**Lecture Two -- The Regal Period to the Early Republic.**

**Overview**

According to later tradition, Rome was initially ruled by kings. We shall examine the traditions about the kings of Rome, from Romulus to Tarquinius Superbus, and shall see how the sources for this period are scant and difficult to use. Of note will be the fact that the kings were "used" in later traditions to explain Rome's early formation in various spheres. Finally, we shall examine the problem of the Etruscan "domination" of Rome under the last three kings.

**I**. All Roman sources agree that Rome was rule initially by kings.

**A.** There were well-formed later traditions about the kings.

**1**. There were seven kings in the so-called Regal Period (753-509 BC). They were, in order: Romulus, Numa Pompilius, Tullius Hostilius, Ancius Marcius (the Latin or Sabine Kings), Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullius, Tarquinius Superbus (the two Tarquins were Etruscans).

**2**. Each king had a set of stories attached to him.

**B**. The sources available to our main account of the early period in Livy were scant.

**1**. Livy had access to now-lost written accounts by earlier writers; all, however, were far later than the Regal Period.

**2**. There were received legends.

**3**. Some archival and epigraphic material may have survived for Livy, but not for us.

**4.** Family histories also filled out the picture.

**5**. For the modern scholar, comparative material from other early monarchies is available, as well as archaeological investigation of early Rome.

**C**. The operation of Roman kingship was noteworthy.

**1.** The kings were not hereditary, but chosen by election from among a council of nobles (the senate).

**2**. Between kings, an *interrex* held office.

**3**. Kings had authority over three areas of government: military affairs, administration of justice, and religion.

**II**. The existence of the kings themselves is not in doubt, but the historicity of the individual reigns is much more troublesome.

**A**. There is little doubt about the overall veracity of the Regal Period.

**1**. The ancient written sources are unanimous about the existence of the Regal Period.

**2**. The earliest Latin stone inscription from the sixth century BC, on the Black Stone in the Roman Forum, mentions a king (*rex*).

**3**. Comparative analysis with other (Greek, Etrusan) polities suggests that kings regularly ruled early archaic communities.

**B**. The details, however, are much more questionable.

**1**. Too few kings rule over too many years (seven kings for 245 years).

**2**. The stories surrounding the kings are moral dramas or etiological tales more than historical accounts.

**3**. The names of some of the kings themselves raise some suspicions.

**4**. Kings' "functions" are suspicious.

**5**. Archeological evidence suggests an elaboration of Rome in the period c. 625 -- 500 BC; this may be the real Regal Period.

**III**. The last kings of Rome are traditionally seen as "Etruscan." This view has been recently challenged.

**A**. The traditional view was that the Etruscans conquered Rome, hence the Etruscan kings.

**B**. More recently, this view has been challenged in favor of an Etruscan influence on Rome that was not in the form of political domination. Rome remained predominantly Latin with Etruscan families gaining influence there, as they did elsewhere, but there was no "Etruscan" period as such.

**Regal Society**

We now turn to examine the shape of early Roman society as reconstructed from available evidence. Several features of later Roman society, it seems, were already in evidence in the very earliest period of Roman history. We shall also examine the shape of government and politics on the eve of the Republic's foundation.

**I**. Regal society at Rome was dominated by aristocratic landowners, with those below them tied by binds of favor and obligation.

**A**. Early Roman society was typically archaic, which includes the existence of slavery.

**1**. Among the freeborn population, the broadest distinction was that bewteeen citizen and non-citizen.

**2**. All citizens were grouped into units called "tribes." Initially there were three tribes, but in later centuries they reached a total of thirty-five.

**3**. One of the chief duties of citizenship was military service in the Roman army, which fought in the phalanx formation at this early date.

**4**. As with contemporary societies in Greece, the citizenry was led primarily by aristocratic landowning families.

**5**. All families, it seems, were grouped into clans (singular *gens*, plural *gentes*).

**6**. The so-called "three names" of Roman citizens reflects the primacy of the *gens* in the familial and social order.

**B**. Prominent families and common families were tied by a system called *clientela*.

**1**. The social system of clientship (*clientela*) was in operation.

**2**. A patron granted favors and generally helped a client, and in return he received support, loyalty, and due deference and respect.

**3**. *Clientela* helped offset the horizontal stratification of Roman society. However, not all classes or persons were involved in the *clientela*.

**II**. At this early date it is possible that the first social "Orders" appeared.

**A**. In Roman society an "Order" was a social rank, a statement of status.

**1**. The first Order to appear seems to have been the Patriciate.

**2**. Patricians were defined by birth, and thus by their names; they were the most privileged group within aristocracy.

