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Edward Anson ✦ Michael Fronda ✦ David Hollander
Timothy Howe ✦ John Vanderspoel
Pat Wheatley ✦ Sabine Müller ✦ Alex McAuley
Catalina Balmaceda ✦ Charlotte Dunn



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Contents of volume thirty-two

Numbers 3-4

- 72 Fabrizio Biglino, *Early Roman Overseas Colonization*
- 95 Catherine Rubincam, *How were Battlefield Dead Counted in Greek Warfare?*
- 106 Katherine Hall, *Did Alexander the Great Die from Guillain-Barré Syndrome?*
- 129 Benjamin Keim, *Communities of Honor in Herodotus' Histories*

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Early Roman Overseas Colonization¹

Fabrizio Biglino

Abstract: It is traditionally believed that Rome started to establish overseas colonies by the late second century: first following C. Gracchus' proposition of Colonia Iunonia on the site of Carthage, then with the establishment of Narbo Martius in Gallia Narbonensis. This narrative, however, raises several issues, primarily due to the nature of the sources themselves, as they are all influenced by late Republican and Augustan ideologies. The objective of this paper is to offer a different approach to Roman overseas colonization during the Republican period. Through a careful examination of different sources, it is possible, in fact, to consider overseas colonization in the early fourth century, in terms of mid-Republican economy and foreign policy. Furthermore, by examining the colonies established in the provinces between the third and second centuries, it is possible to highlight the essential role of the army within the whole colonization process. Finally, it will be possible to fully comprehend key elements behind the founding of colonies, such as the leadership behind it and how it evolved. Ultimately, this paper aims to highlight how overseas colonies allow us to see the whole colonization process as dynamic rather than rigid and monochromatic.

It is probably unnecessary to stress how important the role colonization played in the expansion of the Roman Republic from its earliest stages; after all, the practice of establishing communities of soldier-settlers in strategic positions was not new to Italy. First adopted by the Greeks, it was common among Italian people such as the Etruscans, Latins, and Samnites. According to the sources, the Romans themselves were already establishing colonies by the monarchic period.²

The establishment of colonies allowed Rome to expand its demographic pool, which had important military repercussions, since *coloniae* were required to furnish troops to the legions of the Republic.³ Additionally, colonization offered important socio-economic opportunities for the Roman people, as it allowed a fresh start for poorer citizens and it ensured Roman control over recently conquered territory. As a consequence, colonies proved instrumental in spreading Roman culture and language. According to Velleius, our main source on colonization together with Livy, this whole process was entirely focused on peninsular Italy, as it followed the territorial growth of the Republic.⁴ Overseas

¹ All dates are BC unless indicated otherwise.

² On Roman colonization during the monarchy see Livy, I. 56 and Dion. Hal., V. 63.

³ Livy, XXVII. 9-10 on the well-known episode of the twelve colonies that, in 209, complained about their depleted human and military resources.

⁴ Velleius dedicates an entire section of his chronicle to colonization: I. 14. 1-8 covers the period from the Gallic raid of 390 to 218 and the beginning of the Second Punic War. After all, as Velleius, I. 15. 1 says: "after that, both during the time that Hannibal remained in Italy and during the years immediately following his departure, the Romans had no time for founding colonies"; Velleius, I. 15. 2-5 resumes colonization in 189 with the foundation of Bononia and continues until the establishment of Eporadia in 100. On the other hand, Livy, the other major source on the topic, mentions the establishment of colonies throughout his entire narrative.

colonization, on the other hand, seems to have been purposefully neglected by the senate until the late second century.

This paper aims to demonstrate that Rome actually adopted a very different strategy regarding its overseas colonial policy, and had already started to establish colonies outside of Italy during the mid-Republican period. By examining evidence usually ignored by mainstream scholarly discussion, and supporting it with additional material, including the documented provincial military-sponsored foundations established as early as the late third century, it can be seen that Velleius' claims are not only wrong, but also misleading. Ultimately, it is the objective of this paper to demonstrate that overseas colonies were not only very relevant to Roman military strategy, but also had an important role within the overall debate surrounding mid-Republican colonization.

Colonization and the Sources

As a first step, the matter of the sources on colonization—mid-Republican in particular—should be briefly addressed. While I would agree with Bradley that “[a]ncient literary records of colonization, even in the early Republic, often have a strong imprint of reliability [...] there was a consistent record kept by the state of colonies founded,”⁵ it is important to remember that, as has been stressed by Mario Torelli, much of our information about early Roman colonization is filtered through the ideologies of the late Republic and Augustan age.⁶ Even something as basic as what form colonies and their foundations took has been strongly conditioned by later Roman authors: a well-known source of debate, for instance, is the description of colonies offered by Aulus Gellius.⁷

In the context of this paper, the issue with the sources concerns late Republican and Imperial authors applying their ideas on the role of colonies to those of the early and mid-Republic. This was probably caused by the fact that they did not know the exact form of early colonies, or even what “colony” meant, in the third century or earlier, so they simply applied the more familiar contemporary model of colonization.⁸ As suggested by Crawford, the Romans began to develop their ideology about colonization during the early second century.⁹ By the first century this process had most likely reached its definitive pattern that would then be absorbed by early Imperial writers: an ordered, state- (senate-) controlled process which played a vital role in Rome's success.¹⁰ Emblematic of this is Cicero's famous description of colonies as *propugnacula imperii*, the bulwarks of empire, which has become the *de facto* classification of Republican colonies.¹¹ However, Bradley

⁵ BRADLEY 2006, 163; also see CRAWFORD 2014, 201: “it seems reasonable to suppose that the Romans wrote a history—or histories—of Roman colonization.” and SALMON 1969, 17: “the occasions when colonies were founded before the Gracchi are described by Livy, and in such a way to suggest that his information was taken from official records.”

⁶ TORELLI 1988, 65-66; also see BISPHAM 2006, 76.

⁷ Aulus Gellius, AN, XVI. 13. 8-9; BISPHAM 2006, 79: “one small Antonine literary passage has so conditioned our understanding of Republican colonization.”

⁸ CRAWFORD 1995, 190: “Mi sembra abbastanza chiaro che per i Romani della fine della Repubblica la definizione di una colonia fosse piuttosto vaga”; also see CRAWFORD 2014, 205 and BRADLEY 2006, 163.

⁹ CRAWFORD 2014, 206.

¹⁰ See GABBA 1973, 351-352.

¹¹ Cicero, *Leg. Agr.*, II. 27. 73.

rightly asks, “was the function of colonies the same when this empire did not exist, and when Rome was one of many competing towns in Latium?”¹²

And what about early overseas colonies? References to colonies established outside of peninsular Italy throughout the Republican period, while not numerous, are present in the literary evidence. There is no doubt, though, that Velleius provides us with the most famous—and, in my opinion, controversial—anecdote on overseas colonization (see below).¹³ This Julio-Claudian passage—most likely influenced by late Republican impressions—after all, has strongly influenced our understanding of Roman overseas colonization. Finally, it is important to stress how much the sources tend to marginalize the role of the army in the history of colonization: Velleius, for example, briefly remarks that the military became involved only after 100.¹⁴ This was probably the result of late Republican influence: a rising anxiety over the growing politicization of colonization—and the role of the army therein—and the assumption that the senate was, and always has been, the main authority behind the whole colonization process.¹⁵ The army actually played a vital role in colonization from the archaic period onward and it also proved to be the driving force in some of the earliest cases of overseas colonies, thus undermining Velleius’ entire argument.

Overall, when concerning colonization, the sources, on the one hand, provide a generally reliable chronology backed by official state records, as the Romans were well aware of the importance of colonization. On the other hand, however, they are also responsible for creating debatable accounts based on ideologies shaped during the late Republic—and inherited by the following generations—that, for convenience, were applied to earlier centuries of colonial history, thus reshaping it. As a result, overseas colonization, although it should be considered as important as its Italian counterpart for the strategic and demographic role it played in Rome’s Mediterranean expansion, was relegated to a secondary and controversial issue in the Gracchan era.

Roman Overseas Colonization: A Revision of History?

It is traditionally believed that Roman overseas colonization did not start until the late second century. According to this narrative, the first proposed colony to be founded outside of Italy was C. Gracchus’ project to found, in 122, Colonia Iunonia on the site of Carthage, which had been destroyed by Scipio Aemilianus’ army twenty-four years before.¹⁶ This colony, however, never came to be due to harsh opposition from the senate, and the project of rebuilding Carthage would be revived only by Augustus.¹⁷ The first successful overseas colony established by the Roman Republic, according to Velleius, was Narbo

¹² BRADLEY 2006, 163.

¹³ Velleius, II. 7. 7-8.

¹⁴ Velleius, I. 15. 5: “I would not find easy to mention any colony, apart from a military colony, established after this time.”

¹⁵ Plutarch, GG, 9 on the political role of colonies; Velleius, I. 14. 1: “to insert at this point a record, with dates, of the colonies founded on senatorial authority after the capture of Rome by the Gauls.”

¹⁶ On Colonia Iunonia/Carthage see Appian, VIII. XX. 136, Velleius, I. 15. 4 and II. 7. 8; on the destruction of Carthage see Appian, VIII. XIX. 132.

¹⁷ See Appian, VIII. XX. 136.

Martius in Southern Gaul in 118.¹⁸ This pattern offered by the literary evidence is still accepted to this day: “it was not until the late second century that the Romans began seriously to think of establishing colonies overseas.”¹⁹ According to the sources it was only by the time of Caesar that the first real successful wave of provincial colonial foundations took place.²⁰

This traditional picture regarding the late start of overseas colonization is, however, challenged by Edward Bispham. He argues that the strong political opposition to the Gracchi caused a distortion of the history of colonization, a revision that is still accepted by historians today.²¹ It is worth noticing that, as opposed to his open critique of Gracchus’ colonial initiative, Velleius does not mention the establishments of the already mentioned Narbo in polemic tones, and neither that of Aquae Sextiae.²² Velleius explains the reason behind the late start of overseas colonial initiative:

among the most pernicious laws of Gracchus I would count the founding of colonies outside of Italy. This is something our ancestors had assiduously avoided since they saw that Carthage was so much more powerful than Tyre, Massalia more powerful than Phocaea, Syracuse than Corinth, Cyzicus and Byzantium than Miletus—that is, cities much more powerful than their homelands. This is why they would call Roman citizens back to Italy from the provinces for the census.²³

We can thus see that Gracchus’ proposal for Colonia Iunonia was rejected out of fear that a colony established outside of Italy could, one day, surpass the fame of Rome. The *maiores* had, up until that moment, successfully avoided such a mistake, unlike the Phoenicians and the Greeks.

This is very hard to believe, as it clearly sounds like a pretext to obscure the real reasons. Rome, after all, never hesitated to punish its own colonies when provoked. The most extreme example, and closest to the time of C. Gracchus, is the destruction of Fregellae in 125.²⁴ Founded in 328 on the eastern bank of the river Liris at the junction with the Trerus—an establishment that provoked the hostility of the Samnites and led to the Second Samnite War—Fregellae was, by the time of its destruction, while not comparable to Rome, certainly a prominent colony.²⁵ Its position on the Via Latina made it an important centre for communication and trade between Latium and Samnium, and there is little doubt that it attracted large number of immigrants from the surrounding areas.²⁶ This should not be interpreted simply as evidence of the colony losing its “Latin character” and

¹⁸ On Narbo see Velleius, I. 15. 5 and II. 7. 8.

¹⁹ SALMON 1969, 14.

²⁰ Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 42: “since the population of Rome had been considerably diminished by the transfer of 80,000 men to overseas colonies.”

²¹ BISPHAM 2006, 123.

²² Velleius, I. 15. 4 on Aquae Sextiae.

²³ Velleius, II. 7. 7.

²⁴ See Livy, *Per.*, 60; Valerius Maximus, II. 8. 4 and Plutarch, *C. Gracchus*, 3.

²⁵ On the foundation of Fregellae, see Livy, VIII. 22; on the tensions between the Romans and the Samnites following the establishment of the colony at Fregellae, see Livy, VIII. 23; Strabo, V. 3. 10: “and beside these, Fregellae, which is now merely a village, although it was once a noteworthy town and formerly held as dependencies most of the surrounding cities.”

²⁶ Well-known is the episode in Livy, XLI. 8: the Samnites and Paeligni protested because 4,000 of their families had moved to Fregellae.

being Oscanised, but rather as part of the phenomenon of urban growth that, by the second century, was affecting Rome and other major Italian towns.²⁷ Ultimately, Fregellae was destroyed by praetor L. Opimius, and the colony of Fabrateria Nova was established on its site in 124.²⁸

Obviously, the Fregellan revolt was not a simple—and suicidal, considering the balance of power—attempt to surpass Rome, but part of the complex process of Italian enfranchisement that would lead to the Social War, all of which is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it offers an example of Rome putting down a prominent colony. We may complete this argument by exploring a different, yet similar, situation: the defection of Capua in 216 following the battle of Cannae.²⁹ While not a Roman colony, Capua best represents the case of a city powerful enough to challenge Rome's position as the most prominent city in Italy.

By the fourth century, Capua was, as described by Livy, *urbs maxima opulentissimaque Italiae* (Italy's largest and wealthiest city) and even, according to Florus, one of the largest in the world.³⁰ It was the leader of a group of several Campanian cities called the "Capuan League," and archaeological evidence has confirmed that its territory was far more extensive than those of neighbouring communities.³¹ In 216, when it defected to Hannibal, it was second only to Rome; it appears that, since becoming allied with the Romans, Capua had lost significant power and influence, especially after the seizing of the *ager Falernus* and the establishment of a Latin colony at Cales by the Romans.³² The sources show that Hannibal's main promise to the Capuans was to restore confiscated land and more, so that the city would, as remarked by Vibius Virrius, "also gain supreme power in Italy."³³ As highlighted by Fronda, Capuan desire for hegemony may have been inflated by Livy as an elaboration on the Roman stereotype of Capuan *superbia*. It may be unrealistic that Capua expected to actually control all of Italy, to the point that even Livy describes Hannibal's promises as *magnifica* (extravagant).³⁴ On the other hand, Capua's desire to restore its former pre-eminence, and perhaps more, at the expense of a weakened Rome appears reasonable.

The city was successfully recaptured by the Romans in 211, an event that once and for all turned the war in their favour against the Carthaginians. The land of Capua became property of the people of Rome, and the Campanians, who were *cives sine suffragio* up until

²⁷ SALMON 1969, 117 on Oscan influence at Fregellae; contra this, see MOURITSEN 1998, 118-119 and KENDALL 2013, 176-179. On the growing urbanization of Rome and Italy see GABBA 1994, 102 and 106; ROSENSTEIN 2004, 145; LO CASCIO 2009, 52 and DE LIGT 2012, 163.

²⁸ Velleius, I. 15. 4 on Fabrateria Nova and II. 6. 4 on Opimius.

²⁹ Livy, XXIII. 2-6.

³⁰ See Livy, VII. 31 and Florus, I. XI. 6: "Capua, queen among cities, formerly accounted among the three greatest in the world."

³¹ This "league" included: Atella, Calatia, Sabatia, Casilinum, and even Cales and Cumae in the fourth century; see FRONDA 2010, 122; on Capua's territory see FREDERIKSEN 1984, 36-41 and CHOUQUER 1987, 183-231.

³² Livy, XXIII. 11. 11 on Capuan power during the Second Punic War; Livy, VIII. 11 on the land distribution in the *ager Falernus*; Livy, VIII. 16 on the establishment of the colony at Cales.

³³ Livy, XXIII. 6; on Hannibal's promises see Livy, XXIII. 10.

³⁴ Livy, XXIII. 10: "et inter cetera magnifica promissa pollicitus est brevi caput Italiae omni Capuam fore"; see FRONDA 2010, 119-120.

that moment, lost their political privileges until 189.³⁵ Capuan land was reorganized by the Republic: the property of the leading citizens was sold off, while the newly acquired farmland was rented out.³⁶ While the punishment was certainly harsh, the city was not destroyed—unlike Fregellae—because Rome needed its resources.³⁷ Livy shows the exceptional measures taken in order to preserve the agricultural potential of the area: farm animals that were captured had to be returned to their owners, as were slaves and all property described by Livy as “not attached to the ground.”³⁸ Capua, during the second century, managed to recover its economic importance and prestige and maintained it henceforward—as suggested by the fourth century AD poet Ausonius, who ranked it as the eighth most important city of the Empire.³⁹ There is little doubt, however, that its defection in 216, and the Roman retaliation in 211, irreversibly damaged its power to the point that it could never challenge Rome again.⁴⁰

Having examined the implausibility of the traditional reason why the senate opposed the foundation of overseas colonies, the real reasons are more straightforward than we might imagine and have deep ramifications. First, and already mentioned, is the hostility against Gracchus’ political and colonial programme, openly criticized by Velleius.⁴¹ Second, it should be pointed out that the idea of establishing a colony on the site of Carthage was most certainly unwise, not because it was outside Italy, but because it involved Carthage, Rome’s major rival.⁴² Third, Gracchus’ proposal seems to present the very thing that the *maiores*, according to Velleius, had tried to avoid: the establishing of a colony that could potentially overshadow Rome itself. Considering Carthage’s former power and wealth, this possibility was not too farfetched, and it offered Gracchus’ opponents convincing objections to his plan.⁴³ When these facts are considered together, it becomes clear that the project of Colonia Iunonia was doomed from the start.

