

A Brief History of Rome

Introduction

The History of Rome falls into three major periods: **The Monarchy** (753-510 BC), the **Republic** (509-27 BC), and the **Empire** (27 BC - 476 AD). Some of the stories about the Monarchy are more legend than history, and the true dates of events before 300 BC are uncertain. The stories are important for two reasons: on the one hand because they tell us what the Romans believed or wanted to believe about themselves; on the other hand the dates are also important, because many have been proven relatively accurate (within a decade or so) by archaeology or by the writings of the Greeks.

The Monarchy (753-510 BC)

If we are to make better sense of how Rome began, we ought first to understand that Rome was not first; there was, even for the Romans, a kind of “pre-history.” For the Romans, this meant connecting with the myths and legends of the Greeks. So it is that when Livy begins his history, he begins with the destruction of Troy. According to Livy, the Trojan hero Aeneas, the son of Venus and Anchises, fled from Troy with a number of followers and came to Italy.

After some fighting with the native Latins, Aeneas married the Latin princess Lavinia and founded his own city of Lavinium; there Aeneas prospered for a short time. Aeneas' son (either Ascanius or Iulus, sometimes considered to be the same person) decided to leave Lavinium and found his own city on a ridge of Mount Alba. This was the city of Alba Longa, and it was from here some three hundred years later that the founders of Rome were to come.

According to legend, there were seven kings of Rome. There were certainly more than this; the ones whose names are handed down to us (outside of Romulus, who is almost certainly a later fiction) are probably those that were remarkable for some event in their reign. Here is a listing of the traditional seven kings along with the years of their reign:

Romulus (Titus Tatius)	753-716 (37)
Numa Pompilius	715-673 (40)
Tullus Hostilius	673-638 (35)
Ancus Marcius	638-614 (24)
Tarquinius Priscus	614-576 (38)
Servius Tullius	576-535 (41)
Tarquinius Superbus	535-510 (25)

Romulus and Remus

The stories of Romulus are famous, both in literature and art. The traditional story has it that the Vestal Virgin Rhea Silvia gave birth to the twins Romulus and Remus in the ancient city of Alba Longa and claimed that Mars was their father. Rhea Silvia was thrown into prison for breaking her vow of chastity; Romulus and Remus themselves were cast out into the Tiber by the order of their great uncle, King Amulius. Fate smiles however, and the twins wash ashore. By chance a she-wolf nurses finds them first and nursed the twins. The shepherd Faustulus stumbles upon this miraculous scene and decides to take Romulus and Remus home. Faustulus and his wife Acca Laurentia then raise the twins.

Later Romulus and Remus take vengeance upon Amulius and restore their grandfather Numitor (who had been deposed by his brother Amulius) to the throne of Alba Longa. Instead of remaining in Alba, however, the twins decide to build their own city near the area they had grown up. The traditional date for the founding of Rome was April 21, 753 B.C.

While Romulus and Remus were founding the city, the twins argued about which of the two should rule and name the new city. They agreed to decide the matter via augury a testing of the will of the gods by the flight of birds. Romulus took his position on the Palatine Hill and Remus watched for birds on the Aventine Hill. Though Remus was the first to see birds (six eagles or vultures), Romulus saw a greater number and the omen was decided in Romulus' favor. Thus Rome was named after Romulus.

Remus was still upset over losing the right to name the city because he felt he had been cheated. So it happened that while Romulus was laying out the boundary of the city and setting up foundations for the wall, Remus began to jump back and forth over the boundary. Angered by his twin's behavior Romulus hits Remus and kills him. As Romulus looked down on the corpse of his brother he made the dire pronouncement: "*Sic deinde quicumque alius transiliet moenia mea*" (Thus then [let it be] whoever else will cross my walls, *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.7.2).

The new city of Rome grew quickly by admitting exiles from elsewhere as citizens, but the chance for a new life drew few women. Refused the right of intermarriage, Romulus resorted to trickery. Having invited their neighbors to attend the inaugural games for the foundation of the city, the new Romans forcibly took wives from among those attending the games. This is commonly referred to as the "Rape of the Sabines".

The war that follows contains too many stories to relate here (e.g., Tarpeia, Jupiter Feretrius, Jupiter Stator), but in the end the young wives themselves stood between the lines of battle and stopped the fighting. "Better that we should die," they said, "then live widowed or fatherless." A compromise of a joint kingship shared between Romulus and the Sabine king Titus Tatius brought about a union of the two peoples.

Romulus ruled for many years. Eventually Romulus "disappears" in a fog. Whatever actually happened to him is unclear. The story later told was that Romulus had been taken up to Olympus by the gods and had become the divinity Quirinus. So it was that Romulus was worshipped in Rome as the god Quirinus in later times.

Numa Pompilius

After Romulus, there was a year without a king. At the end of this 'interregnum' period, the Senate elected the Sabine Numa Pompilius as their new king. Numa is most famous for bringing years of peace after the wars of Romulus, and for bringing religion to Rome. Numa is said to have set the dates for public festivals, created public prayers, the worship of Vesta, and built the Regia in the Forum. The nymph Egeria was said to be his advisor in the creation of the calendar and many of the religious institutions.

Tullus Hostilius

Tullus Hostilius (as his name suggests) was another warrior. It was during his reign that Alba Longa, Rome's parent city and rival for the rule of Latium, was destroyed. This was decided by the famous duel of the triplets, the Curatii from Alba and the Horatii from Rome. The

single Horatius that survives the combat won the day for Rome. Tullus also built the Senate House, which (in name at least) lasted all the way to 52 BC, when the mob burned the body of P. Clodius Pulcher within the building and destroyed it.

Ancus Marcius

Ancus is said to have built the first bridge across the Tiber at Rome (the Pons Sublicus) and to have captured the salt pits at the Tiber's mouth from the Etruscans. According to tradition, the port city of Ostia was said to have been founded in Ancus' reign. Most historians believe that Ostia was founded later.

Tarquin the Elder (Tarquinius Priscus)

Whatever gains Ancus Marcius made against the Etruscans seem to have been short-lived, for the last three kings of Rome were all Etruscans. This agrees with both the archaeological record and the historical record we have from the Greeks. Much of the history we have of these last three rulers is more tradition and legend than history, but the stories are worth the telling nonetheless. They are the traditions that the Romans themselves believed, and some of these stories about famous Romans of this time period resonate with their descendants and give reason for the actions of later famous Romans.

According to Livy, Tarquin the Elder was the son of the famous Greek Demaratus. Tarquin is said to have come to Rome in a wagon with his wife Tanaquil, and while en route, an eagle lifted the hat off Tarquin's head and then put it back. Tanaquil interpreted this as foretelling his crowning as king of Rome. Tarquin does indeed gain the throne in Rome. It is during his reign that Rome becomes more of a city than a collection of villages. Tarquin has the Forum drained via the Cloaca Maxima, and lays down the first stone pavement in the Forum as well. It is under Tarquin that the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus is begun, and the building of the Circus Maximus is started.

Servius Tullius

The story of Servius Tullius is truly strange. He is said to have been the son of the slave Ocrisia in the household of Tarquin, and when a child, his hair appeared to be burning without harming him (an omen that Virgil uses in the Aeneid to foretell the future greatness of Ascanius). Tanaquil sees this omen and decides that Servius Tullius will be her husband's successor. Years later, Tarquin the Elder is assassinated by the sons of Ancus Marcius. Instead of immediately announcing Tarquin the Elder's death, Tanaquil delays and has Servius work as an interim ruler while Tarquin "recovers." Through this ruse Tanaquil engineers Servius' advance to the throne. As king, Servius is said to have built a wall around Rome (probably an *agger*) and a temple to Diana on the Aventine. Servius also is supposed to have revised the constitution and set up the army so that citizens served in a position in accordance with their wealth.

Tarquin the Proud (Superbus)

According to Livy, Tarquin the Proud married one daughter of Servius Tullius, murdered her, and persuaded Servius' other daughter, Tullia, to murder her husband (Tarquin's own brother Arruns) so that they could marry. Once married Tarquin the Proud and Tullia plotted to murder Servius Tullius himself. This Tarquin did right in front of the Senate House! Tullia drove up in a chariot to meet Tarquin and then drove the chariot over the body of her father. The street where this is said to have happened was called the *Vicus Sceleratus* (The Road of Wickedness).

