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## **The impact of Roman expansion and colonization on ancient Italy in the Republican period. From diffusionism to networks of opportunity**

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**Abstract**

Roman colonization and expansionism in the Republican period, and its impact on ancient Italy, are intensely debated in current ancient historical and archaeological research. Traditional, diffusionist views from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and especially the 20<sup>th</sup> century have recently been heavily criticized, and many socio-economic and cultural developments in ancient Italy (e.g. 'romanization') have been disconnected from Roman conquest and expansionism. Although this development has been extremely important and salutary, in this paper it is argued that we should be careful not to throw away the baby with the bathwater. Very recent and ongoing research can be seen as pointing at real Roman impact in various spheres - if in different ways and places than traditionally assumed. Inverting the causal logic between new developments in ancient Italy and Roman colonization, it is argued that Roman expansionism actively targeted hotspots in socio-economic and cultural networks of special interest in ancient Italy. The privileged status of colonial communities then energized and redrew existing constellations, thus using, but also impacting on pre-existing configurations. Such a view stimulates us to rethink the primary incentives behind Roman colonization, and to investigate more intricate patterns of Roman agency.

## I Introduction

“In the consulship of Lucius Genucius and Servius Cornelius there was in general a respite from foreign wars. Colonies were established at Sora and Alba. Six thousand settlers were enrolled for Alba, in the Aequian country. Sora had belonged to the territory of the Volsci, but the Samnites had got possession of it; to this place were sent four thousand men.”

*L. Genucio Ser. Cornelio consulibus ab externis ferme bellis otium fuit. Soram atque Albam coloniae deductae. Albam in Aequos sex milia colonorum scripta. Sora agri Volsci fuerat, sed possederant Samnites; eo quattuor milia hominum missa.* (Liv. 10.1.1-2. Translation from the Loeb Classical Library Ed.)

This quote from Livy’s *Ab urbe condita* is just one example of a typical, even relatively detailed, reference found in the literary sources for the establishment of colonists by Rome in newly conquered territories. In this case the number of colonists is given; in other instances we just hear that a colony was established, and nothing more (e.g. *colonia Aesernia deducta est*, Liv. *Per.* 16). Concise as these references are, the establishment of thousands of new settlers in freshly won territory must have been quite an enterprise and experience, for both the new settlers and the original inhabitants of the area. It sparks curiosity about the impact that Roman colonization had on the Italian peninsula, its landscape and its peoples, and raises the question of how colonial and native communities responded to the new situation.

It goes without saying that the potential impact of Roman colonization on ancient Italian communities depends on the character of the colonies themselves, and on the character and intensity of the contact between Italic communities and the new colonial ones. These closely interrelated issues are currently heavily debated by both ancient historians and archaeologists, and old views are rapidly being challenged or replaced by newly emerging concepts and models. Many of these new developments have just recently started, and most are still far from being crystallized or indeed generally accepted. Yet, since they are too important to be left out from any discussion of the impact of colonization on ancient Italy, these developing theories and their potential impact on the debate will be considered here, even if in a necessarily schematic manner. The recent developments in thinking about Roman colonization and expansionism and its relationship with cultural change in ancient Italy have

strong deconstructivist tendencies. Much of the traditionally assumed characteristics of Roman colonization and the related mechanisms of cultural change have been, rightly, demonstrated to be biased by modernist and colonialist ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, the important deconstructive trends in colonization studies only appear to diminish the effective impact of Roman colonization, and do not necessarily undermine the notion of Roman influence in itself and as a whole. It can be argued that, actually, they have opened the door to less-expected forms and patterns of impact, opening up interesting and dynamic forms of Roman colonial impact on, and interaction with, the Italic populations.

Long before the rapid expansion of Rome especially from the fourth century BC onwards, colonization movements had been an integral part of the behavior of most communities in ancient Italy and in the wider Mediterranean. Ample literary references are available for various Greek, Etruscan and Italic migratory movements in the Italian peninsula (e.g. Aequi: Liv. 4.49.7; Samnites: Liv. 4.37.1; Etruscans: Liv. 5.33.8; Volscians: Liv. 7.27.2; Umbrians: Strabo 5.1.10; Lucanians: Strabo 6.1.3; cf. Kornemann 1901, 513; Torelli 1981), not to mention the “sacred spring” myths that probably reflect actual early Italic migrations too.

According to the written sources, also Rome—itself of course imagined as a colony of sorts, first of Troy and then via Lavinium of Alba Longa—displayed already in the Regal and Archaic Periods expansionist strategies involving the confiscation of territories and the foundation of new communities on them. Even in the first years of existence of the city, the mythical founder Romulus is imagined to have sent out several colonies. Although partly mythical and often clearly anachronistic, the references to Archaic and early Republican migrations and expansionism certainly reflect a mobile ancient reality. These movements are better characterized as private undertakings by warlords or *condottieri* with their retinues,

than as state-sponsored enterprises (Càssola 1988; Cornell 1995, e.g. 143-150; Bradley 2006; Chiabà 2006; Chiabà 2011; Termeer 2010, *contra* e.g. Coarelli 1990), and are part of a widespread Mediterranean phenomenon (cf. Horden and Purcell 2000, 386-387). In this period, local populations appear to have been included in the colonies, such as in Antium in 467 BC, where native Volscians were enrolled, as well as Romans, Latins and Hernici (Liv. 3.1.5-7; D. H. 9.59.2).

