



***THEODOR  
MOMMSEN***

***THE HISTORY  
OF ROME  
(VOLUMES  
1-5)***



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**Theodor Mommsen**

# **The History of Rome (Volumes 1-5)**

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# BOOK FIRST

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### The Period Anterior to the Abolition of the Monarchy

—Ta palaiotera saphos men eurein dia chronou pleithos adunata ein ek de tekmeirion on epi makrotaton skopounti moi pisteusai xumbainei ou megala nomizo genesthai oute kata tous polemous oute es ta alla.—

Thucydides.

# CHAPTER I

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### Introduction

### Ancient History

The Mediterranean Sea with its various branches, penetrating far into the great Continent, forms the largest gulf of the ocean, and, alternately narrowed by islands or projections of the land and expanding to considerable breadth, at once separates and connects the three divisions of the Old World. The shores of this inland sea were in ancient times peopled by various nations belonging in an ethnographical and philological point of view to different races, but constituting in their historical aspect one whole. This historic whole has been usually, but not very appropriately, entitled the history of the ancient world. It is in reality the history of civilization among the Mediterranean nations; and, as it passes before us in its successive stages, it presents four great phases of development—the history of the Coptic or Egyptian stock dwelling on the southern shore, the history of the Aramaean or Syrian nation which occupied the east coast and extended into the interior of Asia as far as the Euphrates and Tigris, and the histories of the twin-

peoples, the Hellenes and Italians, who received as their heritage the countries on the European shore. Each of these histories was in its earlier stages connected with other regions and with other cycles of historical evolution; but each soon entered on its own distinctive career. The surrounding nations of alien or even of kindred extraction—the Berbers and Negroes of Africa, the Arabs, Persians, and Indians of Asia, the Celts and Germans of Europe—came into manifold contact with the peoples inhabiting the borders of the Mediterranean, but they neither imparted unto them nor received from them any influences exercising decisive effect on their respective destinies. So far, therefore, as cycles of culture admit of demarcation at all, the cycle which has its culminating points denoted by the names Thebes, Carthage, Athens, and Rome, may be regarded as an unity. The four nations represented by these names, after each of them had attained in a path of its own a peculiar and noble civilization, mingled with one another in the most varied relations of reciprocal intercourse, and skilfully elaborated and richly developed all the elements of human nature. At length their cycle was accomplished. New peoples who hitherto had only laved the territories of the states of the Mediterranean, as waves lave the beach, overflowed both its shores, severed the history of its south coast from that of the north, and transferred the centre of civilization from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Ocean. The distinction between ancient and modern history, therefore, is no mere accident, nor yet a mere matter of chronological convenience. What is called modern history is in reality the formation of a new cycle of culture, connected

in several stages of its development with the perishing or perished civilization of the Mediterranean states, as this was connected with the primitive civilization of the Indo-Germanic stock, but destined, like the earlier cycle, to traverse an orbit of its own. It too is destined to experience in full measure the vicissitudes of national weal and woe, the periods of growth, of maturity, and of age, the blessedness of creative effort in religion, polity, and art, the comfort of enjoying the material and intellectual acquisitions which it has won, perhaps also, some day, the decay of productive power in the satiety of contentment with the goal attained. And yet this goal will only be temporary: the grandest system of civilization has its orbit, and may complete its course but not so the human race, to which, just when it seems to have reached its goal, the old task is ever set anew with a wider range and with a deeper meaning.

## Italy

Our aim is to exhibit the last act of this great historical drama, to relate the ancient history of the central peninsula projecting from the northern continent into the Mediterranean. It is formed by the mountain-system of the Apennines branching off in a southern direction from the western Alps. The Apennines take in the first instance a south-eastern course between the broader gulf of the Mediterranean on the west, and the narrow one on the east; and in the close vicinity of the latter they attain their greatest elevation, which, however, scarce reaches the line

of perpetual snow, in the Abruzzi. From the Abruzzi the chain continues in a southern direction, at first undivided and of considerable height; after a depression which forms a hill-country, it splits into a somewhat flattened succession of heights towards the south-east and a more rugged chain towards the south, and in both directions terminates in the formation of narrow peninsulas.