³⁵ See Livy, XXXVIII. 28 and 36.

³⁶ Livy, XXVII. 3.

³⁷ See Livy, XXVI. 16: “the question of the city and its lands remained to be discussed, and some people were advocating the destruction of a particularly strong city that was so close by and hostile to Rome. But immediate utilitarian considerations prevailed, and it owed its salvation to its agricultural land, which was widely recognized as the foremost in Italy for its overall productivity—the city would be a home to the people farming that land. To keep the city inhabited, its population of resident foreigners, freedmen, traders, and craftsmen was kept on, and all the farmlands and buildings became the public property of the Roman people.”

³⁸ Livy, XXVI. 34; regarding the slaves, Livy says that adult male slaves were not to be given back to their owners—so they became Roman property.

³⁹ Ausonius, *ordo urbium nobilium*, VIII; Cicero, *de lege agraria*, II. 86 calls Capua “*altera Roma*” (other/second Rome).

⁴⁰ Cicero, *de lege agraria*, II. 88: “those wise men decided that, if they took away from the Campanians their lands, their magistrates, their senate, and the public council of that city, they would leave no image whatever of the republic; there would be no reason whatever for their fearing Capua.”

⁴¹ Velleius, II. 6. 1-3: “and then the lunacy that had overtaken Tiberius Gracchus also overtook his brother Gaius [...]. His agenda, however, was far more ambitious and radical than his brother’s. [...] He left nothing unaltered, nothing peaceful, nothing tranquil – nothing, in short, in the same condition as before.”

⁴² Appian, VIII. XX. 134 mentions the sufferings caused by the Carthaginians.

⁴³ Polybius, XVIII. 35 says that Carthage was the richest city in the world; Carthage recovered very quickly from the Second Punic War: Livy, XXXVI. 4 says that in 191, while gathering the supplies requested by the Romans for the war against the Seleucids, Carthage proposed to pay the remaining war indemnities stipulated after the Hannibalic War (see Livy, XXX. 37) in one large instalment, but Rome declined: “and, with a single payment, discharge in full the indemnity which they were under obligation [...] the response

Finally, there is the previously mentioned problem with the sources to be considered. Velleius most likely inherited the opposition to Gracchus and ideologies about colonization from late Republican writers. To this he added some Augustan rhetoric: colonies definitely proved essential in cementing Rome's role in the process of Italian unification, of which the *tota Italia* mentioned in the *Res Gestae* was the final result.⁴⁴ Therefore, it is possible that early Imperial historiography portrayed colonies primarily as an Italian occurrence, relegating overseas colonies to secondary and troublesome episodes.⁴⁵

By combining all these elements, and returning to Velleius' passage, it is reasonable to accept Bispham's suggestion that the history of Rome's colonial activity, especially regarding overseas initiatives, has been severely distorted. By carefully surveying the sources, a different picture starts to emerge, a picture in which we can see Roman overseas colonization starting much earlier.

Early Cases: the Fourth Century

As presented by the literary evidence, Roman colonization dates as far back as the regal period and continued during the early Republic. Both Salmon and Cornell emphasize that during this period it was not an exclusive Roman initiative, as the Latin League was also deeply involved in the establishment of colonies.⁴⁶ By the beginning of the fourth century, Romans and Latins, allied since the stipulation of the *foedus Cassianum* of 493, had for a century successfully defended Latium from external pressure and pursued a common colonial policy.⁴⁷

During the early decades of the century the sources mention the establishment of four colonies: two in southern Latium—Satricum (385) and Setia (382)—and two in southern Etruria—Sutrium (383) and Nepete (383 or 373).⁴⁸ The sites of these colonies further suggest

regarding the money was likewise [negative] that the Romans would not accept any before the due date." ROSENSTEIN 2012, 234 suggests that this was a political decision: Rome wanted to maintain its position of superiority over Carthage as long as possible by using this payment as a reminder. It is worth noticing that the last instalment was paid by the Carthaginians in 151, coincidentally a couple of years before the Third Punic War.

⁴⁴ *Res Gestae*, 25: "iuravit in mea verba tota Italia sponte sua et me be[lli] quo vici ad Actium ducem depoposciti"; the Roman concept of Italian unity seems to date back to at least the third century, as highlighted in the narrative of the Second Punic War in Livy, XXIII. 5: "our fight is not with Samnite or Etruscan, which would at least mean that power wrested from us would still remain in Italy. This is a Carthaginian enemy, not even native to Africa [...]. It would be a crime [...] to have laws imposed from Africa and Carthage, to permit Italy to be a Numidian and Moorish province—one only needs to be born in Italy to find this abhorrent."

⁴⁵ BISPHAM 2011, 40: "Velleius does not like this, seeing it as an innovation—the *maiores* (ancestor) wanted Roman colonization to be an Italian phenomenon."

⁴⁶ SALMON 1969, 40-41; CORNELL 1995, 301.

⁴⁷ SALMON 1969, 40-43; CORNELL 1995, 299-304; as early examples of colonization we can highlight Livy, II. 31 on the establishment of Velitrae (494), Livy, II. 34 on Norba (491), Livy, III. 1 on Antium (467) and Livy, IV. 47 on Labici (418).

⁴⁸ Livy, VI. 16 on Satricum: "the senate suddenly became philanthropic and ordered the settlement of a colony and 2,000 Roman citizens at Satricum." Velleius, I. 14. 2 on Sutrium; on the foundation of Nepete in 383 see Livy, VI. 21: "to have the plebs more amenable to the campaign, they appointed a board of five to section the Pomptine land and a board of three to found a colony at Nepete." And Velleius, I. 14. 2 on the foundation of the colony in 373: "seven year after the Gauls captured Rome, a colony was established at

a cooperation between Rome and its Latin allies: the two in southern Latium were probably more beneficial to the Latins, as they faced Volscian territory, while the two in southern Etruria (both north of Veii) were definitely more valuable to the Romans. Following these events, the sources do not mention other colonies until the establishment of Cales in 334.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, there is evidence, generally dismissed or ignored too hastily by historians, that suggests the Romans during this period actually started to establish overseas colonies, more than two centuries before C. Gracchus' proposal for Colonia Iunonia.⁵⁰

The evidence for an earlier beginning of overseas settlement is a passage in Diodorus dated around the early fourth century: "while these things were taking place in Greece, the Romans dispatched five hundred colonists, who were exempt from taxes, to Sardinia."⁵¹ Cornell dates this expedition to 386, while Bispham suggests dating it to 378, with this latter date being more convincing, as we will discuss. The Greek philosopher Theophrastus describes an expedition to Corsica dated around the same period: "for it is told how the Romans once made an expedition to that island with twenty-five ships, wishing to found a city there..."⁵² Conveniently ignored by Velleius, this evidence makes the second century opposition look even more suspicious (*maiores [...] diligenter vitaerant*), and points toward the political alteration of history suggested by Bispham.

Salmon simply dismisses these initiatives as errors, but they should not be discarded so rashly.⁵³ At first glance, Sardinia and Corsica, far away from Latium, may seem unusual as a destination for Roman colonists in the early fourth century. The Republic, after all, was expanding and focusing its colonization efforts in Latium and bordering regions, as evidenced by the already mentioned Sutrium and Nepete in southern Etruria, and, in 334, by the establishment of Cales in northern Campania.⁵⁴ A wider investigation of the events of this period, however, may suggest a slightly different scenario. As discussed above, colonization was not an exclusively Roman process during the fifth and early fourth centuries, as the Latin League played an important role both politically and demographically. This relationship, however, drastically changed once the Romans conquered Veii (396). This represents Rome's first major territorial expansion, and more importantly, deeply shifted the balance of power between the Latin League and Rome in favour of the latter.⁵⁵ The famous Gallic raid of 390, greatly exaggerated by the literary evidence, proved to be a setback from which the Republic recovered quickly: its expansionist policy was resumed, and followed, from 385, by the establishment of

Sutrium [383], and a year later one at Setia. After an interval of nine years Nepe was colonized"; on Setia see Velleius, I. 14. 2.

⁴⁹ On the establishment of Cales see Livy, VIII. 16 and Livy, *Per.*, 8.