Roman colonizing movements intensified and changed in character, however, after the Latin War (338 BC), when Rome also formally established her dominance (Cornell 1989b; Cornell 1989a; Cornell 1995, 301-304; Oakley 1997, 342-344). The list of colonies sent out by Rome from that moment onwards is impressive (see Fig. 1 and 2), with 33 colonies being founded within the little over a century until the Second Punic War. This period has been described as the “golden age” of colonization by one of the most eminent scholars of Roman colonization, Edward Togo Salmon (1969, 57), and coincides chronologically with the Roman conquest and incorporation of the Italian peninsula. After the incorporation or pacification of the various Italic communities and the warding off foreign invaders such as Pyrrhus and Hannibal, colonization slows down, and in the second century BC enters another era with the Gracchan land reforms and veteran settlements of the late Republic. Attempts at classifying the different colonies that were sent out during the history of Rome already began in the late Republican period (Crawford 1995; Bispham 2000; Bispham 2006), but the rigid distinction between *priscoe latinae coloniae*, *coloniae latinae*, *coloniae maritimae*, and *coloniae militares* famously put forward by Salmon is primarily a modern systematizing construct (see Fig. 1). A real juridical difference is, in any case, the distinction between colonies whose citizens had the Latin right, the so-called “Latin colonies,” and those colonies consisting of people with full Roman citizenship (“citizen

colonies”), that were usually smaller in size. The focus of this chapter is on the mid-Republican period, the main phase of Roman expansion in ancient Italy.

## **II Military strategy, land, and Romanization: motivations for colonization**

In order to appreciate the debate on the potential cultural impact of Roman colonies, it is important to discuss first the main incentives behind Roman colonization as they have been recognized in scholarship on the subject. The issue of the motivation behind colonization is fraught with problems because the relevant written sources are all of much later date, mostly of the late Republican and early Imperial periods. If the basic information provided on the chronology and the sites involved can probably be generally accepted (cf. esp. Oakley 1995 and 1997), the information given about the historical motivations is much more likely to have been biased by concerns of the time that writers such as Livy and Dionysius wrote their histories. Modern scholars have therefore dismissed the historical accounts on the matter as anachronistic to varying degrees, especially, of course, for the earlier time periods. In modern scholarship, three main incentives for sending out colonies are usually recognized: their role in military strategy, their function as providing land for the poor, and their Romanizing role.

It is useful to briefly discuss these supposed incentives, because our interpretation of the primary motivations for establishing colonies affects the ways and extent to which the colonies potentially impacted on local Italic communities. Analogously, it is also useful for understanding the debate on Roman colonization in historiographical terms, since, as will be exemplified below, specific academic positions on the rationale behind Roman colonization define automatically the range of their impact. Certainly, in reality the incentives behind colonizing movements must have always been pluriform and multi-faceted. Establishing colonies may have served different goals, which were also experienced and/or emphasized differently by different groups within society, as well as by later historians (Bradley 2006,

171). Also, it should be kept in mind that the original intentions behind establishing a colony and the actual course of events after it need not be in accord. An important reminder of this potential discrepancy between Roman plans and harsh historical reality is the story of the colonies of Buxentum and Sipontum. There, a Roman consul accidentally found out that the colonies were actually deserted only eight years after their establishment in 194 BC (Liv. 39.23.3-4). That this was not exactly according to the plan is confirmed by the action taken in response, as triumvirs were appointed by senatorial decree to organize a supplement of colonists. Yet, apart from such considerations, different forms of settlement and interaction with local inhabitants can be expected according to different rationales behind the colonizing movement. If military control of an area or route was the main goal, both colonists and their settlement logic may have behaved differently than in a scenario where landless people came to search for a humble field to farm and build a living there.

The close correlation between warfare, conquest, and the foundation of colonies in the literary descriptions, provided notably by Livy on the wars of conquest in the Italian peninsula, has suggested that the primary function of the colonies of the mid-Republican period was strategic. For instance, the placement of the colonies of Fregellae (328 BC), Interamna Lirenas (312), Luceria (314), Beneventum (268), and Aesernia (263) seem to follow closely Roman advancement in, and control over, the area during the Samnite Wars (c. 343-290) and the aftermath with Italic groups rising against Rome with Pyrrhus (280-270) (e.g. Toynbee 1965, 157-160). Also the relationship between the construction of the main Roman roads, facilitating the movement of armies, goods and ideas between Rome and the recently conquered areas on the one hand, and the establishment of colonies on the other, has often been seen as corroborating the link between military strategy and colonization (Salmon 1969; Coarelli 1988; de Cazanove 2005). The image of colonies as strategic strongholds, placed where they are and in the way they are for military purposes (Cicero's "bulwarks of

empire:” *propugnacula imperii*; *Leg. Agr.* 2.23.73, or Livy’s *claustra*; e.g. Liv. 6.9.4) is therefore paramount in scholarship on the subject (esp. Salmon 1936, 1955 and 1969; recently e.g. Broadhead 2007 and Sisani 2007). It is almost universally accepted as a primary motivation for colonization in the mid-Republican period, and discussion has rather focused on the extent of the strategic rationale already in the early Republic. However, although military strategy undoubtedly was an important factor in the mid-Republican period, we shall see that other incentives may have played a role, and that an exclusive military-strategic focus is too narrow to do justice to the complexity of Roman expansionism.

Another incentive for establishing colonies that is regularly and directly transmitted by the written sources regards land. Sending out colonies in order to resolve socio-economic and demographic problems in the city of Rome features prominently in the sources for the early as well as for the late Republican period. The basic idea is that sending out colonists would help rid the city of poor, landless people. It gave these people the opportunity to develop themselves in a colonial context to qualify for military service. Ultimately, colonization thus relieved the city of the landless poor and strengthened Roman power at the same time (e.g. Salmon 1955, 65; Brown 1980, 4). The socio-economic function, or effect, of Roman colonization has been accepted especially for colonies of the second century BC onwards, when Roman hegemony was already established, and when agrarian discussions dominated the political agenda. Whether it also was an important consideration in early and mid-Republican colonization is a moot point. For the early Republican period Livy indicates that tempering plebeian unrest by land distribution could be a primary motive, but his assertions have often been rejected as being anachronistic (e.g. Brunt 1971; Càssola 1988; Erdkamp 2011). References to land distributions, however, seem to come to the fore too regularly to ignore this factor altogether for the early and mid-Republican periods (Oakley 2005; Bradley 2006; Patterson 2006). It has also been argued that for solving land issues



viritalis colonization, that is, individual land plots handed out to colonists without a clear primary settlement of reference, would be more appropriate an instrument (Salmon 1969; for early viritalis colonization see esp. Sisani 2007).