The flat country on the north, extending between the Alps and the Apennines as far down as the Abruzzi, does not belong geographically, nor until a very late period even historically, to the southern land of mountain and hill, the Italy whose history is here to engage our attention. It was not till the seventh century of the city that the coast-district from Sinigaglia to Rimini, and not till the eighth that the basin of the Po, became incorporated with Italy. The ancient boundary of Italy on the north was not the Alps but the Apennines. This mountain-system nowhere rises abruptly into a precipitous chain, but, spreading broadly over the land and enclosing many valleys and table-lands connected by easy passes, presents conditions which well adapt it to become the settlement of man. Still more suitable in this respect are the adjacent slopes and the coast-districts on the east, south, and west. On the east coast the plain of Apulia, shut in towards the north by the mountain-block of the Abruzzi and only broken by the steep isolated ridge of Garganus, stretches in a uniform level with but a scanty development of coast and stream. On the south coast, between the two peninsulas in which the Apennines terminate, extensive lowlands, poorly provided with harbours but well watered and fertile, adjoin the hill-country

of the interior. The west coast presents a far-stretching domain intersected by considerable streams, in particular by the Tiber, and shaped by the action of the waves and of the once numerous volcanoes into manifold variety of hill and valley, harbour and island. Here the regions of Etruria, Latium, and Campania form the very flower of the land of Italy. South of Campania, the land in front of the mountains gradually diminishes, and the Tyrrhenian Sea almost washes their base. Moreover, as the Peloponnesus is attached to Greece, so the island of Sicily is attached to Italy—the largest and fairest isle of the Mediterranean, having a mountainous and partly desert interior, but girt, especially on the east and south, by a broad belt of the finest coast-land, mainly the result of volcanic action. Geographically the Sicilian mountains are a continuation of the Apennines, hardly interrupted by the narrow "rent" —Pegion—of the straits; and in its historical relations Sicily was in earlier times quite as decidedly a part of Italy as the Peloponnesus was of Greece, a field for the struggles of the same races, and the seat of a similar superior civilization.

The Italian peninsula resembles the Grecian in the temperate climate and wholesome air that prevail on the hills of moderate height, and on the whole, also, in the valleys and plains. In development of coast it is inferior; it wants, in particular, the island-studded sea which made the Hellenes a seafaring nation. Italy on the other hand excels its neighbour in the rich alluvial plains and the fertile and grassy mountain-slopes, which are requisite for agriculture and the rearing of cattle. Like Greece, it is a noble land which calls forth and rewards the energies of man, opening

up alike for restless adventure the way to distant lands and for quiet exertion modes of peaceful gain at home.

But, while the Grecian peninsula is turned towards the east, the Italian is turned towards the west. As the coasts of Epirus and Acarnania had but a subordinate importance in the case of Hellas, so had the Apulian and Messapian coasts in that of Italy; and, while the regions on which the historical development of Greece has been mainly dependent—Attica and Macedonia—look to the east, Etruria, Latium, and Campania look to the west. In this way the two peninsulas, so close neighbours and almost sisters, stand as it were averted from each other. Although the naked eye can discern from Otranto the Acroceraunian mountains, the Italians and Hellenes came into earlier and closer contact on every other pathway rather than on the nearest across the Adriatic Sea, In their instance, as has happened so often, the historical vocation of the nations was prefigured in the relations of the ground which they occupied; the two great stocks, on which the civilization of the ancient world grew, threw their shadow as well as their seed, the one towards the east, the other towards the west.

## Italian History

We intend here to relate the history of Italy, not simply the history of the city of Rome. Although, in the formal sense of political law, it was the civic community of Rome which gained the sovereignty first of Italy and then of the world, such a view cannot be held to express the higher and real meaning of history. What has been called the

subjugation of Italy by the Romans appears rather, when viewed in its true light, as the consolidation into an united state of the whole Italian stock—a stock of which the Romans were doubtless the most powerful branch, but still were only a branch.

The history of Italy falls into two main sections: (1) its internal history down to its union under the leadership of the Latin stock, and (2) the history of its sovereignty over the world. Under the first section, which will occupy the first two books, we shall have to set forth the settlement of the Italian stock in the peninsula; the imperilling of its national and political existence, and its partial subjugation, by nations of other descent and older civilization, Greeks and Etruscans; the revolt of the Italians against the strangers, and the annihilation or subjection of the latter; finally, the struggles between the two chief Italian stocks, the Latins and the Samnites, for the hegemony of the peninsula, and the victory of the Latins at the end of the fourth century before the birth of Christ—or of the fifth century of the city. The second section opens with the Punic wars; it embraces the rapid extension of the dominion of Rome up to and beyond the natural boundaries of Italy, the long status quo of the imperial period, and the collapse of the mighty empire. These events will be narrated in the third and following books.