⁵⁰ TORELLI 1993, 100-101; CORNELL 1995, 321-322; BISPHAM 2006, 123.

⁵¹ Diodorus, XV. 27. 4.

⁵² Theophrastus, *HP*, V. 8. 2.

⁵³ SALMON 1969, 166: "references to Roman colonies on Corsica and Sardinia in the fourth century must be in error."

⁵⁴ On Cales, see Livy, VIII. 16.

⁵⁵ Livy, V. 24: "the latter's (Veii) territory was more extensive than that of Rome"; ALFÖLDI 1965, 303 argues that the Roman state at the end of the monarchy, was rather small: "very modest, but it can stupefy only the believers in a huge Rome under the Tarquins"; FORSYTHE 2005, 187 states that Rome was already the main, if not the dominant, member of the Latin League by the time of the Cassian treaty.

colonies.⁵⁶ Finally, in 381, the Romans seized the Latin city of Tusculum and its territory, a move that damaged the relationship with their allies until the Roman-Latin War (340-338) ended with the Roman victory and the abolition of the Latin League.⁵⁷

It is therefore possible to suggest that 381 represents a turning point not only in Roman foreign policy, but in its colonial programme as well. After all, the foundation of Satricum, Sutrium, Nepete and Setia all took place prior to the occupation of Tusculum, and they were partly beneficial to the Latins as well. On the other hand, an expedition to Sardinia in 378 may indicate that Rome, by this point, was pursuing a colonial policy closer to its own strategic needs—the Latins, more concerned with the neighbouring Aequi or Volsci, had no interests in Sardinia. Additionally, the role of Caere should be considered. This powerful Etruscan city had a long-standing alliance with the Romans, and it was a very important centre for overseas trade that certainly had interests in both Sardinia and Corsica.⁵⁸ As Cornell suggests: “the entente with Caere can probably also help to explain some scattered allusions in the sources to Roman activity overseas, in particular the foundation of a colony on Sardinia.”⁵⁹ It is thus possible that Rome was encouraged by its ally Caere to proceed with this project, not an unimaginable option, if we consider the economic side of this argument.

It is traditionally believed that, by the early third century, Roman economy was still rather unsophisticated, almost entirely based on near-subsistence agriculture and limited trade.⁶⁰ Starr, Cornell and Hoyer more recently have all pushed for a more dynamic picture that is much easier to accept.⁶¹ After all, by 381, the Republic was already a well-established regional power rapidly on the rise, and, as a consequence, the city itself was growing. It has been suggested that Rome had a population of around 30,000 by the mid-fourth century, which doubled by the end of the century, making it one of the largest in the Western Mediterranean.⁶² Of course, such a fast-growing city required a constant food supply, and fluvial transportation on the Tiber was the most practical way to provide for Rome’s needs. This, therefore, raises questions about the scale of Roman trade during this period, and it is more likely that Rome, by the mid-fourth century, was an important centre of import and export, thus trade was an increasingly significant part of its economy.⁶³ If this is correct, and the Roman economy was more developed than previously thought, and overseas trade was an important part of such an economy, then it is plausible that early overseas colonization could have been driven by concerns of economics and trade. Thus, Rome’s

⁵⁶ Livy, VI. 2-3 on the Roman victories in 389 and 388; Livy, VI. 4 on the incursion into the territory of Tarquinii in 388 which resulted in the destruction of the towns of Cortuosa and Contenebra; Livy, VI. 8 on the victory over the Volsci in 386; on the reliability of this account, see CORNELL 1995, 318-319.

⁵⁷ On the occupation of Tusculum see Livy, VI. 25-26 and Dionisius Hal, XIV. 6.

⁵⁸ SCULLARD 1967, 100-101; BISPHAM 2006, 123: “synchronism with closer Roman relations with Caere, which certainly would have had trading interests on the islands, perhaps for Corsican fir, whose merits provide the context of Theophrastus’ precious contemporary comment.”

⁵⁹ CORNELL 1995, 321.

⁶⁰ On the traditional view on Roman economy, see ROSTOVZEFF 1957, 13 described fourth century Rome as “a city of peasants,” and “the basis of the economic life of Rome in the fourth century was peasant husbandry, a primitive agricultural system of life”; HOPKINS 1978, 19: “Rome in the early third century had a simple near-subsistence economy”; WALLACE 1990.

⁶¹ STARR 1980; TORELLI 1990, 303-304 and CORNELL 1995, 388-390; HOYER 2012, 179-181, although focused on the Samnites, can be easily expanded to Central Italy.

⁶² STARR 1980, 19.

⁶³ MOREL 1973, 43-46 on the production and export of Roman pottery before the Punic Wars.

interest in Sardinia would be understandable: geographically, the island is in a strategic position in the Western Mediterranean, especially in relation to the trade routes between Italy, Carthage, Sicily and the Balearic Islands. Additionally, we have to consider that the growing population of Rome was mainly supported by imports, and Sardinia is mentioned on numerous occasions by the sources as an important supplier of grain.⁶⁴

Furthermore, Roman colonial activity on the island is the best explanation for the section of the second Roman-Carthaginian treaty (348) that states: “no Romans shall trade or found a city in Sardinia or in Africa...”⁶⁵ This clause raises interesting economic arguments but should especially be considered the final piece of evidence for colonizing Sardinia, as it is difficult to accept the idea that this clause was based on the hypothetical establishment of settlements. For this reason, I believe it is possible to suggest that the Romans actually established more than one colony on the island. Of course, this is just a hypothesis that cannot be supported by direct evidence, but it may be indirectly hinted by other sources. In Polybius’ description and explanation of the first treaty between Rome and Carthage—traditionally dated to the beginning of the Republic⁶⁶—Sardinia is mentioned, but in a quite different light when compared with the already quoted second treaty: “the Romans may come for trading purposes to Carthage itself, to all parts of Africa on this side of the Fair Promontory, to Sardinia and to the Carthaginian province of Sicily.”⁶⁷ The establishment of Roman colonies on the island could explain the change from the first treaty to the much more restrictive second one, as the Carthaginians probably saw such settlements as a threat to their interests.⁶⁸

So, by combining this evidence with Diodorus’ account, it is plausible to suggest that the Romans established more than one overseas colony, a suggestion that can be supported by examining the chronology. The Sardinian colony was established in 378, while the treaty is dated to 348, thirty years during which more expeditions to the island could have taken place. By comparison, in a similar amount of time during the second century (200-169), the Republic established nineteen colonies all over Italy, and sent reinforcements to others—all reported by the sources. Also, Cornell notes that the period from 376 to 363 was relatively peaceful, which could have encouraged colonial activities.⁶⁹ As a final point, we should

⁶⁴ Sardinia was an important source of supplies already for the Carthaginians, as highlighted by Diodorus, XIV. 77 (dated 396): “when the news of the Carthaginian disaster had spread throughout Libya, their allies, who had long hated the oppressive rule of the Carthaginians [...], were inflamed against them. [...] Meanwhile the revolted [...] were short of provisions because they were so numerous, while the Carthaginians brought supplies by sea from Sardinia”; Diodorus, XXI. 16 shows that king Agathocles, in 291/0, was well-aware of the importance of Sardinia for Carthage: “he intended to transport an army once again to Libya and with his ships to prevent the Phoenicians from importing grain from Sardinia and Sicily.” Sardinian grain proved very important for Rome during the Second Punic War, see Livy, XXV. 20; XXIX. 36; XXX. 3; XXX. 24 and XXX. 8; also see ROSTOVZEFF 1957, 9: “south Italy, Sardinia, and Sicily were for a long time the richest grain markets of the world.”

⁶⁵ Polybius, III. 24.

⁶⁶ Polybius, III. 22: “the first treaty between Rome and Carthage was made in the consulship of Lucius Junius Brutus and Marcus Horatius”; thus in 509.

⁶⁷ Polybius, III. 23.

⁶⁸ Polybius, III. 23: “the Carthaginians consider Sardinia and Africa as belonging absolutely to them.”

