

Debating Early Republican Urbanism in Latium Vetus: The Town Planning of Gabii, between Archaeology and History*

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ABSTRACT

Recent archaeological investigations have revealed that at the end of the fifth century B.C.E., Gabii, an ancient centre of Latium Vetus, was reorganised in a planned, quasi-orthogonal pattern, which constitutes an anomaly in the regional context. This is indicative of an important transformational moment in its history, representing a break from previous patterns of occupation and involving significant spatial and socio-political discontinuities with the previous settlement. This article proposes that the reorganisation reflects a moment of refoundation after a period of abandonment, an urban trajectory that can be clarified by a critical re-examination of the historical evidence, focusing on two pivotal processes: the devotio of the city by the Romans and the dynamics of early colonisation in Latium. This new interpretation not only has important implications for understanding the archaeology of Gabii and of early republican urbanism, but also sheds light on one of the 'darkest' ages in Roman history.

Keywords: Gabii; urbanism; town planning; early Republic; religion; colonisation; Postumii

I INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, geophysical survey and extensive excavation have revealed that Gabii, an ancient centre of Latium Vetus, was laid out in a planned, quasi-orthogonal pattern.¹ In view of the gradual and organic nature of the original growth of Gabii as a primary nucleated settlement out of the hut clusters or 'leopard spots' of the early Iron Age (during its urbanisation from the ninth to the sixth century B.C.E.), the regular plan of the mature, early republican city is indicative of an important transformational moment in its history.²

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¹ Becker *et al.* 2009; Terrenato *et al.* 2010; Kay 2013.

² Mogetta and Becker 2014: 171–2; Mogetta 2014: 148–55. For survey evidence on the discontinuous early Iron Age settlement patterns, see Guaitoli 1981: 36–44, figs 10–16. All dates are B.C.E. unless otherwise noted.

It represents a definite break from previous patterns of occupation, and constitutes an anomaly in the regional context: the earliest wave of urban formation in Iron Age central Italy, to which Gabii belonged, inevitably tended to produce irregular urban fabrics, like Rome itself, due to long-term settlement growth and continuity.³ The settlement and intramural burial data gathered by the Gabii Project now allow a fuller picture to be sketched of the circumstances surrounding the creation of this extraordinary urban grid. There are clear indications that most of the fifth century was characterised by a hiatus of occupation at the site, before the creation of the new city plan at the end of the fifth century, which necessarily involved significant spatial — and probably also socio-political — discontinuities with the previous settlement.

In this paper, we first summarise the archaeological evidence for the creation and dating of the quasi-orthogonal layout, and then consider the plan in a local and regional perspective. Based on this analysis, we suggest that the late fifth-century reorganisation of the city represents a moment of refoundation after a period of abandonment, and that the vicissitudes in the urban trajectory of Gabii are to be understood in connection with specific local events. Re-examining the relatively rich literary record dealing with the city and its relationship with Rome in the archaic and early republican periods, we offer a reassessment of the history of Gabii in the fifth century that focuses on two pivotal processes: at one end, the ritual *devotio* of the city by the Romans, an obscure event attested in antiquarian texts that has long been an interpretive crux in scholarship; and, at the other, the dynamics of early colonisation in Latium and the involvement of patrician clans and ‘warlords’ — specifically, in the case of Gabii, the *gens Postumia*. This new interpretation of the unfounding and refounding of Gabii not only has important implications for our understanding of the archaeology of the city and of early republican urbanism, it also sheds some interesting light on society, religion and interstate interactions during one of the ‘darkest’ ages in Roman history.⁴

II THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The urban plan of Gabii is centred on a main axial thoroughfare that bisects the area within the fortifications, adapting to the natural curvature of the south slope of the volcanic crater of Lake Castiglione. This trunk road corresponds to the intramural stretch of an old regional road coming from Rome, originally known as the Via Gabina, which approaches from the west the strategic narrow shelf of land bordered by the depression of Pantano Borghese to the south.⁵ It then exited Gabii towards Corcolle and Tibur from a gate near the extra-urban ‘Santuario Orientale’ (Fig. 1). A 100 metre-long section was exposed by the state archaeological service (SSABAP Roma) in the 1990s in the so-called ‘Area Urbana’, south and west of the Gabii Project site, but its

³ The irregularity of Rome’s urban form was something of an embarrassment to late republican writers. According to Cicero (*Leg. agr.* 2.96), the chaotic neighbourhoods of Rome did not bear comparison with the rational plan of Capua, an *ex novo* foundation laid out on an orthogonal grid of wide streets. Livy (5.55.3–5) describes Rome as more *occupata* than *diuisa*, blaming the hasty reconstruction following the Gallic sack: Bernard 2018: 47–9. Veii (Piazza d’Armi), Tarquinia (Pian di Civita) and Ardea (Civitavecchia) may be mentioned as possible (but not indisputable) exceptions to the pattern, although the layouts tend to be less uniform and extensive, often revealing the existence of different phases of urban development: Paoletti 2005; Guaitoli 2016. Much like Capua, the well documented orthogonal plans of Doganella (in the territory of Vulci) and Marzabotto (Po Plain) are the product of intentional foundations.

⁴ For a recent general approach to the difficulties of writing the history of Rome and Latium in the long fifth century, with salutary attention to methodological concerns, see Smith 2017.

⁵ *LTUR* Supplement 3 (2006), 9–10, s.v. ‘Gabina, Via’ (Z. Mari). For the relationship between these kinds of road-cuttings in the region and early urbanisation, see Tuppi 2014.

continuation to the north-east went unnoticed.⁶ A series of roughly perpendicular roads branch off the thoroughfare at regular intervals, delimiting elongated city blocks that hug the truncated cone of the crater.⁷ The only notable exception in the grid pattern is an east–west basalt paved road that departs at an odd angle from the Via Gabina in the direction of Praeneste (Via Praenestina), perhaps resulting from a later reorganisation of the regional road network.⁸

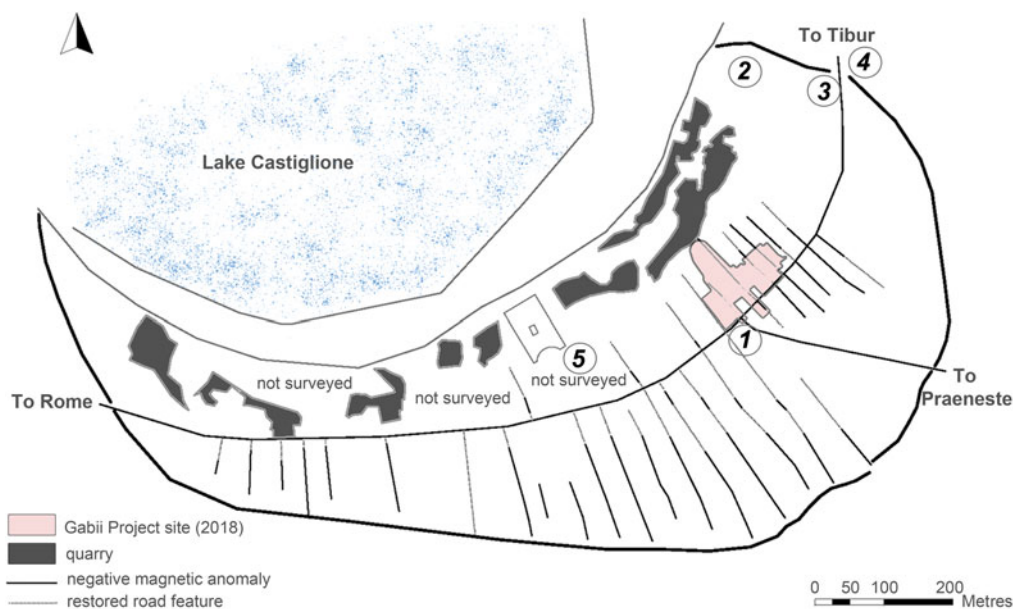


FIG. 1. Restored city plan of Gabii, based on the interpretation of the magnetometer survey and corroborated by excavation. 1. Central intersection of roads from Tibur, Praeneste and Rome; 2. The *arx* and the so-called *regia*; 3. North-east gate in the fortifications; 4. ‘Santuario Orientale’; 5. Area of the Temple of ‘Juno’.

(Drawing: M. Mogetta)

In explicating the process through which this new urban form came into being at Gabii, it is a logical preliminary hypothesis that, given its all-embracing and relatively uniform aspect, the quasi-orthogonal layout would have been planned formally as a unified whole, and that consequently its constituent roads would have been built simultaneously as part of a coordinated and centralised effort within the community. Accordingly, the dating of the initial construction of any given road ought to furnish a reliable chronology for the laying out of the entire urban network. Excavations within five contiguous city blocks near the intersection of the Via Gabina and Via Praenestina have yielded data from the broadly comparable stratigraphic sequences of the thoroughfare and four of the side streets running north from it (Roads 1–4), which allow a relatively precise date for the creation of the grid plan in the last quarter of the fifth century to be

⁶ Majerini and Musco 2001: 490–3.

⁷ For the ground-truthing of the magnetic anomalies detected across the southern sector of town outside of the Archaeological Park, see Gallone and Mogetta 2011.

⁸ Whereas literary texts refer to the existence of a Via Gabina from the archaic period, the earliest mention of a Via Praenestina is in Strabo (5.3.9). The common view is that the winding course of the Via Gabina was replaced by a rectilinear stretch in the third or second century, and that a new section from Gabii to Praeneste was added then: *LTUR* Supplement 4 (2007), 249, s.v. ‘Praenestina, Via’ (Z. Mari).

established (Fig. 2). We limit the discussion of the evidence here to only the original construction phase, proceeding road by road.⁹



FIG. 2. Plan of the Gabii Project excavations, 2009–2018, showing the principal areas and roads under discussion. (After Mogetta et al. 2019: fig. 2)

The earliest phase of the thoroughfare is represented by a negative feature cut into the natural bedrock. This basic road-construction technique is widespread and well attested throughout central Italy in the archaic period, and is generally referred to as a *tagliata*.¹⁰ Subsequently, in the late fourth century, this relatively primitive phase was replaced by a succession of two roads consisting of thick preparation layers of gravel, crushed ceramic and earth (*glarea*) topped by a compact surface (*via glareata*); this glareate road in turn went out of use by the mid third century, when a basalt paved roadway was laid down.

Of the four side-streets that have been investigated, the excavated sequence of the easternmost (Road 1) is the best preserved. The first phase, again consisting of a *tagliata* (Road 1₁), was cut into the natural bedrock; this cut truncated a layer that contains no ceramic material dated later than the sixth century, which affords a rough terminus post quem (Fig. 3). At the other side of the chronological window, the *tagliata* roadway went out of use by the second half of the fourth century, when it was completely resurfaced with a thick layer of *glarea* (Fig. 4). Therefore, a date for the cutting of this *tagliata* at some point in the second half of the fifth century fits well with the stratigraphic evidence.

⁹ For a much more detailed presentation of the stratigraphic sequence for the intramural roads, with references to the relevant stratigraphic units and discussion of the specific ceramic evidence, see Mogetta et al. 2019, upon which this summary draws heavily. Excavation permits were granted by the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali ed il Turismo (MIBACT, Prot. no. DGABAP 0015033/2018 and earlier versions).

¹⁰ Quilici 1992; 2008. For examples of this road-construction technique from the region of Latium, see the urban road from Crustumerium (Jarva et al. 2012: 217–20), and the so-called Via Sacra at Satricum (Gnade 2007: 51–6), discussed further below.



