

THE MONIST

PRIMITIVE ROME.¹

PHILOSOPHERS endeavor to discover the origin of things, anthropologists the origin of man, and all naturalists the origin of living beings. So archæologists delve into the sites of ancient cities to find the origin of civilisation, or the humble birth of a city which has been distinguished for its magnificence or its power.

Man is not satisfied to know merely how things are, especially the noteworthy, nor is he content to know merely the great works of man. He wishes to know also how these things have been produced, and how the greatness of man has developed. Consequently he searches for origins with an anxious curiosity, and notices the least phases of increase and development with a religious zeal. All this explains, in part at least, the almost instinctive love of antiquity, even in men who are unable to estimate its value and significance.

Rome has been venerated on account of its historical greatness, its immense power, and the great and numerous monuments it has left in all parts of the world into which its dominion has extended. It has always been a center of attraction to all cultivated men, and visitors to its ruins have been innumerable—the too many ruins which are scattered all over the city. In the presence of these ruins, which bring to mind a world destroyed, the imagination rises and, leaping through space and time, calls forth a religious sentiment which makes a ruin a sacred relic to be adored, and in-

¹ Translated from the author's manuscript by Prof. Ira W. Howerth, of The University of Chicago.

vests with a halo every stone, every inscription, and every little piece of sculpture, which frequently are of no value in comparison with the creations of modern art.

A few years ago we admired the Coliseum, the Arch of Septimius Severus, the Basilica Julia, the almost irreconisable ruins of the Palatine, the Cloaca Maxima, which by the way is by no means primitive, the *Meta sudante*, etc. We admired the artistic remains of the Roman and the Trajan Forums, the two celebrated columns, the Antonine and the Trajan, all imperial and relatively recent constructions. We entered with sacred horror the labyrinthine sepulchre of Scipio, excavated in the Tufa, and we visited the tomb of Cecilia Metella, or the Pyramid of Cestus. But now our attention is turned to a difficult investigation, and yet one which rouses greater curiosity, namely, an inquiry into the origin of Rome.

When the engineer Boni, who directed the excavations in the Forum and who investigated indefatigably this center of ancient Roman life, first applied the pick to discover what was hidden under these ruins, all the fetich worshippers, archæologists, and dilettante raised a howl of protest against the profaner who would remove a single stone of the Forum and dig a trench to explore it. But now, after some discoveries of great value, the horror has diminished, but is by no means ended, for it is still desired that many parts of the surface which are already known, and that part which really forms the alphabet of Roman archæology, namely, that of the Imperial epoch, be left undisturbed.

No one will be astonished to learn that the place of the Roman Forum, and which bears that name, although the Forum occupies only a part of it, has to-day an altitude above the sea which it did not have at various times from the origin of Rome to the Empire. At present its altitude is from fourteen to fifteen metres, and its slope is less than what it must have been in primitive times. And so the two neighboring hills, the Palatine and the Capitoline, must have had a higher elevation in relation to the valley in which were founded the Forum and other monuments.

If at its present level the Forum is flooded when the Tiber is out of its banks and remains submerged like the Pantheon and

some parts of the lower city, in primitive times the lowest part of the valley between the Palatine and the Capitoline must have been a swamp, as recent excavations plainly show, and must have been uninhabitable. During the various epochs of the city there was a gradual and continuous rise in elevation which continued down to the Imperial epoch. The excavations of to-day reveal a series of strata which are, so to speak, the sediment which has modified the area of that center of Roman life where transpired the great popular events, and from which departed the legions for the conquest of the world. For more than seven centuries that small bit of ground witnessed the destruction and reconstruction of houses, temples, sewers, prisons, and political edifices. So that to-day there are found one above the other the remains of old buildings which have been destroyed or modified, sometimes the ruins of one palace above those of another. All this appears chaotic enough, but it is the expression of the life of the successive periods of the city from its origin to its final destruction by the barbarians.

