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## Part I: From the Origins to the Empire

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The Italian city of Rome was once the center of two great empires: the military dominion of the Roman Empire, and then the ideology of the Christian Papacy. Robert Wilde is a historian who writes about European history. He is the author of the History in an Afternoon textbook series. Our editorial process. Robert Wilde. Updated February 20, 2019. Rome is the capital city of Italy, the home of the Vatican and the Papacy, and was once the center of a vast, ancient empire. It remains a cultural and historical focus within Europe. The Origins of Rome. Legend says Rome was founded by Romulus in 713 B.C.E, but the origins probably predate this, from a time when the settlement was one of many on the Latium Plain. Rome’s history spans three millennia, from the classical myths of vengeful gods to the follies of the Roman emperors, from Renaissance excess to swaggering 20th-century Fascism. Emperors, popes and dictators have come and gone, playing out their ambitions against foreign powers and domestic rivals, stamping out heresies and conspiring for their place in history. Everywhere you go in this remarkable city, you’re surrounded by the past. Few historians accept the myth as historical fact, but most accept that the city was founded as an amalgamation of Etruscan, Latin and Sabine settlements on the Palatino (Palatine), Esquilino (Esquiline) and Quirinale (Quirinal) hills. Pre-historical and early Rome, covering Rome’s earliest inhabitants and the legend of its founding by Romulus. The period of Etruscan dominance and the Regal Period, in which according to tradition, Romulus was the first of seven kings. The Roman Republic, which commenced in 509 BC when kings were replaced with rule by elected senators. Modern History: The period from the 19th century to today. Rome was under siege by the Allied invasion of Italy and was bombed several times. It was declared an open city on 14 August 1943. Rome became the capital of the Italian Republic (established in 1946), with a population of 4.4 million in its metropolitan area (as of 2015 update); 2.9 million within city limits) is the largest city in Italy.