

The 12 Tables



AN INTRODUCTION

Ancient Rome

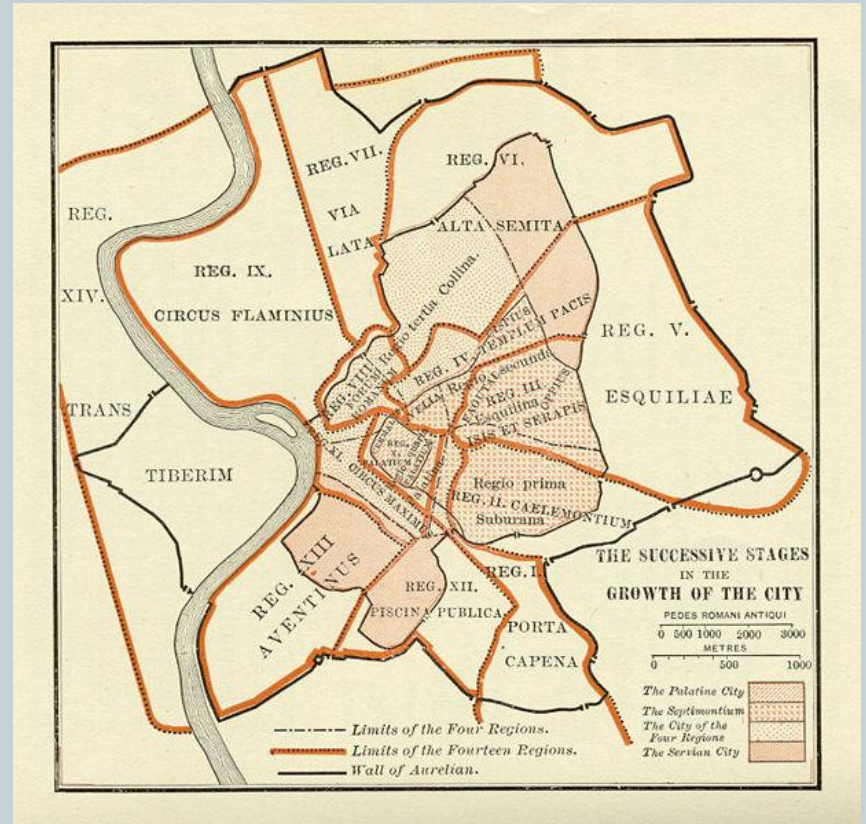


- Roman Kingdom
 - 753-509 B.C.
- Roman Republic
 - 509-27 B.C.
- Roman Empire
 - 27 B.C. – 476 A.D.



The Roman Kingdom

- What is a kingdom?
- In Rome, it was a monarchical government that ruled over Rome and its neighbors
- There was a Senate, but no elections, only appointments by the King
- In 509, the last king (Tarquinius) is overthrown and a Republic is established



The Roman Republic

- Est., 509 B.C.
- Differences?
 - Some separation of powers, checks and balances, elected Senators
- Patricians and Plebeians
 - Elite families vs. poor people/slaves
 - Patricians enforce laws
 - Plebeians demanded written laws
 - ✦ Why?