FIG. 3. View of the original cut into the bedrock to accommodate the first roadway (*tagliata*) of Road 11. (Photograph: Gabii Project)



FIG. 4. View of the subsequent mid-republican roadway of Road 13, with the transition between basalt pavement and gravel (*via glareata*) north of the Area C house. (Photograph: Gabii Project)

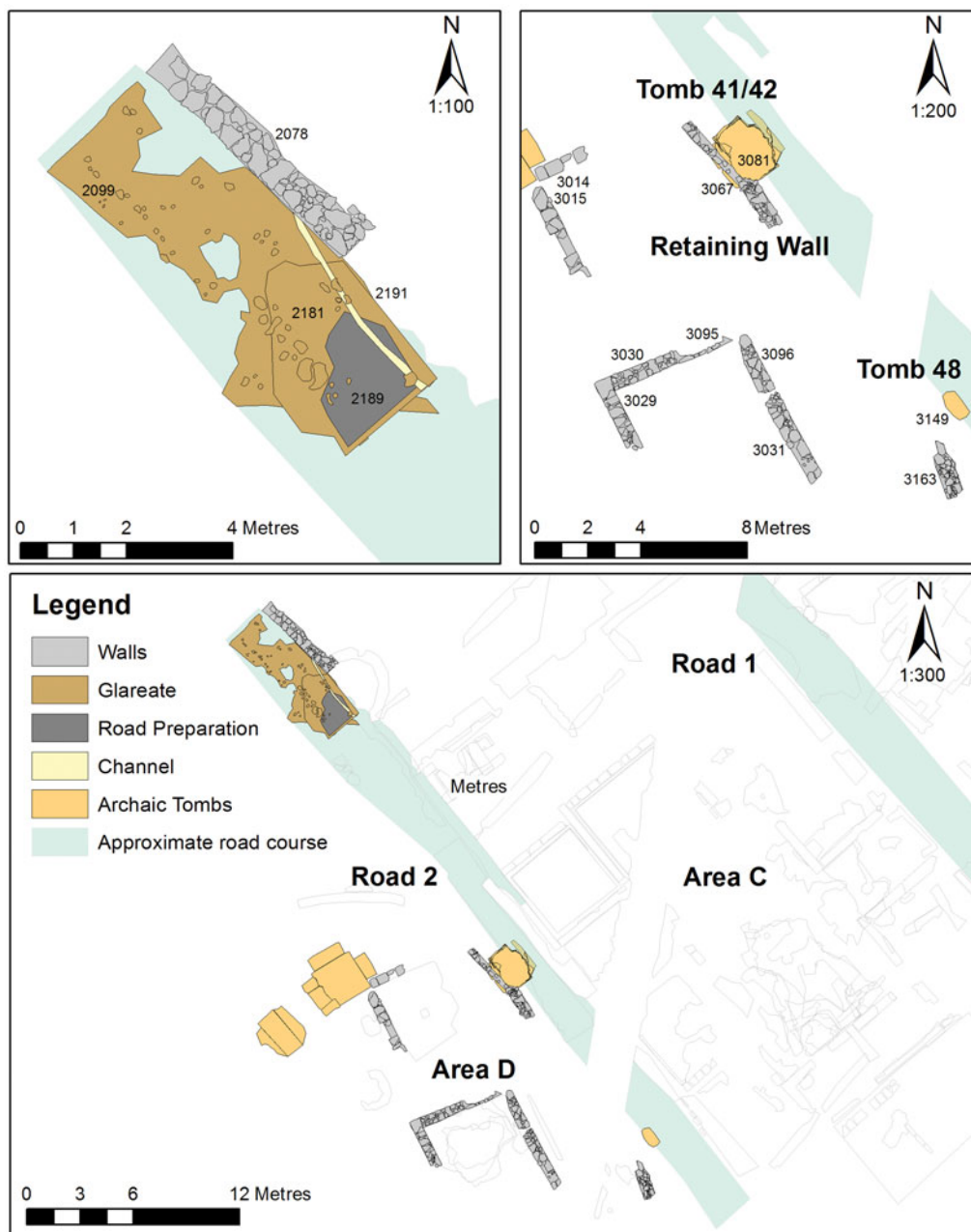


FIG. 5. Composite plan of Road 2 showing the relationship of road features to the archaic occupation of Area D. (After Mogetta et al. 2019: fig. 12)

Although it is substantially less well preserved, Road 2 relates more clearly in its original construction to dramatic discontinuities with previous archaic features in the area, illuminating some of the complex dynamics bound up with the reorganisation of the urban fabric. Prior to the implantation of the grid plan, this sector of the city was occupied by a large domestic complex (known as the Area D compound), bounded by a

stone precinct wall. A habitation sequence has been documented stretching from wattle-and-daub huts of the middle of the eighth century down to houses with stone foundations of the sixth century. Several rich infant burials testify to the elite status of the resident kin group.¹¹ Associated with the abandonment of this ancient compound in the last quarter of the sixth century are a number of exceptional late archaic tombs containing adult inhumation burials, generally without grave goods but dated on the basis of the stratigraphic sequence and typology to the first half of the fifth century.¹² When the new quasi-orthogonal plan, which does not respect the alignment of the earlier archaic structures, was created, Road 2 overlaid one of these tombs, which had been situated just outside the eastern wall of the northern room of the abandoned domestic structure (Fig. 5; Fig. 6).¹³ About ten metres downhill (southeast) from this tomb, the roadway traversed another late archaic tomb, containing an infant burial with an assemblage of grave goods dating between the end of the sixth and the second quarter of the fifth century.¹⁴ These inhumations provide a reasonably secure terminus post quem for the original phase of the plan.



FIG. 6. View of the partially excavated fill of the late archaic Tomb 41/42, subsequently traversed by Road 2 and covered by the western retaining wall of the road. (Photograph: Gabii Project)

The construction technique of Road 2 differs somewhat from the other side-streets. While there is a very shallow construction cut in the bedrock along the exposed length of the road, it is probable that this bedrock surface never served as a roadway. Instead, the original phase of the road (Road 2₁) must have been a *via glareata* laid down on the regularised bedrock, bordered on its western limit for part of its extent — where it ran

¹¹ On the stone building, see Mogetta and Becker 2014: 177–8, fig. 6. For the hut phase, Evans *et al.* 2019. On the infant burials, Mogetta 2020a.

¹² On the archaic tombs in Area D, see Evans 2018.

¹³ Tomb 41/42.

¹⁴ Tomb 48: Cohen 2020: 52–4. The date puts the tomb right at the transition point represented by the destruction of the domestic compound.

alongside the ruins of the Area D compound — by a retaining wall built of irregular, unmortared stones. Along the eastern limit, the glareate road surface abutted a retaining wall built in a similar technique. On the basis of ceramic evidence, this construction activity can be dated to the end of the fifth century, which accords well with the terminus post quem established by the late archaic tombs.¹⁵

The other side of the Area D city block is defined by Road 3. The first phase of this side street (Road 3₁) consisted of a *tagliata* cut into the natural bedrock, of comparable dimensions to Road 1₁.¹⁶ By the middle of the third century at the very latest, a *via glareata* had been laid down within the old *tagliata* to elevate the level of the roadway (Road 3₂). The original construction of Road 3 appears to be connected with other major modifications made to the bedrock in the inhabited area immediately to the west (Area A). Previously, in the archaic phase, this space had been occupied by multiple hut structures that, based on the wealthy assemblages of grave goods found in the associated infant burials, belonged to elite kinship groups.¹⁷ The obliteration of the occupation levels that must have preceded the creation of the city block bounded by Road 3 has been independently dated to not later than the fifth century.¹⁸ The reoccupation of the area following the creation of the new layout consists of extensive levelling work, together with the repurposing of drainage channels and other cuts into the bedrock, which were made to respect the alignment of the orthogonal grid. These scanty features are tentatively interpreted as belonging to a mid-republican domus.¹⁹ With sporadic exceptions like the previous site of the archaic compound in Area D that was left vacant, this period of urban development gradually filled in the city blocks and resulted, by the middle of the third century, in a considerably more continuous pattern of occupation across the site than had existed in the late archaic phase.²⁰

Separating this city block from Area F to the west, Road 4 intersects the Via Gabina at a central location within the general topography of Gabii, just north of the main junction with the Via Praenestina. The monumentalisation projects that transformed the important public areas to which it was adjacent — especially the multi-terraced building occupying the Area F city block — obscure most of the evidence for its first phases.²¹ A compact glareate surface (Road 4₁) has been found to abut the eastern retaining wall of the upper terrace of the Area F complex; this roadway must have been created as part of the same building project, dating to the mid third century. There are traces of an earlier phase of the *via glareata* associated with the original doorway that opened into the courtyard of the ‘Tincu House’ immediately to the east, whose construction predates that of the Area F building by a generation or so.²² The notable drop in the elevation of the underlying bedrock across the width of the roadway makes the existence of a pre-third-century *tagliata* below the visible glareate surfaces (which would correspond to the original phases of the other three side streets) almost certain.

In short, the cumulative evidence from these five city blocks and the first construction phase of their constituent roads provides a secure date for the establishment of the grid plan. It was laid out after a hiatus in the occupation of the city lasting several decades,

¹⁵ The variation in typology between the contemporaneous phases of the different side streets is presumably related to the presence, in this area of the city, of extensive pre-existing features cut into the bedrock lying in the projected path of the roadway, which would have presented an insurmountable obstacle to the viability of a simple *tagliata*.

¹⁶ The shallow (roughly 0.25 to 0.3 m in depth), concave roadbed measures 2.1 m wide at its broadest and narrows to 1.4 m at the bottom.

¹⁷ On these infant tombs, see Becker and Nowlin 2011.

¹⁸ Banducci and Gallone (forthcoming): Phase A-1a.

¹⁹ For an initial presentation, see Mogetta 2014: 153, fig. 4; Banducci and Gallone (forthcoming): Phase A-2.

²⁰ Cf. Mogetta and Becker 2014: 178–81; Opitz *et al.* 2016.

²¹ For the Area F complex, see Johnston *et al.* 2018.

²² Opitz *et al.* 2016: Phase B-1 (c. 280).

as part of a unified undertaking in the last quarter of the fifth century, with successive phases of improvement throughout the mid-republican period.

III THE CREATION OF THE GRID PLAN IN ITS LOCAL AND REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Having established the layout and dating of the original phase of the intramural road network at Gabii, let us examine the archaeological background against which the city plan was created. Such a sweeping spatial reorganisation of the settlement, which must inevitably have had a comprehensive impact on land division and property allotment, could only have been the work of a strong political authority. Since this process involved profound discontinuities not only in the physical, but potentially also in the social fabric of the city, it is likely to have corresponded to a period of broader transition for the community. The transitional moment seemingly attested by the emergence of town planning may be connected with the nearly contemporaneous appearance of monumental public writing, evidenced by fragments of multiple inscriptions on stone dated to the second half of the fifth century. This momentary burst in epigraphic culture at Gabii has been interpreted as ‘a response to or mediation of significant social or political change’, which must have been closely bound up with ongoing processes of state formation.²³ But how did these new conditions arise? To answer this question, we review the evidence from excavations carried out at multiple locations within the settlement, which allows us to contextualise the creation of the grid in relation to the overall sequence of occupation. We then zoom out to a broader scale of analysis, in order to discuss the extent to which the case of Gabii is exceptional, or part of identifiable regional patterns of town planning, abandonment or major moments of rupture characterising the period.

As previously noted, the abandonment sequence of the Area D compound reflects major changes occurring during the fifth century. One of the early clusters of habitation in Gabii, belonging to an elite group whose roots reached back at least into the eighth century, the site was intentionally razed to the ground at the end of the sixth century, never to be reoccupied again. The stone building was replaced by a small group of rock-cut adult tombs, which may have been used by members of the previous residential unit, at least judging by the care with which the ruins were respected. The labour-intensive character of the graves speaks to the high social status of the individuals buried there. While the existence of a possibly contemporary infant tomb nearby could imply some continuity of habitation in the area, preliminary data indicates that in neighbouring Area C to the east (whose early occupation gravitated around the Area D nucleus) there is virtually no evidence for the fifth century. Rare Attic Red Figure pottery fragments spanning the fifth century come from secondary deposits in Area A, Area C and Area D, and suggest some form of elite activity (possibly funerary, though the lack of context does not allow firmer conclusions).²⁴ Thus, the fact remains that one of the main foci of interaction that had been embedded spatially in the landscape for centuries was abruptly abandoned, suggesting that some or all of its resident community had relocated elsewhere. This might not have been a unique case within Gabii, since another group of late archaic adult burials of a strikingly similar typology has been brought to light by the SSABAP Roma in the area between the Temple of ‘Juno’ and the so-called

²³ On these inscriptions (‘Gabii A’ and ‘Gabii B’), see Johnston 2015: esp. 257–8 (quoting 258); Fortson and Potter 2011. This argument is made on the basis of the existence of these remarkable monuments, rather than their content, since both are highly fragmentary and little can be read of the texts themselves.

