

2

Early Rome: External Challenges

1. LIFE IN A DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENT

INTERNATIONAL ANARCHY Romans lived in a dangerous neighborhood. The whole of Italy was an anarchic world of contending tribes, independent cities, leagues of cities, and tribal federations. The Mediterranean world beyond Italy was not much different. During the period of Rome's emergence (ca. 500–300 B.C.) the Persian Empire had first consolidated its hold on the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean, and then lost it to Alexander the Great and the Macedonians. The Macedonian successor states of Alexander's empire fought each other to a standstill. They put down internal revolts and battled invaders.

Greeks fought with and against the Persians for two centuries. Individual Greek city-states waged incessant wars with each other, as did alliances of Greek states. Wars lasted for generations. The great Peloponnesian War raged in two phases from 460 to 446 B.C. and from 431 to 404 B.C. During Rome's early years, the Phoenician colony of Carthage in Africa emerged as a belligerent, imperialistic power in the western Mediterranean, driving the Greeks first out of most of that area and then fighting centuries-long campaigns against them in Sicily. They waged similarly aggressive wars against the Berbers of north Africa. Continental Europe, although we know little about its history in detail in comparison with the Mediterranean world, was probably even less settled and certainly as warlike, to judge from the hoards of weapons, armor, and chariots that have been excavated by archaeologists and can be found in huge quantities in northern European museums. Historically, we know of the impact of raiding warrior bands of Celts from Ireland to what is today Turkey. Fear of the Celts, *metus Gallicus*, was lodged deeply in Roman cultural perceptions and, as we will see, with good reason.

“All states are by nature fighting an undeclared war with all other states” said one of the speakers in Plato's dialogue the *Laws* (625e). A corollary of this assertion is that all states and tribes

were always prepared for war. A truer statement of the international situation might perhaps be that “*some* states are by nature fighting declared *and* undeclared wars with *some, possibly many* other states.” The irony was (and is) that the absence of organized states leads to anarchy, but so does the existence of organized states. The harsh world of interstate anarchy of the Mediterranean and European worlds fostered a culture of belligerence, militarism and aggressive diplomacy among all parties. International law was minimal and in any case unenforceable. War “is a harsh instructor” said the Greek historian Thucydides, who witnessed the Peloponnesian War at first hand (3.82). If the Romans were good at war it was, in part, because they had so many and such good teachers.

The Regal Period

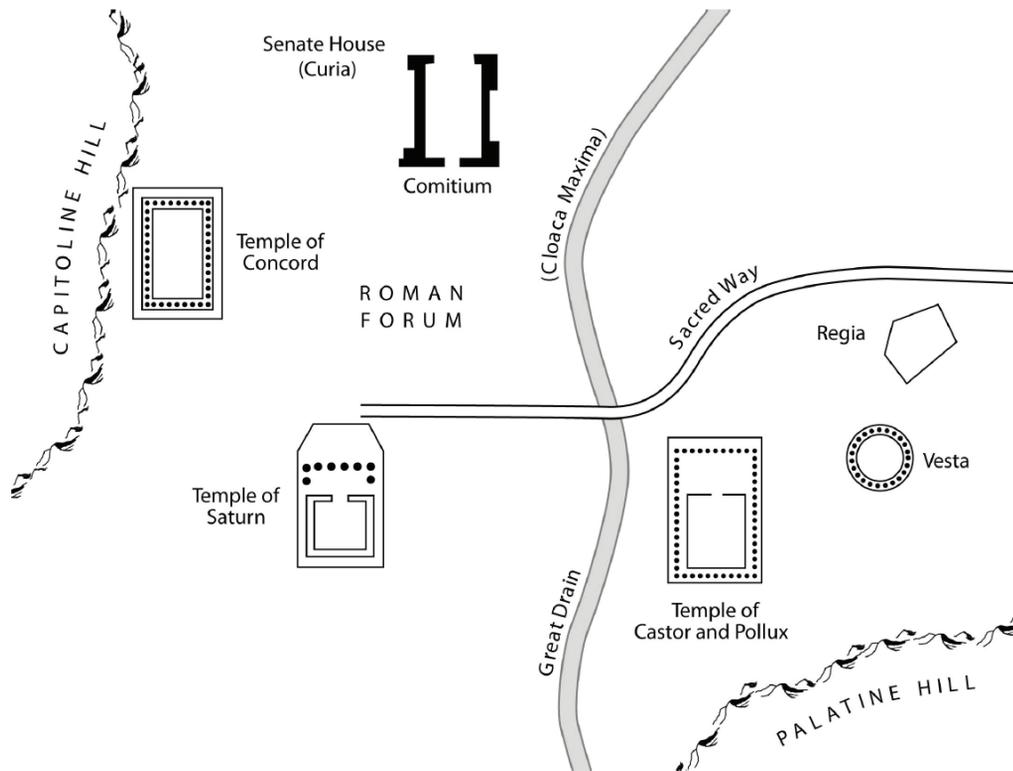
Under the kings there were no serious external threats either from within or outside Italy. Roman power expanded so that by the end of the fifth century, the city was probably the most powerful of the Latin states. But the historical situation changed quickly. First, Rome was challenged soon after 500 B.C. by its Latin neighbors. Then there occurred one of those demographic shifts to which Italy was periodically subject: the movement of highlanders to the plains. Unfortunately for the Romans, these population movements coincided with the infiltration of an even more aggressive, warrior people from outside Italy, the Celts. Coping with these threats took over two centuries and in the case of the Celts, even longer. As late as 225 B.C., a Celtic horde was able to reach within 50 miles of Rome before being defeated, and during the make-or-break war with Hannibal (218–202 B.C.) the Celts were among his staunchest and most effective allies.

Rome and the Latins

First the Latins, aiming to trim Rome’s power, attempted to reinstall the recently expelled king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus, but were defeated by the Romans at the Battle of Lake Regillus in 496 B.C. This was a crucial victory—even if historically obscure—in that it confirmed the recently won independence of the Republic. Later generations of Romans who passed through the Roman Forum were reminded of this battle by the large temple to Castor and Pollux, which was vowed to the two gods by the commander Postumius during the battle and subsequently built in a prominent position in the Forum. It occupies that position to the present day. Three of the fine columns that date from a rebuilding of the temple in 117 B.C. can still be seen.

Following their victory over the Latins, the Romans in 496 B.C. entered into a pact with them, the Cassian Treaty (*Foedus Cassianum*), which regulated their relations for the next century and a half. Its terms are not precisely known, and whether it was a treaty among equals or unequals is disputed.

The task of the alliance was to defend Latium against attack and, where possible, expand its boundaries. The league started with a number of advantages. Latium was a geographical unit with no major mountain ranges to disrupt communications and isolate Latin cities from each other. By 500 B.C. the Latins were already an urbanized people who shared a common ethnicity. Their cities were little self-governing republics, in many respects like Greek *poleis*, but with the advantage that, in addition to speaking the same language, they also shared a number of key legal rights and had a long tradition of religious association. Festivals were celebrated jointly among them at sanctuaries such as that of Diana on the Aventine in Rome, Venus at Lavinium, and—most importantly—every spring in the Alban Hills there was the great Latin festival in honor of Jupiter Latiaris—“Jupiter Guardian of the Latins.” Latins could intermarry among themselves (the right known as *conubium*), own property, and enter into contracts which were recognized in each other’s cities (*commercium*). They also possessed the right of migration (*ius migrandi*) from one Latin state to another. This right



Ground plan of Early Roman Forum

Before the area known as the Roman Forum could be put to use, it had to be drained. The “Great Drain” (Cloaca Maxima) which was built for that purpose in the sixth century B.C. still functions, although it is now integrated with the main sewer system of modern Rome. Its mouth, framed by three concentric arches, is a conspicuous landmark on the Tiber embankment. The drain was much admired in antiquity for the engineering qualities which enabled it to support the great buildings constructed over it and to resist the backwash of frequent floods. The Sacred Way (Sacra Via), Rome’s oldest street, was lined with porticoes and shops. As the main route to the Capitol, it was used by triumphal processions.

included the automatic grant of full citizenship in the new domicile. Collectively, these rights were known as the Latin Right (*ius Latii*), and the Romans designated the Latins as Allies of the Latin Name (*socii nominis Latini*).

These shared rights and cultural similarities, important though they were, did not, however, bring about political unity. The Latin states did not evolve or, for that matter, aim to evolve, into a federal union. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of potential military cooperation and greater political unity, the Latins had a major advantage over the other inhabitants of Italy such as the Greeks, Etruscans, and Oscans. These peoples, too, had similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds among themselves, but had even less political unity than did the Latins. For example, when the Etruscan city of Veii was besieged by the Romans, it received no help from the members of the long standing Etruscan league to which it belonged. As in the case of Greek cities, they were notorious for their endless squabbles and their inability to get along with each other.



Temple of the Twins Castor and Pollux

The sorry remains of a once great temple that dominated one end of the Roman forum from the earliest days of the Republic.

The Oscan Threat

It was fortunate that the Cassian Treaty came into existence when it did because both Latins and Romans almost immediately found themselves under severe pressure from migrants and invaders from the mountainous interior of Italy. For the next century Latins and Romans together struggled to maintain themselves against these intruders.

UNSTABLE ITALY Peninsular Italy was, from the viewpoint of demographics and economics, an inherently unstable region. The plains' peoples were committed to settled agriculture and a form of the state based on the city. The interior mountainous regions were more favorable to herding, and in consequence settlements there were much less permanent. Whereas urbanized centers were the core of the Italian states in the plains regions,

the Oscan and Umbrian states in the interior, to the extent they can be called states, took the form of loose tribal confederations. Their populations lived in scattered settlements or hamlets. At least in the case of the Samnites, however, their lack of urbanization did not affect their ability to cooperate among themselves for military purposes.

