

The Roman Republic

Civilizations of the Ancient World | Meeting #22

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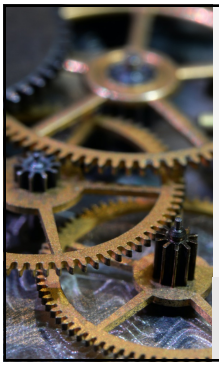

Upcoming Dates

- Monday, November 16
  Clouds essay due
- Thursday, November 26
  No class meeting
- Monday, December 7
  Images essay due
- Sunday, November 22
  Responses for Week 12 Due

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Four things today

- Rome under the kings
- Family and clan in Rome
- The abolishment of monarchy
- The Roman Republic

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Questions about whatever



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Rome under the Kings

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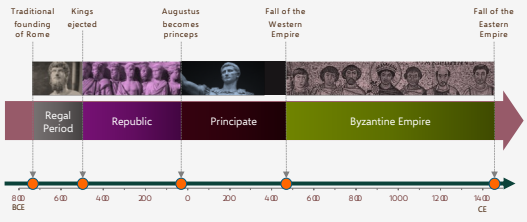
Periods of Roman history



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The Roman king

- Both executive ruler and high priest
- Elected by the nobility

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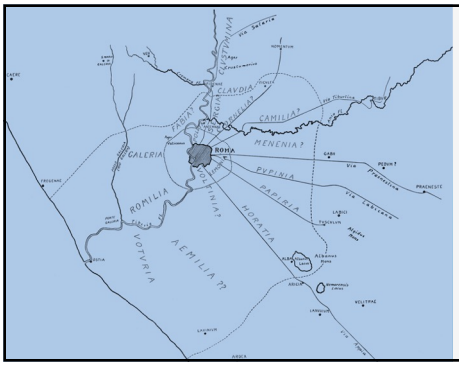

Family and clan

- Families are all-important
- Individuals act on behalf of clan or Rome, not self

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Census and class

- Census used to list those eligible for military service
- Organized according to levels of property ownership
- As Rome militarizes, census shapes the organization of Rome's citizen body

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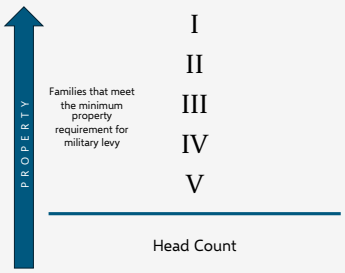
Census



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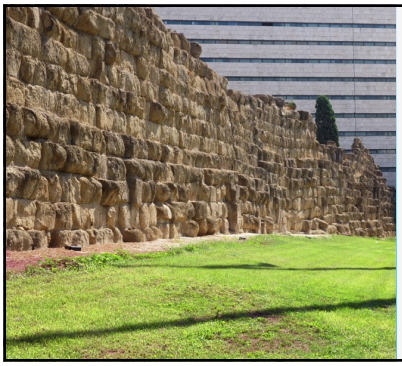

Origins of later institutions

- Census and class
- Walls of Rome
- Assemblies
- Senate
- Pomerium

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Early Roman values

- Virtus
- Pietas
- Fides, Gravitas, Constantia
- Auctoritas

- Later described as the mos maiorum ("the ways of our ancestors")

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Kings of Rome

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(I) Romulus

- Legendary founder
  - Cast out as a baby and left to die by the banks of the Tiber
  - Suckled by a she-wolf
  - Returns to the same place as an adult to found a new city
  - Twin brother Remus
- Stories describe him as strong, effective, and ruthless

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(II) Numa Pompilius

- Election from the nobles described in the annals
- Credited with foundation of religious rules and institutions
- Relations with the gods second in importance to founding of Rome itself

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(VII) L. Tarquinius Superbus

- Tarquin "the Proud"
- Usurps throne
- Arrogant and expansionist
- Despotic repression of nobles and other Latins
- Sybilline books

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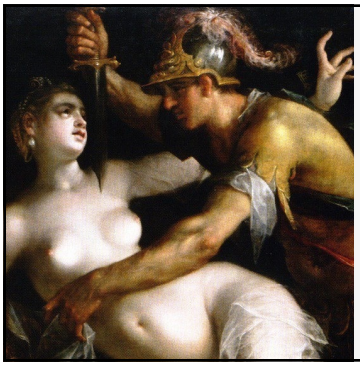

The Rape of Lucretia

- Tarquin's son wants to demonstrate his power
- Choses most honorable of the noble wives and rapes her
- Romans respond in anger
  - Cast out the Tarquin clan
  - Abolish monarchy
  - Vow that Romans will never be enslaved by kings again
- Foundation of the Roman Republic

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The Roman Republic

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Exile of the Tarquins

- Monarchy abolished
- Tarquin clan exiled
- Tarquins rally rebellion
  - Within Rome
  - Among Etruscans
  - Among the Latin city-states

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Battle of Lake Regillus (496 BCE)

- Romans defeat an alliance of 30 Latin city-states
- Twin gods Castor and Pollux seen fighting alongside the Romans
- Establishes Rome
  - King-free
  - Independent
  - Dominant in Latium

