

## REVIEW ARTICLE • BESPREKINGSARTIKEL

## CLANS OF ROMAN ITALY

Roman Roth  
University of Cape Town

Terrenato, N. 2019. *The Early Roman Expansion into Italy: Elite Negotiation and Family Agendas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. xx + 327, 43 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 978–1–108–42267–3. £75.00.

## I

In 381 BC the city-state of Tusculum became the first community to be incorporated into the Roman state as a *municipium*, probably by inclusion in the *tribus Papiria* to which it belonged in historically better documented times.<sup>1</sup> Livy informs us that the incorporation came in the wake of an impending war between Tusculum and Rome, which was averted by the community's surrendering itself to the Roman troops that had menacingly entered the town's territory.<sup>2</sup> Yet its allegiances remained uncertain, so that by the time Rome's Latin allies revolted from her forty years later, Tusculum appears to have been on the rebels' side. Livy represents this as the result of a factional struggle within the *municipium* when he describes the restitution of the town to its citizen status in 338 BC in the following terms: *Tusculanis seruata ciuitas quam habebant crimenque rebellionis a publica fraude in paucos autores uersum* ('The Tusculans retained the citizen status which they had and the charge of rebellion was laid against a few ringleaders while the community was absolved from that of collective betrayal', Livy 8.14.4).

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cic. *Planc.* 19 for Tusculum's status as Rome's oldest *municipium*. Livy 8.37.12 (323 BC) for the earliest attestation of the Tusculans' membership of the *Papiria*.

<sup>2</sup> For the episode, see Livy 6.25, who refers to the Tusculans as *nouis ciuibus* for the first time in his narrative for the year 370 BC (6.36.2). For the historicity of 381 BC as the date of Tusculum's original incorporation, cf. Oakley 1997: ad loc.

This incident provides a prime example of the fact that Rome's successful expansion in Italy depended on loyal members of local elites being in control of her allied communities or, as in this case, of a recently incorporated *municipium*.<sup>3</sup> By the same token, it was possible for those elites to lead their city-states to break away from Rome – or at least attempt to do so – which raises the question what motivated such individuals to be either loyal or opposed to the emerging imperial power. In the case of Tusculum, this issue again arose only fifteen years after the town had been allowed to retain its citizen status.

In 323 BC, Livy writes of a recent rebellion in which the Tusculans were said to have sided with the people of Velitrae and Privernum.<sup>4</sup> The tribal assembly rejected the proposed terms of punishment – execution of adult males, sale into slavery of women and children – almost unanimously, except for the *tribus Pollia*, which Livy (8.37.7–12) suggests was the reason why candidates from this tribe usually failed to gain the *Papiria's* vote *ad patrum aetatem* ('down to our fathers' time'). Again significant is the fact that the status of the town was preserved although at least some of the Tusculans – almost certainly members of the elite – had attempted to break their allegiance to Rome yet another time.

There is yet another twist to the tale; one of the Roman consuls who were elected for the following year (322 BC) was L. Fulvius Curvus, member of a prominent Tusculan family and generally considered to have been the first immigrant *homo novus* who attained the consulship.<sup>5</sup> Although Livy does not comment on this, the Elder Pliny supplies additional information on both the man and his rise to power, which is as intriguing as it is confused.<sup>6</sup> According to Pliny, Fulvius had in fact been consul of 'the rebellious Tusculans' only recently and obtained the same office as soon as he had changed sides and joined the Romans, to the point of celebrating a triumph over his town of origin.

Since this anecdote is recorded neither by Livy nor, more importantly, in the *fasti triumphales*, we ought not to lend it too much credence. Rather, its roots might be traced to later Republican discourses of noble origins.<sup>7</sup> In turn, these were quite possibly elaborated upon by the exemplary tradition

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Harris 1971; Cornell 1995:366–68; Bradley 2019a:320–33.

<sup>4</sup> Livy 8.37.7–12.

<sup>5</sup> Hölkeskamp 2011<sup>2</sup>:179; cf. Wiseman 1971:16–17, 184.

<sup>6</sup> Plin. *HN* 7.136. Unfortunately, Terrenato does not address this important source problem.

<sup>7</sup> Farney 2007:44, 76n101, on this specific case. A comparable (though less elaborate) case is that of Q. Anicius from Praeneste, who was said to have been an enemy of Rome only shortly before holding the curule aedileship there in 304 BC (Plin. *HN* 33.17); see Wiseman 1971:16–17, 187; Hölkeskamp 2011<sup>2</sup>:179; cf. Farney 2007:43–44.

of the early Empire that also provides a context for this and many other chapters in the seventh book of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*.<sup>8</sup> Still, there is rarely smoke without fire. In this case, the fact that this anecdote could credibly be circulated during later times invites the suspicion that the historical rise of the Fulvii had something more to it than merely being a tale of an elite immigrant making it in the emerging imperial city.

