

1. Introduction

1.1 Rome's territorial growth in modern scholarship

The scheme of Rome's territorial development in the regal period, worked out, essentially on the basis of literary sources, by the German topographers during the 19th century,¹ distinguished four stages: (1) the original Palatine City, generally identified with *Roma Quadrata* of some ancient sources, bounded by the Romulean pomerium whose course was usually thought to correspond to that specified by Tacitus *Ann.* 12.24.1–2; (2) the City of Seven Hills (*Septimonzialstadt*), deduced from the explanations of the festival of *Septimontium* in Festus 474.36–476.5 L (see Paulus in Festus 459.1–3 L), i. e. the original Palatine City enlarged by the addition of the Esquiliae and the Caelius; (3) the City of Four Regions, reconstructed on the basis of Varro, *LL* 5.41–54, consisting of the Septimontium (corresponding to the combined area of the *regiones/tribus Suburana, Esquilina* and *Palatina*) and the new additions: the *colles* Quirinal and Viminal (*regio/tribus Collina*), and the Capitol, extraregional but a topographical necessity;² (4) the Servian City, bounded by the 'Servian Wall'. In the estimate of Karl Julius Beloch, in the last three stages the urban area embraced, respectively, 154, 285 and 427 hectares,³ making Rome the greatest non-Greek city in Italy already in the third stage. The topographical logic of this scheme is clear. From her Palatine cradle the City would first have expanded eastwards, via the Velia, to the hills of the Oppius, the Cispius and the Caelius, and then northwards, across the valley of the Velabrum-Forum Romanum-Subura, to the *colles* (on which a separate settlement was usually hypothesized during the City's stages [1] and [2]); the Servian enlargement would have rationalized

1 To mention just the most influential: Becker 1842, Becker 1843, Jordan 1871, Jordan 1878, Jordan 1885, Hülsen 1907.

2 Not to all: e. g. Momigliano 1963, 555, believed that "Varro *LL* 5.45 must represent yet another stage, when Rome was divided into four regions but did not include the Capitoline Hill and the Aventine." See also Gjerstad 1960, 44.

3 Beloch 1926, 208.

the City's defences by reaching the eastern plateau and embracing the Aventine, and the riverine front between that hill and the Capitol.

In spite of criticism, chiefly directed against the flimsiness of the basis of the second stage (two entries in one lexicon, both concerning a half-forgotten festival of possibly pre-urban origin) and the sense of distinguishing between the third and the fourth (especially since according to the majority view the Aventine was embraced by the city-walls only after 390; see pp. 28, 31–32), this scheme survived to the sixties of the 20th century, when it was brushed aside by two grand reconstructions, Hermann Müller-Karpe's *Stadtwerdung* (city formation)⁴ and Einar Gjerstad's *Stadtgründung* (city foundation).⁵ Both based on an examination of archaeological evidence,⁶ though Gjerstad added to his a survey of the literary sources to support and complement his interpretations of the material remains.⁷ According to Gjerstad, in the EIA, whose beginning he dated impossibly low, ca. 800,⁸ in the territory of the future Rome there existed several separate villages (Palatine, Esquiliae, Caelius, Quirinal), signalled by coeval cemeteries;⁹ by ca. 625, when huts appeared in the valley in-between them (the future Forum Romanum),¹⁰ these villages coalesced into a single organism; half a century later, ca. 575,¹¹ the creation of the civic centre in the shape of the Forum Romanum (Gjerstad's 'epoch-making event') transformed a confederacy of villages into a tightly-knit urban community, Rome. Müller-Karpe, on the basis of a different chronology of the Latial EIA, whose beginning he put in the 10th century, interpreted the material from cemeteries as the expansion of one settlement, originally limited to the Palatine (the earliest cemeteries of the Forum and the neighbouring Sepulcretum), which by the mid-9th century embraced the Esquiliae (the Esquiline necropolis) and by the early 8th the Capitol-Quirinal ridge (the Quirinal necropolis). The Forum valley, once a periphery of the Palatine village used as a burial place, became in this way the centre

4 Müller Karpe 1959, Müller Karpe 1962.

5 Gjerstad 1953, Gjerstad 1956, Gjerstad 1960, Gjerstad 1966, Gjerstad 1973b. Actually, Gjerstad himself never used the term *Stadtgründung*, as far as I know first used by Massimo Pallottino in reference to his views on Rome's *primordia* as an opposition to Müller-Karpe's *Stadtwerdung* (Pallottino 1972, 33: "*Stadtgründung* o *Stadtwerdung*?"). Gjerstad's own equivalent of it was 'epoch-making event', defined as follows: "the epoch-making event which Rome's foundation constituted, that is the physical and political unification of villages into a single community" (Gjerstad 1973b, 83), materially signalled by the creation of the Forum Romanum.

6 One of the last to accept the Septimontium as a stage in the expansion of the City of Rome was Thomsen 1980, pp. 212–218; but his treatment of archaeological material was very cursory and superficial. The recent attempt by Martin Rieger to resuscitate the Septimontium is a pure misunderstanding, like the rest of his curiously old-fashioned reconstruction of the periodization and chronology of the settlement on Rome's site (Rieger 2007, 31–82).

