

LUCIUS POSTUMIUS MEGELLUS AT GABII: A NEW FRAGMENT OF LIVY*

The chance discovery of a fragment of parchment has substantially enriched the literary tradition on the Third Samnite War. It deals with an episode in 291 B.C., when the consul Lucius Postumius Megellus ordered his soldiers to carry out work on his estate. The importance of the fragment lies especially in Side A, which tells us that the estate was situated not far from the town of Gabii, a piece of information that is lacking in the other sources.

At Gabii, in the archaic period, there were at least four cult areas, one extra-urban.¹ The sacredness of Gabii and its territory is also attested in the literary sources. A passage of Varro shows that the *ager Gabinus* had a special status between those of *ager Romanus* and *ager peregrinus*: *Gabinus (ager) quoque peregrinus, sed quod auspicia habet singularia ab reliquo discretus* (*Ling.* 5.33). Even if it is not possible to define exactly the particular nature of the auspices of Gabii, it is clear that the territory had a special position in augural doctrine.²

The fragment in question, then, deals both with an obscure period in the history of Rome and with a city that played a crucial role in Roman religion. It is precisely this combination that justifies further discussion of it. The reference to Gabii is important for a number of reasons: first, the geomorphology of the *ager Gabinus* clarifies some details, otherwise obscure, in the other literary sources; second, the presence of Roman private property near a Latin town raises the question of the structure of the territory close to Rome, in the context of the relentless expansion of Rome; finally, the consul's order to two thousand soldiers to work on his land raises a number of issues, other than the traditional one of the abuse of authority, issues sharpened by the location of the incident.

THE FRAGMENT

The fragment was found in 1986, in the medieval monastic centre of Naqlun, near the oasis of the Faiyum. It belonged to a Latin codex and contains, on both sides, remains of two columns of uncial Latin script, which can be dated to the fifth century A.D. The text was published within two years by Benedetto Bravo and Miriam Griffin, who proposed the identification of the fragment with a part of a historical work, probably Book 11 of Livy.³ Later studies of the fragment by Palmer and Vinchesi confirmed the attribution of the text.⁴

*I should like to thank Professor G. Clemente and Professor M. H. Crawford for their comments on an earlier version of this article.

¹ Situated outside the walls is a sanctuary, an archaic votive deposit (L. Caretta, E. De Carolis, G. Gazzetti, and A. Malizia, *Gabii: Rinvenimenti di superficie nell'area della città* [Rome, 1978], 34), the so-called sanctuary of Juno, and a cult area immediately to the south of the built-up area: see M. Guaitoli, 'Gabii. Osservazioni sulle fasi di sviluppo dell'abitato', *QITA* 9 (1981), 50, fig. 17.

² P. Catalano, 'Aspetti spaziali del sistema giuridico-religioso romano. Mundus, templum, urbs, ager, Latium, Italia', *ANRW* 2.16.1 (1978), 440–553, esp. 494–5.

³ B. Bravo and M. Griffin, 'Un frammento del libro XI di Tito Livio?', *Athenaeum* 66 (1988), 447–521.

⁴ R. E. A. Palmer, 'A new fragment of Livy throws light on the Roman Postumii and Latin

The fragment, readable on both sides, reports two different episodes. The text is restored by Bravo as follows:

A		
col. I		col. II
1	[- - - - -]].e(m)	p[
2	[- - - - -] ing]ens	n[
3	[ei era]n[ha[u]t pro-	c.[
4	[cul G]abiis [u]rbe. cu(m)	ce[
5	[Ga]uios nouos exer-	u.[
6	[cit]us indictus	
7	[e]sset ibique cen-	
8	turiati milites es-	u[
9	sent, cum duob(us)	h[
10	milib(us) pe[{}]}]ditum	
11	profect[u]s in agru(m)	.[
12	suom cons[ul? 1-2 lett.]	o[
B		
col. I		+ col. II
1	]i	g[- - - - -]
2	]ui	ar[- - - - -]
3	]e	se[d] reaps[e nega-]
4	]cas	tam eo[[e]]dicto f[ac-]
5	]e	turum quoa[d in-]
6		iussu suo in pr[oui(n)-]
7		cia maneat, et [si]
8	].ā	pergat dicto non
9	]nus	parer[e], \[s]e/[i]n praese(n)-
10		tem hābiturum
11	]..	imper[i]um. Fabius,
12	]i	[acc]eptis mandā- [tis - - - - -]

A.I.3 *ha[u]t*: that is *haud*.

A.I.5 *Ga]uios*: that is *Gabios*.

B.II.10 *hābiturum*: probably the correct form is *inhibiturum*.

Translation of Side A

. . . [he owned - - - -] not far from the town of Gabii. Since it was at Gabii that the new army had been ordered to assemble and since it was there that the soldiers had been organized in centuries, (the consul?) set out with two thousand foot soldiers for his own estate.⁵

Translation of Side B

. . . that he will be doing . . . as long as he remains in the *provincia* without his authorization; and that, if he continues to disobey, he will exercise his *imperium* against him, in person. Fabius when he received these orders . . .

Gabii', *Athenaeum* 78 (1990), 5–18; for M. A. Vinchesi, 'Notizia su un probabile frammento di Tito Livio', *A&R* 35 (1990), 176–82, elements of the language such as *haud procul Gabiis urbe*, frequently used by Livy, especially at the beginning of a new story (*haud procul* + the name of the town + *urbe*), confirm the attribution. The other sources are conveniently collected in M. R. Torelli, *Rerum Romanarum Fontes ab an. 292 ad an. 265 a.C.* (Pisa, 1978), 43–5.

⁵ Bravo and Griffin (n. 3), 496.

A comparison between the text of the fragment and the other sources allowed Griffin to identify the two episodes referred to in the fragment with events of the Third Samnite War, specifically the actions of Postumius Megellus during his third consulship in 291 B.C. The sources in question are a long *excerptum* of the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus,⁶ an *excerptum* of Cassius Dio,⁷ a passage of the *Periocha* of the eleventh book of Livy,⁸ and an entry in the *Suda*.⁹ The first episode involves the Latin town of Gabii as a theatre of military activity: a new army had been ordered to assemble there and organized in centuries, and probably from there a contingent of two thousand soldiers left for the estate, maybe of a consul, located near Gabii.¹⁰ Side B is the final part of a message reported in *oratio obliqua* and sent to a Fabius. As well as locating the estate, the author also specifies that the soldiers were *pedites*.¹¹

THE CONSUL'S ESTATE

The fragment reports that the contingent of soldiers was marching *in agrum suum*, while the *Periocha* of Livy gives the same information, *in agro suo*; but the text of the fragment, in the first and second line, is incomplete. What came before the sentence [- - - *ing]ens [ei era]nt ha[u]t pro[cul G]abiis [u]rbe*, according to Bravo's

⁶ Dion. Hal. 17/18.4.1–6, 5.1–4, 17/18.4.3: *καὶ ἕτερον αὐτῆς ἐπὶ τούτῳ βαρύτερον ἢ ὡς κατὰ Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμόνα ἐπιλεξάμενος γὰρ ἐκ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ στρατιᾶς περὶ τοὺς δισχιλίους ἄνδρας εἰς τοὺς ἰδίους ἀγροὺς ἀπήγαγεν, οἷς ἄνευ σιδήρου δρυμὸν ἐκέλευσε κείρειν καὶ μέχρι πολλοῦ κατέσχε τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς θητῶν ἔργα καὶ θεραπόντων ὑπηρετούντας.* 'And on top of it came another action that was too offensive for a Roman commander. He chose, namely, about two thousand men out of his army, and taking them to his own estate, ordered them to cut down a thicket without iron; and for a long time he kept the men on his estate performing the tasks of labourers and slaves' (ed. Loeb VII 335, slightly revised).

⁷ Dio, 8 fr. 36.32: *Ὅτι οἱ . . . στρατιῶται μετὰ Ποστούμιον ἐξελθόντες κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν τε ἐνόσησαν καὶ ἐδόκουν διὰ τὴν τοῦ ἄλλοις τομῆν ποιεῖσθαι. ἐπ' οὖν τούτοις ἀνακληθεῖς ἐν ὀλυγοῦρῳ κἀνταῦθα αὐτοὺς ἐποίησατο λέγων οὐκ ἑαυτοῦ τὴν βουλὴν ἀλλ' ἐκείνης αὐτὸν ἄρχειν.* 'The soldiers . . . after setting out with Postumius fell sick on the way, and it was thought their trouble was due to the felling of the grove. Postumius was recalled for these reasons, but showed contempt for them [the senators?] even at this juncture, declaring that the senate was not his master but that he was the master of the senate' (ed. Loeb I 287).

⁸ *Perioch.* 11: *L. Postumius consularis, quoniam, cum exercitui praeesset, opera militum in agro suo usus erat, damnatus est.* 'The consular Lucius Postumius was convicted of having used the labour of soldiers on his own land when in command of the army' (ed. Loeb IV 547).

⁹ *Suidae Lexicon*, s.v. *Ποστόμιος ὕπατος*, 4.180, n. 2118 (ed. Adler, Leipzig, 1935): . . . *ἐπιλεξάμενος γὰρ ἐκ τῆς στρατιᾶς περὶ τοὺς δισχιλίους ἄνδρας εἰς τοὺς ἰδίους ἀγροὺς ἀπήγαγεν, οἷς ἄνευ σιδήρου δρυμὸν ἐκέλευσε κείρειν καὶ κατέσχε τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς, θητῶν ἔργα καὶ θεραπόντων ὑπηρετούντας.* 'He chose, namely, about two thousand men out of army, and taking them to his own estate, ordered them to cut down a thicket without iron; and he kept the men on his estate performing the tasks of labourers and slaves.'

¹⁰ In A.I.4 one can read with enough probability the name of the Latin town *G]abiis* (Stefan Meyer in Bravo and Griffin [n. 3], 473–4); while in the following line A.I.5 [*Ga]uios* instead of *Gabios* is a banal spelling variant.

¹¹ Maybe the soldiers used by Postumius were troops of the previous consul Junius Brutus, as seems to emerge from the restoration of the lacunose portion of the fragment of Cassius Dio (8 fr. 36.32: *Ὅτι οἱ . . . στρατιῶται μετὰ Ποστούμιον ἐξελθόντες*). The ten letters between *οἱ* and *στρατιῶται* are illegible in the palimpsest codex; Angelo Mai's conjecture *οἱ σὺν τῷ Ἰουλίῳ στρατιῶται ἅμα τῷ Ποστούμιῳ* is too long; while U. Ph. Boissevain's restoration is more probable, in his edition of Cassius Dio (Berlin, 1895), *οἱ τοῦ Ἰουλίου στρατιῶται σὺν Ποστούμιῳ* (I.109), even if instead of *σὺν* + dative I would prefer to leave *μετὰ Ποστούμιου*, following E. Cary in the Loeb edition.

restoration, may be an expression such as *villa et ager* or, as Griffin suggested, *ager et saltus*.¹² The latter is more probable, because it is a frequent combination in Livy.¹³ Moreover it fits better with the accounts of Dionysius, Dio, and the *Suda*, because they report tree-felling on the estate, which would imply the existence of a woodland area to which the word *saltus* could allude. In fact Dionysius and the *Suda*, which repeats Dionysius almost word for word, mention a *δρυμός*, that is a wood; while Cassius Dio with the word *ἄλλος* alludes to the existence of a *lucus*.¹⁴ Given that the word *lucus*, etymologically linked to *lux*, must mean originally not ‘sacred wood’, but ‘sacred glade’, artificially created by human intervention inside a wood (*nemus* or *silva*),¹⁵ the difference between Dionysius’ *δρυμός* and Dio’s *ἄλλος* suggests that the consul’s estate included a woodland area containing a *lucus*.

It is possible that, already in the third century B.C., sacred areas of the peninsula were violated in order to obtain more land, as Frontinus assumes for a later period.¹⁶ In this case, Megellus’ prohibition on the use of iron to cut down the trees, *οἷς ἄνευ σιδήρου δρυμόν ἐκέλευσε κείρειν*, seems to have been an attempt to avoid sacrilege by applying a religious rule for the maintenance of land sacred to the gods.¹⁷ From an archaic prayer, reported in the *de agricultura* of Cato,¹⁸ we know that *lucum conlucare*, which meant not simple pruning but the felling of trees in order to create a *lucus*, had to be preceded by an expiatory sacrifice, to appease the gods, to whom the plants, disturbed by this operation, were sacred.¹⁹ In the acts of the *Fratres Arvales* we find the description of a sacrifice to Dea Dia to expiate the periodic intrusion of those who worked on the maintenance of the sacred wood²⁰ and the necessary introduction of iron tools.²¹ Using this metal was normally forbidden, because it was considered taboo

¹² Bravo and Griffin (n. 3), 474.

¹³ Vinchesi (n. 4), 181.

¹⁴ Stephanus, *TLG* I.1581–2, s.v. ἄλλος.

¹⁵ F. Coarelli, ‘I *luci* del Lazio: la documentazione archeologica’, in *Les Bois sacrés*, Collection du Centre Jean Bérard 10 (Naples, 1993), 47–8. *Contra* I. Cazzaniga, ‘Lucus a non lucendo’, *SCO* 21 (1972), 27–9, who, in a discussion of the connection between *lucus* and *lux*, presents instead the etymological solution *lucus a non lucendo*.

¹⁶ *De controversiis* 56.19 Th. = 87.19 La.: *in Italia autem densitas possessorum multum improbe facit et lucos sacros occupat*.

¹⁷ Smit (ed. Loeb VII 334) wants to evade the problem created by ἄνευ σιδήρου by removing the phrase from the text, but this is misguided. On the sacredness of the wood, see F. Münzer in *RE* XXII.1 (1953), *Postumius* 55 (cc. 935–41), c. 939, who underlines how such offences against human and divine laws are frequent in annalistic accounts of unpopular commanders.

¹⁸ Cato, *Agr.* 139: *lucum conlucare Romano more sic oportet: porco piaculo facito, sic verba concipito: si deus, si dea est quoium illud sacrum est, uti tibi ius est porco piaculo facere illiusce sacri coercendi ergo harumque rerum ergo . . . si fodere velis, altero piaculo eodem modo facito, hoc amplius dicito: ‘operis faciundi causa’.*

¹⁹ On the Italic cult of trees and woods, sometimes identified with the god to whom they were dedicated, see G. Stara-Tedde, ‘I boschi sacri dell’antica Roma’, *BCAR* 33 (1905), 189–232; id., ‘Ricerche sulla evoluzione del culto degli alberi dal principio del sec. IV in poi’, *BCAR* 35 (1907), 129–81. On the definition of a sacred wood, see J. Scheid, ‘*Lucus, nemus*: Qu’est-ce qu’un bois sacré?’, in *Les Bois sacrés* (n. 15), 13–20; C. Otto, ‘Lat. *Lucus, nemus* “bois sacré” et les deux formes de sacralité chez les Latins’, *Latomus* 59 (2000), 3–7.

²⁰ On the topography of the *lucus deae Diae*, see J. Scheid, *Romulus et ses Frères. Le Collège des Frères Arvales, modèle du culte public dans la Rome des Empereurs*, BEFAR 275 (Rome, 1990), 95–182; for the terminology used to define the maintenance of a sacred wood, that is *lucum coinquere, opus facere*, see H. Broise and J. Scheid, ‘Etude d’un cas: le *lucus deae Diae* à Rome’, in *Les Bois sacrés* (n. 15), 145–57.

²¹ J. Scheid, *Commentarii Fratrum Arvalium qui supersunt* (Rome, 1998), n. 94, col. III, lines 19–20, etc. *Ov. Met.* 8.741–2: *Ille etiam Cereale nemus violasse securi / Dicitur et lucos ferro temerasse vetustos*.

in early Roman religion:²² the sensitivity of the metal to magnetism seemed to hide supernatural properties.²³ The non-use of iron presumably meant the use of another material, such as bronze.²⁴ The consul had perhaps acquired land including a sacred wood, but one that was not under the control of a town or of a sanctuary, with an abandoned *lucus* so overgrown that the trees, which should have bordered it, had now encroached on the open space. One possibility is that Postumius, respecting tradition, wished to restore a sacred area on his estate. On the other hand it is possible that he wanted to use the labour of his soldiers to clear the wood and use the land for agriculture.

The extra-urban sanctuary to the east of Gabii,²⁵ which was in use by the end of the seventh century B.C. or the beginning of the sixth and then abandoned during the mid-second century B.C.,²⁶ lies along the road to Tibur, towards the Fosso di S. Giuliano. The presence of mineral springs suggests a cult linked to health-giving waters,²⁷ but the material in the votive deposit (sitting couples, small babies) suggests rather a goddess of childbirth.²⁸ The identification of the god of a second sanctuary has been much discussed too. The temple in question lies on a rise on the south side of the Lago di Castiglione, near the via Prenestina, in a strategic position in the centre of the network of roads of archaic Latium. The discovery of an antefix with the inscription IVN (*Iunonis*) seems to confirm the attribution of the sanctuary to Juno.²⁹ The sanctuary

²² E. E. Burris, *Taboo, Magic, Spirit. A Study of Primitive Elements in Roman Religion* (New York, 1931), 114–19, 202–12. On the taboos on the use of iron, see J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*, II, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul* (London, 1911), 225–36. On the religious consequences of this prohibition, see E. De Ruggiero, *Dizionario epigrafico* IV (Rome, 1964), s.v. *lucus*, 1970ff.

²³ M. Cary and A. D. Nock, 'Magic spears', *CQ* 21 (1927), 125–7.

²⁴ Among the farm tools used for a vineyard, Cato (*Agr.* 11.4) reports rush-hooks (*falces sirpiculae*), tree-hooks (*falces silvaticae*), and pruning-hooks (*falces arborariae*), probably the equipment used by Postumius' *milites*.

²⁵ F. Castagnoli, 'Santuari e culti nel Lazio arcaico', *Archeologia Laziale* 3 (1980), 164–7; M. Guaitoli, 'Gabii', *PP* 36 (1981), 152–73; M. Guaitoli and P. Zaccagni, 'Scavi e scoperte 3. Gabii', *StEtr* 45 (1977), 434–6.

²⁶ The rebuilding, during the second century B.C., of the so-called sanctuary of Juno, perhaps before that period a simple *sacellum*, dating back to the end of the sixth century B.C., eliminates the importance of the extra-urban sanctuary. See Guaitoli (n. 25), 154–6; F. Coarelli, *I santuari del Lazio in età repubblicana* (Rome, 1987), 11–21; L. Quilici, 'Gabii', in M. Cristofani (ed.), *La Grande Roma dei Tarquini* (Rome, 1990), 159–63.

²⁷ The function of wells intercepting water-bearing strata with probable therapeutic qualities had already been pointed out by P. Zaccagni, 'Gabii. La città antica ed il territorio', *Archeologia Laziale* 1 (1978), 44. Moreover that the area was linked to the cult of gods of health may be confirmed by the fact that, at the IX mile of the via Prenestina, near Gabii, is reported the presence of a sanctuary linked to gods of health, flourishing in the third-second century B.C.: T. Potter, 'A Republican healing sanctuary at Ponte di Nona', *JBAA* 138 (1985), 23–47.

²⁸ The literary sources do not help, because Livy mentions an archaic temple at Gabii, struck by lightning in 176 B.C., but dedicated to Apollo (41.16). On the cults of Gabii, see RE VII.1 (1910), *Gabii* cc. 420–2 (Weiss); besides the cult of Apollo there was also the cult of *Iuno Gabina* mentioned by Virgil (*Aen.* 8.682) and Silius Italicus (12.537), and the cult of *Venus Vera Felix Gabina*, confirmed by an inscription (CIL XIV.2793) and recently related by F. Coarelli, *Dintorni di Roma* (Bari, 1980), 171–2 to the same cult of *Iuno Gabina*.

²⁹ M. Almagro Gorbea, *El santuario de Juno en Gabii, Excavaciones 1956–1969*, Monografía de la Escuela Esp. de Hist. y Arqueol. 17 (Rome, 1982), 581–624, esp. 595; id., 'Il tempio cosiddetto di Giunone Gabina: situazione attuale dello studio', in *Archeologia Laziale* 3 (1980), 168–71; id., 'L'area del tempio di Giunone Gabina nel VI–V secolo a.C.', in *Archeologia Laziale* 4 (1981), 297–304, esp. 302. The presence of votive materials symbolizing beasts of burden, such as oxen and bulls, in the temple, tends to identify *Iuno Gabina* as a goddess of agriculture, according to C. Lega, 'Topografia dei culti delle divinità protettrici dell'agricoltura e del lavoro dei campi nel

was apparently frequented from the end of the ninth century B.C.; at the end of the sixth century a *sacellum* was added, subsequently restored and enlarged certainly during the second century. In the excavations of the sanctuary, an open area, perhaps a grove, was discovered:³⁰ the cavities for the trees, perfectly preserved, are visible in the tufa.³¹ An irrigation system was also visible, with a big tank cut in the rock behind the temple and entry points at the two sides; there was also an isolated hole behind the temple, perhaps for a sacred tree, existing from the first phase of the sanctuary and religiously preserved for centuries.

This discovery perhaps confirms the suggestion that Postumius' property included a *lucus*. Moreover the use of two thousand men, if compared with the small number of labourers suggested by Cato for an olive grove or a vineyard, makes probable the hypothesis that Postumius' estate was large.³²

From the literary tradition, combined with what we know of the area of Gabii, we can make a further inference about his estate. Cassius Dio reports that the soldiers became ill. It is very probable that the extended stay of the legionaries in marshy and maybe unhealthy places caused an epidemic. Although Gabii itself lay on high ground, the surrounding area includes the marsh of the Pantano Borghese. Archaeological surveys in the *ager Gabinus* have revealed tunnels for water drainage,³³ and a complex system of drainage, dating back to the mid-Republican period, has also been found in two excavations in the *ager Gabinus*.³⁴

The location of Postumius' estate near the town of Gabii is perhaps not unexpected: there were close connections from the fifth century B.C. between the *gens Postumia*, with its interest in Greek cults,³⁵ and the territory of Gabii, famous for its Greek culture,³⁶ as well as for its importance in the augural field, although we do not know when any member of the *gens* got possession of land in the *ager Gabinus*.³⁷

Such possession, however, also recalls the critical phases of the early history of Roman colonization: Cassola has suggested that in the archaic period colonization was an activity of the *gens* and the *ager* acquired by an aristocratic group was colonized

suburbio di Roma', in S. Quilici Gigli, *Agricoltura e commerci nell'Italia antica*, ed. L. Quilici, Atlante tematico di Topografia antica, Suppl. I (Rome, 1995), 120–1.

³⁰ Coarelli (n. 15), 48–52.

³¹ Coarelli (n. 26), 16–20; Almagro Gorbea (n. 29), 52–7, 589–91. H. Lauter, in 'Ein Tempelgarten?', *AA* (1968), 628–31, had noted this circumstance, but thought of the area as the garden of a Hellenistic temple.

³² Cato, *Agr.* 10. An olive grove of 240 iugera (60 hectares) needed 13 labourers to maintain it, while a group of 16 labourers was necessary for a vineyard of 100 iugera (25 hectares). The use of 2,000 soldiers is, therefore, remarkable.

³³ S. Musco, C. Morelli, and M. Brucchiotti, 'Ager Gabinus: note di topografia storica', *Archeologia Laziale* 12.1 (1995), 284.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 287ff.

³⁵ See L. Monaco, 'La *gens Postumia* nella prima repubblica. Origini e politiche', in G. Franciosi (ed.), *Ricerche sulla organizzazione gentilizia romana III* (Naples, 1995), 267–98.

³⁶ In 466 B.C. a Sp. Postumius dedicated the temple of *Dius Fidius Semo Sancus*, where the treaty of *isopoliteia* between Gabii and Rome was kept. On Gabii in the archaic period, see E. Peruzzi, 'Romolo e le lettere greche', *PP* 24 (1969), 161–89; revised in id., *Origini di Roma II* (Bologna, 1973), 9–53; id., 'Grecità del Lazio preromano', in id., *Civiltà greca nel Lazio preromano* (Florence, 1998), 165–77.

³⁷ There are no grounds for the date of 338 B.C. suggested by Palmer (n. 4), 5, on the basis of a corrupt passage of Macrobius (*Sat.* 3.9.13); Palmer also, like the Loeb edition, clearly mistranslates Dion. Hal. 17/18.4.1, which refers to the succession to the consulship, not to hereditary succession.

directly by this group.³⁸ This idea is very probable and agrees with Cornell's interpretation of Roman warfare in the archaic period.³⁹ The *gens Postumia* and its long-standing interest in the *ager Gabinus* may form part of this pattern.

A *venditio quaestoria* is probable for Gabii, as happened in 290 B.C. in the territory of Cures Sabini, after the conquest of the Sabina;⁴⁰ a well-known fragment of Fabius Pictor also suggests a radical change in Roman society in this period.⁴¹ In the particular case of Postumius, his kinsman's defeat at the Caudine Forks in 321 B.C.,⁴² and his own difficulties over his triumph at the end of his earlier consulship in 294 B.C., may have led him to put ambition before scruple (Liv. *Epit.* 10.37.6–12). The economic development of the area of Gabii in general emerges from the discovery of a country villa, the first phase of which dates to the beginning of the third century B.C.⁴³ Unfortunately, epigraphic documentation, completely absent in the area of the excavation, does not allow us to identify the owners.⁴⁴

THE CONSUL'S BEHAVIOUR

In due course, according to the *Epitomae* of Livy, Postumius was convicted for using the labour of his soldiers during his consulship. Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the *Suda* also insist on the gravity of his action, while Cassius Dio reports that Postumius was recalled by the senate, because of the illness of his soldiers after cutting down the wood. Only Dionysius of Halicarnassus records that Postumius was condemned in the *comitia tributa* to pay a large fine.⁴⁵

³⁸ F. Cassola, 'Aspetti sociali e politici della colonizzazione', *DArch* ser. 3, 6.2 (1988), 15–17; F. Coarelli, 'Colonizzazione e municipalizzazione: tempi e modi', *DArch* ser. 3, 10.1–2 (1992), 21–30.

³⁹ T. J. Cornell, 'Rome and Latium to 390 a.C.', in *CAH* VII.2, (Cambridge, 1989), 243–308, esp. 274–94; M. H. Crawford, 'La storia della colonizzazione romana secondo i Romani', in A. Storch Marino (ed.), *L'incidenza dell'antico. Studi in memoria di E. Lepore I* (Naples, 1995), 187–92.

⁴⁰ Sicul. Flacc. *De condic. agr.* 102.35–104.3 Ca. = 100.8–13 Th. = 136.14–19 La.; 118.26–120.17 Ca. = 116.20–118.10 Th. = 152.23–153.23 La.; *Liber Coloniarum II* 192.19–21 Ca. = 253.17–19 La.; Hygin. *De condic. agr.* 82.23–30 Ca = 78.18–79.4 Th. = 115.15–116.4 La. On the division of the *ager Sabinus*, see E. Gabba, 'Per un'interpretazione storica della centuriazione romana', *Athenaeum* 63 (1985), 265–84, esp. 268–70; M. P. Muzzioli, 'Note sull'*ager quaestorius* nel territorio di *Cures Sabini*', *RAL* ser. 8, 30 (1975), 223–30; ead., *Cures Sabini, Forma Italiae, Regio IV, 2* (Florence, 1980), 37–41; ead., 'Cures Sabini', in *Misurare la terra: centuriazione e coloni nel mondo romano. Città, agricoltura, commercio: materiali da Roma e dal suburbio* (Modena, 1985), 48–53.

⁴¹ Strabo, 5.3.1 = fr. 20 Peter = *FGH* 809 F 27. On the fragment, see E. Gabba, 'Ricchezza e classe dirigente romana fra II e I sec. a.C.', *RSI* 92 (1981), 543; id., 'Riflessioni sulla società romana fra III e II secolo a.C.', *Athenaeum* 64 (1986), 472–4, repr. in id., *Del buon uso della ricchezza. Saggi di storia economica e sociale del mondo antico* (Milan, 1988), 45–8. *Contra* W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327–70 B.C.* (Oxford, 1979), 65–7, 264–5.

⁴² Palmer (n. 5), 12.

⁴³ Site G 11, according to the numbering of A. Kahane and J. Ward Perkins, 'The Via Gabina', *PBSR* 40 (1972), 91–126. For the excavations, see M. Aylwin Cotton, 'Una villa ed un grande edificio romani lungo la via Gabina', *Archeologia Laziale* 2 (1979), 82–5. See W. M. Widrig, 'Land use at the Via Gabina villas', in E. B. Macdougall (ed.), *Ancient Roman Villa Gardens*, *Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture* 10 (Washington, DC, 1987), 223–60, esp. 227.

⁴⁴ I thank Professor M. G. Granino Cecere, responsible for the updating of *CIL* XIV, for information on the epigraphic data from the *ager Gabinus*. Unfortunately in that area there is no epigraphic evidence of the presence of the *gens Postumia*, even in the Imperial age.

⁴⁵ Dion. Hal., 17–18.5.4: *κατηγορηθεὶς ἐν τῷ δήμῳ πάσαις ταῖς φυλαῖς κατακρίνεται, τίμημα τῆς εἰσαγγελίας ἐχούσης χρηματικὸν πέντε μυριάδας ἀργυρίου.*

Modern historians offer different opinions on the indictment and on the date of the trial. For Mommsen, the reason for the conviction lies only in the use of the labour of the soldiers for private purposes;⁴⁶ Bruno, on the other hand, prefers to follow the hostile account of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who connects the indictment with a series of despotic acts carried out by Postumius during his consulship.⁴⁷

It is very probable that the trial was in 290 B.C., at the end of Postumius' third consulship. Livy also reports that in 293 B.C., after his second consulship (in 294), there was another summons.⁴⁸ This is evidently a doublet, typical of annalistic accounts; no reason is given for the first supposed indictment and, immediately after, Livy himself reports that no trial took place. The year 293 B.C. is also less probable, because Megellus was subsequently elected consul for 291.⁴⁹

The episode of 291 B.C. is mentioned by Cassola as an example of disagreement between consul and senate, along with others in which Postumius claimed the supremacy of the consular *imperium*.⁵⁰ To the accusation of abuse of authority *vis-à-vis* the soldiers, the consul answered that the senate did not rule over him, but he over it,⁵¹ using words similar to those Dionysius attributes to him on another occasion.⁵² All this shows that his rebellious behaviour against the senate left a deep mark on the tradition. In his refusal to accept the supremacy of the senate, Postumius showed how tenaciously he was attached to the archaic concept of power, based on the principle that the holder of *imperium* represented the state. The use of two thousand legionaries was an action typical of patrician behaviour in the past; Postumius, as a member of a conservative nobility, took it for granted, but the new *nobilitas*, after a long process of evolution, could no longer act in such way.

On the use of the soldiers, Dionysius accuses the consul of arrogance and specifies that the soldiers were kept at Gabii for a long time and made to work like retainers and slaves.⁵³ Gabba sees the episode as symptomatic of a time of transition, when *nexum* had been abolished and the nature of clientage was changing, but slavery was not yet widespread. He suggests that Postumius treated his soldiers as if they were old-style *clientes*.⁵⁴ Traditionally clients had been obliged to do *operae*, that is days of work, for

⁴⁶ T. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht* II.1, (Leipzig, 1887³), 321.

⁴⁷ B. Bruno, 'La terza guerra sannitica', in *Studi di storia antica pubblicati da Giulio Beloch* 6 (Rome, 1906), 87–9, 102.

⁴⁸ Liv. 10.46.16: *Favor consulis tutatus ad populum est L. Postumius legatum eius, qui dicta die a M. Scantio tribuno plebis fugerat legatione, ut fama ferebat, populi iudicium; iactarique magis quam peragi accusatio eius poterat*. Postumius, in fact, to avoid the trial brought by the tribune Marcus Scantius supposedly agreed to become a legate of Sp. Carvilius in 293 B.C. during the siege of Cominium.

⁴⁹ So Bruno (n. 47), 88, n. 3.

⁵⁰ F. Cassola, *I gruppi politici romani nel III sec. A.C.* (Trieste, 1962), 194–8. On the disagreement between Postumius and the senate, see L. Loreto, *Un'epoca di buon senso. Decisione, consenso e stato a Roma tra il 326 e il 264 a.C.* (Amsterdam, 1993), 121–2, 184, and id., 'Sui meccanismi della lotta politica a Roma tra il 314 e il 294 a.C. Considerazioni su quattro casi', *AFLM* 24 (1991), 61–76, esp. 74.

⁵¹ Dio, 8 fr. 36.32: *λέγων οὐκ ἑαυτοῦ τὴν βουλήν ἀλλ' ἐκείνης αὐτὸν ἄρχειν*. 'Declaring that the senate was not his master but that he was the master of the senate' (ed. Loeb I 287).

⁵² Dion. Hal. 17/18.4.5: *οὐ τὴν βουλήν ἄρχειν ἑαυτοῦ φήσας, ἕως ἐστὶν ὑπατος, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν τῆς βουλῆς*. 'Declaring that the senate did not govern him, so long as he was consul, but that he governed the senate' (ed. Loeb VII 335–7).

⁵³ Dion. Hal. 17/18.4.3: *πρώτον μὲν δὴ τοῦτο διαβολὴν ἤνεγκε τῷ Ποστομίῳ κατὰ πολλὴν ἀθθάδειαν γεινόμενον, καὶ ἕτερον ἀθθις ἐπὶ τούτῳ βαρύτερον ἢ ὡς κατὰ Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμόνα*.

⁵⁴ E. Gabba, 'La società romana fra III e IV secolo', in *Storia di Roma*. II.1. *L'impero mediterraneo* (Turin, 1990), 9–11.

their *patronus*,⁵⁵ just like *nexi*, who were subjected to their creditor and paid off their debt with days of work.⁵⁶ Such exploitation, typical of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., was still in use in the third century when an alternative and equally effective system had not yet been fully developed. The continued existence of forms of forced labour, imposed on free men, would suggest that the Roman nobility was opposed to abandoning deep-rooted attitudes to dependent labour. Scullard observes that at the beginning of the third century B.C. the constant spread of large aristocratic estates made possible the extension of patronage, including the offer of employment and perhaps also, in some instances, grants of land.⁵⁷

The episode of 291 B.C. clearly falls in a period of social tension: although the contract of *nexum* and the personal subjection of the debtor to his creditor had been formally abolished in 326 B.C. by the *lex Poetelia Papiria*, cases of illegal usury were brought to trial in 296 B.C. (Liv. 10.23.11). In 287 B.C. a proposal for the remission of debts was opposed by the senate, giving rise to the fourth plebeian secession.⁵⁸ The secession ended with the *lex Hortensia*, which established that plebiscites were to have the force of law.⁵⁹ The dictator Quintus Hortensius managed to persuade the plebs, exhausted by debt, to leave the Janiculum.⁶⁰ It is very probable that among the citizens who had got into debt there were many small landowners who had been impoverished by the Samnite Wars.⁶¹ The increasing number of Roman citizens excluded from military service because of debt led, ten years after the episode of Postumius Megellus, to the first extraordinary recruitment of *capite censi* equipped by the state.⁶²

We could then see in the behaviour of the consul the legacy of practices characteristic of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., involving the use of a *coniuratio*, a kind of private military organization, based on the voluntary service of commanders and soldiers. At the end of the sixth century, and at least in the first years of the fifth century B.C., the battles in which Rome was involved against neighbouring peoples were often personal wars, led by members of important and influential *gentes*, who could count on the support of their armed *sodales* and *clientes*. From this point of view the centuriate reform of Servius Tullius, created to prevent the accession to power of the great aristocratic *gentes*, seems to have failed.⁶³

⁵⁵ For the duties of *clientes* towards their *patronus*, see F. De Martino, 'Clienti e condizioni materiali in Roma arcaica', in *Φιλίας χάριν. Miscellanea di studi classici in onore di E. Manni II* (Rome, 1980), 703–5.

⁵⁶ On the connection between army service and indebtedness, R. E. Mitchell, *Patricians and Plebeians. The Origin of the Roman State* (Ithaca and London, 1990), 162, suggests that the *nexi* were in reality soldiers who were *clientes* of important men, 'held captive in lieu of ransom'.

⁵⁷ H. H. Scullard, *Roman Politics 220–150 B.C.* (Oxford, 1951), 13–14. On the general trend towards larger estates, see A. J. Toynbee, *Hannibal's Legacy II* (London, 1965), 560–1.

⁵⁸ Dio, fr. 37.2; Zonar. 8.2.1. On the episode, see the sources collected in Torelli (n. 4), 69–73.

⁵⁹ On the *lex Hortensia*, see G. Rotondi, *Leges publicae populi Romani* (Milan, 1912), 238–41. On the secession, cf. L. Peppe, *Studi sull'esecuzione personale I. Debiti e debitori nei primi due secoli della repubblica romana* (Milan, 1981), 99; M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (London, 1974), 610ff.

⁶⁰ *Perioch.* 11: *Plebs propter aes alienum post graves et longas seditiones ad ultimum secessit in Ianiculum, unde a Q. Hortensio dictatore deducta est, isque in ipso magistratu decessit.*

⁶¹ On the problem of debt as the real cause of the plebeian secession, see G. Maddox, 'The economic causes of the *Lex Hortensia*', *Latomus* 42 (1983), 277–86.

⁶² *Enn. Ann.* 6.183–5 = Gell. 16.10.1; Hemina, *HRR*, I.72, fr. 21 = Non. I.93–4 Lindsay; Oros. *Hist.* 4.1.3; Aug. *De civ. D.* 3.17.

⁶³ T. J. Cornell, 'La guerra e lo stato in Roma arcaica (VII–V sec.)', in E. Campanile (ed.), *Alle origini di Roma* (Pisa, 1988), 94ff.

Many examples from the sixth and the fifth centuries B.C. show that the patriciate, as the main aristocratic group, with its gentilicial structure and client relations, was still the dominant feature of the social organization of Rome. One of these examples is the well-known slaughter of the Fabii and their *clientes* at the Cremera,⁶⁴ another the arrival in Rome of the Sabine Claudii and the occupation of land along the Anio by their *clientes* (Suet. *Tib.* 1), and a third is represented the inscription recalling a Publius Valerius and his *s(u)odales*.⁶⁵ The episode of Appius Herdonius, a Sabine soldier of fortune who in 460 B.C. tried to conquer Rome with an army of clients,⁶⁶ is also significant evidence for this type of social organization in archaic Rome, which is similarly attested in the Etruscan saga of the Vibenna brothers and their *sodalis* Mastarna.⁶⁷

If we interpret the actions of Postumius in the light of these examples, his actions are understandable. During the third century B.C. the evolution of the *nobilitas* was completed and brought radical changes in the command of the army and in the power of the senate. However, it was normal, as we can see in the episode of 291 B.C., for a more conservative part of the aristocracy to act as was typical in former centuries.⁶⁸ As Cornell has underlined, during the fifth century B.C., the governmental system of Rome was chaotic and anarchic.⁶⁹ These difficulties are clearly reflected in the traditional accounts of the plebeian secessions, the problem of debt and especially the many famines; these last in particular probably come from a reliable tradition.⁷⁰ We may perhaps assume that, just as in that period, *clientes* and *sodales* normally followed their *patronus*, their ‘commander’, in military action, so it was normal for the *patronus* to use these same people to carry out agricultural work.

It is important to notice that in the third century B.C. indebtedness of the population was still present and continued to affect military conscription of citizens. As late as 216 B.C., according to Livy and Valerius Maximus, an edict was issued that allowed insolvent debtors to enlist in the army.⁷¹ The dictator Marcus Junius Pera ordered the cancellation of the debts of all enlisted soldiers who had been subjected to their creditors after being convicted of insolvency. The edict benefited not only insolvent

⁶⁴ The number of *clientes* who supported the *gens Fabia* is recorded as 4,000 (Dion. Hal. 9.15.3) or 5,000 (Fest. s.v. *Scele<rata porta>* P 450 L; Paul. Exc. ex lib. Pomp. Festi, s.v. *Sclerata porta* P 451 L).

⁶⁵ See C. M. Stibbe, G. Colonna, C. De Simone, and H. S. Versnel, *Lapis Satricanus. Archaeological, Epigraphical, Linguistic and Historical Aspects of the New Inscription from Satricum* (Rome, 1980); also C. Ampolo, ‘La città riformata e l’organizzazione centuriata. Lo spazio, il tempo, il sacro nella nuova realtà urbana’, *Storia di Roma. I Roma in Italia* (Turin, 1988), 209.

⁶⁶ Liv. 3.15.5: *Exsules occipue, ad duo milia hominum et quingenti, duce Ap. Herdonio Sabino nocte Capitolium atque arcem occupavere.*

⁶⁷ On the Etruscan saga and its historical reliability, see T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome. Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000–264 B.C.)* (London and New York, 1995), 130–41; on the connection Mastarna–*magister populi*, see S. Mazzarino, *Dalla monarchia allo stato repubblicano: ricerche di storia romana arcaica* (Catania, 1945, repr. Milan, 1992), 175–9, 235–40.

⁶⁸ Cassola (n. 50), 197.

⁶⁹ Cornell (n. 63), 97.

⁷⁰ A. Momigliano, ‘Due punti di storia romana arcaica’, *SDHI* 2 (1936), 373–98, repr. in id., *Quarto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Roma, 1969), 329–61, now in id., *Roma arcaica* (Florence, 1989), 183–207.

⁷¹ Liv. 23.14.2–3: *dictator M. Iunius Pera . . . edixitque qui capitalem fraudem ausi quique pecuniae iudicati in vinculis essent, qui eorum apud se milites fierent, eos noxa pecuniae sese exsolvi iussurum.* Val. Max. 7.6.1: . . . *M. Iunio Pera dictatore rem publicam administrante, . . . addictorum etiam et capitali crimine damnatorum sex milia conscriberentur.*

debtors, but also men who had committed a capital offence. If they became soldiers under his command, the dictator would order their release from punishment or debt.

The indictment of Postumius Megellus for abuse of authority seems strange and forced, especially if we consider other episodes of his life as reported by Livy, who presents him as a man always observant of conventions and rules. During his second consulship, in 294 B.C., Megellus asked the senate for a triumph more as a matter of procedure and custom than in the hope of success.⁷² In the same way, he forbade the use of iron to cut down the grove, in accordance with religious convention. If Postumius was recalled and convicted, the offence must be seen not in the abuse of authority in using soldiers, which might rather reflect the normal imposition of a kind of forced labour, but in the fact that they were kept on his estates for a long time and that in the end they became ill.

Unfortunately, our sources do not tell us how many soldiers out of the two thousand died. In a period of heavy military commitment, during the Third Samnite War, any decrease in the number of soldiers would have been serious. A report of loss or temporary indisposition would have obliged the senate to seek the causes. 'It was thought their trouble was due to the felling of the grove', according to Cassius Dio, who clearly believes that the action provoked divine anger, despite the avoidance of iron tools. We may more plausibly suppose that the territory of Gabii was at that time marshy and unhealthy.⁷³

It is theoretically possible, given the number of soldiers used by Postumius, that he was also clearing *ager publicus* and applying a procedure that would become usual during the Imperial age, the use of *militēs* as labourers for Roman public works.⁷⁴ In any case his actions took place in an area of crucial importance for Rome, because it was the source of most of the water used in the city and many aqueducts ran through it. Let us consider Rome's second aqueduct, the Anio Vetus, which as we know from Frontinus was built between 272 and 269 B.C.⁷⁵ The censor Manius Curius Dentatus⁷⁶ financed the work, using the spoils of war taken from Pyrrhus, *ex manubiis de Pyrrho captis*.⁷⁷ The aqueduct's course was mostly underground, from the high Anio valley

⁷² Liv. 10.37.6: *Ob hasce res gestas consul cum triumphum ab senatu moris magis quam spe impetrandi petisset . . .*

⁷³ On the progressive degradation of the Latial agricultural landscape, see the useful observations of C. Yeo, 'The overgrazing of ranch-lands in ancient Italy', *TAPA* 79 (1948), 275–307; on malaria and the marshlands, see the articles of P. Fraccaro in *Opuscula II. Studi sull'età della rivoluzione romana, Scritti di diritto pubblico, Militaria* (Pavia, 1957), 'La malaria e la storia degli antichi popoli classici', 337–67 and 'La malaria e la storia dell'Italia antica', 369–78; P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower 225 B.C.–A.D. 14* (Oxford, 1987), 611–24.

⁷⁴ Gabba (n. 54), 9–11.

⁷⁵ *Aquaed.* 6. Cfr. Auct. *De vir ill.*, 33.9: *Aquam Anienem de manubiis hostium in urbem induxit*. For a comment on the passage, see H. B. Evans, *Water Distribution in Ancient Rome. The Evidence of Frontinus* (Ann Arbor, 1994), 75–82 and C. Roncaioli Lamberti, 'Osservazioni e proposte sul sito dell'incile dell'Anio Vetus e sul ramo di derivazione dell'Anio Novus', in A. M. Liberati Silverio and G. Pisani Sartorio (edd.), *Il trionfo dell'acqua. Atti del convegno 'Gli antichi acquedotti di Roma: problemi di conoscenza, conservazione e tutela'* (Rome, 1992), 83–92; on the Anio Vetus, see T. Ashby, *The Aqueducts of Ancient Rome* (Oxford, 1935), 54–87; P. J. Aicher, *Guide to the Aqueducts of Ancient Rome* (Wauconda, 1995), 35–6.

⁷⁶ Notice that the censor himself was the promoter of another important work of public utility, the partial draining of the Lago Velino, near Reate: Cic. *Att.* 4.15.5: *lacus Velinus a M. Curio emissus interciso monte in Nar defluit, ex quo est illa siccata et umida tamen modice Rosea*. See G. Bodei Giglioli, *Lavori pubblici e occupazione nell'antichità classica* (Bologna, 1974), 68–9.