It is not surprising, then, that few case studies could provide a more apposite illustration of how Nicola Terrenato models the emergence of early Roman imperialism in his new book than do the town of Tusculum and its Fulvian protagonists. For Terrenato sets out to offer his readers no less than a paradigm shift in this respect, 'a reconstruction [that] flies squarely in the face of key assumptions that have stood virtually unchallenged for centuries' (p. xv). This is both refreshing and long overdue in the study of Rome's early imperialism that has seen much recent progress in respect of specific aspects but little shift in the way of the overarching narrative framework.<sup>9</sup> Yet such an openly revisionist approach inevitably risks being criticized where it cuts problematic corners, as in the evidential problems around the figure of Fulvius Curvus, to make the fit between model and sources appear more perfect than it might really be.

To begin with the 'key assumptions' which Terrenato promised to challenge, we need look no further than Tim Cornell's memorable assessment of the episode of Tusculum's initial incorporation (381 BC) in his classic account of early Rome. 'The fact that the Romans occupied Tusculum and made its inhabitants into Romans should not necessarily be seen as a sign of Roman benevolence', Cornell asserts and continues: 'Read, say, "Germans" for "Romans", and "France" for "Tusculum", and it at once becomes clear what this action really meant.'<sup>10</sup> Cornell's specific historical comparison might strike some as extreme and, probably, not entirely fitting. Yet it serves well to illustrate an assumption that, according to Terrenato, fundamentally underlies many standard modern histories of Rome's Italian expansion during the fourth and early third centuries BC. Starting with the mid-Republic, this assumption holds, Rome's relations with her neighbours can increasingly be framed in terms of those between nation states, with her wars of conquest appearing as acts of unilateral aggression aimed at the destruction or annexation of neighbouring communities.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> On the elaboration of such Republican anecdotes by the early Imperial exemplary tradition, cf. Roth 2021.

<sup>9</sup> But see now Bradley 2019a – an important study of early Rome, which appeared in the same year as the book under review.

<sup>10</sup> Cornell 1995:323.

<sup>11</sup> For the most extreme representative of this position, see Harris 1979. Recent approaches are considerably more nuanced, as exemplified by Bradley 2019a:292–

By contrast, one of the most striking of Terrenato's radical departures from previous accounts – and, in fact, from much of the Romans' own narrative as preserved by Livy – is his rejection of all-out military confrontations as the principal means by which Rome built her first empire, although there is naturally a place for such cases in his account, too (see below). Presenting Tusculum's incorporation into the Roman citizenship as a case in point, Terrenato posits that 'numerous major polities ... entered into a treaty (sic) with Rome without major conflict, but as a result of other processes' (p. 148).

These mechanisms of imperial expansion consistently involved two variables that are also the dominant themes which hold Terrenato's narrative together. The first of these are the city-states, urbanized polities that had emerged across central Italy by the late Archaic period and were dominated by extended, well-connected elite clans. These groups represent Terrenato's second variable. They are the families who were both attached to, and sometimes in charge of, individual polities and at the same time venal enough to desert their own communities and negotiate their way into another city-state's elite society. Such negotiations could take different forms, ranging from violent threats to marriage alliances, and they were not always successful, as Terrenato argues happened in the case of Vitruvius Vaccus from Fundi (pp. 178–80). He fatally overplayed his hand when trying to push his way into the Roman nobility by leading the town of Privernum in a revolt against Rome in 329–330 BC.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Terrenato sets up Vitruvius as a counterexample to Fulvius Curvus (p. 188) whose descendants were to be a dominant force in Roman society until the end of the second century BC.<sup>13</sup>

## II

But first things first. Although Terrenato's occasionally idiosyncratic elaborations of anecdotes from ancient literary sources might leave vivid impressions in many of his readers' minds, they must not distract from what is a carefully structured interpretative framework that largely succeeds in reconfiguring the historical evidence for the early Roman expansion into

---

306. See also below. By contrast, the agency of elite groups (as opposed to states) is generally agreed to have been an important mode of territorial expansion in central Italy during the Regal and early Republican periods: cf. Timpe 1990; Cornell 1995:130–50; Armstrong 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Livy 8.19–20.

<sup>13</sup> 'Descendants' is meant in the widest possible sense here since it would be misleading to reconstruct family relations and thus descent in Roman *gentes* following modern western paradigms; cf. Smith 2006; Hölkeskamp 2011<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, Terrenato does not spell this out clearly enough.