7 Gjerstad 1973a.

8 Gjerstad 1966, 320–329.

9 Gjerstad 1956.

10 Gjerstad 1953, 43–49, Gjerstad 1966, 329.

11 Gjerstad 1949–1950, Gjerstad 1966, 312–320, 360, 552–581.

of gravity (*Schwerpunkt*) of an extensive loose community inhabiting the surrounding hills, thus paving the way for its transformation into an urban society, achieved during the 8th century.¹²

Controversies started by the clash of these two visions dominated the scholarly debate till the beginning of the third millennium, when results of the resumption of archaeological investigation in the City in the eighties started to change its terms. Further stratigraphical and typological studies of the material evidence vindicated Müller-Karpe's chronological scheme which the Italian archaeologists, especially Renato Peroni and Giovanni Colonna,¹³ developed into what is today the generally accepted periodization and, less unanimously, chronology of the Latial civilisation (see Table 1),¹⁴ effectively exploding Gjerstad's model of synoecism, based on the conviction that the Esquiline graves were coeval with those of the Sepulcretum.¹⁵ The Italians, though on some points in disagreement with Müller-Karpe, shared with him the central idea of the birth of Rome as essentially the process of expansion of the Palatine settlement eastwards, marked by the corresponding pulling back of the community's burial ground towards the Esquiline plateau, first outlined in the crucial observation by Peroni that the last phase of the utilisation of the Sepulcretum (ca. 850 [Lazio II A]) concurs with the first phase of the Esquiline necropolis, more than one kilometre distant.¹⁶ This concurrence has generally been interpreted as the proof of the occupation by the Palatine community of all the area between the two cemeteries, i.e. of the whole

12 Müller Karpe 1959, Müller Karpe 1962.

13 Peroni 1959–1960, Peroni 1960, Colonna 1964, Colonna 1974, Colonna *et alii* 1976. Refined periodization in Bietti Sestieri 1992a and Betelli 1997.

14 The absolute chronology of EIA in Italy and the rest of the Mediterranean is today in the state of flux; see e.g. Sperber 1987, Bartoloni-Delpino 2005, Brandherm-Trachsel 2008. As regards the Latial culture the new data would suggest – once the extreme position, mainly based on the C₁₄ dates obtained for the Fidenae hut, has been abandoned (compare Nijboer *et alii* 1999–2000 with Attema *et alii* 2014) – that while its early phases (Lazio I, II and III) started ca. fifty years earlier than previously thought, for the passage from Lazio III to Lazio IV A (i. e. from Geometric to Orientalizing) the correction is hardly perceptible. The change would thus consist in doubling the length of Lazio III, from 770–730/720 to 825/810–725, and adjusting correspondingly dates of the preceding periods. For an attempt to distinguish within the so lengthened Lazio III B (estimated length: 775–725) two subphases (III B₁ and III B₂), with grave consequences for dating Roman finds of the period, see Gusberti 2005a (accepted by Andrea Carandini and his team). However, the new chronology presents a number of problems; see a critique of its champions, Plicht-Bruins-Nijboer 2009, by Fantalkin-Finkelstein-Piasetzky 2011, on the basis of the best evidenced Eastern Mediterranean, corroborated with regard to the key transition from Submycenaean to Protogeometric by Toffolo *et alii* 2013. Equally dubious is the doubling of the length of Lazio III (Bartoloni-Nizzo 2003). As concerns the Latial culture it is thus safer to stick to the traditional chronology, especially in a work which only occasionally reaches back beyond Lazio III (in Table I represented by the scheme put forward in Bietti Sestieri 1992a, 536–537). Various versions of the chronology of the Latial EIA are conveniently assembled in Fulminante 2003, 26 (fig. 2.1).

15 See esp. Gjerstad 1966, 204–210.

16 Peroni 1960.

of Rome's central ridge (Palatine-Velia-Oppius).¹⁷ The next step, the inclusion of the northern ridge, would be indicated by the earliest traces of habitation in the Forum valley signalled by Gjerstad,¹⁸ in the high chronology datable to the turn of the 9th/mid-8th century. By that time, in the territory of Rome there would thus have existed a gigantic 'proto-urban' centre of 200–300 hectares, practically identical with the *Vierregionenstadt* of the 19th-century German topographers.¹⁹

This term was first employed in the Italian context after the discovery, concurrent with the final polishing up of the period's chronology, of the phenomenon of 'Villanovan protourbanization': concentration at the end of FBA/beginning of EIA (10th century) of populations of scores of small settlements of Southern Etruria in huge agglomerations with marked city-like traits, including separation of habitation areas and cemeteries, the future historical cities of Tarquinii, Vulci, Veii and Caere, on both accounts dubbed 'proto-urban centres'.²⁰ The analogy between the EIA settlement on Rome's site with these centres, emphasized chiefly by Colonna,²¹ notabene one of the discoverers of the 'Villanovan protourbanization',²² was on his part an answer to potential critics of his dating the expansion of the Palatine settlement to the 'Servian' limits in the first half of the 8th century at the very latest [Lazio II B], when in the rest of Latium evidence suggests settlements of the size of small villages or even individual homesteads: the 'proto-Rome would have been an exception, modelled on the Villanovan "proto-cities" across the Tiber'.²³

One archaeologist of note who for a time did not accept this oversized proto-Rome was Massimo Pallottino. His *città veliense*, a settlement which some time in the 8th century would have assumed the form of a true urban community (even though not yet called Rome), was composed of the Palatine and the Velia together with the adjoining part of the Forum valley and the saddle of the Carinae linking the Velia with the Oppius, all in all considerably less than 50 hectares, with the rest of the Esquiliae and the Caelius (i. e. the rest of the area mentioned in Labeo's definition of the Septimontium) in a vaguely specified position of outer regions.²⁴ The notion of *città veliense* was

17 Müller Karpe 1962, *passim*, followed by practically all the opponents of Gjerstad's notion of synoecism, who, though, especially Peroni, admitted the original existence of two settlements, which would have merged already at the time of the abandonment of the Sepulcretum, i. e., in his dating, in mid-9th century (Peroni 1960, 486–487, 497, Peroni 1988, 18–19, Peroni 1989, 441–448); see also Colonna 1988, *passim*.