Lastly, but by no means less important for this chapter, colonies have been regarded as responsible for the spread of Roman socio-political ideas, technology, language and culture into the Italic areas (e.g. Reid 1913; Salmon 1982; David 1994; Torelli 1999). Colonies have been described as “the real instruments of Romanization” of the newly conquered areas and their inhabitants (Fraccaro 1931; Salmon 1969). Romanization is here understood as a civilizing process that was in the end beneficial for the affected peoples. It would have prepared the Italic peoples for their “final destiny” to be integrated in the Roman empire, as it later has been viewed (Salmon 1982). An early expression of this notion can be found in James Reid’s work:

“Small, numerically, as the number of Latin and Roman settlers in these colonies was, their influence on the regions around them was immense. The local dialects everywhere gave way before Latin, and the populations were in course of time prepared, by subtle changes of culture and sentiment, to accept and even to welcome complete absorption into the Roman state.” (Reid 1913, 64)

The supposedly superior character of the Roman colonial socio-political ideas, technology and culture have conversely been seen as fundamental in explaining the success of Roman colonization, and hence of Roman imperialism in general. The *intentionality* of the “Romanizing” aspect of colonies has, however, since long been debated. Whereas some scholars have seen their civilizing role as part and parcel of a conscious imperial strategy (e.g. Reid, Mommsen), others have viewed it rather as a secondary and essentially unpremeditated side-effect (notably Salmon in his earlier work). It is interesting to note that this motivation for Roman colonization is, in contrast to the military considerations and land distribution, not directly transmitted by the ancient sources (the few references often cited in regard need special pleading, in any case: cf. below for further discussion).

Although these different interpretations of the motivation behind colonization have clearly divergent implications, scholarship on the subject has often sought to integrate the different rationales for Roman colonization in one model, creating a hierarchical relationship between them. In this hierarchical model, the military-strategic function comes first, potential beneficial effects for the Roman poor come second, and a Romanizing influence is often regarded as a last, if positive, side-effect of Roman colonization (cf. Pelgrom and Stek 2014).

### **III The cultural impact of Roman colonization**

Even if it was, according to many scholars, unintentional or only a secondary goal, the effect of Roman colonization on the Italic populations has nonetheless been regarded as massive and incisive. Of course, the subjugation and fate of the original inhabitants will have developed differently according to the historical situation. The literary sources report cases of massacres or indeed genocide, and expropriation or forced relocation is assumed to have regularly taken place (cf. below). The scholarly focus has, however, usually been on the positive, developmental, effects of Roman colonization. The foundation of the new Roman communities in the midst of the Italic peoples would, indeed, have marked the beginning of important changes in the socio-political, economic, and cultural development of Italic communities. The most commonly accepted developments with which Roman colonization has been credited are briefly discussed here.

First, the development of urbanism has been seen as essentially stimulated by the Roman conquest. The socio-political form of the classical city-state would have spread through Rome's colonies all-over the peninsula and further. Second, the related development of a new socio-economic model based on independent peasant farmers would have similarly been instigated by the ideal Roman colonial model. Third, new technology and material culture, themselves reflecting important socio-political developments, would have been

disseminated by the colonies, such as coinage, defensive constructions and new types of pottery such as black-gloss wares. Fourth, new religious ideas and models, often encapsulated in new material mediums, such as anatomical votives and specific monumental temple types, would have spread from Rome to the colonies, and from there would have influenced the Italic areas. The notion that these important cultural changes were brought about directly by the newly established colonies seemed, at first, to be neatly corroborated by the archaeological record. A brief review of some of the most salient archaeological confirmations of the character and impact of Roman colonization is in order, in which urban and rural planning on the one hand, and religious material culture on the other are singled out for this chapter.

The fact that many colonial foundations display regular, gridded town plans has long attracted the attention of scholars (Castagnoli 1972; Ward-Perkins 1974; Sommella 1988). In combination with the evidence for the developments in the Imperial period in the northwestern provinces, where Roman dominance seems to be strongly linked to urbanization, the thesis has been developed that Rome was responsible for the planned urbanism in the conquered areas (e.g. Castagnoli 1972, 121, recently e.g. Sisani 2007 *passim*; for the principle, see the excellent discussion in Terrenato 2008).

In Italy for the Republican period, the amazing discoveries, after WWII, at the Latin colonies of Alba Fucens (founded 303 BC) and Cosa (273), particularly invigorated the notion that Roman expansionism and urbanism went hand in hand and were logically related. During the Belgian and American excavations, and somewhat later at Fregellae (328), too, almost complete town plans were uncovered, as well as impressive remains of political and sacred buildings (Mertens 1969; Brown 1980; Coarelli and Monti 1998). In many ways, these town plans and their public architecture seemed to reflect shared values and political ideas, based on the mother-city of Rome. For instance, the appearance of circular political meeting

places or *comitia* in all three colonies suggested to many scholars that these colonies had copied the model of Rome not only in their socio-political organization, but also in their physical layout. Similarly, the central cult buildings present in many colonies were interpreted as copies of the central cult place at Rome on the Capitol. This happened, for instance, with the cult place on the highest point of the settlement at Cosa, and with the remains of temples partly preserved by their incorporation into later churches, at Sora (303) and Aesernia (263). From these colonial sites, the model would consequently have spread further into the hinterland (as illustrated below). The idea that the colonies founded by Rome would reflect the mother-city is old, and has especially been read into the words of Aulus Gellius (16.13), who, paraphrasing emperor Hadrian, described colonies as “small copies and images of sorts” of Rome. Older generations of scholars explained this passage primarily in terms of socio-political values or the constitution (e.g. Mommsen 1912, 421; Beloch 1926, 489), but the archaeological discoveries at the mid-Republican colonies after World War II seemed to give special significance to the small-replica idea also on the physical level of the urban lay-out, read as a direct expression of these socio-political values (cf. Pelgrom and Stek 2014; Quinn and Wilson 2013, 2-3 for earlier interpretations of Gellius’ text as indicating a physical resemblance to the city of Rome).