²⁴ See Mogetta *et al.* 2019: table 7.

'Hamilton's Forum', south-west of the Gabii Project excavations, although we have limited information regarding its possible relationship with earlier domestic structures.²⁵

Significantly, the Area D tomb cluster was put out of use just prior to the establishment of the grid, which completely obliterated any trace — and perhaps even any memory — of it.²⁶ The break with the previous pattern is evident also in the orientation of the new street system, which diverges from the main alignments of the archaic buildings that occupied the area. A similar situation has been documented in Area A, where early elite presence is signalled by rich Orientalising infant burials, and nearby in Area B. The fifth-century levelling of the archaic features there marks the final abandonment of yet another early habitation cluster. As a result of the process, the redevelopment of urban land in this sector of the settlement seems to bear no relationship with the pre-existing architecture.

This period witnessed discontinuities not only in elite domestic occupation, but also in the organisation of early public spaces, whose excavated levels suggest a significant shift from the archaic past (Fig. 1). On the so-called *arx* above the areas of the city on which our discussion has focused, a tripartite stone-built structure comparable in its architecture and decoration to the *regia* in the Roman forum — and thus interpreted as a seat of power — was emptied of its contents, partially razed and buried under a massive mound. The excavators date this intentional demolition activity to around the end of the sixth century.²⁷ The large-scale *agger* and *fossa* fortifications of the city, whose first monumental phase dates to the late seventh or early sixth century, were repaired in the late sixth or early fifth century. Another reconstruction followed in late fifth and fourth centuries, when the existing north-east gate connected with the Via Gabina was built (or rebuilt?), and a new exterior curtain in *opus quadratum* was added on the northern stretch.²⁸ Incidentally, this renovation independently confirms our dating of the layout, since the reconfiguration of the main gates of the pre-existing fortification circuit was dictated by the insertion of the street system. At the extraurban 'Santuario Orientale', a cult site established in the late eighth century, the first stone structure was destroyed by a fire in the first decade of the fifth century, and rebuilt on a completely different plan. The reconfiguration of the sanctuary, however, was almost immediately followed by a gap in ritual activity. Prestige offerings (including terracotta decorations) pick up again only at the beginning of the fourth century.²⁹ Finally, the same trend has been detected in the sacred area later occupied by the Temple of 'Juno', where there is a sharp decline from the end of the sixth century until the second half of the fourth; very little fifth-century material has been retrieved.³⁰ Taken together, these results provide substantial evidence of sudden contraction and abandonment occurring across the entire site with the transition from the late archaic to the early republican period. The occupation sequence at Gabii only shows signs of recovery in the early fourth century.

²⁵ These tombs remain unpublished; they are also mentioned by Evans 2018: 34–5. Recent excavations by the Louvre in the same area have brought to light an infant burial dating to the late Orientalising or archaic period, thus providing indirect evidence for the presence of a habitation focus nearby: Glisoni *et al.* 2019: 3–5. This raises the possibility that another cluster of early occupation at Gabii was abandoned prior to the installation of the nucleus of adult graves in its vicinity.

²⁶ The fact that the part of the city block corresponding to the archaic Area D compound was never developed in the republican phases may have more to do with the patchy nature of occupation at most mid-republican cities than with any specific ban.

²⁷ See Fabbri 2017; 2012; Fabbri *et al.* 2012.

²⁸ Fabbri and Musco 2016: 74, fig. 3; 85, fig. 13. A terminus ante quem for the ashlar curtain is provided by a grave dating to the first quarter of the third century, which is dug through its construction fills. See also Fabbri and Musco 2016: 87–8 with n. 22, mentioning quarry marks comparable with those known from Rome's republican walls (early fourth century).

²⁹ Fabbri 2012: 25–6 (Phase 3). On the dating of the destruction, see Zuchtriegel 2012: 238–42.

³⁰ See Almagro Gorbea 1981: 300–2. On the problematic identification of the divinity to whom this sanctuary was dedicated, see below, n. 70.

Taking the wider archaeological picture into consideration, the pattern observed at Gabii reveals certain unique features. At contemporary sites in the region, the archaeological record for the later fifth century is also generally poorly visible. A dearth of temple foundations from the 480s onwards has been noted for Rome.³¹ Traditionally, the phenomenon of reduced building activity in both sacred and civic architecture has been interpreted as a sign of economic decline and social crisis during the early Republic, further exacerbated by warfare.³² As alternative explanations, scholars have looked to the effects of deliberate policies of austerity, or to the fact that buildings of the regal period could still fulfil the necessary administrative functions.³³ More recently, however, it has been suggested that monumental construction projects begun at the end of the regal period continued well into the middle of the fifth century without any significant break.³⁴ A similar development has been proposed for Ardea, another top-tier urban centre of Latium, where the record for the main temples demonstrates public building efforts lasting throughout the first half of the fifth century, and perhaps even later.³⁵ In this context, the case of Gabii stands out for the relative sequence and spatial relationship between the obliteration of the archaic occupation, the appearance of clusters of intramural adult burials, the complete lack of building activities for most of the fifth century and the eventual establishment of the grid toward the end of this period.

There are few well documented cases of town-planning projects at major cities in central Italy with which to compare the Sabine evidence. At Tarquinia, a geophysical survey conducted on the western sector of the Civita has recorded a regular layout of parallel roads delimiting standardised orthogonal city blocks. Evidence from excavation suggests that this subdivision was part of a generalised reorganisation of the urban area carried out in the late sixth or early fifth century.³⁶ This is followed by a period of decline, which is mirrored by a drop in funerary evidence from the main cemetery areas in the later fifth century. The case of Pompeii in the fifth and early fourth century may provide another example of the same trend. Although the extent of the street network outside the major thoroughfares (Via del Vesuvio/Via Stabiana, another on alignment with Via di Mercurio, and Via Consolare; and the axis of Via Marina and Via dell'Abbondanza) is more elusive, and the subject of some speculation, the idea that the archaic settlement had a fully developed urban form is now commonly accepted.³⁷ The so-called *Altstadt* is now generally understood as resulting from the shrinking of the Samnite occupation within the confined area around the forum. In other words, at both Tarquinia and Pompeii the archaeological data for the contraction of the settlement clearly postdates the first consolidation of the urban grid, whereas the reverse process occurred at Gabii, with the establishment of the layout following a period of crisis.

³¹ For example, La Rocca 1990, emphasising poor survival rather than absence. On the continuity of votive practice between the sixth and fifth century, see Bartoloni 1987.

³² Cornell 1995: 299–309. The phenomenon is explored more broadly in Massa-Pairault 1990.

³³ For an overview, see Davies 2017: 9–29, 32–5.

³⁴ As discussed by Hopkins 2016: 126–52, based on some very important (but dispersed) finds from the hilltops (mainly terracottas dating to 500–450).

³⁵ The temple of the acropolis, the temple at Casarinaccio and the extraurban sanctuary of Fosso dell'Incastro were rebuilt in the early fifth century, while the Colle della Noce temple seems to have been erected and decorated during the second quarter of the fifth century: synthesis in Ceccarelli 2017. Palone 2009, however, assigns the Colle della Noce terracottas to the second half of the fifth century, linking the building project with the establishment of the Roman colony at the site. Bouma 1996: 153–65 lists at least twenty-four archaic sacred sites for which there seems to be a fifth-century gap in activity.

³⁶ For a contextualisation of the layout of the Pian di Civita at Tarquinia, see esp. Chiamante Trerè 2005: 336–7 (with further references).

³⁷ On the archaic plan of Pompeii, see now Avagliano 2018; Poehler 2017: 25–31 points out that the absence of eastern gates implies that the alignments made by the Via di Nola and the eastern stretch of Via dell'Abbondanza are products of a much later period. On the sequence of construction of the fortifications and their relation to Pompeii's urban form, see van der Graaff 2019.

The presence of funerary areas within the former boundaries of a once flourishing archaic town is rarely attested in the region of Gabii. An intriguing case is that of Satricum, where several nuclei of adult graves have been identified. A small necropolis is located along the so-called Via Sacra at the south-west corner of the temple on the acropolis, while a more extensive burial ground was found in the lower settlement at Macchia Santa Lucia. Noting the lack of contemporary domestic remains, the excavators combined the funerary evidence with the existence of a votive deposit near the temple containing materials ranging from the fifth to the second centuries. On this basis, they interpreted the pattern as a sign of the radical transformation from flourishing urban settlement into a mere pilgrimage site centred on the sanctuary, as a consequence of its alleged destruction by the Volscians in 488.³⁸ Only a small community of Latins would have remained at the site, burying their dead within what was no longer a city and thus free from religious or ideological constraints.³⁹ Subsequent discoveries on the acropolis and elsewhere in the settlement where erosion was less of a factor seemed to provide evidence for continued habitation of the site in the post-archaic period, undermining the previous reconstruction: the fifth-century site would have featured funerary areas in close proximity to domestic quarters, but would have been separated from them by the main roads.⁴⁰ The change in the pattern of use was attributed to Volscian occupation, which would explain the adoption of funerary practices at odds with the Latin tradition.⁴¹ However, the latest finds from the lower town now include fifth- and fourth-century graves that are dug on top of the main road, showing that by the middle of the fifth century, or shortly after, large sectors of the archaic settlement and town plan had been turned into a burial ground. Because the lower course of the Via Sacra was no longer functioning, the excavators tentatively place the new Volscian settlement south of the site of the archaic town.⁴²

Similarly, the fifth-century inhumations at Gabii are indicative of a breakdown not only in the previous social and spatial order of the city, but in the symbolic order as well. The overall extent of the extramural burial grounds that were in use during the archaic period is uncertain, but the available evidence suggests that clusters of adult tombs had developed during the period of city formation on three sides of the area later defined by the fortifications.⁴³ Burials of adults within the walls — and thus within the fixed sacred boundary — would have been unthinkable. Such an act violated an ancient and enduring taboo in Latin culture.⁴⁴ As in the case of Satricum, the impression is that this

³⁸ Livy 2.39.1–5; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 8.14–36.

³⁹ Maaskant-Kleibrink 1992: 36–7; Attema *et al.* 1992.

⁴⁰ For a first synthesis, see Gnade 2002: 30–134; 2007: 63–7.

⁴¹ On the attribution of the graves to the Volscians, see Gnade 2002: 126–33.

⁴² Gnade 2013.

⁴³ At the Osteria dell'Osa necropolis, located just west of Gabii and whose occupation from the eighth century onwards has been linked with city formation, only a small fraction of the tombs can be assigned to the late Orientalising or later phases (for example, Bartoloni *et al.* 2009: 85; Tombs 210, 211, 221 and 405). Thus, Bietti Sestieri 1992: 11–18, 51–2, 815–18 hypothesises that funerary activity in the archaic age is concentrated in the unexplored area of the necropolis south of the modern Via Prenestina. Rock-cut features of possible funerary function are located on the slopes east of the Torre di Castiglione, just north of Gabii: Prayon 1979: 90, 94, plates 10–12. Guaitoli 1981: 48 (with nn. 109–11) reports on poorly documented rock-cut chamber tombs (each with a dromos) from both the Fosso di San Giuliano and the Fosso dell'Osa, some of which may belong to the archaic period. On the former necropolis, see also Caretta *et al.* 1978: 27–8 (citing an isolated surface find, a bronze bracelet dating to the Orientalising period). For full discussion, see Mogetta 2020b, 14–16.