If one did not know that for seven hundred years at least, except during the temporary occupation of the Gauls, the dominion of Rome was not changed, and that the same people dwelt there, one might believe that various invasions and transfers of power had transformed the city. And yet it is a well-known fact that the invaders of a state do not change the places occupied by their predecessors, at least only in exceptional cases, because they find already established what they could create only at great expense and with much labor. The sudden changes which have taken place in the city of Rome during the long period of its existence are due, then, to the many and grave vicissitudes to which it was subjected in about seven centuries of its most active public life. But to know the construction and reconstruction of the city in the valley where the Forum stands is not to know its origin, that humble origin from which arose its grandeur and which contained the germs of its immense vitality, on account of which Rome was superior to other contemporaneous cities. But now the exploring (by some thought to be the devastating) hand of Boni discovers now something which tradition had handed down in historical

works, now something which no one knew anything about. Among many things I shall speak only of two; one of which occasioned grave disputes between the archæologists and the philologists of all nations; the other a surprise to many, even to those who confidently believed themselves able to foretell in accordance with ideas now held something about the origin of Rome and of the Latin civilisation.

STELE WITH AN ARCHAIC LATIN INSCRIPTION.

The *Lapis Niger*, which is an area paved with ancient black marble, about twelve Roman feet in width, about a foot thick, and enclosed, was discovered in the center of the Comitium. It is rumored that at the depth of one and forty hundredth metres they covered an esplanade of yellow tufa (from the Palatine or from the upper strata of the Capitoline underneath the clay) supporting two oblong quadrilateral pedestals decorated with magnificent Etruscan *gola*, with the face turned to the north, that is, toward the Curia Hostilia.

Passages from ancient authors referring to this place include the well-known passage from Festus which refers to the *Niger Lapis* almost as the mark of the funeral place in the Comitium; that of Varro which places the Rostra in front of the Curia, and another from Varro which places the sepulchre of Romulus behind the Rostra: *ubi etiam in huius rei memoriam duos leones erectos fuisse constat*. The tradition of the sepulchre and of a lion (stone) has been gathered also from Dionysius of Halicarnasus. Passing beyond a large house at the west, the esplanade of tufa is transformed, bends to the left and supports a plinth slightly curvilinear which in turn supports the trunk of a monolithic cone of yellow tufa .48 metres in height and with a diameter of .773 metres at the base, and .695 metres at the top. Behind the trunk of the cone, at a distance of .171 metres from the front, rises a half column of tufa in the form of a truncated quadrangular pyramid, with smooth corners, .47 metres by .518 metres at the base, and broken off at a height from .455 metres to .610 metres, not counting the part enclosed in the paved surface. On the four sides and upon the cor-

ner at the southwest angle of the half column, which is .053 metres in size, is the inscription.¹

The inscription begins from right to left and is folded back on the second line from left to right and so on successively in the manner called boustrophedon. The lines are therefore not horizontal but vertical, so that the words begin at the base and run toward the top and then re-descend in boustrophedon, as it is called.

This method of writing recalls the most ancient of Greek inscriptions. There is no example of it in Etruscan, Umbrian, Oscian or archaic Latin inscriptions. Some epigraphs of Picenus and of Marsi preserve the old style. Since in Greece the boustrophedon appeared between the seventh and the sixth century, it is held by some that the inscription of the Stele must belong at least to the sixth century. According to others it is more recent, but I need not discuss this, for the matter is still *sub judice* and is related to the discussion of types of writing and to that of the archaic language itself. (Fig. 1.)



Fig. 1.

The inscription, according to the reading of Gamurrini, is as follows :

Quoi hoi.... / sakros : es / edsorm.... /eiasias / necei :

¹ From *Notizie degli scavi di antichità*, 1899, Boni relatore.

lo..../.....evam / quos: ri..../....m: kalato / rem: hap..../
ciod: iovxmen / ta: kapia: dotav.... / m: i: te: ri: i:..../
m: quoi ha / velod: ne qu.... /od: iovestod..../ iovo-
 viod....

