STUDY GUIDE

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

LECTURE 3

THE FOUNDING OF ROME

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Livy, *The History of Rome*, translated with an introduction by Valerie M. Warrior, book 1, chapters 4-13 and 57-60.

OUTLINE

0:00-5:05 — Why Study Founding Figures

- The Romans understood the importance of a nation's founding to promote unity and establish civic identity.
    - The Romans carried images of their founding, such as the she-wolf nursing Romulus and Remus, throughout the empire.
    - The best source for Rome's founding is Livy, a Roman historian who lived from 64 BC to AD 17 and witnessed the fall of the Republic and rise of the Empire.
    - Livy understood that even though the stories of Rome's founding might be myths, they contained moral exemplars and political lessons that formed the character of the Roman people.

5:06-12:28 — Rome's Founding

- According to Roman legend, Aeneas—the son of the goddess Venus and the Trojan prince Anchises—escaped the destruction of Troy and fled to Italy in the 1100s BC.
    - Aeneas brought his family, a small band of Trojans, and his household gods—the *lares* and the *penates*—to Italy.

    - Aeneas' son, Ascanius, founded the city Alba Longa, where Aeneas' descendants ruled as kings. He established the Tiber River as the border with the Etruscans.
- In the 700s BC, Numitor, a descendent of Ascanius and heir to the throne of Alba Longa, was overthrown by his brother Amulius. Amulius drove Numitor into exile, killed his sons, and forced his daughter, Rhea Silvia, to become a Vestal Virgin to ensure there would be no further heirs from his line.
    - While serving as a Vestal Virgin, Rhea Silvia became pregnant with twin boys and claimed they were the sons of the god of war, Mars. She named the boys Romulus and Remus.
    - Amulius ordered that the infants be executed, but his servants lost their nerve and left the boys in a basket beside the Tiber River.
- Romulus and Remus were found by a she-wolf who nursed them until a shepherd named Faustulus found them and chose to raise them with his wife, Larentia.
    - When the boys grew strong, they began to steal from robbers and other criminals and share their spoils with their neighbors.
    - Some robbers sought revenge, so they captured Remus and took him to Amulius.
    - Romulus led a revolt against Amulius and successfully rescued Remus and reinstated their grandfather, Numitor, as king of Alba Longa.
- In 753 BC, Romulus and Remus decided to build a city of their own.
- According to legend, Romulus and Remus decided to settle who would rule and name the new city through auguries—signs from the gods.
    - Remus claimed the right to rule because he was the first to see birds in the sky.
    - Romulus argued that since he saw more birds, he had won the right to rule.
    - In the conflict, Romulus killed his brother and became the first king of Rome.
- Livy argues that a more common version of the story held that Romulus killed Remus because he mocked the walls Romulus was building for the fledgling city.

12:29-23:45 — The Seven Kings of Rome

- Romulus, the first king of Rome, reigned from 753 to 716 BC. He fortified the city, began offering sacrifices to the gods, and provided laws to bring order and unity to the people.
    - Romulus sought to increase Rome's population through open immigration policies.
    - However, Rome lacked women, so they invited some neighboring tribes to attend a festival for Neptune and kidnapped the unmarried women in what came to be known as the rape of the Sabine women.
    - In an attempt to appease the women, Romulus offered them all the legal rights of marriage including citizenship and a share of the property.

    - The enraged parents of the Sabine women attacked the Romans, but the abducted women interceded between the two armies and sued for peace.
- Following Romulus' supernatural death, the Senate established the *decemviri,* a group of ten men who would rule Rome for five-day terms. After a year, the instability caused by this method led the Romans to desire another king.
- The Senate and the people then elected Numa Pompilius as the second king of Rome.
    - He ruled from 715 to 673 BC and was known for his piety and justice.
    - He built new temples and shrines, established a number of new religious institutions, and reformed the calendar.
- Tullus Hostilius was the third king of Rome from 673 to 642 BC. He was hostile and warlike, but a good king.
- Ancus Marcius served as the fourth king of Rome from 642 to 617 BC. He introduced tension in the royal line by naming the wealthy Lucius Tarquinius Priscus—Tarquin—guardian of his children after his death.
- Following the death of Ancus Marcius, Tarquin sent Marcius' sons on a hunting expedition and convinced the people to elect him as the fifth king of Rome. He ruled Rome from 616 to 579 BC. He and his wife adopted a young boy, Servius Tullius, whom the gods had marked for great things.
- Servius Tullius became the sixth king of Rome, from 578 to 535 BC, after the sons of Ancus Marcius killed Tarquin.
    - Servius tried to eliminate competition for the throne by marrying his daughters to the sons of Tarquin.
    - However, his youngest daughter and Tarquin's eldest son—Lucius Tarquinius—killed their spouses, overthrew and killed Servius, and seized the throne for themselves.
- Lucius Tarquinius was the seventh and final king of Rome from 535 to 509 BC. His pride earned him the name Tarquinius Superbus, or Tarquin the Proud.