There were obviously important differences with the city of Rome itself, which was notoriously irregular in shape, being a so-called “organically evolved settlement.” The equal division of urban plots in the colonies in particular seemed to reflect a way to solve social tension within the newly established community. In a way, the new foundations came to be seen as an idealized Rome, or Roman society in miniature, based on principles of equality (Brown 1980; cf. Fentress 2000).

Aside from the urban plan and its public spaces, the surrounding rural territory would also have been radically organized with the establishment of a colony. Again especially after

World War II, research revealing enormous and incisive land organization programs around colonial towns started to make an impact on the general perception of Roman colonization and its effect on the landscape. Aerial photography, visualizing fossilized land division features in the landscape, was paramount in this development (e.g. Castagnoli 1953-1955; Bradford 1957; Chevallier 1961; Chouquer, et al. 1987). As in the primary urban settlements, the neatly divided lands seemed to reflect an entirely new system of socio-political organization. The neat and ordered subordination of nature that transpired from the man-made centuration grids made a strong impact on scholars of that generation, and was often linked with the allegedly firm and resolute Roman mind. John Bradford (1957, 149; cf. Purcell 1990) for instance speaks of the “absolute self-assurance and great technical competence” with which the Romans would have superimposed the same formal framework on landscapes as different as the Po Valley and desert-like Tunisia. The sudden and massive increase in farm sites of the Republican period recorded in archaeological field survey projects all over Italy added to this idea of colonists settling the orderly allotted landscape. There was at the time of discovery of these well-ordered urban and rural landscapes already much discussion about the ultimate origins of the model, mainly known from Greek colonial and Near Eastern precursors (Castagnoli 1972). But its relationship to Roman colonization and expansionism in Italy seemed clear. The genuine surprise and enthusiasm about these findings of the 1950s comes out clearly in Paul MacKendrick’s words: “these planned communities, with their walls, their neat crisscross of streets, their fora and basilicas and temples, and their pattern of allotments [...] [testified] already to the might and the majesty of the Roman name” (1952, 139).

Also the relationship between the spread of particular religious models and Roman colonization seemed to be documented clearly in the archaeological record. On Figure 3, we see the spread of a specific category of votive terracottas, the so-called Etrusco-Latial-

Campanian type, in Italy (Comella 1981). This modern category is defined as a set of terracotta heads, animal models, statuettes, and notably anatomical votives, i.e. terracotta models of human body parts such as feet, hands, eyes, genitals and intestines. As can be readily appreciated from that map, there seems to be a clear correlation between the colonial foundations of Rome, and the archaeological attestations of this type of votive gifts. As a result of this correlation, conversely these types of votives—and especially the readily recognizable and distinctive anatomic votives—have been regarded as a strong indicator of Roman presence (Torelli 1973), if not in the form of standard colonial foundations such as colonies of the Latin right, then in the form of *virittane* or other, less formalized, forms of colonial settlement (e.g. Coarelli 2000; Sisani 2007). It is not just material culture that is “exported” here: rather, these material remains—at first appearance at least—seemed to reflect specific rituals, which in turn betray specific beliefs and traditions. Here, the “dissemination of Roman attitudes”—as Frank Brown (1980) described the Romanizing effect of colonies—thus appeared to be neatly reflected in the archaeological findings.

Another evocative map (Fig. 4) shows the geographical diffusion of the Etrusco-Italic temple as indicated by architectonic terracotta decoration (Torelli 1999, 121-131). Also here a strong correlation is suggested between Roman colonial presence and the appearance of this type of architecture. Its significance is naturally somewhat different from the more personal votive gifts, as these temples require considerable investment and were usually placed centrally in public spaces. As a result, the appearance of these monumental temples has been linked more directly to communal expressions of identity, arguably instigated by decision-makers at a higher administrative level, and with a wider audience in mind. The construction of “Capitoline” temples, echoing the central cult place and symbol of Rome itself and her power, has thus come to be seen as a clear expression of allegiance to Rome and Roman values. Moreover, a link has been established between the adoption of this type of temple and

the ideals it supposedly refers to. Indeed, in the words of Mario Torelli (1999, 127), “the superiority of the [urban] model rendered easy and consequential the exportation of the cultural forms ingrained in that model. Amongst these cultural forms Etrusco-Italic temple building took first place.” Not only the Roman-ness of the temple architecture has thus been emphasized, but also its effectiveness in evoking urbanism.

#### **IV Recent developments in colonization studies: the disentanglement of cultural trends and colonization**

Over the last two decades, however, important revisions have been put forward. These revisions and critiques affect various different aspects of the model just sketched. The reason for their roughly contemporaneous emergence in the first place can be found in more general shifts in intellectual and academic circles. Since the 1990s, the broader trend has been to move away from monocausal explanations and to view specific historical developments against the background of both local and more global trends; and in general to take a close look at both ancient and modern imperialist and colonialist biases when interpreting our evidence (Terrenato 2005a). Even if they are genealogically related, the various revisionist studies that are relevant for the colonization debate can be divided roughly between those based on new assessments of the actual empirical evidence and those focused on the significance and meaning of established patterns of material culture. As to the first category, seminal studies have recently questioned some of the most important pillars on which the traditional edifice of Roman colonization was built.

