

Alfoldi – Early Rome and the Latins

1. Nomen Latinum

The Latin cities were traditionally divided into 30, perhaps as a reflection of the original migrant tribes that settled that part of Italy. This number was maintained, and included Rome. All states were technically equal in the league and they celebrated a feast at the Alban Mount, and assembled their armies in the meadows below the mountain. Their executive was a dictator latinus, with religious duties

2. Crossroads of Truth and Fiction: The last decade of the 6th century in Latium

Time period of heavy Etruscan invasions. Apparently two Etruscan camps, one supporting Tarquins and the other led by Lars Porsenna. Rome fell into Porsenna's camp and gave him support (perhaps he kicked out the Tarquins), but he was defeated by the Latins in 504 at Aricia, as recorded by a historian from Cyme and passed on through Dionysius. Etruscans seem to have been in charge in Rome in the first few years of the Republic. Many early names in the Fasti later additions. 504 is correct date for foundation of Republic. Sometime before 456 Temple to Diana erected on Aventine, outside pomerium so it could be a Latin shrine. Important for plebeians.

3. Latins as Roman Subjects

The Latins subjected to Rome by the Kings is a big fat myth, as shown by the continuing function of the Latin league with Rome as an equal member down to 338.

4. Fabius Pictor

Fabius Pictor was responsible for shaping much of the early myth of Roman power and civilization, to show the Greeks that the Romans were not barbarians. His work was elaborated on more and more by later historians. Pictor took Aeneas and pushed him back as founder of Rome and invented dynasty of his descendents. Pictor made up all the Roman conquests, perhaps projecting later achievements back in time. He conflated Mastarna and Servius and stuck them between the Tarquins. He made up the story of Tarquin conquering the Etruscans. Under Hellenistic Influence, he put in stories of women (Tarpeia, Lucretia) to cover embarrassing points in Rome History. The Claudians, rivals to the Fabians, are presented in a bad light. Although Pictor falsified much, he was writing to counter Greek and Hellenistic propaganda – Rome only acted every place because she was forced to and so on. It was false but justified for him in the interests of the Roman State.

5. Etruscan Rule

Etruscans at one point subjugated most of Italy. There were 12 main cities in the Etruscan League, ruled at first by Kings. They may have been in Campania around 680. Latium was less appealing to them, but they needed to safeguard their routes to the south. Praeneste was particularly important, but Etruscan stuff is found all over Latium. They were defeated at Cyme in 524 by the Greeks, but maintained major influence in Latium and imported much of their culture. Kings seem to have come from two separate Etruscan cities, Vulci and Tarquinia, with Servius Tullius conflated with Mastarna, attested on Francois tomb in Vulci.

6. Alba Longa and Lavinium

Alba was at one time (pre-urban) the major Latin city, as evidenced by Roman attempts to connect herself to Alba. Lavinium was another major city, and Rome traced its royal line back to both. Lavinium claimed to be the landing place of Aeneas in Italy. Aeneas linked with local deities. Vesta and Penates probably came from Lavinium. There was a Latin Federation cult at Lavinium (the 13 altars). Myth of the white sow is an early Lavinium one, used to justify primacy of Alba. The whole Aeneas and Trojan legend probably came via the Etruscans.

8. Rome During the Early Republic

After Kings, Rome probably continued good relationships with Clusium and Caere, against Veii. Rome and Caere probably came into conflict with Syracuse. Rome was far enough from the mountains to grow while other Latin cities fight the Volscians and others more. Rome badly defeated by the Gauls in 390 (387) but probably not as bad as Livy says, since she bounced back in 10 years. Latins probably helped during this time. Rome soon annexed Tusculum and exerted her control over all Latins until settlement of 338. Rome concluded first treaty with Carthage around 348 (not 508), when she had a considerable stretch of coast.