Nonetheless, not all of his deeds were bloody. After capturing Gabii and other cities of Latium, Tarquin is said to have used the money to build (or to finish building) the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. Still it must be said that many other events in Tarquin the Proud's reign show a similar disregard for life or common conventions of honorable behavior, and his sons follow him in their arrogance and disdain for those they deem inferior. Tarquin's the Proud's fall from power was caused by his son Sextus, who raped the noblewoman Lucretia.

The Road to the Republic (510 BC)

The history of Rome's Republic begins and ends with civil war. As mentioned above, the event that spawned the revolution that became Rome's Republic was the rape of Lucretia by Sextus, the son of Tarquin the Proud. Lucretia was the wife of Tarquinius Collatinus, and she was remarkable both for her beauty and the proud and proper way she carried out her matronly duty. Once Sextus met Lucretia, he lusted for her. Sextus therefore came to her house at evening on a day when he knew Lucretia's husband was away. In accord with the rules of hospitality, Lucretia offered Sextus a place to stay for the evening and he was conducted to the guest bedroom for the night.

During the night, Sextus sneaked into Lucretia's room and forced her to give in to his desires. Lucretia felt so shamed by her acquiescence to the forced demands of Sextus that, after revealing the truth to her husband (Tarquinius Collatinus), her father (Lucretius), and her kinsman (Lucius Junius Brutus), she killed herself with a dagger thrust to the heart. The men around her had been assuring Lucretia that the crime would not go unpunished, trying to persuade her that she was not at fault; her sudden suicide left them stunned. After a few moments silence, Brutus drew the dagger from her wound, and in a burst of eloquence swore by the gods to destroy the entire family of the Tarquins by whatever means he could command.

The sudden oration from Brutus took his companions by surprise, for Brutus for many years had feigned clumsiness and stupidity to seem less dangerous to the Tarquins, and thus more likely not to be put to death as a threat. It was as though the gods themselves had inspired Brutus, and so Lucretius and Collatinus quickly swore to join Brutus' quest to rid Rome of the Tarquins and of all kings forever. Together the men carried Lucretia's body to the Forum and there explained to the outraged crowd that gathered what had happened. It proved the proverbial straw upon the camel's back, and the mob violence it fomented forced the Tarquins to flee for their lives. Ever after the family of the Junii Bruti were renowned as the standard-bearers of freedom, opposed to all tyranny and oppression. This reputation was to have serious repercussions in the ages to come.

The Republic (509-27 BC)

A New Government: Consuls Replace The Kings

After the Tarquins were gone, Rome needed a government. The senate originally set up by Romulus and enlarged by later kings still existed, but they had mainly existed as an advisory council to the king, and in recent years had barely served that purpose. In place of the king, Brutus proposed to have two officers called consuls. These men would be elected each year and would lead the army and serve as a leader of the senate as well. By having two men instead of one, no single man's whim could oppress the state, and by limiting the time of office to a single year, none could abuse power for long. The two men first elected to the consulship were none other than L. Junius Brutus and Tarquinius Collatinus.

The Romans embraced this idea quickly and clung tenaciously to it for nearly 500 years. For many of these years it served them well. As time passed, the Romans created several other offices to fulfill needs as they arose. By the time of Julius Caesar (100 BC), there were five important officers elected yearly: consuls, praetors, quaestors, aediles, and tribunes. Every five years Romans also elected two censors who were to make an official count of the people (a census) and to make the official list of those eligible for the senate. The two consuls led the armies, proposed laws and conducted business in the senate. The eight praetors served as judges in the courts, the twenty quaestors served in the treasury, the four aediles cared for temples and other public buildings and the ten tribunes were to protect the plebs from abusive treatment at the hands of the patricians.

Tarquin's return

After he had retreated safely to Etruria, Tarquin the Proud began to plot to regain his kingship. The former king first tried treachery. Not all within Rome were pleased by the revolution and the new republic. As it happened, the family of the Tarquins had left Rome so swiftly that they had abandoned much of their personal property as well. Tarquin therefore sent ambassadors to Rome to seek restitution for their land and restoration of their property. The consuls and the Senate debated over the issue before them. On the one hand they did not want to give a reason for war by withholding the property of the Tarquins, and on the other hand, they did not want to supply wealth that their enemy could use against them in war.

While the Senate debated on the issue, Tarquin's ambassadors took the opportunity to remain in Rome and see if there were enough people within to support a counter-revolution. Among the young nobility they found just such a group. Meanwhile the Senate had resolved to return the Tarquin's property to them. The ambassadors, under the guise of preparing transport for the property with which they were to return, continued their preparations for the counterrevolution. When they were prepared to go, the ambassadors took with them letters that detailed both the members and means of the conspiracy.

Brutus and the Price of Treason

Unfortunately for the conspirators, a slave named Vindicius revealed the plot to the Senate. The Senate ordered that the ambassadors be arrested. From the letters that the ambassadors carried the whole plot was crushed and its members brought to judgment in chains. The young men who had participated were taken before the two consuls, beaten with rods from the *fasces* and executed in public. Among those who had joined the conspiracy to bring Tarquin the Proud back to Rome were two sons of L. Junius Brutus himself, Titus and Tiberius. Brutus sat presiding over the execution as consul, pained by the death of his own sons, but resolved to see the laws followed faithfully.

As Livy puts it "*Leges surdam rem, inexorabilem esse*" ("the laws are a deaf affair, unable to be moved by entreaty" *Ab Urbe Condita*, 2.3.4)

Rome Under Siege: The Heroes Horatius Cocles and Mucius Scaevola

Unable to regain his kingdom by treachery, Tarquin resorted to open war. Since he had but a fragment of the army he could once call upon, Tarquin appealed to the Etruscan cities for help. First to aid him were Veii and Tarquinii. The battle (Silva Arsia) that followed was a narrow victory for the Romans, but the consul Brutus himself died, together with Arruns, the son of Tarquin the Proud. The two consuls who took power after this battle were P. Valerius Publicola and M. Horatius Pulvillus.

After his loss at Silva Arsia, Tarquin tried again. This time he asked for aid from Lars Porsenna, the Etruscan king of Clusium. Porsenna agrees to help, and with his army marches upon Rome. The attack takes the fortress on the Janiculum Hill by surprise, and the Roman soldiers run towards the city in a disorganized retreat. Only the courage of Horatius Cocles preserved Rome. Horatius Cocles ("One-Eye") was on guard duty at the Sublician Bridge, when the first retreating Romans came running towards the safety of the city.

Rather than running and saving himself, Horatius not only stood his ground but he persuaded some of the fugitives to begin cutting down the Sublician Bridge behind. As Horatius stood his ground some of those who had been retreating (Livy mentions Sp. Lartius and T. Herminius), ashamed of their behavior, joined him in defending the bridge. Together they stopped the advancing Etruscans as their fellow Romans cut down the bridge. Eventually Horatius stood alone. As the bridge crashed down behind him Horatius Cocles jumped into the Tiber and swam to safety.

Although Horatius' bravery had saved Rome from sudden assault, the city was now under siege. The Senate had wisely stockpiled food for the city, but the number of people was too great for the supply to hold out long, and the daily danger and confined spaces would eventually take its toll. So it was that a brave young man, Gaius Mucius, came to the Senate with a plan. The Senate approved and Gaius Mucius swam the Tiber and entered the camp of the enemy, taking with him his dagger alone, concealed beneath his cloak. As the young man waited, alone amid such a crowd of enemies, Gaius looked for King Porsenna, the man he planned to kill. "For if I kill him" he thought to himself "the leaderless army will depart!"

Unfortunately for Gaius, he could not tell which man was the King. Fearing to ask which was Porsenna lest he should give himself away, Gaius Mucius watched carefully for his chance. The pay was being distributed that day, and Gaius decided that the man who gave out the money must be the Porsenna. Gaius Mucius was mistaken and he killed the wrong man, a mere paymaster instead. Unable to escape, Gaius was disarmed and brought before Lars Porsenna for questioning. When Gaius Mucius refused to answer Porsenna with anything more than veiled threats, the King brought a brazier filled with red-hot coals near. Porsenna made it plain that he was going to torture the young Roman unless Gaius made it clear just what sorts of plots there were against the Etruscan King.

