Augustus Caesar, and received lifetime powers of governance as well as [Vol. 5, p. 832] semidivine honors. The empire was thus established and by literary, religious, and artistic propaganda was quickly legitimized and made attractive to Rome's citizens. The much heralded *pax Augusta* did, in fact, provide for an empire at peace for the first time in over a century. Political stability gave rise to economic prosperity, while efficient government in Italy and the provinces won for Augustus the approval of his subjects. Population increased, new cities were established and old cities expanded. In no place was there such a change as in Rome itself where the emperor's building projects transformed the urban area into a beautiful city of marble buildings, monuments, and temples. On a less-extravagant scale the same process occurred not only throughout Italy but also in the provinces where leading citizens were granted Roman citizen rights and romanization was begun in earnest (Syme 1939: 1–568; Jones 1970: 1–189; Taylor 1939: 100–246; Firth 1902: 1–366; Millar and Segal 1984: 1–219).

Through a complicated process of intermarriage among his descendants and his step-descendants, Augustus provided for a succession designed to remain within the family of the Julians and the Claudians. His immediate four successors—the Julio-Claudian emperors Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero—were, except perhaps for Claudius, poor administrators

more concerned with personal indulgence than the improvement of Rome or its empire. However, save for political unrest in the capital, and that largely between several of these emperors and more independent segments of the senatorial class, the empire continued in an expansion cycle characterized by peace and prosperity, so well had Augustus set the proper course. As a result of Nero's excesses and tyrannies revolution came at last. From this civil war emerged a new dynasty, the Flavians, who would rule almost until the beginning of the 2d century A.D. They in turn were succeeded by five emperors elected by the Senate upon their predecessor's recommendation of high moral character and competence to govern. Because such criteria were applied to the designation of new emperors during most of the 2d century, the empire prospered (Garzetti 1974: 3–861; Salmon 1944: 1–366; M. Rostovtzeff 1926: 38–124).

In the opening lines of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the renowned Gibbon praises the Roman Empire during the era of the 2d century as at the height of its civilization.

... the Empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valour. The gentle, but powerful, influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury. The image of a free constitution was preserved with decent reverence. The Roman senate appeared to possess the sovereign authority, and devolved on the emperors all the executive powers of government. During a happy period of more than four score years, the public administration was conducted by the virtue and abilities of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines.

Gibbon's eloquent prose is only slightly exaggerative. Rather, it is a fairly accurate description of a period of growth during which Britain, Dacia, and the Mesopotamian region were acquired and organized into provinces. The extent of Roman territory would never be greater. The frontier was protected by efficient legions, assisted by local auxiliary troops which functioned to garrison the now fortified borders (*limites*) of the Empire (Luttwak 1976: 7–126). Population growth, thriving industry, and widespread trade insured economic expansion which stimulated urbanization. Not only Italy, but most provinces of the empire were occupied by residents who lived in towns and cities and practiced an urban lifestyle (Rostovtzeff 1926: 125–343; Garnsey and Saller 1987: 43–162; Alföldy 1988: 94–157). Governmental forms changed little, the emperor continued to rule with supreme authority, though, as previously noted, the 2d century witnessed the rule of emperors who observed constitutional forms and were assisted in their governance by the upper

classes of society, the Senate and the equestrian order, members of which occupied high office and filled the roles of provincial governors. Administrative organization was still not too complex. Except for a few equestrian civil servants, most bureaucratic functions were performed by freedmen or slaves of the emperors for whom private and public affairs were frequently mixed (Millar 1977: 59–363; Talbert 1984: 163–493).

Yet despite the material prosperity of the period, individual dissatisfaction with stale Greco-Roman religious forms and increasingly pedantic philosophic discourse questioned traditional ethical and metaphysical systems, embracing instead new salvation-oriented religions arising in eastern sections of the empire or beyond. Mithraism and Christianity were the most popular of the cults that offered a personal religion, and their spread and acceptance, sometimes peacefully but frequently not, occasioned societal changes whose full effect upon the empire would not be realized for a century and a half. It was the chaos of the 3d century A.D. soon to follow, which witnessed the incredible increase of these religions and allowed for the sweeping changes of the 4th century (Ferguson 1970: 88–274; Mattingly 1954: 5–95).

