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## The Republican *Ludi Saeculares* as a Cult of the Valerian *Gens*

**ABSTRACT:** Republican sacrifices held at the Tarentum in the Campus Martius constitute part of the lineage of the imperial *ludi saeculares*. Through an investigation of fragmentary and sometimes corrupt historical texts pertaining to the *ludi saeculares*, especially Verrius Flaccus, Varro, Valerius Antias, Valerius Maximus, Zosimus, and Plutarch, this article demonstrates that the Tarentum sacrifices were originally called *ludi Tarentini*, and were a cult of the Valerian *gens* that came under civic supervision in 249 BCE. These *ludi Tarentini* were not associated with the concept of performance once per *saeculum* until Augustus created the *ludi saeculares* from Republican models in 17 BCE.

*Keywords:* *ludi Tarentini* – *sacra priuata* – Saecular Games – *saeculum* – Tarentum

### I. Introduction

The history of the pre-Augustan *ludi saeculares*, or ‘Saecular Games’, constitutes a highly fragmentary and partially fabricated tradition, as is the case with much of our evidence for religious practices in the Republic. This article provides a close analysis of the extant sources on Republican traditions that form the ‘lineage’ of the *ludi saeculares*, tracing their development from aetiological myths of the Valerian *gens* set in the Rome of the sixth-century BCE to the period immediately before Augustus’s Games of 17 BCE.<sup>1</sup>

The *ludi saeculares* are frequently mentioned in studies of Roman history or religion, but insufficient attention has been given to the complexity of the source material for the Republican Games and their chronologies. It is generally agreed that these Games were in origin associated with the Valerian *gens*, but the significance and plausibility of this claim has not been fully investigated.<sup>2</sup> Münzer’s detailed account of the Valerian *gens* makes only passing reference to the tradition of sacrifices at the Tarentum in the Campus Martius, although the legend was important to the creation and maintenance of the identity of the clan in the later Republic and during the Imperial period.<sup>3</sup> Bernstein is correct that the key to interpreting the *ludi saeculares* is to assume that they originated in

1 I am very grateful to Andreas Bendlin and Jarrett Welsh for their feedback on earlier versions of this article. All dates are BCE unless otherwise noted. All translations are my own.

2 See, e.g., Gagé (1934); Taylor (1934), 101; Wirth (1990), 299–300; Coarelli (1993), 214–229; Bernstein (1998); Beck/Walter (2005), 280; Russo (2008).

3 Münzer (1891, 5–7); he mentions the sacrifices at the Tarentum and the Valerian association with the *ludi Tarentini* / *saeculares* only briefly when discussing clan’s Sabine connections.

some kind of evolving, non-static Valerian tradition, whether it be a ritual or recorded text preserving (or inventing) family lore from the early or middle Republic, or a later development among the Valerii in the first and second centuries CE. Yet Bernstein's thesis only provides the starting point for further examination of accounts concerning the *ludi saeculares* in Valerius Antias, Verrius Flaccus, Valerius Maximus, Plutarch, and Zosimus. These sources indicate that the earliest rites to Dis and Proserpina could in fact be considered a gentilician cult, having parallels with inherited rites performed by many other Roman *gentes*, and just as susceptible to development (and fabrication) as any civic religious ritual at Rome. Scholarship on the earliest history of the Games has been impeded by highly speculative theories that attempt to locate ancient rites or deities behind later Valerian developments. No study has fully addressed the questions of how, when, and why a clan's religious traditions (*sacra priuata*) could be transferred to civic supervision.

I begin with a detailed survey of the ancient sources for Republican traditions of the *ludi saeculares*, with emphasis on the treatment of the Valerian legend of the sacrifices at the Tarentum and the potential influence of one source upon another. I examine discrepancies in chronologies for these Republican performances and give a close analysis of textual problems in the major sources, Censorinus and Zosimus. Next, I elucidate the relationship between the Valerian *gens* and the tradition of sacrifices at the Tarentum, which permits a re-evaluation of all religious performances described as *ludi saeculares* or associated with them during the Republic. Finally, I show that attestations of early rites at the Tarentum correspond well with other ancient evidence for *sacra priuata*, but that unlike most gentilician cults, the Valerian rites passed from the control of the clan to that of the *decemviri sacris faciundis*, becoming a civic celebration.

## II. Pre-Augustan sources for the Republican *ludi saeculares*

An examination of ancient sources that attest to the tradition of the *ludi saeculares* in the Republic is not at all straightforward. No literary accounts contemporary with the Republican celebrations survive that provide details of their ritual sequences, nor anything resembling the building programmes, commemorative coins, or inscriptions that attest to performances in the imperial period. This is chiefly due to the influence of Augustus's *ludi saeculares*, which were a religious innovation rooted in disparate Republican traditions.<sup>4</sup> Ancient authors writing after the Augustan period often assumed that Republican antecedents were identical to the Games of 17 BCE. The defining features of the Saecular Games – supervision by the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* in consultation with an oracle from the Sibylline Books, distribution of purificatory materials to the populace, sacrifices by night at the Tarentum in the Campus Martius and by day on the Capitoline and Palatine, *supplicationes*, *sellisternia*, Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* sung by children with