⁶⁹ CORNELL 1995, 324.

consider the debt problems reported by Livy during this period as a plausible incentive for colonial initiatives—including overseas expeditions—but we will return to this point later.⁷⁰

Finally, the establishment of a colony (or more than one, as suggested) in Sardinia after 378 and the expedition to Corsica can be considered additional—and hopefully sufficient—evidence against the ludicrous notion, mainly based on Polybius and Seneca, that the Romans did not sail before the First Punic War.⁷¹ In open contrast with their accounts we can quote both Livy and Appian on the well-known episode of ten Roman ships that entered the port of Tarentum in 282, with Appian being particularly interesting as he mentions that there was an old treaty between the two cities, thus implying that the Romans were accustomed to sailing long before that accident.⁷² Livy states that Rome was quite active on the sea by the late fourth century with the foundation of a colony on the Pontine island (313) and the Decian plebiscite of 311 that established a small fleet.⁷³ It is possible to keep exploring the sources back to the very controversial Regal Era: according to Livy, king Ancus Marcius successfully expanded Roman territory as far as the coast of Latium and established Ostia.⁷⁴ These events, if we give any weight to sources on this period, plausibly triggered some minor maritime activity. By putting together all of this evidence, there can be little to no doubt that the Republic, by the time of the First Punic War, had plenty of maritime experience and had given the sea plenty of thought.

Following the treaty of 348, Rome apparently lost interest in Sardinia until, more than a century later (237), both Sardinia and Corsica were occupied after the First Punic War. So, it should be asked what happened to the colonies established on the islands before the treaty; due to the lack of sources, however, we can only speculate. The absence of evidence is probably the reason why Bispham, while supporting their establishments, dismisses them quite easily: “these two colonies either failed, or evolved very differently from their Italian cousins.”⁷⁵ We know from Theophrastus that the expedition to Corsica failed, but we have no indication that the same happened in Sardinia.⁷⁶ It is possible that they were

⁷⁰ Livy, VI. 31: “now the fuel and cause of discord was debt”; see FORSYTHE 2005, 262: “we may further wonder whether the Roman settlement of Pomptine territory and the foundation of Latin colonies at Sutrium, Nepes, and Setia [...] were intended not only to serve strategic goals but also to ease social and economic tensions in the Roman state.”

⁷¹ Seneca, *de brev. vit.*, 13. 4: “recently I heard somebody reporting which Roman general first did this or that: Duilius first won a naval battle.” He is talking about Gaius Duilius, consul of 260 who, during the First Punic War, defeated a Carthaginians fleet and celebrated the first naval triumph; Polybius, I. 20: “it was, therefore, because they saw that the war was dragging on that they first applied themselves to building ships [...] It was not a question of having adequate resources for the enterprise, for they had in fact none whatsoever, nor had they ever given a thought to the sea before this.”

⁷² Livy, *Per.*, 12: “when the Tarantines looted a Roman fleet and killed its commander, the Senate sent them envoys to complain about this injustice, but they were maltreated. Therefore, war was declared”; Appian, *Sam.*, VII. 1: “Cornelius went on a voyage of inspection along the coast of Magna Graecia with ten decked ships. [...] He reminded the Tarantines of an old treaty by which the Romans had bound themselves not to sail beyond the promontory of Lacinium, and so stirred their passion that he persuaded them to put out to sea and attack Cornelius, of whose ships they sank four and captured one with all on board.”

⁷³ Livy, IX. 28 on the Latin settlement on the Pontine island; Livy, IX. 30 on the plebiscite by plebeian tribune Marcus Decius.

⁷⁴ See Livy, I. 33 on Ancus Marcius.

⁷⁵ BISPHAM 2006, 123.

⁷⁶ Theophrastus, *HP*, V. 8. 2: “for it is told how the Romans once made an expedition to that island with twenty-five ships, wishing to found a city there; [...] wherefore the Romans gave up the idea of founding their city.”

simply abandoned: Livy, on a later occasion, reports of colonies being abandoned by their colonists.⁷⁷ This option, however, seems unlikely, since the colonists would have either remained in Punic Sardinia, or found a way to return to Italy, as it is improbable that Rome organized an expedition to collect the colonists—especially considering that Sardinia, after the treaty, was basically off-limits.⁷⁸ The only alternative, then, is that Rome abandoned these colonies while their inhabitants continued living there and, ultimately, became closer to the local Sardinian and Punic population. This is how, in my opinion, Bispham's remark on how they "evolved very differently from their Italian cousins" should be interpreted. While simply abandoning colonies might at first appear a peculiar decision by the Romans, it is actually the only reasonable solution once the larger picture is taken into account. Although successful, these colonies probably were not a priority to the Republic; they were trade posts, perhaps even bridgeheads for future expansion on the island, but at the time of the treaty with Carthage (348), Rome's attention was entirely focused on Italy.⁷⁹ Finally, considering that the establishment of Fregellae, as mentioned, instigated the hostility of the Samnites, maintaining the colonies in Sardinia would have most likely damaged the relations with Carthage; bearing in mind that Rome during this period was involved in different large conflicts—the First Samnite War (343-341) and the Latin War (340-338)—this was something that the Romans surely could neither economically nor politically afford.⁸⁰

Additional Cases: the Army and Overseas Colonization

In the previous section we examined the possibility of dating the beginning of Roman overseas colonization to the early fourth century based on Diodorus' account of the Sardinian expedition and explored in detail the reasons why such an expedition should be accepted in the light of important economic and political considerations. Furthermore, we have explored the possibility of the establishment of more than one colony. If included in the official history of Roman colonization, the colonies in Sardinia would definitely prove Bispham's argument that the cause of the senate's opposition to C. Gracchus' colonial policy, as reported by Velleius, was a rewriting of history instigated for political reasons.

To further support this argument, it is possible to investigate the matter of overseas colonization from a different angle: the establishment of military-sponsored settlements. We are not looking at Velleius' *coloniae militares*, though they possibly represent the best example of colonies established specifically for veterans. This, however, was a specific phase of colonization that interested Italy in the course of the first century that was

⁷⁷ Livy, XXXIX. 23 on the cases of Sipontum and Buxentum.

⁷⁸ Polybius, III. 24: "no Romans shall [...] remain in a Sardinian or African port longer than he needs to obtain provisions or to repair his ship."

⁷⁹ Shortly before the treaty, in 354, following successful campaigns against the Tarquinienses and the Tiburtines, Rome entered into contact with the Samnites (see Livy, VII. 19). In 343, soon after the treaty with Carthage, Rome became involved in Campania against the Samnites (see Livy, VII. 29-31).

⁸⁰ Livy, VII. 38 mentions that Carthage, after the Roman victory over the Samnites at Suessula (343), sent emissaries: "the fame of the operation was not confined to the bounds of Italy, either: the Carthaginians also sent spokesmen to Rome to offer their congratulations and the gift of a golden crown, weighing twenty-five pounds, which was to be lodged in the sanctuary of Jupiter on the Capitol." This might suggest that Rome and Carthage, after the treaty of 348, maintained good relations, thus sacrificing the Sardinian colonies proved to be the right decision.

triggered mainly by the political context of the late Republic.⁸¹ The army, nevertheless, provides some of the earliest cases of overseas colonies: those at Tarraco and Italica, both established during the Second Punic War. The first, in Hispania Citerior, was an important base for operations during the conflict, and later became the capital of the province.⁸² Italica, on the other hand, was founded in Hispania Ulterior in 206 by Scipio for his soldiers during the operations against the Carthaginians.⁸³ Famous as the birthplace of both Trajan and Hadrian, the colony had humble beginnings: Appian describes it as an outpost in which Scipio settled the sick and wounded soldiers from his army.⁸⁴ However, Italica's importance progressively grew as it became a major producer and exporter of grain and oil, further emphasised by the status of wealthy provincial families during the Empire.⁸⁵

Italica, regardless of its original function, is another foundation that, together with those in Sardinia, is noticeably absent from Velleius' chronicle and not considered by the senators opposing Gracchus. Not only was it established very far from Italy (roughly 2,350 kilometres from Rome), but at the time of its establishment Hispania Ulterior was not even a Roman province. Finally, as a settlement established through the army, it predates the *coloniae militares* by more than a century: one of the earliest cases that we know of is Colonia Mariana, established in Corsica presumably in 93.⁸⁶ We can thus see that Italica was founded 84 years before Gracchus' proposal for Colonia Iuniora, and 113 years before the first of the *coloniae militares*. This emphasises the long relationship between colonization and the army, a relationship that continued during the second century, as the literary evidence highlights numerous overseas foundations all associated with military campaigns. From Gracchuris (178) in Hispania Citerior to Aquae Sextiae (122) in Gallia Narbonensis, the Republic, through the army, established numerous overseas colonies all ignored by Gracchus' adversaries in Velleius' account.⁸⁷

Not only do these foundations directly oppose the idea that Rome did not consider overseas colonization until the senate reluctantly agreed to the establishment of Narbo, but they should all be considered as part of the wider picture of Roman colonial history. Except for some isolated critiques—notably Tweedie⁸⁸—it is generally agreed that following the

⁸¹ Velleius, I. 15. 5; BROADHEAD 2007, 158; SALMON 1969, 128.