Notes for Book I Chapter I



1. The dates as hereafter inserted in the text are years of the City (A.U.C.); those in the margin give the corresponding years B.C.

## **CHAPTER II**

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#### The Earliest Migrations into Italy

#### Primitive Races of Italy

We have no information, not even a tradition, concerning the first migration of the human race into Italy. It was the universal belief of antiquity that in Italy, as well as elsewhere, the first population had sprung from the soil. We leave it to the province of the naturalist to decide the question of the origin of different races, and of the influence of climate in producing their diversities. In a historical point of view it is neither possible, nor is it of any importance, to determine whether the oldest recorded population of a country were autochthones or immigrants. But it is incumbent on the historical inquirer to bring to light the successive strata of population in the country of which he treats, in order to trace, from as remote an epoch as possible, the gradual progress of civilization to more perfect forms, and the suppression of races less capable of, or less advanced in, culture by nations of higher standing.

Italy is singularly poor in memorials of the primitive period, and presents in this respect a remarkable contrast to

other fields of civilization. The results of German archaeological research lead to the conclusion that in England, France, the North of Germany and Scandinavia, before the settlement of the Indo-Germans in those lands, there must have dwelt, or rather roamed, a people, perhaps of Mongolian race, gaining their subsistence by hunting and fishing, making their implements of stone, clay, or bones, adorning themselves with the teeth of animals and with amber, but unacquainted with agriculture and the use of the metals. In India, in like manner, the Indo-Germanic settlers were preceded by a dark-coloured population less susceptible of culture. But in Italy we neither meet with fragments of a supplanted nation, such as the Finns and Lapps in the Celto-Germanic domain and the black tribes in the Indian mountains; nor have any remains of an extinct primitive people been hitherto pointed out there, such as appear to be revealed in the peculiarly-formed skeletons, the places of assembling, and the burial mounds of what is called the stone-period of Germanic antiquity. Nothing has hitherto been brought to light to warrant the supposition that mankind existed in Italy at a period anterior to the knowledge of agriculture and of the smelting of the metals; and if the human race ever within the bounds of Italy really occupied the level of that primitive stage of culture which we are accustomed to call the savage state, every trace of such a fact has disappeared.

Individual tribes, or in other words, races or stocks, are the constituent elements of the earliest history. Among the stocks which in later times we meet with in Italy, the immigration of some, of the Hellenes for instance, and the

denationalization of others, such as the Bruttians and the inhabitants of the Sabine territory, are historically attested. Setting aside both these classes, there remain a number of stocks whose wanderings can no longer be traced by means of historical testimony, but only by a priori inference, and whose nationality cannot be shown to have undergone any radical change from external causes. To establish the national individuality of these is the first aim of our inquiry. In such an inquiry, had we nothing to fall back upon but the chaotic mass of names of tribes and the confusion of what professes to be historical tradition, the task might well be abandoned as hopeless. The conventionally received tradition, which assumes the name of history, is composed of a few serviceable notices by civilized travellers, and a mass of mostly worthless legends, which have usually been combined with little discrimination of the true character either of legend or of history. But there is another source of tradition to which we may resort, and which yields information fragmentary but authentic; we mean the indigenous languages of the stocks settled in Italy from time immemorial. These languages, which have grown with the growth of the peoples themselves, have had the stamp of their process of growth impressed upon them too deeply to be wholly effaced by subsequent civilization. One only of the Italian languages is known to us completely; but the remains which have been preserved of several of the others are sufficient to afford a basis for historical inquiry regarding the existence, and the degrees, of family relationship among the several languages and peoples.

In this way philological research teaches us to distinguish three primitive Italian stocks, the Iapygian, the Etruscan, and that which we shall call the Italian. The last is divided into two main branches,—the Latin branch, and that to which the dialects of the Umbri, Marsi, Volsci, and Samnites belong.