Gaius' response was to say "Behold for yourself how cheaply those who see great glory hold their own bodies" and then to thrust his right hand into the midst of the coals and hold it there until consumed. Porsenna was astonished. He set Gaius Mucius free, commenting that he wished he had men as brave as Mucius fighting for him. Mucius in reply says "What you could not obtain by threats I will give you in kindness. 300 young men of Rome have sworn to kill you. Mine was the first lot, the rest will be with you, each in their own turn." It will not surprise you to learn that Lars Porsenna decided to make peace with Rome quickly and depart thence. Tarquin the Proud is forced to relinquish his hopes of regaining his kingdom and instead of returning to Rome, he ends his days in the court of Aristodemus of Cumae.

Plebs vs. Patricians and Enemies All Around

Once the Romans rid themselves of kings, the struggles of the Republic alternate between fighting against external enemies and the internal striving between the patricians and the plebs (also known as plebeian classes) of Roman society. The patricians were the original

Romans, and they possessed full citizenship rights. The plebs was made up of various groups of citizens. Some had simply served as retainers for wealthy patricians and others had come to Rome as immigrants. Regardless of their origin, the plebs possessed only partial rights of citizenship. Many, but not all of the plebs were poor. What united them all was the lack of the vote, the inability to hold office, their inferior status before the laws and their ignorance of the laws themselves. The next 250 years of Roman history is filled with the plebeian struggle to gain all these rights.

The Laws of the 12 Tables and the Tribunes

The first thing the plebs needed was knowledge of the laws. The problem was that the patricians alone could hold the office of judges (later known as the praetors), and the judges administered the law according to oral tradition. Without a written body of law, the patrician judges could manipulate the law almost at will. This led the plebs to demand a written set of laws. Ten men (the Decemviri) were assigned the task of writing down and publishing these laws, and the entire state lay in their hands while they were compiling it.

Two years passed without their task being completed. Finally, when the patrician judge Appius Claudius (one of the Decemviri) wrongfully attempted to enslave the plebeian maiden Verginia, the plebs revolted. The plebeian revolt finally caused the patricians to publish the basis for Roman law in a series of 12 bronze tablets that were set up in the Forum. These were the "Laws of the 12 Tables" of 449 BC.

The plebs also gained the right to elect their own officers called tribunes. The tribunes had the power to call and organize an assembly of the plebs, and to veto or forbid any action of a patrician judge if they thought it abusive of the laws. This process was also called *intercessio* from the verb *intercedo* that was also used. Thus, through the power of the tribunes, the use of a plebeian revolt and by gradually gaining the right to intermarry with patricians and to hold the various offices of state, the plebeians became true equals with the patricians.

Conquer Thy Neighbor

One of the things that ultimately brought the plebs and patricians of Rome together was the struggle against and conquest of their external enemies. On the one hand, the patricians needed the plebs to help them in this military struggle, and on the other hand, the conquest of the neighboring cities created a new class of inferior citizens to replace the plebs (citizens with Latin Rights). So everybody in Rome was happy (well, almost). The conquered people also did fairly well in this bargain since Rome was generous (as far as ancient peoples go) in the terms it offered to the conquered peoples.

It was to this generosity that Rome owed its empire's ultimate success. Once Rome conquered, she demanded that the conquered people give up their right to make war and peace, and that they (the conquered peoples) supply soldiers for Rome's foreign policy. In return, the conquered peoples were granted limited Roman citizenship. This allowed them to hold their own local elections but denied them of voting rights in Rome itself. Rome granted full citizenship to a few of the wealthier members of the conquered people. In this way, the conquered Italian peoples became the new plebs, producing a new problem for future generations to address.

Trouble Along the Way

So Rome continued with its gradual expansion to the north and the south. They fought and absorbed the Hernicians, the Volscians, the Aequians, and the great Etruscan city of Veii. Rome's involvement in Etruscan affairs leads them to fight with the Gauls and to the disastrous battle of the Allia River.

During the struggle against the Volscians the leader Gaius Martius (better known as **Coriolanus**) is exiled from Rome. Coriolanus returns at the head of a Volscian army and advances toward Rome. Various embassies and priests fail to persuade Coriolanus from continuing toward Rome; and only the intervention of his wife Volumnia and Veturia his mother finally sways him.

During the struggle against the Aequians, a Roman army was trapped along with both consuls, and the Senate appointed **Cincinnatus** dictator to raise a relief army and save the trapped army and consuls. This Cincinnatus does. After completing his mission, Cincinnatus gives up his power and returns to his farm, even though he might have remained as dictator for up to six months.

Rome's success in Latium leads them to a fight against Veii, an Etruscan city as large and powerful as Rome herself. The war lasts some ten years; it is finally won by the stratagem of the general **Camillus**. Veii's lands double Roman territory and bring Rome more directly into Etruscan affairs. It is because of this that Rome's armies move to help the Etruscans against the advancing Gauls (a name given Celts by the Romans). Angered by the Roman intervention, the Gauls advance to Rome, fight near the Allia River and decisively defeat the Romans. So it happens that Rome is sacked and burned about 390 BC.

Tota Italia et Mare Nostrum

Rome recovers surprisingly swiftly from this defeat. Within 100 years, Rome becomes mistress of all of Italy, and within 250, she commands the whole of the Mediterranean (known as Mare Nostrum or "Our Sea"). To do this Rome fights in three major wars: The Samnite Wars (3 wars 343-341; 326-304; 298-290BC), the Pyrrhic War (280-275) and the Punic Wars (3 wars 265-146 BC). In the wars against the Samnites, Rome defeats the last of the truly Italian enemies. It is during this war that the famous Appian Way is built (312 BC) as a means of getting soldiers from Rome to Campania quickly. The first high-level aqueduct (Aqua Appia) is built in the same year. Both constructions owed their existence to the famous Roman Censor, Appius Claudius Caecus ("the Blind").

The Samnites

The wars with the Samnites became the greatest trial Rome had endured, for the Samnites were an enemy of equal size and strength. During the Samnite Wars, Roman armies had the upper hand as long as they remained in the plains, and Roman or Latin colonies placed at strategic points helped them to secure their gains. When the Romans advanced into the highlands of the Apennines and tried to bring the war to the Samnites, however, disaster seemed to follow. This was the case both at the Caudine Forks (321 BC) and at Lautulae (315 BC) where the armies were trapped in mountain passes and forced to surrender. From that point on, however, the Romans seem to have adapted to the mountain fighting and were not caught again in such straits. The Romans recovered from Lautulae with surprising speed and managed to advance into Samnium despite being pressed by rebellions elsewhere. The Samnites asked for peace and the Romans granted both themselves and their enemies respite from 20 years of war.

A final confrontation between the Rome and Samnium for supremacy in Italy seems to have been inevitable. Denied expansion to the north, east and west, the Samnites turned their efforts toward the Lucanians in the south. The Lucanians appealed to Rome for help and once again Rome and Samnium were at war. The Samnites retaliated by joining together with the forces of the Senones (the same Gauls who had captured Rome in 390 BC), the Etruscans and Umbrians at the Battle of Sentinum in 295 BC. Rome's largest army ever (6 Roman legions and an equal number of allies) took the field under the command of Fabius Rullianus and Decius Mus.

Even with such a massive force, the battle was long in doubt. For some time neither side advanced far. Decius then led a force of cavalry and made a deep cut into the lines of the Gauls. Unfortunately for Decius, his infantry were unable to follow and appeared he would be trapped. Decius Mus therefore committed an act of *devotio*, declaring himself and the army of the enemy as consecrated to Mother Earth and the Dii Manes. Decius then ran to his death in the thick of the enemy. Seeing their leader killed had a remarkable effect on the Romans. Instead of being dispirited, they rallied and routed both the Gauls and the Samnites. The victory proved decisive.

Pyrrhus

The war against Pyrrhus was important as it was the first test of Roman armies against an army and a general that the Greeks found impressive, and thus it was through Rome's success against this foe that the Romans were noted by the Greeks as a force to be reckoned with for the first time. In essence, Pyrrhus was fighting for the Greeks in Magna Graecia, that part of Southern Italy and Sicily so heavily colonized by the Greeks. Pyrrhus was the king of Epirus and the nephew of Alexander of the Great of Macedon. Pyrrhus' armies were tough, veteran mercenaries. Pyrrhus came to Italy at the request of Tarentum with whom the Romans were then at war. In the first battle (Heraclea, 280) against the Romans, Pyrrhus led his troops to victory. While the Roman infantry held their own against Pyrrhus' battle line, the Roman cavalry's unfamiliarity with elephants proved decisive against the Romans.