Italy. Needless to say, to those who are familiar with the author's earlier work, 'historical' equally comprises of material and written sources in this book, too.<sup>14</sup> In fact, much of that evidential reconfiguration flows from Terrenato's contention that the archaeological record does not merely have illustrative value but, conversely, represents an anchor point for the historical narrative itself, at least at the structural level. Whereas the conventional use of archaeology to illustrate specific points in the historical narrative is ultimately an exercise in circular argumentation, this book sets out by looking from the other end of the telescope and assembling an impressively comprehensive picture of the rise of central Italian city-states since the early Iron Age. These polities, in turn, become Terrenato's first basic unit of analysis (and narrative) and together form a landscape of collective agency that is peopled by elite clans with both shared and rivalling interests. As we saw earlier, the historical actors at this level of analysis are usually encountered rather more anecdotally through epigraphic sources, iconographical representations, and, above all through the annalistic tradition as it primarily survives in Livy's *Ab urbe condita* for this early period.

As Terrenato readily admits (pp. xvi-xvii), neither the significance of urbanism nor the role played by elite agency represents a new discovery. Yet his approach is novel not only by characterizing these groups as long-term networks of extended family clans but also by postulating somewhat less convincingly that these mechanisms remained decisive down to the Social War (cf. below). While the significance of elite networks in facilitating the relations between Rome and other Italian states is widely recognised, Terrenato assigns overriding importance to agency at that level when it comes to most forms of interaction between individual polities. Thus, he contends that relations even between 'particularly cohesive states ... often tended to replicate elite lineage interaction in an expanded form' (p. 71). This is a powerful assertion. However, it would have benefitted from being contextualized more explicitly within recent scholarship on the nature of institutionalization in Greece and Rome during the Archaic to mid-Republican periods, as well as from an examination of specific case studies to show precisely how such nascent institutions mirrored traditional forms of aristocratic interaction.<sup>15</sup> For it is hardly difficult to think of Republican institutions that provide strong counterarguments to Terrenato's claim, such as the censorship that was instituted in 443 BC and which had become a formidable curb on the influence of inter-personal elite relations on Roman political culture by the time the *lex Ovinia* was passed at some point

---

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Terrenato 1998; 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Eder 1990, and Hölkeskamp 2011<sup>2</sup> remain fundamental in this respect, as does Smith 2006. Cf. also the contributions to *Antichthon* 51 (2017).

before 318 BC.<sup>16</sup> Arguably, this early trend towards institutionalization may have given Rome the decisive edge over other central Italian polities, although one has to be careful not to mistake the relatively thin record which exists for those states for firm evidence that they did not develop comparable institutions during the fifth and fourth centuries BC.

Since writing a history of institutions, let alone of Roman exceptionalism is not the author's objective, this criticism should not take away too much from the novel contributions which the book makes to the debate over the origins of Roman imperialism. At the core of these stands Terrenato's locating the agency of central Italian clans within the – in his terms – changing 'global context', which their intensive networking with other regional and Mediterranean elites had helped to bring about. As the hallmark of this context, he identifies the expansive urban polities whose socio-political institutions and economic potency the clans used as the vehicles to drive their own agendas. From the early Iron Age, these cities had begun to form on the Tyrrhenian side of central Italy – notably in Etruria, Latium, and Campania – as well as in the South of the peninsula and in Sicily where the presence of Greek and Punic migrants played a decisive role. Even before the onset of urban formation proper, the elites of Bronze Age Italy had been involved in Mediterranean-wide networks, thus establishing the foundations of the 'globalized' scenario in which their descendants 'interacted' and 'negotiated' during the late Archaic and especially the Hellenistic periods (Chapter 2, pp. 31-72).

This transition from the 'long-term' to the 'global context' of elite interaction represents the decisive juncture in Terrenato's narrative (Chapter 3, pp. 73-108). He identifies two historical trends that mark this transition for the period between the late fifth and the middle of the third centuries BC. The first of these is a notable increase, across central Italy, in medium-sized rural sites that were situated outside nucleated settlements. The second concerns a Mediterranean-wide shift away from a socio-political landscape that had been characterized by city-states of comparable size, and towards the emergence of several such polities as dominant in their respective regions. The ultimate challenge which these states faced in this context was to attract to themselves other, less ambitious communities. These latter were seeking to benefit from the prospect of peaceful, economically advantageous conditions which being part of a larger imperial might bring about for themselves. The successful, long-term incorporation of such smaller players was in turn pivotal to enabling imperial expansion by polities like Rome whose socio-political systems were fundamentally suited to administering limited territories as opposed to large empires. 'It

---

<sup>16</sup> Livy 4.8.2-7; cf. Cornell 2000 (for a date in the late 330s or early 320s); Oakley 1998:384-388; Hölkeskamp 2011<sup>2</sup>:142-47, 314, with detailed references.

was therefore essential for the expanding states to assess how their policies would be received in the communities that were being incorporated' (p. 104).