One important development has been the questioning of the character and outlook of Roman colonial towns in the most important phase of Roman expansion, in the mid-Republican period. Restudy of some of the type-sites, and especially a keen eye on the precise chronology, has considerably questioned the notion of neat mini-Rome’s planted *ex*

*novo*. This revision is particularly visible for Cosa, not coincidentally the site that has been regarded as the Roman colonial type-site *par excellence*. The discussed key urban elements of the town were originally thought to neatly reflect the mother city of Rome and to derive from the first years of the colony's foundation in 273 BC. However, many of these elements have now been re-dated to the period after 197 BC, when the colony was reinforced, or their existence has been revised entirely (Fentress 2000; Sewell 2010). The similarity to Rome, as well as to one another, of the colonial political structures of the forum and the *comitium* has also been questioned (Mouritsen 2004 with, however, Coarelli 2005). The great variety of different colonial realities has been the object of detailed study by Edward Bispham (2006), who pointed out that the "Capitoline kit" was seldom uniform or present at all in mid-Republican colonies.

Together with critiques of the overly ordered and anachronistically flavoured literary record transmitted in the Roman sources (Càssola 1988; Crawford 1995; Torelli 1999; Bispham 2006; Patterson 2006), attention has thus been drawn to the potentially strong effect of hindsight in our understanding of Republican colonization. Indeed, late Republican and Imperial experiences may have been used to fill in the gaps in the knowledge about the actual situation during the wave of colonization in the fourth and third centuries. In reaction, some scholars have developed models rather based on archaic and early Republican experiences (Bradley 2006), working on the important premise that the break between Archaic and Republican society was perhaps not as clear-cut as it has been portrayed in the literary sources (Terrenato 2005b). These approaches decidedly move away from an abstract, monolithic Roman state dictating colonial foundations and imposing cultural change. The importance of family ties and the cooptation of different groups into factions, crossing geographical and ethnic borders, in colonial enterprises and expansionism have accordingly received due attention (e.g. Càssola 1988; Bradley 2006; Terrenato 2014). Clearly, here we



move far from the imagined drawing room of the “colonial office” at Rome where the blueprint for colonies would have been designed, in the vision of Brown (e.g. 1980, 42-44) and his contemporaries (cf. MacKendrick 1952; Salmon 1969, 38).

Also the developments that colonization would have set in motion or facilitated in the conquered areas and abutting regions are rapidly being revised by different fields of study. The role of Rome in urbanization, and especially in the development of planned urbanism in Italy, for instance, is being questioned by both recent discoveries and systematic analysis of urbanism in a broader Mediterranean perspective. As to the latter, Sewell (2010 and 2014) has demonstrated the importance of contemporary Greek and Macedonian models in the urban layouts of new settlements. Although elements of the new towns may demonstrate some specifically Roman choices, much of the impressiveness of the planned towns appeared simultaneously in various Mediterranean areas not affected by or related to Roman colonization. At the same time, recent excavations at the old Latin center of Gabii point to the early local development of planned urbanism, well before the wave of mid-Republican Roman colonization, demonstrating that such developments could take place locally and over a longer period of time, without the need for the importation of knowledge from elsewhere and its consequent and systematic enforcement by the Roman state as part of a colonizing program (Mogetta 2014). Moreover, it can be asked if in some way urbanization did not make Roman expansion possible in the first place, rather than that it was brought about by it. In other words, that urbanization was a requirement for integration rather than an effect of it (Terrenato 2008).

Also, other trends in settlement, and in the spread and production of specific categories of material culture, may be read differently in the light of the increased archaeological knowledge of both colonized and non-colonized areas of ancient Italy. For instance, the noted increase in small peasant farms in the Republican period seems to be part

rather of a larger Hellenistic trend in both colonial and non-colonial areas of Italy and the wider Mediterranean, which seriously undermines the causal relationship posited between the Roman conquest and the farm phenomenon with its socio-political and economic implications (Terrenato 2007; Attema, et al. 2010, esp. 147-166).

This raises the question of whether other trends that have traditionally been linked to Roman colonization by way of their broad contemporaneity should necessarily be interpreted as a consequence of Roman expansionism, or if these also follow a different path or logic. The issue of land division is complex, because such divisions are notoriously hard to date precisely, but a case has been made that land divisions may also be connected to other moments in history, both predating and postdating Roman colonization (Pelgrom 2008; cf. Terrenato 2008).

Also in regard to settlement forms and urbanism, Jeremia Pelgrom (2008) has argued that the archaeological evidence for the rural settlement in the colonial territories rather points at nucleated, clustered settlement than dispersed farms, and has suggested that colonists lived in dispersed villages and not equally dispersed over the territory: a different situation than the neatly ordered urban and rural image given by MacKendrick. Similarly, it has been proposed that epigraphic evidence for village communities such as *vici* can be interpreted as colonial villages with a relatively independent status and communal identity with regard to the primary settlement of the colony, a model that would shift focus from the primary settlements to a dispersed network of secondary ones (Stek 2009).

Another case of recent revision regards the debate on anatomical votives and their connection to Roman colonization. As seen above, the connection had been established on the basis of the geographical and chronological coincidence of the find spots of these particular votives with Roman colonization in the mid-Republican period. Recently, Fay Glinister (2006a) has argued that the correlation is partly biased by the higher research

intensity in colonial areas, and that the practice of dedicating anatomical votives is documented in non-colonial areas and contexts pre-dating the Roman conquest. Even more importantly, she asks what was actually Roman about these votive practices, and to what extent they were part of specifically Roman rituals or beliefs, or rather part of broader Hellenistic trends. The factor of the bias in research intensity remains difficult to assess without much more field research in non-colonized areas: it is hard to detect reliable patterns with a basically skewed archaeological record. In any case, a recent analysis of all presently available evidence re-asserts that there is, after all, a positive correlation between the location and chronology of Roman colonial settlements and the specific type of votives (de Cazanove 2015; cf. also Sisani 2007), especially by way of distinguishing between primary and secondary centers (i.e. imitations or variations of types prevalent in colonial contexts that were made and used locally). An important question remains, however, what this correlation means in practice. Is it indicative of specific, new Roman rituals and beliefs, slowly penetrating the Italian hinterland as well, or is it rather an effect of higher consumption and production rates in the colonial centers? With regard to the discussion on votive religion, Glinister (2006a, 104) has indeed emphasized the role of colonies “as ethnic and religious melting-pots,” as a result of which “colonies were enabled to act as forums of cultural and religious interactions” in their own right, rather than seeing them as merely passing on pre-existing Roman cultural and religious forms to the rest of Italy.