The inscription is thus disposed upon the sides of the Stele, and begins at the bottom of the western side. (Fig. 2.)

. . . . IOH IOVQ
 SAKROS:ES
 MROSD
 EIASIAS
 OJ:IECEJ
 EVAM
 IY:SOVQ
 OTAJAX:M
 REM:HAP
 CIOD:IOVXMEN
 VATOD:AIKAX:AT
 I:IY:ET:I:M
 M:QVOI HA
 VQEN:DOJEV
 OD:IOVESTOD
 OIYOYIOD...

Fig. 2.

Others have transcribed the inscription with some variations, but this is not the place to speak of these, because every variation implies a different interpretation, and therefore the problem to re-

solve is the interpretation. I make no pretension to being a philologist by profession, but I may say that the philologists of many nations have encountered insuperable difficulties, and are still engaged in lively disputes without coming, it seems to me, to any definite results.

The principal difficulties are two: The inscription is incomplete because the Stela is broken and the upper part is wanting, and it is cut longitudinally, so that the continuity of the lines is broken. If it had been cut horizontally, we should have the lower part of the inscription entire and might read the last part of it without interruption. But there is another difficulty, it appears to me, and that is this: the inscription does not contain the Latin as we know it, but a language spoken by the people in that epoch. This language was not at that time completely formed, and doubtless contained many parts of the vocabulary of a language anterior to that with the Aryan inflection, that is, of a language spoken by the indigenous Italians. The effort to interpret all the words by comparing them with the Aryan languages, while overlooking what might be indigenous, produces greater obscurity and prevents any complete interpretation.

I have many times expressed the opinion, an opinion based upon observed facts, that the Italian languages were formed upon the soil of Italy itself; hence, all the linguistic elements of the languages spoken prior to the Aryan invasions could not have been lost. Even to-day we find the relics of these languages in the vocabulary and the inflection of every language of the Aryan type. In a recent work I have shown this conclusively.¹ If this is true, it is not possible to interpret the fragmentary words of the archaic inscription of the Roman Stele with the Latin vocabulary alone. Possibly the Stele will remain undeciphered, like many other inscriptions of Latium! But this does not diminish the importance and the value of the discovery. Perhaps it even increases it, because it shows once more that the Latin language and the Roman

¹ Compare my works: *Arii e Italici*, Turin, 1898; *The Mediterranean Race. The Origin of the European Peoples*, London, 1901; *Gli Arii in Europa e in Asia*, Turin, 1902 (bearing the date 1903).

people which speak it were born of many elements, and it represents an obscure fringe of primitive Rome.

AN ARCHAIC SEPULCHRE.

A discovery not less important than the preceding is that of an archaic sepulchre with tombs for two different funeral ceremonies, incineration and inhumation.

The engineer Boni, testing in various places the depth of the area between the Palatine and the Capitoline which contained Republican and Imperial Rome, that is to say, the valley where the Roman Forum, the temples and the other monuments are found, discovered near the foundations of the Temple of Faustina a tomb for incineration (April, 1902). By an exploration of the foundation of the Temple, and from the depth of the Tomb, it is easily seen that the architect who erected the temple not only ignored the existence of a very ancient sepulchre, but having discovered it cared so little for it that he destroyed that part which served him in laying the foundation of the temple.



Fig. 3.

The tomb is situated at a depth of 4.50 metres below the present level of the Forum and 10.63 metres above the level of the sea. It consists of a dolium containing a vase with charred bones, a cin-

erary urn, and other smaller vases, among which is one with a half-moon shaped handle characteristic and common in the Terremare of the valley of the Po. The dolium was packed in a ditch or sink which was .60 metres in diameter and .45 metres in depth. In the



Fig. 4.

cinerary urn were found the charred remains of a human skeleton crumbled by a fire which must have been very hot, and some remains of the bones of other animals; no trace of metal. (3, 4.)