⁴⁴ Not only is the prohibition of adult intramural burials in Latium detectable archaeologically, but such a practice is also expressly forbidden in the Twelve Tables (10.1), which are probably roughly contemporary with the Sabine burials under discussion: see Crawford 1996: 704–5. For the exclusion of adult burials from the urbs in Latium more broadly, see Bartoloni 1984. The legal enforcement of this taboo beyond Rome, in the later Republic at least, is clear from the Lex Ursonensis §73 (=CIL 2.5439). The language used to describe the sacred boundary of the city in this colonial charter is reminiscent of the Roman pomerium, but it remains a subject of debate whether the specific idea of the pomerium was distinctive to Rome, or part of

sacred boundary was no longer maintained and that, accordingly, as a properly defined *urbs*, Gabii had ceased to exist.

IV REASSESSING THE HISTORY OF GABII IN THE FIFTH CENTURY

In this light, the momentous change at the end of the fifth century represented by the new urban plan of Gabii appears tantamount to a refoundation of the city. Although in general terms the fifth-century decline at Gabii would seem to fit squarely within a broader archaeological phenomenon in contemporary central Italy, the actual settlement dynamics of growth, abandonment and repopulation revealed by detailed study of our dataset appear quite anomalous. To explain this exceptional sequence, in this section we critically revisit the textual evidence for Gabii in this period, with the aim of moving beyond overarching interpretive frameworks to a more specific attempt to situate and understand the developments that can be observed on the ground in their historical context. In order to reconstruct the history of late archaic and early republican Gabii, it is necessary to take into account two crucial events, and to consider the impact that these had not only on Gabii's relationship with Rome, but also concomitantly on its internal civic and urban configuration: the *foedus Gabinum*, a singularly important early treaty that granted Roman citizenship wholesale to the Sabine community; and the Roman *devotio* of the city of Gabii, an archaic dedicatory ritual in which an enemy community in its entirety was cursed and declared forfeit to the gods. At first glance, the antithetical nature of these interactions appears difficult to reconcile, and a coherent narrative that makes sense of them in relation to one another and to the broader dynamics within contemporary central Italy has remained elusive.⁴⁵ But the new evidence for the sweeping reorganisation of the city toward the end of the fifth century calls for a reappraisal of these events. Specifically, we suggest that the obscure *devotio* of Gabii, which has hitherto resisted secure dating or contextualisation, is to be placed at the beginning of fifth century, not long after the *foedus Gabinum*; and that the discontinuities of occupation across this period at Gabii that are prerequisite to the creation of the new urban plan might be interpreted as part of the catastrophic consequences of this ritualised unbounding of the city by the Romans.

Since the discussion of the *devotio* that follows will argue that such a ritual is to be understood in light of the establishment of the *foedus Gabinum*, it will be useful first to examine the treaty, its circumstances and its effects. Our evidence for the *foedus* comes entirely from a narrow span of time in the Augustan age, almost five centuries after the two rival city-states first concluded its terms. The antiquarian intellectual climate, augmented by the cultural and political programme of the *princeps*, promoted a renewed interest in the kinds of historical documents of which the archaic treaty between the Romans and the Sabines was a prime example. In his epistle to Augustus, written around 12 B.C.E., the poet Horace refers sardonically to the supposedly

Latin culture more broadly. Nevertheless, the creation and maintenance of sacred boundaries that divided the city from its territory was certainly deeply embedded in archaic central Italy, and Gabii itself was associated with some of what the Romans perceived to be the oldest aspects of the rituals of city foundation (*ritus Gabinus*) through which such boundaries came into being (cf., for example, Cato: *FRHist* 5 F 66). On the pomerium, its origins and its associated rituals, see *LTUR* 4 (1999), 96–105, s.v. 'Pomerium' (M. Andreussi); Gargola 2017: 130–9. On the symbolic meanings and social dynamics of civic boundaries in Roman Italy, see Stevens 2017.

⁴⁵ Among the various proposals to situate the *foedus Gabinum* and the *devotio* of Gabii within the historical developments of the fifth century, see Montero Herrero 1981; Bruun 1967; Alföldi 1963: 378–80; Beloch 1926: 156–7. Bruun's late chronology is untenable, along with most of his arguments relating to the historical context of the treaty (with the exception of some points of relative chronology, such as the priority of the *foedus Gabinum* with respect to the *foedus Cassianum*).

widespread contemporary attitude among the Romans that extolled ‘the treaty of the kings made on equal terms with the Gabines’ (*foedera regum uel Gabiis... aequata*) as one of the earliest ‘literary’ productions of the Romans, dictated by the Muses themselves atop the Alban Mount (*Albano Musas in monte locutas*).⁴⁶ Around the same time as the publication of the second book of Horace’s *Epistulae*, C. Antistius Reginus, a moneyer from a *gens* that traced its origins to Gabii (and had woven its family traditions into the legendary history of early Roman–Gabine interactions) minted a coin commemorating the ancient *foedus*. The reverse of this aureus depicts two men — one clearly wearing the *toga* draped in the particular ritual fashion of the *cinctus Gabinus* — conducting a sacrifice upon an altar, together with a legend celebrating ‘the treaty of the Roman people with the Gabines’ (*foedus populi Romani qum Gabinis*).⁴⁷ Although the *foedus Gabinum* seems to have been very much ‘in the air’, the contemporary Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus is the only extant author to provide any details of its content and context. He claims that the terms were set down in writing upon a wooden shield covered in the hide of the ox that was sacrificed as part of the oath-taking ceremony when the treaty was ratified. Furthermore, he attests that this inscription, ‘written in ancient characters’ (γράμμασιν ἀρχαϊκοῖς ἐπιγεγραμμένη), remained displayed in the Augustan age as a ‘monument’ (μνημεῖον) within the temple of Semo Sancus.⁴⁸ With good reason, most scholars have accepted the autopsy of the historian, and the authenticity of the document.⁴⁹

It is possible to infer at least the general purview of the *foedus* from the somewhat oblique narrative of Dionysius. Its terms included guarantees to the Gabines of their autonomy (τὴν τε πόλιν αὐτοῖς ... τὴν ἰδίαν ἀποδιδόναι), continued possession of their territory (τὰς οὐσίας, ἃς ἔχουσι, συγχωρεῖν) and, most significantly, the rights of full citizenship at Rome (σὺν τούτοις τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἰσοπολιτείαν ἅπασι χαρίζεσθαι).⁵⁰ This remarkable *ἰσοπολιτεία* clause, which is consistent with Horace’s characterisation of the treaty as a *foedus aequum*, is fundamentally important for the history of the expansion of the Roman citizenship.⁵¹ Related to the incorporation of Gabii into the Roman political sphere, there seems to have been an additional, religious dimension. According to the lore of the *augures publici*, only in the territory of Gabii (*ager Gabinus*) could the

⁴⁶ Hor., *Epist.* 2.1.24–7. On the date of the second book of the *Epistulae*, and the context of this letter in particular, see Rudd 1989: 1–2.

⁴⁷ RIC I² no. 411, c. 13 B.C.E. A few years earlier (c. 16), a *triumvir monetalis* belonging to the more important branch of the clan, C. Antistius Vetus, had minted a denarius similarly representing the *foedus* (RIC I² nos 363–4). Dionysius (*Ant. Rom.* 4.57) records that a member of the *gens Antistia*, Antistius Petro, was among the leading citizens of Gabii at the end of the sixth century, before he was ultimately brought down by the plot of Sextus Tarquinius. On the mythical genealogy of the Antistii, see Farney 2007: 288–9. The Antistii Veteres (see below, n. 78) rose to great prominence under Augustus and his successors, holding seven consulships between 30 B.C.E. and 55 C.E. The *cinctus Gabinus* was a manner of draping the toga used during the performance of certain rituals: from ancient descriptions (Serv., *ad Aen.* 5.755, 7.612; Isid., *Etym.* 19.24.7), it seems that part of the garment was drawn over the head, and part girt around the body and thrown back over the left shoulder to hang down the left side of the back; on this Sabine fashion, see, most recently, Palombi 2015: 271–4; cf. Wilson 1924: 86–8.

⁴⁸ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 4.58. Dionysius records that he came to Rome after Augustus’ victory at Actium (c. 29–28; *Ant. Rom.* 1.7.2), and indicates that at least the first part of the work was published in the consulship of Claudius Nero and Calpurnius Piso (7 B.C.E.; *Ant. Rom.* 1.3.4). His research and writing should thus be situated in the same cultural, intellectual and political milieu as Horace and Antistius.

⁴⁹ In addition to the scholarship cited above (n. 45), see also Sherwin-White 1973: 19; Cornell 1995: 210; Forsythe 2005: 72. For a recent defence of a ‘much more optimistic view of the very early Latin documentary sources’ found in later Greek and Roman authors, see Langslow 2013 (quoting 175).

⁵⁰ Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 4.58. Dionysius achieves a clear and compelling drama at the expense of precise documentary information.

⁵¹ Cf. Sherwin-White 1973: 19–20 (quoting 20): ‘The incorporation of Gabii ... marks the opening of a new era in the history of Rome.’ On ‘isopolity’ in this context, see Humbert 1978: 85–135.

same rituals be observed as in the territory of Rome (*ager Romanus*).⁵² While our accounts do not explicitly trace the origins of these *auspicia singularia* back to the terms of the treaty, the establishment of uniquely close civic ties between the two communities is the most likely context in which such a provision that exceptionally privileges another Latin community in the public religion of the Roman state would have entered Roman augural practice. Thus, ἰσοπολιτεία and *auspicia singularia* were probably complementary and interrelated aspects of the *foedus Gabinum*.⁵³

As for the date and occasion of the *foedus*, the narrative of Dionysius weaves its enactment into the immediate aftermath (c. 510) of the infamous Roman capture of Gabii through the duplicitous stratagem of the trickster tyrant Tarquinius ‘Superbus’ and his son Sextus. But considerable circumspection is required, since much of the Tarquin episode smacks of later literary embellishments and fabrications within the Roman historiographical tradition.⁵⁴ Consequently, it is of limited explanatory value for understanding the genesis of the treaty. But, divorced from the particulars of the myths of the annalists upon which Dionysius drew, an approximate date around the end of the sixth or beginning of the fifth century can serve as a reasonable point of departure for attempting to determine the general historical setting of the *foedus*.⁵⁵ The basic concerns that the *foedus aequum* attempts to address, to the extent that they can be reconstructed, would seem to presuppose the existence of intercommunity conflict, or at least of underlying conditions generative of conflict, in which neither party was able to gain decisive advantage. Indeed, the terms of the treaty, which are remarkably advantageous for the Gabines, are inconsistent with an outright Roman capture of the city, whether by fraud or by force. Moreover, fragments of folk aetiologies preserved in the writings of Roman antiquarians lend further credence to what would be the natural assumption based on the realities of geographical proximity and the process of state formation: that there had been a longstanding rivalry between Rome and Gabii stretching back well into the archaic period and punctuated by intermittent violence, probably in the form of relatively small-scale raiding parties.⁵⁶ These considerations, combined with the scant evidence for the use of monumental public writing in archaic Rome, render it highly unlikely that the treaty dates before the middle of the sixth century at the very earliest; we may use this as a conservative *terminus post quem*. On the other side of the temporal window, the terms of the *foedus Gabinum* — especially the grant of ἰσοπολιτεία — are most intelligible at a point in time prior to the *foedus Cassianum*, the compact concluded between the Romans and the Latins following the Latin War, which resulted in the creation of the new Latin League with Rome at its

⁵² Varro, *Ling.* 5.33. For hints from the material record about the practice of augury in early Gabii, see Bottini 2012.

⁵³ Cf. Montero Herrero 1981: 13. See also Gargola 2017: 140–1 on the religious aspects of the *ager Gabinus*; his discussion would also support an early date for the establishment of the *auspicia singularia* and the privileged status of Gabii’s territory, compatible with the context in which we place the *foedus*.

⁵⁴ Cf. Livy 1.53–4. As Ogilvie 1965: 205–6 noted, this episode is actually a conflation of two separate events appropriated almost wholesale from Herodotus: Zopyrus and the capture of Babylon (3.154–60), and the communication between Periander and Thrasybulus (5.92.6–7).