A comparison may be drawn with black gloss pottery. Although this category of Hellenistic pottery has been connected to Roman colonization and expansionism in similar ways as the earlier described trends, it is quite clear that its use in general cannot be seen as an unequivocal expression of Roman identity or Romanization (see e.g. Roth 2007). Black glaze ware originally developed from Attic black glazed workshops and was consequently produced at a huge scale in especially Campania and Latium, but was also produced at

innumerable other sites, both colonial and non-colonial (Di Giuseppe 2012). With the discussion on the anatomical votives and the black gloss ceramics, the problematic relationship between specific trends in material culture and their specific meaning and significance for understanding the societies that produced and used it comes clearly to the fore.

## **V Connectivity, economy, and opportunity: Roman colonization as capturing nodes in networks of influence?**

The automatic connection between several cultural developments and Roman colonization has thus rightly been questioned in recent years and especially since the 1990s, but in the meantime responses to these “deconstructive” studies have been produced, too. Many of these debates still have to be further developed on the basic level of evidence (land division systems and settlement patterns for instance). In particular the factor of differential research intensity in colonial and non-colonial areas is still poorly understood, and difficult to account for in analyses at the present state of research. Apart from the fact that, generally speaking, more research has simply been devoted to Roman(ised) contexts than Italic counterparts, skewing our knowledge in favour of Roman (colonial or not) contexts, research projects have also set out with specific methodologies and expectations that differ from those when approaching “indigenous” sites and areas. Few research projects, for instance, have set out to identify centuriation patterns in Samnite, rather than Roman areas (but see La Regina 1999), or to look for “Capitolia” in, say, Italic hill-forts. There is thus an undeniable risk of “confirmation bias” in Roman studies. For various aspects of Roman colonization and expansionism more systematic comparative study is needed in order to eliminate this bias.

Nevertheless, at the present state of the documentation, I think we should not exclude that there actually exists a positive correlation between many new socio-economic or cultural

developments and Roman colonization and expansionism. If in the trends described above colonial sites indeed perform more noticeably than other sites, it is well worth asking what the actual causal relationship is between particular developments and colonies. In several cases, it seems indeed that the causal relation actually may be turned it on its head (cf. Glinister 2006b on colonies and votive religion; Terrenato 2008 on expansionism and urbanization; Bradley 2014 on colonies and roads). It is one thing to argue that the pre-existence of some of these developments actually made integration in the Roman network possible, rather than that they were a result of it, as we saw above. Yet, such a characterization of the process may be too passive, especially when considering the whole spectrum of socio-economic and cultural trends involved, some of which cannot be seen as necessary preconditions for admission to the Roman clique. Rather, we may see the overall pattern as the sum result of a series of opportunistic, yet conscious, decisions informed by a range of practical considerations that differed from case to case. In that sense, Roman Republican colonization may have been much more like other Mediterranean colonization movements from prehistory to early modern times, and may have behaved very much according to that same logic, which is described so well in *The Corrupting Sea* (Horden and Purcell 2000, e.g. 282-287; cf. Bispham 2006, 76).

Now importantly, allowing more diversity in Roman colonial enterprises and inverting the causal relationship between several socio-economic or cultural developments and Roman colonization, does not mean that “Rome” mattered less in the whole process. Actually, the notion of Roman agency is crucial for understanding the creation of the overall pattern. But it *does* mean that we should let go of mono-functional (i.e. military) interpretations of mid-Republican colonization, and admit that the range of considerations to establish colonies was much wider than the later systematized historical tradition has led us

to believe (cf. above, with Fig. 1). In fact, glimpses of incentives and enterprises not commonly associated with Roman colonization can be reconstructed from other information.

An example of a different perspective on the logic or incentives behind colonization regards the specific positioning of colonies. Naturally, the sites for Roman colonial settlements were carefully chosen with various factors of attractiveness in mind. And, no doubt, military-strategic considerations were in many cases a crucial factor in this choice. But viewing colonies as “single-purpose fortified garrisons” is unnecessarily reductive, and indeed not even warranted by the written sources. Taking a broader perspective, the general positioning, and especially some particular and unexpected configurations (cf. below), of colonial settlement can be better described as tapping into, and appropriating, different infrastructural networks. In fact, the integration in, and connectedness to, the main infrastructural network of ancient Italy by land and the Mediterranean world by sea seems to have been high on the priority list when targeting sites for colonization. This becomes apparent both from the selection of new sites and in the establishment of colonies in flourishing, existing centers. The fact that ports were often targeted for colonization is well known (e.g. Mommsen 1912, 418), but also sites in inland areas, on cross-roads or in areas giving access to special resources, can be seen in this way.

In this regard, the correlation between Roman expansionism and access to salt is an interesting case. Apart from its direct importance for humans and animals alike, before refrigeration salt was an essential commodity for the conservation of food, and access to it was very limited in ancient Italy. In an interesting paper, Adalberto Giovannini (1985) has shown how fourth and early third century BC Roman expansion targeted the limited areas of Italy where salt was won. This went from the conquest of Veii in 396 BC, yielding access to the *salinae* near Ostia, via the otherwise not necessarily profitable Adriatic areas with the *via Valeria* and the establishment of Hadria (290-286), to the *via Appia* and Venusia (291 C)

securing access to the salt of Canusium, and finally at Tarentum in 272. Another, partially related, economic incentive behind Roman expansionism has been recognized in the Roman integration of the transhumance networks in the central Apennines. Ella Hermon (2001, 175) has argued that Roman colonization in the Apennines indeed followed “the rhythm of transhumance.” To that end, main routes and nodes were incorporated, a process which differs significantly from establishing “bulwarks of empire” in the traditional sense.

