

II.—Septimontium or Saeptimontium?

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The word *Septimontium* as used by the ancient authors has two distinct meanings, the name of a religious festival, and the collective name of the communities which celebrated it.¹ The double tradition stems in part from Varro and in part from pontifical records which he either does not know or deliberately disregards. It is proposed in this paper that Varro's misinterpretation of *Septimontium* as derived from *septem montes* has created the confusion which has made the Septimontium one of the standing problems of Roman history and topography.

THE SEPTIMONTIUM OF ANTISTIIUS LABEO

Of the few extant passages on which we must base our understanding of the term and of the institution it reflects, the oldest in date of composition is Varro's (*L.L.* 5.41).² His statement about

¹ Without involving them in the heresies here presented, I wish to record my thanks to Professors Agnes Kirsopp Michels and T. R. S. Broughton for helpful criticism.

The chief modern authorities are cited as follows:

Jordan = H. Jordan, *Topographie der Stadt Rom* 1 (Berlin 1878), 2 (1871).

J.H. = H. Jordan, *Topographie der Stadt Rom* 3 (Berlin 1907), edited and completed by C. Huelsen.

Kent = R. Kent, *Varro on the Latin Language*, "Loeb Classical Library" (Cambridge, Mass. 1938).

Lindsay = W. Lindsay, *Sexti Pompei Festi de Verborum Significatu quae supersunt cum Pauli Epitome* (Teubner, Leipzig 1913). All references to text are given with Lindsay's pagination preceded by L.

Lugli MA = G. Lugli, *Monumenti Antichi di Roma e Suburbio* 2 (Rome 1934).

Lugli RA = G. Lugli, *Roma Antica* (Rome 1946).

Wissowa RK = G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*² (Munich 1912).

Wissowa Sept. = G. Wissowa, "Septimontium und Subura," *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur römischen Religions- und Stadtgeschichte* (Munich 1904) 230-52, reprinted from *Satura Viadrina* (1896).

² The chronology of the chief ancient sources is roughly as follows:

Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, 47-45 B.C. (cited as *L.L.* from Kent).

De Rebus Rusticis, 37 B.C. (cited as *R.R.* from Hooper and Ash, "Loeb Classical Library" [1934]).

Festus, c.150 A.D. (cited as *Festus* from Lindsay) epitomizes an otherwise lost work by the Augustan scholar, Verrius Flaccus, and is in turn excerpted by Paulus Diaconus (Paul Warnefried) in the eighth century A.D. The latter is cited as *Paulus* from Lindsay.

it, however, does not represent as old a tradition as a quotation from Antistius Labeo which comes to us through Festus (L 474, 476) and apparently depends on the records of the priests. The passage from Festus is one of a series of glosses (L 472, 474, 476) taken almost in a block from Labeo's work on pontifical law,³ and all dealing with archaic religious terms or practices. They include names of special sacrificial cakes, ritual implements, or details of priestly costume. The Septimontium passage, almost in the middle of the series, concerns a festival and the religious organization responsible for it. There is no suggestion here of *Septimontium* as the name of a group of *montes*. A long parenthesis from Varro is appended to the Labeo quotation, but we come back to Labeo again in the next gloss on "Sistere fana." The Varronian interpolation consists of two rather dull aetiological stories to explain the names *Oppius* and *Cispius* for two of the Septimontium hills. This is not at all pertinent to the context, and is out of keeping with the primitive atmosphere of the Labeo passage with its obsolete names and its record of a sacrifice made directly to a place instead of to a tutelary deity. It is fortunate that the text of Festus, so woefully mutilated in some places, is here complete and clear (L 474, 476):

On the Septimontium, as Antistius Labeo says, there is a holiday for these hills: for the Palatium, the sacrifice offered to which is called Palatuar; for the Velia, to which there is likewise a sacrifice; for the Fagutal, for the Subura, for the Cermalus, for the Oppius, for the Caelian hill, for the Cispin hill.⁴

Be it noted that, while the celebration is shared by all the places in the list, the sacrifice is specified for two only, Palatium and Velia;

Antistius Labeo, an Augustan scholar who survives only in quotation by other writers.

Festus apparently cites him from Verrius Flaccus.

Lydus, Joannes Laurentius, *De Mensibus* (sixth century A.D.), cited as Lydus, *Mens*.

³ Festus, or Verrius Flaccus whose book he supposedly follows quite closely, often shows this arrangement of a series of entries on subjects closely related or taken from one work. For another block of references to Labeo, see L 296; 298.8, 17, 22, 23; 300. Because of alphabetical arrangement, an inappropriate heading is sometimes used to force the passage under the desired initial: e.g., L 272.32 where "Pueri" heads a passage on the *salinae* and the use of *signa* along a road. Caution should be used in restoring a lemma, as must be done in L 458.1, since Paulus sometimes changes a heading completely, as in L 477.1, where "Sacrificium" replaces the "Septimontio" of Festus L 474.

⁴ "Septimontio, ut ait Antistius Labeo, hisce montibus feriae: Palatio cui sacrificium quod fit, Palatuar dicitur; Veliae, cui item sacrificium; Fagu(t)ali, Suburae, Cermalu, Oppio, Caelio monti, Cispio monti. Oppius autem appellatus est, ut ait Varro," etc.

and also that the number seven is not mentioned.⁵ There are in fact eight names given, but it has been the practice to explain away one of them (usually the Caelian) and so make the number fit Varro's explanation of the word *Septimontium*.⁶ As a matter of fact, we know from the list of the *sacella Argeorum* (Varro, *L.L.* 5.46-48) that the Caelian, like the Palatine itself, had several subdivisions, so the pontifical number far exceeds seven.