It is in this respect, then, that Rome outdid her competitors according to Terrenato, the key mechanism being represented by the way in which the Roman elite deftly employed central-Italian clan dynamics to convince – and sometimes cajole – its peers to align their polities to their city. Other emerging powers, by contrast, employed models that were less successful and, in the end, failed, as the chapter explores through the case-studies of Carthage and Syracuse. Yet others were ultimately less ambitious in their aims than was Rome. Thus, Massilia (Marseille) became Rome's most important ally in the South of Gaul, while the Etruscan city-state of Tarquinii (Tarquinia) ended up being incorporated into the empire.

However, this last case is somewhat problematic. While the Tarquinian territory serves rather well to illustrate the spread of new agricultural sites which Terrenato rightly identifies as a key feature of the fourth and third centuries BC, it is far less convincing that this city-state ever made a serious 'bid' – to use Terrenato's terminology – for imperial power at any point during this period. On the contrary, the settlement patterns in this case point to a centrifugal tendency, by which so-called satellite towns like Tuscana (Tuscania) and Musarna (ancient name unknown) and their local elites increasingly escaped the reach of the once powerful South Etruscan centre.<sup>17</sup> If anything, Veii would have provided a more suitable South Etruscan example of an ambitious city-state since it not only engaged in a fierce rivalry with Rome but also demonstrably built a network of regional alliances with subsidiary centres like Capena, Nepet, and Sutrium.<sup>18</sup> In response, Rome had no option other than to annihilate this serious rival.

### III

With the scene thus set, Terrenato's discussion subsequently turns to looking in more detail at the mechanisms of Rome's imperial expansion which he characterises as a 'heterogeneous conquest'. He views this heterogeneity as determined by two factors: these are, first, the individual 'biographies' of the polities which Rome encountered (Chapter 4, pp. 109-154)

---

<sup>17</sup> See the maps and discussion in Bourdin 2012, and cf. also Cifani 2003. Elsewhere (235) Terrenato appears unduly to downplay the significance of the fact that Tarquinia, Caere and other previously important South Etruscan centres were sidelined by the Roman road system; cf. Potter 1979.

<sup>18</sup> Cifani 2003. Livy 5.16.2 (and elsewhere) mentions the military alliance between Veii and these towns. The Elder Cato (*Orig.* 2.19) claimed that Capena had been founded as a colony by Veii.

and second, the extent to which ‘the families’ that dominated many of those states were successful in negotiating the terms of integration with their Roman counterparts (Chapter 5, pp. 155-193).

While the case studies of several polities in Chapter 4 aptly demonstrate considerable diversity among the scenarios that made up the history of the Roman conquest of Italy, they are also driven by a tripartite typological approach that could be summarized as follows. First, its prominence in both ancient and modern historiography notwithstanding, the fall and destruction of Veii was by no means representative of Rome’s *modus operandi*. Rather, it resulted from a historically specific situation that saw two equally ambitious and matched cities pitted against each other in unusually close geographical proximity. Second, the much more typical scenarios may be described as case-dependent outcomes of elite negotiations – exemplified in Terrenato’s account by the ‘biographies’ of Caere, Capua, and Arezzo – that involved little to no formal warfare. Third, the fierce resistance that was offered to Roman expansion by the Samnites, as well as the drawn-out, brutal fighting which it entailed are to be explained by the absence of the very socio-political conditions that enabled elite negotiation and effective inter-state treaties. Thus, Terrenato asserts, ‘it is most definitely not a coincidence that Rome always extended to urbanised areas first’ (p. 138).