Other entrepreneurial activities, which also move far from the idealized notion of the colony as a newly founded city-state on the model of Rome, appear in snippets of written information provided by Greek writers. In his *Enquiry into Plants*, Theophrastus (c. 370-288 BC) describes a Roman expedition of 25 ships to Corsica, apparently with the intention to found a town there (5.8.2; cf. e.g. Torelli 1981, 72-76, but cf. Amigues 1990), probably referring to his own time or little before. A similar notice comes from Diodorus Siculus (15.27.4) for Sardinia, who reports that 500 colonists were sent out around 386 BC. The renewed version of the Carthaginian treaty of 348 BC, which in the new form explicitly forbids overseas Roman settlements—something that apparently was not deemed necessary during the first treaty—gives further credibility to these enterprises (Cornell 1995, 325-326). The precise purpose of such expeditions is not immediately clear to us. Corsica may have been a source of good pine, as Theophrastus explains in the chapter in the context of which he tells us about the Roman enterprise. But such overseas activities may perhaps also be linked with piracy (Torelli 1981, 72-76; Cornell 1989b, 315; Bispham 2012). In any case, these undertakings are difficult to fit within the traditional paradigm of Roman colonization and its iconic austere farmer-soldiers, which is probably why they were left out by later, Roman sources moulding the history of Roman colonization. The Roman interest in these types of “island opportunities” (Horden and Purcell 2000, 285) suggests that we should broaden the traditional perspective of incentives for early and mid-Republican Roman

expansionism to one that includes rather different types and forms of exploitation and interaction.

The targeting of pre-Roman cult places for Roman colonization and incorporation could be understood in a similar way. Rather than solely marking an ideological and symbolic display of Roman power in the religious realm, economic incentives may have played a considerable role here, since cult places, urban and rural alike, were often important economic hubs in regional networks (cf. Stek 2015). Cult sites represented power on the tangible level, in socio-economic and administrative terms, since these sites were market places and places of knowledge transfer as well as adequate spots for centralizing administration, especially in areas where other suitable centres were absent. They also represented power on account of the religious authority of the associated deities, which explains the privileged status of such sites also in commercial transactions. For these reasons they formed an important attraction for Roman expansion. Roman decision-makers should be accorded a more active role in the integration of pre-Roman cult sites than is allowed usually.

Given all these particular choices, it may not surprise us that the selected sites—“the colonies” as they appear to us now—in particular stand out in terms of the creation and adoption of new influences and ideas, as well as in the production and consumption of related innovative material culture. The special qualities or possibilities of an area or site became useful targets for Roman expansionism.

The mechanisms and scenarios outlined above are not readily apparent in the later written sources that deal explicitly with Roman colonization. But in some cases they may provide a better historical interpretation for conquest and colonization. Generally, this means that careful historical contextualization of single colonization events or of rather short-lived phases and particular regional considerations is more likely to be insightful than creating a single explanatory model for what appears to have been a variegated series of initiatives with



very different backgrounds and incentives at play. Also, it should be emphasized that the mechanisms and scenarios proposed above are only “atypical” if measured against a very strict understanding of Roman colonization. Actually, the described behavior is quite normal for most other kinds of colonization and expansionism in (Mediterranean) history. In fact, the neat categories of colonies of Fig. 1, and their relative “functions” in Roman history, represent extremely high expectations of Roman thoughtfulness and farsightedness over a very long time.

Viewing colonization rather as the targeting of sites, areas and networks of opportunity, allows us to explain the integration of colonies within regional networks. This “adaptive integration” is evidenced, for instance, by the adoption of regional measurement and coinage systems in colonies. Regional patterning in the adoption of colonial coinage has been demonstrated for the northern Adriatic area, where from Ariminum to the Vestini the same heavy weight standard and division of the *as* in ten, rather than twelve *unciae* is used, whereas another, different, regional network can be discerned in the south within which the colonies of Venusia and Luceria operated (Crawford 1985, 42-51; Bradley 2006, 173-174; Termeer, forthcoming).

It is debatable whether or not the adaptation of colonial coinage to local or regional practices is indicative of local populations being integrated into the colony. In particular a case has been made for Ariminum that this adaptation to local practice may point to the inclusion of local inhabitants in the colony. But above all, this adaptation indicates eagerness to function within regional economic networks. Importantly, seeing colonization as the capturing of opportunities (of all sorts) in the Italian peninsula does not imply fundamental passiveness or continuity of existing structures either. The privileged status of colonists and colonial communities—also in economic terms—energized the targeted existing networks of power and exchange, but also established new ones as it realigned others. Therefore, the

special position of at least certain colonies in these networks of opportunity explains their functioning as hubs of movement for people, ideas, and material culture.

## **VI Conclusion. The baby and the bathwater: a re-appraisal of Roman agency**

The perspective sketched above has, of course, little to do with the emanation of a formal, codified Roman culture from the colonies into the barbarian hinterlands, enlightening the Italians and granting them access to civilization. Indeed, the deconstructive trends in recent research may perhaps give the impression that the impact of Roman colonization on ancient Italy in the mid-Republican period was much less profound than previously imagined. Such a conclusion would be misguided. The different research trends rather show that the lines along which this impact took place have to be redrawn in different ways. The image of colonies as prêt-à-porter copies of the mother city, radiating Roman culture, surely needs to be abandoned. Yet, this does not automatically mean that the impact of the establishment of colonial communities on local society was minimal. Rather, this impact may have been felt in different ways and places than the presence of a civilized mini-Rome in their midst would have had.