A second entry under the same word *Septimontium* occurs earlier in the *S* section of Festus (L 458). Here the manuscript is in the unfortunate state characteristic of other interesting passages, where one side of the page has been burned away and a straggling fringe of words has been left on the other:⁷

----- pellatur mense
 ----- Fastis Agonalia
 ----- ontibus fiunt sa
 ----- agutali, Subura
 ----- et Cispio

Even the lemma has to be restored from the context, but obviously there is here the remnant of a statement which includes the same pontifical list of *montes* as the quotation from Antistius Labeo (L 474, 476), but it contains additional information about the place of the holiday in the religious year. There is no way of ascertaining whether this is another extract from Labeo or a similar work, or taken directly from the pontifical books which are cited in several places in Festus.⁸ A different source might account for the partial

⁵ Modern scholars cite Festus as authority for a sacrifice on seven hills. The basis for the claim is a restoration. See below, 19.

⁶ Cf. Müller's edition of Festus, 338, 340 (note on XV.9); Wissowa *Sept.* 244-47; Marquardt, *Röm. Staatsverwaltung* 3.184 (Leipzig 1878); Lugli *RA* 399; *idem*, *Eranos* 41 (1943) 13. DeSanctis, *Storia dei Romani* 1.185 f. (Rome 1907) proposes that the Subura was added to the original *montes* after settlers spread over the lower ground. The meaning suggested in this paper for the word *Septimontium* makes it a matter of indifference whether the participating communities were located on hills or in valleys. A. von Gerkan, *RhM* 96 (1953) 20-30, offers a new explanation for the extension of the name *Subura*, but none for the inaccuracy (p. 27) of *Septimontium*.

⁷ The generally accepted restoration appears in L 458:

(Septimontium ----- ap)pellatur mense
 (Decembri . . . post eum qui dicitur in) Fastis Agonalia,
 (quod eo die in septem m)ontibus fiunt sa
 (crificia: Palatio, Velia, F)agutali, Subura,
 (Cermalto, Caelio, Oppio,) et Cispio.

⁸ Cf. L 160.14, s.v. "Nectere"; L 488.16, s.v. "Tesca"; L 364.5 f. s.v. "Recto fronte."

duplication, but the somewhat haphazard arrangement of the whole work is enough to explain why Festus did not concentrate all his information on the Septimontium under one entry.⁹

From other sources we know that the day of the Septimontium was December eleventh, and that it coincided with the Agonium or Agonalia.¹⁰ So the word *Decembri* is plausibly restored after *mense*. The forms of the single names which end the statement show that we have in *montibus* the ablative rather than the dative of the Labeo passage in Festus L 476, but the editors are unjustified, I believe, in restoring "quod eo die septem in montibus fiunt sacrificia." Whether through Labeo or some other source, we are here following the same pontifical tradition as in L 476, where the statement contains no reference to seven places, but distinctly says the sacrifice was made to two only, and names eight altogether. Here in L 458.3 f., could not "pro montibus" explain the ablatives in a way more consistent with the tradition than "in septem montibus"? The explanation of public versus private *sacra* in Festus L 284.18 ff. uses the expression "pro montibus" in such a way as to show that some customary rite or rites were so characterized, and it has been generally supposed that there was in the phrase a reference to the Septimontium.¹¹

⁹ Doubling of this sort is not unparalleled in Festus. Cf. the story of the Fabii and the Porta Carmentalis s.vv. "Scelerata Porta" L 450 and "Religioni" L 358; also entries under "Sorum Tigillum" L 380 and "Tigillum Sororium" L 502. It is possible that the original entries in Verrius Flaccus were much more extensive and focussed on such different aspects of the subjects that they were justifiably separated. Here, for instance, there may have been a discussion of the nature of the *Agonium* of December 11 — perhaps as a parallel on the *colles* of the Quirinal (once called *Agonus* according to Festus L 304.11) to the celebration of the *montes* on the Palatine side of the brook?

¹⁰ The Septimontium is not mentioned in the early imperial calendars. The pre-Caesarian calendar from Antium is too fragmentary at that point for certainty, but no recognizable trace of the name has survived (*Not. d. Scavi* 1921, 73–126). As one of the ancient festivals which survived into the Christian era, it occurs in the late imperial calendars: *CIL* I² 253, 336. Cf. Wissowa *Sept.* 230 f. Varro, without giving the month and day, puts it at the end of the year in his discussion of the holy days (*L.L.* 6.24). The *post eum* of the restoration (note 7 above, line 2) is to me incomprehensible, since the Agonium fell on the same day, not the preceding. Cf. *CIL* I² 336. According to Kent 1.187, note on *L.L.* 6.14, *Agonium*, the correct name of the festival, was corrupted by analogy with other calendar feasts to *Agonalia*.

¹¹ Wissowa *Sept.* 232 f. The text of Festus (L 284.18–21) reads: "Publica sacra, quae publico sumptu pro populo fiunt, quaeque pro montibus, pagis, curiis, sacellis: at privata, quae pro singulis hominibus, familiis, gentibus fiunt." For changes made by Paulus, see pages 20–21.

The editors have found their *septem* in the statement in Paulus (L 459) which corresponds to the mutilated Festus gloss on *Septimontium* (L 458). Paulus has written:

Septimontium appellabant diem festum, quod in septem locis faciebant sacrificium: Palatio, Velia, Fagutali, Subura, Cermallo, Caelio, Oppio et Cispio.

