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Mobility and Secession in the Early Roman Republic¹

ABSTRACT

One consequence of the globalisation of the modern world in recent years has been to focus historical interest on human migration and movement. Sociologists and historians have argued that mobility is much more characteristic of past historical eras than we might expect given our modern nationalistic perspectives. This paper aims to contribute to this subject by surveying some of the evidence for mobility in central Italy, and by examining its implications for early Rome. I will focus primarily on the plebeian movement, which is normally seen in terms of an internal political dispute. Our understanding of the ‘Struggle of the Orders’ is conditioned by the idealising view of our literary sources, who look back on the early Republic from a period when the plebeians provided many of the key members of the nobility. However, if we see the plebeian movement in its contemporary central Italian context, it emerges as much more threatening and potentially subversive. The key plebeian tactic – secession from the state –, is often regarded as little more than a military strike. Instead, I argue that it was a genuine threat to abandon the community, and secessions can be seen as ‘paused migrations’. This paper also considers two other episodes that support this picture, the migration to Rome of Attus Clausus and the Claudian *gens*, and the proposed move to Veii by the plebs.

INTRODUCTION

One consequence of the globalisation of the modern world in recent years has been to focus historical interest on human migration and movement. Sociologists and historians have argued that mobility is much more characteristic of past historical eras than we might expect given our modern nationalistic perspectives. Their works claim, perhaps with a touch of overstatement, that mobility rather than fixity was the norm in most pre-industrial societies. For example, in a fascinating ‘manifesto’ on the subject Greenblatt has argued that cultural mobility is

¹ I would like to thank the editors, the anonymous referee, and audiences in Auckland, Dublin, and Cardiff for comments, which have much improved the finished article.

characteristic of most pre-modern societies.² Such studies draw our attention to the artificiality and modernity of modern national boundaries, and the need to imagine a world without the bureaucratic accoutrements of the modern nation-state. Various studies have applied these ideas to antiquity; Horden's and Purcell's *Corrupting Sea* has been particularly influential.³

This article aims to contribute to this subject by surveying some of the evidence for mobility in central Italy, and by examining its implications for early Rome. I will focus primarily on the plebeian movement, which is normally seen in terms of an internal political dispute. Our understanding of the 'Struggle of the Orders' is conditioned by the idealising view of our literary sources, who look back on the early Republic from a period when the plebeians provided many of the key members of the nobility. They generally emphasise the validity of plebeian demands, their peaceful means in securing these demands, and the measured compromises which were reached as a result. The 'Struggle of the Orders' is thus seen as a stage in the maturation of the full classical Republic, eventually reached with the admission of the plebeians to the magistracies and priesthoods, and the recognition of the decrees of the plebeian assembly.

However, if we see the plebeian movement in its contemporary central Italian context, it emerges as much more threatening and potentially subversive. The key plebeian tactic – secession from the state –, is often regarded as little more than a military strike. Instead, I argue that it was a genuine threat to abandon the community, and secessions can be seen as 'paused migrations'. Other episodes in early Roman history reflect this possibility and support this picture. I am going to look at two in particular, the migration to Rome of Attus Clausus and the Claudian *gens*, and the proposed move to Veii by the plebs.

MOBILITY AS A PERVASIVE FEATURE OF EARLY ROME AND CENTRAL ITALY

The term 'mobility' is used in scholarship on central Italy in a variety of ways. There are two main types of mobility that are relevant. The first is physical migration, between states or ethnic

² Greenblatt (2009) 6. 'This cultural mobility [from the eighth century BC], facilitated by traders, craftsmen, and troops of mercenaries, was obviously uneven and at certain times and places was sharply restricted. But, once launched, it proved unstoppable. A vital global cultural discourse is, then, quite ancient; only the increasingly settled and bureaucratised nature of academic institutions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, conjoined with an ugly intensification of ethnocentrism, racism, and nationalism, produced the temporary illusion of sedentary, indigenous literary cultures which made only sporadic and half-hearted ventures toward the margins. The reality, for most of the past as once again for the present, is more about nomads than natives.'

³ Horden and Purcell (2000); Moatti (2004), (2013) 77; Isayev (2017).

groups (the latter tend to be easier to spot in the evidence). This is sometimes called horizontal mobility. We also encounter social mobility, which is sometimes called vertical mobility. These movements involve a change in domicile or a change in status. But sometimes we are talking about both, and often the two go together. Frequently migrants changed their name on moving, especially when they moved from one language group to another.

The idea of mobility as a pervasive feature of early Rome and central Italy has been well established since the pioneering studies of the 1970s by Carmine Ampolo.⁴ These showed that there were many examples in epigraphy from central Italy of members of the elite present in communities who originated from elsewhere. One famous example comes from the spectacular Tumulo del Re in Tarquinia (fig. 1). The probable occupant of the tomb, Rutilus Hippokrates, had a mixed Latin and Greek name, despite belonging to the Etruscan elite.⁵ Ampolo drew attention to the parallel stories in the literary sources of migrant figures, such as Tarquinius Priscus, the fifth king of Rome. He is said to have been of Greek parentage, and to have moved to Rome from Tarquinia, changing his name from the Etruscan Lucumo to the Latin Lucius Tarquinius. His family thus passed through Greek, Etruscan, and Latin cultural worlds, the mirror image of Hippokrates. Ampolo hypothesised that the elite in this period were easily able to move from place to place, aided by networks of guest friendship akin to those we find in Homer's *Odyssey*, and seemed to be able to retain their social status in their new abode, a type of 'horizontal social mobility'. Ampolo regarded this as characteristic of the Orientalizing and Archaic periods, when state structures and senses of ethnicity were only weakly developed.

⁴ E.g. Ampolo (1970-71), (1976-7); discussed by Marchesini (2007) 143-5, with further references.

⁵ Ampolo (1976-7) 333-45: the name *achapri rutili hipukrate* [--- Rutilus Hippokrates] appears on a bucchero oinochoe (late seventh century BC) in the tomb; this could denote the owner of the drinking vessel, and not necessarily the owner of the tomb; but, as Ampolo points out, even the latter indicates a figure with close relations with a member of the Tarquinian elite.