⁵⁵ Some scholars have read chronological significance into the designation of the treaty in the Latin sources as either a *foedus regum* (Horace) or a *foedus populi Romani* (the aureus of Antistius): that is, as belonging either to the regal period or the early Republic. But the association of the treaty with ‘kings’ or ‘the Roman people’ in these phrases cannot be taken literally — or reliably — as situating the event relative to the traditional date for the establishment of the Republic in 509; *pace*, for example, Bruun 1967: 60.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Festus 402L. For the nature of warfare in Latium in this period, see Armstrong 2016: 74–128, esp. 88 on the activities attributed to Sextus Tarquinius. Livy (1.53–4) and Dionysius (*Ant. Rom.* 4.53–8) both characterise the continuous warfare between the two cities as a stalemate, broken only by the ruse of Tarquin. The generous *foedus* is thus somewhat in tension with Dionysius’ preceding narrative of Tarquin’s ruthless takeover, and Dionysius must exercise some ingenuity to explain away the apparent discrepancy. Perhaps this problem is what led Livy simply to omit mention of the *foedus*.

head.⁵⁷ After this point, while bilateral treaties between Rome and the Latins did not become obsolete as an instrument of diplomacy, their use seems to have been reserved for the readmission of rebellious Latins into alliance with Rome, and their terms limited to the renewal of the *societas* and *amicitia* guaranteed under the *foedus Cassianum*.⁵⁸ So the *foedus Gabinum* can, in sum, be reasonably placed around or shortly before 500. Gabii, for a brief period of time before the Latin War, enjoyed an unparalleled status. Its good fortune was not to last.⁵⁹

From the *foedus*, let us turn now to the *devotio*. The sole textual evidence for the *devotio* of Gabii comes from an obscure but intriguing reference in the *Saturnalia*, a learned miscellany of Roman antiquarian lore written in the fifth century C.E. by the senator and high-ranking imperial office-holder Macrobius (Praetorian Prefect of Italy in 430). Following a discussion of old Roman customs relating to the besieging of cities and arcane beliefs in the importance of their tutelary divinities, Macrobius records the prayer formula by which *dictatores* and *imperatores* might, after calling forth the gods of the place through the related ceremony of *evocatio*, devote a city of the enemy to the proper chthonic deities. The commander would beseech these gods, as he performed the various elements of the ritual, to ‘take the city, its fields, the lives of its citizens and their lifetimes as cursed and doomed to destruction’ (*uti uos eas urbes agrosque capita aetatesque eorum deuotas consecratasque habeatis*).⁶⁰ In the course of his researches, Macrobius had found in early annalistic writers (*prisci annales*) that four central Italian cities had suffered this archaic ritual of *devotio* at the hands of the Romans: Fidenae, Veii, Fregellae and Gabii.⁶¹ The author does not elaborate further on these events. Of these four cases, the *devotio* of Veii, around the beginning of the fourth century, is the

⁵⁷ On the *foedus Cassianum*, an inscribed copy of which seems to have been set up in the forum down to the first century, see Cic., *Balb.* 53; Livy 2.33.9; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 6.95.2. On its authenticity, see esp. Cornell 1995: 299–301; Humbert 1978: 68–9 (with further bibliography). Its terms, as presented in our accounts, are more favourable to the Latins than the surrounding narrative — elaborated to magnify the Roman victory — might have dictated, which is another point in favour of its basic authenticity. The fact that the temple of Semo Sancus in which the hide-covered shield bearing the inscription of the *foedus Gabinum* hung was, according to tradition, only formally consecrated by the consul Sp. Postumius in 466 is not — pace Alföldi 1963: 379 — an obstacle to an earlier date. The shrine had supposedly been built half a century earlier, but had remained for some time without the customary dedication; see Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 9.60.8.

⁵⁸ Instructive in this respect is the *foedus Ardeatinum* between Rome and Ardea, (re)established in 444; see Livy 4.7.10–11 (= Licinius Macer *FRHist* 27 F 18) and Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 11.62.4, with Frier 1975: esp. 80 n. 7.

⁵⁹ Moving forward in time, in the dim historical light of the fifth century, it is difficult to discern clearly any effects of either major clause of the *foedus Gabinum*. An extraordinary assembly, according to Livy 3.20, convened in 460 *ad Regillum lacum*, where the power of the *tribuni plebis* was ineffectual, but where the *augures* might still ‘inaugurate a place where business could be transacted with the *populus* under the proper auspices’ (*locumque inaugurari ubi auspiciato cum populo agi posset*). The *Lacus Regillus* cannot be securely located in the *ager Gabinus* (see below, n. 68), and thus does not offer unambiguous evidence of the operation of the *auspicia singularia*, although it may well be relevant. Important *gentes* from Gabii like the Antistii may have established themselves at Rome and become active participants in Roman politics by the last quarter of the fifth century (Livy 4.42–4), but such opportunities cannot be attributed exclusively to the *ισπολιτεία* clause.

⁶⁰ Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.9.1–11 (ed. R. A. Kaster, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA, 2011). On the ritual of the *devotio*, Versnel 1976 is fundamental. As an inversion of the procedure of city foundation, it seems that, as part of the *devotio*, the ritual of ploughing around the boundary of the city might be used to ‘unfound’ it (*exaugurare*) and annul its sacred properties; see Serv., *ad Aen.* 4.212, with Edlund-Berry 1994: 18.

⁶¹ Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.9.13: ‘In antiquitatibus autem haec oppida inveni deuota: †Stonios†, Fregellas, Gabios, Veios, Fidenas; haec intra Italiam, praeterea Carthaginem et Corinthum.’ The first place-name in this list has been corrupted beyond recovery in the transmission of the manuscripts, and no satisfactory emendation has been proposed. *Gabios* is only a minor correction of the manuscript’s *Gavios* (or *Cavios*), which reflects late Latin sound changes, and has been almost universally accepted among modern scholars; the name *Gavii* is found in the corpus of the land surveyors (*Liber Coloniarum* p. 234L and *Ordines Fmitionum* p. 349L in F. Blüme, K. Lachmann and A. Rudorff (eds), *Gromatici Veteres*, Berlin, 1848) and late antique historians (Jord., *Rom.* 104–5), and *Cabii* in late Roman maps (for example, *Tab. Peutinger.* in C. Miller, *Itineraria Romana*, Stuttgart, 1916, 325 (Strecke 56)).

best understood, both historically and archaeologically;⁶² while the *devotiones* of Fidenae and Fregellae are otherwise unattested, the occasion of each can be reasonably conjectured.⁶³ For Gabii, the historical circumstances are more obscure.⁶⁴ Apart from the story of the duplicitous infiltration and takeover of the city by the Tarquins, an episode that is at least partly an annalistic invention, our extant texts preserve no memory of a Roman conquest of Gabii. In the period of Roman political transition around the end of the sixth century, it is possible that factional strife within the community of Gabii was a contributing factor in confrontations with newly emergent powers in Rome. Based on the material cultural evidence, at least some Sabine groups seem to have had close affiliations with the older monarchic authority, and in these changing circumstances, questions may have arisen about the validity — or utility — of the *foedus*.⁶⁵ The last recorded conflict between Rome and Gabii dates to the beginning of the fifth century, during the Latin War, in which the Sabines sided with the Latin states that had reconfigured and reoriented their alliances to exclude the former hegemon; after this event, Gabii temporarily fades from history, only to re-emerge onto the local stage over a century later as an ally of Rome in the war against the recalcitrant Latin city-state of Praeneste in the late 380s.⁶⁶ It must have been at this crucial moment,

⁶² See the narrative at Livy 5.20–1. On the archaeological evidence connected to the destruction of Veii after its *devotio*, see Ward-Perkins 1961: 52–7. Restudying Ward-Perkins' survey data, Di Giuseppe 2012b: 359 confirms the scarcity of evidence throughout at least the first half of the fourth century and suggests a partial depopulation after the conquest, though noting problems in identifying diagnostic pottery for the period. Patterson and Rendeli 2012: 381 refer to a decline or restriction in the occupation of the plateau. For evidence from remote sensing, see Guaitoli 2016: 197, 199–200. Bartoloni and Acconcia 2012: 11–12, 29–32 argue for the abandonment of Piazza d'Armi by the early or mid fifth century, thus considering it unrelated to the *devotio*, and suggesting that the area would have been reoccupied only in the second half of the fourth century, possibly by Roman colonists. Excavations in the central area at Macchiagrande document the destruction of a group of archaic houses (to be replaced by a single domus) and the progressive obliteration of a possible archaic cult structure from the fourth century onwards: see D'Alessio 2018.

⁶³ According to the historical accounts, Fidenae went to war against Rome several times in the course of the late sixth and fifth centuries (504 B.C.E.: Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 5.40–3; 500–499 B.C.E.: Livy 2.19, Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 5.52–60; 438–434 B.C.E.: Livy 4.17–23, Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 12.5); the decisive conflict seems to have come around the last quarter of the fifth century (426, according to Livy 4.30–4), when, after a long series of revolts, the city was captured and laid waste by the Romans. This was surely the occasion of the *devotio*; the oblique reference in Livy (4.32.8) to 'vows undertaken' (*uotis nuncupatis*) by the dictator before the destruction of the city might dimly recall such a ritual. Fregellae rose in revolt against the Romans in 125; the uprising was quickly suppressed and the city totally destroyed by the praetor L. Opimius (Livy, *Per.* 60; Strabo 5.3.6; Plut., *C. Gracch.* 3.1). Given the recent *devotio* of Carthage by Scipio Aemilianus and the politics and character of Opimius, it is likely that the praetor, modelling himself on Aemilianus, revived the archaic ritual in dealing with a Latin enemy. This interpretation, connecting the *devotio* of Fregellae to the destruction by Opimius, has become generally accepted: see, for example, Coarelli and Monti 1998: 44, 68.

⁶⁴ Versnel 1976: 380 n. 34; cf. the various suggestions of Alföldi 1963: 378–80; Palmer 1970: 178–81; 1974: 178; 1990: 5–6; Gabrielli 2003: 252 n. 37; Pasqualini 2012: 48–51; Palombi 2015: 260–1.

⁶⁵ Behind the legend of Antistius Petro being stoned to death by his fellow Sabines, who fell for the trick of Sextus Tarquinius (Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 4.57), might be a dim recollection of civic discord within Gabii around the time of its conquest, with different clans strategically allying themselves with different outside forces — Roman patrician *gentes*, 'warlord'-*rex* figures, the Latin League — against their own fellow citizens. Furthermore, the important contradictions in the historical tradition as to whether Gabii welcomed the Tarquinius after their exile from Rome (Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 4.85.4, 5.3.1) or assassinated Sextus Tarquinius when he tried to take refuge there (Livy 1.60.2) might be read as indicating tensions between pro-tyrannical and anti-tyrannical factions. Similarly, the reported presence of 'the best from the city of Gabii' (Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 5.22.4: ἐκ τῆς Γαβίων πόλεως τὸ ἀκμαϊότατον) among the forces of the Etruscan warlord Lars Porsenna might reflect internal divisions that led to some renewed conflict with Rome around 500. For the evidence from the so-called *regia* at Gabii and its relationship to 'regal' iconography at Rome, see Fabbri 2017.

⁶⁶ For Gabii on the side of the Latins against Rome during the Latin War of the early fifth century, see Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 5.61. This list of Latin cities bound by treaty corresponds in part to the list in a fragment of Cato's *Origines* that is commonly thought to have been copied from an archaic dedicatory inscription of the Latin League set up c. 500 at Aricia (see *FRHist* 5 F 36). The exact relationship between the two lists is uncertain, but there is no a priori reason to doubt the record of Gabii's participation. For the war against Praeneste,

in the wake of the decisive victory of the Romans under the dictator A. Postumius at Lake Regillus, when the *devotio* of Gabii took place.⁶⁷ The battle was fought in the vicinity of Gabii, on the border of its territory.⁶⁸ It would thus be the first known instance of the ritual, a dubious distinction accorded to a city that, in many other respects, occupies such an exceptional place in the early history of Rome.