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The Republic

- Shared rule by the 200 or so propertied clans
- Designed to prevent any individual from gaining preeminence over other Romans
- Characterized by:
  - Collegiality
  - Annual office
  - Separate voting of imperium
  - Ladder of offices

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The Republic: (1) Collegiality

- All elected officials have a colleague
  - Two consuls
  - Six praetors, etc.
- Equal power
  - Shared responsibility
  - Collegial veto
- A magistrate who acts against the state can be stopped by his college

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The Republic: (2) Annual office

- Elected offices held for one year
- Prevented from building up a power base in office over time
- Side-effect: elected officials focus on the short term

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The Republic: (3) Imperium

- Imperium is the power to command a Roman citizen
  - Domestically: summons to assembly, to stand trial, etc.
  - At war: order into battle
- Not embedded in the office
  - Must be granted to a person by the Roman people
  - Separate vote after the election
- Only the highest elected offices have imperium

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The Republic: (4) Ladder of Offices

- All officials rise up through the same offices in order
- All candidates for a given office have similar experience
  - Shared governance
  - No one stands out

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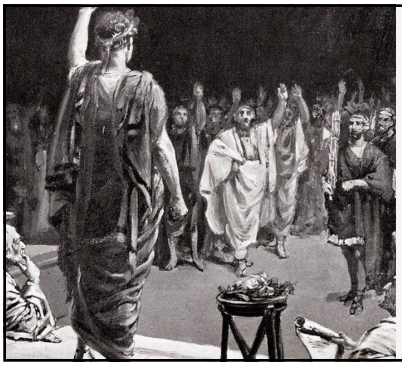

Assemblies

- Roman citizens gather in assemblies to pass laws
- Different assemblies for different purposes

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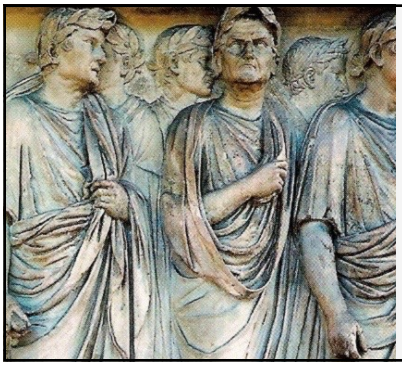

Magistrates

- Elected officials
- Administer Rome, courts, temples, etc.
- Those offices with imperium command armies

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Senate

- Created as a body of experts to advise the king
  - Priests
  - Ex-officials
- Has no official power
  - Can only pass resolutions
- The auctoritas of its members gives it unofficial power

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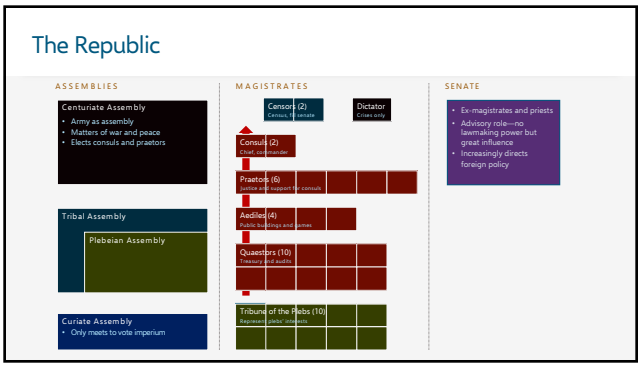
The Republic



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The Early Republic

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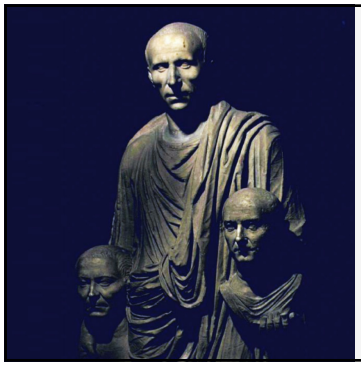

Patricians

- Romans must consult the gods before any act of the state
- Empowers those few families who control the priesthoods
- Patrician families control Rome
  - The state religion
  - All offices with imperium
- Plebeians (non-patrician families) deprived of voice and agency

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"Struggle of the Orders"

- Plebeians vastly outnumber the patricians
- Have nothing common
  - Plebeians are rich and poor, farmer and artisan, urban and rural, etc.
- Force reforms by refusing to levy
- Gain their own officials and council but not imperium

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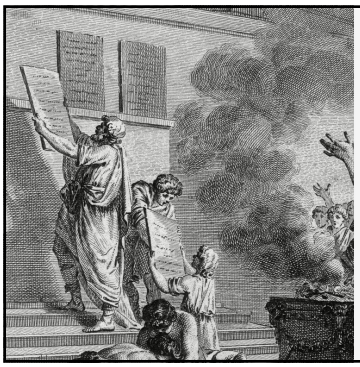

Decemviri and the Twelve Tables

- Six decades in, patrician abuses were worsening
  - Excessive interest on loans
  - Corruption in deciding court cases
- Demands for reform
- 10 lawgivers create a public law code
  - Justice is shared and transparent
  - Reinforcement of shared identity

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