

MYTHIC

R · O · M · E



THE DESIGN MECHANISM

Mythras

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Mythras

MYTHIC ROME

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INTRODUCTION

SPQR

Senatus Populusque Romanus

*"Ilia the fair, a priestess and a queen,
Who, full of Mars, in time, with kindly throes,
Shall at a birth two goodly boys disclose.
The royal babes a tawny wolf shall drain:
Then Romulus his grandsire's throne shall gain,
Of martial towers the founder shall become,
The people Romans call, the city Rome.
To them no bounds of empire I assign,
Nor term of years to their immortal line
Even haughty Juno, who, with endless broils,
Earth, seas, and heaven, and Jove himself turmoils;
At length atoned, her friendly power shall join,
To cherish and advance the Trojan line
The subject world shall Rome's dominion own,
And, prostrate, shall adore the nation of the gown.
An age is ripening in revolving fate
When Troy shall overturn the Grecian state,
And sweet revenge her conquering sons shall call,
To crush the people that conspired her fall
Then Caesar from the Julian stock shall rise,
Whose empire ocean, and whose fame the skies
Alone shall bound; whom, fraught with eastern spoils,
Our heaven, the just reward of human toils,
Securely shall repay with rites divine;
And incense shall ascend before his sacred shrine
Then dire debate and impious war shall cease,
And the stern age be softened into peace:
Then banished Faith shall once again return,
And Vestal fires in hallowed temples burn;
And Remus with Quirinus shall sustain
The righteous laws, and fraud and force restrain.
Janus himself before his fane shall wait,
And keep the dreadful issues of his gate,
With bolts and iron bars: within remains
Imprisoned Fury, bound in brazen chains;
High on a trophy raised, of useless arms,
He sits, and threats the world with vain alarms."*

Virgil, The Aeneid

Rome is the longest enduring civilisation in western European history. It is synonymous with empire, legions, dictators, gladiators and decadence. The Romans have been an inescapable influence on our lives. Much of modern law, European languages, and even some political systems, are based upon their legacy.

The efforts of this once mighty nation still echo in our psyche, making Rome a perfect setting for roleplaying campaigns. Whether you prefer the gritty underhanded corruption of Roman politics, fighting great battles against Rome's enemies, or participating in the spectacular excitements of chariot racing and gladiatorial combat, ancient Rome can cater to your needs.

In its own peculiar way, Rome is the archetypal metropolis, the original upon which our modern cultures are but a pale shadow. Welcome to the Eternal City and its treacherous depths...

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book contains setting information for role-playing in Rome during its Monarchy and Republic. Although it includes some complementary rules and skills it is not a game in its own right and is designed for use with Design Mechanism's MYTHRAS system for play – although it should be easy to use with any percentile based role-playing game.

The content focuses on the city and culture of Rome from its legendary founding in 753 BC to the end of the Republic in 27 BC. 700 years is an incredible length of time, which makes it difficult to cover the period in any detail. Imagine how much modern society has changed in the last 100 years... women's suffrage, economic reforms, the rise and fall of communism, fashion, entertainment; the transformations have been profound. Although readers may find the following contents more comprehensive than any previous role-playing supplement on the era, it still only scratches the surface.

Despite the focus on the city itself – rather than its burgeoning empire – Games Masters should bear in mind that to a Roman, Rome was the centre of the world and the provinces merely places to conquer and reap taxes from. On a more practical level, there was simply not room to add any additional material covering the regions and enemies of the empire.

Most of this book contains dates and periods to indicate when certain historical events occurred. The author has used the following generalisations to break the era into four parts and utilises BC

instead of BCE out of old fashioned familiarity. For those who desire to use the more authentic Roman dating system of AUC ab urbe condita (from the founding of Rome), simply subtract the BC year from the value of 753 and add one.

- Ω The Monarchy, 753-509 BC – The founding of the city to the overthrow of the Monarchy
- Ω The Early Republic, 509-264 BC – The start of the Republic and conquering of Italy
- Ω The Middle Republic, 264-133 BC – The Punic Wars to the Gracchi reforms
- Ω The Late Republic, 133-27 BC – Political instability and civil wars leading the end of the Republic

QUICK LATIN GUIDE

Singular Ending	Plural Ending
-a (<i>lupa</i>)	-ae (<i>lupae</i>)
-us (<i>gladius</i>)	usually: -i (<i>gladii</i>), but sometimes -us (.)
-um (<i>templum</i>)	-a (<i>templa</i>)
-is (<i>inauris</i>)	-es (<i>inaures</i>)
-e (<i>monile</i>)	-ia (<i>monilia</i>)
-io (<i>pugio</i>)	-iones (<i>pugiones</i>)

HISTORICAL FLAVOUR

Since this is an historical setting, most of the information has been carefully researched to be as accurate as possible, drawing on the archaeological and historical theories current at the time of publication. Many of the cultural conventions described may seem odd, or even wrong, but where space permits their accuracy has been illustrated using quotes from Roman and Greek authors contemporary to the time or within a few generations of the period. Due to the dearth of written material surviving from earlier times, most of the information is skewed towards the lifestyle and culture at end of the Republic and, at best, are only generalisations.

Although primarily a historical guide to early Roman life, some supernatural and mythological elements are included in the Magic and Creatures chapters to provide for Games Masters desiring a mythic campaign. These aspects are more subtle than their earlier archaic Greek counterparts and demonstrate Roman superstition prevalent at the time.

The layout of the book places the cultural sections first, leaving the majority of chapters involving game mechanics and campaigns to the latter half.

QUICK LATIN GUIDE

Included throughout the book are Latin translations for commonplace objects, ideas or acts. These have been added to show the original source of many English words and it is hoped that, if used in play, the vocabulary will provide players with an increased level of immersion.

It should also be noted that although the author spells some Roman names and words with the letter ‘J’, the Romans used the letter ‘I’ instead.

In Latin, changing a word from singular to plural was not as straightforward as adding an ‘s’. Different kinds of words formed the plural in different ways. Here is a simplified table for those who need it: