

Middle Republican Connectivities*

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ABSTRACT

*This paper outlines a new framework for the historical study of Rome and Italy during the middle republican period. We argue that traditional approaches centred upon social struggles at home and battles abroad, *res domi militiaeque*, do not sufficiently capture the dynamism of Roman society during the early stages of imperial expansion. Recent scholarship has been rightly critical of the appropriateness of applying concepts of Hellenisation to the period, as Rome's interactions with Magna Graecia and the Greek East in the fourth and third centuries look very different than they would in subsequent centuries. Moving in a new direction, we sketch the contours of an approach that foregrounds the many connectivities (temporal, geographical, methodological, historical) apparent from the interdisciplinary study of middle republican Rome and Italy. The result encourages a new mode of historical inquiry into the development of middle republican Rome and Italy, one which sees Rome already in this moment as both expansively interconnected with and actively involved in wider Mediterranean and Eurasian history.*

Keywords: Middle republican Rome; connectivity; ancient history; Hellenistic Italy

I INTRODUCTION: FROM COUNTERFACTUAL TO CONNECTIVITY

Mention of so great a king and ruler calls forth some thoughts, which I have often mulled over to myself, that it should be pleasing to inquire how Roman events would have turned out if there had been war with Alexander.¹

This sentence, which introduces Livy's famous digression on Alexander and Rome in the ninth book of his history, simultaneously presupposes and precludes Rome's place in the increasingly connected Mediterranean world of the later fourth century B.C.E. Livy's extended discussion is explicitly counterfactual history, perhaps the first of its sort in Greco-Roman historical literature: it imagines a series of events that never came to pass,

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¹ 9.17.2: 'tanti regis ac ducis mentio, quibus saepe tacitus cogitationibus volutavi animum, eas euocat in medium, ut quaerere libeat quinam eventus Romanis rebus, si cum Alexandro foret bellatum, futurus fuerit'.

partly as a means of sounding emergent institutional and cultural differences between the imperial republican city-state and Hellenistic kingdoms.² In Livy's unabashedly biased view, Rome would have emerged victorious from the encounter with Alexander, thereby extending by an even earlier date its (imagined) dominion over the eastern as well as the central Mediterranean world. But irrespective of Livy's biases, the conceptual bedrock for his digression calls for comment. His treatment in Book 9 of Rome and the Hellenistic East as separate worlds attests to the evocative power of this moment in Mediterranean history, apparent also in the various reports of the Macedonian king's unfulfilled plans at his death in Babylon to sail west and conquer the entire *oikoumene*.³ Of course, such plans in their unrealised boldness served more to enhance the potency of the Alexander-myth than to yield concrete geopolitical outcomes. It would be several more decades before the entry of the Roman state into the fractious political struggles of the Hellenistic kingdoms.

Livy's counterfactual thought-experiment, organised as it is around a division of the Mediterranean, also remains a powerful artifact for its affinity with the groupings of modern scholarship, which still tends with some notable exceptions to treat events in the fourth and early third centuries B.C.E. as following separate trajectories in East and West. It is standard for histories of Rome in this period to concentrate on the resolution of internal socio-political struggles and the initial stages of the conquest of Italy, leading up to the first overseas campaign in Sicily in 264 B.C.E. It is our purpose in this essay to consider, by contrast, the possibility of an extensive and encompassing history of Rome and Italy in the years around the death of Alexander. We will follow Livy's counterfactual, but along lines that are anything but imaginary.

Let us admit from the outset that there is little value in performing this exercise in a strictly empirical manner or by means of a narrowly political history. The evidence to support any direct political relationship between Rome and the eastern Mediterranean at this moment in time is meagre at best.⁴ One could perhaps point to Cleitarchus' report of an Italian embassy to Babylon; the context through which we know of this episode — Pliny the Elder's notice about growing Greek historiographical and scientific interest in Rome — suggests that Romans, too, may have travelled alongside the Bruttian, Lucanian and Etruscan ambassadors.⁵ We might also acknowledge recent claims that monumental fourth-century rock-cut tombs from the area of Viterbo in south Etruria were modelled directly upon the Macedonian palace at Pella and royal tomb architecture at Vergina, and that highly fragmentary coeval tomb architecture from the Capitoline at Rome itself may

² Ancient counterfactual thinking is not restricted to historiography: see Slatkin 2018 on counterfactuals in Homer. For analysis of the Alexander digression, see Oakley 1997–2005 *ad loc.*; Morello 2002, Mahé-Simon 2006 and Briquel 2015 all capture different aspects of its relevance to Livy's broader aims. The application of counterfactuals to ancient history motivates several contributions to Cowley 1999 and has recently been championed by Scheidel 2019: see esp. ch. 4 for a defence of their heuristic value, and 116–17 on Arnold Toynbee's essay 'If Alexander the Great had lived on'; cf. Collins 2007 for a historical sociologist's critique of counterfactual history, and Spellman and Mandel 1999 for a primer on counterfactuals and causality.

³ These plans, later relished by the rich traditions of the Alexander Romance, are of early origins and credibly sourced: for the amassing of troops and supplies in the months before Alexander's death, see Bosworth 1988: 196–201 and 209–10. The intended target was Carthage; whether Rome was at all in Alexander's sights at the time is far less certain. We thank one of our reviewers for pressing us to clarify here.

⁴ Whether the installation of statues to Pythagoras and Alcibiades 'in the horns of the *comitium*' at the time of the Samnite Wars (Plin., *HN* 34.26) reflects a political as well as a cultural dialogue is hard to answer with certainty: usefully on the statues, see Mele 1981; Purcell 2003: 25–6; Humm 2005: ch. 11; and Humm 2014 on the legend of Numa and Pythagoras.

⁵ Plin., *HN* 3.57; cf. Arr., *Anab.* 7.15.4. The 'high dating' of Cleitarchus' activity: Badian 1965; Prandi 2012. The tradition surrounding this embassy: Bosworth 1988: 84–93 and Prandi's commentary for Kleitarchos *BNJ* 137 F 31; Pérez Rubio 2016 on Celtic embassies to Alexander. Strabo's report (5.3.5) that an Alexander sent an embassy to Rome to complain about Antiate pirates has been taken to refer to Alexander the Molossian: see Capdeville 2016: 43 n. 171; on Rome's role in the suppression of piracy, see further n. 99 below.

likewise have featured Macedonian style.⁶ But our procedure is not to heap this material, often tenuous and unavoidably fissiparous, into a fragile buttress for the idea of an early Hellenistic Rome. As we discuss below, the identification and use of Greek culture was not unimportant to communities in Italy, including Rome, in this period; but the circulatory patterns between West and East were both subtler and more long-standing than is captured by terms like Hellenistic, Hellenisation, or Hellenism. Instead, our goal is to construct new and more ambitious frameworks for assessing temporality and historical change in Rome and Italy that do not take Greece as their point of departure.⁷

The precedents and inspirations for our enterprise in framework-building are numerous.⁸ This article's specific way forward is to centre Rome and Italy in the history of this period while bringing out for sustained evaluation multiple and complex senses of extension and expansion. Our watchword is connectivity, by which we intend to emphasise the entanglement of both this period of Rome's history and its analysis with other spaces, times and methodologies. This discussion will naturally lead down various paths, and still more could easily be found besides those we map below; but we intend the whole as a response to two more targeted questions.

First, in terms of periodisation, is the 'Middle Republic' helpful primarily as a term of historiographical convenience, or are there historical aspects beyond the simple carve-out of time that make the period distinct? It is our view that 'middle republican' Rome and central Italy form a distinct period of study because this unit of time and space witnessed a uniquely consequential intensification of links between Romans and others.⁹ To be sure, the periodisation and the tripartite division of republican history implied by the moniker 'Middle Republic' are by now established scholarly conventions. That they have no ancient basis should not concern us: as a heuristic procedure, delineating historical periods is always to some extent retroactive and artificial.¹⁰ The periodisation took on considerable popularity in the wake of the landmark 1977 exhibition catalogue *Roma medio repubblicana*, now celebrated by a pair of impressive conference volumes marking the fortieth anniversary of its publication.¹¹ In current scholarship, the phrase 'Middle Republic' is most often applied neutrally to describe a variety of historical trends occurring in the fourth and early third centuries B.C.E., sandwiched between the early republican 'Conflict of the Orders' and the overseas imperial conquests and eventual civil wars of the Late Republic. While the finer details of how republican history is sliced up into these constituent units vary considerably (as we detail further in Section II), this abundance of turning points on its own would seem to warrant a more conscious effort to understand what makes the Middle Republic historically coherent and interesting. We see the Middle Republic as much more than an organisational category for packaging events or developments between two points in time.

⁶ Etruscan tombs near Viterbo: Jolivet and Lovergne 2020; Rome: Tucci 2018. Literary and epigraphic evidence for Etruscan-Greek contacts in the fifth and fourth centuries: Capdeville 2016.

⁷ In Bernard 2018a: 3–4 and Padilla Peralta 2020: 25–6, the authors have offered more extended critiques of understanding this period of Roman history as Hellenistic. Introducing their excellent recent volume on the 'Hellenistic West', Prag and Crawley Quinn 2013: 13 land in the end on the view that such a term is probably inappropriate for the history of either the western or eastern Mediterranean at this date; for the Hellenistic Far East, cf. G. Parker 2007: 176–85 on Hellenism's conceptual limitations, and Yang 2017 for 'Indianisation' as counterpoint to Hellenisation; Alexander 2001 on the ideological freight of Hellenism and Hellenisation; note also the pushback to Hellenisation in Burstein 2021's study of the kingdom of Kush.

⁸ See e.g. Buchsenschutz *et al.* 2012 for a non-Hellenocentric treatment of Celtic cultures in the fourth and third centuries.

⁹ In order to keep the discussion within manageable limits, we retain Rome and central Italy as primary points of reference, while granting that many other Italian and central Mediterranean peoples took on their own connectivities in this period, sometimes in ways only loosely intersecting with Roman imperialism: see the essays in Prag and Crawley Quinn 2013; Manning 2018; Pilkington 2019; de Lisle 2021.

¹⁰ Flower 2010: 6.

¹¹ Cifarelli *et al.* 2019; D'Alessio *et al.* 2021.

Second, what exactly is gained by applying concepts of connectivity to the study of the Middle Republic? Our response to this question is to take connectivity not only as a descriptive statement about relationships, but as a method that invites the kind of productive association and juxtaposition through which different categories of evidence from and about the Middle Republic may be bridged and their links more stimulatingly exploited. It is this method that offers us the best chance of pivoting effectively from recognising the multiple turning points that cluster within the ‘Middle Republic’ to writing multiplicities *into* the Middle Republic.¹² In developing answers to our second question, we admit that we will not always offer tidy or complete solutions to particular historical problems; part of the motivation for this study is to identify connections, some necessarily fuzzier than others, around which programmes of research might coalesce further down the road.¹³ One banner under which our notion of connectivity explicitly operates is that of Horden and Purcell’s now classic study on Mediterranean connectivity. The authors’ conceptualisation of the Mediterranean as a place of movement — ebbing and flowing, constantly humming with a Brownian motion that circulated people, goods and ideas — finds a home within the wider turn of premodern and early modern history towards global, transnational and comparativist themes.¹⁴ In the discipline of ancient history, it has been massively influential, and the last two decades of research are practically awash in publications about the shape and nature of Mediterranean connectivities.¹⁵ And yet, despite this rich current in contemporary historical scholarship, and even though Horden and Purcell themselves selected south Etruria as one of four ‘definite places’ to test their model, connectivity has had little reverberation in histories of the Middle Republic, which remain more introspectively focused for reasons that we discuss below.¹⁶ While a full re-elaboration of Roman history in this period along these lines is beyond our scope, we intend this paper as a summons to the attempt. Following Polybius’ lead, we propose a stitching together (*symploke*) of Rome into the broader cloth of Mediterranean history in this period; the result is a history that, while not exactly Hellenistic, is certainly more inclusive.¹⁷

We proceed first by emphasising the value of an extensive and interlinked approach to the temporal (Section II) and methodological (Section III) texture of the period, before turning to sketch the contours of middle republican connectivities in the realms of socio-economics (Section IV) and culture (Section V). Throughout, we embrace the

¹² Cf. Knapp *et al.* 2021: 5, who take connectivity (as opposed to ‘contact’ or ‘mobility’) to mark ‘the material or ideational bridging of disparate communities’; and Pitts and Versluys 2021, who interrelate connectivity with *relationality* and *impact* in their manifesto for ‘objectscapes’. The practice of ‘writing multiplicities’: Ali 2021.

¹³ In singling out fuzziness as a property of the methods appropriate to the study of the Middle Republic, we nod not only to historiographical interest in the mathematical notion of the ‘fuzzy set’ (Horden and Purcell 2000: 45; note the concept’s appearance in Bispham 2007: 82 and 111; usefully on the concept’s non-historiographical affordances, Mallette 2017: 18–22) but also to the ‘fuzzy connections’ salient in recent classical reception studies (see e.g. Hardwick 2011).

¹⁴ Conrad 2016; Bayly 2018. Isayev 2017 is perhaps the closest study of this sort for our period, but within a wider temporal scope; see now Ghobrial 2019, whose concept of ‘global microhistory’ seems to us to offer considerable potential for the study of antiquity. See also Section II below, for the global-history paradigm of Osterhammel 2014.

¹⁵ Horden and Purcell 2000. Of the various *sequelae*, Purcell 2016 is arguably the most provocative in innovating and expanding connectivity’s analytic reach; note also the essays collected in Horden and Purcell 2020. Broodbank 2013 and Hodos 2020 are among the most sweeping recent interventions. Pitts and Versluys 2014 promote an allied concept of globalisation; we prefer Horden and Purcell’s ecological framing.

¹⁶ For a summons to the study of connectivity in Italy, see already R. Roth 2012. For some key differences between connective and comparative approaches, note Scheidel 2018a: 43.

¹⁷ Polyb. 1.4.11; further on the concept of *symploke*, see Wallbank 1975; on 218 B.C.E. as an important moment in this process, see Polyb. 1.3.3–4 and 5.105.4 with Clarke 1999: 80–1 and 119–20. Stitching and knitting as metaphors for connectivity: Strabo 2.5.26, with Horden 2020 for reaffirmation of the explanatory power of a (carefully defined) connectivity. ‘Inclusive Hellenistic history’: Purcell 2013.

plural ‘connectivities’: the lines we see extending outwards from middle republican Rome organised connections of a geographical, human and temporal nature.

II CHRONOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS

Since one of our primary aims is to refine the periodisation of republican Roman history, we begin with the topic of historical time and its divisions.¹⁸ The middle republican Rome we envision is not merely one of connected places and peoples; how Rome came to establish the fact(s) of its temporality was a connective feat in itself. As noted earlier, while the term ‘Middle Republic’ itself is modern, our ancient literary sources built their narratives of republican history upon several turning points that the term is nowadays taken to encompass. There is general consensus on fixing this period’s endpoint to the opening of hostilities against Carthage; the event stands for both ancient and modern histories as a marker of the end of ‘the beginnings of Rome’.¹⁹ By contrast, the other, earlier boundary appears more labile. One important anchor was undoubtedly the Gallic sack of Rome in 390, singled out as a nadir in Roman political history and often employed to stake down more expansive historical narratives. The sack closes Livy’s first pentad, while his second opens with the famous claim to write Roman history from a ‘new beginning’ based upon the presence of documentary information, presumed to be lost for the preceding period (6.1.3). His statement seems to amplify the view of at least one of his sources, very likely Claudius Quadrigarius, who had deemed early Roman history impossibly obscure and so began his whole historical work with the events of the sack.²⁰ Meanwhile, the mythological figure of M. Furius Camillus, whose career served to bridge events before and after the sack, takes us back a decade or so to the expedition against Veii in 406, which formed its own starting point. The Licinio-Sextian laws in 367, passed according to some accounts with Camillus’ intervention, formed another.²¹ There were other, later turning points as well: Ennius’ grandly programmatic command at the start of *Annales* VI to ‘unroll the history of the great war’ with Pyrrhus, or possibly the Samnites, comes to mind.²² While Livy provides us with the most complete (and most studied) extant version of the period’s history, the limited state of our knowledge of his sources and antecedents makes it hard to plot the constellation of alternative turning points in any detail; however, where we can glimpse the shape of other narratives, the expectation of diversity and heterodoxy is more than met.²³ Tacitus’ potted history of early Rome at the start of his *Annales*, for example, sets the

¹⁸ Flower 2010.

¹⁹ Polyb. 1.6.6, 2.1.1, etc.; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.8; Beloch 1926; Cornell 1995. Timaeus’ endpoint of 264, which becomes Polybius’ starting point, is possibly attributable to the former’s death shortly thereafter as much as to any historical retrospection; his separate monograph on Rome’s war against Pyrrhus — see Walbank 2002: ch. 11 — signals an interest in this conflict as a(nother) turning point.

²⁰ See Briscoe’s introduction to Q. Claudius Quadrigarius in *FRHist*, which distinguishes between the annalist and the ‘Clodius’ mentioned at Plut., *Num.* 1.2. On the types of records whose destruction is referenced or implied at Liv. 6.1.1–3; Crawford 1998: 38. Livy’s departures from Polybius in the narrative and thematic employment of the Sack: U. Roth 2021.

²¹ Cf. Liv. 7.1; for Camillus’ role, see Liv. 6.38 and 42.9; Plut., *Cam.* 39.

²² Enn., *Ann.* 164 Skutsch. While the placement of the statement at the start of book VI is secure, Skutsch’s placement of the passage at the start of the poet’s narration of the war with Pyrrhus is debated: Cornell 2004 suggests the phrase introduced the narration of the Samnite wars; R. Roth 2010: 175 favours Pyrrhus; the allusion to this verse at the opening of Lucretius book 5 (in which Pyrrhus and his elephants later make an appearance: see now Nethercut 2021: 97–100) lends support to Skutsch.

²³ Cf. the Sabine conquest as a watershed in Varronian historiography: *De vita populi Romani* frs. 65–66 Pittà with Wiseman 2016: cxix; note Smith 2021 on the conquest’s significance for Fabius Pictor and Cato the Elder. Livy’s silences and omissions, and what they suggest about the currency of alternative accounts, are the theme of Ridley 2013.

Decemviri as its turning point for the republican state before zooming forward all the way to the despotic reigns of Cinna and Sulla (*Ann.* 1.1).

This plurality of divisions also characterises modern research into middle republican history. Historians emphasise a series of novelties and firsts in the period, from Rome's first territorial conquest across the Tiber with the sack of Veii to the opening of the highest office of the consulship to Romans of plebeian birth by the Licinio-Sextian laws, an act that jump-started the legal transformation of Rome's political elite from the previous patrician domination into the new patricio-plebeian *nobilitas*. Another plausible inflection point falls in the late 340s: around the time of Alexander of Epirus' exploits in Italy, the events of the Latin War and the murky circumstances of their resolution seem to spur a new realignment of regional politics under Rome's imperial rule; subsequent military expansion into Campania and then into the Central Apennines during the Samnite Wars all represent new geographical firsts in Rome's expanding territorial imperialism.²⁴ For others, Appius Claudius Caecus' highly innovative censorship of 312 represents the dawn of a new period, while further steps in the securing of an Italian empire at Sentinum in 290 or against Pyrrhus at Heraclea and Ausculum in 280–279, for example, are also noted.²⁵ These and other political and military firsts are joined by other innovations of various forms: honorific statuary, the first Roman coinage, trunk roads, aqueducts, a start or restart to colonisation in Central Italy, and so forth. Everything adds up to make the period seem both different from and at the same time integral to the construction of later Roman society.

However, one also starts to observe from the list of 'firsts' how many of the period's turning points and boundaries seem rooted in the deeper past. We have already noted how in historical narratives the figure of Camillus acts to tie the events of the Gallic sack to the preceding campaign against Veii and the subsequent Licinio-Sextian laws.²⁶ The rise of plebeians to the consulship in 367 seems technically to have been a return, as several plebeian families appear in the *fasti* for the early fifth century.²⁷ In any case, the power-sharing elite who emerged from 367 onwards had been forged through a decades-long struggle between the social orders, with alternating phases of advance and retreat since at least the mid-fifth century and the time of the Decemviri. Even those technological innovations of the period, enormously novel as many were, were often path-dependent: Rome's initial production of coins around 300 B.C.E. followed several centuries of the monetary use of bronze in various forms, while the pioneering construction of Rome's first aqueduct, the Aqua Appia in 312, should be contextualised as part of a series of early hydraulic channelling projects in Central Italy that extended back several centuries — ranging from Rome's *cloaca* and draining of the Alban lake to the diffuse use of *cuniculi* to irrigate fields in Archaic south Etruria, as well as similar hydraulic systems now known from Latium and Campania.²⁸ As for the period's lower terminus, the opening of hostilities with Carthage marked a major escalation in Rome's overseas imperialist project; however, Rome's previous wars were hardly irrelevant to this development. Cornell has rightly challenged the sources' vision of the Roman

²⁴ The Second Samnite War has been a prominent marker: among more recent studies, note Loreto 1993, whose 'epoca di buon senso' begins in 326, and Raaflaub 1996.

²⁵ Humm 2005, especially for Appius Claudius Caecus; cf. Raaflaub *et al.* 1992, which brackets the period from 338 to the Pyrrhic Wars as a unit for historical analysis. For the Pyrrhic wars and historiography, see R. Roth 2010. Note the use of 290 as a divider between the historical narratives of Rosenstein 2012 and Bradley 2020.

²⁶ For the Camillus myth, see Bruun 2000a.

²⁷ Cornell 1995: 252–6.

²⁸ For pre-coinage uses of bronze, see Bernard 2018b: 6–8 with previous bibliography; for water-management and related infrastructure in Archaic Italy, see Bianchi and D'Acunto 2020; for the background at Rome specifically, Lombardi and Santucci 2021.

conquest of the Samnites as a grand and programmatic imperialist affair from the start, an interpretation upon which archaeology also casts doubt.²⁹

Rather than insisting on the period's fixed boundaries, then, we propose understanding the Middle Republic as a chronological span defined by a concentration of transformations that all capitalised on developing trends. Our Middle Republic was fundamentally an age of transformation, along axes that we specify below; however, its status as an era of change does not make it cleanly separable from its past, and the forward-looking nature of many of its 'firsts' ensured continuities with later republican culture. Framed in this way, the temporal texture of this period shares some commonalities with the chronological framing of other periods in global history.

We find considerable appeal in Osterhammel's framing of temporality and periodisation in his recent global history of the 'long' nineteenth century, itself a study of the transformative effects of connectivity. Osterhammel contemplates the idea of a 'long' century in human history, an adjective first applied by Braudel to the sixteenth century and popularised by Hobsbawm's study of the emergence of the modern, global world during the 'long' nineteenth century.³⁰ This geographically expansive epoch of transformation in human history bound the Atlantic world to the Indian subcontinent, east Asia, the Pacific Rim and the Antipodes. Such an approach necessarily raises the problem of how to fold an array of locally specific narratives into a discrete chronological period. The solution, according to Osterhammel, is not only to focus analysis upon connections of the geographical or socio-cultural variety, but to reconsider the whole organisation of events in historical time:

My nineteenth century is not conceived as a temporal continuum stretching from point A to point B. The histories that interest me do not involve a linear, 'and then came such and such' narrative spread over a hundred or more years; rather they consist of transitions and transformations ... The individual transformations begin and end at particular moments, with continuities in both directions on the arrow of time. On the one hand, they continue developments from the past ... on the other hand, the nineteenth century is the prehistory of the present day; characteristic transformations that began then rarely came to a complete stop ... What I wish to conjure up and comment on is not a sealed-off, self-sufficient history of the nineteenth century but the insertion of an age within longer timelines: the nineteenth century *in* history.³¹

Thus, he goes on to say, his work operates with two periodisations in mind, one a calendar century *of* history representing the bare segment of time, the other the long century *in* history, which emerges only through contextual analysis. This *in/of* distinction closely resembles Horden and Purcell's distinction between history *in* and *of* the Mediterranean, with the former focusing on events and the latter incorporating the nature of their setting.³² If the focus of the latter is on the webs of connectivity tying the whole together, Osterhammel's century *in* history also relates to a sense of connectedness on a temporal (rather than purely geographical) basis, with events neither sealed off nor standing apart from those of other periods.

²⁹ Cornell 2004; for a recent reappraisal of Roman effects on the material record of Samnium, see Scopacasa 2015.

³⁰ Braudel 1949; 1953; Hobsbawm 1962; Bayly 2004; cf. Hector and Casimir 2003–2004 on 'the long Haitian nineteenth century'. 'Long' centuries in historical scholarship: Liberman 2013; for recent examples from the ancient Mediterranean, see e.g. Rüpke 2012 on the 'long third century' in republican religious history; Shipley 2018: 238 on the Hellenistic Peloponnese's 'long third century' (and cf. the 'short' third century of Chaniotis 2018: ch. 3).

³¹ Osterhammel 2014: 47.

³² Horden and Purcell 2000: 2–3; similarly Sahlins 2004: 128.

Mechanically applying this idea, one could follow Osterhammel's lead by arguing for a self-contained century of Roman history between (say) the years 367 and 264, from the Licinio-Sextian laws to the beginning of war against Carthage. If the hundred-year span's importance seems too much an artifact of the later Gregorian calendar,³³ we could instead frame the exploration in more emic terms as an *aetas* to *aetas* comparison of generations.³⁴ Consider the lifespan of one leading political actor, placed by Livy in the first ranks of those generals against whom Alexander would have had to contend if he had fought Rome: M. Valerius Corvus. Elected to his first consulship in 348 at the age of twenty-two and his last in 299 at over seventy years old, he lived to see his son hold high office once or perhaps twice in the 280s and died in 270 around the age of 100, as his grandson was embarking on his own political career, which peaked in a consular command against Carthage in 263.³⁵ Or we could instead map the period around the life of the Greek historian Timaeus of Tauromenium, who died at the age of ninety-six around the start of the war with Carthage and whose history registers the rising Greek interest in Rome.

Yet it is Osterhammel's concept of a century *in* history that interests us as much if not more than the construction of a linear middle republican historical period from point A to point B, however measured out. As with his globalising nineteenth century, our period was one of transitions and transformations that were marked by their continuities to the Roman republican past and future, as we have just observed. It seems important to observe that the middle republican period did not emerge phoenix-like out of any catastrophe or cataclysmic episode; its making did not follow on the heels of any putative unmaking of the preceding period.³⁶ We would argue that recognition of this particular balance of continuity and change is ultimately more important to the temporal conception of the Middle Republic than settling any argument over particular start- or endpoints. Undoubtedly, the Roman state of the later third and second centuries looked nothing like the early republican community of the fifth century; however, a framing of history *in* the middle republican period serves both to remind us of the intense crucible in which this later, new world formed, and of the manner in which its features extended and elaborated those of the more distant past.

III METHODOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS

As we turn to consider middle republican connectivity of the historical (and not only chronological) sort, closer scrutiny of the more traditional ways of emplotting the period's history is needed. If our periodisation is to be heuristically useful, it must clear some space for methodological innovation. So far, discussion of the Middle Republic as a bounded temporal unit of historical enquiry has focused largely on social struggles at

³³ For the development of the Gregorian calendar, see Richards 1998; note also Ali 2021: 275–9 on the *anno Domini* system. More remains to be said about the (perceived) movement of Roman time in terms of *saecula*: Feeney 2007: 145–7; Le Goff 2015: 3.

³⁴ For generational thinking as applied to the period, see e.g. Liv. 9.16.19: 'haud dubie illa aetate, qua nulla virtutum feracior fuit, nemo unus erat vir quo magis innixa res Romana staret'; cf. Florus 1.praef.4–8 for the division of Roman history according to the phases of one person's *aetas* (*infantia*, *adolescentia*, *maturitas*, *senectus*), in a scheme probably adapted either from Seneca the Elder's *Historiae* (on which see further Clarke 1999: 15–16) or Varro's *De vita populi Romani* (Wiseman 2016: cxiii and cxx). An invigorating treatment of 'the problem of generations' in historical and sociological study: Mannheim 1952: ch. 7.

³⁵ Biography: Münzer 1891: 18–25; for scepticism about the details of his *cursus*, cf. RE 7A.2413–18 (Volkman) and BNP s.v. 'Valerius' I.12 (Müller).

³⁶ For the absence of any palpable rupture, our period's emergence better resembles Osterhammel's global nineteenth century than some other frequently analysed transitions in Eurasian history, such as that from the Late Medieval to Early Modern worlds freshly studied in Campbell 2016.

home and armies abroad, *res domi militiaeque*. These are not unimportant topics for our account, nor are they sterile for other researchers; advances continue to be made on both fronts.³⁷ At the same time, this focus has dominated scholarship on middle republican Rome so greatly as to sideline the development and piloting of other methods and approaches, over the last half century at least. Studies of the period's ruling classes and the patricio-plebeian social struggles tend to follow well-worn grooves.³⁸

Despite the weight of tradition, such research is often shot through with anxiety about the usefulness of the extant ancient literary sources, often taken as the primary means of accessing political and military history; the results of this research have consequently been attacked along source-critical lines.³⁹ We cannot claim here to resolve the problem of the sources. Perhaps some degree of optimism is justified in light of Oakley's exposition of the evidentiary material available to the annalists and more recent research in the same vein.⁴⁰ As even some critical voices have conceded, the record of the Middle Republic does not seem as problematic as that of the Late Monarchy or Early Republic.⁴¹ For example, following De Sanctis' lead, Cornell reasonably zeroes in on the censor Appius Claudius Caecus as the 'first living personality in Roman history', while Humm takes matters a step further with his lengthy reconstruction of the political and cultural contexts in which the censor operated. These efforts are only possible because of the expanding range and increasing detail of the textual authorities that are available for the period.⁴² Still, credence in these authorities will only take discussion so far, since there continues to exist no means to verify beyond any shadow of doubt historical propositions that are based only upon the ancient literary sources.

The traditional, and intertwined, emphases on Roman political history and on ascertaining the trustworthiness of our sources for that history lead rapidly to an impasse. In mapping a methodological path beyond this point, we start with the observation that both these approaches are strongly introspective in nature and tend to treat Roman history largely in isolation from its surrounding world; they adhere to the division of the Mediterranean that we saw at work in Livy's counterfactual. As regards the source problem especially, there is also little hope of the situation ever ironing itself out of its own accord, since the chances of finding new evidence that might shine direct light on the probity of our sources are slim to none. But such long-standing problems can be mitigated precisely through the sort of reorientation this paper proposes, namely a turning away from a history of the fourth century *qua* political history to a more inclusively defined middle republican fourth century *in* history. We see this reframing unfolding along both empirical and theoretical lines, and in particular from two more connective ways of thinking about the period's history: first in terms of how we integrate available material culture, and second in terms of how we take on board comparative historical approaches.

There now exists an enormous quantity of archaeological material from this period, much more than was the case even a few decades ago. This abundance is the result both of the restudy of known sites and of new excavation and publication. Rome itself can be taken as paradigmatic of this trend: middle republican sanctuaries at Sant'Omobono and

³⁷ See e.g. Rosenstein 2004; Armstrong 2016.

³⁸ Terrenato 2019: ch. 1 now traces scholarly myopia of this sort all the way back to antiquity. The literature on the period's political history and the 'Conflict of the Orders' holds pole position in the field. Important works include Hölkeskamp [1987] 2011; 2004; 2010; 2017; 2020; Loreto 1993; Beck 2005; among notable edited volumes are Raaflaub 1986; Eder 1990; Mineo and Piel 2016.

³⁹ See e.g. Millar 1989; Forsythe 2005.

⁴⁰ Oakley 1997–2005: Vol. I; see now Sandberg and Smith 2018.

⁴¹ Wiseman 2008: 15; for the problematic tradition on the Late Monarchy, see the debates in Lulof and Smith 2017.

⁴² Cornell 1995: 377 (and, for other De Sanctis-flavoured appraisals of the censor, Roller 2018: 95 n. 1); Humm 2005. The censor's life and times as one possible benchmark for periodisation: Flower 2010: 36.

Largo Argentina have seen energetic recent phases of restudy, while new excavations into deeper stratigraphy beneath the Forum of Caesar, on the Caelian and on the northeastern Palatine provide new keyholes into the period's material culture. Continuing modern expansion into the city's suburbs frequently reveals middle republican sites, while beyond the city's periphery recent exploration in south Etruria and Latium has been no less energetic or productive. Meanwhile, publications on particular middle republican classes of materials, from fine-wares and amphorae to architectural terracottas, continue to proliferate. This list could easily go on.⁴³

Of course, archaeology has long played a role in histories of the period, and so part of the task before us is to update our syntheses to account for all of this new material.⁴⁴ However, a more fundamental issue is how we go about such integrative work. Earlier scholarship tended to view material culture as auxiliary to other, especially textual, forms of analysis for the reconstruction of the early Roman past.⁴⁵ This hierarchy is rooted in a disciplinary legacy that dates back to the mid-nineteenth-century elaboration of ancient history as a discipline allied with classical philology, and to the birth of 'prehistory' at around the same time.⁴⁶ As a result, when the archaeology of pre-imperial Rome grew by leaps and bounds in the early twentieth century, it encountered a historical framework largely already in place, and revisionist attempts to work solely from the material culture were largely met with suspicion.⁴⁷ While great strides have been made in recent decades, it is still common to find historical work on the period turning to the archaeological record largely to supplement or verify information found in the literary sources. In our view, the situation calls for reassessments of both the historical questions we ask and the approaches we employ. New typologies of black-gloss ceramics or Greco-Italic amphorae, for example, seem directly relevant to narratives of middle republican social and economic history and thus to the period's political economy, but not because they bear on (long-running preoccupations with) political culture or patricio-plebeian social struggles.⁴⁸ Furthermore, what has changed over the last decades is not only the quantity of available evidence, but also the qualitative transformation of Roman archaeology into a discipline with its own impressive toolkit of analytical and scientific approaches. In itself, plugging the results of the laboratory into historical reconstructions can produce interesting and sometimes unexpected outcomes; but doing so effectively also requires a reorientation to the fact that such results often operate at levels of scale and resolution that differ from those of more traditional historical accounts. Archaeology thus produces vectors of historical information that intersect productively with other lines of historical inquiry, but do not necessarily travel in the same direction or at the same pace; the result is a sort of consilience.⁴⁹ In this sense, we view the spadework of connecting archaeology and history as furnishing the basis for a new form of connectivity, in this case of a methodological nature.

We discuss some relevant material from climate science in the next section. For now, we limit ourselves to one illustration, this time from bioarchaeology. How many historians of middle republican Rome are aware that our unit of time was apparently a major turning point in the dominance of domesticated fowls in Italian diets? While chicken bones

⁴³ For updated exposition of the period's archaeology, see now Cifarelli *et al.* 2019; D'Alessio *et al.* 2021.

⁴⁴ For earlier work on the period that was receptive to archaeology, see the relevant sections of Cornell 1995. Gjerstad *et al.* 1967 and Bruun 2000b also contain important papers on material culture.

⁴⁵ Momigliano 1963: 108; Bickerman 1969: 400.

⁴⁶ Smail and Shryock 2013; note also Hall 2014: ch. 1 on classical archaeology's handmaidening to (text-centric) ancient history.

⁴⁷ Most notably that of Gjerstad 1953–1973, on which see Momigliano 1963.

⁴⁸ For a sense of the stakes of these typologies, and the disagreements that they provoke: Morel 2009.

⁴⁹ Consilience and its potential for Roman history: Scheidel 2018b: 7.

appear in food dumps in Italy starting in the Bronze Age, they assume a new level of priority in assemblages of the middle republican period. We find hundreds of such bones among the faunal remains in a third-century context at the suburban villa of Centocelle, and corresponding upticks in smaller numbers at other contemporary sites.⁵⁰ In this light, perhaps the famously fowl behaviour of Publius Claudius Pulcher before the Battle of Drepana gains another layer of ecological significance, and the appearance of chicken imagery on early Roman currency gains another interpretive context.⁵¹ More to the point, these finds reveal that the Middle Republic witnessed consequential shifts in Italian meat consumption and in agricultural investment in domesticated fowl stocks — hardly irrelevant to wider considerations of land-use, diet, or production. Chicken domestication might be linked with rising urbanisation and increased settlement density, since chickens offer a rapidly reproducing source of animal protein that can be raised in more confined spaces.⁵² There are even possible ecological implications to consider, as early chicken domestication has been linked in other areas with local environmental shifts.⁵³ In other words, these finds are useful in part because they do *not* speak directly to political or military events; they invite us to plot different points of connection.

Our methodological intervention is not limited to the centring of archaeological evidence. The historical contours of the Middle Republic also come into sharper focus, we contend, through targeted comparison with other times and places. It is therefore imperative that historians of the period think more globally. There are in fact good pedigrees, both ancient and modern, for doing just that, from Polybius' comparative framework for understanding early Roman imperialism to Arnold Toynbee's styling of his own globally sweeping historical research explicitly after Polybius' work.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, similar approaches remain largely underutilised for the period and for Roman history generally.⁵⁵ In promoting a return to more global horizons, we offer as example the traditional subject of Romans in arms, central to all the standard narratives of the period. A quick glance outside the peninsula leaves no question that, in the wider 'anarchic' Mediterranean of the fourth and third centuries, war reigned supreme.⁵⁶ The 'Hellenistic military revolution' took shape not only around new battlefield technologies, but around the political, institutional and economic recalibrations that accompanied their successful deployment.⁵⁷ One can look beyond the Mediterranean in corroboration of this synergy: the constraints and incentives for state (trans)formation that emerged from military conflict and its aftermath were not radically dissimilar to those prevailing in Warring States China or pre-Mauryan and Mauryan India.⁵⁸ In these Eurasian hubs of state formation, where rival political units of roughly similar war-making capacity

⁵⁰ De Grossi Mazzorin 2004 and 2005. Signs of the transition in fifth-century contexts: see Trentacoste 2021 for the prominence of chicken remains in ritual fills at Cerveteri and Orvieto. Note also Banducci 2021: ch. 6 on the 'huge increase in chicken remains' at Cetamura del Chianti in the last three centuries B.C.E.

⁵¹ See Padilla Peralta 2018 (n. 1 collects ancient references to the episode) on the ecological dimensions of this inflection point in Roman divination; Tuck 2020 for the relevance of modern scientific research into avian sensitivity to the study of Roman divination. Chicken imagery on Roman currency bars (RRC 12/1): note the brief comments of Yarrow 2021: 17–19; cf. Feider *et al.* 2020 on chicken–human hybrids on Late Iron Age Celtic coinages.

⁵² Banducci 2021: 224.

⁵³ Xiang *et al.* 2014.

⁵⁴ Note the comparative framing of Toynbee 1965: I ch. 3 (and Map 1); for the self-styling as successor to Polybius, Toynbee 1954: 66, in a reflection on Polyb. 8.2. Even though its arguments and methods have come under fire, *Hannibal's Legacy* was well ahead of its time in its globalising approach to Roman expansion.

⁵⁵ For the value, and rarity, of comparison in ancient history, see Scheidel 2018a.

⁵⁶ The anarchic Mediterranean: Eckstein 2006. War in the Hellenistic world: Chaniotis 2005.

⁵⁷ Technologies of Hellenistic militarism: Cuomo 2007: ch. 2. Hellenistic institutions: Ma 2013. Warfare and market economies in the late classical and early Hellenistic world: Günther 2020.

⁵⁸ Rome and China: e.g. Kiser and Cai 2003, primarily concerned with Qin China but with much of interest for Roman historians; Rosenstein 2010 and other essays in Scheidel 2010; Scheidel 2015; Beck and Vankeerberghen

strenuously vied for the upper hand, innovative solutions to collective action problems were decisive in creating the conditions for the scaling-up of one polity's capacity to project its power over others. These solutions were often improvised in moments of conflict and later firmed up through jurisprudence and/or ritual, as the same pattern repeated itself across these geographically disparate regions: the demands of escalating warfare generated internal tensions, destabilising existing aristocratic superstructures and clearing the way for the ascension of new rent-extractive elites.

The failure of Rome's old elite to maintain their power and the rise of this new elite stand at the centre of the period's traditional history, however the internal dynamics of this process are to be understood.⁵⁹ But the wax and wane of the early republican elite, from the closing of its ranks to its investment in austerity to its disintegration in the face of internal fissures, has much in common with the fates of other Mediterranean elites during and after the 'fifth-century crisis'.⁶⁰ Such commonalities again push us towards the broader perspective. Polybius' explicitly comparative thinking about the various constituencies involved in Roman political power is a prompt to widen our lens. It is tempting, in the spirit of *Histories* VI, to imagine the early Roman state with its closed patriciate order as modelling the same progression from violence to austerity and collapse that ultimately kneecapped classical Sparta,⁶¹ although this hypothesis is in need of further testing. What does seem more certain is that, as experiments in capital- and coercion-intensive statehood quickened in momentum throughout fourth- and third-century Eurasia, political communities of varying sizes and complexities rolled out different political and military strategies for ensuring longevity or mitigating catastrophe — both of which could hinge on keeping elites from defecting to other states. Although literary narratives of military conflict sometimes exaggerate or overplay warfare's devastations, and in the process veil the capacity of defeated communities to endure defeat, the stakes of military conflict were high: 'Because the consequences of defeat could be so terrible, ancient states did everything in their power to avoid it, and republican Rome was no exception'. For every Mediterranean community that, faced with disaster, sought out and secured a viable path to survival, there were many that did not, or that survived merely as by-words for the obliterative force of imperial expansion in the memory of future generations.⁶²

But we might expand our frame of reference still further and think not only about interstate conflict, but about the more general subject of violence and its effects on Italy in the period. Roth has recently floated the idea that Italy following the Hannibalic war was a 'post-conflict zone';⁶³ we might consider how such a title applies also to the earlier period. The same literary sources that chronicle the twists and turns of Mediterranean violence offer ample illustration of communities hedging against or coming to grips with the prospect of destruction. Two decades before the passage of the Licinio-Sextian legislation, Rome itself had grappled with this dilemma, if the annalistic tradition is to be trusted: in the immediate aftermath of the Gallic Sack, voices

2021. Conflict and unification in the Indian subcontinent, culminating in the Mauryan ascendancy: Sarao 2014; for the reign of Ashoka, Lahiri 2015; more economically, Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 91–103.

⁵⁹ Flower 2010: chs 2–3 for the transformation of Rome's elite and its bearing on the periodisation of the fifth and fourth centuries. The failure of aristocratic classes: see a recent *American Historical Review* Exchange (124.3 [2019]) for pointers on how to analyse the rise and fall of the historical 1 per cent.

⁶⁰ Smith 2017 for a new account, which shares some common features with Bradley 2015; note also Viglietti 2020: 83–8.

⁶¹ The rise and fall of Sparta's 'limited access order': Ober and Weingast 2018.

⁶² We quote from Rosenstein 2012: 3. 'Wandering cities' and options in the face of calamity: Mackil 2004; see now the essays in Fachard and Harris 2021 on city destruction in the Greek world; cf. Lambrugo *et al.* 2019 on the resilience of communities in the *chora* of Gela. Destroyed communities as by-words for obliteration: see e.g. Veii as memorialised in Florus 1.12.11: 'Who remembers its existence now?'

⁶³ R. Roth 2019a, introducing a collection of essays on Rome's relationship to Italy in the final two centuries B.C.E.

clamoured for the relocation of the Roman community to Caere, a plan obstructed only by the formidable eloquence of Marcus Furius Camillus, the semi-legendary victor over Veii whose successful stand against the city's relocation came to be figured by Livy as a second foundation.⁶⁴ The verifiability of this incident matters less than those historical factors that made the debate over relocation plausible and even sensible to future generations, beginning with those that already in the fourth century were hard at work moulding and transmitting Rome's responses to the Sack; and here again, adopting a more comparative orientation is of the essence.

For starters, the creation and circulation of the Camillus-myth took place against a backdrop of regional and supra-regional elite and sub-elite mobility. Violence and mobility converged to spectacular effect in making this period's history. Although long a feature of Mediterranean life,⁶⁵ circuits of voluntary and forced migration were strengthened and in numerous cases supercharged during the Middle Republic. As some Roman and Italian elites repeatedly renegotiated their civic allegiances in the search for polities ripe for commandeering or exploitation,⁶⁶ non-elites took steps to check and where possible profit from this species of aristocratic opportunism. It is arguably through their success at locking restive elites in place (via the creation and enforcement of effective institutional backstops against their political defection) that the state-formation processes of the fourth and early third centuries generated some of their most lasting long-term rewards. Meanwhile, millions were shuffled around the Mediterranean in the service or at the behest of ambitious expansionist states over the course of the long fourth century. The forced migrations through which Dionysius I asserted his control over Sicily; the Greek and Macedonian forces led by Alexander the Great and his successors that drove deep into central Eurasia, spawning colonies and new conurbations in their wake; the mercenaries who streamed into and out of the western Mediterranean in pursuit of coin and adventure; the citizen and allied levies that bore the burden of Rome's wars; the Roman colonists whose dispatch across the peninsula secured the Middle Republic's ability to project power in hostile environments: these human displacements offer the clearest evidence for the interaction of militarism and mobility in the formation of a new western Eurasian order.⁶⁷

These themes — war and violence, elite and non-elite mobility — are readily recognisable to anthropologists and sociologists as widely relevant to human societies of most if not all periods. There is no reason to bound or curtail our discussions of their middle republican manifestations. Once again, as we saw with archaeological evidence and methods, a global approach that draws its vitality from wide historical comparison and anthropological thinking enables a richer account of this consequential period. It is our conviction that a diversification in methodologies and a more intentionally ecumenical stance towards evidence can power a still more global and inclusive middle republican Roman history. For the rest of this paper, we offer a rapid sketch of what such a newly configured history might look like; in the envoi, we underline the work that will need to be done to make good on this history's promise and prospects.

⁶⁴ Liv. 5.51–4, to be read now with Feeney 2021: ch. 16; on the making of the Camillus myth, see Bruun 2000a.

⁶⁵ On elite mobility in Archaic Italy, Ampolo 1977 is classic; Bradley 2015 is excellent on the relationship between this mobility and the 'fluidity' of Roman and Italian elites; Isayev 2017 now tackles sub-elite movement. Cf. Purcell 1990 and Horden and Purcell 2000: ch. 9 for the full Mediterranean picture, and Ramgopal 2018 on republican and imperial mobilities.

⁶⁶ Terrenato 2019.

⁶⁷ Large-scale population transfers and the Sicilian empire of Dionysius the Elder: Harris 2018. The colonial and synoecistic projects of Alexander and the Successors: Boehm 2018. Hellenistic mercenaries: Griffith [1935] 1968; Marinovic 1988; Loman 2005 on accompanying wives and children. Roman colonisation: Pelgrom and Stek 2014 and Pelgrom 2018 for the limitations of the traditional paradigm; Stek 2018 for the benefits of moving 'beyond the Romanising agrotown' in tracking colonisation's variable footprint; Kim 2021 on the dating of Roman centuriation at Luceria; Jewell 2019 on colonisation as forced displacement.

IV AXES OF TRANSFORMATION

Ultimately, the Licinio-Sextian laws and their results are comprehensible as features of state formation, as the new ruling elite at Rome started to expand their interests over territory in a manner that had few direct precedents but multiple parallels. As they radiated outward into other areas of the Italian peninsula, Rome's own nascent imperial interests ran up against similarly ambitious city-states, from Tarquinia to Tarentum and beyond. From Carthage to Massilia, the fourth century was an important phase in state formation throughout the western Mediterranean.⁶⁸ Empire and state formation increased interstate competition and military activity, and at the same time drove elite demand for wealth. The heightened Roman and Italian (and human and non-human) mobilities that such pressures set in motion then sparked changes along multiple axes, from the local to the continental; it is these changes themselves, as well as the techniques now available for their documentation and study, that bring the era's connectivities into clearer focus. We review several of these axes and their moments of most conspicuous intersection in turn.

A first axis of transformation is demographic, manifest in what appears to be a rise in the population of the peninsula during our period, if not at the outset then by the final third of the fourth century at the latest. The trend is perhaps most visible through landscape archaeology, which reveals a dynamic infilling of several Italian rural areas in the fourth and third centuries.⁶⁹ Such infilling was not limited to Italy, but encompassed other parts of the Mediterranean, notably the Punic west, whose landscapes underwent similarly timed transformations.⁷⁰ This apparently supra-regional change in rural settlement suggests that the state formation processes noted above may not have been as detrimental to population growth as they are sometimes held to have been, as large-scale faceoffs on the battlefields of central and highland Italy did not usually yield mass fatalities capable of halting demographic expansion.⁷¹ What they did frequently yield were mass enslavements, about which we will have more to say below. Meanwhile, the absence of any substantial exogenous disease shocks enabled the premodern fertility regime of the peninsula's various communities to run its course unimpeded, mirroring the demographic expansion of other corners of the Mediterranean during the last few centuries B.C.E. Although the annalistic tradition records multiple disease episodes for the fourth century, these were apparently not devastating enough to arrest demographic growth; ours was an era of intensifying contacts that did *not* trigger those catastrophically virulent disease outbreaks whose eventual unleashing was the outcome of a markedly different conjuncture of connectivities.⁷² The evidence for demographic increase, meanwhile, is not limited to the countryside; the number of central settlements increases in Italy during our period, and urbanisation forms another axis. In aggregate

⁶⁸ See now Terrenato 2019: ch. 3 for a synthesising treatment; Pilkington 2019: chs 4–5 and San José 2021 for Carthage in the fourth and third centuries; de Lisle 2021 for Syracuse under Agathocles I. These trajectories need not be linear: sources describe Tarquinian expansionist ambitions in the sixth century, although see Smith 2017 and Bernard 2018c for the Archaic Roman state.

⁶⁹ General observations in Isayev 2017: 144; Terrenato 2019: 98–100. For nuanced, regionally specific discussion, see now Patterson *et al.* 2020; for a data-rich overview of Italy, see Samuels 2019.

⁷⁰ Fentress and Docter 2008: 108–9 note rural infilling around Carthage in the fourth and third centuries.

⁷¹ A new and vital port of call for students of Roman massacres is Barrandon 2018, which unfortunately for us is confined to the last two centuries B.C.E. and the first two centuries C.E.; Quesada-Sanz 2015 on genocide in Iron Age Europe focuses mainly on the Roman conquest of the Iberian Peninsula.

⁷² Mediterranean demography during the first millennium B.C.E.: Scheidel 2007. Annalistic records of disease episodes: see Northwood 2006 for a catalogue. The opening chapters of Plin., *HN* 26, an important literary source for the history of disease at Rome, assign the arrival of most highly communicable diseases to the early Empire; one apparent exception is sourced at 26.4.5 to the *Annales* for 164 B.C.E. Pathogens and empire: Harper 2021; on environmental and climatic drivers of infectious disease, see the bibliography at n. 92 below.

the figures are impressive, as suggested by Sewell's statistical demonstration of a sharp rise in urbanisation across Italy in the period from 350 to 300.⁷³ More people not involved in primary agricultural production meant more muscle: for the long slogs of military conflict in an ever-widening theatre of operations, or for large-scale building projects in cities. It also meant more mouths to feed, and so the trend in urbanisation in this period must be understood as directly related to rural infilling.⁷⁴

All of this amounts to rising consumption, and connected to the effort to meet demand was a third axis of transformation: intensifying agricultural production. Archaeological finds are tantalising in what they suggest about the Roman economy's major structural pivots. The Archaic Auditorium Villa on the Via Flaminia was substantially restructured and monumentalised around 300, but as always the unique nature of that site makes it difficult to determine whether it was exceptional or formed part of a wider trend.⁷⁵ In favour of the latter possibility, Volpe points to a number of substantially built middle republican farmhouses in the *suburbium* with signs of vine cultivation.⁷⁶ Literary sources reveal their own picture of increased and multifaceted elite investment in the landscape. The final conquest of the Sabines in 290 B.C.E. was followed by a unique territorial division in which quaestors sold captured land in 50-*iugera* plots that could not be resold. As Farney points out, this procedure favoured elites with both wealth to purchase large tracts of land and sufficient capital to maintain them. The distribution is thus plausibly seen as setting in motion the rise of those estates that dotted the Sabine region by the Late Republic.⁷⁷ The whole perhaps does not yet add up to a villa economy but seems aimed in that direction.

In some places, the level of investment supporting economic connections was state-backed and possibly even state-coordinated. Links between rural producers and centres of consumption were facilitated by infrastructural innovations, most notably aqueduct building in the city of Rome and roadworks outside it — such as the Via Appia with its remarkable *via recta* from Rome to Terracina, as well as other consular highways that connected Rome in capillary fashion to the rest of Italy. In the Pontine region through which the Via Appia passed, we detect investment on a grand scale in infrastructural projects that made marginal land available, or in some cases re-available, for cultivation or settlement.⁷⁸

At the same time, we should not overemphasise the role of elite capital or state investment. If the macro-level picture suggests intensification, at the level of the individual site the floral and faunal record also show change, but along longer time-scales. It is likely, for example, that this period was an important phase in the slow shift from hulled wheats to free-threshing bread wheats, a change typically associated with Roman dietary preferences in Italy and subsequently throughout Southern Europe. While the archaeobotanical evidence reveals the increasing prominence of free-threshing wheat over the long run of the first millennium B.C.E., middle republican sites in Italy still exhibit a polyculture of grain varieties.⁷⁹ Likewise, the first millennium witnessed a

⁷³ Sewell 2016.

⁷⁴ For flows of peasant labour between Roman town and countryside, see Erdkamp 1999.

⁷⁵ Carandini *et al.* 2006: 191–224; see Terrenato 2001.

⁷⁶ Volpe 2009; 2012; other regions of Italy provide some limited supporting evidence for this trend: see Isayev 2007: 73–5 on Moltone di Tolve in Basilicata. For overall patterns of landscape change in this period, see Patterson *et al.* 2004: 5–13; Enei 2001: 59–62 on the region of Caere.

⁷⁷ Farney 2019: 162; see further Gabba 1989; Roselaar 2010: 39–45.

⁷⁸ The Groningen University Pontine Region Project sheds considerable light on settlement change in this region: see De Haas 2011; Walsh *et al.* 2014, with specific reference to marginal land use. The claiming of marginal lands in the peninsula as one marker of the 'agency of the displaced' during the fourth and third centuries: Perego and Scopacasa 2018.

⁷⁹ Heinrich 2017; Primavera *et al.* 2017 note that free-threshing wheat had formed part of the portfolio of Italian grain cultivation since the Late Bronze Age. The millennium-long transition from hulled to free-threshing wheats across 'large parts of the Mediterranean and northern and central Europe': van der Veen 2018: 55.

steady progression in animal husbandry practices, with the overall trend inclining towards larger sheep and cattle body sizes and more meat, even if the timing of such change is difficult to pin down to any specific moment.⁸⁰ The significance of these changes as *longue durée* phenomena is a good reminder of what was stressed in the preceding section: even though they offer new and relevant information, archaeologically informed approaches often operate in ways different from those with which text-centred historians are better acquainted.

These longer-run trends also spur contemplation of more exogenous drivers of landscape change. Here, we move from local trends to a more global axis of transformation. It is possible that middle republican Italy reaped some gains from beneficent climate shifts, although on this front much work remains to be done. Syntheses of Roman climate have posited that the (later) Roman imperial economy was coterminous with a period of stable and comparatively warm climate, the so-called Roman Warm Period or Roman Climate Optimum (RCO).⁸¹ The relationship of the end of the RCO with the dissolution of the imperial state has so far garnered the majority of historical attention, but we might also consider the implication that the beginning of the Roman Warm Period was conducive to earlier processes of state formation.⁸² In global terms, we can point to some ameliorative factors from recent palaeoclimate work, including the absence of major tropical and northern hemispheric eruptions from 426 to 44 B.C.E.,⁸³ or a positive Northern Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) trend over the same period that has been taken to indicate a warm, wet European climate.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, efforts to link macro-regional climate developments to specific continuities and ruptures in the political and economic rhythms of the ancient Mediterranean have already provoked much disagreement.⁸⁵ How global trends played out at regional and local levels throughout the Mediterranean basin remains a crucial and unanswered question, not least because of the challenges of conceptualising historical causation without falling into environmentally determinist traps.⁸⁶

There are two specific issues here: first, warming or cooling could have very different impacts on land productivity inside and outside the Mediterranean; and second, the Mediterranean's famously fragmented ecologies entailed significant local variations in rainfall and temperature.⁸⁷ Urgently needed are local reconstructions, yet the palaeoclimate data currently available from central Italy still leave much to be desired. Most work on Italian climate remains palynological, and it is difficult to differentiate

⁸⁰ Trentacoste *et al.* 2018; De Grossi Mazzorin and Minniti 2019.

⁸¹ Harper and McCormick 2018.

⁸² For beneficent climate leading to efflorescence in combination with other factors, compare Campbell 2016: ch. 2.

⁸³ Sigl *et al.* 2015; for correlation between volcanism and historical data for harvests from Ptolemaic Egypt, see Manning *et al.* 2017 (and n. 85 below).

⁸⁴ Olsen *et al.* 2012; note that Baker *et al.* 2015 claim a negative NAO trend in the same period.

⁸⁵ The relationship of the El-Niño-Southern Oscillation to the African and Indian monsoon cycles impacts the Nile's flow: Manning 2018: ch. 5. Unexpectedly low flood levels are probably behind a crippling grain shortage that afflicted much of the Greek world in the early 320s: on the 'Cyrene Grain Edict', see Rhodes and Osborne 2003: no. 96, with Bresson 2011. Debating the relationship of climate change to Mediterranean state formation: see e.g. Weiberg and Finné 2018 on the eastern Mediterranean in the Late Bronze Age.

⁸⁶ On this last point, see Sessa 2019.

⁸⁷ Margaritelli *et al.* 2020 rely on sea-surface temperature reconstructions to argue that 'more homogenous temperature conditions across the Mediterranean' prevailed for several centuries beginning c. 400 B.C.E.; but, as Labuhn *et al.* 2019: 253 note, 'temperature changes are more homogenous in space than precipitation changes'. Regional and global trends concealing local variability: Peyron *et al.* 2017: 260; Haldon *et al.* 2018: 5–7. Bresson 2020: 236–7 notes that cooling could raise land productivity in the Mediterranean while at the same time lowering it in northern Europe.

anthropogenic from climatic trends in Late Holocene pollen data.⁸⁸ Cores from lakes and coastal sites in Latium and Campania do show consistent decrease in arboreal pollen down to about 300 B.C.E., followed by a phase of moderate forest advancement with fewer xeric species, but we are hard pressed to say whether these changes were driven by land-use patterns or by climate (or a combination of the two).⁸⁹ Evidence collected in a recent geoarchaeological coring survey of the Forum Boarium does, however, point to the effects of anthropogenic change around Rome itself already in the Archaic period.⁹⁰ Another locally specific source of climate information for Italy in the Iron Age and Roman period is a series of speleothems, calcareous flowstones formed by water circulating into caves. The latest synthesis of this material emphasises Italy's intensely localised climate patterns for the republican period, with several speleothems pointing to drying trends, rather than the increased rainfall suggested by global indices. On this basis, the authors call into question the idea that the RCO had a significant effect on Italy.⁹¹ Also obscure at the moment are the precise parameters of interaction between localised climate patterns and the distribution and spread of infectious disease — though one would expect, on the basis of ongoing research into the nexus of palaeoclimatology and epidemiology in ancient eastern Eurasia,⁹² that these parameters and their explanatory weight would vary considerably according to the chosen scale of temporal and geographical resolution. Hopefully, the 'thunderous entry' of climate into the world of ancient history will inspire further scientific and historical collaboration to provide greater clarity on the period's climate and its effects on human behaviour.⁹³

Whatever their underlying causes, the new settlement patterns that redefined rural and urban landscapes alike, as well as the population growth that interacted with these patterns, were sustained by commercial connections. Trade in particular deserves special consideration as another axis of transformation visible in, and emanating from, Italy during our period. We are now in the position of being able to sketch long-distance trade from the fifth to third centuries in some detail, thanks to the investigation and publication of a series of shipwrecks laden with cargoes of Italian amphorae in the waters of the western Mediterranean.⁹⁴ Around 480, the last known great merchant ship of Archaic Italy, the exceptionally large Grand Ribaud F wreck with a cargo of almost a thousand Caeretan wine amphorae and a captain Manios at its helm, sank on its voyage off the Côte d'Azur.⁹⁵ Over the next century, fewer wrecks with Italian amphorae are found off the Italian coastline and outlying regions, whereas Greek and Punic amphorae show up with greater frequency. Then, around 350, trade originating from Central Italy springs to life again, as shipwrecks carrying Italian amphorae reappear from France to Sicily. In the interim, the centre of production supporting such activity shifts southward

⁸⁸ Because of the increasing impact of humans on plant cover over time, such distinction is 'difficult for the Mid Holocene and impossible for the Late Holocene', according to Kouli *et al.* 2019: 69; a similarly pessimistic note is sounded at Labuhn *et al.* 2019: 251.

⁸⁹ Di Rita and Magri 2012; Di Rita *et al.* 2018 favour NAO and climate factors; see further Stoddart *et al.* 2019: 10–11. Proposals to interpret palynological records from ancient Greece as evidence for structural changes in land use (see Izdebski *et al.* 2020) face the same uncertainty.

⁹⁰ Brock *et al.* 2021.

⁹¹ Bini *et al.* 2020. For the intensely local character of climate data, compare the drying trend in Italian speleothems with the progressive shift towards warmer, wetter conditions during the same period that is suggested by speleothems from Mallorca: Cisneros *et al.* 2021.

⁹² See Tian *et al.* 2017, with Brook 2017 for a historian's perspective.

⁹³ We quote from Bresson 2020: 233; collaboration of this sort will need to take to heart the recommendations of Degroot *et al.* 2021. For some first attempts to link local climate change and human behaviour in first-millennium B.C.E. Italy, see Perego and Scopacasa 2018.

⁹⁴ For a map of wrecks in the western Mediterranean, see Olcese 2012; Strauss 2013 remains the most recent attempt to collect ancient wrecks.

⁹⁵ Long *et al.* 2006. 'Manios': see the discussion at Bruni 2013: 767 of the inscribed objects recovered from the wreck.

from Etruria to Campania, as indicated by the first series of so-called Greco-Italic amphorae.⁹⁶ The rise of export production from this region around the time of the *foedus Neapolitanum* of 326 has emboldened some scholars to credit the encroaching presence of Rome as a factor behind this commerce; by the second quarter of the third century, Greco-Italic amphorae start to feature Latin stamps, some with names of prominent Roman *gentes*.⁹⁷ With an energy not seen since the close of the Archaic period, the sea was reinvigorated in the fourth century as a means of connecting producers and consumers up and down the Tyrrhenian coast and beyond. This reinvigoration may lie behind the Roman state's increasing attention to coastal landscapes and the fluvial interfaces connecting Italy's inland regions to the sea. At the mouth of the Tiber, the initial *castrum* at Ostia is roughly contemporaneous with this fourth-century surge in commercial activity, while similarly planned *castra* at Latin river mouths are now known from the coast below Lavinium and Ardea, and further south at Minturnae.⁹⁸ Another signal of an uptick in seaborne trade is the multiplication of testimonies for less state-directed and more predatory behaviour along the coast: both protection against and investment in piracy may have motivated the decision to send a colony in 338 to Antium, previously a hotspot for Volscian pirates.⁹⁹

Two other mediating forces in the amplification of commerce's links to agriculture during the fourth century stand in the company of these aforementioned axes of transformation. The first is labour, and more specifically the shift in local and regional labour regimes that the introduction of mass enslavement to the peninsula precipitated. While recent scholarship has adopted a more critical and expansive view of the application of Finley's category of the 'slave society' to global history, this revision has not called into question the centrality of chattel slavery as the primary mode for generating the surplus production that supported Rome's dominant political classes.¹⁰⁰ But when exactly did chattel slavery become so salient? As Finley and others have noted, there is a telling overlap between the decline of older forms of dependency (as heralded or enacted through the abolition of *nexum* in 326 or 313 B.C.E.) and annalistic notices of mass enslavement in battle, beginning with the conquest of Veii and growing ever more frequent during the campaigns in Samnium.¹⁰¹ The expansion of slave-holding raises a number of questions; not least among them is how tens if not hundreds of thousands of war-slaves were put to use, if these annalistic notices are to be trusted.¹⁰²

The available evidence leaves us poorly informed about slave markets in this early period, though it is certainly telling that the *lex Aquilia* — passed sometime in the early third century — presumes the ability to track the peak valuation of an enslaved person

⁹⁶ Late Etruscan (Py 4A) amphorae circulate into the fourth century but are increasingly replaced by Greco-Italics: see Cibecchini 2006; for Greco-Italics, see Vandermersch 2001; Olcese 2005–2006 and 2017.

⁹⁷ Panella 2010: 13–14.

⁹⁸ Jaia and Molinari 2012; Liverani 2019 extends these trends north into Etruria. The date of Ostia's foundation is much debated; Pellegrino *et al.* 2018 publish remains of a wooden breakwater from the river mouth dated by radiocarbon to the sixth century. State interest in maritime trade in this coastal zone may be reflected in the appearance of hoards of Rome's first cast heavy bronze coins in the same area (Yarrow 2021: 13 with Map 15); see below on Rome's early coinage. Changes and enhancements to maritime sanctuaries in this period: Moser 2019a.

⁹⁹ Bispham 2012: 228–9. The colonisation of Antium, Tarracina and the *insula Pontiae* as a response to Greek piracy: Palmer 1997: 24–5; see Strabo 5.3.5 on Greek complaints about Roman piracy; *IG II²* 1623.276–85 with Verdejo-Manchado and Antela-Bernárdez 2021 on Athenian efforts to neutralise 'Tyrrhenian' piracy in the 330s, which remained a problem into the first decade of the next century (*IG XI.148.73* with Gabrielsen 2003: 397). Rome's maritime efforts before the First Punic War: Starr 1980: 62–4; Bresson 2007 and Badoud 2015–2016 on Rome's relationship with Rhodes; R. Roth 2019b.

¹⁰⁰ Lenski 2018; see Padilla Peralta 2017: 320 for additional bibliography.

¹⁰¹ Finley 1964; Gabba 1990: 10–11.

¹⁰² On these questions, see Welwei 2000.

in the year preceding their wrongful death.¹⁰³ Forthcoming comparative work in this regard is keenly awaited.¹⁰⁴ However these markets functioned, the ramifications for Rome's ruling classes were significant. For one thing, the emergence of legal actions for safeguarding market-valued human and non-human capital unfolds in parallel to (and possibly even in conjunction with) changes to the census and the censorship, the institution mostly directly responsible for articulating declarations of wealth to social standing.¹⁰⁵ More concretely, consider the prosecution of L. Postumius Megellus in 291 B.C.E. for ordering soldiers under his command to work on his estate. Here, a *vir consularis* from the highest political echelon was attacked for extracting personal labour from Roman citizens putatively under his command. That this was no longer politically viable implies that the option to exploit an alternative form of (we presume) non-free labour was available, if not expected.¹⁰⁶ Apparently, then, it was becoming necessary for members of the senatorial *nobilitas* not only to possess a certain measure of landed property, but to manage it through slaves. In this respect, middle republican Rome shares some important and relatively underexplored affinities with another western Mediterranean state that became profoundly dependent on agricultural slavery and on the *sordida mercatura* of human trafficking: Carthage.¹⁰⁷ In this optic, the aforementioned parallel transformations to settlement patterns around the two capital cities in this period becomes even more relevant.

The introduction of large-scale slavery in the era of early imperial expansion coincides with the advent of a second institutionally generative force: coinage. At the start of our period, coins had long been minted in south Italy, but only around 300 do they start to play a much-expanded role in Latium. This trend includes the first Roman issues struck in Campania.¹⁰⁸ We also see a considerable increase of foreign issues in circulation in Etruria.¹⁰⁹ Like other trends, Rome's first coins should be understood as features of its evolving political economy. The initial, sporadic strikes were too small in number and often too variable in metrology to meet any single fiscal need. Instead, their impetus must be attributed to the predilections of a growing portion of Roman elites who were involved in market-oriented production and external trade, the forms of exchange facilitated by a standardised currency.¹¹⁰ These local uses and habits should not, of course, blot out consideration of the Mediterranean and Eurasian dimensions of monetisation during our period. Siphoning away over 100,000 talents of assets, Alexander the Great's looting of Achaemenid riches initiated a transfer of wealth in a particular, metallic form that left practically no region of western Eurasia untouched; it has been calculated that, from 333 to 290, the equivalent of approximately 91,000 talents of coined silver entered Near Eastern and Mediterranean circulation as a direct consequence of Alexander's plundering.¹¹¹ It was not only Persian silver and gold itself,

¹⁰³ *Dig.* 9.2.2. pr.-1 for the relevant clause of the *lex Aquilia* as quoted in Gaius' *Provincial Edict*: 'quanti id in eo anno plurimi fuit, tantum aes dare domino damnas esto'; see Elster 2003: 127–32 for commentary and bibliography on the law.

¹⁰⁴ For the existence by this date of market-based slavery in cities like Praeneste (and in Rome itself), see Bernard 2018a: 168–71. Comparison of middle republican slavery to the enslavement systems of the Sokoto Caliphate: Scheidel forthcoming. The interface of human capital valuation with slave-management practices and strategies: cf. Rosenthal 2018: ch. 4 on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Atlantic.

¹⁰⁵ Cornell 2000 on the censorship and the *lex Ovinia* remains foundational; note also Curti 2000: 78–9.

¹⁰⁶ Gabrielli 2003a: 95–6 on this incident, contextualised against what we know of the shift away from *nexum*; 2003b on an important (fragmentary) source.

¹⁰⁷ Slavery in Punic Carthage: Lewis 2018: ch. 13.

¹⁰⁸ Burnett 2012.

¹⁰⁹ Pulcinelli 2015.

¹¹⁰ Bernard 2018b.

¹¹¹ The depletion of the Achaemenid treasury from the equivalent of 180,000 silver talents to 50,000: Strabo 15.3.9 for the first figure; Justin 13.1.9 for the second. Calculations: Thonemann 2016: 15–16; for a tally of Alexander the Great's assets, see Holt 2016: 181–5.

but the attitudes and practices taking shape around them, that helped transform Eurasian economic behaviour. While the spoils of Alexander were not directly reformed into Roman coins, the westward diffusion of a transactional reliance on precious metal coinage had long-lasting effects.¹¹² Whether or not this unprecedented phase in the global history of money was ultimately responsible for setting western and eastern Eurasia on divergent monetary paths,¹¹³ its significance to central and western Mediterranean communities that were in the early stages of exploring the fiduciary and communicative powers of coinage cannot be overstated. Rome's own recourse to coinage during our period is one marker of this exploration. Elsewhere in the Mediterranean, the macro-regional inundation of precious metal triggered the emergence of new fiscal regimes during the early Hellenistic period.¹¹⁴ Having already devised a system for extracting and routing wealth that relied on a thick web of interpersonal knowledge and strong intra-communal monitoring, the middle republican state did not chuck this system overboard following the introduction of coinage; instead, it carefully re-engineered that system in the service of a new social equilibrium.¹¹⁵

Throughout this discussion, we have sought to underline how the movement of people, goods and ideas in the middle republican period helped link Roman society to a wider Eurasian world. Cumulatively, changes in population, settlement, agricultural production, commercial activity, labour regimes and monetisation can be seen as indices of the emergent political economy that came to define middle republican Rome. They should therefore be conceptualised in relation to the major trends in Roman state formation that we described above. However, development along these axes should not be understood only, or even primarily, in terms of political economy. Far from being ancillary to the regional and supra-regional dynamics outlined in this section, cultural and religious shifts command attention in their own right as determinants of Rome's trajectory. In the next section, we lay out our understanding of these interconnected shifts and propose several ways of thinking them afresh.

V ROME, ITALY AND THE MEDITERRANEAN KOINÉ

At the root of these shifts was the propagation of a new central Italic cultural *koiné*, whose iterations and permutations are inseparable from the demographic and economic expansion of the Roman world in the Middle Republic. The precise chronological sequencing of the appearance of this *koiné* in relation to the large-scale people-movers of militarism and colonisation has been animatedly and inconclusively debated. We do not pretend to slice through the Gordian Knot to resolve matters once and for all; what we offer instead is a more connective account of that *koiné*'s early steps, with particular emphasis on the role of Rome.

One driving force in the rise of this *koiné* was the adoption up and down the peninsula of philhellenism as a flexible and capacious rubric for internal and external differentiation. Again, we are speaking of a decisive moment in what was in fact a multi-century project of interaction and adaptation.¹¹⁶ As we noted in Section I, it is necessary to be more precise

¹¹² The source of metal for Rome's pre-denarius coinage appears to have been mostly spoils from its own campaigning: see Rowan 2013.

¹¹³ Overview of this divergence and its underlying causes: Scheidel 2008.

¹¹⁴ Comparative analysis of these regimes: Monson 2015.

¹¹⁵ For the early republican tax system's dependence on personal relationships, see Tan 2020. Further: Tan 2017: ch. 6; Bernard 2018a.

¹¹⁶ Philhellenism as cultural technology: Gallini 1973; Dench 2003: 298–304; Feeny 2016: ch. 4. The timescales of philhellenism: cf. the periodisation embraced in the contributions to Chrubasik and King 2017. Roman contacts with the world of Alexander the Great and the Diadochi: Humm 2016: 90–1 and n. 5 above.

here than the term ‘Hellenistic’ usually allows, especially as we are not talking about the adoption of Greek as a spoken language at Rome. The details of engagement with cultural models which were understood as Greek were necessarily more complex, bound as they were to broader webs of mobility and cultural circulation to and within Italy. For one thing, these webs had vibrated for centuries following the first colonial contacts, and possibly even before them: Hopkins has probed the existence of connections between Rome and the Greek world in the Archaic period.¹¹⁷ For another, what happened at Rome was part of a geographically wide-ranging phenomenon. That is, the study of those Roman experiments in philhellenism that were well under way by the age of the Samnite Wars cannot be pursued in a vacuum. To the same or perhaps even to a greater extent than the imperial Republic itself, other communities in Italy and throughout the Mediterranean bought into and quickly capitalised on philhellenic discourses. The phenomenon is well known from its outcomes in material culture: among recent discoveries, we have already noted those monumental aristocratic tombs from nearby south Etruria that seem to show Etruscan elites employing models of Macedonian palatial architecture, and perhaps even a similarly styled monument from the Capitoline at Rome. Additionally, through historical or semi-historical encounters with Greek philosophy (the Samnite Herennius Pontius comes to mind), active incorporation of practices marked as or perceived to be ‘Greek’ into their political systems, or the creative interpretation and retrofitting of Greek heroic mythologies to suit their aetiological needs, elites in multiple Italic polities took to philhellenism enthusiastically during our period.¹¹⁸

Such enthusiasm finds ready parallels in other parts of the Hellenistic West, as recent studies have documented.¹¹⁹ In the setting of central Italy, the question still in need of answering is what made this philhellenism so appealing — if it still makes sense to term it philhellenism and not a Mediterranean-wide bundle of cultural practices whose assemblage depended equally on Greek and non-Greek contributors, with its Hellenicity only being ascribed *post eventum*. Perhaps Morris’ term ‘Mediterraneanization’ might be a more appropriate and less prejudicial label for the process.¹²⁰ Needless to say, one complicating factor is that our most explicit authorities for the regional embrace of philhellenism are Greek authors such as Timaeus. A first way to sidestep this problem is to envision these authorities as intercultural brokers in an elastic ‘Middle Ground’, along the lines recently proposed by Feeney.¹²¹ A second way is to attend even more scrupulously to the mixed media through which hybridising encounters with this *koimé* were circulated and monumentalised, from coins to statuary and public architecture. A third and complementary option is to engage the intensification of a visual and aesthetic

¹¹⁷ Hopkins 2016: chs 2–3. Debate continues over connectivity between Italy and the Aegean world in the Bronze Age, often centring on the interpretation of sporadic finds of Mycenaean pottery and locally made imitations: see Blake 2014.

¹¹⁸ Herennius Pontius and Samnite appropriations of Greek philosophy: Horkey 2011. Assimilation of Greek civic theories by Italian polities: Polyb. 2.39.2 with Purcell 1994: 384 on the incineration of Pythagorean meeting-places in south Italy in the late fifth century; n. 4 above on Pythagoreanism at Rome. Myth and aetiology: Dench 2003.

¹¹⁹ Prag and Crawley Quinn 2013.

¹²⁰ Morris 2003 coins the term to describe a process of ‘increasing connectedness’; his ‘simple narrative’ (44–5) proceeds from the following premise: ‘It was already obvious to Polybius (1.3) that some periods of Mediterranean history were more Mediterraneanized than others, and we should preserve this insight’. But note the reservations of Woolf 2021: 23, citing the term’s ‘liability to be co-opted to teleological accounts that look very like genealogies of the west’, the fact that its ‘motor ... is often left obscure’, and (here we duck) its regular pairing ‘with connectivity, which ... leaves questions of agency and power to the side’.

¹²¹ Feeney 2016: 98, adapting a notion popularised in White’s 1991 study of indigenous and coloniser interactions in the Great Lakes region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the same approach is leveraged in Woolf 2009 and 2011: ch. 1 and (cautiously) Dench 2018: 46. But note Rushforth 2006’s critique of White for overlooking enslavement’s role in the ‘Middle Ground’.

koiné as a fundamentally intra-Italic process, and to linger longest on Rome's relationships to other centres of artistic production in Etruria and Campania.

Striking through all of these contexts, and exercising agentive force in its own right, was the formation of new discourses and practices concerned with civic belonging, and especially (but not only) with wrangling restive elites and subjugated populations. In Section IV, we drew attention to the success of some polities in locking highly mobile elites and their families into long-term commitments, as city-state and federated units of democratic or oligarchic persuasions tilted against tributary empires and against each other. Sorely overdue is a history of governmentality, for our period and later periods in Mediterranean history, that would inventory and analyse the successes and failures of the Roman state in asserting sovereignty over mobile populations.¹²² For now, it seems prudent to observe that the drive towards 'becoming political', and the correlated process of 'becoming historical' that hitched Roman identity to the city of Rome itself during our period, reflect a determination to bring elite and non-elite actors into a shared civic space and under a shared jurisdiction.¹²³ But the mechanisms that steadily privileged Rome as the centre of the imperial *res publica* also incentivised a growing reliance on constructions of citizenship that decoupled Roman — and even more consequentially Latin — identity from physical residence in the city of Rome. Even if these constructions, most notoriously the introduction of the *civitas sine suffragio* with the settlement of 338 B.C.E., took their cue from experiments in citizenship unfolding elsewhere in the Mediterranean, Rome's refinement of them proved both unique and durable.¹²⁴ In gauging the efficacy of these constructions, however, it is crucial not to lose sight of a fundamental shift in the *location* of politics that dates to our period. By the mid-third century, the percentage of Roman citizens enrolled in the military was well on its way to outstripping probable electoral participation rates,¹²⁵ heralding the ultimate triumph of military service as a device for inculcating and transmitting Roman identity. In this context, the manipular revolution was not the only structural change of consequence: our period also saw the Roman army evolve into a new kind of body politic, acquiring those features that by Polybius' time would justify the description of its organisation while on campaign as akin to that of a *polis*.¹²⁶

Civic education extended beyond the army. Religious observance, both on and especially off the battlefield, mattered too. The habits of repetition and inculcation that were generated through cultic observance were equally if not more integral to the testing and fine-tuning of political sensibilities. Not cleanly differentiable from the political experiments of the early Hellenistic world, but nonetheless deserving of separate comment, is the redefinition and reorganisation of religious practice throughout urbanised western Eurasia during our period.¹²⁷ Though sometimes slighted as secondary or epiphenomenal, fourth-century alterations to the religious foundations of

¹²² Orientation to what such a history will need to analyse: Ando 2021.

¹²³ 'Becoming historical': Smith forthcoming; 'becoming political': Purcell 2003.

¹²⁴ Among recent studies of the *civitas* s.s. we note Tan 2020 (status and fiscality) and Sisani 2021 (autonomy versus integration). Fifth- and fourth-century Sicily as experimental incubator: Talbert 1975: 125–7 on the multiple citizenships of Timoleon of Corinth and his contemporaries, and on Timoleon's reorganisation of Syracuse; cf. Frederiksen 1984: 196–7 for other Syracusan and Greek federal variations on 'citizenship without the vote'.

¹²⁵ Scheidel 2006: 221 fig. 7.

¹²⁶ Polyb. 6.31.10, detailing the orderly layout of Roman army camps, and cf. Plut., *Pyrr.* 16.5 on the τάξις of the Romans; but note Machado 2021's deconstruction of middle republican *disciplina militaris*. Political expression within the army: see Taylor 2018 on centurion elections. Contrasting approaches to the manipular legion's emergence and evolution: compare Armstrong 2020 and Taylor 2020.

¹²⁷ We stress 'urbanised': the relationship between the political-ritual demands of cities and rural religious observance awaits systematic study; Ando 2017 comments on the state of affairs two and a half centuries after our period. Stek 2009 on the Roman conquest's implications for rural religion continues to reverberate; see now Gasparini 2021.

the Roman *res publica* fall in line not only with the Hellenistic shift towards what Graf has termed ‘private religiosity’ but with the Eurasia-wide veer towards religious experimentation that intrigued Jaspers and more recently Bellah.¹²⁸ Undeniably, the economic efflorescence discussed above played a part in this experimentation,¹²⁹ as did the philhellenism on whose other expressions we have already remarked; but the Roman state’s religious trajectory is not reducible to or fully explicable by reference to these catalysts alone. Coming of age in an interconnected world where various types of divinity travelled across ethnic and regional lines, the middle republican state quickly stood out for the energy it applied and the resources it funnelled towards the importation of cults, with the worship of abstract qualities in particular contributing to an increasingly abstracted theological system.¹³⁰ This worship is notable for the speed with which it bridged the east–west divide, and the challenges its spread poses to any one-directionally diffusionist model as a result. Within a very short period of time, from Asia Minor and Athens to Latin- and Oscan-speaking Italy, personified abstractions became established recipients of cult.¹³¹ As for the monumental language that it adopted for structuring the religious behaviours of its civic community and honouring new deities, the middle republican state had a fair amount in common with Hellenistic peer polities, even if its decision to build many small temples instead of a few large ones departed from patterns in evidence elsewhere in the Mediterranean.¹³² In the vigour and scale of its embrace of ‘accumulative civic polytheism’, however, Rome rapidly set itself apart.¹³³

As this discussion suggests, the transformation in central Italy and at Rome of middle republican religious practices was at once both social and spatial in nature. The dramatic rise in the number and frequentation of cult sites across central Italy, pulsing to the rhythm of a ‘Latialisation’ whose parameters are the subject of several new studies, attests to the dawn of a regime of religious observance in which private acts of dedication that interacted with public monumentalised spaces moved increasingly to the fore.¹³⁴ Taken together with literary evidence for shifts in public and private cult, the explosion in archaeologically visible private acts of dedication has lately been the focus of cultural histories of the peninsula that are rigorously attuned to the interactions of gender, ritual and state formation.¹³⁵ How best to understand the imprint of these interactions on the redefinition and institutionalisation of priestly power in third-century Rome, most notably the elevation of the *pontifex maximus* and his college to the top of

¹²⁸ Graf 1995; cf. Kindt 2015 on Greek ‘personal religion’ in the space between public and private religious acts; Potter 2003 and Chaniotis 2018: ch. 15 for other components of Hellenistic religion. The Axial turn: Jaspers 1953, with Morris 2019’s foreword to the *Seshat History of the Axial Age* for a review and critique of scholarship in the footsteps of Jaspers (and see next note). Bellah 2011 omits republican Rome in his study of the Axial Age; Runciman 2005 argues that Roman religious observance is ‘the exception that proves the rule’.

¹²⁹ ‘Increased affluence’ in western and eastern Eurasia as responsible for ‘the emergence of ascetic wisdoms and moralizing religions’ in the Axial Age: Baumard et al. 2015. But cause and effect are hard to disentangle here: see Mullins et al. 2018 for an attempt to work around the methodological shortcomings of Axiality; Slingerland et al. 2020 for a pointed assessment of the Seshat enterprise.

¹³⁰ Abstract qualities: Clark 2007; cf. Spannagel 2000 for their theological import.

¹³¹ Developments in the east: R. Parker 1996: 227–37, focused on the Attic evidence but with references (228 n. 39) to activity in other regions of the Greek-speaking Mediterranean. Italy beyond Latium: while the Samnite evidence is (probably) from the second century — see Testa 2016: 86–8 for Victoria’s cult at Samnite Pietrabbondante — Miano 2015: 270 correctly emphasises that already c. 300 ‘places [in Italy] without a strong connection to Rome ... were worshipping Virtues independently’.

¹³² Padilla Peralta 2020: chs 2–3 for discussion of the most significant parallels and differences; for Carthaginian temple construction see CIS 1.3914 = KAI 81 with Pilkington 2019: 108–9.

¹³³ The phrase and exposition: Champion 2017.

¹³⁴ See Marroni 2012; Di Fazio 2019a; the twelve data-rich volumes of *Lazio e Sabina*. ‘Latialisation’ as an urban phenomenon: Palombi forthcoming; Di Fazio 2019b for Latial religious culture in the fourth and third centuries.

¹³⁵ Schultz 2006 was path-clearing. Among the latest interventions in a now-crowded field: Carroll 2019; McDonald 2019; Moser 2019b; Padilla Peralta 2020.

Rome's state religion, remains an open question.¹³⁶ What seems clear in any case is that the opening up of public *sacra* to members of the new patrician-plebeian elite, the incorporation of new divinities into monumental places of religious observance, and an incipient discourse concerned with the policing and regulation of religious space are all features of our period. One element of this last shift was the description and adjudication of different kinds of space, a process which was integral to one form of ritual practice that braids together myth, topography and environment: augury. If the Romulus and Remus myth did in fact coalesce at the turn of the late fourth and early third centuries, as Wiseman argues, its centring of augural practice as a founding rite and its mapping of that practice onto the topography of the city fall in line with the contemporaneous intensification and diversification of divinatory practices within and beyond Rome, by ritual practitioners assimilating expanding bodies of knowledge about Italic landscapes and fauna.¹³⁷

With the place of religion in the Middle Republic's coalescing cultural *koiné* — not the only one of its kind coming into being in the western Mediterranean — we come full circle.¹³⁸ Two decades ago, it may have been reasonable for the author of a piercing essay on middle republican religion to complain that 'both literary and archaeological sources are scarce and provide us with a fragmentary picture of the state of affairs'.¹³⁹ But as the preceding sections have sought to demonstrate, new evidence as well as new approaches for handling that evidence are coming in from many different quarters. What remains now is to bring this material together, while being attentive to the hurdles that need to be cleared in order to develop an interdisciplinary practice that does justice (even if only imperfectly) to the connectivities of the Middle Republic.

VI CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A NEW MIDDLE REPUBLICAN HISTORY

We began this paper by noting that Livy's Alexander digression presents modern scholarship with two choices, neither satisfactory, for framing the history of middle republican Rome. The idea(l) of a Rome already in the vanguard of Hellenisation in the age of Alexander — a prospect called into question by Livy's counterfactual — rests on tenuous evidence. At the same time, the study of the early Roman imperial expansion as a series of battles and wars masterminded by the patricio-plebeian *nobilitas* yields its own dissatisfactions. The traditional narrative, as introspective as the ascription of precocious Hellenism is extrospective, bogs down in debates about the credibility of the literary sources. In this article, we have attempted to clear space for a third path, one whose accent on connectivities (temporal, methodological, historical, and human) better integrates the period into the reality of a liquid Mediterranean world around the time of Alexander.

There are two main payoffs to this approach. First, the Middle Republic comes into being as an agentive entity in its own right: not as an arbitrarily (because anachronistically or retrospectively) circumscribed unit of time, but as a dynamic cultural formation that cries out to be grasped on its own terms. Establishing these

¹³⁶ The 'revolution' that elevated the *pontifex maximus*, previously fifth in the *ordo sacerdotium* if Festus 198 L. is to be trusted: Ridley 2013: 41, summarising previous discussions. Religious institutionalisation during the third century: Rüpke 2012: chs 2–3.

¹³⁷ The myth's late fourth- and early third-century gestation: Wiseman 1995. The foundational auspices in Ennius as a reflection on the topographic variety of (middle republican) Rome: *Ann.* 72–77 Skutsch, with Mignone 2016. Ecologies, ritual knowledge, and imperialism: Padilla Peralta 2018; cf. Gargola 2017: ch. 4 on augury and territoriality and Tuck 2020 on divination and environment.

¹³⁸ Cf. the emergence of a cultural *koiné* centred on the cult of Melqart: Martí-Aguilar 2018.

¹³⁹ Curti 2000: 77.

terms requires attention to the manifold connectivities that characterise this formation in its spatial and temporal extensions. While some seeds for Rome's eventual triumph over its Mediterranean competitor-states were planted as early as the sixth century, it is the Middle Republic of this article that marks a decisive turning point not only in the Roman state's geopolitical fortunes but in the very identity and form of the Roman state itself. But despite the (seeming) ineluctability of the final outcome of Roman expansion in any discussion of the Middle Republic, our concern in this article is less with that outcome itself than with the weaving-together (*symploke*) that took place en route to its realisation.

Second, by demonstrating the amenability of this period in Mediterranean history to a range of inter- and multi-disciplinary interventions, our article makes the case for training a new generation of Roman historians who are open to pursuing their goals through collaborative means. It used to be true, in some Anglo-American circles at least, that ancient historians trained to scour literary evidence threw up their hands in despair at some of the more enigmatic historiographical voids of the fourth and early third centuries B.C.E. This despair had material consequences for graduate and undergraduate training. Students were steered away from the hazy uncertainties of the Archaic age and the Early and Middle Republic, and towards the *terra firma* of late republican history with its swashbuckling cast of characters and the relative abundance of literary testimonies for their exploits — manageably bounded enough for isolated practitioners of a philologically premised ancient history. If this article has shown anything, it is that there is so much evidence for a vibrant and transformative Middle Republic that its sidelining simply cannot be justified. Not only that, but we suggest that the disciplinary and methodological openness this article has promoted means that this evidence is best exploited through collaborative efforts. Middle republican Rome in this way can become a laboratory for a brand of ancient history that calls upon the full panoply of strengths of our community and beyond, from archaeologists to climate scientists, comparative historians and others, all of whom are increasingly pushing in the same direction. We close by identifying this collaborative interaction, too, as a productive connectivity with special relevance to the historical study of our middle republican period. To pave the way for future collaborations, more energy and resources will need to be poured into the training of genuinely interdisciplinary Roman historians, and into modelling for them what a vision for integrating different kinds of evidence demands. Bringing together two ancient historians of broadly comparable perspectives but with different interpretive tools at their respective disposal, this article has attempted to set out one such synthesising vision.

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