18 Gjerstad 1966, 43–44, 339.

19 Peroni 1988, 19 (150–200 hectares), Colonna 1974, 302, 304 ("in pratica prefigurante la città delle quattro regioni di epoca arcaica"), Pacciarelli 1994, 249–250 (ca. 300 hectares), Carandini 1997, 347–348 (251 hectares, though see p. 203 n. 31).

20 Negroni Catacchio-Peroni 1979.

21 Colonna 1974, 304.

22 Colonna 1967, Colonna 1977.

23 Colonna 1974, 302, 304.

24 Pallottino 1960, 27–36 and below, p. 44 n. 20.

used by some scholars sharing his view about the value of the literary tradition for reconstructing early Rome,²⁵ but in the long run has been absorbed by the 'proto-urban centre' hypothesis, at least among the archaeologists.²⁶

The historians have been much more circumspect, less on account of the territorial extent of that alleged 'proto-urban centre' than of the nature of the entity thus qualified. In itself, three hundred hectares means little, since it goes together with a handful of villages just as well as with a unitary settlement. Now, 'proto-urban centre' as applied to the EIA Italy conveys unmistakably the second meaning.²⁷ Even before the term was floated, Müller-Karpe considered self-evident the urban nature of the Forum-centred community of the 8th century. As for the paradigmatic Villanovan agglomerations, the very fact that they came into being as a result of concentration of inhabitants of tens of small settlements of the Late/Final Bronze Age proves that they were strong centres of political power, without which the population transfers would not have been achieved.²⁸ No wonder that in the Roman context, the distinction between the proto-urban centre, a 'city before the city', and the city *stricto sensu* has had a marked tendency to blur or even to disappear altogether; e.g. Colonna linked the beginning of the urban phase with the postulated demographic explosion of Lazio II B (ca. 800), when the inhabitants of the Palatine-Esquiline settlement would have occupied the valley of the Forum and all the hills around it.²⁹ Other supporters of a 'proto-urban centre' on Rome's site did not have a clear idea of what the passage from it to the city might have consisted in; like Müller-Karpe, they apparently assumed that the former evolved naturally into the latter. The problem of when exactly the 'true' city came into being and more precisely, on what evidence we can speak of the existence on Rome's site of a truly urban community, was the door through which the historians returned to the debate.

The first historian's voice in the debate started by the *Stadtgründung-Stadtwerdung* controversy was Carmine Ampolo's.³⁰ His argument, to an extent a re-elaboration of Gjerstad's reconstruction (see pp. 209–210), was two-pronged. First, he emphasized the ahistoricity of Müller-Karpe's indicators of the achievement of the urban phase and most pertinently observed that in the debate on the forms of settlement in the EIA

25 Bedini-Cordano 1980, Coarelli 1983, *passim* (without mentioning the term).

26 E.g. Colonna 1987, 56, included the *città veliense* as a stage of the pre-/proto-urban settlement of the phase Lazio II A, which buried its dead in the Sepulcretum.

27 'Proto-urban' centre can be treated as an Italian EIA equivalent of what with regard to other areas and periods today's theoreticians call 'early state'; see Bietti Sestieri 2000, Guidi 2008.

28 As far as I know, this feature of the Villanovan centres was first emphasized by Peroni 1969, *passim*, esp. 158, 296–298, i.e. before the discovery of the nature of the 'Villanovan revolution'. For the priority of the political element in their birth, see especially Bietti Sestieri 1997.

29 Colonna 1991, 212: "Il grande salto demografico avvenuto con la fase romana II B, quando l'abitato traboccò nella valle del Foro e si allargò sulle alture circostanti: l'età in cui, a mio avviso, dai Velienses nacquero i Romani."

30 Ampolo 1982, Ampolo 1983, Ampolo 1988.

Italy the adjective ‘proto-urban’ is to a large extent a prophecy *ex eventu*, in which the historically ascertained fact of the birth of a city on a given site is both the premiss and the conclusion.³¹ Second, he approached the question ‘from the rear’, looking for the earliest indubitable signs of the existence in Rome of the classical *cit  antique* (*polis, civitas*), an organized body of men and ‘poliadic’ deities,³² in which decisions vital for the community were debated and decided upon in public spaces open to all the members of the said community. He found them in Gjerstad’s ‘epoch-making event’, dated in accordance with Colonna’s chronology to 650–625: the creation of the civic centre of the Forum and the Comitium, flanked to the east by the Regia, the official seat of the ruler as the chief of the religious apparatus of the community, and the Atrium Vestae, the public hearth of the city, and to the west by the shrines of the Capitol. Ampolo’s argument, restated by Tim Cornell,³³ has been accepted by some defenders of the notion of the ‘proto-urban centre’ who accordingly distinguish two phases of urbanization, ‘proto-urban’ and ‘poliadic’.³⁴

On both hypotheses the settlement, or settlements, on Rome’s site reached, or could have reached, its enormous extent, equal to the City of Four Regions, already in the pre-urban phase, which would make meaningless the question of its territorial expansion in the regal period.³⁵ The results of the new bout of excavations, started in the early eighties of the previous century, have made it possible to put the hypothesis of a huge proto-Rome to the test. It proved disastrous to the original *Stadtwerdung* model as formulated by M ller-Karpe. Albert Ammerman’s discovery that until the creation of the Forum Romanum, made possible by a great operation of filling the central part of the valley between the Palatine and the Capitol, its area was a no-man’s-land subject to seasonal flooding by the Tiber,³⁶ rules out its having been settled before that time (ca. 650–625) and so its function of the ‘centre of gravity’ of the population of the surrounding hills as well. The finding that the dead were buried at the northern foot of the Palatine still at the beginning of the 7th century,³⁷ shows that even in the urban period (on the traditional chronology) on the site of the alleged proto-Rome there was no clear and lasting division between inhabited zones and cemeteries, which makes one sceptical about the view that it embraced all the area between the Tiber and the Esquiline and Quirinal necropolises. Consequently, although the notion of an enormous

31 Ampolo 1988, 164.

32 Fustel de Coulanges 1864.

33 Cornell 1995, 92–103.

34 See e. g. Bietti Sestieri 1992, 221–253.

35 It must be observed, though, that in their classic presentations of the problem both Ampolo and Cornell were decidedly vague about what preceded the City as they defined it (see Ampolo 1988, 160–161, Cornell 1995, 55, 92)

36 Ammerman 1990a, Ammerman 1990b.

37 Carandini-Carafa 1995, 69–70, 144–145, 148, Carandini-Cappelli 2000, 291–300. See De Santis 2001, 280, Ziolkowski 2005, 39–40, Ampolo 2013, 253–258 and below pp. 207 n. 48, 213, 224 n. 140.