THE SACRED SPRING A challenge the Oscans had to deal with intermittently was that of overpopulation. Their solution to this recurring problem was the institution of the "Sacred Spring," (*ver sacrum*). This was a religious ritual in which all of the creatures born in a particular year—human as well as animal—were declared "sacred" (Lat. *sacer*), i.e., dedicated to the gods. At the end of the year all the animals so designated were sacrificed to the gods and so passed into their possession, while the humans were allowed to live but with the understanding that upon reaching adulthood they would emigrate to make a livelihood for themselves elsewhere in Italy. Needless to say such an arrangement made for unstable and unfriendly relations with neighbors. The settled, less aggressive agricultural inhabitants of the lowlands were the most likely victims of the *ver sacrum*. Without warning, a group of warlike and desperate young people might appear out of the mountainous interior and fall on an agricultural settlement or city which they would either take over or perish in the attempt.

The institution of the *ver sacrum* was highly successful, at least from the highlanders' viewpoint. During the fourth century, Oscans infiltrated Campania and took over both the flourishing Etruscan city of Capua and the Greek city of Cumae. The same fate befell many other Greek cities on the Tyrrhenian Sea coast. In Apulia in the south, massive walls had to

Chronology: Wars of the Republic I

Wars with the Oscans	ca 500–400 B.C.
Capture of the Veii	396 B.C.
Sack of Rome by the Celts	390 B.C.
Latin Revolt	340–338 B.C.
Samnite Wars	326–304; 298–290 B.C.,
Battle of Sentinum	295 B.C.
War with Pyrrhus	280–275 B.C.
First Punic War	264–241 B.C.
Second Punic War	218–202 B.C.

be built to defend the towns of that region. By 350 B.C. Lucania and Calabria were overrun by Oscans.

AEQUI, VOLSCI, AND SABINES While Romans and Latins were squabbling among themselves around 500 B.C., the nearby hill peoples, identified in the sources as Aequi and Volsci (probably Umbrian-speaking), seized their opportunity to expand their possessions and moved down into the plains of Latium and Campania. They overwhelmed the strong Latin towns of Tibur and Praeneste and took possession of the Alban Hills and its sacred sites. Further south they occupied the Monti Lepini and reached the Mediterranean coast where they established themselves at Antium and Terracina. The nearby Etruscan city of Veii took the opportunity of Roman and Latin weakness to seize control of the mouth of the Tiber and the valuable salt route, the Via Salaria, by which salt was carried into the interior of Italy. The Sabines, a hill people with a long history of involvement—peaceful as well as warlike—with Rome now posed an additional threat directly to Rome from the northeast. A significant economic downturn in Rome is detectable in the archaeological record at this time, and the long temple building program which had been begun under the kings came to an abrupt end in 484 B.C. It seems that at this time many Latins took the opportunity to migrate to safety at Rome. A dangerous consequence of the success of the Oscans in fighting their way through Latium to the coast was that the urbanized people of the nearby Tiber River valley, the Hernici, were cut off from their natural cultural allies, the Latins.

A DESPERATE SITUATION? It is hard to estimate how desperate the situation was at this time for the Latins, Romans, and Hernici. In the absence of any genuinely useful information, the historians of later periods inflated what little information they had to give the impression that the armies of the contenders were locked in constant warfare. That there was constant warfare is undoubtedly accurate, but armies, at least not large armies, are unlikely to have been involved. The experience of the Romans and Latins was not at all like the epic collision that occurred at about the same time between the Greeks and the Persian Empire, where genuinely large armies and fleets were involved. More often than not the clashes of the Latins with their foes were in the forms of skirmishes, raids and counter raids, as the Roman historian Livy noted.

Some perspective is provided when we consider the size of the region in dispute. Most of the action of the century and a half of war took place within a radius of 12–25 miles of Rome. Veii, the nearby threatening Etruscan city, was just 10 miles from Rome. Another major Etruscan city, Caere, was 24 miles away; the important Latin city of Tibur was 18 miles and Tusculum about 12. Nevertheless, we should not overly discount the reports of the sources. The fact that warfare kept up for over a century suggests that despite the resources of the Latins, a significant struggle, whatever the size of

The Fate of a Greek City at the Hands of the Oscans

The story is told by the historian Aristoxenus of Tarentum who lived about the time of the conquest of Poseidonia (modern Paestum, south of Naples) by Oscan highlanders.

We act like the peoples of Poseidonia who live on the Tyrrhenian Sea. Although they were originally Greeks, it happened that they were completely barbarized, and became Oscans. Nevertheless they still celebrate one festival that is Greek to the present. For this event they gather together and recall those ancient words and institutions which were once theirs and after lamenting them and weeping over them in each other's presence, they return home (Athenaeus 14.632a).

the forces involved, took place. Romans and Latins and their institutions were tested severely. Fortunately for them they proved, in the end, capable of outlasting their more simply organized, if more aggressive, opponents. It is worth spending time on this early period because it was precisely in this only vaguely-known segment of Roman history that its character and institutions were developed. When better sources become available (after 300 B.C.), Rome's childhood and a good part of its adolescence, so to speak, were already over. By then it was already a highly successful, functioning state.

COUNTER MEASURES What looked like small steps to counter the invaders had important results. Like American frontier forts, Latin fortresses were established at the strategic locations of Cora, Signina, Norba, and Setia with the aim of containing the Volsci in the Alban Hills and the Monti Lepini. Their powerful defensive walls are still impressive.

These fortresses put the invading Oscans on the defensive, though as late as 350 the Volsci were still in possession of Velitrae in the Alban Hills and Privernum in the Monti Lepini. An alliance was made with the Hernici and a little later with the Samnites. The climactic battle of the war took place in 431 B.C. at the Algidus Pass, just 18 miles from Rome. Vague recollections of these events were stored in the memories and archives, such as they were, of great Roman families such as the Quinctii (to which clan Cincinnatus belonged), the Valerii, Claudii, Cornelli, Julii, Postumii, Manlii, Fabii and others. These tales were heavily embroidered by later historians who liberally borrowed from Greek sources and later periods of Roman history.¹



The Walls of Norba

The massive east gate of Norba. Norba was one of a string of colony-fortresses established on impregnable positions in the foothills of the Monti Lepini to contain the raids of the Aequi and protect the great north-south highway, the Via Appia. Norba, along with her sister fortresses served Rome and the Latins well in all their wars in Italy.

¹It is not always certain that a particular family later prominent in Roman history is to be connected with a particular event in early times. Families preserved tales of their ancestors and sometimes were able to insert the names of ancestors, fictitious or otherwise, into the record.

The Fall of Veii

By dint of constant fighting the Sabines, Aequi and Volsci were either defeated, driven back into the hills, or contained. By 400 B.C. Rome was ready to turn its attention to the nearby Etruscan city of Veii which, given its location just 10 miles away, posed an immediate threat to Rome. After an



Early Rome and Her Neighbors

epic siege of supposedly 10 years (suspiciously like the 10 year siege of Troy by the Greeks), Veii fell and Rome appropriated its gods, its people and its territory. By the ritual of *evocatio* (“calling-forth”), the gods of Veii were invited to abandon the fallen city and move to Rome, where they would continue to be worshipped. The most famous of the Veian gods who migrated to Rome in this fashion was the goddess Juno (the Greek equivalent was Hera), who ended up with her own temple on the Aventine Hill where she was worshipped as Juno Regina, Queen Juno. By this process Rome not only propitiated the angry gods of Veii but also eliminated the political claims of Veii by delegitimizing its right to divine protection. *Evocatio* was to become a feature of Roman statecraft and imperialism during the Republic. A particularly prominent example of the use of *evocatio* in later time was the calling forth of the gods of Carthage, Rome’s mortal enemy, which in 146 B.C. was eliminated as completely as was Veii.

THE SPOILS OF VICTORY Apart from removing a dangerous strategic rival, the conquest of Veii immensely expanded Rome’s economic and military resources. It is estimated that Rome’s territory was increased by about 60%. Veii’s land was divided up into parcels of 7 iugera (about 4½ acres) and distributed, according to Livy, to every member of the plebeians (5.30). An important side-effect of individual (*viritim*) land grants of this type to poor citizens was that by being bumped up in the census, they became eligible to serve in the main striking force of the army, the phalanx, and not merely as skirmishers or light infantry as they had been in the past. For the same reason, they moved up within the political system to higher levels of participation and influence. In Rome’s political culture, higher levels of civic responsibility in both military and political domains followed upon elevation in economic status. In the class-census (*classis*) system, privileges were nicely balanced with responsibilities (more on this in the next chapter). This technique of individual land grants, which was used throughout much of Rome’s history, had the multiplying effect of reducing poverty while at the same time increasing the state’s citizen manpower reserves, its citizens’ political participation, and overall economic strength.

Conquest and Colonies

The conquest of Veii represented Rome’s most significant independent (i.e., independent of the help of the Latin League) acquisition of territory to date. Paradoxically, however, in proportion as Rome expanded its borders it became exposed to new threats—the problem of all expanding states, imperial or otherwise. As old buffer zones were eliminated, Rome found itself with new—often hostile—neighbors and new borders to defend. Expansionism of this type had to balance the gains of new territory with new defensive responsibilities. Given a sufficient level of paranoia—or aggressiveness—this process could go on forever.

To address this challenge, Rome relied on an old technique used in the past in conjunction with the Latins: the construction of a jointly sponsored fortress in recently conquered territory. The Latin term for these frontier posts is “colony” (*colonia*) but that term has become so loaded with modern meanings that we need to keep in mind that for Romans and Latins, the term originally had a specific, defensive connotation.