23:46-31:24 — The Birth of the Republic

- While on military campaign in 509 BC, Sextus Tarquinius, the son of Tarquin the Proud, and his companions got into a debate about whose wife was the most virtuous. To settle the argument, they decided to visit each of their wives unannounced in the middle of the night to see what they were doing.
    - Lucretia, the wife of Collatinus, won the competition when the men found her weaving with her handmaidens, whereas the other wives were partying.
    - Sextus was filled with lust for Lucretia and returned a few days later and demanded that she sleep with him.

    - Lucretia steadfastly refused, but was overcome when Sextus threatened to kill her and destroy her honor by claiming she was committing adultery with a slave.
- After being raped, Lucretia called her father, husband, and several friends to make a defense of her honor.
- Lucretia made everyone swear that Sextus would not go unpunished and then she stabbed herself to prevent unchaste women from using her as an example to escape punishment.
- Lucius Junius Brutus, one of the friends who witnessed Lucretia's defense, was spurred by this outrage to lead a rebellion against the Tarquins and overthrow the monarchy.
- Brutus and Collatinus were elected the first consuls in the newly formed Republic in 509 BC.

KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS AND PEOPLE

Titus Livius (c. 64 BC – AD 17): known as Livy, he was a historian of Rome who survived the collapse of the Republic.

Aeneas: The son of the goddess Venus and a Trojan prince, he fled Troy at the conclusion of the Trojan War and landed in Italy where he united with the Latin tribe. His descendants ruled the city of Alba Longa and founded Rome.

Romulus: The son of Rhea Sylvia and Mars, he and his twin brother, Remus, were abandoned as children and saved by a she-wolf. Romulus and Remus restored their grandfather as king of Alba Longa before founding the city of Rome. Romulus killed his brother in a fight over who would rule the new city and he became the first king of Rome.

Lucretia: The virtuous wife of Collatinus who was raped by Sextus Tarquinius, the son of the seventh king of Rome. After her rape, she explained what had happened to her friends and family before killing herself lest she become an example for faithless women.

Brutus: A friend of Collatinus who roused the Romans to rebel against the royal Tarquin family. After the Tarquins were overthrown, Brutus and Collatinus were elected the first two consuls of the new Roman Republic.

KEY PASSAGES

"To antiquity is granted the indulgence of making the beginnings of cities more impressive by mingling human affairs with the divine. And if any people should be allowed to sanctify their origins and reckon their founders as gods, surely the military glory of the Roman people is such

that, when they claim that their father and the father of their founder was none other than Mars, the nations of the world tolerate this claim with the same equanimity with which they tolerate our dominion."

- Livy, *The History of Rome*, book 1, preface

"The following are questions to which I would have every reader direct close attention: the kind of lives men lived; what their moral principles were; by what individuals and by what skills, both at home and in the field, our dominion was born and grew."

- Livy, *The History of Rome*, book 1, preface

"Coming down from the surrounding mountains, a thirsty she-wolf heard the infants' cries and turned in their direction. She gave the infants her teats so gently that the master of the royal flock found her licking them with her tongue."

- Livy, *The History of Rome*, book 1, chapter 4

"At that point the Sabine women, whose abduction had given rise to the war, dared to advance amid the flying weapons, their womanish fear overcome by the terrible situation. With loosened hair and torn garments, they rushed in from the side, parting the battle lines and checking the battle rage. Appealing on the one side to their fathers, on the other to their husbands, they begged fathers-in-law and sons-in-law not to defile themselves with impious bloodshed, nor stain with parricide the offspring of their blood—grandfathers their grandchildren, fathers their children."

- Livy, *The History of Rome*, book 1, chapter 13

"After the lapse of a few days, Sextus Tarquinius went to Collatia with just one companion. . . . Burning with passion, once he saw that it was safe all around and everyone was asleep, he drew his sword and went to the sleeping Lucretia. . . . When he saw that she was resolute and unmoved even by the fear of death, he added the threat of disgrace to her fear: after killing her, he would murder a slave and place him naked by her side, as evidence that she had been killed because of adultery of the lowest kind. With this terrifying threat, his lust prevailed as the victor over her resolute chastity. Sextus Tarquinius departed, exulting in his conquest of a woman's honor. Lucretia, grief-stricken at this terrible disaster, sent the same message to her father in Rome and her husband in Ardea, bidding each to come with a trustworthy friend. . . . 'The marks of another man are in your bed. But only my body has been violated; my mind is not guilty. Death will be my witness. But give me your right hands and your word that the adulterer will not go unpunished. Sextus Tarquinius is the man.' . . . She took a knife that she had hidden in her garments and plunged it in her heart."

- Livy, *The History of Rome*, book 1, chapter 58

"Brutus took the knife from Lucretia's wound and held it up, dripping with blood, as he proclaimed, 'By this blood, most chaste until it was defiled by a prince, I swear and take you, O gods, to witness that I will pursue Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, together with his wicked wife and all his children, with sword, fire, and indeed with whatever violence I can."
- Livy, *The History of Rome*, book 1, chapter 59

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why is it important for a people to study and understand their founding? What does the founding of Rome say about the Roman character?

Why does Livy say we should study history and Roman historical figures in particular?

What were the primary challenges faced by the Romans?

NOTES