He has omitted from his epitome the section which might lighten our present darkness on the question of the Agonalia, but has kept the list of names in the ablative, and has made a statement about them. Is it safe to assume that the statement so faithfully reproduces the Festus original that it gives us the missing words? There is some sign of confusion in that Paulus first announces that there were seven places and then names eight, but of course the best basis for a judgment on his reliability is a comparison of his versions with the Festus originals in places where both texts are preserved. We find his faithfulness to the original varies greatly, but there are enough cases where Paulus has misinterpreted Festus to put the reader on guard. He is especially prone to confuse the facts and to show poor judgment on matters concerning religious antiquities.¹² This is natural, since he was a Christian Lombard of the eighth century A.D. The ancient practices, already quaint survivals or far gone toward obsolescence in the time of Verrius Flaccus, were to Paul the Deacon in his cloister of Monte Cassino always remote, sometimes repulsive, and sometimes without interest. Before reading the text of Paulus into Festus L 458, it would be well to compare the Festus and Paulus versions of the second *Septimontium* passage (L 474, 476, 477) where the two versions are complete. Here we find that Paulus has reduced a gloss of 13 lines to: "Sacrificium quod fiebat Romae in monte Palatio, Palatuar dicebatur." His statement concerns only one subordinate clause of the original and completely misrepresents even that fragment. For Antistius Labeo as there quoted says that a sacrifice was made not *on* the Palatium, but *to* the Palatium. The idea is somewhat startling: it may well have been incredible to the Christian Paulus. A difficult passage in Tertullian, however, seems to acknowledge such treatment of places as gods by the misguided pagans.¹³ A compari-

¹² A flagrant example is on "Municipalia sacra," L 146, 147.

¹³ *Ad. Nat.* 2.15: "Ut cetera transvolem, etiam locorum urbis vel loca deos arbutramini, Janum Patrem (et diva arquis est Jana) et montium septem Septimontium."

son of the two versions of "Publica sacra" (L 284, 285; for the text see note 11) shows that even the notion of a rite celebrated "pro montibus" apparently troubled Paulus. He has omitted the phrase with other impersonal categories ("pro pagis, curis, sacellis") and retained only the personal "pro populo," and "pro singulis hominibus familiisque." He seems to have been willing to entertain the idea of performing rites on behalf of people, but not on behalf of places. We can not accuse him of acting unintelligently in avoiding mechanical repetition of pagan conceptions which he could not understand. What made no sense to him he omitted or modified. From the gloss of L 476 he omitted in his version a part of the statement, and changed the rest to fit his own idea of the relation between the sacrifice and the Palatium. In L 458 he has again omitted a part (of what importance we can only conjecture), and it seems probable that he has acted again on the same prejudice he has exhibited in L 284 f. and in L 476 f. to change "pro montibus" to "in septem locis." The number seven, which has no place in the pontifical record, and which so ill suits the context, could easily have made its way into his text from the long-established cliché of Rome as a city of seven hills. That can be traced back at least as far as Varro (*L.L.* 5.41), who may indeed have invented it.

THE SEPTEM MONTES OF VARRO

In the book in which the passage occurs, Varro's declared purpose (5.10) is to "tell about the words denoting places and those things which are in them," that is, the Septimontium is introduced as a place name, the derivation of which Varro intends to explain. It seems quite clear that *Septimontium* was not primarily a place name, though it may have been used as a convenient designation for the original district represented in the festival of that name. The etymology Varro suggests is open to question. Representative etymologies immediately preceding the Septimontium explanation are *prata*, "meadows" from *parata*, because they stand "ready" without man's labor; and *rura*, "country lands," from *rursum*, because the same operations must be repeated "again and again" in the fields.¹⁴ Immediately following is the origin of the name "Capitolium" from the human head, *caput*, discovered on that hill. So a crude etymological myth balances two linguistic absurdities on

¹⁴ Varro had not repented of *prata* from *parata* more than ten years later, for he repeated it in *R.R.* 1.7.10.

either side of the *Septimontium* passage. However, Varro is not always wrong by any means, and both he himself and the generations of scholars after him have included *Septimontium* in the group of words which Varro characterizes earlier in his book (*L.L.* 5.7) as so easy to analyze that even the man in the street sees the obvious truth about them: "quo populus etiam venit." That the word is compounded of *septem* and *montes* is a plausible conjecture which has never to my knowledge been questioned.¹⁵ "Where Rome now is," says Varro (*L.L.* 5.41), "was called the Septimontium from the same number of hills which the city afterwards embraced within its walls."¹⁶ It is clear that the seven he has in mind are not hills of the pontifical record, but those of the Servian city, for he specifies the Capitoline as one of them. He goes on to account for the name of the Aventine, and we expect to find in what follows the names of five hills to complete his series. He makes no definite pronouncement about them, however, and to reconstruct a list from the discussion of the "reliqua urbis loca" (45 ff.) it is necessary to search through an embarrassment of riches in fifteen names. Most of these are from the priestly records and applied to subdivisions of the main heights, of which only three (Caelian, Quirinal, and Viminal) are directly mentioned. Instead of Mons Esquilinus, he uses the place name Esquiliae, which he expressly says (50) included the two *montes*, *Cispius* and *Oppius*. The Palatine is represented by its three component parts, *Cermalus*, *Palatium*, and *Velia*. Varro names no specific hills at all when he comes back (*L.L.* 6.24) to the same word *Septimontium*, this time applied not to the site of Rome, but to the festival: "Septimontium Day was named from these *septem montes*, 'seven hills,' on which the city is set."¹⁷ We assume that he means the same hills (whatever they were) to which he referred in 5.41.

Varro's confusion seems fundamental and complete. He has jumbled the names of the four regions, of the hills of the pontifical records, and those of the "Servian" great hills; he has reversed the situation to derive the name of the festival from the place instead of

¹⁵ It may be worth noting that compounds with *septem* do not as a rule weaken the second syllable: *septemplex*, *septemgeminus*, *septemviri*, *septentriones*, *septemestrus*, etc. *Septicollis* and *Septizonium* are of late formation, and the first is certainly modelled directly on *Septimontium*.