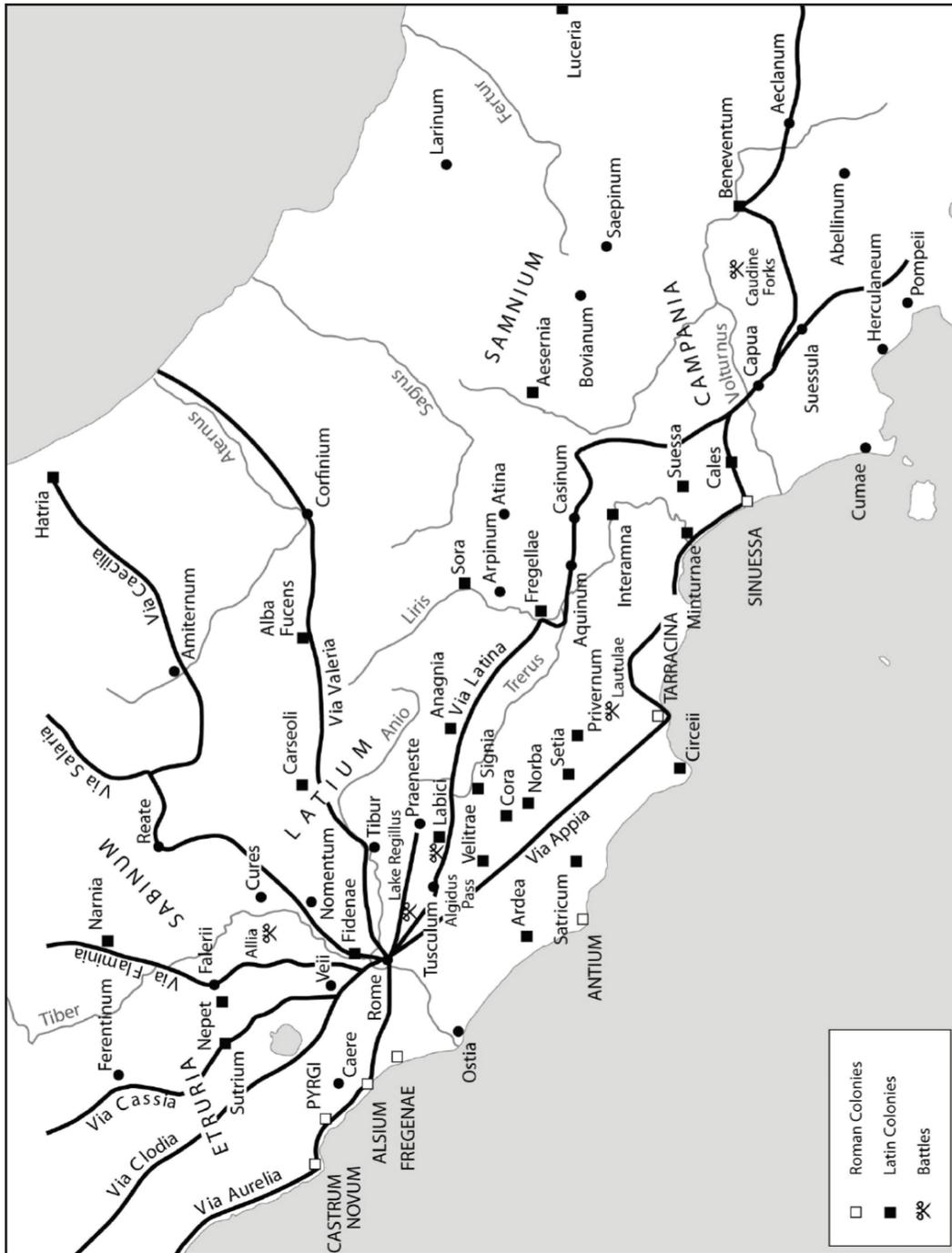
THE PROBLEM OF ANNEXATION Few ancient states, and certainly not Rome or any other Latin state in this period, had the capacity to annex and bureaucratically administer new territory. *Polis* type states de facto had minimal governments and no standing bureaucracies whatsoever. The

“administration” of such states was made up of a handful of annually elected magistrates, a council made up of ex-magistrates, and at certain regular times, citizen assemblies. Occasionally committees of these assemblies served in administrative capacities, but only for very carefully defined periods of time, usually no more than a year. No administrative position had a salary attached to it. Compensation for those who served in these capacities was psychic and political. The individual gained in honor and enhanced powers of patronage; his family gained in glory and authority. There were no paid professional politicians or administrators in ancient *poleis*, and Rome was no exception. At most the state covered the expenses of magistrates and administrators, but there was nothing like, for example the bureaucracies the British built up to administer India or the Ottomans the Middle East. In the absence of such complex governmental bodies, Romans and Latins had to find other means to protect their territory. Hence the invention of the “colony.”

THE LATIN COLONY The Latin colony was an ingenious invention. It was a sovereign state, an autonomous, self-governing entity with its own citizen assemblies, elected magistrates and senates (councils made up of ex-magistrates), but with loyalties to the larger Latin community. It drew its membership from throughout the Latin League, allowing citizens of different Latin cities (including Rome) to leave their home states and start a new life for themselves among a whole new set of faces. Just this opportunity alone must have appealed to a certain number of people. There was also a very significant material incentive: a decent size grant of land which elevated the founding members of a colony to a new and higher socio-economic status. For a second or third son who had little chance of making it in the home state, for men as well as for women, the availability of new land represented an escape from a possibly poverty-stricken existence.

There was, however, a price of sorts to be paid: the loss of citizenship in one’s native state. Thus a Roman citizen joining a new Latin colony ceased to be a Roman citizen and acquired the Latin citizenship of the new colony, and similarly for citizens of other Latin states. Settlement among hostile indigenous peoples far from home and among strangers from other states, although fellow citizens, must have created difficulties of all sorts. Nevertheless, the fact that so many Latin colonies were successfully established over so many centuries (eventually there were 34 of them), and under such difficult conditions says a great deal about the capacity of the Latins to cooperate among themselves in new ventures.

About a dozen Latin colonies (sometimes called *priscae Latinae Coloniae*—the earliest, “old time” Latin colonies) were established before the Latin League came to an end in 338 B.C. Fidenae, Sutrium and Nepesin guarded the northern approaches to Rome and Latium. Velitrae, Signina, Norba, Cora and Setia protected the Latin plain from the Volsci and Aequi, who had taken possession of the Alban Hills and the Monti Lepini. Satricum and Ardea covered the southern approach to Rome and backed up Cora and Norba farther north. Antium and Circeii were fortresses on the coast. All these fortresses were situated in naturally strong positions, some on hill tops, some on the sides of steep ravines or on rivers or streams. They guarded roads, rivers, and mountain passes, and were impossible to take except as a result of extended sieges which could not be conducted without inviting an attack from other colonies, from Rome itself, or its allies. Together they formed a deep defensive network protecting the Latin heartland. In the course of centuries, fortresses of this type were established at strategic points throughout Italy. They were to become Rome’s most faithful allies—its primary shield—and over time the most effective dispensers of Latin culture from the Alps to Magna Graecia in the south. They were also to become as Cicero said later, “the fetters of Italy.”



Colonies and Roads

The Warlike Celts (Gauls, Gaels)

Despite success in containing the Etruscans, Sabines, Aequi, and Volsci, and having expanded north of the Tiber by incorporating Veii, Rome and Latium were not secure. Warlike Celtic tribes from across the Alps had been settling in the Po valley for a number of generations and had already dislodged the Etruscans from that region. They were now threatening Etruria itself. These events occurred towards the end of the fifth century B.C., but the bulk of the migration seems to have taken place primarily during the fourth century. In due course the Po valley itself came to be known to the Romans as *Gallia Cisalpina*—Cisalpine Gaul (“Gaul This Side of the Alps”). News of these settlements and awareness that the Celts could launch attacks through various passes in the Apennines was available to Romans and Latins alike. Livy notes that one of the reasons the Etruscan cities did not come to the aid of Veii when it was under Roman siege was their preoccupation with “new settlers of strange nationality with whom their relations were ambivalent and far from comfortable” in parts of Etruria (Livy 5.18).

THE SACK OF ROME Of the Latin cities, Rome, being the farthest north, was the most exposed. Still, while not unexpected, the appearance of a Celtic horde just north of Rome, the quick and overwhelming defeat of the Roman army at the battle of the Allia (390 B.C.), and the subsequent capture of Rome itself, must have been an overwhelming shock to the Romans. It undoubtedly contributed to the defensive paranoia that fueled much of Rome’s expansion in later years. Forever after, July 18, the *dies Alliensis*, “The Day of the Allia,” was observed officially as an “inauspicious day” in the Roman calendar. Fear of the northerners, *metus Gallicus*, became embedded in the Roman psyche more deeply than any other fear, and was reflected even in its law. A special state of emergency known as the *tumultus Gallicus* could be called by the magistrates. It suspended all exemptions from military service and gave the authorities a free hand to call up whatever reserves they thought were necessary to meet the threat. The state had made a decision that the sack of Rome would not be repeated.

THE FAILURE OF THE LATIN LEAGUE At this critical juncture it was clear that the Latin League and the concentric lines of defense built up in the previous century had failed spectacularly. This revelation of the city’s vulnerability deeply influenced its future strategic thinking and led to a fundamental reevaluation of the usefulness of the Latin alliance. The success of the first invasion, it was felt, would surely encourage the Gauls to raid again, and indeed for the next two centuries this was the case. It was particularly worrying because these invasions occurred unpredictably. For example, a powerful Celtic force appeared in 358 B.C. at Pedum, just 14 miles from Rome. Less than 10 years later they were again in Latium, this time in alliance with a Greek fleet from southern Italy. To meet this particular threat took one of the largest call-ups of troops in Roman history.