'proto-urban centre' of 200–300 hectares is still abroad,³⁸ the idea of reducing the settlement of the end of the EIA to the areas where the material remains confirm or strongly suggest habitation – the Palatine, the Velia, the Capitol, and the lower grounds at their feet: the zone of the Sacra Via and the Forum Caesaris; all in all considerably less than 100 hectares even including the uninhabited valley of the Forum – pioneered by Alessandro Guidi,³⁹ has recently been gaining ground.⁴⁰ This settlement is still referred to as a 'proto-urban centre', in some cases, I think, mainly from force of habit: dwellings scattered on several hills, with groups of huts separated by empty spaces, secondary activity areas or burial places hardly justify the use of this term.

An entirely different category of evidence are traces of building activity, some of it clearly communal, along the northern foot of the Palatine, the earliest of which date from the second half of the 8th century and continue into the fully historical – and undoubtedly urban – period: the so-called 'wall of Romulus' (henceforth: 'Palatine wall'),⁴¹ the structure, or structures, in the future Atrium Vestae and the neighbouring *domus publica*,⁴² and to an extent the sacred precinct at the foot of the Velia near the Arcus Constantini.⁴³ Whatever their interpretation be (see pp. 211, 215–217), their chronology, location and later history make them serious rivals of the signs which Ampolo singled out as markers of the fully urban phase: and the story they tell is, or can be made, convergent with that transmitted by our literary tradition which says that the City was born on the Palatine sometime during the 8th century.

To sum up. Today there exist two reconstructions of the pre-urban settlement on Rome's site, restricted and extended. On the former it embraced the westernmost parts of the two main ridges, the Palatine-Velia and the Capitol, the rims of the Forum basin and maybe a part of the Quirinal. On the latter the proto-urban centre extended on both ridges up to the Esquiline plateau plus the smaller hills and the lower ground of the Subura in-between; all in all the area of the future City of Four Regions, several times bigger than the former. The third reconstruction – Gjerstad's separate villages on the hills, territorially broadly corresponding to the extended proto-urban centre – has practically no partisans. The beginning of the urban phase is linked either with the creation of the Forum Romanum ca. 650 – which presupposes the existence of a single community inhabiting both ridges, territorially hardly distinguishable from the 'proto-urban centre' – or with the building of the 'Palatine wall' 75–100 years earlier. The latter view, however, has decidedly bizarre traits. One might expect its partisans to

38 See e.g. Fulminante 2012, 44 (202 hectares in EIA 1 [900–850/825], 210 in EIA 2 [850/825–750]).

39 Guidi 1982, 282: ca. 95 hectares; in Guidi 2008, 179, it has grown to ca. 150 hectares through the addition of the Quirinal (see below, p. 205).

40 Bietti Sestieri 2000, Cazzella 2001, De Santis 2001, Bietti Sestieri-De Santis 2007, Bartoloni 2009, Alessandri 2013, 380–390.

41 Carandini-Carafa 1995, 139–160 (Ricci, Brocato, Terrenato).

42 Carafa 2004, Filippi 2004, Filippi 2005, Arvanitis 2010, Carandini *et alii* 2017.

43 Panella 2006, Zeggio 2013 (*santuario veliense*).

limit the original City to the Palatine; however, the wall's discoverers interpret it – and so the essence of the 'epoch-making event' as well – as carving the Palatine out of the already existing huge proto-urban centre as the dwelling place of the *rex-augur* who in the newly reconstructed community embodied the political and religious power; later developments would have been of political and administrative nature, extending the status enjoyed by the Palatine to other hills without any change to the settlement's territorial limits.⁴⁴ Of course, one can ignore this queer proposition, an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable notions of the Palatine *urbs condita* of our literary tradition and the proto-urban centre extending over an area corresponding to that of the City of Four Regions of the present-day (or isn't it yesterday's?) archaeological orthodoxy, and stick to the self-imposing 'Romulean' interpretation, in which the wall signals the boundary, whether defensive or religious, of the first urban community.

1.2 Literary tradition on the first Rome and her growth: methodological problems

All these reconstructions base on archaeological evidence, but the literary tradition on the first Rome (and, in the case of Ampolo and Cornell, that on which the ideal type of *la cité antique* was formulated) is present in varying degree in all save perhaps that of the restricted pre-urban settlement. Müller-Karpe too, on principle based his analyses exclusively on material remains,⁴⁵ unlike Gjerstad who followed his study of the archaeological evidence by a survey of written sources, in which, by straining their sense to the maximum, he tried to show that they are in perfect agreement with his interpretations of the material remains and so provide the final corroboration of his reconstruction and especially of his low chronology. Among the Italian archaeologists the dividing line has been the attitude to the autonomy of their discipline with regard to history, more precisely the choice of an interpretational key to archaeological material: anthropological models or the literary tradition on ancient Rome.⁴⁶ It goes without saying that the exponents of the former position – to name just a few: Anna Maria Bietti Sestieri, Anna De Santis, Alessandro Guidi, Francesco Di Gennaro – can hardly afford to take no account whatsoever of written sources, but they use them sparingly, essentially as illustrations of particular points in their demonstrations. The partisans of the latter, especially Colonna, profess mutual confirmation of archaeological data

44 Carandini 1997, 493–497, Carandini 2006, *passim*.

45 Even he, however, arguing against the 'Sabine' interpretation of the Esquiline graves, ruled out the possibility that they could have belonged to a different ethnic group than those at the foot of the Palatine (Müller Karpe 1959, 35–42, Müller Karpe 1962, 44–46) chiefly on the basis of Theodor Mommsen's rejection of the *Tatiuslegende* (Mommsen 1886).