It is clear that the idea of the *devotio*, which entailed — certainly in theory and apparently in practice — the utter destruction of the city, is incompatible with the *foedus Gabinum*, the terms of which assume the continuation of Gabii as a political community in its own right. There is no tenable interpretation of the *foedus* as the final outcome of the same conflict that involved the *devotio* of the city. Therefore, the logical conclusion is that the *devotio* could only have happened at a point in time after the establishment of the treaty. Furthermore, it stands to reason that it was, in reality, the existence of the unique treaty between Rome and Gabii that made the disloyalty of the Gabines and their alliance with the rest of the Latin states against the Romans in the Latin War all the more bitter, and the extreme — and possibly innovative — punitive measure of the *devotio* all the more warranted. Indeed, the subsequent history of the Roman *devotio* suggests that it came to be reserved for only the most intractable cities, those enemies who might be adjudged to have incurred the wrath of the gods by the breaking of oaths and the violation of treaties: this is true of the other early republican cases of Fidenae (c. 426) and Veii (c. 396), as well as the later ‘archaising’ revivals of the ritual at Carthage (146), Corinth (146) and Fregellae (125). It seems that the extraordinary vengeance of Rome against Gabii was commensurate with the extraordinary rights and privileges that the city had previously been granted, and had faithlessly spurned.⁶⁹ Gabii was, moreover, a powerful and longstanding rival, which seems on some level to have supported the ousted political faction at Rome (leaving aside the vexed question of how exactly the events surrounding the end of the regal period are to be understood). Combined with its geographical proximity to the battlefield, it stood out as a logical target for this exemplary act of sacral retribution. Memories of the precipitous downfall of Gabii persisted: the frequent collocation of the three original early republican *oppida devota* — Gabii, Fidenae and Veii — in later

which culminated in the capture of that city by the Roman dictator T. Quinctius Cincinnatus in 380, see Livy 6.21–9. The allegiance of Gabii to Rome in this conflict is misunderstood by Palmer 1970: 178, who incorrectly claims that Gabii fought on the side of Praeneste. Livy (6.21.9) makes clear at the outset of the narrative that the Gabini, along with the cities of Tusculum and Labici, appealed to Rome for military aid after their territories were invaded by Praeneste. Gabii seems to have remained loyal during the Latin Revolt that followed, c. 341–338. Thus, Palmer’s 1990: 5 suggestion of placing the *devotio* in the context of the aftermath of the Latin Revolt is unfounded.

⁶⁷ For the dictator A. Postumius Albinus ‘Regillensis’, the battle at Lake Regillus (variously dated by the ancient accounts to 499 or 496), and its aftermath, see Livy 2.19–21; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 6.2–21. While Beloch 1926: 156–7 was perhaps right to express some doubt that, ‘eine Tatsache, wie die Zerstörung einer Stadt wie Gabii, könnte doch in unserer annalistischen Überlieferung nicht wohl übergangen sein’ [a fact like the destruction of a city like Gabii surely could not be passed over in our annalistic tradition], he was mistaken that ‘es ist, seit der Einnahme durch Tarquinius Superbus, von Kriegen zwischen Gabii und Rom überhaupt niemals die Rede’ [after the capture by Tarquinius Superbus, there is never any mention at all of war between Gabii and Rome], since, in fact, Gabii fought against Rome in the Latin War.

⁶⁸ The precise location of *Lacus Regillus* is debated. It seems to have been somewhere in the plain on the border between the territories of Tusculum and Gabii (Livy 2.19.3; cf. Livy 26.9.12). Ashby 1898 thought it corresponded to the modern Pantano Secco, around 6 km southwest of Gabii, and this position is supported by Quilici 1974: 879–81. Pareti 1959 placed it (probably incorrectly) 1 km closer to Gabii, at Prata Porci. Barbeta 1995: 47–8 took up an old suggestion that it lay at Pantano Borghese, just south of Gabii. For our purposes here, what is important is that the lake was very close to the *ager Gabinus*, and that the battle — even if fought in *agro Tuscolano* — was within a short march of the walls of Gabii (Tusculum is roughly equidistant but comparatively inaccessible, situated high in the Alban hills to the south at an elevation of 600 m).

⁶⁹ Along these lines, one might interpret the terms and provisions of the multilateral *foedus Cassianum* as a Roman response to the failure of the bilateral *foedus Gabinum* as an instrument of loyalty.

writings as bywords for ruination and the catastrophe of a once great city is further suggestive of the lasting *exemplum* of the *devotio* that attached to their names and histories, even if the vague mentions in the extant accounts do not specifically identify their shared calamity as such.⁷⁰ This widespread, almost commonplace identification of Gabii with an archaic ruin in late republican and early imperial literature is particularly interesting since, in light of the extensive archaeological evidence from both public and private contexts for an impressive mid-republican resurgence, it is such a patent anachronism, which ignores all urban development subsequent to the ancient devastation. Such rhetorical uses of Gabii seem to reflect the degree to which the idea of the city was so inextricably intertwined with the memory of its *devotio* that no centralised urban planning of the fourth century, no monumental scenic architecture of the third century, no grand Hellenistic-style temple-theatre complex of the second century, could displace its deep-rooted identity as an *oppidum devotum* in the collective Roman imagination.⁷¹

On this view, it is tempting to see in the belated dedication of the existing sanctuary of Semo Sancus on the Quirinal that housed the *foedus Gabinum* by Sp. Postumius in the next generation (c. 466) a link, as a kind of epilogue, to the story of the momentous ritual destruction of Gabii. As a monument, the shield inscribed with the treaty would inevitably have been viewed differently in the aftermath of the *devotio*, especially displayed as it was in a shrine to a divinity whose original sphere of responsibility seems to have comprised oaths and other compacts considered to be sacred and unalterably fixed.⁷² It is unlikely to be a coincidence that the political actor interested in (re)shaping the complex meanings, memories and symbolic importance of this space was a member of the patrician *gens Postumia*, the clan to which the *dictator* belonged whom the historical tradition unanimously credits with the victory over the Latins at Lake Regillus — and who accordingly, if our interpretation of the occasion of the *devotio* of Gabii is correct, would have been responsible for the performance of the ritual. This familial connection may have been one of the principal motivations behind the formal consecration, after a long lapse of time, of the shrine of Semo Sancus, a central feature of which was a document that now stood as a memorial both to the self-inflicted reversal of fortune of an ally turned treacherous and to the achievement of the *gens Postumia* in exacting a kind of divine retribution.⁷³ Such an instrumental use of a

⁷⁰ See for example, Livy 5.54.1 (Veii, Gabii and Fidenae; dramatic date of 390); Virg., *Aen.* 6.773 (Gabii and Fidenae); Prop. 4.1a.34–6 (Gabii and Fidenae); Hor., *Epist.* 1.11.7–8 (Gabii and Fidenae); Juv., *Sat.* 6.56–7, 10.99–101 (Gabii and Fidenae); Lucan 7.391–3 (Gabii and Veii). There may also be a connection between the *devotio* and the old poliadic cult of Gabii, Juno Gabina (associated with the most ancient community by Virg., *Aen.* 7.682–3; cf. Sil., *Pun.* 12.537). In the two best documented cases of the ritual, Veii and Carthage, the *devotio* seems also to have been accompanied by an *evocatio* of the local form of the goddess Juno (although for Carthage, see the doubts raised by Rawson 1973: 168–73). Despite the almost universally accepted identification of Juno as the divinity connected to the monumental second-century temple at Gabii, the evidence on which this assumption rests is, in fact, rather flimsy. It cannot be conclusively shown that her cult continued into the republican period.

⁷¹ The grandest example of the mid third-century monumentalisation of Gabii is documented in Area F: see Johnston *et al.* 2018. The persistence of these outdated views of Gabii in the early imperial period is a testament more generally to the workings of Roman social memory and the ways in which the past is selectively remembered — and forgotten — in light of present needs for self-definition; cf. Fentress and Wickham 1992: 88.

⁷² On Semo Sancus — whose origins and nature were obscure even to the Romans (Ov., *Fast.* 6.213–18; Varro, *Ling.* 5.66), but whose name was thought to derive in part from Latin *sancire*, given the god's association with oaths and treaties — see esp. Radke 1987: 115–23.

⁷³ That the last king of Rome was, at least in the tradition, thought to be both the builder of the temple of Semo Sancus and the concluser of the *foedus Gabinum* would seem to make the ultimate dedication of this temple by the same *gens* that was responsible for the destruction of Gabii a particularly evocative statement. On some level, the interest of the fifth-century Postumii may have been in reclaiming and recontextualising meanings associated with the previous ('regal') political order.

temple (re)dedication to glorify the *gens* and consolidate its place within the shifting political landscape at Rome aligns with the other, more prominent religious building activities of the early fifth-century Postumii, while the interest in the ambivalent monument surrounding the *foedus Gabinum* also fits well into the narrative of the lasting involvement of the Postumii in the city of Gabii and the *ager Gabinus*, down into the third century.⁷⁴

If it can be plausibly argued on the basis of historical evidence that the city of Gabii underwent an extensive intentional destruction and a ritual unfounding in the form of a *devotio* at some point in the early fifth century, then we gain valuable contextualisation for the intriguing urban trajectory of fifth-century Gabii plotted independently by the archaeological evidence: the roughly contemporaneous obliteration of important buildings on the *arx* and at the extramural sanctuary and the abandonment of the elite domestic compounds around the beginning of the fifth century; the apparent hiatus in occupation activity in the middle of the fifth century, marked by the significant anomaly of the intramural inhumation of adults; and, finally, and most importantly for our purposes here, the creation of a radically innovative urban plan towards the end of the fifth century. It is possible to weave together the archaeological and the historical threads into a coherent, if tentative, narrative. Around the end of the sixth century, Gabii concluded a remarkable *foedus aequum* with Rome, the terms of which granted its citizens and territory a privileged political and religious status; after backing the ousted political faction at Rome and treacherously shifting its alliance to the Latin League shortly thereafter, it became the first city to suffer as retribution a *devotio* when the Romans, under the dictator A. Postumius, prevailed in battle nearby at Lake Regillus; the defeat of Gabii came to factor importantly into the self-promotion of the *gens Postumia*.⁷⁵ The city was destroyed and ritually unmade, and consequently abandoned for much of the fifth century. Different Sabine factions enjoyed divergent fates: certain clans, like the *gens Antistia*, which rose to some prominence at Rome within only a few decades, seem to have negotiated the tumultuous political landscape more successfully than others.⁷⁶ Some locals — perhaps subjected to forced migration elsewhere — returned to bury their dead among the ruins of the unfounded city. Within the habitation clusters of the Iron Age and archaic community, intramural funerary display had always represented an important strategy for both the construction and performance of identity and the creation of symbolic ties with the physical landscape.⁷⁷ After the city was depopulated, the practice clearly continued, albeit in different forms, into the mid fifth century, probably in order to maintain or construct a link with the past occupants. The removal of the sacred boundary of the city and its associated taboo against intramural burial by the ritual of the *devotio* opened up the potential to exploit adult inhumations as markers of ancestral places, taking over the function that infant

⁷⁴ In the early fifth century, the *gens* is also credited with the dedication of the important temple of Castor and Pollux in the Forum (Livy 2.42.5), as well as vowing the temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera near the foot of the Aventine (Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 6.17.2, 6.94.3). On the Postumii in the fifth century, and the role of the mid second-century historian A. Postumius Albinus in shaping the tradition around his ancestors, see Wiseman 1998: 35–52. On the activities of the Postumii in and around Gabii in the fourth and third centuries, see below.

⁷⁵ In 96, the moneyer A. Postumius Albinus minted a denarius whose reverse, depicting the Dioscuri watering their horses at a fountain, recalls the mythical circumstances of his ancestor's victory at Lake Regillus four centuries earlier (*RRC* 335/10b).