4 Augustus's adaption of tradition for the Games of 17 is discussed in detail in Dunning (forthcoming).

a procession between the Capitoline and Palatine, *ludi scaenici*, races – constituted a composite ritual sequence drawn from a variety of religious practices originating in the Republic. The very name *ludi saeculares* was an Augustan creation, as was association of the rite with a celebration only once per *saeculum*, a period of 110 years. Concrete evidence for the direct Republican predecessors of the *ludi saeculares* is found in the *ludi Tarentini*, which were celebrated during the First and Third Punic Wars with nocturnal sacrifices at the Tarentum at an interval of 100 years. Yet there is no evidence that the *ludi Tarentini* were connected with the concept of the *saeculum* during the Republic.

This section and the next will provide an overview of pre- and post-Augustan sources for the Republican predecessors of the *ludi saeculares*, with particular attention devoted to discrepancies in their chronologies. There is very little pre-Augustan material. The most valuable source for the Republican Games is the second-century CE author Censorinus, who discusses the history of the *ludi saeculares* in his *De die natali* (16.7–17.13) with information and quotations that he or an earlier source gleaned from Roman historians of the second and first centuries BCE: Cassius Hemina,<sup>5</sup> Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi,<sup>6</sup> Gnaeus Gellius,<sup>7</sup> Valerius Antias,<sup>8</sup> as well as the antiquarian Varro.<sup>9</sup> These Republican sources are of great significance, since they offer the only information about the *ludi saeculares* recorded before the Augustan celebration. Yet the evidence from the earliest historians – Hemina, Piso, Gellius, and Antias – is scant, amounting to the dates of several early celebrations and the names of the consuls for those years, without any longer description of how the rites were celebrated.

Among Censorinus's Republican sources, of particular interest are (probable) citations from Valerius Antias concerning the earliest celebrations of the *ludi saeculares*. Antias asserts that consuls belonging to the Valerian *gens* held the first and second Games during the Republic: Valerius Publicola in 509, and M. Valerius Corvus in 348 (17.10). He assigned the third Games to 249, and the fourth to 149, contradicting Hemina, Piso, and Gellius, who give the date as 146. Scholars have accused Antias of inventing such pieces of information in order to glorify his own *gens*: from the nineteenth century onward, many have agreed that Antias fabricated much of the tradition of Valerian achievement during the Republic.<sup>10</sup> In his survey of the Valerian *gens*, for example, Münzer is confident that much of this tradition is Antias's attempt to enrich his family history.<sup>11</sup> But Rich and Jehne have suggested that Antias may not be the exceptional liar that Livy makes him out to be in his own history. Rich argues that Antias may have had access to state archives, which permitted him to compose a history of Rome in far greater detail than there had been previously,<sup>12</sup> even if this were the case, there is no concrete evidence

5 fr. 39 Peter = *FRH F* 42 (Beck/Walter 2005) = *FRHist F* 40 (Cornell et. al. 2013).

6 fr. 36, 39 Peter = fr. 46, 49 Forsythe = *FRH F* 39, 42 = *FRHist F* 38, 40.

7 fr. 28 Peter = *FRH F* 29 = *FRHist F* 30.

8 fr. 22 and 55 Peter = *FRHist F* 26, 64.

9 *De Scaen. orig.*, Carstairs (1968), 59.

10 Rich (2005), Jehne (2011).

11 Münzer (1891), especially 54–71.

12 Rich (2005), 155–61.

to confirm that written records of civic cults and gentilician traditions were available to Antias. Both Rich and Jehne agree that Antias could easily have embellished his accounts, but Jehne wonders if this may be his attempt at formulating conjectures from fragmentary material.<sup>13</sup> Antias's use of oral tradition or family records should also be considered, since his material may have come from stories passed down by the *gens* that could have created or elaborated upon at an earlier date. Antias's account of the Games entailed invention, reception, or both, but in any case, he likely portrayed the rites as *sacra priuata* of the Valerian clan.

Yet with respect to the dates Antias gives for the Republican *ludi saeculares*, there are substantial textual issues in Censorinus:

Primos enim ludos saeculares exactis regibus post Romam conditam annis ccxlv a Valerio Publicola institutos esse (Antias auctor est P. Valerio Sp. Lucretio cons.), ad xv uirorum commentarios anno ccxcviii M. Valerio Spurio Verginio cons. (secundi fuerunt, ut Antias tradidit) M. Valerio Coruo ii C. Poetilio (cons.) anno post urbem conditam octauo et quadringentesimo, ut uero in conmentariis xv uirorum scriptum est, anno cccc et decimo (C. Marcio Rutilo iii T. Manlio Imperioso) cons. tertii ludi fuerunt Antiate Liuioque auctoribus P. Claudio Pulchro L. Iunio Pullo cons. (anno quingentesimo quinto, at ad xv uirorum conmentarios) anno quingentesimo duodeuicensimo P. Cornelio Lentulo C. Licinio Varro cons. de quatorum ludorum anno triplex opinio est. Antias enim et Varro et Liuius relatos esse prodiderunt L. Marcio Censorino M. Manilio cons. post Romam conditam anno dcv. at Piso Censorinus et Cn. Gellius, sed et Cassius Hemina, qui illo tempore uiuebat, post annum factos tertium adfirmat Cn. Cornelio Lentulo Lucio Mummio Achaico cons., id est anno dc(v)iii; in xv uirorum autem conmentariis notantur sub anno dcxxviii (M.) Aemilio Lepido L. Aurelio Oreste cons. quintos ludos (C.) Furnio C. Iunio Silano cons. anno dccxxxvii Caesar Augustus et Agrippa fecerunt.<sup>14</sup>