46 A brief but singularly lucid and penetrating presentation of the two approaches with special reference to Rome is in Bietti Sestieri 2000.

and the literary tradition. The result of this approach, apart from the tendency to run into circular reasoning (an archaeological datum is interpreted in the light of a notice in the written sources which in turn is 'confirmed' by the so interpreted archaeological material), is a singular fideistic attitude to the literary tradition, in practice often quite unceremonious in its use (witness the notion of the great proto-Rome, contradictory to everything we find in written sources), but on principle insensible to the necessity of reflection on the epistemological status of the information it provides. This attitude has been promoted to the rank of method by Andrea Carandini, the discoverer of the 'Palatine wall': treating this wall as the Archimedean point 'rehabilitating' in its entirety the literary tradition on the first Rome and the preceding epoch, he deliberately rejects the methods of source criticism as a fruit of the obsolete 'rationalistic historiography of the 19th century'.⁴⁷

Among the historians there are no fideists. All are critical and, on the crucial question of the relationship between information transmitted by written sources and archaeological data, all adhere, at least verbally, to the position expressed succinctly in Arnaldo Momigliano's classic "Interim Report on the Origins of Rome."⁴⁸ The archaeologist and the historian need each other: both reconstruct the same past, but with different material and methods, hence the imperative that each know and utilize material and analyses of the other, combined with consciousness of diversity of questions one can sensibly ask each category of evidence. The trouble is that every historian sees differently the fulfilment of these desiderata.

First and foremost, a study of any aspect of Archaic Rome based on written sources requires facing the obstacle which Louis de Beaufort recognized in 1738 as the chief reason of, as he termed it, the incertitude of the early phase of the City's history, namely, the hiatus separating that phase from the birth of the Roman historiography⁴⁹ (his other obstacle, the *sacco di Roma* of 390, which would have destroyed the majority of relics of the past, has been dropped because of the lack of traces of wholesale destruction that might be attributed to the Gallic fire which allegedly destroyed the whole urban area except the Capitol, clearly invented by the Romans of later generations who explained the haphazard, planless character of their City by the haste of its rebuilding after the Gauls' departure).⁵⁰ In Roman chronology the regal period corresponds to the 8th to 6th century whereas our earliest sources date from the first century and the earliest sources of our sources – according to the Romans themselves – from the end of the third: how then could authentic information about the early City have been

47 Carandini 1997, Carandini 2006.

48 Momigliano 1963.

49 Beaufort (1738) 1866, 4.

50 Castagnoli 1974, Coarelli 1978, 229–230, Torelli 1978, 226–228. On the other hand, traces of destruction by fire datable to the first half of the 4th century have been found in the Forum Caesaris (Di Giuseppe 2010, Delfino 2010, Delfino 2014, 74, 79–83) and around the north-east corner of the Palatine (Panella-Zeggio-Ferrandes 2014, 180–181). In general see Delfino 2009.

preserved for so long before it found its way into literary tradition? The other major problem is the fact that the said tradition is not uniform but exists in a number of variants, sometimes radically differing from one another: how then can we decide which variant might be imparting genuine information? To put it bluntly: could ancient erudites know anything about early Rome, and even if they did, can modern scholars extract that knowledge from their writings?

Answers to these questions divide the historians into two camps: moderate and radical (or sceptical). The moderates (to use a term derived from the notion of *critica temperata* of the greatest exponent of this approach, Gaetano De Sanctis)⁵¹ say ‘yes’ to both; the radicals say ‘no’. According to the moderates, in the final analysis our sources depend on a hard core of largely identifiable authentic data, ‘structural facts’ in Cornell’s terminology, in contradistinction to the mainly fictitious ‘narrative superstructure’.⁵² The sources of our sources go back much further than the late 3rd century which is simply the time of the earliest authors who met the criteria of historical writing prevailing in the days of Cicero;⁵³ and the earliest documents quoted by the ancients date from the 6th century. Besides, a good part of the literary tradition on early Rome was the work of antiquaries, erudites interested in the past for its own sake, who explained old terms, institutions, customs etc. without political, moral and literary commitments: whatever be the worth of their *aitia* and etymologies, the objects of their inquiry were real enough. Then, the essentially closed corpus of written sources is not all that we have: the ever growing archaeological material on the one hand complements them and on the other makes possible new readings of texts analysed since times immemorial. Finally, if the modern historian is unable to trace the ways of memory of the ancient Romans, this is his problem and not the proof that their writings are all a pack of lies and inventions.⁵⁴

The sceptics question the identifiability of ‘authentic’ data. In their opinion, in order to have a datum transmitted by the literary tradition recognized as potentially authentic, the historian ought either to confirm it by external evidence (whatever that means),⁵⁵ or to explain in what way it had been preserved by the collective memory before being transmitted to the literary tradition.⁵⁶ This, however, is unrealizable since the external evidence, almost always archaeological, is mute by definition, and all the

51 First defined à propos of the inscription of the *Niger lapis* in De Sanctis 1900, 446: “Pertanto la iscrizione arcaica del foro, né più né meno che tutti i documenti a noi pervenuti, ci ammonisce ad usare di quella critica temperata che nulla ciecamente afferma per servile ossequio alla tradizione, nulla ciecamente nega per sola smania di negare.”