⁷⁷ On Roman commanders using a part of the spoils of war, that was due to them (*manubiae*),

above Tibur, down along the river to the town, from where it reached the via Praenestina. It ran along the via Praenestina to Gabii, then along the via Latina and at last along the via Labicana to the Porta Maggiore. The construction of the *Anio Vetus* through this area shows the complete control that Rome exercised over her eastern *suburbium*.

The creation of a system of aqueducts and the restoration of the road network, especially of the via Praenestina and the via Labicana, during the third century B.C., transformed the landscape of the area, in comparison with the previous century.⁷⁸ Quilici's studies of the eastern *suburbium* of Rome reveal a change in the type of settlement, and therefore in the landscape, between the fourth and third centuries B.C.⁷⁹ This situation is explained by him in terms not only of Rome's political supremacy, but also of the economic dominance of the city, which overshadowed other territorial interests and impoverished the radial net of communications between the various outlying towns.

Ashby's studies of the Roman Campagna revealed a dense road network in this area.⁸⁰ Beside the via Praenestina, in the archaic period the via Gabina,⁸¹ that linked Rome to Gabii, putting the latter on the trade-route in the archaic age from Etruria to Campania, there were also many minor roads, practically a secondary road network, that linked Gabii to nearby centres such as Collatia, Tibur, Praeneste, and the Alban Hills.⁸² We can see the function of control that Gabii had,⁸³ partly because of its favourable position where various important routes crossed, such as the inland route to Campania, the old routes that linked the Abruzzo and the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian coast, and the Etruria–Sabina axis that probably crossed the Anio near Lunghezza, and partly because of its large populated area.⁸⁴ The irony is that the resulting Roman interest in Gabii in the end subverted the reason for the interest.

We should also notice that *lapis Gabinus* was used in Rome for the first time on a small scale in the fourth century B.C., instead of the red Anio tufa, which had been used in the defensive structures and buildings of the archaic age.⁸⁵ The widespread exploitation of the stone of Gabii and its use on a large scale in great public works is

to build public works, during the second century B.C., see E. Gabba, 'Considerazioni politiche ed economiche sullo sviluppo urbano in Italia nei secoli II e I a.C.', in P. Zanker (ed.), *Hellenismus in Mittelitalien, Kolloquium in Göttingen vom 5. bis 9. Juni 1974 II*, (Göttingen, 1976), 325. On how the spoils were used, see F. Bona, 'Sul concetto di *manubiae* e sulle responsabilità del magistrato in ordine alla preda', *SDHI* 26 (1960), 105–75.

⁷⁸ S. Musco and P. Zaccagni, 'Caratteri e forme di insediamenti rustici e residenziali nel suburbio orientale tra il IV ed il I sec. a.C.', in *Misurare* (n. 40), 90–106.

⁷⁹ L. Quilici, *Collatia, Forma Italiae*, Regio I, 10 (Rome, 1974), 35ff.; id., 'La campagna romana come suburbio di Roma antica', *PP* 29, fasc. 154–9 (1974), 410–38.

⁸⁰ T. Ashby, *The Roman Campagna in Classical Times* (London, 1927), 128–45'; id., 'The classical topography of the Roman Campagna I', *PBSR* 1 (1902), 127–285, on Gabii, esp. 180–97.

⁸¹ Liv. 2.11.7, 3.6.7, 5.49.6 (some milestones of the via Gabina). See A. M. Kahane, 'A paved Roman road east from Gabii', *PBSR* 41 (1973), 18–44; G. Radke, *Viae Publicae Romanae*, in *RE* Suppl. 13, *Viae Publicae Romanae* (Stuttgart, 1971), cc. 1482–3, translated into Italian by G. Sigismondi, (Bologna, 1981), 108, 116; for the ancient road-network, see Musco and Zaccagni (n. 78), 92–5.

⁸² On the Etruria–Campania axis, see S. Quilici Gigli, 'La valle del Sacco nel quadro delle comunicazioni tra Etruria e Magna Grecia', *StEtr* 38 (1970), 363–6; P. Sommella, 'Per uno studio degli insediamenti nelle valli del Sacco e del Liri in età preromana', *StEtr* 39 (1971), 393–407. On recently discovered secondary routes, that linked Gabii to nearby minor centres, see Musco, Morelli, and Brucchiotti (n. 33), 275–92.

⁸³ Guaitoli (n. 1), 48–9.

⁸⁴ Dion. Hal. 4.53–58; Plut. *Rom.* 6.1; Liv. 1.53.

⁸⁵ Guaitoli (n. 1), 45ff, fig. n. 18, n. 19.

probably to be dated to the beginning of the second century B.C.⁸⁶ From that time the quarried stone was partly used for the needs of the territory, but mostly exported to Rome to be used for public buildings (Strab. 5.3.11).

In conclusion, the primary and secondary road networks, the building of the *Anio Vetus*, and the quarrying of *lapis Gabinus* reveal that the area of Gabii and its territory was characterized by considerable economic activity at this time, and that it had become the object of urban economic interests. Rome more and more tended to change the aspect of its surrounding territory: perhaps we should consider Postumius' order to cut down trees as presaging the building of the *Anio Vetus* about twenty years later.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The discovery of a fragment of parchment indicating the site where the military activity of the consul Postumius took place, and especially where two thousand soldiers were sent, allows us to understand elements in other literary sources on the episode of 291 B.C. That the consul's estate was large and also included, besides fields, a sacred grove and marshy areas, is a very probable hypothesis, because a morphological analysis of the soil around Gabii reveals that in antiquity the area was marshy, and included healing sanctuaries and the cult of a sacred tree in the temple of Juno Gabina, which was surrounded by a *lucus*. The location of the consul's estate also suggests other explanations of his behaviour, besides the traditional one of the abuse of authority. His adherence to religious rules and tradition reveals that he was an aristocratic conservative. This allows us to interpret his use of soldiers for personal ends as the application of traditional aristocratic modes of labour exploitation, which were deep-rooted in the mentality of conservative patricians and had not yet been abandoned by men such as Postumius. Other possible explanations may be sought in the urgent need to clear recently acquired woodlands in order to ease personal financial difficulties (a member of the *gens Postumia* had been defeated at the Caudine Forks), but also simply in the reclamation of marshy land overgrown with vegetation, or in deforestation before the building of an aqueduct or a new road.

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⁸⁶ A. Balil, 'Topografia de Gabii y del Agro Gabino', *Cuadernos Escuela Esp. de Hist. y Arq.* 10 (1958), 29–55; G. Lugli, *La tecnica edilizia romana con particolare riguardo a Roma e Lazio I* (Rome, 1957), 306–9.