Pyrrhus then decided to press his advantage in negotiations. Gaius Fabricius led the Roman ambassadors and Pyrrhus tried to bribe Fabricius to lend his support in the Senate. Fabricius not only refused to be corrupted by Pyrrhus' bribes, he also refused the offer by Pyrrhus' doctor to poison Pyrrhus. Fabricius' honorable conduct may have contributed to Pyrrhus' departure after Ascalum (278 BC), though Pyrrhus' losses also must have played their part. Although Pyrrhus defeated the Romans in the first two battles (Heraclea and Ascalum), Pyrrhus' loss of troops each time was so great that he was unable to sustain the war against them. This is why a victory that is won at a very high cost is called a "Pyrrhic" victory. After Heraclea, Pyrrhus is said to have surveyed the field of battle and said, "Another such victory and I am ruined!" a statement that was to prove prophetic.

While Pyrrhus fought in Sicily, the Romans set about punishing those who had taken common cause with Pyrrhus (the Oscans and the Samnites). Rome defeated these two enemies so decisively, that even during the long trial of the Punic wars, most allies chose to remain loyal to Rome rather than risking Rome's anger later. Altogether, Pyrrhus faced the Romans in three different battles. By the time Pyrrhus returned three years later, the Romans were well prepared to face him, and their allies knew better than to betray the Romans again. In the third battle (Beneventum, 275 BC) the Romans defeated Pyrrhus outright. Rome's trial against Pyrrhus' mercenaries had shown both the value of the considerable reserves of

manpower in Italy and that the Roman legionary formation (with its versatile maniples) was equal and perhaps superior to the Greek phalanx formation.

Carthage (The Punic Wars)

The first two wars with Carthage (called Punic because of the Phoenician origins of Carthage) were bitter, long, and nearly destroyed Rome itself; the third war ended with the burning of Carthage.

The First Punic War (264-241 BC) began when Rome supported a group of mercenaries (the Mamertines) against the Carthaginians at Messana in Sicily. Much of the war that followed was decided by naval battles because the control of the sea lanes determined where Rome and Carthage could advance their armies. This war forced the Romans to create their first real fleet and changed Rome from a regional land power into a force to be reckoned with in the whole of the Mediterranean. Since they lacked experience in naval maneuvers, the Romans decided to adapt the war on the waves to what they knew best: land battles. By the addition of a *corvus* (a kind of spiked gang plank) to their ships, the Roman soldiers could board Carthaginian ships quickly and easily. This meant that they were able to ignore skillful Punic naval maneuvers and turn the sea battle into a land battle.

Rome first tested their *corvi* at the battle of Mylae in 260 BC. There the Roman fleet commanded by Gaius Duilius defeated the Carthaginians and gained control of Sicilian waters for the next five years. Roman armies continued their advance across Sicily and by 256 Rome equipped an even larger fleet to strike at Carthage itself. After defeating another Punic Fleet at Cape Ecnomus, M. Atilius Regulus landed near Carthage with 15,000 men. Regulus defeated the Carthagian forces in battle and Carthage initiated peace negotiations. Regulus' terms were too harsh to accept, however, and Carthage hired the Spartan mercenary captain Xanthippus and joined battle again. The Romans were defeated soundly and Regulus himself was taken captive. Regulus had paid the price for his overconfidence.

Carthage was still interested in peace, however, and sent Regulus back to Rome to secure it. Before he left Carthage, however, Regulus had to swear to return. The Carthaginians also made it clear that Regulus' life depended on him coming back with an acceptable peace. Once Regulus had presented the Carthaginian terms to the Senate in Rome, he advised against accepting them. Then, despite the fact that he knew he was returning with news that meant his own death, Regulus returned, faithful to his oath.

The war dragged on for 14 more years. A new Carthaginian general, Hamilcar Barca, brought success to Punic arms in Sicily, but the success was too little and too late. At the battle of the Aegates Islands (241 BC), the Romans destroyed yet another Carthaginian fleet. Carthage's inability to supply her forces in Sicily forced an end to the war. Rome took possession of Sicily, her first overseas province, and in the creation of a Roman navy.

Hannibal

The Second Punic War was started by Hannibal, the son of the brilliant Carthaginian general Hamilcar Barca from the First Punic War. Hannibal proved as brilliant a military commander as his father. He led his army from Spain to Italy, crossing the Pyrenees and the Alps along the way. When Hannibal arrived in Italy in 218 BC, he defeated the Roman army sent against him; for the next 16 years, Hannibal defeated every Roman army that he faced. Because of the terrible defeats they suffered at his hands and because Hannibal

marched his army all the way to the very gates of Rome, Hannibal was known thereafter as the greatest mortal enemy of Rome.

Despite two severe losses (Lake Trasimene, 217 BC and Cannae, 216 BC, with a total of some 80,000 dead), the Romans persevered. Though he was able to march around Italy with relative impunity, Hannibal was unable to capture Rome itself. Rome's armies in Spain and her command of the sea denied Hannibal the resources and reinforcements which he needed to capture Rome. The delaying tactics of the dictator Q. Fabius Maximus (called "Cunctator" "the Delayer" at first in derision and later in laud), allowed the Romans time to regain the initiative.

Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus

In the end the Romans find a great general of their own, the young and talented Publius Cornelius Scipio (later given the cognomen Africanus). Scipio Africanus first defeated Carthaginian power in Spain and mastered the tactics that Hannibal had used so effectively against Rome. By crossing with an army to Africa, Scipio Africanus forced Hannibal to return to Africa and to defend Carthage. It is near Carthage that Scipio Africanus, using Hannibal's own tactics against him, finally defeated Hannibal at the Battle of Zama in 202 BC. A year later Rome and Carthage concluded a treaty of peace.

Marcus Porcius Cato

One of the more famous Romans to rise in the Second Punic War was Cato the Elder. Cato was famed for his devotion to duty and the strict moral code he followed. Cato (much like Regulus in the previous generation) believed in values he felt were the true "Roman virtues" things like self-sacrifice for the good of the whole state, hard work and simple living that honored both gods and men. Cato saw luxury and Greek mores as an enemy to be resisted as bitterly as any army in the field.

Cato was a practical minded man, and after he visited Carthage and saw that the city had regained its trading power and wealth, Cato spent the remainder of his life trying to persuade Rome to destroy Carthage once and for all. Whenever Cato spoke in the senate after this visit, no matter what the original subject, Cato would end his speech with the words "Carthago delenda est" (Carthage must be destroyed). Cato did not live to see this wish accomplished, but Rome did destroy Carthage in the Third Punic War (149-146) and it was a Scipio (P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus) who accomplished the task. After this Rome ruled territories on all sides of the Mediterranean, and modestly called it "Mare Nostrum" ("Our Sea").

The Macedonian Wars (214-205, 200-196, 172-167)

Philip V

At the same time that Rome was fighting against Carthage, the Hellenistic kingdoms of the East watched to see which would end the war as victor. In Macedonia, the young king Philip V (23 years old) bided his time until he saw that Hannibal had crushed the Roman armies at Cannae. Feeling certain of the eventual outcome, Philip made an alliance with Carthage. Rome's alliance with the Aetolians forced Philip to act in Greece rather than bringing aid to Hannibal. By the time Philip had settled matters in Greece, he decided to make peace with the Romans instead (205 BC).

The peace was relatively short-lived however. Ambassadors from the Rhodians and from Attalus I of Pergamum came to the Senate for aid against Philip. It was probably not difficult to persuade them given that Philip had been allied with Hannibal, Rome's most bitter enemy. The Senate in turn used fear of Philip as a new Hannibal to persuade the Centuriate assembly to declare war on Philip. As the consul in Livy puts it to the assembly: "*Quirites, non utrum bellum an pacem habeatis, sed utrum in Macedoniam legiones transportetis an hostes in Italiam accipiatis.*" ("Romans, it is not whether you will have war or peace, but whether you will transport your legions to Macedonia or receive the enemy in Italy" *Ab Urbe Condita* 31.7). So it was in 200 BC that Rome's armies marched into Greece.