¹⁶ "Ubi nunc est Roma, Septimontium nominatum ab tot montibus quos postea urbs muris comprehendit" (Kent).

¹⁷ "Dies Septimontium nominatus ab his septem montibus, in quibus sita urbs est" (Kent).

vice versa, as is generally agreed.¹⁸ The festival antedated the inclusion of the Capitoline which he expressly numbers among the seven (*L.L.* 5.41). The passage in Festus L 424 (s.v. "Sacrani"), which says that Sabines came down from Reate to drive out Ligurians and Siculans "ex Septimontio," does not at all support Varro's position. Though Festus there uses Septimontium as a place name, the reference is obviously to a very primitive stage of the city's development, and to that more limited district which was included within the greater Rome, and which was conveniently designated by its characteristic communal feast. There is, in fact, no other way of specifying that particular subdivision of the Roman site without listing the separate neighborhoods which composed it. In historical times these no longer existed as recognizably distinct from their surroundings, and their names were not in common use. There is now a general skepticism about the existence of a town bearing the name *Septimontium* and forming an intermediate step between a Romulean settlement on the Palatine and the organized city of the Etruscan kings. Certainly I am not aware of any living defenders of the once popular notion that the Septimontium was equipped with wall and *pomerium* to enclose its separate heights. The difficulty of fortifying such a position would be overwhelming.¹⁹ There is no parallel on record, moreover, for such a town name as *Septimontium*, though the Roman site, with its cluster of high places enclosed within a confluence of streams, is far from unique in central Italy.²⁰

¹⁸ "While it is . . . very certain that the Septimontium was an ancient festival, it is not probable that this was ever an actual name of Rome." Platner-Ashby, *Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (London 1929) 472, s.v. "Septimontium."

¹⁹ For the older traditional view of the Septimontium as a city, cf. Wissowa *Sept.* J. B. Carter (*AJA* 12 [1908] 172 ff.; *RM* 25 [1910] 82) vigorously attacked the view that any organized *urbs* preceded the "City of Four Regions." The problem of fortifying the difficult site has been studied more recently, especially by Säflund, *Le Mura di Roma Repubblicana* (Rome 1932). Present opinion regards the wall of the fourth century B.C. as the first attempt to enclose the so-called Servian city in a continuous ring of masonry, though forts on separate heights and an *agger et fossa* on the weak east-northeast approach existed earlier. See Platner-Ashby (above, note 18) s.vv. "Septimontium" and "Murus Servii Tullii" 350.

²⁰ Cf. Lugli, *Eranos* 41 (1943) 12 f.; *RA* 399; Pinza, *BullComm* Ser. 5 (1898) 58, note 1. Ashby, *Papers Brit. School Rome* 3.35, describes Cures, birthplace of Numa Pompilius, as a hill with two summits, around which runs a stream now called the Fosso Correse. Veii also shows several heights enclosed in a confluence of streams. Cf. Dennis, *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria*³ (London 1883) 1.5 f. with sketch, and map facing page 1. Names descriptive of such sites occur (Antemnae, Interamna), but no collective formed from the number of heights.

THE SEPTEM MONTES OF VERGIL AND
HIS SUCCESSORS

While there is no question that the concept of seven hills within the wall of one city was popular from the Augustan period on, there is no proof that a list of seven "Servian" hills had been definitely established in Varro's day. The list we now accept as canonical appears nowhere in exactly the "correct" form in any ancient text, and the composite eastern heights are regarded as units only by convention.²¹ There is no mystery about the source of a fixed association between Rome and her seven hills, however. Vergil in the *Georgics* (2.534 f.) has built upon Varro's suggestion a pair of lines unforgettable for several reasons—their lovely sound, their appeal to pride not only in Rome's strength but in her beauty, their semi-mystical suggestion of seven in one and one in seven. If this were the only place where Varro's prose had kindled Vergil's imagination, it might seem a fantastic suggestion that

et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma
septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces

could spring from a combination of "septem montibus in quis sita urbs est" and "ab tot montibus quos postea urbs muris comprehendit." But Vergil often turned to Varro's store of information, and sometimes found in it not only useful facts, but inspiration. An example is that old Corycian sailor (was he a retired pirate?)²² whose garden beloved of the bees transfigured what had been a bit of waste land in Calabria. The description is one of the ornaments of the fourth *Georgic* (125–48), but is not the old fellow close akin to Varro's Faliscan brothers (*R.R.* 3.16.10), veterans of the legions in Spain, who turned to bee-keeping and gardening on their poor little acre, and drew from it the same riches which Vergil's veteran found "qua niger umectat flaventia culta Galaesus"? Then in the first *Georgic* (178–86) there is the immortal passage on the preparation of the threshing floor. Vergil had surely consulted Varro's handbook and checked his directions. There in the midst of prescriptions for combating weeds and destructive creatures (*R.R.* 1.51.1)

²¹ ". . . the usual later seven," Kent, note on *L.L.* 6.24; "the famous seven," Rose, *Plutarch's Roman Questions* 199 (note on 69); etc. etc. Jordan made one of his systematic studies of the "sieben Hügel" (2.204–12), but did not succeed in making the situation clear. See below, 25–27 and note 26.

²² See Servius *ad Georg.* 4.127.

Vergil read the phrase, "ne . . . ostia aperiant muribus ac formicis," "that they may not open the doors to mice and ants." And the poet forgot to pour the *amurca* on the clay to poison "weeds, ants, and moles," while through those open doors passed his *exiguus mus* to build underground his dwelling house and his granaries; and with him went the ant "inopi metuens formica senectus," and the blind mole digging out his *cubilia*. It seems that from Varro's chance expression came the fancy to apply to the ant, the mouse, the mole, and the toad the language of human handiwork and of human hopes and fears.²³

Vergil approved his own line about the seven hills, since he used it again without change in *Aeneid* 6.783,²⁴ a place of new honor for the phrase destined to be repeated again and again as part of the living language. Horace (*Carmen Saec.* 7) speaks of the gods "quibus septem placuere colles." Tibullus (2.5.55 f.) makes his sibyl prophesy:

Carpite nunc, tauri, de septem montibus herbas
dum licet: hic magnae iam locus urbis erit.