Some months afterward another tomb was discovered at almost the same level as the first, but of a different character. It consisted in a kind of box formed by blocks of tufa placed about .50 metres from the sink containing the dolium with the cinerary urn, and contained an inhumed, but not burned, skeleton. This skeleton is still in place (Aug. 18, 1902), for only the upper part of it has been uncovered, the cranium and the upper part of the thorax. The remainder of the skeleton is still covered with earth. The place contiguous to this tomb gives indications of other neighboring tombs, but it cannot be easily explored without destroying or damaging the constructions which stand above it and which belong to the

Republican period. At a distance of a few metres, however, in freer ground, another exploration has succeeded in discovering new tombs for incineration, of which some contain cottage urns, well known by their forms, because other similar urns have been found in Latium and elsewhere. The discovery of these few tombs is sufficient to demonstrate the existence of a very ancient sepulchre in the valley which contains the Forum and the other remains of Republican and Imperial monuments lying at the foot of the Palatine and the Capitoline.¹

It is no new thing to discover in Rome tombs for cremation mingled with those for inhumation. About twenty years ago such tombs were discovered not far from the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in the Via dello Statuto. I myself possess a skull from these tombs, and many other skulls, also studied by me, are preserved in the Capitoline Museum.² In Latium several burying-grounds with tombs for incineration have been explored, and a year ago one near Grottaferrata in the villa Cavalletti, a kilometre and a half from Frascati, was brought to light.³

In the judgment of the explorers of these burying-grounds, Colini and Mengarelli, it seems that this tomb belongs to the same epoch as that of the Roman Forum, that is, to the first period of Latium. Both show intimate connection with other sepulchres of Latium, commencing with those discovered at the beginning of the past century. Few differences of any importance are found. They are not sufficient to place them in different periods or to indicate diverse influences. All have substantially common fundamental characteristics which show a single civilisation. The discovery of a burying-ground in the Roman Forum ought not, therefore, to occasion surprise, for Latium and even places in the city of Rome itself are covered with burying grounds of the same type. About a year ago when I wrote on this question, I pointed out that a people which practiced burning the dead had occupied Latium,

¹After that time new tombs have been discovered.

² "Studi di antropologia laziale." *Boll. Accademia-Medica*, Rome, 1895.

³*Notizie degli scavi di antichità*, 1902, cit.

at least to the Tiber, as it had already occupied the Valley of the Po and the territories of this valley as far as Latium. This people, which invaded Italy from the North, had found a population which practiced inhumation and possessed a neolithic civilisation highly developed and with the use of copper, whence the name *eneolithic*, given by Italian archæologists to this epoch.¹

Where the invaders were most numerous the funeral custom was almost altogether changed, even the primitive inhabitants adopting incineration. But where they were less numerous the indigenous inhabitants preserved in part the earlier custom of inhumation. Consequently, in parts of Italy, and especially in Latium, both rites are found together. In the Roman Forum, where the new burying-ground was discovered, a tomb with a cinerary urn was found near a tomb for inhumation, as has already been seen. Probably others might be found if the excavations were extended.

From my own investigations and studies I have come to the conclusion that the invaders with the rite of incineration were the Aryans, and that those who inhumed were the indigenous inhabitants, whose differences in physical characteristics from the former were especially in the form of the head. The Aryans had a large, short (brachicephalic) skull with forms spheroidal platycephalic and cuneiform. The indigenous inhabitants had a long and narrow head (dolicho- and mesocephalic) with ellipsoidal forms, and they belong to the great Mediterranean variety whose existence I have shown, and which I have many times described.²

The skull of the inhumed body in the tomb in the Roman Forum, near the tomb of the body which has been burned, is of the Mediterranean type, ellipsoidal and dolichocephalic. Hence that tomb is one of an indigenous inhabitant, which I call *Italico*, while the others for cremation are tombs of the Aryans, and also of the Italians who accepted the Aryan custom.³ This agrees exactly

¹ See *Arii e Italici*, Turin, Rome, 1897.