Although this last point is somewhat of a truism – early Rome’s neighbours were predominantly urban settlements – Terrenato’s typology fundamentally works. There can be little denying that the wars of conquest in Samnium were exceptionally fierce, and this fact indeed favours a structural explanation of the kind which the author offers us. At the same time, Terrenato may be right to call out Livy (and most of his modern successors) for inflating the number of instances in which Rome’s early expansion took the form of siege warfare and the wholesale destruction of major towns (see also above). By contrast, the decisive role played by clans and their protagonists in shaping Rome’s early expansion in Latium is well documented by both literary and archaeological sources, even if Terrenato underestimates the significance of formalized (i.e. state) warfare from at least the fifth century.<sup>19</sup>

However, Terrenato’s account of Samnite society somewhat downplays the complexity which has been pointed out in recent years and thus sidelines the significant role which was played by elite agency in the formation and expansion of the Samnite polities that reached their floruit as Rome’s key allies during the second century BC.<sup>20</sup> While he concedes that the transformation of Capua into an Oscan-speaking city ‘signals an interest by some of [the Samnite] elites in the urban game that was being played on the coast’,

---

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Armstrong 2016.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Tagliamonte 2005; Scopacasa 2015.



it should also be viewed as representative of the successful and lasting expansion of the networks which these groups – that were not limited to the Samnites *stricto sensu* – built across South-central Italy, and which thus went significantly beyond the prominent case of Capua.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Terrenato himself acknowledges the existence of such networks of mobility with his discussion of the Magii (albeit in a considerably later context) but it would be equally possible to cast in a similar light the Maleventine Otacilii, a branch of whom had settled at Rome by the 260s BC.<sup>22</sup> In connection to this, it would be tempting to suggest that this particular clan may have been instrumental in the establishment of the Latin colony at Beneventum in 268 BC, a hypothesis that would in fact dovetail nicely with Terrenato's overall argument, the 'grand bargain' from which those who cooperated with Rome emerged as the winners.

At this point, the book reaches a caesura. With the conquest of Italy completed by the end of the second Punic War, the discussion shifts to the consequences of Rome's expansion during the second century BC. This takes the form of a fine, carefully structured chapter (6, pp. 194-248) that constitutes a fitting conclusion to the book, while the actual Conclusion rather represents a somewhat redundant summary of the overall argument and will not be discussed in detail here.

In his final substantive chapter, then, Terrenato targets an assumption behind many approaches to the 'Romanization' of Italy, which is – as he rightly points out – based on circular reasoning: 'Since the conquest was Roman, the diffusion of supposedly Roman elements is highlighted, and since Italy as a result appears thoroughly Roman, so the conquest must have been too' (p. 194). To this one could add another kind of circular argumentation that pertains to the relationship between material and written evidence in the eyes of many historians of Republican Italy. Thus, visible changes in the archaeological record – such building types and ceramic typologies – are explained with reference to a frequently lacunose framework of events that is, in turn, verified by the presence of those very materials. It goes without saying that such approaches usually de-emphasise aspects of continuity or contradictions that exist regarding both types of

---

<sup>21</sup> For an overview, see the contributions to Ampolo et al. 1989, and to Farney and Bradley 2018; cf. Bourdin for the epigraphic evidence.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Hölkeskamp 2011<sup>2</sup>:180; Farney 2007:187, who cautions that the Otacilii were the only family from outside Etruria and Latium for whom a consulship is documented before the Social War. Terrenato (p. 142) raises the Pontii as another example of a Samnite clan that successfully settled at Rome after the Samnite Wars. However, the date of their move is not clear and may belong to the period after the Social War. Terrenato discusses the Otacilii in passing as an example of successful elite integration at the highest level in the next chapter (pp. 175, 185).

evidence as, for example, in the late second-century sculpture of the Arringatore that casts emphatically Roman traits – dress, gesture – in the decidedly Etruscan context of a ritual dedication designated in the local language.<sup>23</sup> On a more global scale, the excessive violence of the second century BC (pp. 196–203), the construction of roads (pp. 230–36) and foundation of colonies (pp. 219–26) – to name but three of Terrenato’s examples – all appear to raise the question of why the patterns in our evidence should be so closely comparable to each other across Italy unless they represent a centrally orchestrated programme of cultural change.

Yet, Terrenato views such questions as misguided or, rather, based on a false set of premises that locate the Roman conquest of Italy paradigmatically as the subjugation of regional powers by a powerful foreign empire in the making. By contrast, once the long-term perspective of Rome’s expansion as a ‘grand bargain’ is adopted, those contradictions vanish or, rather, appear in a different light. Take the example of colonization. As Terrenato points out, the functions which these foundations fulfilled in each case can be explained only with reference to the specific local contexts, while they had in common that they functioned as nodal points in the networks which had dynamically emerged from over two centuries of elite negotiations. Since these settlements were usually located in well-connected and economically expedient locations, it is not surprising that they sometimes coincided ‘with economically hyperactive pockets [where] real and fundamental change did happen’ (p. 247). Rather than representing the initial motivation for colonization, however, such developments were unforeseen, long-term consequences of a process that had begun by gradually interweaving a variety of elite interests in a shared, expanding context of agency.