Martial looks out from the Transtiberine heights:

Hinc septem dominos videre montes
et totam licet aestimare Romam (4.64.11 f.).

As to what seven hills they were, the exact catalogue probably troubled his brother poets as little as it troubled Vergil, but some more literal-minded observers may have been disturbed by a vagueness in the glorious panorama. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, looking over the scene not long after Vergil had composed his famous lines, apparently regrets that the sprawling city, where one section melts into the next, does not show up with clearly separated hills more definitely enclosed. The wall which he saw, and which was

²³ So Kenneth Grahame apparently found in Vergil's creatures of the threshing floor almost the whole cast of characters for his *Wind in the Willows* — the toad, the mole, and the field mice. However, in developing the treatment of them as people, he has turned the "lonely word" into a chapter. Cf. especially "Mole's house," which elaborates the suggestion in *cubilia*, while Mr. Toad, starting from Vergil's *bufo*, has grown out of all recognition.

²⁴ Conington called it an anti-climax, but he felt so little of the impact of the word *sibi* that he considered only whether or not it is an ethical dative. In that personal pronoun Rome comes to life as the mother sheltering her children in her walls as in her arms, and the picture develops naturally into the comparison with "Berecynthia mater" which follows in the *Aeneid*.

familiar to Vergil, was "hard to be discovered by reason of the buildings that surround it in many places," and the city had spread far beyond it (*Ant. Rom.* 4.13.4 f.). Architectural developments blurred the contours of the hills so that except for the Palatine, Capitoline, and Aventine, their limits were not distinct. There are variant versions of the times and circumstances in which each district was added to the aboriginal Palatine. Though, if we take *Esquiliae* as equivalent to Mons Esquilinus,²⁵ it is possible to count seven "Servian" names scattered through the first book of Livy, and Dionysius (4.13) says that Servius Tullius "added two to the other five" unnamed hills, it is a difficult matter to discover just what territory is covered, for instance, by the terms *Mons Esquilinus* or *Esquiliae* at any given time.²⁶ Dionysius (4.13.1) faithfully echoes the Vergilian phrase: "After Tullius had surrounded the seven hills with one wall," and then breaks down into the confusion which always follows the number seven in this connection: "he divided the city into four regions, which he named after the hills, calling the first Palatine, the second Subura, the third Colline, the fourth the Esquiline region."²⁷ Clearly, only two of the names are those of "great" or "Servian" hills—Palatine and Esquiline. Colline covers both Quirinal and Viminal, while the meaning and application of *Subura* are controversial. No wonder the conscientious foreigner was confused by what purported to be Roman tradition. The naming of four from seven would raise a problem in any case, and Dionysius does well to pass lightly over the question without trying to be specific about connections. Plutarch also knows there are seven hills, but avoids naming them.²⁸ It was left to

²⁵ See below, note 26. Be it noted that Livy says of the famous Servian wall (1.44), "aggere et fossis et muro circumdat urbem," without mentioning hills or their number.

²⁶ See Platner-Ashby (above, note 18) s.v. "Esquiliae." After discussing the name, the author says: "'Mons Esquilinus' is found only once in Cicero (*de rep.* ii.11) and for the first time, and is not used at all by Livy, Tacitus, Pliny, Suetonius, or Martial, but it was adopted by Greek writers, and became common after the first century (RE vi. 683)." Livy 1.48 says, "in collem Esquiliarum" and in 1.44 says that Servius "addit duos colles, Quirinalem Viminalemque; inde deinceps auget Esquilias." Cf. Jordan 1.1.183 f.

²⁷ Vergil's "una," however, throws the emphasis on the one-ness of Rome rather than on the idea of one continuous wall. Dionysius reproduces all the authentic confusion of Varro 5.45-53.

²⁸ Q.R. 69: "The festival of the Septimontium they observe in commemoration of the addition to the city of the seventh hill, by which Rome was made a city of seven hills." (Tr. Babbitt, Loeb, 1936.) Plutarch evidently feels the need of explanation and offers a suggestion not known from any other source.

antiquarians of the time when Rome's greatness was already past to establish a fixed list, but their efforts to do so arrive only at confusion which becomes worse confounded with the passage of centuries. The Janiculum from the wrong side of the Tiber pushes in to displace the Capitoline, or the seven swell to eight through the addition of the Janiculum to the full "Servian" list.²⁹ Joannes Lydus (*De Mens.* 4.155) crowns the development with two lists, one of which he enlivens by substituting two gates of the wall of Aurelian (Praenestine and Tiburtine) for Quirinal and Caelian, while in the other he replaces the Viminal by a deformed Velia from the old pontifical list of lesser *montes* (Βελινήσιος).³⁰

To Vergil the seven citadels of the single city were a telling poetic symbol of Rome as the one in many and many in one. He probably never imagined applying the symbol literally to the facts of contemporary topography. On this point Servius comments shrewdly on *Aeneid* 6.783: "He says rightly that Rome had embraced seven hills. And he holds a safe course" (in not going on to analyze the situation) "for from that point on there is great uncertainty. Some say that by Romulus seven little hillocks had been enclosed, which, however, were called by other names. Others will have it that these same hills which are here today had been enclosed by Romulus, that is, Palatine, Quirinal, Aventine, Caelian, Viminal, Esquiline, Janicular. But others will have it that these were the hills, yet called by different names: these names were changed later, as we read about many places and rivers, as (8.329) 'the Saturnian land often changed its name.'"³¹

Varro's derivation of *Septimontium* from *septem montes* is obviously based primarily on the appearance of the word. That ap-

²⁹ Servius *ad Aen.* 6.783, and mediaeval descriptions of Rome. See Jordan 2.204 f.

³⁰ Cf. note on this passage in edition of R. Wuensch 173 (Teubner, Leipzig 1898).

³¹ "... bene urbem Romam dicit septem inclusisse montes. et medium tenuit: nam grandis est inde dubitatio. et alii dicunt breves septem colliculos a Romulo inclusos, qui tamen aliis nominibus appellabantur. alii volunt hos ipsos, qui nunc sunt, a Romulo inclusos, id est Palatinum, Quirinalem, Aventinum, Caelium, Viminalem, Esquilinum, Ianicularem. alii vero volunt hos quidem fuisse, aliis tamen nominibus appellatos: quae mutata sunt postea, ut de multis locis et fluminibus legimus, ut (VIII 329) *saeptius et nomen posuit Saturnia tellus*" (ed. Thilo, Leipzig 1878-83). Carter (above, note 19) 178 n. 2 attempts to clear the confusion thus: "in the course of time it (i.e., the Septimontium) became widened into a general festival of the hills, so that it included all the great hills, the number being kept roughly at seven" etc. Platner-Ashby (above, note 18) s.v. "Septimontium" gives us the last word: "It is quite evident that some Roman antiquarians believed that the festival of the Septimontium was based on the inclusion within the limits of the city of seven hills or parts of hills, but that they differed as to which hills they were."

pearance is so convincing that it has apparently satisfied modern scholars in spite of the general opinion that in such matters the ancients "seldom blundered into the truth."³² It is only when we leave the safe course charted by Vergil and try to develop the logical consequences of accepting the *septem* that difficulties begin. There may be some reason, too, to suspect Varro's special interest in the number seven for its own sake, a number, which though peculiarly potent in more eastern countries, plays no great part in early Italian tradition.³³ Varro had discussed the uses of seven (seven planets, seven sages, etc.) and Aulus Gellius (3.10) has happened to preserve a summary of his remarks. A general interest in hebdomads may have inclined him even more to see in *Septimontium* a collective name for seven hills.

EVIDENCE FURNISHED BY THE NATURE OF THE ROMAN SITE

It is a relief to turn from the confusion of the literary tradition to the comparatively simple and straightforward evidence of archaeology and of the geographical features of the Roman site.³⁴ Two small tributaries of the Tiber, one flowing through the valley of the Argiletum and the Forum Romanum, the other through the valley of the Circus Maximus, separated the site of greater Rome into three natural divisions. These streams, though small in volume, were not seasonal *torrentes* but flowed perennially from springs. They possessed for this reason uncanny powers, according to primitive belief, and could not only interrupt the auspices, but bar the passage of spirits and hostile influences.³⁵ The places named by Antistius

³² Sir James Frazer, *Fasti of Ovid* 4.93.

³³ The number of the major flamens was three, of the minor, twelve (Wissowa *RK* 504); while there were boards or commissions of seven men (Cic. *Phil.* 6.5.14), there were others of two (Caes. *B.C.* 1.23), of six (*ILS* 5445), and fifteen (Tac. *Ann.* 6.12), while the *decemviri* were the most famous of all (Livy 3.32 f.). There were six vestals, thirty *curiae*, four or fourteen regions, ten tribunes, etc. The Roman calendars show a week of eight days, though a seven day week has left some traces in Italy (Heurgon, *REL* 25 [1947] 236-49); Degraisi, *Actes 2me Cong. d'Épig. Grecque et Lat.* [1952] 101).

³⁴ For the hydrographic map, see Lugli *MA*, plate iv, or Lanciani, *Ruins and Excavations* (London 1897) fig. 1 (reproduced in Säflund [above, note 19] 165).

³⁵ For the breaking of the auspices by running water, see Servius *ad Aen.* 9.24; for special rites at river crossings, Festus L 296.26, s.v. "Petronia"; L 284, s.v. "Peremne"; for ancient Italian water worship in general, cf. Frazer, *Fasti of Ovid*, 2.89 f.; 4.96, 173, 333; Bailey, *Phases in the Religion of Ancient Rome* (Berkeley 1932) 42 f.; Cecchelli, *Enc. Ital.* s.v. "Acqua"; Rellini, "La Caverna di Latronico," *MonAnt* 24 (1916) 548-616.

Labeo as joining in the celebration of the Septimontium were located in the central section between the two streams.³⁶ Archaeological evidence indicates that at least as early as the eighth century B.C. a typical Italic settlement was in existence there, with scattered groups of huts for the most part on the *montes*, which were more desirable for dwellings than the marshy valleys below.³⁷ The boundaries of living water which protected them all gave a sort of unity to the separate neighborhoods within the confluence, and it is easy to accept the tradition of a festival celebrated annually by the whole district together from very early times. The Caelian is separated from the other *montes* by a branch of the Circus brook in the valley where the Colosseum now stands. Therefore the Caelian probably came last into the Septimontium community and its participation depends on an extension across the religious barrier of running water.³⁸ Unlike the Esquiline and Caelian *montes*, which lacked natural defenses on the east, the Palatine was almost completely isolated and bounded by steep cliffs. The section of the Palatine called *Cermalus*, where the most extensive and intelligible remains of primitive occupation have been found, has access only by steps to the Tiber bank and Velabrum, over which it towers. There was only one approach by which a road passable for ox carts and pack animals could reach the summit of the hill: this was by way of the *Velia*, to the *Palatium*, the eastern summit of the Palatine. The *Velia* was a ridge which formed an extension of the *Palatium* toward the Esquiline. The road over it would pass through a traditional Porta Mugonia which can be located only approximately as not far distant from the arch of Titus.³⁹ It was there that all roads to the Palatine from the Tiber ferry, or from the land roads which entered