**3**. The circumstances surrounding the emergence of the patricians are obscure; various reconstructions have been offered by modern scholars.

**4**. Whether or not the other social Order, the Plebs, was in existence in this early period is not clear.

**III.** Politics under the Regal system of government were controlled by aristocrats more than by the kings.

**A**. Kings were chosen from among the members of the senate and ratified by the people, that is, the adult make citizens meeting in assembly.

**1**. The status of the senate in this very early period is unclear; it may have been an ad hoc council of advisors to the king.

**2**. The people were grouped into voting units called *curiae* and met in an assembly called the Curiate Assembly (*comitia curiata*). There are parallels for this in Greek and other archaic cultures.

**3**. The main function of the Curiate Assembly was to ratify the senate's choice of a new king and officially to confer the power of command (*imperium*) upon him.

**B**. Brief consideration of the so-called "Servian Constitution" (after Servius Tullius) illustrates many of the problems in dealing with the Regal Period.

**1**. Many of the features of the system are clearly anachronistic, but some may date to the Regal Period.

**2**. The difficulty lies in determining which ones do.

**The Beginning of the Republic**

With the expulsion of the kings in 509 BC, Rome became a Republic governed by annually elected magistrates. We shall now discuss the traditional tale of the foundation of the Republic and the criticisms leveled against it by some modern scholars. We shall also review how the constitution of the fledgling Republic developed, and consider social developments that were to lead to the Struggle of the Orders.

**I**. In Roman tradition, the Republic was founded following an atrocious act that spurred a *coup d'*état.

**A**. Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of Rome, was a poor ruler who enacted various policies that were unpopular.

**B**. His son, Sextus Tarquinius, raped Lucretia, a nobleman's wife, who subsequently committed suicide. The assault sparked a coup.

**1**. A family friend of Lucretia's husband, L. Junius Brutus, helped the dead woman's incensed family to organize resistance against Superbus; many members of the Tarquin clan were also part of the plot.

**2**. Tarquinius was forced to abandon Rome.

**3**. A plot to restore the monarchy led to Brutus having to execute his own two sons.

**4**. Assisted by Lars Porsenna, king of nearby Clusium, Tarquinius attempted to regain Rome by force of arms, but failed.

**5**. A subsequent attack by Porsenna on the Latins failed at the Battle of Aricia (506 BC), and he withdrew back to Clusium.

**C**. Modern scholars have treated this cycle of stories in different ways; none accept them as they are.

**1**. The stories are, on the face of it, typical of the early history of Rome: romantic, heroic, and didactic.

**2**. Another ancient tradition records that the Romans surrendered to Porsenna, and that he imposed a humiliating treaty on Rome

**D**. Modern scholars, faced with these difficulties have come up with a variety of alternative reconstructions of events, such as:

**1**. The expulsion of the Tarquins is to be read against the background of waning Etruscan power in Italy in the fifth century BC.

**2**. The transition from monarchy to Republic was not a single, dramatic event, but rather a slow process stretching into the mid-fifth century BC.

**3**. The story of Lucretia is, in fact, not improbable, given comparable "personal" events in other royal dynasties that had broad political effects.

**4**. Following the alternative ancient tradition, Lars Porsenna took Rome and abolished the monarchy before retiring after Aricia.

**5**. In the end, though, the evidence is just too unreliable to be sure about what happened in detail.

**II**. The young Republic began developing its form of government.

**A**. The form of Roman Republican government evolved over the centuries. The early years are, unsurprisingly, somewhat unclear.

**1**. Kings were replaced by two magistracies, called consuls (or praetors).

**2**. Later consular lists (fasti) went all the way back to 509 BC, but there are some suspicions that the very early names are later interpolations.

**3**. From the early Republic, the consuls shared power with colleagues with limited tenure (yearly elections).

**4**. There were two popular assemblies (comitia curiata, and comitia centuriata).

**5**. In times of great emergency, a dictator could be installed for six months to deal with the emergency. The dictator nominated a second-in-command, the Master of Cavalry (magister equitum).

**6**. The former king's duties now devolved to the magistrates and to priests, the most important of whom was the pontifex maximus; there was also a rex sacrorum, probably a purely religious incarnation of the old king.

**III**. The Order of the plebs may have arisen in the Early Republic.

**A**. The plebeians were the other major Order of citizens.

**1**. In later years, the plebs comprised all those who were not patricians.

**2**. Initially, however, the plebeians may have been a restricted Order of citizens, perhaps poorer and less influential men with their own sociopolitical agenda.

**3**. Rich families only appear to have joined the plebs later when the plebeians became a political and social force to be reckoned with, in the context of the Struggle of the Orders.