⁸² On Tarraco see Pliny, *NH*, III. 3. 21, "the colony of Tarragon, which was founded by the Scipios," and Livy, XXI. 60-61.

⁸³ Appian, VI. 7. 38.

⁸⁴ On Trajan, see Eutropius, *Breviarium*, VIII. 2 who mentions that his ancestors moved to Italica from Umbria; also see SYME 1958, 604. On Hadrian, the paternal side of his family, the Aelii, came from Italica since "the time of the Scipios"; also see BIRLEY 1997, 12; see RUFINO 1990, 516 on both the Ulpii and Aelii.

⁸⁵ SYME 1958, 42 and 602.

⁸⁶ Mariana is mentioned by Pliny, *NH*, III. VI. 80.

⁸⁷ Gracchuris was established by Ti. Sempronius Gracchus following his successful campaign in Hispania Citerior, see Livy, *Per.*, 41 and Pliny, *NH*, III. 3. 24; DYSON 1985, 196 also attributes Semproniana to Gracchus. Other important overseas foundations tied to army—and mentioned by the sources—are: Corduba (152), by M. Claudius Marcellus with both Roman and Iberian settlers (see Strabo, III. 2. 1), Valentia (138), by D. Iunius Brutus for the veterans of the campaigns against Viriathus (see Livy, *Per.*, 55), Palma and Pollentia (123), by Q. Caecilius Metellus *Balearicus* (see Strabo, III. 5. 1). Indirectly connected to the army is the colony of Carteia (171) for the offspring of Roman soldiers and Iberian women (see Livy, XLIII. 4). On Aquae Sextiae, established by consul Sex. Calvinus and proconsul F. Flaccus, see Livy, *Per.*, 61, Strabo, IV. 1. 5, Pliny, *NH*, XXXI. 2. 4 and Velleius, I. 15. 4; also see SYME 1958, 604-605 on Gallia Narbonensis.

⁸⁸ TWEEDIE 2011, 465-466.

establishment of Luna (177),⁸⁹ Roman colonization paused because: “with Italy south of the Alps now firmly under Roman control, there was no longer a need for the *propugnacula imperii* that had played so important role in Roman expansion of the previous century and a half.”⁹⁰ Livy and Velleius add certain colonial activities during the following decades, but they are criticized by modern historians.⁹¹ Then, in 124, with the foundation of Fabrateria Nova, colonization resumed, and continued until, following the establishment of Eporedia (100), it entered into the phase of the *coloniae militares*.⁹² Instead, it is possible to suggest a different approach: colonization did not stop, but was simply focused elsewhere. During the same period when, apparently, there was no need for colonies in Italy (177-125), Rome was actually promoting, through the army, the establishment of overseas colonies—considering that these initiatives, from the foundation of Gracchuris to that of Aquae Sextiae, took place in almost the exact same period (178-122).

It should now be clear that the anti-Gracchan argument against overseas colonization highlighted by Velleius is unfounded and should be disregarded. After all, we know of at least three settlements (Palma, Pollentia and Aquae Sextiae) that were established in two different provinces during Gracchus’ tribuneships (123-122). Velleius’ entire argument is based on the claim that up until that moment, establishing colonies outside of Italy had been carefully avoided by the ancestors (*maiores*); as seen, the evidence clearly shows numerous instances that prove the exact opposite. From the Sardinian colony of the fourth century, to Italica during the Second Punic War, and finally to the military colonies of the second century, it is clear that overseas colonization never constituted a contentious issue for the Republic. On the contrary, the cases we have examined suggest that the *maiores*, eager to expand Rome’s interests beyond the borders of Italy, actually pursued a dynamic, even bold, colonial policy on different occasions. At the same time, however, they also raise intriguing questions on the authority behind the establishing of overseas colonies.

Overseas Colonization: Who was in Charge?

The various instances of overseas colonization previously examined, from the early colonial expedition to Sardinia, to the establishment of Tarraco and Italica, and finally the

⁸⁹ On Luna see Livy, XLI. 13.

⁹⁰ BROADHEAD 2007, 157; also see SALMON 1969, 109 and 112.

⁹¹ Livy, XLIII. 17 on the reinforcements (1,500 colonists) sent to Aquileia in 169; Velleius, I. 15. 3 on the colonists sent to Puteoli, Salernum, Buxentum, and Auxium in 157. SALMON, 1969, 112 and 188 criticizes Velleius’ dating: “a colony in 157 would be an isolated and aberrant phenomenon.”

⁹² From Velleius, I. 15. 4-5 we know of the following colonies: Fabrateria Nova (124), Scolacium Minervia and Tarentum Neptunia (122), Aquae Sextiae (122), Narbo Martius (118), Dertona (date not certain; SALMON 1969, 121 suggests 109), and Eporedia (100). Regarding Fabrateria Nova, while it is possible to argue whether it was an actual colony or just a settlement for the displaced inhabitants of the recently destroyed Fregellae, its role in the history of colonization should not be undervalued. It was, after all, the first foundation in Italy mentioned by the sources (Velleius, I. 15. 4) since that of Luna (Livy, XLI. 13 and Velleius, I. 15. 2). An important missing element is whether more colonies were established during the Gracchan period — other than Scolacium, Tarentum and the failed project at Carthage. BELOCH 1926, 493 suggests that at least three more colonies, Abellium, Grumentum and Herculia Telesia, should be included as colonies of the Gracchan era because their chief officials were called *praetores duoviri* like those at Narbo, established a few years after the death of C. Gracchus. Also, Abellium has the adjective *Livia* as part of its full title (Veneria Livia Augusta Alexandriana Abellinatium), implying that this might actually have been one of the colonies proposed by Livius Drusus in order to undermine Gracchus (see Plutarch, GG, 9).

provincial foundations of the mid-second century, all have one element in common: they raise questions about who was actually in charge of establishing overseas colonies.

When examining colonization as a whole, the sources definitely point toward the senate as the decision-making body.⁹³ However, it is more plausible that the senate's authority over colonization was rather limited until the late fourth century, while authors such as Livy or Velleius, as remarked earlier, applied late Republican practices, with which they were more familiar, to early and mid-Republican colonial procedures.⁹⁴ Up until the late fourth century, colonization was, in practice, a more private initiative under the leadership of powerful individuals, while the senate's role was limited to formal decisions once everything was already done. As already argued by Cassola, this would properly connect colonization with the initiative of the *gentes* who, especially during the early Republic, were accustomed to waging war outside the control of the state.⁹⁵ The case of Publicola, who established a colony at Sigliuria to compete with Porsenna, offers a clear example of a powerful leader acting independently; Titus Quincticus' actions in the region of Antium, on the other hand, represent the limited role of the senate, as its only input was to accept formally what was already decided.⁹⁶ This was most likely a relic of the monarchy: powerful individuals maintaining their initiative in founding colonies resemble the depiction in the sources of the kings being responsible for colonial politics.⁹⁷ This situation changed by the late fourth century, as the *lex Ovinia* (introduced between 339 and 318) established the independence of the senate from the magistrates by removing the principle that no senators could be removed for personal or narrow political reasons.⁹⁸ This law, as

⁹³ Livy, IV. 49 on the case of Lucius Decius (414): he proposed a colony at both Bolae and Labici but was vetoed by his colleagues who would not allow his proposal to be passed without the approval of the senate. Also see Velleius, I. 14: "I have therefore decided to separate the first and second section of this book with some information in summary form, knowledge of which will not prove superfluous, and to insert at this point a record, with dates, of the colonies founded on senatorial authority after the capture of Rome by the Gauls"; also see Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 458 in which he explicitly records the passing of a *senatus consultum* for the colonization of Saticula in 313; BROADHEAD 2007, 148: "the senate and the people decided by formal legislation the use to which the newly acquired *ager publicus* would be put. Some was given over to colonization"; SALMON 1969, 131.

⁹⁴ BRADLEY 2014, 64-65; BRADLEY 2006, 168: "but the considerable power of the senate over mid-Republican colonization must be a later development."

⁹⁵ A typical example of "private" warfare is the case of the Fabii at the Cramera river: see Livy, II. 49-50; see CASSOLA 1988, 17; CORNELL 1995, 144; HERMON 1999, 873-876; CRAWFORD 2014, 205-206.

⁹⁶ Plutarch, *Publicola*, XVI. 2: "returning, therefore, to Rome, and wishing, in the first place, to surpass Porsenna in the loftiness of his spirit, he built the city of Sigliuria, although his adversary was already near at hand"; Livy, III. 1: "in the previous year under the leadership and auspices of Titus Quincticus a certain amount of land had been captured from the Volsci; a colony, he suggested, could be established at Antium, a city on the sea that was nearby and accessible [...]. His proposal was accepted."