Whereas in the traditional “clash of civilizations” model a sharp spatial separation between newcomers and the original inhabitants has been assumed, new research tends to demonstrate closer and more direct face-to-face interaction between colonists and the local population. Partly as a result of the supposed military function of mid-Republican colonies, very limited inclusion of non-Romans in the colonies has usually been assumed for the mid-Republican period (e.g. Brunt 1971; Sisani 2007). But recently, Guy Bradley (2006, cf. the overview in Roselaar 2011) has argued for a more consistent presence of non-Romans in newly established colonies also in this period. Even if the situation differed from place to place (cf. Celuzza 2002 for an archaeological argument based on the sizes of the primary settlements of

Latin colonies), it seems that cohabitation was at least part of the colonies' general practice. Newly developing models of territorial organization and administration of colonial communities also tend to show that we should allow for more intricate patterns of cohabitation both in and outside the primary settlements (Pelgrom 2008; Pelgrom 2012; Stek 2009; Tarpin 2014).

Interesting in this regard are the rural communities called *vici* that probably should be understood as newly installed Roman communities rather than pre-Roman villages. Epigraphic and archaeological evidence for some of these rural communities show strong adhesion to Roman cultural and religious models. For instance, in the *vicus Supinum* near the colony of Alba Fucens (303 BC), dedications are made to the Roman deity *Victoria*, which in this post-conquest context can be seen as a reference to contemporary Roman ideological models (Stek 2009). Equally, at a substantial village and sanctuary site near the colony of Ariminum (268 BC) marble statues of Minerva and Fortuna have been found, dating to little after the foundation of the colony (Lippolis 2000).

Such evidence suggests that the acceptance and re-elaboration of fashionable Roman models of the time was not restricted to the urban, primary settlements associated with the colonies, and that secondary settlements could play an important role in the development and spread of new cultural models. Especially if one couples these findings with accumulating evidence for indigenous religious traditions and presence in the colonial urban centers (e.g. Torelli 1999; Liberatore 2014; Bolder-Boos 2014), a more dynamic and interwoven picture emerges, which is not defined primarily along urban-rural lines.

On the methodological level, we have seen how more sophisticated theories of material culture and its meaning have emerged, emphasizing the mutability and multi-interpretability of objects and symbols. Surely, it is impossible to recognize stable and static symbols of Roman culture and use them bluntly to map Romanization. However, it should be

emphasized that these important observations do not undermine the possibility that, in well-defined historical circumstances, certain categories of material culture or symbols could indeed become associated with Roman imperial success (e.g. Torelli 1999; Stek 2013). For the interpretation of such cases, careful contextualization is clearly needed, and no inherent superiority or “Romanness” of material culture or symbols can ever be assumed. But it would be unwise to throw away the baby with the bathwater in our postcolonial enthusiasm, and misunderstand our methodological incapability to *recognize* a specific historical situation with the *inexistence* of that situation. A good example is the critical discussion of material culture and ethnicity. It is surely hard to recognize Roman migrants in the archaeological record, but at the same time it is rather probable that migrants actually brought sometimes specific objects, practices, technologies, cuisine, dress *et cetera* with them to their new homes.

It should also be emphasized that clear instances of identification and association with Rome or Roman power come to the fore in several instances. Rather than seeing these as exclusively state-ordered and immutable connections, these are often better interpreted as local initiatives in specific historical moments and display a high degree of inventiveness and creativity (Torelli 1999; Bispham 2006). A good example of the local evocation of Roman models is the creative copying of Roman topography in colonial contexts (*vicus Palatius*, *Esquilinus*, etc.). Also the colonial sacred landscape, even if locally specific and receptive of many influences, could include clear references to the symbolic link with the mother city, or other specifically “colonial” links (cf. below). Much of the “Romanising” elements found in colonial settlements is thus easier explained as forming part of common processes in migration situations—including an increased awareness of perceived foreignness and reactive identity enhancement, and related archaisms or invented traditions—than to see them as the result of a specifically Roman imperial strategy.

Moreover, it seems clear that the emphasis on the Roman roots or character of colonial communities is not necessarily stable or related to the period of foundation. Rather, just as the cultural waves proposed for the “Romanization” of the whole of Italy (Wallace-Hadrill 2008), the colonial preoccupations with Roman roots could be seen as different waves in different moments of time, in which the second century BC and the late Republican period are certainly the most visible ones. Colonists as well as colonial decision makers could thus enhance their association with Rome and other colonies, as a group or network, when the historical situation seemed to require so. Importantly, these communal colonial identities were not even necessarily focused on Rome itself: the network could also reconfigure itself around *Latin*, not Roman identity. An inscription on behalf of the *poplo Arimenesse* (the army/people of Ariminum: CIL I<sup>2</sup>, 40) made in the Latin sanctuary of Diana at Nemi can probably be interpreted in this sense (Cicala 1995; Bispham 2006). The historical context of this specific dedication can perhaps be found in the late third century conflicts with the Gauls. The “highlighting” of specific associations—in this case a Latin one, but in other cases Roman, local or regional associations—seems in any case to respond to acute historical situations. Yet, regardless of the contextually and temporally dependent and variegated character of evocations of Rome’s power in colonial contexts, their existence per se need not be downplayed or underestimated: it just needs careful historical contextualization. Besides the conscious evocation of ideologies that had become associated with Roman power, also the opposite should be considered as being part of the same package: enhanced self-identification of the Italic communities as a reaction to Roman pressure. The realignment of socio-economic, cultural and demographic constellations through Roman agency—in collaboration with local elites or not—did change the Italian social landscape considerably. The traditional nineteenth century image of slowly dwindling Italic identities over time in tandem with the rise of Rome is illusory: rather the opposite is true, and it is no coincidence

that affirmations of (perceived) Italic identities continue or even increase during the Republican period (cf. e.g. Giardina 1997; Williams 2001; Bradley 2007). More directly related to the establishment of colonies, it has even been argued that the positioning of Latin colonies in frontier areas has strongly determined and indeed “solidified” the ethnic boundaries of the ancient Italic populations, which were presumably more fluid before Roman intervention (de Cazanove 2005). Even if not purposefully “instruments of Romanization,” the colonies sent out by Rome definitely made a major impact on the shape of ancient Italy by the enhanced interaction—deadly, detrimental, antagonistic, as well as mutually beneficial, according to the situation—with the Italic populations.

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