Roman Recovery

The opportunity to reorganize Rome’s defenses came soon enough. The Celts moved on in search of new opportunities for glory and plunder, and the Romans set about building proper defenses for the city. Stone walls about six miles long made of rock from the quarries of Veii were constructed around the core of the built-up area. (So strong were these walls that a good stretch of them, the so-called “Servian Walls” can still be seen just outside the main train station in Rome). Their construction is an indication of both Rome’s fear of future attacks and its resourcefulness. Colonies

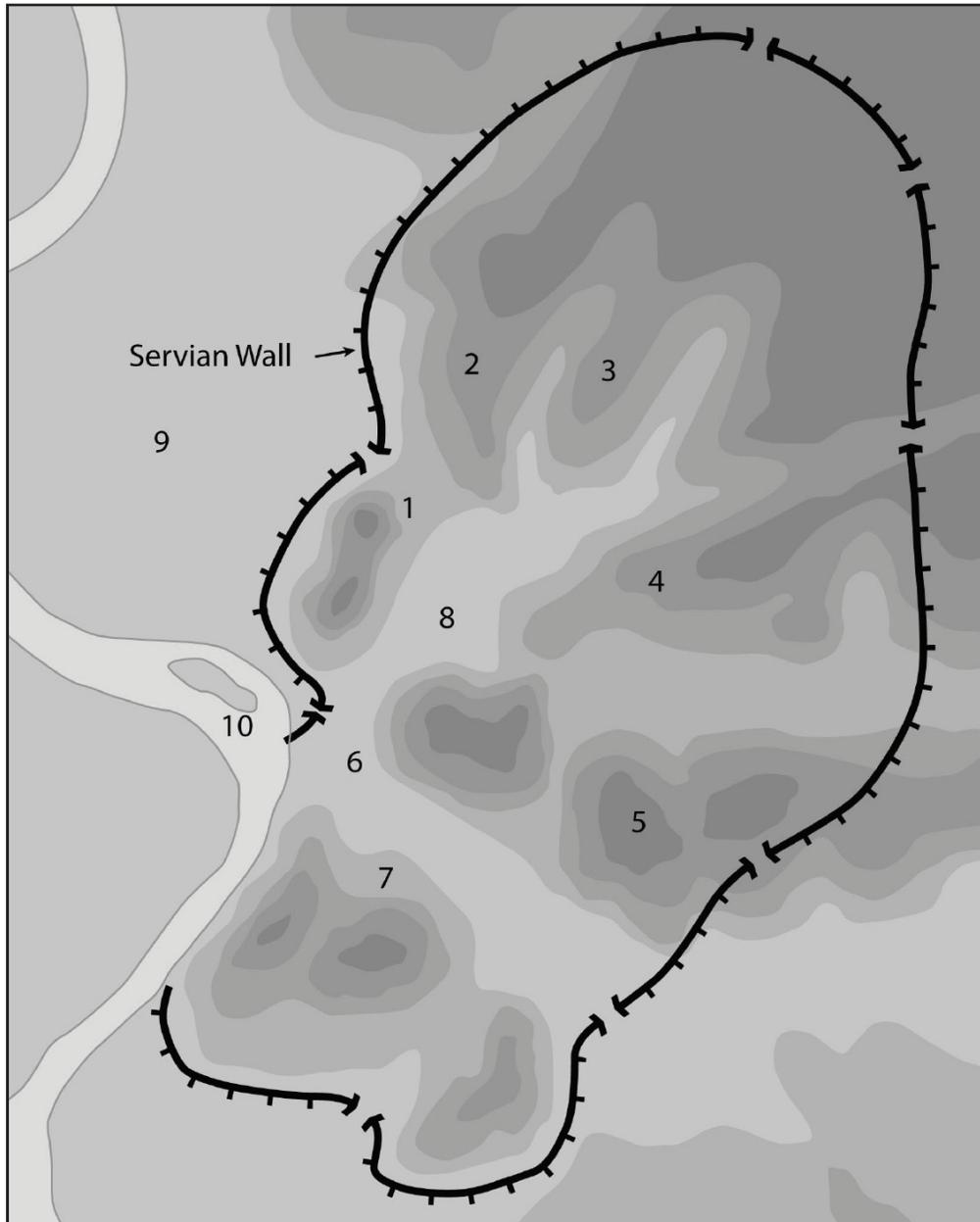
were established to the north at Sutrium and Nepes, and at Setia and Satricum to the south. Nearby Tusculum was fully incorporated into the Roman state in 381 B.C. Its citizens were given the full Roman franchise while being allowed to administer their own internal affairs as they had in the past. A city of this type, having local autonomy but with Roman citizenship, came to be known as a *municipium*—that is, a city that shared the burdens (*munera*) of the Roman state, mainly the responsibility of military service. The nearby city of Caere was given a limited form of citizenship called *hospitium*, a kind of honorary citizenship, in recognition of services rendered to Rome during the Celtic occupation.

LATIN UNHAPPINESS The Latins also began to reevaluate their relationship with Rome. Secure for the time being against outside aggression, they took a critical look at Rome's growth and came to the conclusion that the conquest of Veii and the settlement of its territory by Roman homesteaders had created a huge imbalance in their relationship. Then in 354 B.C. the Romans made an alliance with the Samnite federation, which was a significant power to the east of the Latins. This was followed in 348 B.C. by an alliance with Carthage which essentially recognized Rome's preeminence in the central plains region of Italy.

The main trigger, however, for the dissolution of Rome's relationship with the Latins came as a result of a request for help from the Campanian city of Capua which found itself threatened by Samnite encroachment. This action, taken independently of the Latin League, gave Rome a foothold on the southern side of Latium. From the Latin viewpoint this amounted to a form of envelopment.

A TURNING POINT IN HISTORY The decision of Rome to abandon its recent alliance with the Samnites and aid the Campanians was logical, strategic—and opportunistic. Capua was the head of a rich, well established federation in Campania, and in terms of political culture closer to Rome than the Samnites. In choosing to take up the cause of a *polis*-type state, the Romans began the long process of defending urbanized peoples throughout the Italian peninsula—and eventually outside Italy—against the tribal Celts and Oscans. This decision by the Romans, despite its apparent unimportance, was actually a turning point in their history and possibly, not to overly exaggerate, in world history. Romans of later generations recognized this, and the belief found its reflection in the work of Livy, the great historian of the late Republic. Livy noted that the alliance with Capua led inevitably to war with the Samnites. Victory over the Samnites in turn had the effect of projecting Roman power deep into southern Italy. This then provoked the enmity of the powerful Greek city of Tarentum which turned for help to Pyrrhus, a Hellenistic king from Epirus, just across the Adriatic from Tarentum. Roman victory over Pyrrhus and Tarentum led them, finally, into war with the Carthaginians (Livy 7.29).

The conflict with the Samnites ended soon after it began (the First Samnite War 343–341 B.C.). An agreement was worked out by which the Samnites recognized coastal central Italy, including Campania, as part of the Roman sphere of interest while the Romans recognized Samnite suzerainty of the inland areas of central Italy and the left bank of the Liris River in Campania. At this point, probably thinking that their situation—wedged between Rome and Roman-dominated Campania—was critical, the Latins rightly recognized that their autonomy was at stake and rose in revolt (340–338 B.C.). The war was hard fought, but its details are unknown. With help from their erstwhile enemies the Samnites, the Romans defeated the Latins decisively by 338 B.C., and a whole new era of Roman history began.



Rome, Seven Hills, Servian Walls

The Seven Hills of Rome and the so-called "Servian Wall," actually built in the fourth century after the Celtic sack of the city. The Romans disagreed as to which of the hills should be counted among the "Seven Hills" of Rome. The most likely are the following: 1. Capitoline; 2. Quirinal; 3. Viminal; 4. Esquiline; 5. Caelian; 6. Palatine; 7. Aventine. Also included are 8. The Forum, and 9. The Campus Martius or "Field of Mars" located outside the pomerium, and 10. The Tiber Island where the Tiber was most easily crossed. The Servian Walls are indicated by the dark perimeter line.

2. A NEW BEGINNING: ROME AFTER THE LATIN WAR

The settlement worked out with the Latins after the war was crucial to Rome's future development. Despite the obscurity of the period, which comes as a result of poor documentary evidence, we know enough to conclude that a major historical milestone was passed. Principally it was this: The old rule for *polis*-type societies was that, once a certain size in terms of population and territory had been reached, further development was impossible without loss of the fundamental constitution and way of life of the *polis*. Most Greek *poleis* were in the realm of 700–1000 families and a territory of perhaps 25–100 square kilometers. Even Athens, which had a much larger population and territory than most *poleis*, had built-in limitations to its growth. Rome after the defeat of the Latins found a way out of this cul-de-sac that allowed for growth while at the same time retaining the characteristics of its *polis* and its Republican constitution.

The End of the Latin League: Terms of the Settlement

The momentous solution worked out by Rome for its defeated adversaries did not spring out of nothingness. Latins and Romans, as previously noted, had much in common both culturally and politically. They had such mutually interchangeable rights as marriage, trade, and migration. The establishment of the institution of the colony showed how expansion could be achieved without loss of autonomy. Basing its solution on this past experience, the Romans settled on the following:

1. While some land was confiscated from the conquered Latins, Volsci, and Campanians and assigned to individual Roman settlers, the bulk was left in the possession of its original inhabitants. The conquered were neither enslaved nor reduced to the level of serfs, but given new legal, social, and political relationships with Rome.
2. The Latin League was abolished as an institution. A small number of Latins were incorporated in the Roman state and given full citizenship rights while being allowed to continue to administer their own internal affairs. These were such smaller Latin states as Lanuvium, Pedum, Aricia, and Nomentum. Citizens of such states became Roman citizens in the fullest sense (*cives optimo iure*) and their states became known as *municipia optimo iure*.² They could vote in Roman assemblies and run for Roman political offices. At the same time they had control of their own internal affairs. What they lost was the ability to conduct foreign affairs as independent states.