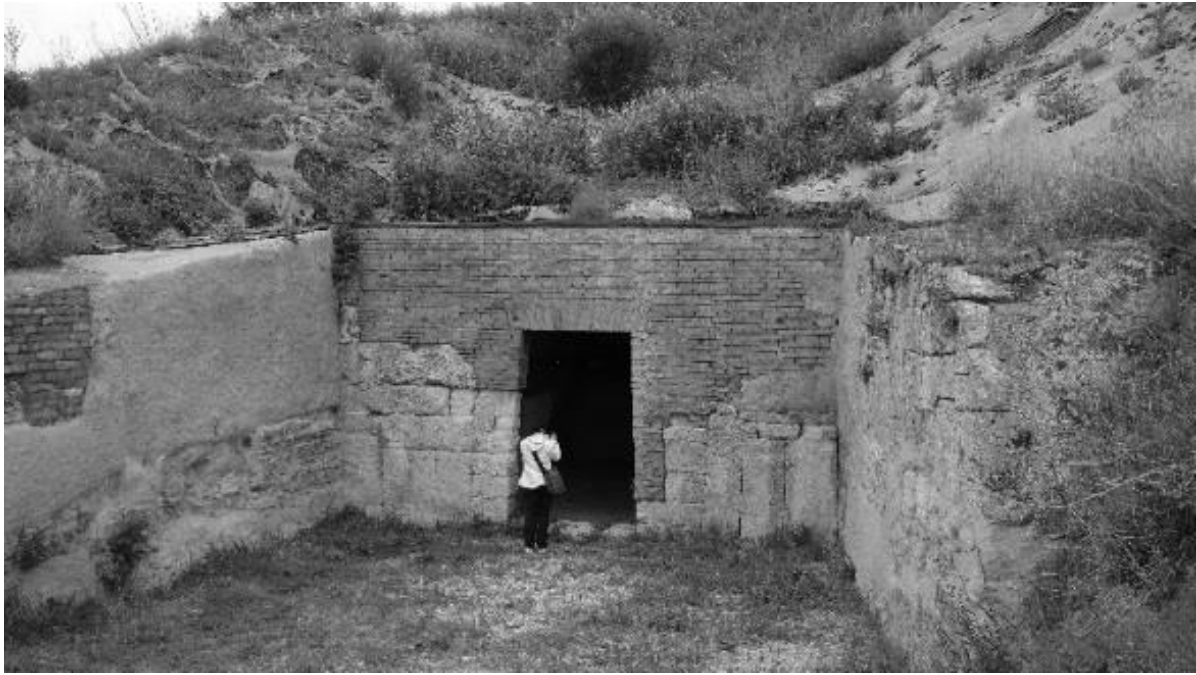


Figure 1. Monumental dromos of the Tumulo del Re, Tarquinia.

This mobility is widely attested in Etruscan epigraphy. Some interesting attestations of mobile Etruscans come from Latium, for example.⁶ There are a range of Etruscan inscriptions which show Etruscans dedicating items or owning items buried in tombs in Latium. For example, in the Bernardini tomb in Latin Praeneste a silver cup on which is inscribed *Vetusia* (probably in Etruscan) under the rim may document the Etruscan owner of this high status tomb. A dedication from Satrium on a bucchero cup, which reads [*Laris*] *Velchaina*, exactly matches the name on an identical bucchero cup from Etruscan Caere. And a bucchero amphora from a chamber tomb in Lavinium carries the inscription *mini m[ulu] vanice mamar.ce a.puniie* ('Mamarce Apunie gave me'), which is almost identical to a dedication on a bucchero olpe found at the Portonaccio sanctuary of Veii, c. 570 BC.

There are also many contemporary examples found in Etruscan epigraphy of individuals with newly constituted gentilicial names, sometimes drawn from place-names to indicate origin. The Etruscan city of Volsinii offers many cases from the epigraphy of the main city cemetery, the Crocefisso del Tufo.⁷ Around 60% of the burials belong to individuals with names of Etruscan origin, and around 40% have names of apparent Italic origin (either Umbro-Sabine or Falisco-Latin). There are also a couple of isolated examples of names with Greek

⁶ Naso (2004) 226.

⁷ Torelli (1981) 140.

origins (e.g. *Achilena*, from Achilles), and Celtic origins (e.g. *Katicina*, an Etruscanised version of Catacus).

Etruscan *tesserae hospitales*, tokens of hospitality relationships, are also revealing in this light. There is now a small corpus of seven Etruscan examples from Rome, Carthage, and Murlo. The examples from Rome and Carthage show Etruscans in relationships of hospitality with Sulcis in Sardinia and with a native of Carthage.⁸ From Murlo we have a cache of five examples from a late Orientalising building that probably show the contacts of the leading figure with members of the elite in other Etruscan cities.

Recent reappraisals of this topic have demonstrated just how comprehensive the evidence is in the first millennium BC, and that this high level of mobility extended from the Orientalising period through the republican period.⁹ For example, a large number of immigrants (or the descendants of them) are visible in Etruscan cities due to gentilicial names that derive from their place of origin (either other cities, both inside and outside Etruria), or from their ethnic group.¹⁰ The latter are particularly interesting, revealing Latins, Umbrians, Greeks, and various other Italics incorporated as immigrants (see table 1). The high proportion of Latins who adopted Etruscan names is striking. They must have found homes in Etruscan cities, and were probably bilingual.¹¹ High levels of private mobility thus seem to continue well beyond the Orientalising and Archaic periods.

Table 1. Etruscan gentilicials derived from ethnic names (Bourdin [2012] 1055-6)

Number	Provenance	Origin	Gentilicial
1	Vetulonia	Faliscan	Feluske
14	Tarquinia, Volterra, Chiusi	Gallic	Cale
3	Cerveteri	Campanian	Campane
28	Vulci, Bologne, Tarquinia, Chiusi, Perugia, Orvieto	Greek	Creice, Creicna, Craica, Kraikalu
91	Tarquinia, Chiusi, Perugia	Latin	Latine, Latinie, Latiθe, Latini
11	Chiusi, Perugia	Ligurian	Lecusti, Lecstina, Lecustini
3	Perugia	Marsic	Marsi, Marsie
41	Chiusi	Umbrian	Umre, Umrie, Umrina, Umrana,

⁸ Maggiani (2006). Carthage, Sante-Monique cemetery, mid-sixth century: *mi puinel karthazie : els q[---]na*. Rome, Forum Boarium, 580-560 BC: *araz silqetenas spurianas*.

⁹ Marchesini (2007); Bourdin (2012).

¹⁰ Bourdin (2012) 578-85, with annex 14. Note that the identification of the origin is not always unproblematic.

¹¹ The list of provenances seems incomplete, and should include Veii (Rix, *Etruskische Texte* V 2.4).