⁷⁶ If Gabii was characterised by factionalism around 500, the formation of strategic alliances with groups at Rome on the part of the Antistii might help to explain their particularly rapid integration into social and institutional structures at Rome (see above, nn. 59, 65). A contemporary comparison for the relationship between factionalism and the involuntary abandonment of cities might be the depopulation of Camarina and Gela and the forced migration of their inhabitants to the neighbouring *polis* of Syracuse, which contributed to the consolidation of political power and regional hegemony by the Deinomenid tyrants; see Hdt. 7.155–6; Thuc. 6.5; Diod. Sic. 11.76; cf. Lomas 2006.

⁷⁷ Demonstrated by Cohen and Naglak 2020 on the basis of the excavated sequence from one such cluster.

burials had previously served in materialising physical and symbolic ownership. Non-locals are unlikely to have been interested in burying their dead with such care and in such close spatial connection with the old seats of power. But, as a political community, Gabii had become defunct, a kind of ghost town.⁷⁸ When the mountain peoples of the Aequi and Volsci descended into the Latin plain in the mid fifth century, the marauders encountered no resistance whatsoever in the territory of Gabii.⁷⁹ In the last quarter of the fifth century, however, occupation activity in the city resumed with a sudden intensity: on the direction of some central authority, the grid-planned streets were laid out simultaneously, completely obliterating features that had persisted even in the abandoned city as meaningful places of memory in the landscape; multiple public inscriptions on stone were set up, which clearly indicate the presence of powerful social actors and an intended civic audience. Thereafter, the community gradually came back to life. In the 380s, the re-emergent city was a bulwark for Rome against the depredations of Praeneste, and by the middle of the third century, it was a thriving urban centre once more.

Moving forward in time, as has been suggested at various points throughout this discussion, the political rivalries, imperial conquests, cultural developments and intellectual trends of subsequent generations fostered continued interest in the early history of Gabii, which was of such fundamental importance to the story of Rome itself. The beginnings of Roman historiography in the second century defined more clearly traditions that had long been propagated by the self-interested family agendas of the Postumii and their aristocratic competitors like the Fabii, as intensifying anxieties about problems like kingship and tyranny in republican society more broadly also drew attentions — and imaginations — to particularly salient episodes in the Sabine past that spoke meaningfully to the Roman present. A renewed fascination with archaic religious procedures must have surrounded the revival of the obsolete ritual of the *devotio* in 146, and lent richer significance to the prototypical fate of early republican Gabii in the works of contemporary annalists. This formative period undoubtedly (re)shaped Roman memories about Gabii. But the re-elaboration or invention of the tradition seems to have integrated and built upon certain underlying events and dynamics for which there is a high degree of plausibility, especially in light of the archaeological record, with which it generally aligns. Finally, in the late Republic and the Augustan age, the concomitant rise of antiquarianism and decline of the cities of old Latium proved to be an especially evocative combination in the case of Gabii: commentary on the physical ruins, venerable documents and ordinary customs of its bygone greatness became part of a new discourse of Roman identity.

To conclude this historical reassessment, our proposed interpretation of the new, planned city of Gabii is that it represents a refoundation after the rupture of the mid fifth century caused by the *devotio*. Even if one is hesitant to accept the identification of

⁷⁸ It has been noted in scholarship that ‘deserted Gabii’ had a ‘curious status’ with respect to the rustic Roman *tribus*: see Taylor 1960: 44; cf. with due caution Alföldi 1963: 313, 379–80; Beloch 1926: 155–7, 163. Although nearby Pedum belonged to the *tribus Menenia*, Gabii and its *ager* do not seem to have been included in the system of the seventeen original rural *tribus* — the creation of which is to be dated sometime around or shortly before 495 (Livy 2.21.7, with Cornell 1995: 173–8). If correct, this exceptional absence might have been connected initially to its privileged, autonomous status guaranteed by the *foedus Gabinum* (so Alföldi, Beloch and, more guardedly, Taylor, who refers to the city’s ‘shadowy independence’), but then subsequently to the execration and abandonment of the city and the associated impacts on the population of its territory. In the early imperial period, the most distinguished branch of the Sabine *gens Antistia*, the Antistii Veteres, belonged to the *tribus Aemilia* (CIL 14.2849) (see above, n. 47); but republican members of the *gens* did belong to the geographically appropriate *tribus Menenia*, like the senator of 129 B.C.E. L. Antestius C. f. Menenia, found among the *consilium* on the S.C. *de agro Pergameno* (IGRom. 4.262). The change in *tribus* might have been the result of the elevation of the Antistii Veteres to the patriciate by Augustus; see Pistor 1965: 17; Minieri 1988.

⁷⁹ This event (c. 463/462) is the only mention of Gabii in historical sources between the Battle of Lake Regillus in the 490s and the war against Praeneste in the late 380s; see Livy 3.8.6 and Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 9.68.1.

the occasion of the abandonment with this specific historical event, the clear discontinuity of occupation nonetheless raises important questions of the agency and motivations behind the revival of Gabii. If the process that we discern is the Sabine community reconstituting itself multiple generations after the trauma of destruction, then this would be an exceptionally uncommon and complex case of local resilience and initiative. If, on the other hand, this was a project conceived of and implemented by agents of Rome as the hegemonic power in Latium, which seems the more likely scenario, there would be, given its early date, interesting and important implications for the history of colonisation and planned urbanism in Roman Italy.⁸⁰

V THE REORGANISATION OF GABII AND EARLY REPUBLICAN COLONISATION

The integrated analysis of the stratigraphy of the street system and the sequence of occupation at Gabii allows us to characterise the tempo and modalities of its urban reorganisation with greater precision than is normally possible for most towns of Latium, where very little survives besides fortifications and temples for the early republican period. While early fifth-century renovations are well attested at nearby peer sites (for example, the city walls at Praeneste;⁸¹ the temples at Ardea, discussed above⁸²), the case of Gabii stands out because of the nature of the hiatus between contemporary monumental construction projects and the actual establishment of the grid, which we can now assign with confidence to the end of the fifth century. The intermediate phase consists of small clusters of adult burials developing around abandoned elite habitation foci, a pattern that elsewhere in the region is only attested at sites that were defunctionalised as a result of warfare, as at Satricum (where the practice continued on a larger scale well into the fourth century). The complete obliteration of these archaic features by the road grid, together with the simultaneous appearance of a robust public epigraphic culture, has prompted us to re-examine the historical relationship between Gabii's unparalleled urban upheaval and the dynamics of the absorption of the old city into the Roman political sphere.

Given that the newly planned city of the late fifth century looks like the result of a kind of refoundation, which may implicate the involvement of the Romans in some capacity, it is worth considering the resettlement of Gabii in the broader context of early republican colonisation. Despite the fact that the city is not recorded explicitly among the *priscae Latinae coloniae* found in the literary texts, 'colonisation' is a useful preliminary approximation for the general changes under way at Gabii in this period.⁸³ Given the high degree of variability and inconsistency in the dynamics, results and records for these colonies, it seems that an inclusive approach — which admits the utility of comparison between settlements that are explicitly called *coloniae* in the surviving texts and those that are not, but share similar trajectories — is justified. In recent scholarship on early colonisation, there are two basic models for conceptualising the process: 'a "statist" scenario, which postulates radical interventions in the colonised areas, planned and organised by the Roman political body', and a decentred interpretation that places emphasis instead on the independent initiative of *gentes* and 'warlords' acting with more

⁸⁰ It should be noted that the revival of the community is not incompatible with a previous *devotio*; indeed, most of the other secure examples of *oppida devota* were eventually reoccupied (Carthage and Corinth being refounded as *coloniae*).

⁸¹ Gatti and Palombi 2016.

⁸² See above, n. 35.

⁸³ Roman tradition held that at least fifteen *coloniae* were founded between the reign of Tarquinius Superbus and the settlement of Latium in 338. For a reassessment of these early colonies, see, generally, Termeer 2010; and de Haas and Attema 2016 on the specific case of Norba.

or less autonomy from Rome.⁸⁴ For the fifth century, at least, the ‘gens/warlord’ model increasingly seems to make the most sense of the range of available archaeological, epigraphic and literary evidence.⁸⁵ Given the rather poor archaeological visibility of early colonisation, the city plan of Gabii represents a potentially important contribution. Moreover, the idiosyncratic aspects of the form of the plan may offer further support for the argument that Rome was not actively or directly involved in the centralised creation of a coherent colonial model in the fifth century, and that there was a significant degree of local experimentation.

The close relationship between the patrician gens *Postumia* and Gabii is therefore of particular interest in thinking about the possible agency behind the reorganisation and reoccupation of the city. In the first half of the fifth century, the activities of the Postumii around Gabii would plausibly fit the model of gentilician warlords, operating in the interstices between state and private power. The dictator A. Postumius defeated Gabii and, if our interpretation is correct, performed the ritual *devotio* of the conquered city. A generation later, Sp. Postumius took a personal interest in carefully curating the memory of the treaty between Rome and Gabii. At this period, the gens seems to have possessed extensive property in the neighbourhood of Gabii, which can be deduced in part from the fact that beginning in the early fifth century, several generations of the most distinguished branch of the Postumii — the Alb(in)i — took the secondary cognomen *Regillensis*.⁸⁶ Although the historical accounts explain this name as an honorific and attribute its origins to A. Postumius’ victory at Lake Regillus, this is almost certainly an anachronistic interpretation. Like the identical cognomen of the contemporary patrician Claudii Sabini Regillenses, whose ancestral home was the Sabine town of Regillum, the name of the Postumii Alb(in)i is far more likely to have been toponymically derived, and to refer to a seat of landed power in the area of the Latin plain around Lake Regillus.⁸⁷ At least some of these holdings — presumably lying to the north and east of Regillus, between the lake and the city — were carved out of the former territory of Gabii, which extended southward to the border with the *ager Tusculanus* near Regillus; but it cannot be ruled out that the origins of the Postumii also lay in this region, and that this pre-existing local interest may have been intertwined with the leading role that A. Postumius took in the battle.

Down into the late fourth and early third centuries, the Postumii dominated the *ager Gabinus* almost in the fashion of feudal lords, blurring — and at times overstepping — in their archaic-style exercise of authority the boundaries between magistrate and patron. In 291, the consul L. Postumius Megellus assembled 2,000 Roman soldiers near

⁸⁴ Attema *et al.* 2014: 211. The term ‘warlord’, while it has been fruitfully employed in recent scholarship to describe certain social conditions in this period, is not unproblematic. There are various understandings and uses of the term: see esp. Armstrong 2016: 3 n. 6 (with further bibliography), whom we follow in adopting the basic definition proposed by Vinci 2007: 328 of a ‘warlord’ as ‘the leader of an armed group that uses military power and economic exploitation to maintain fiefdoms which are autonomous and independent from the state and society’; cf. Rich 2018.

⁸⁵ Termeer 2010: 61–2; cf. Càssola 1988: 17; Coarelli 1990: 151–3; Terrenato 2014; Armstrong 2016: 215–32. The attested members of the family with this cognomen are: A. Postumius Albus Regillensis (cos. 496), Sp. Postumius Albus Regillensis (cos. 466), A. Postumius Albus Regillensis (cos. 464), Sp. Postumius Albus Regillensis (tr. mil. c. p. 432.), M. Postumius Albinus Regillensis (tr. mil. c. p. 426, censor 403), P. (or M.?) Postumius Albinus Regillensis (tr. mil. c. p. 414), A. Postumius Albinus Regillensis (tr. mil. c. p. 397, 381), Sp. Postumius Albinus Regillensis (tr. mil. c. p. 394), L. Postumius Albinus Regillensis (tr. mil. c. p. 389, 381).

⁸⁷ For the comparable Claudii Sabini Regillenses (or Inregillenses) and the town of Regillum (or Regilli) in Sabinum, see Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 5.40.3; Livy 3.58.1; Suet., *Tib.* 1.1 (*patricia gens Claudia ... orta est ex Regillis oppido Sabinorum*). On the topographical nature of fifth-century cognomina, see Cornell 2003: 85; Ampolo 1981: 61; Mommsen 1878. If the *fasti* are a reliable indication, toponymically derived *cognomina* fell out of fashion amongst the Roman aristocracy by the second half of the fourth century. In general, on the territorially rooted nature of the gens and the dynamics of the control and distribution of land by clan leaders, see Capogrossi Colognesi 1994.