On the whole the number of citizens inducted into the Roman citizenship body at this time was small. Nevertheless, cautious as it was, an important precedent was established, namely, that non-citizens could be given all the rights of Roman citizens *while* retaining citizenship of their own, native communities. The connection between citizenship and place was severed. In the past a person could be only a citizen of the place of his native birth and present domicile. After 338 B.C. it was in principle possible for a community any place in Italy (or elsewhere for that matter) to have the full Roman citizenship while retaining its own local autonomy and citizenship.

3. The large Latin states of Tibur and Praeneste which were too large to be absorbed, at least at this time, remained as Latin states but with individual treaties with Rome and no capacity to

² The English dictionary equivalent of *municipium*, municipality, does not much help our understanding of the Roman term. In this instance it seemed better to keep the Latin term.

act independently in the matter of foreign relations. In this regard all diplomatic arrangements, declarations of war, treaties with foreigners and so forth, were a matter for Rome to decide. Cora also received this status as a reward for service on the Roman side during the recent war. These were *civitates foederatae*, allied states with separate treaties with Rome.

4. Seven old Latin colonies founded before 338 B.C. remained as Latin colonies, but their relationship was now exclusively and individually with Rome, not with each other as autonomous members of the Latin league. These were Sutrium, Nepes, Ardea, Circeii, Signina, Setia and Satrium. They were forbidden to consult with each other as they had in the past and their mutual rights of trade (*commercium*) and marriage (*conubium*) were abrogated. The territories of Antium and Velitrae were annexed.
5. The truly major problem that needed a solution was what to do about peoples such as the Volsci and the Campanians who were differed from Rome in language and culture. The traditional solutions—enslavement or enserfment—were not considered. Instead the Romans came up with a new legal status for them: second class citizenship and partial incorporation in the Roman state. Such states were designated as *civitates sine suffragio* or *municipia sine suffragio*—states without the vote but having to bear the burdens (*munera*) of military service in the Roman army.

It was an unpopular status as Rome found out quickly, but it had its uses and it was certainly a lot better than some of the usual alternatives that defeated states suffered in ancient (or more recent times). Citizens of such states could migrate to Roman territory and achieve full citizenship. They were in a better position to familiarize themselves with Roman law, political practice and culture than would otherwise have been possible and could thus move toward full incorporation in the Roman state. Their elites were able to establish important personal relationships with their opposite members at Rome. De facto, the status of citizenship without the vote became a preparatory phase for full citizenship. From the Roman viewpoint, to have whole groups of cities and peoples in the *sine suffragio* status served to create a buffer zone between Roman territory and more distant allies who had less constricting relations with Rome. The Hernici, old-time allies of Rome but enemies during the Latin war, opted to remain as allies rather than accept the status of *sine suffragio*.

6. Roman citizen colonies, i.e. independent cities made up exclusively of Roman citizens, were sent out to two key places on the coast, Ostia and Antium, to provide protection against piratical raids. This step was taken as an alternative to the creation of a navy for which Rome was not yet ready, and indeed Rome was historically slow to extend its power by naval means, although eventually it had no choice but to build a fleet of its own.
7. There was an important religious and cultural component of the settlement of 338 B.C. Ancient myths, which told of Rome's founding by the venerable Latin state of Alba Longa and of the shared Trojan origin of Latins and Romans, were emphasized. Although the Latin League as an association of independent republics was over, its religious traditions were maintained. As in the past, joint religious festivals were held at the traditional Latin shrines throughout Latium. Thus was cemented the idea of ethnic unity, although the new state engineered in 338 B.C. was not based on ethnicity. In fact, the genius of the Roman invention of 338 B.C. was that any ethnic group anywhere in Italy (and eventually anywhere in the Mediterranean) could be incorporated in some fashion into the Roman state; neither ethnicity, nor language nor culture were obstacles to Roman growth—provided, of course, the incorporated peoples

were willing to agree to the rules of the new state. The Republic had begun to evolve from a *polis*-type state into a proto-territorial state, without losing the advantages of a *polis*-state or acquiring the administrative disadvantages that normally went with the acquisition of large amounts of conquered territory and resentful, subject populations.

Consequences of the Settlement of 338 B.C.

WHAT ROME AVOIDED First, a permanent class of serfs or slaves was not created. As a result, Roman garrisons were not needed to police the newly conquered territories. Second, no oppressive administrative bureaucracies were imposed by Rome. Roman appointees did not run the dozens of cities that now came under Roman overlordship. Except for the states without the vote (*civitates sine suffragio*), the conquered states paid no tribute to Rome. No Roman judges, tax collectors, or police intruded in the lives of the conquered peoples. What Rome demanded were soldiers in time of war, not taxes. The conquered ran their own internal affairs much as they had in the past. The new Roman state was in fact just a loose confederation of self-administering cities and communities dependent to a considerable extent on mutual tolerance and trust. This goes a long way towards explaining why Roman civic ideology and political propaganda stressed *fides*—trust, good faith, dependability—so much. Because it underpinned domestic culture and social relations in Rome itself, it was logical to promote it also in foreign relations.

WHAT ROME GAINED From economic and military viewpoints, the settlement of the Latin war produced huge gains for Rome. Direct annexation of population and territory was small, but the transformation of its former allies as described above resulted in an overall 37 percent increase of territory and a 42 percent increase of population. The core area of central coastal Italy came under Roman direct control. In emergencies it could call up large bodies of troops and, assuming success in war, could reward all inhabitants of this area with booty and land grants. To order and stability, Rome added tangible material benefits.

The Roman Footprint in Italy

Although Romans were not present in large numbers anywhere outside their central homeland, their fortress-colonies and the roads that connected them with Rome were visible manifestations of their presence or near-presence. The existence of allies and colonies in distant places gave emphasis to the need for good communications at all times of the year and in all weather. Some of these places were genuinely hard to reach, and Rome launched a road building program to link them with each other and with Rome itself. The program took centuries to complete.

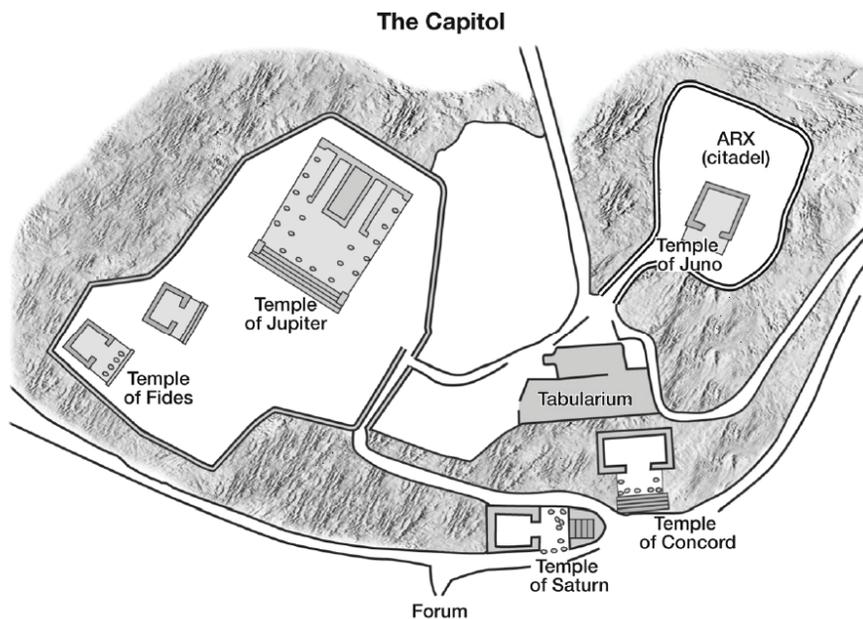
ROADS The Romans learned a great deal about road building from the Etruscans. When they conquered the Etruscan city of Veii, they inherited a preexisting network of roads that connected it to other Etruscan cities to the north and west. To this network the Romans added the *Via Amerina* which connected the important colony of Nepes to Rome. Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber, and Praeneste, a key city in Latium, were linked to Rome by the *Via Ostiensis* and the *Via Praenestina* respectively. The *Via Latina* was the inland route by which Rome kept open communication with Campania, while somewhat later the *Via Appia* provided an alternate route closer to the coast. Most of these roads were built along already established tracks or roads. Their elevation to roads (*viae*) involved straightening where possible, the addition of bridges and culverts, and surfacing

with gravel. Paving with stone, which was an expensive undertaking, came later in fits and starts. An important aspect of these road building activities and the huge expenses involved suggest that Romans had arrived at a high level of self-confidence. They knew that while good roads provided a quick means of reinforcing frontier fortresses and aiding allies, the converse was also true: enemies could use the roads to attack Rome. In fact the Via Latina was used by both Pyrrhus (in the early third century), and Hannibal (later in the same century) when they launched their raids on Rome itself.