² *The Mediterranean Race. A Study of the Origin of the European Peoples.* London, Walter Scott, 1901.

³ On this question compare *Arii e Italici, cit.*, and *Arii in Europa e in Asia*, Turin, 1902.

with the result of another study which I have made of the oldest skulls of ancient Rome, skulls antedating the walls of Servius Tullius,¹ and which for the most part belong to the Mediterranean type.

The problem which now presents itself is to determine who were the founders of Rome, to ascertain whether they were Aryans or Italians, that is, whether they burned their dead or buried them, or in other words, whether they were Asiatic Aryans or the Mediterraneans.

All those who with the philologists admit the Italicity of the Aryans, notwithstanding the great confusion of the facts, and who consider the Aryans as the bearers of the Hellenic and Latin civilisation, believe that Rome was founded by the Aryans; and hence they find some confirmation of their opinion in the discovery of the burying-ground in the Roman Forum. This burying-ground, according to their opinion, must have been one of those belonging to the founders of the four square city on the Palatine. Some even say that the body inhumed near the tomb of the incinerated one was a client or a dependent of the latter, a patrician!

To be sure, it is difficult to establish any exact chronology by means of burying-grounds alone, but approximately it seems that the burying-grounds of Latium belong to about the eighth century B. C., as does also that of the Roman Forum. This was the epoch of the Etruscan colonisation, which is undoubtedly of Oriental origin, and which carried into the Occident the twilight of the Mycenaean civilisation. This colonisation, it appears, interrupted the continuity of the invasion and dominion of the Aryans, who at that time extended from the valley of the Po to the Tiber.

From the number of burying-grounds scattered through Latium and over the Roman territory itself, and in the place where rises the most ancient city, we must conclude that there was a large community of a mixed population, the indigenous (Mediterranean) and the foreign (Aryan). This community adopted a mixed funeral custom, the ancient and primitive practice of burying their

¹ See *Studi di antropologia laziale*, cit.

dead, and the recent one peculiar to the Aryans, that of incinerating them. As it is on the Esquiline (Via dello Statuto), so also in the Roman Forum. In the necropolis of the Esquiline a few hundred metres from the Forum, most of the Tombs are for incineration, only a few being found for inhumation. And we must admit the fact that it is natural in the domination of one people by another, especially when it is severe, for the conquered and subject race to imitate the customs of their masters. Hence all the tombs of a necropolis never represent a single type of population. Many of the indigenous inhabitants followed the custom of their masters, the Aryans, in burning their dead, and this custom was never completely abolished. In Rome even in recent epochs funeral pyres were sometimes constructed for the dead, especially for illustrious persons. And the same thing happened also in Etruria, where to-day the visitor may find recent Etruscan tombs with the funeral custom of cremation.

In Latium and in the Roman territory the number of foreign Aryans must have been very great. In confirmation of this I may present two arguments: First, the study which I have made of the skulls from the necropolis of the Esquiline, and from which it appears that the majority belong to the Mediterranean type, and a few to the Aryan type;¹ and second, the composition of the modern population outside of the walls of Rome, which in spite of the mingling undergone at various times belongs chiefly to the Mediterranean type.

The community, which on account of its ethnical components is called the Ario-Mediterranean, dwelt in cottages, never in walled houses. Their cities were not different from the villages which are found among other indigenous populations, savage or semi-savage. The city surrounded by walls, with its regular life and all that belongs to it, did not exist in the eighth century B. C. We know that construction in stone was very ancient in the eastern Mediterranean where the art was taught by Egypt and the Mycenaean civilisation. In Etruria, since the remains of the Pelasgian civilisation

¹ See *Studi di antropologia Laziale, cit.*

are not found anterior to the advent of the Etruscans, stone architecture must have owed its origin to them. In upper Italy buildings of stone, the result of the Etruscan invasion and dominion, have been found, as for instance at Marzabotto, near Bologna.