Titus Flamininus

The Romans marched into Greece under the command of the consul P. Sulpicius, but though the war was favorable it was not decisive. T. Flamininus, the consul for 198 took command in Macedonia, and the situation changed quickly. With the additional help of the Achaean League, Flamininus forced Philip to leave Epirus and withdraw to Thessaly. It was in Thessaly at the battle of Cynocephalae in 197 BC that Flamininus decisively defeated Philip. It was a triumph not only for Rome over Greece, but for the legions over the phalanx yet again. The terms of Rome's treaty with Philip V limited him to Macedonia and set free the other Greek states that Philip had held as subjects. A year after his victory at Cynocephalae, Flamininus declared that all the Greeks were free.

Matters in Greece would not settle as easily as Rome might wish however. Because of his disagreement with the Senate over his conquests in Thrace and also because of the encouragement of the Aetolians, Antiochus III invaded Greece. The Romans, aided by Philip as well as their allies from Pergamum and Rhodes, met and defeated Antiochus at Thermopylae (191 BC) and then pursued him to Asia Minor; there Scipio Africanus (acting as legate for his brother Lucius) decisively defeated Antiochus at Magnesia in 190 BC. Rome dealt with Aetolia severely. Their capital, Ambracia was sacked. The Aetolians were forced to give up all their territory lost in war and become a permanent ally of Rome. Macedonia too was disappointed in the outcome, for though Philip had proven a loyal ally, he was not rewarded with the territory he had helped to conquer (as were Pergamum and Rhodes); instead he was forced to relinquish all the territory he had gained. From that point on Philip began to build a war machine to challenge Rome for supremacy in Greece.

Pydna (168 BC)

By the end of his life in 179 BC, Philip had built an army of some 30,000 men and left a treasury filled with 6000 talents of silver (at 57 pounds to the talent this is 342,000 pounds of silver). Philip's son Perseus worked to increase what his father had left him. In 171 BC, Rome declared war. Neither side made progress. When Aemilius Paulus arrived in 168 BC, he won the decisive battle over Perseus at Pydna. Macedon would never rise again. Rome also sacked and pillaged 70 towns in Epirus and carried away more than 100,000 of their people into slavery. Whatever freedom was left to the Greeks, it was subject to the whim of Rome, master of the Mediterranean.

Pergamum

With Rome becoming more powerful in the East, smaller kingdoms were gradually more influenced by them and were absorbed into Rome's dominion. Some became allies and

remained independent for a while. One of these was Pergamum. Pergamum's ruler decided that it was better to be part of Rome than risk being attacked by other powerful states that might not be so benevolent. King Attalus III of Pergamum therefore bequeathed his kingdom to Rome in his will. On the death of Attalus in 133 BC, Pergamum became part of Rome. Other small states followed this trend later.

The Gracchi and Land Reform

During the century between the Pyrrhic Wars and the Battle of Pydna Rome had extended her empire from Spain to Asia Minor and from the Po Valley to Carthage. This constant warfare had a number of results, and not all of them were favorable for all Romans. Land in Italy had also become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy people. Even the "public lands" lands owned by the state but rented out to raise money for the government were largely in the hands of a few. Instead of many small farms, the land was divided up into large farms. Because a great number of slaves (prisoners taken from the wars) had been imported into Italy, gangs of slaves ran these large farms (*latifundia*) rather than free men. Instead of living in the countryside, many came to the Rome. There too a great deal of the work was done by slaves. A great mass of commoners (*plebs*), with no work, no home and no money, remained in Rome. Such a situation was filled with problems. How to solve the problems, however, was a matter of debate.

Two men who worked to solve these problems were Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. These two brothers were the grandchildren of the famous Scipio Africanus, though he himself never knew them. Scipio's daughter Cornelia had felt that the two young men showed great promise, however, and had called them her "jewels." Tiberius was elected tribune of the Plebs in 133 BC. To solve the land problem, Tiberius proposed a redistribution of the public lands. First he proposed that no citizen be allowed to own more than 320 acres of public land and that what remained should be divided among the poor of Rome and Italy. Tiberius said that the funds from Pergamum bequeathed to Rome in 133 could be used to fund his projects.

The Senate, however, did not approve of Tiberius Gracchus' proposals. Many senators owned *latifundia*, and they did not want to see their land taken away from them. According to normal procedure, Tiberius could not bring his proposals before the Assembly of the People for a vote without the approval of the Senate. Despite the rejection by the Senate, Tiberius does bring his proposals to the Tribal Assembly and they are passed. Although the Senate accepted the passage of Tiberius Gracchus' laws on land reform, when Tiberius then tried to run for reelection as tribune of the Plebs, the Senate refuses to accept it. Claiming that Tiberius was aiming at kingly power, a group of senators (led by Scipio Nasica) armed with clubs met Tiberius and his supporters on election day. In the ensuing fight, Tiberius was killed.

Gaius Gracchus worked to fulfill the proposals of his older brother, though not all of what he proposed was accomplished. Some ten years later (123 BC), Gaius Gracchus is elected tribune of the Plebs as well. Gaius not only continues to support land reform (by the creation of colonies), he also proposed that Rome should subsidize the price of grain for citizens in Rome and that the Italian allies of Rome should gain citizenship rights. Gaius managed to be reelected tribune once (122 BC) but violence once again breaks out during his attempt for a third tribunate and Gaius Gracchus is killed in 121.

The Late Republic: Age of Generals and Civil War

A person born in Rome around 100 BC, had they managed to live to the age of 20, would have witnessed two civil wars and also would have seen 80,000 Roman and Italian merchants and tax collectors slaughtered in a single day at the order of a foreign king; had this same person lived to 30 he would have witnessed a third civil war that lasted 9 years and a slave rebellion that ravaged Italy for three years. A person who managed to live to 60 would have seen two more civil wars and the prospect of yet another to come before his 70th birthday. It was neither a safe nor a pleasant time in which to live (if you managed to live through it at all); it is not surprising, therefore, that when one man offered peace to the Romans in exchange for giving him all political power, they took the offer.

Because of the writings of a few people, but especially those of the orator Cicero and the renowned Julius Caesar, we have a very detailed history of this time in Roman history, far more than we can examine here. In place of this, I will offer a sketch of several individuals who made this time what it was.

Marius (157-86 BC)

Marius was one of the most brilliant generals that Rome ever produced, and it was because of his reorganization of the legions that Rome was able to continue its conquests in the next 100 years and probably more. Marius first became popular because he defeated Jugurtha, the king of Numidia. It was Marius's genius that allowed the Roman legions to defeat the Germans at Aquae Sextiae and at Vercellae (102 and 101 BC) despite being outnumbered at least 3 to 1. Marius also made soldiers of the poorest members in Roman society (*proletarii*), and transformed politics in the process. Suddenly thousands of men, who previously had nothing, now had a place in Rome, money in Rome and a reason to vote: Marius. Marius' success as a general and his creation of a new clientela among the *proletarii* was a great part of why Marius was elected to the consulship seven times (107, 104, 103, 102, 101, 100, 86).

Sulla (138-78 BC)

Sulla came to prominence late in life despite being born into a patrician family. Sulla had fought alongside Marius in Africa and against the Germans, and had been somewhat in the older man's shadow for many years. In 91 BC that changed, and it changed because of the Italians and of a foreign king. The Italians wanted the vote, the right to run for consul and all that full Roman citizenship offered. The Roman Livius Drusus tried to bring them these things through legislation, but political opponents murdered him. In the following year (90 BC), Rome's faithful Italian allies made a bid for independence, replacing the full Roman citizenship they wanted with one of their own creation. The result was a war led by the Samnites and the Marsi against Rome. The war did not last long, but it was both bitter and bloody. In the end, Rome granted the citizenship to gain the peace. While the fighting lasted though, Sulla had shown himself to be an exceptional leader.

The Command Against Mithridates the Great of Pontus

At the same time the Romans had been fighting against their allies in Italy, King Mithridates had attacked Rome's province of Asia, and with a single order had nearly all the Romans and Italians (said to be as many as 80,000) in that province killed. Once the war in Italy was over, Sulla was elected consul (88 BC) and given the command against Mithridates. While Sulla was putting his army together in Campania, supporters of Marius (no doubt urged by Marius himself) managed to transfer the command against Mithridates from Sulla to Marius. Sulla then did the unthinkable: he marched on Rome, forced the assemblies to reverse their votes at sword point, and murdered any that tried to stop him. Then Sulla marched off against Mithridates in 87 BC.