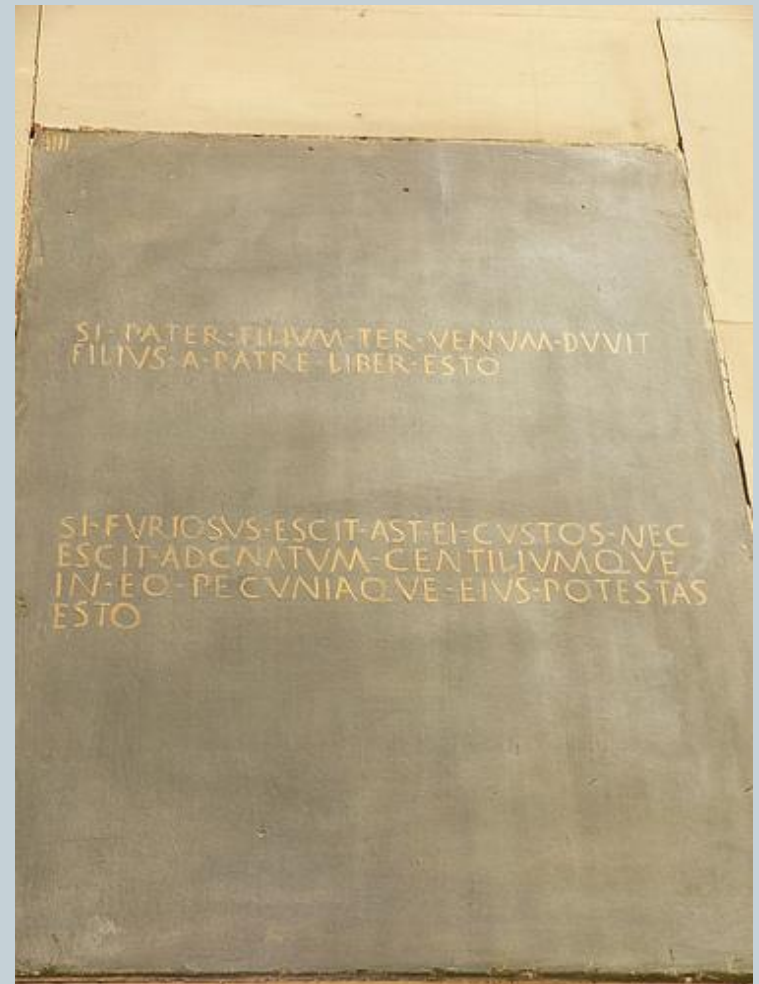
The Twelve Tables



- Because of the Plebeians great numbers advantage, the Patricians had to agree
- Decemvirate formed
- 1st 10 codes completed in 450 B.C.
- One of the members of the Decemvirate, Livy, put the laws to the Plebeians this way..
- "...every citizen should quietly consider each point, then talk it over with his friends, and, finally, bring forward for public discussion any additions or subtractions which seemed desirable."

12 Tables, cont'd

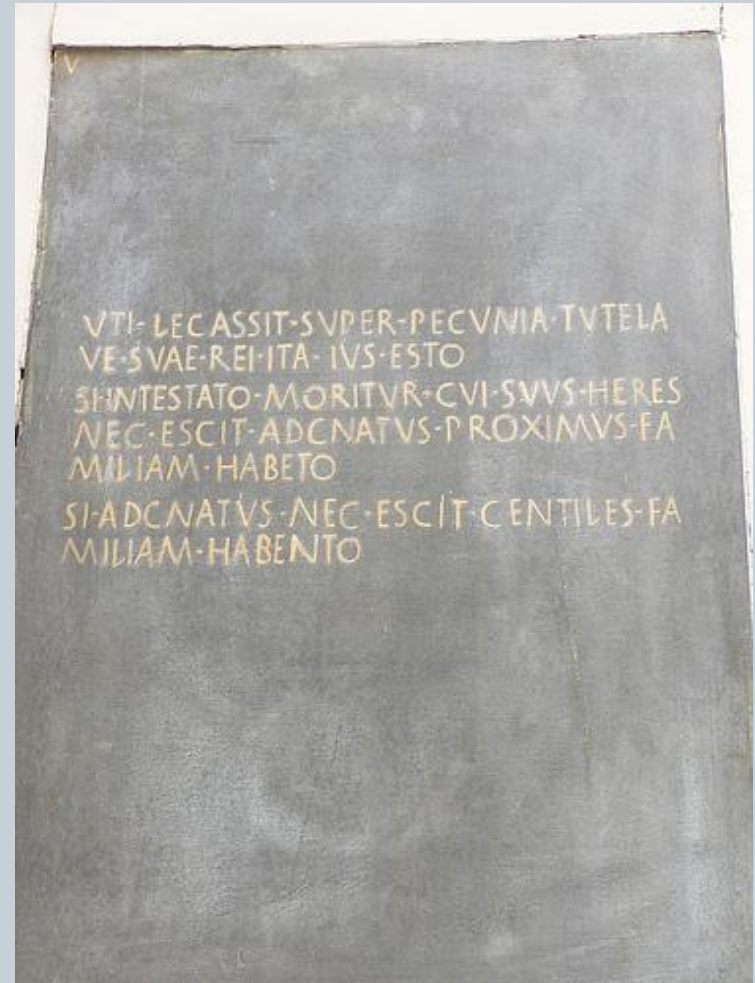
- These 10 were not quite enough, and Plebeians demanded more specifics
- In 449, the last 2 were added
- The laws were literally drawn on 12 marble tiles and placed in the Roman forum, so that all could read and know them
 - Destroyed when Rome is sacked



12 Tables, Cont'd



- They were NOT a comprehensive statement of all law
- They are a list of privately held rights and procedures
- Similar to a _____? _____?
- Bill of rights
- They combine strict and rigorous penalties with equally strict and rigorous procedures



CONCLUSION



- So, the 12 Tables form the basis of Roman law and the centerpiece of the Roman Republic
- Significance?
- Unlike Hammurabi's Code, they're the first thing that even resembles a Constitution or Bill Of Rights



 Larger View

Constitution of the
United States of America

Assignment



- **Introduction**

The Twelve Tables represent an early attempt by the Romans to form a system of civil law for their simple farming society. Historians have only found fragments of the tables, but these fragments provide much information about early Roman life and values. Many of the principles covered in the Twelve Tables remain important today. Others would be rejected in a democratic society. In this activity you will read and interpret the laws.

Directions

- Start with the Twelve Tables handout.
- Read the brief history of the Twelve Tables and the translation of the laws, taking notes as you go.
- After you have read the information and taken detailed notes, pick up a questions sheet. If you do not finish reading before the period's end, pick up a questions sheet on your way out. This will be due at the first of class Wednesday.