This may have been a fitting juncture for Terrenato at which to introduce his twin concepts of the regional and global contexts again. For by the second century BC, the successful Roman conquest of Italy had certainly become the defining feature of the former while the latter was being shaped by the Mediterranean-wide exploits of Rome and her Italian allies. The transformative forces that were unleashed in second-century Italy – mass enslavement, migration, conflict over land and a vast increase in the elite and its wealth – were a direct result of the Mediterranean-wide, military and economic successes which the Roman alliance’s wars bestowed on the Apennine peninsula, even if they ultimately became its curse during the last decades of the Republic.<sup>24</sup> Yet, as Terrenato duly notes, this could hardly

---

<sup>23</sup> While this sculpture is not discussed by Terrenato, it serves to illustrate the potential value of his explanatory model to the field more widely. For the considerable debate over the date and status of its subject (Aule Metelle), cf. Cianferoni 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Maschek 2018.

have been foreseen – or, one might add, intended – by the likes of Fulvius Curvius or Vitruvius Vaccus as they were bidding for supremacy among the clans of central Italy at the early dawn of Rome’s Italian empire.

#### IV

With *The Early Roman Expansion into Italy* Terrenato has produced a remarkable achievement in several respects. Despite his overriding emphasis on the elite clans of Italy as drivers of cultural change and empire formation, it would be mistaken to view this as the book’s principal contribution to the study of mid-Republican imperialism. In fact, this is an area in which the volume sometimes falls short even if Terrenato’s argument is convincing overall (see below). Rather, it is the consistent deployment of settlement archaeology as a key heuristic device to understand the historical process of Rome’s early expansion at a structural level, which is most likely become this book’s most lasting contribution. In the same respect, the first chapter (‘Views of Roman imperialism’, pp. 1-30) is deserving of praise since Terrenato aptly guides his readers here towards gaining a full understanding of the purpose and place of his new approach within one of the most tilled fields of ancient Mediterranean history.<sup>25</sup> Needless to say, my choice of this terminology is deliberate. For, rather than isolating Rome’s imperial expansion historically as a case of exceptionalism, or overly drawing on comparisons with the world of the Classical Greek πόλεις, Terrenato contextualizes his subject not only within its immediate Italian background but also as part of the west-central Mediterranean region. This constitutes yet another respect in which the book represents a welcome departure from the norm.

As Terrenato himself admits, the comprehensive claim of the book inevitably leads to gaps and a lack of detail in several parts of the discussion. Rather than a genuine shortcoming, the – at times – rather granular description of the evidence, interspersed with more focused case studies, contributes to the flow of Terrenato’s essay-style discussion that is furthermore enhanced by a generous number of well-placed, mostly purpose-built maps and illustrations.

My three more substantial criticisms come from different angles. The first is methodological. For, in view of the bruising criticism which Terrenato lavishes on text-based scholars, it is surprising to see how seemingly uncritically he deploys some of the more questionable episodes of the Annalistic tradition to support his model of clan agency and interaction.

---

<sup>25</sup> However, Crawford’s 2020 critique of this part of the book raises the important point that Mommsen and others were in fact interested in the non-Roman populations of Italy and dedicated a significant amount of effort to their study.

Thus, his use of the anecdotes around Fulvius Curvus and Vacceius Vaccus – to name two prominent examples – might have been prefaced by a *caveat emptor* or, preferably, preceded by a methodological discussion justifying why such personal episodes might merit consideration as providing instances of ‘structural facts’ (in Cornell’s sense). Closely related to this is the way in which Terrenato engages with the literary evidence. While his aim is to render his discussion accessible non-specialist readers, full citation of key passages in translation, as well as a consistently applied way of referencing them would have been welcome, especially in Chapter 4, which draws heavily on historiographical texts.

My second criticism concerns Terrenato’s definition of the ‘clan’ or ‘family’. This is largely convincing in the earlier part of his discussion in which he draws on historical anthropology to trace the emergence of elite kinship groups in the archaeological record (esp. pp. 43–51). Yet as the book moves towards the late Archaic and Hellenistic periods, both the material record and especially the literary sources point towards a slightly more complex picture.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the funerary record in the Tarquinian and other Etruscan cemeteries point towards significant changes in the way in which elite families represented themselves, with a much greater emphasis being placed now on multi-generational descent and aristocratic intermarriage than had previously been the case, and including a greatly increased use of epigraphy.<sup>27</sup> Engaging with this development in some detail may have added a further dimension to Terrenato’s argument concerning the structural changes within central Italian cities during the phase of territorial expansion, especially but not exclusively in his case study of Tarquinia. In respect of the literary sources and thus of long-standing debates among ancient historians, a more thorough definition of Roman clans as political agents might have prevented the reader from, at times, getting the impression that Terrenato’s aristocratic families share significant features with Münzer’s *Adelsparteien*.<sup>28</sup> However, this can hardly have been his intention.