⁹⁷ See Livy, I. 33 on the foundation of Ostia by king Ancus Marcius.

⁹⁸ On the *lex Ovinia* see Festus, 290, *Glossaria Latina* vol. IV: "*Praeteriti senatores quondam in opprobrio non erant, quod, ut reges sibi legebant sublegebantque quos in consilio publico haberent, ita post exactos eos consules quoque et tribuni militum consulari potestate coniunctissimos sibi quosque patriciorum et deinde plebeiorum legebant, donec Ovinia tribunicia intervenit qua sanctum est ut censores ex omni ordine optimum quemque curiati<m> in senatu<m> legerent. Quo factum est ut qui praeteriti essent et loco moti haberentur ignominiosi.*" "Passed-over senators in former times were not in disgrace, because, just as the kings used to choose for themselves, and to choose as replacements, those whom they would have in public council, so after the kings were expelled the consuls also, and the military tribunes with consular power, used to choose for themselves all their closest friends from the patricians and then from the plebeians; until the tribunician Ovinian law intervened, by which it was laid down that the censors should be bound by oath to enrol in the senate all the best men from every rank. Thus, it came about that those who were passed over and removed from their seats were

suggested by Cornell, marked the beginning of the dominance of the senate in Roman public life.⁹⁹ Consequently, it can also represent the moment that properly defined the role of the senate with regards to colonization. The case of consul Postumius Megellus (291), who was not permitted to distribute land he had won, might represent an instance of the senate starting to assert its authority over the matter of colonization and land distribution: “it was only after the formalization of the senate in the late fourth century that the preconditions for the development of longer term strategic thinking developed.”¹⁰⁰

How did these elements influence overseas colonization? Before the introduction of the *lex Ovinia*, it is safe to assume that procedures were under the control of influential politicians or military leaders. The case of the Sardinian expedition, which predates the *lex Ovinia* by several decades, can be included in the category of colonies promoted by private initiatives, but, at the same time, it also presents an interesting anomaly. Because of its location and context, the foundation cannot fit the traditional archaic image of a colony established by the leader of a *gens* for his *clientes* (clients) and *sodales* (companions). As examined earlier, Sardinia was outside Rome’s sphere of influence or areas of military activity, but it potentially offered significant trade benefits. Furthermore, the political and economic circumstances of the time should be considered: by 378, Rome’s government was under the leadership of the military tribunes with consular power and there were serious domestic issues involving debt, as recorded by Livy.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, the only military operations consisted of plundering Volscian territory and it is thus unlikely that such limited actions would be followed by traditional military-related colonization.¹⁰²

Conversely, by the late third century, when Tarraco and Italica were established in Spain, and especially by the mid-second century, when numerous army-sponsored colonies were founded in the provinces, the senate was the main authority behind the colonization process. Nonetheless, it is plausible that overseas colonization, once again, implied slightly different procedures when compared to its Italian counterpart. As the Romans started their conquest of Spain following the Second Punic War, Dyson remarks that “the Iberian Peninsula was too far distant for the Romans to attempt a true colonial system.”¹⁰³ When compared with the colonization process that took place in Italy between the fourth and the second century, then, it is correct that the Spanish settlements did not follow the “true” colonial process.¹⁰⁴ However, the foundations mentioned earlier suggest that the Republic might have employed a slightly different approach to its colonial policy.

The long distance was undoubtedly an issue, as Rome could not send waves of colonists on a yearly basis to faraway provinces. This, after all, could have raised serious recruitment difficulties: not only did the long travel required involve risks, but, just like their Italian counterparts, provincial colonies were exposed to enemy raids.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, more

considered dishonoured”; see CORNELL 2000, 79-86; BRADLEY 2006, 168; BRADLEY 2014, 65-66; CORNELL 2014, 230-231.

⁹⁹ CORNELL 2014, 231.

¹⁰⁰ BRADLEY 2014, 66; on Postumius Megellus see Dion. Hall., XVII-XVIII. 4.

¹⁰¹ Livy, VI. 31: “now the fuel and cause of the discord was debt.”

¹⁰² Livy, VI. 31.

¹⁰³ DYSON 1985, 186.

¹⁰⁴ See KEAY 2003, 157.

¹⁰⁵ Livy, IX. 26 on recruitment difficulties for the establishment of Luceria (314) and Livy, X. 21 on the difficulties in recruiting colonists for Minturnae and Sinuessa (296); see PATTERSON 2006, 199-202 and PELGROM 2008, 368.

practical alternatives were adopted, and linking colonization with the army appears to have been one of the most beneficial. Not only it would have allowed the settlement of thousands of Roman citizens and Italian allies, but they were probably more willing to stay so far away from Italy due to the economic rewards offered by colonization.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, these foundations had the strategic function of increasing Roman presence, and ultimately, control in a province. Further, they facilitated the interaction between Romans and natives, who were surely involved in this process.¹⁰⁷ Provincial colonies could have been reinforced through migration, especially during more peaceful periods—e.g. the Spanish provinces between the early 170s and the mid-150s—or via the settlement of discharged soldiers.¹⁰⁸

For these reasons, and by looking at the evidence, it would seem that the role of the senate remained limited: from Scipio at Italica to Sex. Calvinus and F. Flaccus at Aquae Sextiae, military commanders appear to have been the real forces behind these colonial initiatives. Because of this, Richardson argues that they were not “official” colonies, making military-related colonization appear almost a return to early Republican practices.¹⁰⁹ Tweedie also adds:

if these were not senate-approved settlements, they would indicate that the commanders were taking an increasing level of responsibility for the settlement of their men, perhaps because of increasing difficulties in obtaining “official” settlements in Italy.¹¹⁰

This portrait is more compatible with the *coloniae militares* of the first century than establishments such as Italica, Gracchuris or Palma. While it is true that military commanders appear to have been in charge of the process, it is hard to believe that they completely disregarded the senate; it is more likely that they were granted the authority to establish overseas colonies by the senate. This, as argued, simplified the colonization process that, ultimately, increased Roman presence and control in a province. The autonomy of the commanders can be also considered by looking at these foundations as part of the reward schemes granted to their troops, which, ultimately, were up to the commanders, and not the senate. The argument that these colonies were established because of the “increasing difficulties in obtaining official settlements in Italy,” finally, is actually quite misleading. Contrary to later cases, there is no indication of opposition from the senate against these initiatives.¹¹¹ Also, while an increasing problem by the late second century, the matter of the scarcity of land in Italy is very debateable in this instance, as it was probably not an urgent issue up to the mid-second century, as certain instances in the

¹⁰⁶ Both PATTERSON 2006, 200 and GABBA 1988, 19 highlight how colonization allowed the lower classes of Roman society to be involved in the rewards of conquest.

¹⁰⁷ Strabo, III. 2. 1 on Corduba having a population: “from the beginning by picked men of the Romans and of the native Iberians”; on natives and Roman colonization see BRADLEY 2006, 175-177 and PELGROM 2014, 82.

¹⁰⁸ LOWE 2009, 57-58; KEAY 2003, 157 says that archaeological evidence shows growing imports of Italian wine and pottery.

¹⁰⁹ RICHARDSON 1986, 161.

¹¹⁰ TWEEDIE 2011, 470.

¹¹¹ See Appian, BC, I. 29-30 on Marius; this represents the first time the sources highlight opposition against the settlement of veterans; also see Cicero, *Balb.*, XII. 48; Appian, BC, II. 13 on Pompey, another case of political resistance against land concessions.

sources suggest.¹¹² Finally, if it was so hard for commanders to settle their veterans in Italy, it should be highlighted that the sources do not mention any similar initiatives in other provinces, especially Macedonia, Greece, and Africa during periods of intense military activity. It is likely that deficiency in the literary evidence is the main problem, for if this was becoming a common occurrence, the sources would have mentioned such settlements (as they did—even briefly, like Livy’s *Periochae*—for Spain).