We may ask, then, how did it happen that with so many Ario-Mediterranean communities in Latium and in the Roman territory, no city was built except by that community which dwelt upon the Palatine and the Capitoline or between these two hills? A year ago, writing on the origin of Rome, I attributed the principal cause to the Etruscan colonisation, which on the one hand broke the relations of the Aryan invasion between Latium and the north, and on the other hand threatened to take possession of the territory of the Tiber and had already founded, a few kilometres from the Tiber, the city of Veio. If Latium wished to remain independent, it was compelled to fortify itself against its new enemy, which was not only more powerful in arms, but also of a more advanced civilisation, and hence could have easily conquered a tribe little more than half savage, as were the people of Latium in general and the Latins especially.¹

But this could not have been accomplished suddenly without some change taking place within the tribes of Latium, and especially in those nearest the sea and the Etruscan territory, which now lay between Ceres and Veio on the right bank of the Tiber. This change took place through the acquisition of a part of the Mediterranean civilisation, which for a few centuries had advanced from the Orient and infiltrated itself in the riverain populations of the Occident. The Etruscans, late Pelasgians, as I have called them,² being continually near them, contributed more than commerce with the Orient to change the inferior conditions of the Latin tribe near the Tiber. We find great difficulty to-day, however, in distinguishing and separating the primitive culture of Rome from the Etruscan. Indeed, there are those who believe there is no difference between them.

¹ See *Arii e Italici*, *cit.*, last chapter.

² Sergi, *The Mediterranean Race*, *cit.*

What they taught the Romans was stone architecture, the orientation of the city, and the construction of walled fortifications. Hence arose the citadel on the Capitoline, and the city on the Palatine, two hills already inhabited by two tribes, and separated in part by the swampy valley now occupied by the Forum.

With this first nucleus of a type of city until then unknown were united a few neighboring tribes who dwelt on the surrounding hills and were independent communities with their own orderly arrangements and also with their own burying-grounds, as we have seen. Nor is this all that happened. There must have been much commerce with the people of other communities, and therefore an influx into the new and strong city constituted with new arrangements and fortified against the nearest dangerous enemies, namely, the Etruscans.

A little later this city, which may be called the daughter of the Etruscan civilisation, measured its strength with the Etruscans themselves, but was constrained by them to allow the Etruscans to participate in the State and in part also in the colonisation: a concession necessary to allow it to live in peace and without danger. But finally their emancipation was complete, and many communities of Latium having been conquered, there was a great increase of power.

In all this profound change the Aryan elements, which formed a part of the communities of Latium, together with the Mediterranean elements, lost all their distinction and value. The populations were fused so as to be no longer distinguishable, as we saw with reference to the burying-grounds in which inhumation, which was preserved by the conquered, exists along with those for cremation, which were introduced by the Aryans. And the increasing power of the new city began to level the ethnic differences so that in time they completely disappeared, even from tradition. Aryanism dominates in one thing only, namely, language, for now that domination is complete. The inflected language has destroyed the primitive language of the indigenous population.

When the fusion of the tribes of the Seven Hills began, and the Capitoline was united more closely with the Palatine, the

valley which separated them began to fill up and to be occupied by houses and temples, and the Forum was established. Then it was forgotten by the Romans that in that swampy valley there existed a primitive cemetery which contained the remains, sometimes burned, sometimes buried, of the Ario-Mediterranean tribe which dwelt on the top of the Palatine and built there the structures which are now uncovered.

My firm conviction, therefore, is that primitive Rome was founded under the influence of the Mediterranean civilisation and especially of the Etruscan, which was almost the model in its construction, and of ethnic elements already mingled, the Mediterranean the larger, and the Aryan the lesser, as is shown by a study of the ancient and modern populations of Latium. The Aryans were incapable of constructing a city like Rome, because when they emigrated into Europe and into Italy their civilisation was inferior to the Mediterranean, and they were ignorant of the art of building in stone;¹ they gave only the language.

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¹ Cf. *Gli Ariti in Europa e in Asia, cit.*