### Iapygians

As to the Iapygian stock, we have but little information. At the south-eastern extremity of Italy, in the Messapian or Calabrian peninsula, inscriptions in a peculiar extinct language<sup>(1)</sup> have been found in considerable numbers; undoubtedly remains of the dialect of the Iapygians, who are very distinctly pronounced by tradition also to have been different from the Latin and Samnite stocks. Statements deserving of credit and numerous indications lead to the conclusion that the same language and the same stock were indigenous also in Apulia. What we at present know of this people suffices to show clearly that they were distinct from the other Italians, but does not suffice to determine what position should be assigned to them and to their language in the history of the human race. The inscriptions have not yet been, and it is scarcely to be expected that they ever will be, deciphered. The genitive forms, -aihi- and -ihi-, corresponding to the Sanscrit -asya- and the Greek —οιο—, appear to indicate that the dialect belongs to the Indo-Germanic family. Other indications, such as the use of the aspirated consonants and the avoiding of the letters m and t as terminal sounds, show

that this lapygian dialect was essentially different from the Italian and corresponded in some respects to the Greek dialects. The supposition of an especially close affinity between the lapygian nation and the Hellenes finds further support in the frequent occurrence of the names of Greek divinities in the inscriptions, and in the surprising facility with which that people became Hellenized, presenting a striking contrast to the shyness in this respect of the other Italian nations. Apulia, which in the time of Timaeus (400) was still described as a barbarous land, had in the sixth century of the city become a province thoroughly Greek, although no direct colonization from Greece had taken place; and even among the ruder stock of the Messapii there are various indications of a similar tendency. With the recognition of such a general family relationship or peculiar affinity between the lapygians and Hellenes (a recognition, however, which by no means goes so far as to warrant our taking the lapygian language to be a rude dialect of Greek), investigation must rest content, at least in the meantime, until some more precise and better assured result be attainable.(2) The lack of information, however, is not much felt; for this race, already on the decline at the period when our history begins, comes before us only when it is giving way and disappearing. The character of the lapygian people, little capable of resistance, easily merging into other nationalities, agrees well with the hypothesis, to which their geographical position adds probability, that they were the oldest immigrants or the historical autochthones of Italy. There can be no doubt that all the primitive migrations of nations took place by land; especially such as were directed

towards Italy, the coast of which was accessible by sea only to skilful sailors and on that account was still in Homer's time wholly unknown to the Hellenes. But if the earlier settlers came over the Apennines, then, as the geologist infers the origin of mountains from their stratification, the historical inquirer may hazard the conjecture that the stocks pushed furthest towards the south were the oldest inhabitants of Italy; and it is just at its extreme south-eastern verge that we meet with the Iapygian nation.

## Italians

The middle of the peninsula was inhabited, as far back as trustworthy tradition reaches, by two peoples or rather two branches of the same people, whose position in the Indo-Germanic family admits of being determined with greater precision than that of the Iapygian nation. We may with propriety call this people the Italian, since upon it rests the historical significance of the peninsula. It is divided into the two branch-stocks of the Latins and the Umbrians; the latter including their southern offshoots, the Marsians and Samnites, and the colonies sent forth by the Samnites in historical times. The philological analysis of the idioms of these stocks has shown that they together constitute a link in the Indo-Germanic chain of languages, and that the epoch in which they still formed an unity is a comparatively late one. In their system of sounds there appears the peculiar spirant -f, in the use of which they agree with the Etruscans, but decidedly differ from all Hellenic and Helleno-barbaric races as well as from the Sanscrit itself. The

aspirates, again, which are retained by the Greeks throughout, and the harsher of them also by the Etruscans, were originally foreign to the Italians, and are represented among them by one of their elements—either by the media, or by the breathing alone -f or -h. The finer spirants, -s, -w, -j, which the Greeks dispense with as much as possible, have been retained in the Italian languages almost unimpaired, and have been in some instances still further developed. The throwing back of the accent and the consequent destruction of terminations are common to the Italians with some Greek stocks and with the Etruscans; but among the Italians this was done to a greater extent than among the former, and to a lesser extent than among the latter. The excessive disorder of the terminations in the Umbrian certainly had no foundation in the original spirit of the language, but was a corruption of later date, which appeared in a similar although weaker tendency also at Rome. Accordingly in the Italian languages short vowels are regularly dropped in the final sound, long ones frequently: the concluding consonants, on the other hand, have been tenaciously retained in the Latin and still more so in the Samnite; while the Umbrian drops even these. In connection with this we find that the middle voice has left but slight traces in the Italian languages, and a peculiar passive formed by the addition of -r takes its place; and further that the majority of the tenses are formed by composition with the roots -es and -fu, while the richer terminational system of the Greeks along with the augment enables them in great part to dispense with auxiliary verbs. While the Italian languages, like the Aeolic dialect, gave up the dual, they