E. The Late Empire

Military and governmental stability was provided Rome by early rulers of the Severan dynasty, but economic woes as well as political, religious, and social dissonance produced strains in the fabric of the empire. Weaknesses and oddities of the last Severan emperors contributed to societal deterioration which by the third decade of this turbulent 3d century A.D. had so declined that the empire was nearly destroyed in a few short years (MacMullen 1966: 163–268; Alföldy 1988: 157–85). During the fifty years from the death of Severus Alexander in 235 until the accession of Diocletian in 284, twenty men ruled as emperor at Rome, while others ruled elsewhere either as pretenders to the imperial throne or as local dynasts over parts of the empire which had segmented into several separate realms. Civil wars more continuous and intense than those that had gone before devastated population, wealth, and resources. In the East a resurgent Parthia deprived Rome of territories and along the European [Vol. 5, p. 833] *limites* the long restrained press of semicivilized humanity poured across borders denuded of legions utilized elsewhere in battle with forces of rival claimants to Rome's once considerable power. To Aurelian and a handful of his successors, all soldier emperors from Illyria, goes credit for reacquiring most of Roman territory (Rostovtzeff 1926: 344–449; Brauer 1975: 3–267; MacMullen 1976: 48–214).

Under the last of these, Diocletian, stability was reestablished and there emerged a new transformed society, more the precursor of the Middle Ages than emulator of classical antiquity. Military reform ended reliance on standing frontier garrisons as the primary defense structure of

a realm whose population was too small to support any but the new mobile field armies that accompanied Diocletian and his colleague emperors, each administering a quarter of the empire. The term tetrarchy aptly describes the reformed government that managed a hierarchical system of smaller administrative units, the dioceses and provinces. The balanced and efficient organization of Diocletian gave new life to the empire but functioned less effectively under successors whose rivalries were responsible for initiating Christian persecutions as an aspect of the politics of oppressing or currying favor of a group that had grown to comprise so large a portion of the population. After a decade of civil war a proponent of Christian rights and recipient of Christian support, Constantine, gained supreme power and provided Rome, once more, with but a single ruler (Williams 1985: 24–230; MacMullen 1987: 1–184; Lot 1961: 5–54; Luttwak 1976: 127–94; Jones 1964: 21–76). Many of Diocletian’s military and administrative reforms were continued by Constantine in his centralization of authority under a court which accompanied the emperor, wherever he might journey. The reformed mobile army had reestablished the prowess of Roman arms and continued to assist the frontier militia in maintaining the integrity of Roman borders. Administration and society in the era of the late empire is most fully and effectively described in Jones’ masterwork *The Later Roman Empire* (1964: 77–1024). Economic problems of inflation and unemployment resulted in price controls and job restrictions which produced hereditary occupation castes and discouraged change of residence. More persons became engaged in farming and individuals became tied to particular parcels of land. Urban society declined and country life flourished in the agricultural economy. Local aristocrats commanded country militias and provided immediate protection to residents against frontier incursions until such time that the emperor’s armies could arrive. The seeds of medieval feudalism were thus sown (Lot 1961: 55–127; Claster 1982: 9–57). A repercussion of the struggles between pagan and Christian that characterized the era of Constantine’s heirs was the decline of educational institutions and with them the extirpation of classical culture (Smith 1976: 21–144; Lot 1961: 128–87; Dodds 1965: 1–138; Laistner 1951: 1–74). It is perhaps fitting that Constantine had established a new capital for this increasingly Christian empire. The name of Rome’s empire remained, but Rome no longer ruled. Rome came to be but another city in the empire of Constantine and his successors, the Senate but a town council. Any authority Rome would possess in the new era ironically derived from the very Christianity which was perhaps ultimately responsible for damaging the preeminent position Rome had occupied in the Mediterranean world for six centuries before Constantine. Moreover, for the first time in over a thousand years Rome had ceased to govern itself, and rather was governed first from Constantinople, later from Mediolanum (Milan) or other seats of the divided empire in the West

(MacMullen 1987: 139–240; Lot 1961: 187–309; Smith 1976: 120–250). See also ROMAN EMPIRE.

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JOHN F. HALL