CENTURIATION The division of land confiscated from enemies also left a powerful visible imprint on the landscape of Italy. Whether it was a matter of founding a colony or individual allotments an elaborate process known as centuriation (*centuriatio*) was used to guarantee an orderly transfer of land to the settlers and their descendants. Roman surveyors divided up the land to be assigned into squares, rectangles and irregular areas marked by stone boundary markers, a number

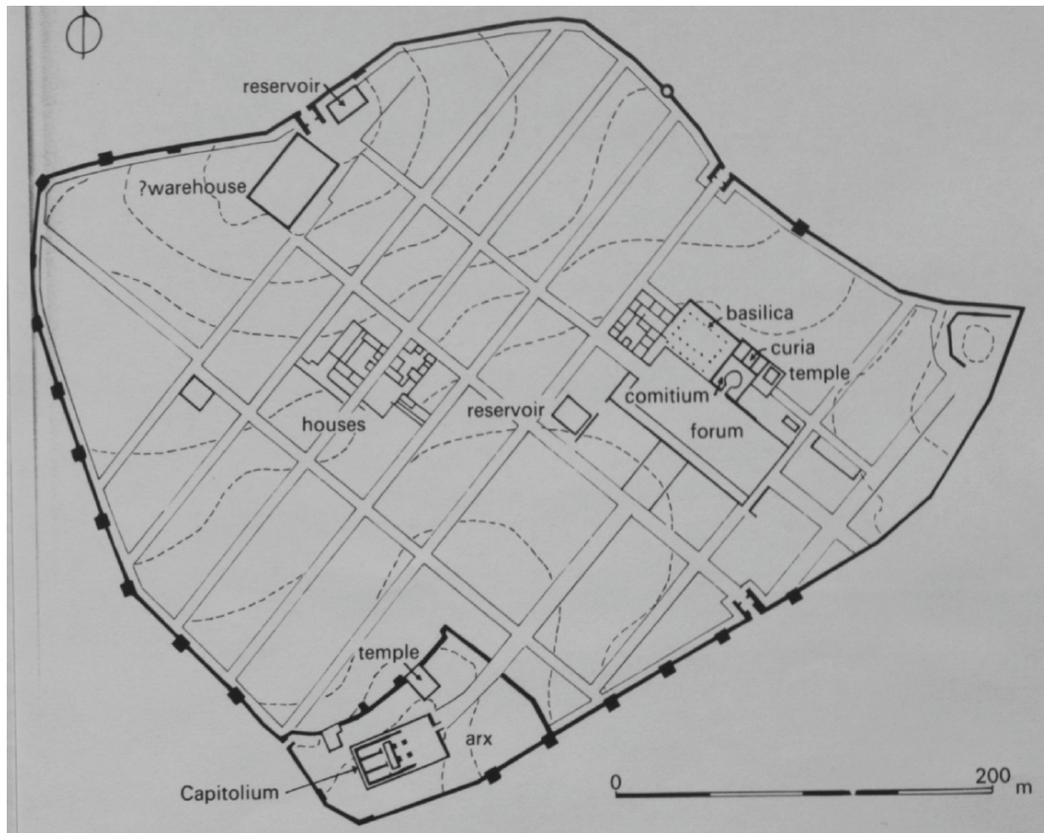


Coin with Fides legend



Plan of Capitoline Hill

The Romans gave visual emphasis to their ideology. The Temple of Fides was located in a prominent position on the Capitol overlooking the Forum as a perpetual reminder to Romans and visitors to Rome of the stock Romans claimed to put in trustworthiness and dependability. The clasped hands on the coin proclaim the dependability of the armies (first century A.D.).



Ground plan of Cosa

Cosa was founded in 273 B.C. as a frontier outpost on the coast north of Rome. The colony had to cope with pirates and the nearby hostile Etruscan city of Vulci. It was surrounded by walls. Eighteen towers facing the sea strengthened the defenses. Its capitolium or tripartite temple to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, was located on the hill above the colony in the arx or citadel. It was built in imitation of its counterpart in Rome. Such "Capitols" were a standard feature of all Roman colonies.

of which survive. Registers were kept of the allotments to keep control of the land distribution process and avoid future disputes.

The work of centuriation is most visible from the air where the marks of the original grids can still be seen in the ground throughout Italy, but most especially in the Po valley and in Apulia in southern Italy.³ The unit of measurement was the *actus* and the normal size of a century was 20 x 20 *actus*, or about 125 acres. The actual lines (*limites*) of the grid were marked by walls, roads and ditches and it is these that have left their mark in the countryside to the present. *Limites* that ran east and west were known as *decumani*; north-south lines were *kardines*.

Centuriation, the presence of Latin speaking peoples in powerfully fortified colonies, and roads linking the colonies to each other and to Rome were constant reminders to the native peoples that although they may have been a majority in terms of population, real power no longer lay with them.

³Centuriation is still visible over large areas of Tunisia, France, Germany, the Danube Valley and parts of the Middle East.

For native elites there was little choice but to cooperate with the new authorities. Thus began the slow, uneven process of “Romanization.” Long before the term “divide and conquer” was invented, Rome was following the procedure throughout Italy as a matter of self-interested statecraft. Eventually it would do so throughout the Mediterranean and a good portion of Atlantic and continental Europe.

The Roman Military

The Roman army had originally been modeled on the close-order fighting unit of the phalanx used by Greek armies. The Roman phalanx, perhaps 4,000 men strong, was made up of heavily armed infantrymen or hoplites who were equipped with cuirass (breast plates), greaves (shin guards), helmets, and round shields. Packed closely together in files eight deep, the purpose of the phalanx was to drive enemy forces from the field and hold the ground captured.

For the siege of Veii, the legion was expanded from 4,000 to 6,000 men, probably by expanding the single class system to five classes. Pay may have been introduced at this time for the purpose of covering the individual soldier’s living costs while away from home. The cavalry unit of the army went from 6 to 18 centuries. By mid fourth century, the single legionary army was split into two legions, and by the end of the century there were four legions. By that time also the phalanx legion had been transformed into the more flexible manipular legion made up of 30 subunits called “maniples” (*manipuli*—“handfuls”), and each maniple was in turn divided into two “centuries” (of 60 to 80 men) commanded by centurions. It took most of the century for the Romans to complete the restructuring of their army, but in the end it was an extraordinarily efficient fighting force.⁴

AUXILIARIES AND THE ALLIES What we think of when we hear the term “Roman Army” is, reasonably enough, an armed body of men made up of Romans. In reality, however, a Roman army was rarely made up of just “Romans.” Brigaded alongside the Roman legions was an equal number of soldiers drawn from its Latin and non-Latin allies. Thus a consular army of two legions would be accompanied on campaign by two legion-equivalents of allies. Under treaty arrangements with Rome, the allies at the beginning of each year were told how many troops they needed to provide and when and where they were to appear. Allied units were made up of 500 men in *turmae* or cohorts, 10 of which made a wing (*ala*)—the term for the legion-equivalent. Their equipment, so far as we can tell, was the same as that of the Romans themselves. The individual allied cohorts were commanded by their own officers called *praefecti*. Somewhat confusingly the whole allied *ala* was commanded also by prefects, but these were Roman officers appointed by the consuls.

3. THE SAMNITE WARS: THE CAMPAIGN FOR ITALY

Down to the settlement of 338 B.C. Rome had been buffered against direct contact with the Samnite federation by the presence of its Hernican and Latins allies. The settlement of 338 B.C., however, put Rome, through its Campanian involvement with Capua, in direct confrontation with the Samnites.

CONFRONTATION WITH THE SAMNITES As the Romans were expanding their hegemony, so were the Samnites. Strategically located on a saddle of mountain land overlooking two of the major plains of Italy, Campania and Apulia, Samnium was in a position to dominate all of central and southern Italy. By the mid-fourth century B.C. it was well on the way to doing so. Previous Oscan incursions from the highlands had, as we have seen, swept the Greeks and Etruscans out of Campania (with

⁴The next chapter has an extended discussion of the military changes that took place in the fourth century. See pp. 80.

the exception of Naples), but when Rome incorporated the Campanians into its commonwealth in 338 B.C., it came into direct competition with the Samnites for control of that area. The Samnites in turn were confronted for the first time not just by individual cities as they had been in the past, but by an organized block of peoples reaching from south of Naples to Etruria. The confrontation between the two powers came in the Liris valley. It is unlikely that at this time either side thought they were about to enter into a multi-phased, decades-long war for supremacy in Italy, but that is what occurred.

Rome strengthened its position in the Liris valley by founding Latin colonies at Cales in 334 B.C. and Fregellae in 328 B.C., and a Roman colony at Tarracina on the coast in 329 B.C.⁵ The founding of Fregellae, which was on the left bank of the Liris, may have been seen as a particularly provocative act because the Samnites had for some time been moving to control that area. In addition, Rome had interests in Apulia, into which the Samnites were infiltrating, where the cities of Arpi and Luceria had requested Roman help. The great conflict was thus a struggle throughout most of central and southern Italy between the urbanized, agricultural populations of the plains and the pastoral highland peoples. For almost a generation the wars dragged on—bloody, confused, unending. They occurred in two phases: the Second Samnite War between 326 B.C. and 304 B.C., and the Third Samnite War between 298 B.C. and 290 B.C.

The Strategic Issues of the Samnite Wars

Each side had strategic advantages and disadvantages. Geographically the Samnites had a major advantage over Rome throughout their protracted contests. “No position in war is stronger,” says the military analyst Correlli Barnett, “than a strategic offensive coupled with a tactical defensive.”⁶ Translated for the war between Rome and Samnium, this means that Italian topography made it easy for the Samnites to attack Roman territory, but difficult for the Romans to attack the Samnite homeland. The most natural approach to Samnium for Roman armies was through Campania, but rugged mountains on Samnium’s Campanian side made any assault from that direction difficult. The Romans always had to attack uphill, as it were, into the mountain fastnesses of the Samnites.

Samnium had a weakness, however: Its rear was vulnerable to an attack from the plains of Apulia. The only problem with an Apulian strategy for Rome was how it was to get its armies into Apulia. Not by sea—Rome lacked a fleet and even if it had one the dangers of shipping men and equipment all around southern Italy into the Adriatic would have made that approach too risky. That left a two-step assault, first a move across central Italy to the Adriatic, followed by a march down the coast into Apulia, as the only alternative. This strategy, too, had its problems. Central Italy’s mountains were full of belligerent tribes and the terrain was horrendous for campaigning.

ALL BAD CHOICES Rome’s choices were all bad choices, but of these the frontal assault on Campania seemed at first the only practicable one. The Romans tried this and, predictably, they failed badly. The battle of Caudine Forks in 321 B.C., which resulted in a whole Roman army being forced to surrender, was, in the opinion of the Romans, their worst defeat in history. Rome was forced to give up its recently established fortresses at Fregellae and perhaps Cales, and its links with Campania, the *Via Latina* and the *Via Appia*, were cut. An uneasy five-year truce followed. With the

⁵Distances from Rome were not great. Fregellae was just 60 miles from away, directly on the line of the *Via Latina*, about halfway between Rome and Campania. Warfare, in other words, was still being conducted within a day or so’s walking distance of Rome.