Gabii and employed them to clear private land on his large ancestral estate in the *ager Gabinus*, detaining them for a long time in the unhealthy marshes (that until modern times characterised much of the hinterland of Gabii) and thereby ultimately contributing to the outbreak of an epidemic within the army.⁸⁸ Such despotic behaviour, which brought the arrogant Postumius into vocal conflict with the rest of the aristocracy, doubtless represents the persistence of early republican forms of clientage and labour exploitation, and reflects Postumius' increasingly outmoded conception of his own individual power. In his subsequent defence before the Senate, he claimed that he was its master, not the other way around. These remnants of the extreme local autonomy and social dominance of the patrician *gens*, which are reminiscent of the situation of the 'warlords' active in fifth-century Latium, were probably especially resistant to change among certain elite families (like the Postumii) and on certain kinds of ancestral gentilician land (like the *ager Gabinus*).⁸⁹ There is a tradition, perhaps containing a kernel of relevant information, that associates the powerful members of the *gens Postumia* in the fifth century with large bands of followers, who could at times be mobilised for offensive (perhaps even semi-private) warfare through invoking alternative forms of personal authority. Ascribed to these Postumii is a commitment to maintaining older modes of distributing conquered territory that privileged the aristocratic *gentes* rather than the new plebeian element in the Roman military system.⁹⁰ Despite their reactionary tendencies, members of the clan could be flexible enough shrewdly to adapt the sway they wielded locally to changing political realities. A generation before Megellus' transgressive activities in the *ager Gabinus*, his kinsman Sp. Postumius Albinus as consul in 334 had proposed the foundation of the important Latin colony at Cales, a measure that was intended in part to forestall disaffection among the plebs and win political favour for its proponents.⁹¹ Based on the apparent presence of families of Gabine extraction among those enrolled as settlers at Cales, Postumius seems to have used this new, more formalised type of colonial scheme in rather traditional ways to reward his own personal *clientelae*.⁹² It is, therefore, not implausible to imagine a significant degree of continuity in the topography of power in the *ager Gabinus* — centred around the Postumii — from the early Republic to the age of the Samnite Wars,

⁸⁸ For this episode, see Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 17/18.4, who specifically identifies this land as a family inheritance (διαδοχῆς) and connects it to the nobility of his clan (τῆς τ' ἀξιώσεως τοῦ γένους); Cass. Dio F 36.32; Livy, *Per.* 11; and especially the new fragment of book 11 of Livy, analysed in its full context, with particular attention to Gabii and the Postumii, by Gabrielli 2003; cf. Monaco 1995; Palmer 1990. This Postumius, either the nephew or the grandson of Sp. Postumius Albinus cos. 334 (see below), was the first of the *gens* not to bear the *cognomen* Albinus, adopting instead — in the fashion of the late fourth century — the Greek name *Megellus*; on the names, relationships and circumstances, see Palmer 1990: 12.

⁸⁹ Cf. Gabrielli 2003: 252–6.

⁹⁰ On the large bands of followers under the power of the Postumii, see Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 10.41.5 (dramatic date 455). Livy (5.16.5) records that in 397 A. Postumius Albinus Regillensis raised a band of 'volunteer' (*prope uoluntariorum*) soldiers through unofficial means (*non iusto dilectu*), and despite the intervention of the people's tribunes, to retaliate against Etruscan raids into Roman territory. An evocative episode is related by Livy (4.49–50) involving another Postumius Regillensis (tr. mil. c. p. 414) and the settlement of the territory of the conquered city of Bolae (located about 17 km southeast of Gabii). His haughty resistance to the popular desire for the creation of a *colonia* for the plebeians resulted in his murder at the hands of his own troops. On the generally hostile tendency of the historiographical tradition toward the Postumii, see Wiseman 1998: 35–52.

⁹¹ Livy 8.16.13–14 states that in proposing the *colonia*, the consuls meant to 'anticipate the wishes of the plebs with an act of generosity' (*ut beneficio praeuenirent desiderium plebis*); 2,500 colonists were enrolled.

⁹² Stamped black-gloss ceramics produced locally at Cales from the middle of the third century attest to the prominence there of a family of entrepreneurs called the Gabinii: on this 'Calene ware', see Pedroni 2001: esp. 65–81; Di Giuseppe 2012a: 88. For the text of the stamps themselves, recording members of the *gens* and their *serui*, see *CIL* 10.8054.4–8. Already Schulze 1904: 532–3 had reasonably connected this *nomen* to Gabii; Palmer 1990: 11 went further in plausibly suggesting that it was the circumstances around the creation of the *colonia* at Cales and the resettlement of expatriate Gabini there by Sp. Postumius Albinus that initially inspired the name *Gabinus*, since it would hardly be a gentilic within the community of Gabii itself.

and to see the resettlement of Gabii at the end of the fifth century as a process grounded in, and a function of, this gentilician power.⁹³ In this *gens*-oriented model of colonisation, the Postumii would have possessed both the requisite local authority to coordinate the centralised effort implicated by the new urban layout, and the vested interest in the reallocation and redistribution of property that the comprehensive replanning of the city entailed.

Although family agendas like those of the Postumii were highly influential in shaping the processes of early Roman expansion and colonisation, it remains to consider the possible motivations on the part of the broader republican decision-making apparatus that might have contributed to more generalised support for the reoccupation of Gabii.⁹⁴ Amidst the conditions that prevailed in Latium around the time of its refoundation, Gabii's geographical location lent it significant strategic value as a defence against both the unsettled Aequi and wayward Latin allies to the east. The *colonia* planted in the last quarter of the fifth century at the rebellious city of Labici, in the near vicinity of Gabii to the southeast, certainly attests to Roman concern with securing their hold on the region more firmly. Together with Gabii, it served as an important buffer in the 380s against the expanding hegemony of Praeneste, which maintained its own rival network of subsidiary *oppida* in this area of the Latin plain. The new city of Gabii may thus have originated contemporaneously with the *colonia* at Labici as a cognate response, negotiated between the interests of the clan and the 'state', to the same social and military pressures.⁹⁵ After peace was finally established in Latium at the end of the fourth century, Gabii became an important node in the social and religious networks of distinguished members of the local elite of Praeneste, perhaps mediating to some extent their interactions with Rome.⁹⁶

From the perspectives of both archaeology and history, then, the planned resettlement of Gabii at the end of the fifth century constitutes a valuable and complex new case study for understanding early republican urbanism. In particular, the distinct possibility of the long-term involvement of the Postumii in the city and its territory affords a rare opportunity for venturing a more fine-grained analysis of the general dynamics articulated in current models of 'warlord'- and *gens*-oriented colonisation in this period.

VI CONCLUSIONS

Having re-evaluated, on the basis of the latest archaeological data, the idea of the quasi-orthogonal layout of Gabii as an outcome of an essentially independent long-term development (as had been initially hypothesised in previous publications), we have proposed a new reconstruction of the history of the interstate interactions between Rome and Gabii in the course of the fifth century, and offered an interpretation of the possible impacts of Rome's early expansion on the local urban trajectory. The details of the processes at work — which we have connected to moments of ritual unbounding (*devotio*) and planned resettlement ('colonisation') — and the precise role of particular

⁹³ Palmer 1990: 5 wanted to connect the acquisition of property in the *ager Gabinus* by the Postumii to the results of the *devotio* of the city, but because he incorrectly dated the *devotio* to 338 (see above, n. 66), his hypothesis was rejected in subsequent scholarship; cf., for example, Gabrielli 2003: 252 n. 37.

⁹⁴ On the dynamics of these family agendas, see Terrenato 2019.

⁹⁵ The Roman colony at Labici was supposedly founded in 418 (see Livy 4.47). For the *oppida* in the orbit of Praeneste in the 380s, see Livy 6.29.6; for Gabii as a buffer against its expansion, see Livy 6.21.9, 6.27.10.

⁹⁶ On two votive inscriptions to Fortuna dedicated at Gabii in the late fourth century by members of the *gens Oppia* from Praeneste, see Le Glay 1985. The arrogance exhibited by L. Postumius Albinus during his visit to Praeneste as consul in 173 (Livy 42.1) might be related on some level to his status at Gabii, and to relations between Praeneste and Gabii, as well as between Praeneste and Rome.

social and political actors — like the *gens Postumia* — in the end of the old urban form and emergence of the new are, at present, beyond our ability to establish with certainty.⁹⁷ Other relevant aspects of the archaeological record of early republican Gabii still need to be elucidated in order to reach firmer conclusions about the first phase of occupation of the planned settlement. The material evidence from across the five contiguous city blocks excavated thus far is extremely scarce throughout the first half of the fourth century, so much so that the general impression we have is that of a site which for some time resembled an empty, subdivided box. This might be taken to indicate that the initial impact of this kind of gentilic ‘colonisation’, as opposed to later state-sponsored foundations, was comparatively limited in demographic terms. Another problematic aspect concerns the emergence of monumental civic infrastructure, which at the moment seems to represent the last addition to Gabii’s urban landscape, lagging behind the development of private areas by at least a generation. This pattern is also typical of the urbanism and architecture of mid-republican colonial foundations. In a city in which we still do not even know the location of the original forum, our understanding of functional areas and zoning remains imperfect, making it difficult to contextualise properly the few known instances of public architecture and to define different traditions, especially in order to identify the influence or agency of Rome in these processes. Finally, a landscape perspective would complement the view from the urban centre and enable an analysis of the settlement patterns in the *ager Gabinus* during the transition into the post-archaic period, with the goal of assessing whether rural occupation was affected in similar ways.⁹⁸

But the main findings and conclusions that we have presented regarding the vicissitudes of early republican Gabii have important wider implications for the field. The possibility of now weaving the different threads of Gabii’s archaeological sequence into a coherent narrative for a historical period (the ‘dark’ fifth century) surrounding which there is considerable scepticism, demonstrates the value of — and the need for — large-scale excavation and survey at sites that are part of the first wave of urbanisation in central Italy. The unparalleled contextual evidence that has been gathered in relation to the significant destruction and abandonment event has allowed us to revisit old problems and assumptions, and to write the first systematic history of the *devotio* of Gabii in light of the material record. Beyond Gabii, this history sheds new light on some crucial moments in the early Republic. As we have suggested, the intentional refoundation of Gabii after a hiatus in occupation is bound up with other interesting social and political dynamics that are the subject of much ongoing debate about the nature of early Roman expansion. While Gabii was exceptional in many ways, especially in terms of the settlement and burial patterns through the pivotal phase of transition, our detailed reconstruction of the events surrounding the remaking of the city contributes to the discussion by highlighting the actual mechanisms through which factionalism and private elite agendas influenced urban developments and interstate relationships in the core region of Roman hegemony, tracing the repercussions well into the period that followed the launch of the new colonisation programme after the final conquest of the

⁹⁷ The apparent gap of several decades between the two events — destruction and refoundation — is unusual for a single city, but fits broadly within early republican patterns of colonisation, in which there is a shift after the middle of the fifth century toward [exerting] more influence over captured settlements through the planting of “colonies” on captured land, although the nature of this shift is masked by the ambiguous nature of early Roman colonization’ (Armstrong 2016: 219).

⁹⁸ For an approach of this kind, see Attema *et al.* 2014. Paying particular attention to the period 480–350 in the Pontine region, the authors recognise that while settlement organisation of the archaic proto-urban polities was completely destabilised by the beginning of the fifth century, rural patterns remained largely unaffected, especially in the territory of Norba: 2014: 218, fig. 3. A portion of the *ager Gabinus* east of Gabii was included in the extensive survey conducted by Quilici 1974. In general, see Musco *et al.* 1995.

Latins in 338. More broadly, the case study of Gabii can be taken as a starting -point for reassessing Roman attitudes towards the ‘unmaking’ of cities, and how this tool could be deployed in the context of the development of Roman imperialism.

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