Marius fled from Rome and survived. After Sulla had departed, Marius returned to Rome with an army of his own, and again Rome was awash in blood. Marius set up a new government, became consul, and died shortly thereafter in 86 BC. Cinna, the other consul of 86 BC, continued Marius' cause and made Sulla an outlaw *in absentia*.

While Marius was working against him in Rome, Sulla continued the war against Mithridates. Sulla defeated the armies of Mithridates in Greece twice and then entered into negotiations with Mithridates. These culminated in the Peace of Dardanus in 85 BC. The terms of this treaty forced Mithridates to leave all the territory he had conquered, retreat to his original kingdom of Pontus, to pay an indemnity to Sulla and to become an ally of Rome. Sulla then settled his troops in the province of Asia while he negotiated with the government led by Cinna to try to remove his outlaw status.

At the news of Cinna's death in Liburnia in 84 BC, Sulla decided to chance his luck in war instead of continuing the negotiations. So it was that yet another civil war began. After a short but bloody campaign, Sulla's veteran armies were victorious. Many of the Marian supporters fled from Rome and continued the fight from elsewhere in Rome's territory. Meanwhile Sulla became dictator and set up the infamous *proscriptions*, a list of traitors to Rome who could be hunted down and killed for a bounty. More than 2600 of Rome's richest men were murdered this way in the first year alone, their estates passing into Sulla's hands to use as he wished. Some of those on the lists escaped; others Sulla pardoned. Even so, a great many more died while Sulla continued his unlimited dictatorship. Sulla finally gave up the dictatorship in 79 BC. Soon afterwards, he died.

Pompey the Great (106-48 BC) and Crassus (115-53 BC)

Sertorius

Meanwhile Marius' old supporters, led by Sertorius in Spain, continued to fight on against the Rome of Sulla. This war provided an opportunity for the rise of Pompey. In a seven-year campaign (77-71 BC), Pompey defeated Sertorius.

Spartacus and Crassus.

While Pompey worked in Spain, affairs in Italy were not quiet. In 73 BC the gladiator Spartacus started a revolt in Capua. What began as a group of gladiators spread to a general slave revolt. Several armies are sent against Spartacus by Rome, and for two years the ex-gladiator defeats Rome's efforts and plunders his way through Italy. Finally M. Licinius Crassus defeated Spartacus in 71 BC. Crassus crucified all the survivors he caught. Returning from Spain, Pompey managed to destroy a remnant of Spartacus' rebels and so claimed credit for "ending" the rebellion. Crassus was none too pleased at being forced to share the credit.

Against the Pirates and Against Mithridates

Next, the Romans voted to give Pompey an extraordinary command of three years in order to clear the Mediterranean of pirates. Pompey accomplished this task in three months. Because of his swift and spectacular success, Pompey was then granted the command against King Mithridates, who again had attacked Roman interests in Asia. In a four-year campaign (66-62), Pompey completely defeated Mithridates, and annexed much of the territory into Rome's control. He was Rome's hero and he celebrated an extraordinary triumph when he returned to Rome in 62 BC.

Despite all this, Pompey had some problems on his return. His success had raised both great jealousy and great fear among the senatorial class, and when he tried to pass laws to secure land for his veteran soldiers, the senators blocked him. Although he could have followed Sulla's example and marched on Rome, he refused to do this. However, after two years of frustration, he decided to act outside of the law. He joined two other Romans, Julius Caesar and Crassus to form the first triumvirate.

Julius Caesar (100-44 BC)

pardoned by Sulla, In him I see many a Marius. Pirates

Julius Caesar was a patrician by birth, nephew to Sulla and he should have been a member of the conservative Optimates party in Rome. Yet Caesar's great uncle had been none other than Marius, and all his life his politics would be populist. The Julian family had sponsored the law that granted citizenship to the Italians, and they had gained control of a large voting block in Rome through this and other measures. This was exactly what Pompey needed. Between the money that Crassus could supply for bribes, the influence that Caesar could supply with votes and the backing Pompey could furnish with his popularity among the military; these three men controlled Roman politics for the next ten years. Pompey's veterans were taken care of, and in return, Caesar was elected consul and granted an extraordinary command in Gaul for five years, later extended to ten years. Crassus also gained an extraordinary command in the East against the Parthians, but whereas Caesar's command led to the conquest of Gaul, Crassus' led to his ignominious death at Carrhae in 53 BC.

Civil War Again

Toward the end of Julius Caesar's second extraordinary command, many in Rome became increasingly nervous, because they feared that Caesar would become another Sulla. Some threatened to prosecute Caesar for illegal acts he had committed during his consulship, and to avoid this, Caesar wished to run for consul *in absentia* (no one who held office could be brought into court). Caesar no longer held the guaranteed aid of the triumvirate because Crassus had died (in 53 BC) and Pompey had become distant. Caesar's daughter had married Pompey and made what seemed a lasting bond between the two men, but Julia died in 54 BC, and Pompey had become increasingly jealous of Caesar's successes, all of which eclipsed his own, now a decade in the past. Finally, Caesar took the decisive step on January 10, 49 BC: he crossed the Rubicon River with his army and entered Italy, thus declaring war on Rome itself.

Caesar's move caught Pompey off guard. Perhaps Pompey thought there would be some last minute negotiation. Perhaps he thought Caesar would not invade. Whatever the case, Pompey was forced to withdraw to Greece. There, a year later, the armies of Pompey

and Caesar clashed at Pharsalus, and Caesar's forces decisively defeated Pompey's despite being outnumbered by some 13,000 men (35,000 to 22,000). Pompey fled to Egypt where he was murdered; Caesar had to fight the remnants of the Pompeian cause for three more years before bringing the wars to an end at Munda in 45 BC.

At the end of the war, Caesar did not, like Sulla, use proscriptions to purge the Senate or to enrich himself, but instead pursued a policy of clemency, pardoning those who had taken up arms against him as long as they did not do so again. Caesar reformed the calendar, founded numerous colonies (notably Carthage and Corinth) and revised laws on debt to save many from the bankruptcy that would have befallen them because of the war. Finally, Caesar became dictator for life in 44, and planned to lead an army against the Parthians to avenge his friend Crassus' death. These plans were cut off by his assassination in March of 44 BC, an act that plunged Rome into civil war yet again. This time the battle for control of Rome lay between the pro-Republic party led by the assassins Brutus and Cassius and the pro-Caesarian party led by Mark Antony, and Gaius Octavius, the grand nephew of Julius Caesar.

The result was the defeat of Caesar's killers (Brutus and Cassius) at Philippi (42 BC) by the members of the Second Triumvirate of Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus. The Second Triumvirate began their rule not with clemency, but with the second round of proscriptions, again resulting in the murder of some 2500 Roman senators and knights.

Octavian and the Second Triumvirate

Once the three members of the Second Triumvirate (Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus) had established themselves via the law (the *Lex Titia* of 43 BC) punished the assassins (Philippi, 42 BC), and rid themselves of their political enemies via proscriptions an uneasy peace followed. In this time each member of the triumvirate tried to become supreme. Lepidus soon became unimportant; Antony claimed Greece and the East while Octavian was granted the onerous tasks of resolving all the trouble in Italy (the results of the civil wars) and the settlement of the West (Gaul and northwestern Spain had never properly been set up as provinces). Antony seemed the more likely winner in this contest, as the more experienced man. Antony's campaigns against the Partians were unsuccessful though, whereas Octavian's efforts in Italy were more favorable in Roman eyes. Antony underestimated both Octavian and the people around him, and he also underestimated the extent to which his alliance with the Egyptian queen Cleopatra would make him unpopular at Rome. Octavian, meanwhile, hammered away with propaganda to style himself a true Roman with Roman virtues, capitalizing on his connection as the "son" of the "divine" Julius Caesar, a man who traced his lineage back to the Trojan hero Aeneas and to Venus.

Actium

Antony and Octavian finally went to war at the battle of Actium in September of 31 BC. At Actium Octavian's fleet (under the command of his friend Marcus Agrippa) defeated the combined naval forces of Antony and Cleopatra. Antony gradually retreated to Egypt where he met his final defeat a year later. Rather than be captured both Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide. When Octavian returned to Rome in 29 BC he was hailed as the hero who had defeated the evil Egyptian Queen, and was given the honorary title Augustus.

