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Kathryn Lomas. *The Rise of Rome: From the Iron Age to the Punic Wars.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018. 432 pp. \$35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-65965-0.

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

This book is one of a new series by Harvard University Press on the history of the ancient world. It is one of the first books to offer a comprehensive overview of the early development and rise of Rome for a general public—particularly undergraduates, as well as interested laymen.

Lomas gives an admirable overview of a period for which very few primary sources exist, at least not in the form of written accounts by eyewitnesses. Lomas therefore has to fully engage with the available archaeological and epigraphic materials, and does so excellently. It is always difficult to bring such a poorly documented period to life, especially if even the most basic events and developments of the period are under debate. However, Lomas manages to draft a lively sketch of life in the regal and early republican period, supported by a large variety of color plates and black-and-white drawings.

Part 1 focuses on early Italy and the foundations of Rome. In the ninth century, when this book starts, Rome was just of the many settlements in Latium, perhaps located at an exceptionally well-chosen location, but with no particular claim to regional dominance. Lomas therefore starts by sketching the histories of the peoples, within and outside Italy, that played an important role in the peninsula at this time: the archaeologically attested Etruscans, Greeks, and Phoenicians as well as the mythical involvement of the Trojans and the Sabines. Throughout the volume, Lomas clearly articulates the involvement of the Italian peoples with the history of Rome. In doing so, she rightly points to the great amount of migration that occurred in ancient societies in general, thus dismissing any simplistic ideas about conquest of

one people by another—the Etruscans did not outright conquer Rome or Campania, as has been suggested, but their cultural influence was nevertheless large.

Next, Lomas discusses the “orientalizing revolution” of the seventh century. In this period, rapid social and economic change occurred in Italy. A wealthy international elite emerged, connected through ties of marriage and friendship, which displayed its status through conspicuous consumption. At this time, the city of Rome had converged from a number of small settlements into an urban center of regional importance.

The second part of the volume covers the period 600-400, in which many crucial developments in state structures and power relations in central Italy occurred. In the sixth century, the city-state became the predominant type of state organization throughout Italy. Many cities saw investment in their layout and public buildings in this period; Rome in the late sixth century looked very different than a century before. After the fall of the kings—in a period that saw political and economic disruption in many areas of Italy—the fifth century was a period of change in Rome and Italy, connected to the rise of the Samnites as a clearly distinguished ethnic group.

Next, Lomas gives a detailed but very readable account of the “struggle of the orders.” At the heart of the conflict between patricians and plebeians was access to power: political, social, religious, and economic. This was a period of experimentation in many regards, both political—for example, the number of magistrates and their functions—as well as legal, with a number of new laws coming into force in the fifth and fourth centuries. At the same time, conspicuous consumption by the elite

focused more and more on the sponsorship of public and religious buildings rather than private houses and tombs, emphasizing the growing importance and power of the state in Roman society.

Part 3 focuses on the Roman conquest of Italy. From the late fifth century, Rome gradually expanded its power in central Italy. This brought considerable economic advantages, leading to great changes in the city itself. Rome was further enlarged in the fourth century, with new public amenities, an impressive city wall, the new Via Appia, a new port, *et cetera*. The struggle of the orders had been more or less resolved; a new, mixed aristocracy was now in power and displayed its wealth in private houses as well as the sponsoring of public buildings, paid for by the spoils of war.

Important aspects of the Roman conquest of Italy were colonization and road-building. Through these methods, Rome tightened its control of the peninsula, but also impacted economic developments—whether a settlement was located near the new road system determined its economic performance. In some aspects of the discussion on colonization, Lomas relies a little too much on traditional scholarship, which has been challenged by a large number of recent publications. However, this is inevitable in a book of this type, and in general Lomas succeeds remarkably well in succinctly and clearly describing the main developments of the period while also giving attention to the intricacies of the scholarly debate.

The final part of the book discusses the development of Rome from a city-state to the dominant power in Italy in the fourth century. This focuses on a variety of changes that occurred in this period, which provided the basis for Rome's dominance in the remainder of the Republic. The most important of these were the final settlement of Rome's constitution and the role of the various assemblies, the power of the Senate, the arrangement of state religion, the further development of the Roman army, the final emergence of a new nobility, the growing influx of wealth into Rome, the emergence of a slave society, and the growing influence of Greek culture in Rome. With this, Lomas leaves an excellent starting point for the next volume in this series.

The book is supported by a large variety of supplementary materials. First is a note on sources that discusses the challenges of interpretation of the limited number of ancient sources that have survived from this period. There is a bibliography as well as a section guiding readers toward other essential works. A useful guide to sites, museums, and online resources points archaeology enthusiasts to the best places in Italy to visit; unfortunately, the number of online resources mentioned in this section is rather small.

This volume is recommended reading for all nonspecialists interested in the early history of Rome. It sets a high standard for this new series and it is to be hoped that the other volumes will be able to live up to its example.

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