			Umrce, Umria
8	Tarquinius, Chiusi	Sabine	Sapice, Safici, Sapiena, Sapina, Sapinie, Sapini
14	Perusia	Venetic	Venete, Veneti

Unfortunately this mobility is less visible elsewhere in central Italy, as other regions lack the epigraphic corpus that exists for Etruria, and Latins moving to Rome would not need to change their names in this way. Nevertheless, a good case can be made that this is also a relevant model for Rome. It is well known, for instance, that there are many names in the consular *fasti* with foreign origins: Ranouil thought he could identify 22 families among the patricians that were of non-Latin origin (see table 2 below). Although this is optimistic, and some of his identifications seem mistaken (for example the Aquilii are Etruscan, not Volscian), it nevertheless suggests a substantial external element in the Roman elite.¹² Some individuals had *cognomina* formed from place names, such as Auruncus (cos. 501, 493 BC) and Sabinus Inregillensis (cos. 495 BC). Other *cognomina* suggest external origins of an earlier date, from areas associated with regal military activity, such as Amintinus, Camerinus, Medullinus, and Mugillanus. Although we do not know the date of their movement to Rome, and there is debate about the historicity of *cognomina* in this period, this evidence seems to show the full integration of these foreign *gentes* into the Roman elite, to the extent that they even held magistracies.¹³ Torelli has characterised Rome as the mirror image of Volsinii.¹⁴ Both can be seen as frontier cities, with a high proportion of incomers. Whereas Volsinii was a predominantly Etruscan city with many Italic immigrants, Rome was a Latin city with many Etruscan immigrants.

Table 2. Patricians of presumed foreign origin
(Table 28, Bourdin [2012] 543-4, from Ranouil [1975])

<i>Gens</i>	Date of accession to the consulship	Presumed origin
Tarquinius	509	Etruscan
Horatii	509	Etruscan

¹² Ranouil (1975); Bourdin (2012) 542-50. See also Drummond's list for comparison, Drummond (1978) 88-9, 90-2, 102-4.

¹³ Farney (2007) 42; Bourdin (2012) 545.

¹⁴ Torelli (1988) 255; cf. Bourdin (2012), 532-8.

Valerii	508	Sabine
Lucretii	508	Etruscan
Larcii	506	Etruscan
Herminii	506	Etruscan
Postumii	505	Sabine
Menenii	503	Etruscan?
Verginii	502	Etruscan
Cominii	501	Etruscan
Aebutii	499	Etruscan
Veturii	499	Etruscan, Sabine?
Claudii	495	Sabine
Nautii	488	Etruscan, Latin?
Siccii	487	Etruscan
Aquilii	487	Volscian
Manlii	480	Etruscan
Volumnii	461	Etruscan
Romilii	455	Etruscan?
Tarpeii	454	Etruscan?
Aternii	454	Etruscan?
Folii	433	Sabine, Volscian?

As is clear from these examples, in tracking such movements scholars have tended methodologically to rely on the evidence of onomastics, the study of names, generally preserved in epigraphic form. Onomastics remains a controversial source of evidence, and names are often ambiguous to interpret. The great study of early Italian names was Schultze's *Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen*, published in 1904. This confidently assigned origins to a whole series of ancient names. But its conclusions have been severely criticised, and it is evident, for instance, that Schultze overestimated names of Etruscan provenance. Recent studies have been more scientific, given the great accumulation of new epigraphic data, and more cautious in their conclusions. They have demonstrated that the adoption of names of apparent external origin are not necessarily clear signs of recent immigration: some apparently Italic forms of gentilicial names in Etruscan, such as Peticina, may have had a long history, and may have been married up to an Italic-derived Etruscan forename to emphasise links with ancestors rather than making a direct statement about one's own origins.¹⁵ Nevertheless, even this more cautious approach has reinforced the idea of widespread mobility.¹⁶

¹⁵ Marchesini (2007) 145.

¹⁶ Marchesini (2007); Bourdin (2012).

Our picture, then, is of inter-community movement being a fundamental feature of central Italy from the Orientalising period into at least the fifth and fourth centuries BC, the time of the early Roman Republic. Although our evidence for Rome is less good than for some of its neighbours, the presence of Latins in neighbouring societies makes reciprocal movement into Rome highly likely. Of course we should not overstate the idea of mobility. It was a phenomenon in the context of permanently settled communities, sedentary on the same sites from the early Iron Age, if not earlier (from the middle Bronze Age in the case of Rome, as we now know). There was a pastoral element to the economy of central Italian communities, but they were not nomadic. Archaic Rome in fact had a mixed economy, and on the whole the evidence suggests the prevalence of agriculture over pastoralism.¹⁷ Crops such as olives, fruit trees, and vines (attested from at least the seventh century BC in Rome and Latium) require long-term investment and cultivation before harvesting. So these are organised societies with a high level of permeability to outsiders, unlike modern states with frontiers that control movement.¹⁸

THE PLEBEIAN MOVEMENT

I argue that we should understand the plebeian movement in the light of this mobile environment. In part this is already established for the origins of the plebs. The emergence of the plebs must be linked to the increasing size of the population in the sixth century BC.¹⁹ The plebs never seems to have been a closed group, in contrast with the restrictions on the patriciate or with citizens in Greek states such as Sparta or Athens. This is a characteristic feature of the central Italian environment, and one which led to the long-term increase in Rome's population. Furthermore, links with Greek cities must have lain behind the political aspirations of the movement, and seem reasonably securely attested.²⁰ I also think that the plebeian tactic of secession, withdrawal from the city, is connected to mobility. Whilst the possibility of the plebs migrating is sometimes alluded to, modern scholars seem more concerned with the historicity

¹⁷ Ampolo (1988a).

¹⁸ See Abulafia and Berend (2002) 1-34 on the modern idea of linear frontiers emerging gradually in medieval and early modern Europe, and the 'enormous linguistic and ethnic diversity of societies not just on the medieval frontiers, but even in the heart of Europe' (23).

¹⁹ Torelli (1988) 257-61; Richard (2015) 306-10.

²⁰ Momigliano (2005) 179, 184; Richard (2015) 503-7.

of the secessions, and often seem to take the action itself for granted. Admittedly, there are serious issues with the literary tradition. We will turn to the attestations of the secessions now.

Three secessions are attested in the canonical version of early Roman history, as presented in Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. They lead to the patricians conceding a range of measures in favour of the plebeian organisation. The First Secession is said to have taken place in 494 BC to the Sacred Mount, a hill north of the Tiber and approximately 5 kms from the city. The story of the First Secession in Livy and Dionysius begins with a debt crisis in the community, which led to a large portion of the plebs becoming indebted, and subject to creditors' abuses. An army was enlisted to fight against the Volsci, Aequi, and Sabines, but then refused to go to war, diverting to the Sacred Mount north of the city. There the plebeians under military oath were joined by the mass of the plebeian city-dwellers. Various discussions took place, and eventually peace was restored between the Senate and the plebeians, with the latter being allowed to elect plebeian tribunes for the first time.²¹ The Second Secession is dated to 449 BC, and was associated with the ending of the Decemvirate. This was a board of 10 men appointed to replace the existing magistrates and draw up a law code for Rome. When the Decemvirs started to behave in a tyrannical fashion, the plebs sought to overturn the regime. Those serving in the army at first assembled on the Aventine hill in the south of the city, and then ultimately withdrew to the Sacred Mount again. The story of the Second Secession in particular comes down to us in a highly complex and somewhat dubious narrative tradition. It is a story woven around exemplary figures such as the tyrannical decemvir Appius Claudius, and the maiden Verginia.²² Finally, in 287 BC, in the most poorly attested of the several episodes, the Third Secession of the plebs took place when the plebeians withdrew to the Janiculum hill. They only returned when they had secured a final concession, the right of the plebeian assembly to pass laws fully binding on all the population of Rome. The sources for the Third Secession suffer less from obvious problems, in part because there is so little information on it, and we have lost Livy's narrative for this period.²³

The sources provide a number of variant traditions on the destination, date, and number of the secessions. The main tradition identifies the destination of the First Secession as the Sacred Mount, in the district of Crustumerium, between Anio and the Tiber.²⁴ A variant version, less

²¹ Livy 2.21-33; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.41-89.

²² Livy 3.50-4.

²³ Livy, *Epit.* 11; Plin. *NH* 16.37; *Dig.* 1.2.2.8.

²⁴ Livy 2.32.4, Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.45, Varro, *Ling.* 5.81; see Richard (2015) 547-9, and Mignone (2016) 17-23, with further references, who defend the tradition.

common according to Livy, identified the Aventine as the destination.²⁵ The Livian tradition indicates that there were two further secessions, one in 449 BC to the Aventine and Sacred Mount, and a further one in 287 BC to the Janiculum. Other sources give different numbers, but it is not clear that they represent more authoritative traditions.²⁶ Some authors have argued that a notice in Diodorus (11.68.8) indicates that the First Secession really took place in 471 BC; but Diodorus merely reports that this was the first time four, rather than two, tribunes were elected. Our sources also differ on the names of the first elected tribunes, and Livy notes that some versions have only two tribunes elected in the first instance.²⁷

Some of the details of the account may also be problematic because of later distortions. The parallels between the secessions and the withdrawal of C. Gracchus to the Aventine raise questions about whether the latter provided the model for the former.²⁸ The parable of the parts of the body told by Menenius Agrippa to convince the plebs to return to Rome and resolve the crisis drew on early Greek fables, as Dionysius recognised (*Ant. Rom.* 6.83.2); the severe role of the Claudii as archetypal villains in both the First and Second Secessions, in contrast with the very positive role attributed to the Valerii, has generated suspicions that Valerius Antias has had a distorting effect on the history of his ancestors.²⁹ In contrast, details such as the role of debt in the ‘Struggle of the Orders’ seem more plausible.³⁰ The *lex sacrata* passed by the plebeians, a sacred law (of protection for the tribunes) that probably originated as an oath, also seems plausible. This is a typically Italic phenomenon, and it has military overtones; it was said to have been used by other Italic peoples such as the Samnites to levy troops, and in the context of the Sacred Spring rite.³¹ According to Dionysius (*Ant. Rom.* 6.89.3), the oath sworn by the plebeians included the dedication to Ceres of the goods of anyone who violated tribunician sacrosanctity. Ceres was a cult with Campanian links, and soon afterwards, in 493 BC, the goddess was honoured with a temple on the Aventine to Ceres, Liber, and Libera, an innovative Roman mix of Italic deities. The oath to Ceres thus fits well in an early republican context, rather than being a later invention.³² The plebs could possibly be understood as a group akin to the mobile armed bands of the Archaic period, devoted to a particular tutelary deity, and potential founders of a new community on land that they conquered.

²⁵ Piso in Livy 2.32.4 and perhaps Sall. *Iug.* 31.17.

²⁶ Sall. *Iug.* 31.17: 2; Ampel. 25: 4.

²⁷ Ogilvie (1965) 309-12; Richard (2015) 541; Livy 2.33.3.

²⁸ E.g. Ogilvie (1965) 311; Mignone (2016) 17-47.

²⁹ Ogilvie (1965) 311; Wiseman (1979) 65-76, who argues for a mixed and contradictory tradition on the Claudii.

³⁰ Cornell (1995) 265-8; Gabrielli (2008).

³¹ Ogilvie (1965) 313-14; Cornell (1995) 259.

³² Ogilvie (1965) 314; Spaeth (1996) 86.

The historical issues with the secessions are discussed at some length in modern scholarship. There is a wide spectrum of modern views. Most authors accept the historicity of the last secession in 287 BC, and take a range of positions on the earlier secessions, from complete scepticism to cautious acceptance. Modern authors have particularly questioned the authenticity of the early secessions. Some have regarded the repetition of secessions as suspicious, and doubt that the social struggle would have been ongoing for over two centuries, with the plebeians seemingly taking an extraordinarily long time to achieve their ends. On this interpretation, the earlier examples were modelled on the secession of 287 BC, which has much more chance of being historical, given that it is within a few generations of the first Roman historian, Fabius Pictor, who was writing in the late third century.³³ Others have argued that the narrative is unbelievable and modelled on Greek stories. Forsythe claims that the First Secession was likely to have been modelled on the Herodotean story of Telines, ancestor of Gelon (Hdt. 7.153).³⁴ In this story, Telines brought back a group banished from Gela due to civil strife, using only divine objects and not force; Telines' descendents, as a result, became priests for life. However, this story is very sketchily outlined in Herodotus and provides only a weak parallel with the Roman story. In fact, the unique aspects of the secessions are much more striking. I would instead argue that the first two secessions are historical, even if their details are problematic, and that they should be understood in the context of widespread inter-community mobility. The Third Secession occurs considerably later, and involves a different venue much closer to Rome and an apparent military threat to the city. It therefore seems to have been a different type of event from the first two, or at least not an appropriate model for them.

Overall the unprecedented nature of the story, and the general unanimity of the traditions on the broad lines of events, support the historical nature of the First and Second Secessions.³⁵ As Lintott has noted, the peculiarity and distinctiveness of the events of the plebeian secessions, which saw intense political strife but did not lead to violence, make it unlikely that they were modelled on stories of stasis in Greek states. The uniqueness of the events is in fact a powerful argument in favour of their authenticity, and not, as Forsythe takes it, a sign of invention.³⁶

Modern views of what a secession signified vary widely.³⁷ For Mommsen, the First Secession 'threatened to establish in this most fertile part of the Roman territory a new plebeian

³³ Raaflaub (2005) 209.

³⁴ Forsythe (2005) 174.

³⁵ Richard (2015) 541-7; Cornell (1995) 258, more cautious.

³⁶ Lintott (1999) 32. Forsythe (1997).

³⁷ Poma (2008) sections 1-3.

city'.³⁸ For others, this was potentially a rival state that might join Rome's enemies, given that many of them originated elsewhere.³⁹ The secession is defined in standard reference works as 'technically a withdrawal from the state' (*Oxford Encyclopedia of the Ancient World*) and an 'extreme form of civil disobedience' which 'implies detachment from public life as well as emigration from Rome' (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*). Other authors have been more cautious, arguing that it was clearly distinct from a defection, and the plebeians were keen to ensure that they remained part of the Roman state.⁴⁰

The contrary nature of these views is in part determined by disagreements over who the plebeians were at this point in time, which in turn reflects the complexity of the sources' picture. Ogilvie argues that the plebeians were, for the most part, craftsmen and businessmen, recent emigrés, lacking a patron's protection (which somewhat contradicts the image in the sources of impoverished farmers).⁴¹ For Momigliano, the plebs largely belonged to the *infra classem*, the group lacking the property qualification for the army. This explains why plebeian demands were not immediately met, and why Appius Claudius disparages the commitment of the plebs to war.⁴² But this interpretation also meets the difficulty that the sources unanimously link secession with military strike, which was provoked by the debt crisis. Richard argued that the secession must have been primarily the work of citizen soldiers, who allied with the *infra classem* and *nexi*. He argued that the *adsidui* were the key group affected by the agrarian crisis, and the issues of the *proletarii* were secondary.⁴³ Along similar lines, Raaflaub argued that the secession must have been mainly made up of the hoplites. He thought that the power of the Roman elite, visible through central Italian tombs of their peers and manifested in their rigid sacred control, explains the slowness of the reform process that resulted. He also asserted that the institution of the tribunate is a very dramatic concession, which implied that the plebeian power of extortion was considerable. In fact, the secession is best explained if the plebeians are seen as a mixed group, with a substantial military element, reflecting a complex economy in Rome.⁴⁴

If we therefore accept the secessions as authentically remembered events of early Roman history, how do they fit with a mobile environment? The secessions are often seen in terms of a military strike, but a more substantial threat of leaving the community completely is

³⁸ Mommsen (1862) 280.

³⁹ Le Glay *et al.* (2004) 46.

⁴⁰ E.g. Daube (1972) 143, noting that the sources deliberately use the term *secessio* rather than *deficere* or *defectio*.

⁴¹ Ogilvie (1965) 294.

⁴² Momigliano (2005) 173-7; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.63.3.

⁴³ Richard (2015) 512, 549.

⁴⁴ Cornell (1995) 257; Richard (2015) 512-19; Raaflaub (2005).

implicit.⁴⁵ In the context of regular and easy migration, the act of secession implies the potential to ‘up sticks’ and move to other another place by a group *en masse*. Secession was therefore not just a military strike, but also a kind of ‘paused migration’. In fact, the sources clearly refer to it in these terms on several occasions. In his account of the First Secession, Dionysius (*Ant. Rom.* 6.47.1) describes the patricians as worried that the plebs will defect to the enemy. Once the secession has been established on the Sacred Mount, the plebs remaining in the city began individually to slip away, openly and secretly, to join the movement (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.48). Most strikingly, Dionysius has the plebeian leader Junius Brutus (not the consul of the same name) suggest in a speech that they should leave Rome and found a colony elsewhere.⁴⁶ On another occasion, when further civil strife had broken out in 471 BC, Livy describes the Volsci as aiming to encourage a secession of the plebs to their side.⁴⁷

How far these annalistic views reflect fifth century conditions is uncertain.⁴⁸ Given that these are speeches or attributed feelings, it would be unwise to take them as firm evidence of historical reality. Nevertheless, they show that both Livy and Dionysius, and probably their sources, thought that secessions could lead to permanent migration to an enemy of Rome, which is an idea in striking opposition to their general construct of Roman history in the fifth century BC. This period is portrayed as one of continual battle between Rome and enemies such as the Volsci and Aequi, as a veritable struggle for survival, and whatever the realities of that historical vision (it is notable that the size of Rome implies that it had far superior demographic resources), the potential defection of the plebeians would nonetheless be a strange spectre to raise in this context.

Other evidence suggests that the idea of withdrawing from one community and transferring to another is a credible one for the Archaic period. The idea that secession can shade into migration or colonisation is preserved in later sources. Servius distinguishes colonies founded by public agreement from those founded through secession.⁴⁹ An example of the latter is the plan by a Roman garrison to seize control of Capua in 342 BC, a curious episode that almost

⁴⁵ Cf. Poma (2008) section 3.

⁴⁶ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.80.3: [From Brutus’ speech] ‘We, who are abandoning the life which had for us no city and no hearth, are going forth as a colony (*apoikia*) that will be neither hateful to the gods nor troublesome to men nor grievous to any country.’ This feature of the First Secession is only in Dionysius.

⁴⁷ Livy 2.58.3: *Volscum Aequeumque inter seditionem Romanam est bellum coortum. vastaverant agros ut si qua secessio plebis fieret ad se receptum haberet.* (‘During the disturbance the Volsci and Aequi began war. They laid waste the fields in order that if the plebs should secede they might find a refuge with them.’)

⁴⁸ Poma (2008) section 3: ‘C’è enfasi retorica, senza dubbio, nella pagina di Dionigi, ma forse c’è anche un frammento di verità, nel momento in cui indica come la sua fonte interpretasse l’azione della plebe.’

⁴⁹ Serv. *Aen.* 1.12: *hae autem coloniae sunt quae ex consensu publico, non ex secessione sunt conditae.* (‘So these colonies are those which have been founded by public agreement, not as a result of a succession.’)

develops into a secession. Although Livy (7.38-42) does not present it as a formalised secession like the others, the plebs still won various concessions from the Senate. In an article on early colonisation, Bayet called these movements ‘armed secessions’.⁵⁰ Some were successful in establishing what we could term a ‘colony’, such as the Mamertines at Messana in the 280s BC. In one version of the Mamertines’ story, they left their homeland and came to Messana in a Sacred Spring, echoing the sacred oath of the plebeians.⁵¹ Secession as an option or tactic was thus linked to the broader context of general mobility, and could amount to a real threat to withdraw from the community on a permanent basis and take up residence elsewhere.

Our understanding of these movements is hampered by the anachronistic approach of our much later sources. As many commentators have shown, they tend to reinterpret the early Republic in terms of their own day. Episodes of mobility are classified by them in the terminology of the late Republic, using concepts such as *colonia* and *secessio*. But we should be alert to the idea that such classifications are misleading, and that types of mobility, unofficial and official, merge into one another. This is particularly evident in the sphere of colonisation, where the term ‘*colonia*’ is applied to a wide variety of different communities that came under Roman control in the early Republic, and received varying numbers of settlers or garrisoning soldiers.⁵²

Ultimately then, even if we consider it impossible to recover plebeian intentions in the secessions, the act of moving out of Rome within the highly mobile environment of fifth century BC Italy has dramatic implications. Although understanding the nature of the threat is hindered by the successful resolution of the disputes, and by the extreme hindsight of the sources, one implication must have been that the plebs could move off and found a ‘colony’, which might be in ‘enemy’ territory.

THE MIGRATION OF THE CLAUDII: A SECESSION IN REVERSE?

Important support for this picture comes from other evidence. In 504 BC the founder of the Claudian *gens*, Attus Clausus (variously named in the sources) was said to have migrated from Regillum in Sabinum to Rome, accompanied by a large number of his followers. He supposedly left Sabinum due to pressure from his political opponents over his (peaceable) stance on war

⁵⁰ Bayet (1938).

⁵¹ Fest. 150L; Dench (1995) 211.

⁵² Crawford (2014); Bradley (2006).

with Rome. Attus was adopted into the Roman patriciate, and his followers were allotted land between Fidenae and Picetia. This district became the Claudian (voting) tribe, and Attus, changing his name to Appius Claudius, became a leading member of the senatorial elite, and held the consulship in 495 BC. This story is thus not only an archetypal example of the mobility of elite figures and their entourages, but also a ‘reverse secession’, a movement by seceders into Rome as a result of a political dispute, even if the sources do not use the term *secessio* to describe it.

This much of the story is supported by a whole range of sources, including Livy, Dionysius, Plutarch, and Appian, although there are a number of issues with particular aspects of it.⁵³ Concerning the date of the migration, Suetonius records a variant that Clausus migrated at the time of Titus Tatius, although he states that this is less commonly held than the early republican version recorded by Livy and others. This version is referred to in Virgil (*Aen.* 7.706-709), and may be an Augustan invention.⁵⁴ Servius, in his commentary on Virgil, relates Clausus’ migration to the more common date of 504 BC, and thinks only that the last part of this section of Virgil’s *Aeneid* relates to the earlier Romulean period. Ogilvie argues that the tradition that the Claudii came to Rome in the republican period must be wrong, as they were patrician and so must have been created under the monarchy.⁵⁵

The name of the original Claudius is variously reported in the sources as Titus Claudius (Dionysius), Attius Clausus (Livy), Attus Clausus (Tac. *Ann.* 4.9), Appius Clausus (Plutarch), and Atta Claudius (Suetonius – the most authentic version according to Bourdin). Livy states that he changed his name from Attius Clausus to Appius Claudius when in Rome, the designation by which we know him as the consul of 495 BC. Name changing is something of a topos, echoing the story of the Greco-Etruscan Lucumo who, as noted above, adopted the name Lucius Tarquinius on migrating to Rome around a century earlier. But this motif is also potentially authentic, given that we come across a wide range of invented names in Etruscan epigraphy, as we have seen. Some authors have questioned the authenticity of the name, pointing out that it is odd that Attius is a distinct Italic name from Appius, and claiming that it might in fact be Etruscan.⁵⁶

⁵³ Livy 2.16.3-6; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.40; Plut. *Publ.* 21; Suet. *Tib.* 1.1-2; App. *Kings* 12.

⁵⁴ Wiseman (1979) 59-64 also arguing that the designation of Attus’ son as M. n. in the *fasti* must mean that Attus had a citizen father, implying a different version. On the Augustan date, see Ampolo (1970-71) 40 with further references.

⁵⁵ Ogilvie (1965) 273.

⁵⁶ Ogilvie (1965) 274.

Epigraphic evidence shows other figures with the name Claudii in different ethnic contexts. The name Klavtie, probably an Etruscan version of Clausus/Claudius, is recorded on an Etruscan inscription on a red figure kylix discovered in the cemetery of Aleria (Sardinia), dating to c. 425 BC. Another inscription records the name Clavtie in a tomb at Caere from the late fourth century BC. These inscriptions have inspired some scholars to hypothesise that these Etruscans belonged to the same Roman *gens*, and moved via Caere to Etruscan dominated Aleria. Others point out that the Etruscan figures may have shared nothing with their Sabine and Roman counterparts beyond their name.⁵⁷ This is possible, but the similarity of some names (some of which are, in fact, identical) found in different ethnic contexts suggests they are linked. The presence of Claudii elsewhere is paralleled by the presence of Fabii, Aquilii, Plautii, and many others in Etruscan and other central Italian contexts. These apparently ‘Roman’ elite families were linked to, or part of, broader clan groups that might have moved from city to city, and left dedications in diversely located sanctuaries (e.g. the Aquilii/Acvilnas present in Rome, Vulci, and Veii in the early fifth century).⁵⁸ An in-depth study of the name by Keaney has recently argued that Clausus was an authentic Sabine name. Whilst the name is present in Caere, and elsewhere in central Italy, this does not discount the Roman story of Attus’ Sabine origins.⁵⁹

Our sources emphasise the numbers of followers that Attus bought with him, and generally agree on a figure but not on what it represents. Livy and Suetonius both talk of a large number of clients. The other sources are more specific, specifying 5,000 relatives, friends, and clients in total (Appian, Servius) or 5,000 adult males and their households (Dionysius and Plutarch). The sources thus differ on the precise details, although they are in agreement that Attus’ entourage included not just military-aged males, which strengthened Rome at an opportune time given the forthcoming hostilities with the Sabines, but also other followers (particularly clients), and perhaps whole families. Some modern scholars have been sceptical of this aspect: the round nature of the figure raises suspicions, and it is implausible that such figures were recorded at the time. Raaflaub in particular argues that it ‘clearly represents a retrojection’ on the basis of the large followings of later nobles of the late Republic, and is incompatible with the low modern estimates of the total population.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Forsythe (2005) 161.

⁵⁸ Ampolo (1988b) 207.

⁵⁹ Keaney (1991), who hypothesises that his name was Romanised by assimilation to a pre-existing Roman equivalent, Claudius.

⁶⁰ Raaflaub (2005) 22, 210 (this would be strengthened if the 5,000 represented adult males, which he omits).

However, these are unreliable grounds on which to question the idea of a substantial entourage *per se*,⁶¹ and other scholars have been more willing to accept this aspect of the story. A large number of followers is presupposed by the creation of the new Claudian voting tribe, and there are many contemporary parallels for military leaders accompanied by bands of clients, such as Publius Valerius on the *Lapis Satricanus*, and the Fabii with their clients at the Cremera in 479 BC.⁶² This also includes the famous example of Coriolanus, who defected from Rome to the Volsci.⁶³ Although a heavily romanticised saga, the story of Coriolanus probably reflects the archaic reality of widespread horizontal mobility between communities.⁶⁴ It also accords with the presence of Volscians in early Roman colonies. Other stories show that this type of transfer for military purposes occurred elsewhere, with generals such as Aristodemus of Cumae leading foreign forces.⁶⁵ The most striking parallel is with the failed attempt to take Rome by the Sabine leader Appius Herdonius, who is said to have attacked with a force of 4,000 or 4,500 clients in 460 BC.⁶⁶

The sources have Clausus leaving Sabinum due to political problems. According to Livy this was the result of a schism (*sedition*) between a war party and a peace party. Clausus was accused of favouring Rome, and, in a (late republican?) detail added by Dionysius, under threat of prosecution. This led to his flight to Rome, where he was well received. In Plutarch this is due to the manoeuvrings of Valerius Publicola, which Wiseman has suspected of being a distorted Valerian perspective introduced by Valerius Antias.⁶⁷ Clausus was made a patrician and given a large plot of land (25 *iugera* according to Plutarch), and his followers settled on smaller plots (distributed by Publicola in Plutarch, or Clausus in Dionysius) in the area north of Rome between Fidenae and Picetia. Claudius, as he now was, became consul in 495 BC and ‘the chief man among the leaders of the aristocracy’ (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.24). In this way Appius founded the Claudian *gens* at Rome.

The original story would thus presumably emanate from the collective memory of this *gens* and their family records. We know that this genealogical legend of the Claudii’s Sabine ancestors was replayed in the funerals of Julio-Claudian emperors, and its dramatisation in the

⁶¹ See Bradley (2016), for a higher estimate of the population.

⁶² Torelli (1988) 245.

⁶³ *Lapis Satricanus*, a dedication to Mars by the *suodales*, the followers, of Poplios Valesios: Stibbe *et al.* (1980); Coriolanus: Livy 2.33-40.

⁶⁴ Ampolo (1970-71) 43-4; Cornell (2003) 84-91.

⁶⁵ Bradley (2015) 117, n. 76.

⁶⁶ Livy 3.16.5; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 10.14.1; Ogilvie (1965) 424; this figure is also questioned by Raafaub (2005) 44, n. 124.

⁶⁷ Wiseman (1979) 61-5, 115, speculatively reconstructing a negative and positive archetype of the story.

republican funerals of the Claudii will have fixed it in Roman consciousness.⁶⁸ But it is notable that the story has a distinctly different feel from the much more elaborate and dramatised nature of the saga of Coriolanus, which seems much more likely to have stemmed from an oral tradition such as banquet songs.⁶⁹ The Claudian migration is likely to have been anchored in Roman history by various facts recorded in official records. The creation of the Claudian tribe will have been recorded in pontifical records, and Appius Claudius was recorded in the consular *fasti* for 495 BC.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Appius plays a major role in the plebeian disputes of the next few decades, which it is interesting to note is not linked in the sources to his migration or foreignness. His political role implies bilingualism, which ties in with other attestations of linguistic ‘code-switching’ in the archaic context such as the archaic Etruscan inscriptions found in Latin-speaking Rome. As Bourdin observes, ‘l’intégration de ce “prince” sabin est immédiate et totale’.⁷¹

Therefore there are good reasons to accept as authentic the story of the migration of Attus Clausus, accompanied by a group of followers.⁷² Some details are likely to be elaborated and debatable, such as the precise number of his followers. The confusion amongst the sources over aspects such as the precise name of Attus Clausus may suggest elaboration in oral source material. But migration across ethnic borders with a large group of followers is attested by all the sources, and fits the late sixth century context. It is also plausible, given the later name of the tribe in this area and the later power of the *gens*. An invention of early republican migration later on in the Republic would not only require an implausible level of knowledge of the specific social conditions of the Archaic period on the part of later historians, but would also surely have been challenged by the family itself. Although the stated reasons for the migration are unverifiable, they show striking parallels with the way that political disputes a decade later at Rome led to the withdrawal of the worse-off party, in this case the plebeians.⁷³

THE THWARTED MIGRATION TO VEII

⁶⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 4.9 records that in the funeral of Drusus ‘the Sabine nobility, Attus Clausus, and the busts of all the other Claudii were displayed in a long train’; Farney (2007) 79.

⁶⁹ Cornell (2003).

⁷⁰ Ampolo (1970-71) 41; Oakley (1997) 61.

⁷¹ Bourdin (2012) 524.

⁷² Ampolo (1970-71) 40-1; Cornell (2003) 86; Bourdin (2012) 523.

⁷³ Incidentally, this connection is never made in the sources, who treat the Claudian migration as an isolated event; the ancient sources were not therefore likely to have modelled the Claudian story on the First Secession.

Another parallel with secession is found in the tradition about the proposed migration to Veii.⁷⁴ This is referred to on two occasions by Livy, both occurring in connection with the tradition of Camillus and the controversy ignited by the suggested distribution of the *praeda Veientana* (the spoils of the sack of Veii). Livy reports that the idea was first raised in 395 BC, the year after the sack, when the plebeians are said to have rejected the prospect of moving to a colony on the borders of Volscian territory, and instead favoured the distribution of land captured in Veii (Livy 5.24.5-11). The tribune Titus Sicinius proposed that half of the plebs and half of the Senate move to Veii, with the Romans holding both cities together.⁷⁵ This proposal was vehemently opposed by Camillus and the Senate, and led to the consultation of the pontiffs, who advised the dedication of a golden crown at Delphi. The proposal was then raised again after the destruction of Rome by the Gauls (390 BC), only to be thwarted by Camillus a further time, following a set-piece speech that Livy uses as the culmination of his first pentad (5.49-55).