In addition to my earlier remarks on the absence of an explicit engagement with institutionalization as a factor in Rome’s lasting expansion, my third critical remark concerns Terrenato’s views of clan-based elite negotiations as a constantly decisive factor throughout Republican history (pp. 249–72). While there can be no denying that the Social War was caused by the dissatisfaction among the Italian elites at being Rome’s junior partners, they were now acting within institutional frameworks that had come about

---

<sup>26</sup> Cf. also the cautionary remarks that are expressed by Smith 2006 against viewing the *gentes* as stable units of political agency.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Roth 2010.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. the Fabii are described as ‘friends’ of the Fulvii (187); cf. Münzer 1920, with the contributions to Haake and Harders 2017.

through processes of state formation which had themselves been decisively shaped by the very fact of Roman imperialism. Put differently, had individualized elite negotiation in the sense of Terrenato's early and mid-Republican clans been an option in the late second and early first centuries BC, a general rebellion against Rome is unlikely to have taken place.<sup>29</sup> However, their exclusion from the citizenship and other structural grievances were felt universally among the allies, who were now interacting with Rome no longer as fluid communities of elite clans but as states that, at the very minimum, regularly had to raise funds and manpower for wars across the Mediterranean.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, most interactions between Rome and these communities now followed diplomatic – as opposed to familial – routes even if the violation of allied institutions and their representatives by the hegemon were certainly not unheard of.<sup>31</sup> If anything, after their costly victory it was now the Romans' turn 'to place a bid' collectively with the allies to ensure the continuity of their empire. This might be one way of describing in Terrenato's terms what belatedly happened with the grants of citizenship that followed the unprecedented bloodshed of the Social War.<sup>32</sup>

Yet these points of critique notwithstanding, my overall verdict on *The Early Roman Expansion into Italy* remains distinctly positive. While there can be no doubt that we must turn to literary evidence for the narrative of the conquest, Terrenato has successfully built an approach to making the material evidence speak to the cultural structures underlying that story, and thus to fleshing out the historical agency of the conquered Italian elites, too. His is a highly readable account of a key period in world history, which can be expected to draw to its subject the increasing number of readers for whom historical research, by definition, involves an engagement with post-colonial theory.

---

<sup>29</sup> Most of Rome's allies were involved in the rebellion in one way or another, although there appear to have been notable differences in respect of specific grievances and commitment to the cause; cf. Bradley 2019b.

<sup>30</sup> Lo Cascio 1991; Bourdin 2012. The same – and very Roman – mechanisms were used by the former allies against Rome in the Social War: Lo Cascio 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Diplomacy: Jehne 2009; abuse of allied magistrates: Roth 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Diod. Sic. 37.2, on the scope of the war, even this statement might be somewhat exaggerated; cf. also the important overview by Santangelo 2019 (233 on the significance of Diodorus' comment), and the convincing suggestion by Maschek 2018, according to whom the violence of Rome's wars of conquest was directly responsible for the brutality of the Social War and the Civil Wars of the first century BC.