This picture of the senate delegating responsibility of colonial affairs in the provinces to military commanders, however, is questioned by the establishment of Carteia in Hispania Ulterior (171). The delegation, representing the sons of Roman soldiers and Spanish women, went straight to the senate that authorized the establishment of a colony at Carteia.¹¹³ The fact that this foundation is also ignored by Velleius is rather surprising, specifically for two reasons. Not only was the senate directly involved in its foundation, clearly going against the concept that the *maiores* actively avoided establishing colonies overseas, but Livy states that Carteia was a Latin colony, making it as “official” as its Italian counterparts. Therefore, the different leadership behind the overseas colonization process should provide the last rejection of Velleius’ representation of the opposition against Gracchus’ overseas colonial policy based on role of the *maiores*. Earlier cases, like Sardinia, show that the *maiores* were not even in control, while later cases—from Italica to Aquae Sextiae—highlight a different picture: the senate was certainly not avoiding the establishment of overseas colonies, but possibly supporting them by assigning the responsibility to military commanders. Finally, the episode of Carteia shows that the senate, when necessary, could have been directly involved in the establishment of overseas colonies.

Early Overseas Colonization: Why Does it Matter?

The previous sections of this paper have investigated whether Rome, contrary to well-known evidence, had begun to establish colonies outside of Italy by the early fourth century, a practice that was pursued throughout the mid-Republican period via an active collaboration with the army. This, however, was intentionally ignored by the sources and, as argued, created a revision of colonial history that still endures.

Accepting that Rome had already started to establish colonies outside of Italy by the early fourth century offers interesting insights. Not only does it further suggest a dynamic political and economic portrait of Rome during this period, but it also enters into the debate surrounding the motivations behind the colonization process. As emphasized by Salmon and Brunt, colonies had primarily a strategic function, as they projected Roman power into still hostile regions and consolidated control.¹¹⁴ Socio-economic issues only started to be considered by the second century.¹¹⁵ This rigid division, however, strongly

¹¹² Livy, XXXI. 4 and XXXI. 49 on Scipio receiving permission to settle in Samnium and Apulia the veterans of his campaigns in Spain and Africa (probably around 50,000 men). Livy, XL. 38 on the case of the 40,000 Ligurian men—followed by wives and children—who, in 180, were moved by the Romans to plots on *ager publicus* in Samnium.

¹¹³ See Livy, XLIII. 3 on the episode; also see Gaius, *Inst.*, I. 56 on the legal transmission of Roman citizenship.

¹¹⁴ BRUNT 1971, 538.

¹¹⁵ SALMON 1969, 15.

limits our understanding of the establishment of colonies. Recent debate has argued that these settlements were already an important means of relieving poverty among Roman citizens by the mid-fourth century, without, however, forgetting their original military purpose. Hence, colonization should not be as rigidly defined as suggested by Salmon, but it should be regarded as a more fluid process. As suggested by Bradley: “as well as changing in function over time, colonies probably meant different things to different sectors of Roman society.”¹¹⁶ Both elements were thus present in colonies, and most likely were applied differently: while the state was moved mainly by the strategic and military considerations, the settlers were clearly more interested in potential economic benefits.¹¹⁷

This double function of colonies can be further emphasized by examining the early overseas settlements. At first glance, the colonial expedition to Sardinia appears anomalous alongside the other foundations of the period (Satricum, Setia, Sutrium and Nepete). It clearly does not fit the model of colonies being exclusively *propugnacula imperii*, to use Cicero’s well-known characterization, as it did not offer any military and strategic benefit.¹¹⁸ Thus, it is not a surprise that Salmon simply dismisses it as a convenient error. Nevertheless, by looking at colonies as multi-purpose institutions throughout the early Republic, a settlement outside of Italy does not appear to be such an anomaly. The Sardinian colony (or colonies, as I have proposed) hardly had any military purpose, as the island was well outside Rome’s sphere of influence. On the other hand, as we have suggested, the Republic might have had trade interests in Sardinia, plus, as implied by Livy, there were pressing debt issues at Rome at the same time. Finally, there is the limited role of the senate to be considered: before the *lex Ovinia*, colonial policy was mainly a private initiative by powerful leaders, and the Sardinian colony may represent such a case. It is plausible that prominent individuals were interested to the island, or were influenced by the allied city of Caere, which also had trade interests there.¹¹⁹

The same arguments should be applied to second century overseas colonization. The significant evidence regarding the establishment of provincial settlements in which the army played an important role does not receive enough attention, especially when compared to their Italian counterparts. First, they imply that the Republic did not stop its colonization policy between 177 and 124, as traditionally believed, but instead focused its efforts abroad, where settlements were actually needed. Secondly, the evidence emphasises the necessity of abandoning the rigid subdivision of colonization according to its functions in favour of a persistent flexibility. Salmon argues that colonization, once resumed in the late second century, “ceased thus to be mainly military in its aims and became political and economic.”¹²⁰ However, the overseas colonies of this period show that all elements were maintained. We may look at Gracchuris as an example: while it surely provided land and economic rewards for its settlers, there is no doubt that it was strategically important for Roman control in the Ebro valley, especially since it was established by T. Gracchus after his campaigns against the Celtiberians. Overall, it is plausible that the second century overseas settlements were based on the experience that the Romans had gathered in Italy.

¹¹⁶ BRADLEY 2006, 171.

¹¹⁷ As highlighted by PATTERSON 2006, 200, the strategic role of colonies was not at all popular among settlers due to the potential dangers.

¹¹⁸ Cicero, *Leg. Agr.*, II. 27. 73.

¹¹⁹ On Caere’s trading interests see BISPHAM 2006, 123 and CORNELL 1995, 321.

¹²⁰ SALMON 1969, 114.

While, a “true” colonial system did not exist due to the issues of distance, the major elements, including the multi-purpose nature of settlements, were not altered.

Another element in which early overseas colonies play an important role is within the ongoing discussion regarding the coexistence between the colonists and the local populations. Contrary to conventional view, overseas settlements, especially early ones, strongly point towards the “double-community” scenario, as they would have undeniably benefitted from incorporating the local population.¹²¹

The presence of indigenous element (*incolae*) in Republican colonies, after all, is attested by sporadic epigraphic evidence, such as the following concerning the colony of Aesernia:

*Samnites inuolae V(eneri) d(ono) d(ederunt) mag(istri) C. Pomponius V.F. / C. Percennius L.F. / L. Satrius L.F. / C. Marius No. F.*¹²²

This colony was established in 263 on the site of a Samnite town, but this evidence, dated to the second century, shows that Samnite *incolae* have persisted among the colonists.¹²³ For this reason, it is difficult to believe that the Sardinian colony excluded local *incolae*. First, we have to consider the political reasons explored early; second, Diodorus’ passage states the limited number of colonists (five hundred), and the involvement of the natives could have not only facilitated the establishment of the colony, but also the relations with neighbouring communities. Finally, the military-sponsored foundations of the second century offer both direct and indirect evidence in favour of the inclusion of non-Roman elements. Archaeological evidence, as highlighted by Keay, increasingly supports the fact that the Romans in Spain regularly used pre-existing settlements and their networks.¹²⁴ Involving friendly natives, as indirectly suggested at Gracchuris,¹²⁵ and more directly at Corduba, where local population were even involved in the establishment of the colony itself, would have greatly helped to achieve Rome’ strategic needs during its overseas expansion, but also benefitted the colonies themselves.

In conclusion, this paper has highlighted that Rome already pursued an active colonial policy overseas by the early fourth century, and strongly questioned the sources for depicting a much later start to this process. Michael Crawford states:

mi sembra abbastanza chiaro che per i Romani della fine della Repubblica la definizione di una colonia fosse piuttosto vaga [...] La verita’ e’ che non abbiamo la minima idea di cio’ che significasse il termine colonia populi Romani per i Romani della fine della Repubblica.¹²⁶

Maybe this should be extended to overseas colonies as well. By the late Republic, historians were probably attempting to homogenize colonization as one long process that never changed to create a stronger sense of unity with the past. This was most likely absorbed by

¹²¹ See PELGROM 2014, 82; ROSELAAR 2010, 75 and GAGLIARDI 2006, 173-175. On the traditional view see SALMON 1969, 15 and BRUNT 1971, 254 and 538-544.

¹²² GAGLIARDI 2006, 156-157.

¹²³ On the establishment of Aesernia see Livy, *Per.*, 16 and Velleius, I. 14. 8.

¹²⁴ KEAY 2003, 157-159.

¹²⁵ DYSON 1985, 196: on Gracchuris: “its population was most likely drawn from friendly natives, who would provide a watch on the surrounding hills and establish a market to draw neighbouring natives into the developing Roman frontier economic system.”

¹²⁶ CRAWFORD 1995, 190.

early Imperial writers—such as Velleius—who, perhaps, added the Italocentric sentiments of the age of Augustus. Thus, overseas colonization was pushed aside, as it clearly did not fit this model. Nevertheless, there is no question that it played an important role in Roman expansion and strategy—just like its Italian counterpart. Properly understanding this fact allows us to have a more complete comprehension of Roman Republican colonization.

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