52 Cornell 1986, 73, Cornell 1995, 18.

53 See especially Purcell 2003.

54 Best representatives of this approach: Cornell 1986¹, 2005²; Cornell 1995, 1–30, Grandazzi 1991 *passim*, esp. 237–279, Grandazzi 2007.

55 Poucet 1985, 35–72. See similar themes in Poucet 1967, Poucet 1972, Poucet 1985, Poucet 2000.

56 Ogilvie-Drummond 1989.

imaginable mechanisms of oral transmission, in Rome's case an unavoidable stage between a fact's occurrence and its being recorded in writing, distort the original information to the point of making it unrecognizable.⁵⁷ What is commonly called 'literary tradition' on early Rome is thus an assortment of more or less groundless speculations and downright inventions by intellectuals of the middle and late republican and imperial times. Hence the logical inference, openly stated by Jacques Poucet, the most persistent advocate of the school, called hypercritical by its opponents, that the ancient intellectuals could not be better informed on the subject than the modern scholars,⁵⁸ and the main tenets of hypercriticism, unexpressed but shining through utterances of its followers: literary sources and material remains belong to different heuristic orders which in practice do not meet in a historical analysis; dating the birth of a given tradition to the latest possible moment, preferably to the first time we find proofs of its existence in our sources.⁵⁹

Whereas the price of the epistemological optimism of the moderates is the provisional character of many, maybe most, of their inferences, the methodological purism of the hypercritics leads, or rather should lead, to renouncing writing history of Rome before the 4th century: this is why their main contribution to the debate, apart from keeping in check too hasty or far-reaching interpretations of their colleagues, are studies of particular strands of the literary tradition aiming to show when, how and why they came about.⁶⁰ I think that the best appraisal of various standpoints in the debate has been given by Alexandre Grandazzi in his studies of the origins of Rome as a methodological and historiographical problem. In his opinion, the approach of the fideists and the hypercritics is quite similar, being based on a priori assumptions – that the literary tradition is all history or all falsehood – and leading either to total approval or total condemnation. Accordingly, he includes the partisans of both under the common designation of dogmatists as opposed to *les prudents*, those who try to approach every detail of the literary tradition with an open mind and consign it to the realm of history, legend, ideology or erudite speculation only after a thorough analysis supported with data and methods of every possible discipline, starting with archaeology.⁶¹

57 Wiseman 1979, Wiseman 1989.

58 Poucet 1985, 102 (à propos of the original, 'Romulean' tribes of Tities, Ramnes and Luceres, in his opinion an antiquarian fantasy derived by the Roman erudites from the *sex suffragia* of the centuriate organization): "les érudits romains intéressés par la question ne devaient guère être mieux informés que nous."

59 A prime example of this tendency is Peter Wiseman's dating the invention of the Remus and Romulus legend, first attested by the setting up in 296 of the statue of the twins suckling the she-wolf (Liv. 10.23.12), to the turn of the 4th century, i. e. literally a day before (Wiseman 1995, 103–128).

60 See especially Poucet 1967, Poucet 1985, Poucet 2000, Wiseman 1995. Poucet 1994 calls himself 'agnostic' which does not prevent him from continually explaining particular themes of the Roman literary tradition on the regal period with interpretative schemes of Georges Dumézil and his school.

61 Grandazzi 2007.

Needless to say, it is easier to set out the methodological ideal of *les prudents* than to apply it in a concrete argumentation. The extremism of the hypercritics does not make the basic aporias of the literary tradition any less real, and the danger of slipping into credulity, especially into what the Italians sometimes call *concordismo*,⁶² squaring at all costs reports in written sources with archaeological data (usually, I repeat, by subjecting both kinds of evidence to every sort of interpretational contortionism) is ever present. If today the pendulum has clearly swept to the sceptical side,⁶³ this is surely a reaction to the ‘Carandini phenomenon’: a flood of monographs, articles, catalogues, atlases, most of them of them magnificently published,⁶⁴ propagating his most peculiar ideas about Rome’s prehistory, early history and topography⁶⁵ with open disdain not just of source and historical criticism, but of basic principles of scholarly inquiry, freely mixing selectively chosen information from written texts and interpretations of archaeological data with his personal convictions automatically elevated to the rang of facts, and piling them up into multi-storied constructions which for everyone but him and his collaborators are simple fantasies.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, this reaction has put under the interdict not only Carandini’s interpretations, but also his *équipe*’s archaeological findings, which is best seen in the fact that none of his critics has yet come out with his own interpretation of the ‘Palatine wall’ whose dossier was published almost twenty years ago. What is worse, the condemnation has also fallen on scholars who do not belong to Carandini’s circle, but who have positively reacted to his findings by emphasizing their importance and putting forward their own interpretations thereof.⁶⁷

62 Ampolo 2013.

63 Witness Frascchetti 2001, Ampolo 2013, Cornell 2015, texts whose authors cannot be accused of hypercritical leanings.

64 To mention just a few most significant for my subject, Carandini 1997, Carandini-Carafa 2000, Carandini-Cappelli 2000, Carandini 2006, Carandini 2010, Carandini 2011, Carandini-Carafa 2012, Carandini *et alii* 2017.

65 Ampolo 2013, *passim*, calls Carandini’s reconstruction *ipertradizionalista*. I would not call him thus: no ancient author ever mentioned anything like his Termontium, Quinquemontium and other *montia*, no ancient author identified the *curiae* with the *sacraria Argeorum*, no ancient author spoke of a Pagus Querquetulanus or Collinus. One scholar of note of our day who deserved this appellation was the late Emilio Peruzzi, an eminent linguist whose admittedly fantastic interpretations and propositions concerning the early Latium and the first Rome were based on clear, though indefensible principles (Peruzzi 1970, Peruzzi 1978, Peruzzi 1990, Peruzzi 1998).