## References

- Ampolo, C., Briquel, D, Càssola Guida, P., et al. 1989. *Italia omnium terrarum parens: La civiltà degli Enotri, Choni, Ausoni, Sanniti, Lucani, Brettii, Sicani, Siculi, Elimi*. Milan.
- Armstrong, J. 2016. *War and Society in Early Rome: From Warlords to Generals*. Cambridge.
- Bourdin, S. 2012. *Les peuples de l'Italie préromaine*. Rome.
- Bradley, G. 2019a. *Early Rome to 290 BC: The Beginnings of the City and the Rise of the Republic*. Edinburgh.
- Bradley, G. 2019b. 'State formation and the Social War'. In K.-J. Hölkeskamp, S. Karataş, and R. Roth (edd.), *Empire, Hegemony or Anarchy? Rome and Italy 201–31 BC*, 167–190. Stuttgart.
- Cianferoni, G.C. 2015. 'Portrait statue of Aule Metelle (Arringatore)'. In J.M. Daehner and K. Lapatin (edd.), *Power and Pathos: Bronze Sculpture of the Hellenistic World*, 256–257. Florence and Los Angeles.
- Cifani, G. 2003. *Storia di una frontiera: dinamiche territoriali e gruppi etnici nella media valle tiberina dalla prima età del ferro alla conquista romana*. Rome.
- Cornell, T.J. 1995. *The Beginnings of Rome: Rome and Italy from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000–264 BC)*. London.
- Cornell, T.J. 2000. 'The *lex Ovinia* and the emancipation of the Senate'. In C. Bruun (ed.), *The Roman Middle Republic: Politics, Religion, and Historiography, c. 400–133 BC*, 69–89. Rome.
- Crawford, M.H. 2020. 'Review of N. Terrenato, *The Early Roman Expansion into Italy*'. *JRS* 110:323–24.
- Eder, W. (ed.) 1990. *Staat und Staatlichkeit in der frühen römischen Republik*. Stuttgart.
- Farney, G.D. 2007. *Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition in Republican Rome*. Cambridge.
- Farney, G. and Bradley, G. (edd.) 2018. *The peoples of Ancient Italy*, 231–254. Berlin.
- Haake, M. and A.-K. Harders (edd.) 2017. *Politische Kultur und soziale Struktur der römischen Republik: Bilanzen und Perspektiven*. Stuttgart.
- Harris, W.V. 1971. *Rome in Etruria and Umbria*. Oxford.
- Harris, W.V. 1979. *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327–70 BC*. Oxford.
- Hölkeskamp, K.-J. 2011<sup>2</sup>. *Die Entstehung der Nobilität: Studien zur sozialen und politischen Geschichte der römischen Republik im 4. Jh. V. Chr.* Stuttgart.
- Jehne, M. 2009. 'Diplomacy in Italy in the 2nd century BC'. In C. Eilers (ed.), *Diplomats and Diplomacy in the Ancient World*, 143–70. Leiden.
- Lo Cascio, E. 1991. 'I togati della "formula togatorum"'. In A. Storchi Marino, (ed.), *L'incidenza dell'antico: studi in memoria di Ettore Lepore*, 309–28. Naples.

- Lo Cascio, E. 2018. 'Gli incensi della Tabula Bantina'. In F. Camia, L. del Monaco, and M. Nocita (edd.), *Munus Laetitiae: Studi miscellanei offerti a Maria Letizia Lazzarini*, 321–334. Rome.
- Maschek, D. 2018. *Die römischen Bürgerkriege: Archäologie und Geschichte einer Krisenzeit*. Darmstadt.
- Münzer, F. 1920. *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien*. Stuttgart.
- Oakley, S.P. (ed.) 1997. *A Commentary on Livy, Books VI-X: Vol. I, Book VI*. Oxford.
- Oakley, S.P. (ed.) 1998. *A Commentary on Livy, Books VI-X: Vol. II, Books VII-VIII*. Oxford.
- Potter, T.W. 1979. *The Changing Landscape of South Etruria*. London.
- Roth, R.E. 2010. 'Dichotomising the family in Hellenistic Etruria: forms of strategic display in elite burials'. *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 21.2:176–93.
- Roth, R.E. 2019. 'Sympathy with the allies? Abusive magistrates and political discourse in Republican Rome'. *AJP* 140:123–66.
- Roth, R.E. 2021. 'Boundary Issues: Valerius Maximus and Rome's Italian allies'. In J. Murray and D. Wardle (edd.), *Reading by Example: Valerius Maximus and the Historiography of Exempla*, 94–122. Leiden.
- Santangelo, F. 2018. 'The Social War'. In G. Farney and G. Bradley (edd.), *The peoples of Ancient Italy*, 231–254. Berlin.
- Scopacasa, R. 2015. *Ancient Samnium: Settlement, Culture and Identity between History and Archaeology*. Oxford.
- Smith, C.J. 2006. *The Roman Clan: The Gens from Ancient Ideology to Modern Anthropology*. Cambridge.
- Tagliamonte, G. 2005. *I Sanniti: Caudini, Irpini, Pentri, Carricini, Frentani*. Milan.
- Terrenato, N. 1998. 'Tam firum municipium: The Romanization of Volaterrae and its cultural implications'. *JRS* 88:94–114.
- Terrenato 2014. 'Private vis, public virtus: family agendas during the early Roman expansion'. In T.D. Stek and J. Pelgrom (edd.), *Roman Republican Colonization: New Perspectives from Archaeology and Ancient History*. Rome.
- Timpe, D. 1990. 'Das Kriegsmonopol des römischen Staates'. In W. Eder (ed.), *Staat und Staatlichkeit in der frühen römischen Republik*, 368–87. Stuttgart.
- Wiseman, T.P. 1971. *New Men in the Roman Senate*. Oxford.

roman.roth@uct.ac.za