retained universally the ablative which the Greeks lost, and in great part also the locative. The rigorous logic of the Italians appears to have taken offence at the splitting of the idea of plurality into that of duality and of multitude; while they have continued with much precision to express the relations of words by inflections. A feature peculiarly Italian, and unknown even to the Sanscrit, is the mode of imparting a substantive character to the verb by gerunds and supines, —a process carried out more completely here than in any other language.

### Relation of the Italians to the Greeks

These examples selected from a great abundance of analogous phenomena suffice to establish the individuality of the Italian stock as distinguished from the other members of the Indo-Germanic family, and at the same time show it to be linguistically the nearest relative, as it is geographically the next neighbour, of the Greek. The Greek and the Italian are brothers; the Celt, the German, and the Slavonian are their cousins. The essential unity of all the Italian as of all the Greek dialects and stocks must have dawned early and clearly on the consciousness of the two great nations themselves; for we find in the Roman language a very ancient word of enigmatical origin, -Grai- or -Graic-, which is applied to every Greek, and in like manner amongst the Greeks the analogous appellation — Opikos— which is applied to all the Latin and Samnite stocks known to the Greeks in earlier times, but never to the Iapygians or Etruscans.

## Relation of the Latins to the Umbro-Samnites

Among the languages of the Italian stock, again, the Latin stands in marked contrast with the Umbro-Samnite dialects. It is true that of these only two, the Umbrian and the Samnite or Oscan, are in some degree known to us, and these even in a manner extremely defective and uncertain. Of the rest some, such as the Marsian and the Volscian, have reached us in fragments too scanty to enable us to form any conception of their individual peculiarities or to classify the varieties of dialect themselves with certainty and precision, while others, like the Sabine, have, with the exception of a few traces preserved as dialectic peculiarities in provincial Latin, completely disappeared. A conjoint view, however, of the facts of language and of history leaves no doubt that all these dialects belonged to the Umbro-Samnite branch of the great Italian stock, and that this branch, although much more closely related to Latin than to Greek, was very decidedly distinct from the Latin. In the pronoun and other cases frequently the Samnite and Umbrian used -p where the Roman used -q, as -pis- for -quis-; just as languages otherwise closely related are found to differ; for instance, -p is peculiar to the Celtic in Brittany and Wales, -k to the Gaelic and Erse. Among the vowel sounds the diphthongs in Latin, and in the northern dialects generally, appear very much destroyed, whereas in the southern Italian dialects they have suffered little; and connected with this is the fact, that in composition the Roman weakens the radical vowel otherwise so strictly preserved,—a modification which does not take place in the kindred group

of languages. The genitive of words in -a is in this group as among the Greeks -as, among the Romans in the matured language -ae; that of words in -us is in the Samnite -eis, in the Umbrian -es, among the Romans -ei; the locative disappeared more and more from the language of the latter, while it continued in full use in the other Italian dialects; the dative plural in -bus is extant only in Latin. The Umbro-Samnite infinitive in -um is foreign to the Romans; while the Osco-Umbrian future formed from the root -es after the Greek fashion (-her-est- like —leg-so—) has almost, perhaps altogether, disappeared in Latin, and its place is supplied by the optative of the simple verb or by analogous formations from -fuo-(-amabo-). In many of these instances, however—in the forms of the cases, for example—the differences only exist in the two languages when fully formed, while at the outset they coincide. It thus appears that, while the Italian language holds an independent position by the side of the Greek, the Latin dialect within it bears a relation to the Umbro-Samnite somewhat similar to that of the Ionic to the Doric; and the differences of the Oscan and Umbrian and kindred dialects may be compared with the differences between the Dorism of Sicily and the Dorism of Sparta.