66 A vitriolic attack on Carandini’s method and writings is in Ampolo 2013. More persuasive and more crushing is the courteous assessment in Bietti Sestieri 2000. See also Carandini’s synthetic presentation of his views on Rome’s *primordia* plus comments (very critical) by leading British scholars in Cifani-Stoddart 2012, 5–22.

67 An extreme case of this condemnation is in Ampolo 2013, 259 n. 67: “Val la pena di riportare l’adesione immediata ed entusiasta alla tesi di Carandini di uno storico ipertradizionalista, che del resto crede anche alla storicità dei re di Alba Longa, A. Grandazzi ...”, a denunciation both untrue (see Grandazzi 2008, 731–890, esp. 731–733) and unjust considering that it is directed against the scholar who definitely demonstrated that Alba Longa never existed (Grandazzi 1986, Grandazzi 2008, 445–514). Grandazzi’s ‘fault’ consisted in presenting his own interpretation of Carandini’s finds

To minimize all these dangers it is necessary to distinguish between areas in which it should be possible to ask the written sources sensible questions and those in which it assuredly won't, and single out those elements of the literary tradition whose untenability is beyond dispute. One, perhaps the greatest source of misunderstanding should be pointed out at once because of its crucial importance for the following argument – the chronology of the kings of Rome: Romulus (753–715), Numa Pompilius (714–672), Tullus Hostilius (672–640), Ancus Marcius (640–616), L. Tarquinius Priscus (616–579), Ser. Tullius (578–534), L. Tarquinius Superbus (534–509). Seven kings, all save the first raised to the throne as mature men, could not have reigned ca. 244 years, especially considering that four of them are reported to have died by sudden death (three murders and one thunderstroke)⁶⁸ and the last, expelled from Rome, spent the last fourteen years of his life in exile. What is worse, he was the son of the fifth king: we thus have seven kings but only six generations. The absurdity of this chronology was already noticed by the ancients; unfortunately, a partial remedy proposed by L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi who hypothesized that Superbus was Priscus' grandson, not son (Dion. Hal. 4.6.5), is falsified by the family tree of the entire *gens Tarquinia* which knows only four generations: (1) Demaratos of Corinth, the line's founder, (2) L. Tarquinius Priscus and his brother Egerius, (3) L. Tarquinius Superbus and Egerius' son Arruns, (4) the sons of Superbus and Arruns' son L. Tarquinius Collatinus, one of the first pair of consuls of the nascent republic.⁶⁹ Now, the chief problem with the artificial construct that is the tradition of the seven kings of Rome is that it served the ancients as the chronological scheme into which they inserted everything they knew, or thought they knew, about the regal period. Unfortunately, the archaeologists (and some historians too) often refuse to take notice of this fundamental fact. Dating an Archaic find by a reference to some king (e. g. one from ca. 700 'to the reign of Numa') can be made light of as a harmless mannerism, but interpreting the same find in the light of what the sources narrate about that king's reign is a grave error.

The situation changes with the last kings. Tarquinius Superbus, a fully historical figure once we remove the black paint with which our sources smeared him, at the time of his expulsion in 509 (in Varro's chronology, four years higher than that which we find in Livius) had grown-up sons and died as an old man in 495: it is thus entirely plausible that he came to power in 534. This in turn makes it possible to determine the approximate dates of his father and one or several kings who ruled in-between: Tarquinius

(Grandazzi 1991, 202–212, see below, pp. 211, 222–223), something that none of the latter's critics has deigned (or dared) to do.

68 Five according to Plutarch, who alone among our sources has Ancus Marcius murdered as well (*Numa* 22.10).

69 Cazanove 1988; see also Cazanove 1992.

Priscus would have become king one generation before, ca. 570, Servius Tullius around 540. Beyond that we cannot go.⁷⁰

So shortened, the age of the Tarquini is the first more or less historical period of Rome. Although the only datable events of the period are the original dedication of the Capitoline temple in 512 or 511 and the fall of the monarchy in 509 (still in Varro's chronology), the fact that it was followed by the fully historical early Republic makes it possible to apply retrospective reasoning to many of its aspects. Alas, when we move back beyond the second half of the 6th century, this method loses legitimacy, if only because archaeology has shown that the Rome of the last kings, with the predecessor of the 'Servian Wall', the Capitoline temple, the Circus Maximus, the Sacra Via and other streets plus their drains starting with the Cloaca Maxima – the essentially unchanged scene on which in the coming centuries the history of the republic narrated by our written sources would be played – was an entity of a different order of magnitude in respect to everything that preceded it.⁷¹ Naturally, this does not necessarily mean that the Roman society of, let's say, mid-7th century had to differ substantially from that which three generations later created *la grande Roma dei Tarquini* and after another the Republican régime. What matters is that *la grande Roma dei Tarquini* furnishes the frame in which, for example, during the first generation of the Republic, the birth of the closed hereditary order of patricians, monopolizing the communication with the gods and so the political power, and of the plebeian organization, a syndicate of citizens' self-defence quickly transformed into a political counter-élite, have their proper places, become historically plausible in spite of their singularity. The ancients, however, placed the birth of the two orders in the Romulean age; and this, apart from the image drawn up by archaeology for the 8th century Rome, is inconceivable in the literal sense of the word, and so incapable of defending itself not only against hypercriticism, for which all the Roman history before the 4th century is a fable, but also against *la critica temperata*, one of whose tools is common sense.