Scholars have generally highlighted the contemporary rhetorical themes in Livy's version of the story, which may be based on an earlier source given the parallels with Plutarch, *Camillus* 31-2.⁷⁶ The idea of the migration has typically been regarded as a late invention along the lines of the Gracchan proposal of a colony at Carthage, or the attempt by the allies to shift the capital to Corfinium during the Social War.⁷⁷ It is also of great relevance to the period of the Civil Wars, when Julius Caesar and then Anthony were rumoured to be planning to move the capital elsewhere. This prompted Augustus to link his dynasty firmly to Rome through the building of a dynastic tomb in the city. But whilst the version found in Livy has clearly been influenced by these repeated concerns with the primacy of the *Urbs*, it is worth exploring the possibility that the essence of the story is authentic. The resemblance with Gracchan and Social War events is rather stretched, and by no means undermines its historicity: Gracchus' proposal was for the movement of a group of colonists from the city, a traditional idea, albeit employed in the innovative context of a colony overseas, rather than the whole population of Rome; in the Social War the allies established Corfinium as an anti-Rome rather than a refuge or alternative for the population of the *Urbs*. Both are of too different a character from the story about Veii

⁷⁴ Cf. Poma (2008) section 3, though without elaborating on the comparison.

⁷⁵ Livy 5.24.7-9: 'They even brought forward a proposal, which met with still more support after the capture of Rome by the Gauls, for migrating to Veii. They intended, however, that Veii should be inhabited by a portion of the plebs and a part of the Senate; they thought it a feasible project that two separate cities should be inhabited by the Roman people and form one state.'

⁷⁶ Kraus (1994); Vasaly (2015) 77-80; Isayev (2017).

⁷⁷ Ogilvie (1965) 741-2; cf. Walsh (1961) 17. For contrasting views of Camillus as a historical figure, see Bruun (2000) and Oakley (1997) 376-9.

to offer templates. The rumours of the Civil Wars are rather closer, but the sources common to the different versions of the story we have in Livy and others suggest that it was not invented at such a late date.⁷⁸ It is an odd story to invent, and it is not at all implausible in the context of central Italy in the early fourth century BC. Rome and Veii were in fact closely linked by migration, and we know of Latins present in Veii as early as the seventh century BC.⁷⁹ Ironically, massive state-sanctioned Roman migration to Veii followed shortly, as the lands were divided up for virgane settlers who were enrolled in four new tribes in 387 BC.

This proposal is therefore much more plausible than scholars have allowed. It occurred repeatedly, and was only resisted with difficulty. Again the narrative fits into a pattern of potential plebeian mobility, showing a distinct willingness to abandon the city for better options.

CONCLUSION

Mobility is a well established feature of the elite of central Italy in the Orientalising and Archaic periods. In addition, it is becoming increasingly evident that this mobility affected a wide range of social levels, and continued well into the republican period. In terms of Roman history, most studies have examined this phenomenon in the context of the Roman monarchy and first decade of the Republic, with less emphasis on the fifth century BC. This may be due to the way the literary sources begin to categorise migration movements in anachronistic terms such as *colonia*. Thus obvious movements in and out of Rome like Tarquinius Priscus, Attus Clausus, and Coriolanus no longer crop up after the first few decades of the early Republic, as they are probably subsumed by the sources into more ‘official’ types of movement. It is thus difficult to determine whether private movement came to an end or the terminology of our sources has changed.⁸⁰

Episodes like the secessions and the putative move to Veii are manifestations of this mobility, without its full realisation. The threat of migrating away from Rome, even to an ‘enemy’ community, must have been real. It was the result of very severe grievances on the part of the plebeians, who had little to lose – or who, at least, thought that the benefits of such

⁷⁸ A fragment of Ennius (*Annals* 154-5 Skutsch) has been linked to the speech of Camillus, but there is considerable debate over whether this is the correct context (Elliott [2013] 65).

⁷⁹ See the *Tite Latine* (‘Titus Latinus’) buried in Veii in the late seventh century: Ampolo (1976-7) 342.

⁸⁰ This shift in emphasis may also be due to the change in the sources Livy and others were using, from material of essentially oral derivation to material with a documentary basis.

a move would outweigh the costs. A memory of this potential is retained in our sources, even if we are unable to identify the precise means of its preservation. The threat of secession was only averted by the patrician element of the Senate making very substantial concessions on each occasion, showing how central Italian elites were forced to compromise politically in the face of these movements to maintain the integrity of the state. It thus helps us to understand how the elites of these states, themselves a product of mobility, might attempt to control or curtail mobility to prevent the potential fission of the community and a subsequent catastrophic loss of manpower. Ampolo has talked of the tension between the rationalisation of the state that was characteristic of the later monarchy and the centrifugal forces of mobile warrior bands, and a similar tension also seems characteristic of the plebeian struggle.⁸¹ Restraining these movements requires innovative political solutions that create unique institutions, such as the plebeian tribunate with its broad powers and freedom of action.⁸² Following Woolf, we can see the formation of states as a history of ‘enclosure’, although this does not come about without cost to the hegemonic elite.⁸³

This scenario also raises some fascinating questions about the nature of Rome’s central Italian milieu, inter-state relations, and ethnicity. It prompts us to ask how strong these early Italian states really were, and how well defined their ‘enemies’ were. For example, Gaius Claudius, the uncle of the Decemvir Appius Claudius, is said to have returned to his ancestral city of Regillum in 450 BC despite the intervening Sabine Wars (Livy 3.58.1): rather than a situation of generalised ethnic conflict, it seems more likely that there was war between Rome and certain Sabine towns, and frequent shifts of alliances. It also raises the issue of how applicable concepts like ‘migrant’ and ‘foreign’ are in a central Italian environment where movement was so easy. These terms presuppose modern-style borders and boundaries, but this has been questioned in both historical and archaeological studies. Medieval historians have shown how the idea of linear frontiers only gradually emerged in medieval Europe.⁸⁴ Archaeologists such as Lightfoot and Martinez have critiqued the idealising ‘concept of frontier borders in which relatively homogenous groups are divided by sharp boundaries as depicted in ethnographic maps of tribal areas and colonial territories’. They go on to ‘question the assumption that discrete social units, tightly bounded in space and time, should be visible in most frontier contexts’.⁸⁵ Thus we need a new terminological vocabulary and new set of models

⁸¹ Ampolo (1988b) 238.

⁸² On the tribunate see now Lanfranchi (2015).

⁸³ Woolf (2016).

⁸⁴ See n. 18 above.

⁸⁵ Lightfoot and Martinez (1995).

to understand the situation in archaic Rome.⁸⁶ We should also situate Roman history more profoundly in its wider central Italian context, which has long been obscured by the Romanocentricity of the literary tradition.

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⁸⁶ E.g. Marchesini (2007) 126-9, who sees Rome as part of an Etrusco-Italic 'macroethnos', or the suggestion of Potts (2015) 120, that cities like Rome are less frontier societies and more a type of 'middle ground'.

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