³⁶ The significance of this fact was missed by Wissowa *Sept.* and in most other topographical studies which have tended to disregard the hydrography. Cf. the arid plans of Wissowa *Sept.* 249; Basanoff, "Pomerium Palatinum," *Mem. Accad. Lincei*, Scienze Morali 1939; De Ruggiero, *Il Foro Romano* (Rome 1913) map facing page 6. The special importance of the Roman streams was noted by Frothingham, *AJA* 16 (1912) 109 f. Säflund (above, note 19) and Von Gerkan, *RM* 46 (1931) 153-88 (plan p. 167 fig. 2), both took account of them in studying the history of the fortifications.

³⁷ See Lugli, *Eranos* 41 (1943) 11-13; Gjerstad, *BullComm* 73 (1949-50, published 1952) 15, or *Antiquity* No. 102 (1952) 62; Pinza, *MonAnt* 15 (1905) 516 f.; Romanelli, Puglisi, and Davico, *Rivista di Antropologia* 38 (1950-51) 19-37.

³⁸ The water boundaries and their religious importance are fully discussed in a forthcoming book on Janus.

³⁹ Cf. Lugli *RA* 399. Säflund considers actual traces of the gate exist at the narrowest point of the *Velia* (*op. cit.*, note 19 above, 167; "Corolla Archaeologica," *Acta Inst. Rom. Regn. Sueciae* 2 (1932) 64-68.

the Forum and Circus valleys, must merge to enter by the gate.⁴⁰ Except on that narrow approach, no artificial barrier was needed to supplement the natural defenses of the Palatine.⁴¹ The plausible conjecture has been made that the Palatine, so well fitted for the purpose, served as a general refuge in time of danger for all the people living within the confluence. The settlements on the eastern *montes*, like the scattered huts on the lower slopes and in the valleys, would be abandoned, while the people and their animals crowded through the Porta Mugonia into the safety of the Palatine enclosure.⁴² It is at first sight puzzling that the *Cermalus* with its commanding position should remain in the background while the *Palatium* and the *Velia* were singled out as the focus of the Septimontium ceremonies, but their relation to the road and its point of entry into the common fortress would explain their position as the "saepti montes" par excellence. It is on the basis of the *saeptum* maintained for the general safety that I would explain both the name *Septimontium* and the sacrifice offered to two of the hills on behalf of all,—to *Palatium* and *Velia* "pro montibus." The *Palatium* with its special sacrifice called *Palatuar* (Festus L 476) and its special priest called the *flamen Palatualis* (Festus 284) is obviously the chief concern, while the *Velia*, for which there is "likewise" (*item*) a sacrifice, may be regarded as an outer defense, perhaps with a secondary gate where the road turned off from the Sacra Via to the Porta Mugonia.

We know from Plutarch's *Roman Questions* (69) that on the holiday of the Septimontium it was forbidden to use vehicles drawn by yoked animals (ὀχήμασι ζευκτοῖς). If the Septimontium was the feast of the *saepti montes*, with a sacrifice intended to invoke a blessing on the enclosure and its barrier, it would be natural to close for that day the one road which made a breach in its defense, and at the same time to give a day of rest to the creatures which pulled the loads along that climbing way. Like other peasant populations, the Romans seem to have regarded the draft animals as part of the working family, and upon this attitude perhaps was based the

⁴⁰ Cf. Lugli, *Atti Congresso Studi Romani* 3 (1933) 260 for the development of the system of roads leading into and through Rome.

⁴¹ "Murus erant montes," Prop. 4.4.13.

⁴² As Livy describes the Aequi of a somewhat later time (fifth century B.C.), "In oppida sua se recepere, uri sua popularique passi" (3.3.10). Cf. Dion. Hal. 2.37 and Lugli RA 399; Säfund (above, note 19) 164, 169 f.

prejudice against using as sacrificial victims the animals which had so served their masters.⁴³ Except for the negative feature of the ban on wheeled traffic, and the statement that sacrifices were offered, the sources carry little suggestion of how the day of the Septimontium was marked. It may be that the sort of picnic patronized by the emperor Domitian (Suet. *Dom.* 4) was a traditional part of the celebration. Certainly there was something enjoyable about it to claim the interest of the populace, for this is one of the old festivals which survived the recognition of Christianity.⁴⁴ It would be interesting to know whether the participation was always limited to the original district between the streams. Probably it was not, for even in Varro's time the brooks had long ago been converted into underground drains, and forgotten along with the rest of the prehistoric setting which had given meaning to the day's rites.

THE QUESTION OF ORTHOGRAPHY

Whether it is linguistically possible to establish a link between *Saeptimontium* and *septem* is a question which has so far not been considered. The interchange of *ae* and *e* is an easy matter, and Varro (*L.L.* 5.97) himself has happened to leave us the information that in his time words which kept the diphthong in the city were pronounced with the single vowel in the country districts. Kent, in his edition of the *De Lingua Latina* (Introduction, xviii), remarks: "Varro, as a countryman, may have used E where residents of the city of Rome used AE (cf. v. 97); but the standard orthography has been introduced in our text, except that E has been retained in *seculum* and *sepio* (and its compounds: v. 141, 150, 157, 162; vii. 7, 13) which always appear in this form." It is precisely in *sepio* that we are interested in this question. Even if the single vowel has replaced the diphthong, however, the question of the closed or open sound and of the quantity still remains. The fact that the syllable is long in any case because of the double consonant *pt* makes it easier to shift to a short vowel in this particular word. It is noteworthy that Dio Cassius (53.23.1; 59.10.5) transliterates the diphthong of *Saepta Julia* as epsilon. Moreover, Varro needs no excuse

⁴³ Macrob. *Sat.* 3.5.5; Vergil, *Georg.* 4.540, 551. Horace (*Odes* 3.18.11 f.) speaks of the oxen sharing a rural holiday, and the same custom marked the Consualia in December (Plut. *Q.R.* 48; Dion. Hal. 1.33.2).