If so, the question imposes itself: is it possible to lengthen our view beyond the chronologically scaled-down age of the Tarquini? Or rather, what kind of information in the literary tradition has a chance of transmitting genuine data? In the light of what has been said above *histoire événementielle* is out of the question. The structure and institutions of the earliest Roman community must remain elusive as well, our only potential source for them being uncertain anthropological and comparative analyses of burial grounds;⁷² written sources furnish strictly two secure data of capital importance, namely that on the summit of the community there was the king and that the citizen

70 Thomsen 1980, 27–57, Cazanove 1988.

71 See e.g. Cristofani 1990, *passim*.

72 At the end of the 7th century even this source of information dries up because of the change in burial customs (general, radical impoverishment of graves and their furniture), common to Veii and the whole Latium; see Colonna 1977.

body was divided into three *tribus*. In practice, the only aspect of the first Rome which can be studied on the basis of written sources is precisely the history of the City as an urban organism. This may sound paradoxical, for is not archaeology the basis of every reconstruction of the history of a habitat? True, but without written sources archaeological material is mute, and in Rome we try to find much more than, for example, in Etruscan cities like Veii or Tarquinii, completely open to the archaeologist's pick. Thanks to the fact that the extant Republican and Augustan authors, while referring to the Archaic City's material aspect, essentially related what they were seeing with their own eyes, we are able to reconstruct a good deal of her historical topography, localize zones and single monuments mentioned in written sources and, in favourable circumstances, identify them with material remains. Moreover, in their case the classic epistemological problem of the sources of our sources is much less grave than when we try to study the first Rome as a community. In their reconstructions of the pre-Servian City the ancient erudites usually made use of a method little different from that used by their modern colleagues: they applied 'scholarly' interpretative schemes of their day to visibly antique witnesses of various categories – material (walls of local tuff, shrines and *atria* of crude bricks, covered with terracottas), religious (primitive rites and priesthoods) and linguistic (old names and expressions) – which they dated, rightly or wrongly, before the Tarquinii; and what they could see and read about was infinitely more copious than the scraps the moderns have, an advantage which the two tools the latter have invented – archaeology and source criticism – do not quite counterbalance. Therefore, the ancient erudite and the modern scholar interpreted, and still interpret, the same reality; and this signifies that, without forgetting all imaginable reservations and qualifications, the ancient sources, and their sources as well, and the material unearthed by the archaeologist, relate the same story. *Ergo*: there is no reason to prefer one dossier to another; *ergo*: the study of the literary tradition is for a modern student of the first City of Rome as indispensable as that of her material remains.

In our day, consistent use of both critically read literary sources and archaeological data to reconstruct the urban reality reaching back to the regal period has been the mark of the research of at least one scholar, Filippo Coarelli; and it would be superfluous to dwell on how greatly his writings have enriched our knowledge and broadened our perception of the City's earlier periods.⁷³ The present study aims at being classified in the category of 'historical topography' as well, the main difference being that whereas Coarelli's volumes are dedicated to particular zones, I want to concentrate on one aspect of the City as a whole: her growth, in one, relatively circumscribed period, the early Archaic age.

At the end of these preliminary remarks, a word is in order concerning the feature of the archaeological investigation of the City which since the turn of the 19th century has

73 Coarelli 1983a, Coarelli 1988a, Coarelli 1997a, Coarelli 2012, Coarelli 2014.

largely determined the investigation and its results, that of accessibility. Thanks to the incomparable richness of material hidden below her surface, Rome has no equals as an archaeological site; but no less unique is her accessibility to archaeological investigation, especially for a city which never ceased being a great centre of habitation, which for more than a century has been the capital of a great modern state and which during the last half a century has become a megalopolis of three million inhabitants and thriving industry. This notwithstanding, Rome's topographical and historical centre – the Palatine, the zone of the Sacra Via, the Forum Romanum and the Imperial fora, the Circus Maximus, the Colosseum valley, to an extent even the Capitol – is an archaeological park, open to the excavator's pick in theoretically unlimited degree. The other side of the coin is the great difficulty, bordering on impossibility, with investigating other parts of the historical City. The problem of the casuality of finds is in Rome's case the opposite of what we usually find elsewhere: the potential distortion of our optique results from accessibility of the centre and inaccessibility of the outer areas. This peculiarity is even more pronounced with regard to prehistorical and early Archaic layers, the deepest and so the least accessible. Reaching them outside the Zona Archeologica Centrale is practically impossible apart from a few unbuilt patches, bigger piazzas and gardens. Except for EIA graves of the Esquiline necropolis, brought to light in the last decades of the 19th century during the construction of Via Cavour and Via Giovanni Lanza and the laying down of the districts of Santa Maria Maggiore and Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, and the much fewer contemporary tombs found at broadly the same time during the construction of the ministerial complexes in the eastern Quirinal, practically all the discoveries dating from these periods were, are and, no doubt, will be made in the centre, where our tradition situates the first Rome.⁷⁴ The danger of easy 'corroboration' of written sources by archaeology is in this situation only too manifest: since the only part of the City where digging in depth is practicable, is the one pin-pointed by our tradition as the cradle of the City, every new prehistorical or Archaic find made there underscores the area's exceptionally long record as a zone of habitation and so tends to confirm the image created by the written sources.

74 The only substantial late 20th-century discovery in the Esquiliae reaching back to the Orientalizing and Archaic periods, votive material in a Mid-Republican sanctuary in the Giardini Field-Branaccio on the Oppius, was made in the years 1987–89 within an area turned into a garden at the end of the 19th century, where a building project necessitated an emergency excavation (Astolfi 1990, Cordischi 1990, Cordischi 1993). The western half of the Oppius, at the beginning of the 2nd century A. D. buried under the platform of the *Thermae Traiani*, is another area potentially open to archaeological investigation, provided a practical way is found to overcome the enormous technical problems with reaching its lower levels. See Volpe 2000, *passim*, esp. 523–529.