Each of these linguistic phenomena is the result and the attestation of an historical event. With perfect certainty they guide us to the conclusion, that from the common cradle of peoples and languages there issued a stock which embraced in common the ancestors of the Greeks and the Italians; that from this, at a subsequent period, the Italians branched off; and that these again divided into the western

and eastern stocks, while at a still later date the eastern became subdivided into Umbrians and Oscans.

When and where these separations took place, language of course cannot tell; and scarce may adventurous thought attempt to grope its conjectural way along the course of those revolutions, the earliest of which undoubtedly took place long before that migration which brought the ancestors of the Italians across the Apennines. On the other hand the comparison of languages, when conducted with accuracy and caution, may give us an approximate idea of the degree of culture which the people had reached when these separations took place, and so furnish us with the beginnings of history, which is nothing but the development of civilization. For language, especially in the period of its formation, is the true image and organ of the degree of civilization attained; its archives preserve evidence of the great revolutions in arts and in manners, and from its records the future will not fail to draw information as to those times regarding which the voice of direct tradition is dumb.

### Indo-Germanic Culture

During the period when the Indo-Germanic nations which are now separated still formed one stock speaking the same language, they attained a certain stage of culture, and they had a vocabulary corresponding to it. This vocabulary the several nations carried along with them, in its conventionally established use, as a common dowry and a foundation for further structures of their own. In it we find

not merely the simplest terms denoting existence, actions, perceptions, such as -sum-, -do-, -pater-, the original echo of the impression which the external world made on the mind of man, but also a number of words indicative of culture (not only as respects their roots, but in a form stamped upon them by custom) which are the common property of the Indo-Germanic family, and which cannot be explained either on the principle of an uniform development in the several languages, or on the supposition of their having subsequently borrowed one from another. In this way we possess evidence of the development of pastoral life at that remote epoch in the unalterably fixed names of domestic animals; the Sanscrit -gaus- is the Latin -bos-, the Greek —bous—; Sanscrit -avis- is the Latin -ovis-, Greek —ois—; Sanscrit -asvas-, Latin -equus-, Greek —ippos—; Sanscrit -hansas-, Latin -anser-, Greek —chein—; Sanscrit -atis-, Latin -anas-, Greek —neissa—; in like manner -pecus-, -sus-, -porcus-, -taurus-, -canis-, are Sanscrit words. Even at this remote period accordingly the stock, on which from the days of Homer down to our own time the intellectual development of mankind has been dependent, had already advanced beyond the lowest stage of civilization, the hunting and fishing epoch, and had attained at least comparative fixity of abode. On the other hand, we have as yet no certain proofs of the existence of agriculture at this period. Language rather favours the negative view. Of the Latin-Greek names of grain none occurs in Sanscrit with the single exception of —zea—, which philologically represents the Sanscrit -yavas-, but denotes in the Indian barley, in Greek spelt. It must indeed be granted that this diversity in

the names of cultivated plants, which so strongly contrasts with the essential agreement in the appellations of domestic animals, does not absolutely preclude the supposition of a common original agriculture. In the circumstances of primitive times transport and acclimatizing are more difficult in the case of plants than of animals; and the cultivation of rice among the Indians, that of wheat and spelt among the Greeks and Romans, and that of rye and oats among the Germans and Celts, may all be traceable to a common system of primitive tillage. On the other hand the name of one cereal common to the Greeks and Indians only proves, at the most, that before the separation of the stocks they gathered and ate the grains of barley and spelt growing wild in Mesopotamia,(3) not that they already cultivated grain. While, however, we reach no decisive result in this way, a further light is thrown on the subject by our observing that a number of the most important words bearing on this province of culture occur certainly in Sanscrit, but all of them in a more general signification. -Agras-among the Indians denotes a level surface in general; -kurnu-, anything pounded; -aritrām-, oar and ship; -venas-, that which is pleasant in general, particularly a pleasant drink. The words are thus very ancient; but their more definite application to the field (-ager-), to the grain to be ground (-granum-), to the implement which furrows the soil as the ship furrows the surface of the sea (-aratrum-), to the juice of the grape (-vinum-), had not yet taken place when the earliest division of the stocks occurred, and it is not to be wondered at that their subsequent applications came to be in some instances very different, and that, for example, the corn intended to