⁴⁴ The Septimontium appears in the fourth century A.D. in the calendars of Philocalus and Polemius Silvius. See above, note 10.

to disregard his quantities, as he shows by connecting *hūmor* and *hūmus* (L.L. 5.23 f.), *sōlus* and *sōlum* (L.L. 5.22). In deriving *sēclum* (*saeculum*) from *sēnex* (L.L. 6.11) he commits an error involving exactly the same sounds as occur in *saepti* and *septem*. No matter what the feelings of a well-trained modern philologist, it is apparent that Varro would not allow the length of a vowel to stand in his way when the etymological urge was strong upon him. As to Festus, the Codex Farnesianus shows such erratic treatment of the diphthong *ae* that the form of *Septimontio* (L 474) reveals nothing about the quality of the vowel in the first syllable. Lindsay (Introduction, ix) tells us that the manuscript *passim* indicates the diphthong *ae* by *e* with a mark under it like a reversed cedilla. However, either the scribe or the editor has often slipped. In L 478.18 *Secularis* appears without any indication of a diphthong. Has the same error marked *Septimontio* in L 474.36? *Ediles* for *aediles* (L 152.1) and *Meniana* for *Maeniana* (L 120.1) occur in the manuscript, but these peculiarities are noted in the apparatus criticus, while *Secularis* passes without comment. *Propriae* for *proprie* (L 158.18) shows that the exchange works both ways. More important for the matter under discussion is the occurrence of the forms *sepiuntur* (L 146.14) and *septus* (L 146.15 f.) without indication of a modified *e* in text or apparatus. So the text of Festus, while it gives no positive evidence, at least shows nothing to indicate that the orthography of *Septimontio* reflects the Varronian tradition in the Festus passage.

SAEPTI MONTES

Saepire and *saeptum* are frequently used in speaking of a place enclosed for its protection. Varro (*R.R.* 1.14.1–4) writes “de saeptis quae tutandi causa fundi aut partis fiant” by means varying from thorn hedges to brick walls. Cicero (*Rep.* 1.41) and Livy (5.5.2) use *saepire* of fortifying a town. The verb and its derivatives are part of the old religious vocabulary, “verba pontificalia,” as Servius says. A templum is defined as a “locus ita effatus aut ita septus” (Festus L 146.16)⁴⁵ and *saepire* is regularly used in inscriptions for enclosing altars or sacred areas.⁴⁶ So a word formed on that stem

⁴⁵ Cf. Varro *L.L.* 7.13; “quod omne templum esse debet continuo septum”; Servius Auct. *ad Aen.* 4.200: “alii templum dicunt . . . quod palis aut hastis aut aliqua tali re . . . saeptum est.”

⁴⁶ E.g., *ILS* 5427: sacellum d.s.s. saepiundum coeraverunt; *ibid.* 3298: aram Volcano maceriaq. aream saepiendam . . . coer.

might occur in the name of an archaic ceremonial. The *saeptum* commemorated in the festival, according to my hypothesis, was practical in its purpose, but religious in the sense that it was set up with the sanction of the auspices and protected by divine powers.

CONCLUSION

The explanation of *Septimontium* from *saepti montes* is in harmony with the picture of the Roman settlements which has been reconstructed by modern scholars from the evidence of archaeology and the hydrography of the site. It has long been recognized that the Palatine was the place best suited to be the fortress and refuge for the groups of habitations between the Forum and Circus brooks. These are the places which appear in Antistius Labeo's list as participating in the sacrifice of the Septimontium. All the populace joined in paying honor to the *Palatium* and the *Velia* which were "enclosures," *saepta*, by virtue of the fence or wall where the one road approached the summit through the Porta Mugonia. The development of a truly urban community on the Roman site deprived the ritual of its meaning and disguised the topographical features which could have preserved an understanding of its purpose. It had faded by Varro's time into such obscurity that it was possible for a learned antiquarian to transpose the institution to the "Servian" city for which it had no more significance than for the Rome in which he himself lived. As an occasion for a popular holiday the Septimontium long outlived the pagan sacrifice for which it was established. We do not know how long or how nearly continuously the outward forms of the ritual were repeated annually out of respect for the *mos maiorum*. Festus shows that there was a fixed pontifical tradition and quotes Antistius Labeo, an Augustan, as using the present tense concerning it. The number seven seems an intrusion based on a false etymology (*Septimontium* from *septem montes*) made possible by Varro's habitual disregard of quantities. It rests upon an accidental resemblance and shows that Varro has confused the prehistoric *montes* with the "great hills" into which groups of them were combined in later times. The number seven does not correspond with ancient lists extant of either category; instead of explaining anything it creates unnecessary difficulties. It was probably Vergil who established the seven hills as the eternal symbol of Rome, by shaping a chance suggestion of Varro's into

poetry. The picture of Rome as the many in one has a truth independent of the literal facts of topography, and the number seven had acquired for the Hellenistic world a power of its own. The image passed from the *Georgics* to the *Aeneid*, and from there into the literature of the world, while a list of seven names for seven "great hills" evolved to fit it.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ After this paper had gone to press I learned through Professor J. Waszink that F. Müller had added to his thesis (*De veterum, in primis Romanorum, studiis etymologicis* [Utrecht 1910]) the proposition that "septimontium = saeptimontium," but published no argument in support of it.