Augustus (as Octavian was known from this point on) proceeded to create a position for himself by assuming various powers of other officers in the Republic (notably tribune and

consul), while allowing others (under his watchful eye) to continue to hold the offices of consul, praetor and quaestor. This allowed Augustus to be king in fact while seeming to restore the Republic. Augustus called himself *Princeps* which means *First Citizen*. That is why during the first part of the Empire the government by the emperor is called the *Principate*. It was in this way that Augustus became the first emperor of Rome.

The Empire (27 BC - 476 AD)

The Julio-Claudians (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero)

Augustus

Augustus ruled as the first emperor from 31 BC to 14 AD, some 45 years. The hallmarks of his reign were the peace and prosperity that followed. Four more rulers followed him from his family, all of whom were descended from either a Julian or a Claudian, and thus the first dynasty is called, the Julio Claudians. Through peaceful negotiations, Augustus regained the legionary standards that Crassus had lost to the Parthians in 53 BC (the second emperor Tiberius accomplishes this for him). He firmly established Roman rule in Gaul and completed the conquest of Spain, and further extended Roman rule in northern Europe. At the end of his life, few remained in Rome who knew anything but his rule and his peace in the Empire. One event, Varus' loss of three legions in Germany in AD 9 marred his success, and it determined his policy and his successors' policy of non-expansion into Germany after that.

BRICK AND MARBLE

Tiberius (AD 14 to 37)

Tiberius, Augustus' stepson succeeded him and ruled from AD 14 to 37. Though unpopular with the senate of Rome, Tiberius ruled sensibly and the peace that began with Augustus continued.

Caligula (AD 37-41)

Tiberius' successor, his grandnephew Gaius (more commonly known as Caligula) was unbalanced. Caligula was assassinated after a short reign (AD 37-41). Through the work of the Praetorian Guard the Emperor Claudius succeeded Gaius.

Claudius (AD 41-54)

Claudius became emperor against all odds. Born sickly, he stuttered and stammered when he spoke, and suffered some sort of partial paralysis. Both Augustus and Tiberius considered him unsuited to govern, and it was likely as a joke that Gaius made Claudius consul. Despite this, Claudius reigned as a competent emperor, and he presided over the successful invasion of Britain and the initial incorporation of this new province as well as that of Mauritania into the empire. Claudius' major failing seemed to be in his choice of wives. One (Messalina) he executed when she tried to make another man both her husband and the new emperor; the other (Agrippina the Younger, his own niece) may well have poisoned him in order to place her own son Nero on the throne.

Nero (AD 54-68)

Nero began his reign at the age of 16, and was guided in his first five years by the philosopher Seneca and Afranius Burrus, the prefect of the Praetorian Guard. During this time, the administration of the empire went well; private affairs, however, went almost immediately awry. In 55 Nero had Claudius' son Britannicus poisoned to rid himself of a rival for the throne. Four years later he had his own mother murdered to please his mistress Poppaea; shortly afterwards he had Octavia, Claudius' daughter and his own wife, killed so he could marry Poppaea. Things went from bad to worse. Nero appeared as an actor and musician in public, something no one but slaves or near slaves would do. In 61 a rebellion broke out in Britain under Boudicca and in Armenia under Vologases. In 62 Nero began treason trials in Rome, making the senatorial class nervous. In 64, a fire destroyed much of Rome. While the fire burned Nero is said to have composed a poem on the destruction of Troy, probably giving rise to the story that Nero "fiddled while Rome burned." Nero took the burned land and built an extravagant palace for himself. To pay for it, Nero raised taxes. As a result, many accused Nero of setting the fire for his own ends. Nero himself blamed the Christians for the fire. The trials of Christians for the fire became the first persecution of the Christians.

The Year of the Four Emperors (AD 69)

By 65, the constant trials of senators and Christians as well as the unrest and seeming mismanagement at the edges of the empire created a real conspiracy. Two years of executions followed the discovery of the conspiracy of Piso. Finally, one of Nero's legates rebelled, and several others followed him until even his own prefect of the praetorians betrayed him, selling the throne to the general Galba. Nero fled from Rome and committed suicide. Mass disorder followed, and a single year saw four emperors. First Galba, next Otho, then Vitellius and finally Vespasian.

The Flavian Dynasty (AD 69-96, Vespasian, Titus and Domitian)

Vespasian (AD 69-79)

Vespasian was an army veteran from a practical Italian farm-country background. He had held commands in numerous parts of the empire, from Britain (where he led part of the invasion of AD 43) to Judaea, where he was finishing the suppression of rebellion when Nero was deposed in AD 68. Vespasian set about his task energetically. He restored order in the army, set the economy on a steady, sound and profitable course and tore down parts of Nero's palace (the Golden House) to build new public buildings (most notably the Colosseum). Vespasian also accorded respect to the senate, but made it clear from the start that he would allow the senate to serve as judges of law and administrators of government, but not to make any real policy decisions. While no innovator like Augustus, Vespasian's work earned him the title of the second founder of the Principate.

Titus (AD 79-81)

Vespasian's elder son Titus succeeded his father in June of AD 79. In August of the same year, Vesuvius erupted. In AD 80, Rome suffered another fire. A year later Titus died of fever. Despite the fact that natural disasters dominated Titus' short reign Romans remembered Titus as an ideal emperor.

SACKS JERUSALEM

Domitian (AD 81-96)

Domitian, the younger son of Vespasian, became emperor in AD 81. Domitian had poor relations with the Senate, but he managed the empire well. Like his father and brother, Domitian was autocratic, but as the years passed, this tendency became more pronounced. By AD 86 Domitian even required people within the palace to address him as Dominus et Deus (Lord and God). Domitian also showed a marked love of things Greek, which also rankled the Roman nobility. Eventually these things provoked one legate (Saturninus) to attempt a rebellion in AD 89. Although the revolt was unsuccessful due to the loyalty of other legates, Domitian was unsettled by this and began to see conspiracies all around him, especially in his more able commanders. Tacitus supposes that it was this kind of fear that caused Domitian to recall Agricola, though it was five years before Saturninus' rebellion. Eventually Domitian's fears proved true and he fell to an assassin in AD 96.

The Five Good Emperors (AD 96-180)

After Domitian was assassinated, the senate promoted Nerva, one of their own, to become emperor. Although a sensible and capable individual, he had two faults, he was very old and he did not have the support of the army. After a year as emperor, Nerva adopted Trajan as his son and successor. Three months later in January of AD 98, Nerva died and Trajan became the new emperor. The practice of adopting a successor became standard practice for the next four emperors, and historians have generally considered this to be the golden age of Roman imperialism.

Trajan (AD 98-117)

Trajan was the emperor who expanded Rome's empire to its greatest size. He also built the largest of the imperial fora in Rome, with a large Greek and Latin library, an extensive marketplace, and a column decorated with scenes from his Dacian campaigns. Trajan's success in war and his good government at home won him the title of "Optimus Princeps" (the best emperor). However, Trajan's almost continuous expansion left neither the time nor the money for fully organizing the new provinces. Much like the expansions of Justinian some 400 years later, the expansion cost more than Rome could afford to maintain, and may have created the instability that resulted for the next 50 years. Falling ill while on the road back to Rome, Trajan died in 117. He is said to have adopted Hadrian as his heir, and the well-respected officer ascended the throne with little opposition.

Hadrian (AD 117-138)

Hadrian's first actions were to withdraw from Mesopotamia and Armenia and to make peace with Parthia. He also acted to suppress revolts in Egypt, along the Danube and in Britain. Unlike his predecessor, Hadrian acted primarily to secure Rome's possessions. Hadrian's famous wall in Britain was part of this overall plan for a peaceful and prosperous state well protected against attack from outside and devoted to developing economic and cultural resources within. Hadrian was remarkable for his visit to every single province in the Empire.

Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161)

Antoninus Pius continued Hadrian's policy of defensive posture. He built a second wall in Britain well north of Hadrian's, but this was not defended beyond the reign of Marcus

Aurelius. Antoninus Pius made his greatest contributions in creating laws that supported impartial administration of justice, and in beginning the systematic treatment of law that Justinian would later complete with his codification in the 6th century AD. Antoninus adopted two sons, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, and he shared his rule with Marcus Aurelius for the last 15 years of his reign. Both Marcus Aurelius and Verus were given prime opportunities in their education, but it was Marcus Aurelius who shone as the better pupil for Fronto, particularly in the area of philosophy.

Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180)

Both Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius became emperors at the death of Antoninus Pius, but Marcus Aurelius was the man with the real power; Verus never displayed either energy or capacity for rule. The Parthians invaded Armenia in 161 and Verus went to deal with the situation. Fortunately, the general Avidius Cassius was able to do this for Verus. Despite the fact that Cassius was successful at arms, and he managed to capture the Parthian capital of Ctesiphon, misfortune followed. The Roman army brought back a plague with it and this plague decimated the empire's population for years to come. Lucius Verus later joined Marcus Aurelius on the frontier, but he died there in AD 169, leaving Marcus Aurelius as the sole emperor.

Marcus Aurelius himself commanded on the Danube frontier, and it was here that he spent much of his time as emperor. During his time on the frontier, Marcus Aurelius had a lot of time to contemplate the strange and capricious chances of fortune. One of the reasons we know as much as we do about Aurelius is this is that we still have two works that he wrote: his letters of correspondence with his old teacher Fronto and the work commonly titled *Meditations*. It is largely because of the philosophical reflections he penned in the *Meditations* that Marcus Aurelius is called the Philosopher Emperor.

Marcus Aurelius remained as sole emperor until he elevated his own son Commodus to be his partner as emperor in AD 177. Marcus Aurelius made Commodus his heir, and when died in AD 180 Commodus succeeded Marcus Aurelius as the next emperor. By doing this Marcus Aurelius had broken with the tradition started by Nerva 84 years earlier. This choice also ends the reign of good governance that began in AD 96.

Commodus (AD 180-192)

After M. Aurelius' death, Commodus acted against the advice of his father and against that of his advisors, for he immediately made peace with Rome's enemies on the Danube frontier. He then proceeded to spend frivolously and rule badly for some 12 years. In the end, Commodus was murdered by his wrestling partner.

Septimius Severus (AD 193-211) and the Severan Dynasty

Commodus' death brought about another civil war and another year of four emperors. At the end of this civil war, Septimius Severus captured the throne by being the best general with the best troops, defeating his rivals in succession. Although his rule begins in AD 193, Severus did not defeat his last rival (Clodius Albinus, legate of Britain) until AD 197. Worse, the internal struggle had seriously weakened the armies in all parts of the empire. As a result, Severus had to fight a war against the Parthians (197-199) to regain what they had invaded, and to fight in

Britain to stop the raids from the north and to regain control of Hadrian's Wall (the Antonine Wall now abandoned for good).

Caracalla (AD 211-217)

So it was that the imperial family came to York in AD 208 and Septimius himself died there in AD 211. Caracalla shared the Principate with his brother Geta for a bit more than a year. Then Caracalla murdered Geta and became sole emperor. One of the more remarkable events of Caracalla's reign was his grant of Roman citizenship to every free person in the empire.

Severus is said to have advised Caracalla to enrich the army and neglect all else, and Caracalla followed that maxim religiously. The rest of the Severan dynasty also supported the military before all else. This policy of catering to the whim of the military led to disaster. Even though Caracalla himself led the armies in largely successful campaigns, the praetorian prefect Macrinus assassinated him in AD 217.

Caracalla's successors were no more fortunate. Each was forced to make greater and greater promises to ensure the loyalty of the soldiers, an economic drain that the empire was unable to sustain.

The Barracks Emperors and the Tetrarchy

Two Severans (Elagabalus and Severus Alexander) ruled between AD 217 and 235, but their weak reigns were but the prelude to the wretched parade of emperors that followed, for they were at the mercy of the army rather than controlling it, and they were constantly forced to fight to defend the frontiers. The disorder began in earnest in 238 though, and for the next 40 years, there seem nearly as many emperors. Because the emperors of this time period forced their way to prominence by the sword and the temporary loyalty of their army, these emperors are frequently known as the "Barracks Emperors."

Along the way, there were brief glimmers of hope. **Aurelian** (AD 270-275), for instance, was hailed as **Restitutor Orbis** (restorer of the world) because he reestablished Roman control in both the East and the West of the empire in one person. It was **Diocletian** (AD 284-305) who really restored hope to Rome though. Together with **Maximian**, Diocletian did establish stability for more than 20 years, and his new system created an order for the succession. Older emperors could retire, their successors could ascend the throne and the future successors could be chosen well in advance. It was a chance for long-term order.

Diocletian began to secure order by appointing Maximian his **junior partner (Caesar)** to restore order in Gaul and the Rhine Frontier. When Maximian proved a loyal subordinate, Diocletian raised him to the coequal status of **Augustus**. So far, Diocletian had done nothing more than had been done during the reigns of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. When **Carausius** seized control of Britain and declared himself an Augustus, however (i.e. of equal standing with Diocletian and Maximian), Diocletian was forced either to accept him or to attack him as a rival. He chose the latter. To make sure that matters in Gaul and on the Rhine remained secure, Diocletian retained Maximian on the Continent in AD 293, and sent a new Caesar, **Constantius**, to defeat Carausius. Meanwhile, Diocletian chose **Galerius** as a second Caesar subordinate to himself. This was the Tetrarchy: two Augusti that divided the Roman world between them. When Diocletian and Maximian did retire in AD 305, it seemed that things might settle down on a long-term basis. Unfortunately for Rome, these

plans too had flaws. Designated Augusti (senior emperors) might die before expected and Caesars (the junior emperors) might claim the throne for themselves.

Constantine the Great

This is exactly what did happen. Diocletian's carefully organized system of two Augusti to divide the Empire between them and two Caesars to serve as their lieutenants and heirs broke down soon after his retirement in AD 305. Constantius Chlorus was Augustus and Severus Caesar in the West. Galerius was Augustus with Maximin Daia as his Caesar in the East. Unfortunately, this passed over the sons of Maximian and Constantius, both of whom were ambitious men.

When Constantius died in 306 while trying to reestablish order in the province of Britain, the soldiers at York (Eboracum) proclaimed his 21-year-old son Constantine as Augustus. Galerius refused to accept this, and offered instead to advance Constantine to the office of Caesar and advance Severus from Caesar to Augustus. However, both the former Augustus Maximian and his son Maxentius refused to accept Severus as Augustus. Six years of disorder followed with no fewer than five Augusti at one point.

Galerius died in AD 312, and Constantine fought and defeated Maxentius at the battle of the Milvian Bridge. There Constantine placed the Chi and a Rho on the shields of his men as a response to a vision and in an apparent appeal to the Christian God for help, thus the famous Latin phrase *in hoc signo vinces* (in this sign you will conquer). It was the first overt sign of Constantine's eventual conversion to Christianity. With this victory, Constantine was acknowledged at Rome as the senior Augustus. Finally, in AD 324 Constantine defeated his final rival Licinius and became sole emperor.

The First Christian Emperor

Constantine was the first Christian emperor, thus lending the support of Rome itself to the development and confirmation of the new religion. Constantine called the famed "Council of Nicea" in AD 325 to create unity in the Christian Church via a creed that all Christians could agree upon. Constantine also built a new capital city, Constantinople (AD 330), an action from which Rome never recovers. Constantinople itself grew quickly, both because of the favor of the emperors and because it quickly developed as a centre of trade. Constantinople grew up as a Christian city from the first as well (both Christian and Pagan rites were observed at its foundation), and the lasting legacy of Constantine was to convert the Roman Empire from a pagan to a Christian state.

Constantine's rule until AD 337 reinvigorated the Empire but his sons' struggle for sole control after his death again plunged the state into civil war, weakening the ability to resist pressures from without. The tetrarchal system itself also created a continual rivalry of East versus West, and the number of emperors who control the whole empire after Constantine are few. The division of the empire also created a tendency to try to protect the part rather than the whole, and undoubtedly contributed to the earlier demise of the West. By the time of Rome's sack by Alaric in AD 410, Rome is no longer the capital, but rather a hollow shell of what once had been the glory of the world. It is a very weak Western Empire that Romulus Augustulus (the last Western Emperor) ruled, and when Odovacer deposed Romulus Augustulus, it was from a throne that was more name than reality.