⁶Correlli Barnett, *The Swordbears*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1975, p. 96

failures of the first round of the war in mind, Rome was forced to rethink its options. It decided on a combined Adriatic-Apulian strategy.

A New Strategy: Isolating North and South

Since its first encounter with the Samnites in the 350s B.C. Romans had been conscious of the danger of having to fight a two-front war with the Samnites on one side and an alliance of Etruscans, Celts and Oscans on the other. Its worst case scenario was for these two groups of enemies to unite. To avoid this possibility Rome had to exploit its central place location, its main strategic asset.

CENTRAL PLACE THEORY In the diagram below, hypothetical country B has central place location relative to countries A and C. At first glance B's position looks dangerous since it could be attacked simultaneously by A and C. However, B has the natural advantage of internal lines of communication which allow the rapid movement of armies from one frontier to another. The attacking nations have no such advantage. If they are to succeed they have to coordinate their attacks exactly, a difficult task under any circumstances. However, there is a caveat: To exploit the advantages of internal lines of communication requires high levels of national self-discipline and a willingness to engage in long term planning.

Romans were conscious of the advantages and disadvantages of their position in central Italy from early times. Their discipline and attention to organization was the product of a society militarized by necessity. They knew what they had to do to survive in a dangerous environment. Rome's strategy, based on its central place location, even if not always followed, was reflexive. Nevertheless the sheer doggedness and intelligence with which the Romans pursued their strategy in the period following Caudine Forks is one of the more visionary feats of statecraft and military planning in history. Less well known than some of Rome's other achievements, it deserves to be looked at in some detail.

BUILDING A BARRIER IN CENTRAL ITALY Rome's initial approach to its two-front problem was necessarily diplomatic. It could not conduct wars in the north with much hope of success while simultaneously contending with the Samnites in the south. From the 350s B.C. on, Rome sought to neutralize the northern threat by seeking long-term truces with key Etruscan and Umbrian cities. A major achievement was a 30-year-truce negotiated in around 330 B.C. with the Senonian Celts (Gauls) who had settled on the Adriatic side of Italy. These were the most threatening (and closest) of all the Celts and it was vital to keep them quiet while wars with Samnium were in progress. Almost to the end, Rome was successful in isolating north and south, though there was trouble in Etruria between 311 B.C. and 308 B.C. When the Celts and Etruscans finally did join in the fighting



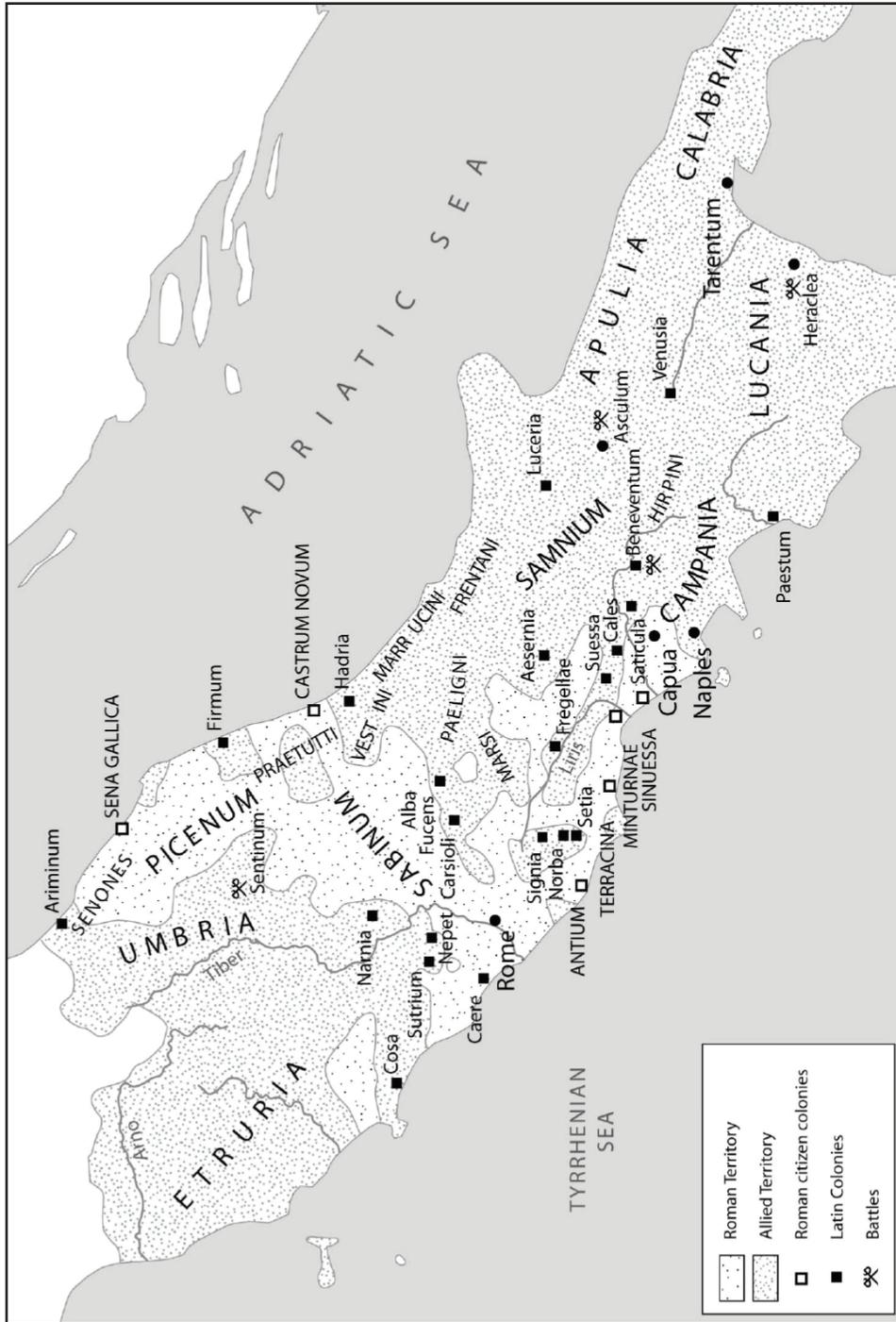
(culminating in the Battle of Sentinum in 295 B.C.), it was too late to make a difference. Nevertheless, Sentinum was a close call.

If Latium was Rome's original central place location it now planned to develop this advantageous position by building a political and military barrier all the way across the Italian peninsula from the Tyrrhenian to the Adriatic Sea. The work on this project began immediately after the humiliation of Caudine Forks, but was not complete until 266 B.C. By expanding to the Adriatic, Rome could accomplish the dual task of making a two-front war unlikely or at least manageable if it occurred, and secondly of defeating Samnium through the Apulian strategy.

THE ADRIATIC-APULIAN STRATEGY The plan was marvelously conceived, but difficult to execute. When Germany and the United States built their internal lines of communication—their network of roads and railroads—they were doing so in peacetime, with huge resources, and in territories that were under their direct control. The Romans, on the other hand, had to accomplish their task over generations, while engaging simultaneously in war and diplomacy with the Samnite Federation, bands of Celts, Etruscan cities, and literally dozens of tribal peoples in the mountainous interior of Italy. Unfortunately we lack the kinds of records that would allow us to bring these events to life in any detail. We can only imagine the kind of discussions that must have taken place in the Senate, in the homes of commons and elite, among Romans, Latins and their allies. Every technique of cajolement and intimidation must have been used. Some potential enemies were no doubt bought off, while others were brow-beaten. The amount of detailed knowledge of Italy's geography, languages, peoples and cultures acquired by Roman senators and ordinary people during this process must have been huge. Fortunately for Rome, there were none of the rapid changes in the make-up of the Senate that occur in democratic modern governments, where it is difficult to pursue consistent strategies from year to year let alone from generation to generation, and where institutional knowledge and memory is shallow.

THE EXECUTION OF THE STRATEGY Except for occasional notices in the sources, we can only follow the general course of Rome's Adriatic strategy. From the start it was successful. We know, for instance, that in 319 B.C. the Frentani made an alliance with Rome, and there followed other alliances with states in Apulia which were looking for help against infiltrating Samnites. By 315 B.C., Roman armies were operating in Apulia, and a major success was achieved that year when the key strategic site of Luceria, a Samnite stronghold, was captured. It was immediately converted into a large Latin colony. By this move Rome established an important fortress from which attacks could be launched on the vulnerable rear of Samnium. In case of disaster, Roman armies could retreat to the defenses of the colony.

But even while Roman armies were having success in Apulia, they were having difficulties in their home territories. They suffered a crushing defeat at Lautulae, a few miles from Terracina, and the victorious Samnite army marched to within 25 miles of Rome, as far as the colony of Ardea, which blocked its progress into Latium. The following year, 314 B.C., saw yet another reversal of fortunes. This time the Samnite army was heavily defeated near Terracina, and Rome was able to reestablish its colonies at Cales and Fregellae and create four new colonies at Saticula, Suessa, Interamna and on the island of Pontiae off the coast of Campania. The aim of this latter colony was to provide sea access to Campania in case the land routes were severed again. One scholar has rightly called Luceria and these new colonies the fetters of Samnium. The Second War with Samnium came to an end in 304 B.C.



Battlefield Italy

THE FINAL ROUND: THE THIRD SAMNITE WAR Rome now set out to consolidate its hold on the three routes across central Italy to the Adriatic. Large Latin colonies were established at Narnia in Umbria to secure the Via Flaminia route (299 B.C.), and at Carseoli and Alba Fucens to secure the Via Valeria (302 and 303 B.C.). Sora was sent out to protect the all-important connecting route to Campania, the Via Latina, from incursions from the north (303 B.C.).

It was fortunate that the Rome took such actions to secure its grip on central Italy. In 298 B.C. the most dangerous round of the three wars with Samnium broke out, and Rome's nightmare scenario of Samnites teaming with Celts, Umbrians and Etruscans in the north became real. Rome had to fight a two-front war after all. In 296 B.C., the Samnite general Gellius Egnatius managed to march an army north through Rome's central Italian barrier and join up with the northern alliance at Sentinum near the Via Flaminia route to the Adriatic. Unfortunately for Egnatius, his army did not receive all the support he expected as he marched north. Rome's new colonies and alliances managed to hold down local populations who might otherwise have joined him. Roman armies were then able to concentrate their forces at Sentinum and crush the Samnites and their allies in one of the most crucial battles in Rome's history (295 B.C.). Two years later the Roman armies defeated the Samnites at Aquilonia in their own homeland. Nevertheless, in the closing years of the war Rome was still heavily engaged in the northwest with central Italian peoples who had risen to join the Samnites. This remained the case until 290 B.C., when one of Rome's legendary heroes, M'. Curius Dentatus, put down the remnants of the revolt and added large areas of Sabine and Praetuttian lands to the *ager Romanus*, Roman territory.

CONSOLIDATION The war with the Samnites ended in 290 B.C., but the Celts were still in the field and a Roman army was badly beaten at Arretium in northern Etruria in 284 B.C. The Celtic forces managed to reach Lake Vadimon, just 50 miles from Rome before being finally defeated.

Once again Rome set about consolidating its gains by planting colonies at strategic locations. Along the Adriatic coast, Hadria, Castrum Novum, Sena Gallica, Ariminum, and Firmum were established as colonies between 289 B.C. and 264 B.C. Large numbers of individual Romans were settled on land confiscated by Dentatus in Sabine and Praetuttian territory. A large Latin colony was established in Apulia at Venusia in 291 B.C. With these fortresses in place, the Romans had made good on their strategy of severing Italy in half—or so they hoped. Their planning was quickly put to a test by the invasion in 280 B.C. of southern Italy by a Hellenistic king, Pyrrhus of Epirus, at the head of a powerful professional Macedonian-style army, and toward the end of the century by the great Carthaginian general Hannibal.

UNANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES It is commonplace to say that victories in war often generate unanticipated and unwanted consequences for the victors. After a generation or more of almost continuous warfare, the Rome that emerged in 290 B.C. was a different one from the Rome that found itself involved with Samnium 350 B.C. Early in the wars with Samnium, Rome had difficulty holding onto its fortress colony at Fregellae in the Liris valley, a mere 60 miles from Rome. Much of the early campaigning took place within a few days march from Rome. The decisive battle of the Second Samnite War was at Terracina in 314 B.C., also only 60 miles from Rome and directly on the Via Appia. Yet, by the end of the Third Samnite War in 290 B.C., Roman armies were regularly deployed far from Rome, and Roman fortresses—principally its Latin colonies in Apulia, Samnium, and on the Adriatic coast—were hundreds of miles distant from Rome. The presence of these centers of Roman power far from the metropolis, often in the heart of hostile territory and difficult to reach, was a new development. The dispersion of Romans, their separation from their homeland, and their oversight was to be at the heart of the constitutional crisis that was to confront Rome over the next couple of generations. By this early date, however, it was evident to at least some percep-

The Importance of Colonies: Fortresses of Empire

“Is every place of such a kind that it does not matter to Rome whether a colony is founded there or not, or are there some places which demand a colony, some which clearly do not? In this affair as in other matters of our state it is worth remembering the care of our ancestors who located colonies in such suitable places to ward off danger that they seemed not just towns in Italy, but fortresses of an empire.” (Cicero, *de lege agraria* 2.73)

tive Romans that the city had already outgrown its traditional city-state or *polis* constitution, and resistance was building to the further expansion of Roman territory.

The War with Pyrrhus

There was another consequence of Roman expansion in Italy that became apparent much more quickly than the brewing constitutional crisis. Involvement with Campania led to the wars with Samnium, but once Rome was victorious in that conflict it found itself involved with new neighbors and new sets of problems.

Rome’s founding of two major colonies in Apulia put it into competition with the Greeks of Tarentum and the protectorate they attempted to maintain over the other Greek cities of the south. Given the usual feuding—both within Greek cities between upper and lower classes and among Greek cities themselves—it was inevitable that some internal party would supply the impetus or at least the pretext for Rome to intervene directly and displace Tarentum’s protectorate with its own.

The occasion was supplied when the Greek city of Thurii found itself under attack from the Oscans of Lucania and appealed for help not to Tarentum but to Rome. The Romans obliged and provided Thurii with a garrison of Roman troops. About the same time three other Greek cities, Locri, Rhegium, and Croton, were also garrisoned by Rome. In retaliation, Tarentum sank part of a Roman flotilla that had supposedly entered its territorial waters, expelled the Roman garrison at Thurii, and installed a democracy in place of the oligarchy Rome had been supporting. When the Romans protested, their ambassadors were grossly insulted publicly in the theater by the people of Tarentum. After Rome declared war, the Tarentines appealed for help to one of the great military adventurers of the post-Alexander the Great world, Pyrrhus of Epirus (modern Albania).

“PYRRHIC VICTORIES” Pyrrhus imagined he could duplicate in the west the victories of his relative Alexander the Great over Persia. In 280 B.C. he arrived with a force of 25,000 men and 20 elephants. To justify his war he claimed that as a descendant of Achilles he was waging a second Trojan War on behalf of the Greeks against the (Trojan) Romans. At Heraclea he won a battle against the Romans, but not before suffering heavy casualties. He offered peace but the Senate rejected his proposal, saying Rome would not treat with an enemy as long as he was on Italian soil. Pyrrhus marched on Rome and reached Anagnina, just 35 miles from Rome, before turning around and returning to southern Italy. He won a second battle at Asculum in 279 B.C. but again suffered heavy casualties. After this defeat he was supposed to have replied when someone congratulated him on his victory: “Another win like this and I’m finished” (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 21.9). Hence the proverbial term “Pyrrhic Victory.” A proposal to create a federation in southern Italy with Tarentum at its head was rejected by the Romans, who were backed by their Carthaginian allies. Never known for his ability to devote himself for long to any one task, in 278 B.C. Pyrrhus left Italy to help the Sicilian Greeks clear their island of Carthaginians. When this expedition failed, he returned to Italy, where in his third battle with the Romans, near Malventum in 275 B.C., he was held to a draw.

Annoying Greeks: “Incompetent to manage their own affairs but thinking themselves competent to dictate war and peace to others.”

The event recorded here occurred in 320 B.C. when the Romans were campaigning in Apulia to the north of Tarentum. The spin, on the event, however, is purely Roman. The time for Greek fecklessness was over. The Greeks had had their shot at hegemony; now it was Rome's.

Just at that moment, as both sides were getting ready for battle, ambassadors from Tarentum arrived and ordered both Samnites and Romans to stop fighting. They threatened that whichever army was responsible for preventing an end of hostilities they would take on themselves on behalf of the other. The consul Papirius listened to the envoys as if he were persuaded by what they had to say and replied that he would have to confer with his colleague. He sent for Publilius [*the second consul commanding the other Roman force*], but went about getting ready during the interval. Then, after he had discussed the situation with Publilius, he gave the signal for battle.

The two consuls were involved in the usual matters that occurred before battle, both religious and practical, when the Tarentine envoys appeared again, hoping for an answer. “Men of Tarentum,” Papirius said, “the keeper of our chickens [*the augur*] tells us that the auspices are favorable and that the omens from the sacrifice are also good. So, you see, the gods are with us as we go into action.” With that he gave the order for the standards to advance and led out his troops, commenting on the folly of a people which was incompetent to manage their own affairs because of internal strife and discord, but thought themselves qualified to dictate limits of peace and war for others (Livy 9.14)

That was enough, and Pyrrhus withdrew from Italy. To celebrate their win, the Romans changed the name of the city from the evil-sounding Malventum to Beneventum. Three years later Pyrrhus removed his garrison from Tarentum, and the city fell to the Romans.

THE FINAL CONQUEST OF PENINSULAR ITALY Pyrrhus' invasion encouraged a revolt by the Samnites and Lucanians that lasted for 10 years. When finally put down, the Romans acted decisively to break up the Samnite Confederation by founding powerful colonies at key sites in their midst, at Beneventum in 268 B.C. and at Aesernia five years later. With the fall of Tarentum and the establishment of these new colonies, Rome's conquest of the peninsula, except for the Celtic north, was complete. No power remained to challenge Rome. Its defense of the urban, settled populations of the peninsula against their traditional enemies—the Oscans and the Gauls—won Rome credit in the eyes of Greeks throughout the world. Pyrrhus was one of the most colorful characters of the period, and was respected for his military abilities. Roman success against him was evaluated accordingly. The Macedonian king of Egypt, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, sent a delegation bearing gifts to Rome in 273 B.C. Greek historians, ever on the lookout for something to write about, took note of the new power rising in the west. Timaeus, a Sicilian Greek historian, identified Rome as a defender of Greek liberties against Carthage, another traditional enemy of the Greeks. To lend dramatic emphasis to his point he made a synchronism between Rome's and Carthage's founding dates.

This chapter has briefly set out the story of the rise of Rome to dominance in Italy, but it has not addressed the question of how it happened from an internal Roman viewpoint. The formal techniques by which Rome made its conquests, such as the incorporation of conquered peoples into its commonwealth, the building of roads, and the establishment of colonies, have been discussed. We have now to deal with the specific mechanisms Rome used to achieve its hegemony. This will be the subject of the next chapter.