Censorinus has been influenced by Augustan tradition and always refers to the Republican Tarentum rites as *ludi saeculares*, portraying them in continuity with the imperial

13 Jehne (2011), 208–209.

14 'The first Saecular Games were instituted by Valerius Publicola after the kings were expelled in the 245th year from the foundation of Rome, (according to Antias, in the consulate of P. Valerius and Sp. Lucretius); according to the *commentarii* of the *quindecimuires*, they were held in the year 299, during the consulate of M. Valerius and Sp. Verginius. The second games were held, as Antias related, in the second (consulate) of M. Valerius Corvus, who had as colleague C. Poetilius, in the 408th year after the foundation of the city, but in the *commentarii* of the *quindecimuires* it is written that they were held in the year 410, in the consulate of (C. Marcius Rutilius (for the third time) and T. Manlius Imperiosus). The third Games were in the consulate of P. Claudius Pulcher and L. Iunius Pullus, according to Antias and Livy, in the five hundred and fifth year, but in the *commentarii* of the *quindecimuires*, in the year 518, in the consulate of P. Cornelius Lentulus and C. Licinius Varro. There are three opinions concerning the fourth games, for Antias and Varro and Livy said that they took place in the consulate of L. Marcius Censorinus and M. Manilius, in the 605th year after the foundation of Rome, but Piso Censorinus and Cn. Gellius, and also Cassius Hemina, who were living at that time, affirm that they were performed three years later, in the consulate of Cn. Cornelius Lentulus and L. Mummius Achaicus, that is, in the year 60(8); in the *commentarii* of the *quindecimuires*, however, they are noted under the year 628, in the consulate of (M.) Aemilius Lepidus and L. Aurelius Orestes. Caesar Augustus and Agrippa celebrated the fifth games in the consulate of (C.) Furnius and C. Junius Silanus, in the year 737.' (DN 17.10–11, ed. Sallmann 1983.)

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Games. In this passage, the greatest problem occurs with the sources for the dating of the first and second Games; a number of editors have noted that our texts of Censorinus give no source for these. Sallmann (following the edition of Puteanus Bamelrodius, 1628) has supplied Valerius Antias as the source for the Games instituted by Valerius Publicola, and a number of editors have supplied Antias as the source for the second Games in the second consulate of M. Valerius Corvus, as well. These emendations are reasonable, given that Censorinus always cites Antias first in his list of sources for the third and fourth celebrations, but Rapisarda is much more cautious in his edition, and merely indicates lacunae in the text.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the present texts of Censorinus only preserve the names of other Republican authors in the discussion of the first and second Saecular Games (aside from the revised tradition of the *quindecimviri*); Livy is cited only for later celebrations. Manutius (1581) suggested that Censorinus cites Livy for information on the second celebration, but Livy does not directly identify any kind of ritual as *ludi saeculares* in his seventh book, which narrates the events of the 340s, during which M. Valerius Corvus was consul for the second time. It is likely that this conjecture is based on Livy's mention of a *lectisternium* held in 348 at 7.27, but as it will be shown below, this religious performance cannot be identified with the *ludi saeculares* with any certainty.

But Sallmann and other editors have another reason for attributing information for the first and second Saecular Games to Antias: Censorinus records that both celebrations were held during the consulate of a Valerius. As discussed above, Antias, as a member of the *gens Valeria*, could be passing on some kind of family tradition (of recent invention or derived from older accounts) about the origins of the Games via oral transmission, family records, or the memory of celebrations of a gentilician cult. Further support for the restoration of Antias as the missing source can be found in the confusion of dates that follow for the latter *ludi saeculares*. The dates that Censorinus gives for the second celebration seem to be incorrect when compared with those found in later texts: according to him, they are held in the consulate of M. Valerius Corvus and C. Poetilius, 408 years from the foundation of Rome, that is, 346. According to the *commentarii* of the *quindecimviri*, the second Games occurred in 410 *ab urbe condita*, in 344. Lachmann corrected the dates to 348 and 346, while Hulstsch merely indicated that the text was corrupt. Sallmann and Rapisarda have let the error stand. Censorinus may be responsible for the error, but it could also stem from his source, most likely Antias: he may not have had access to Antias directly, but may have used citations of his history in another author, such as Varro. It is clear, however, that first source indicated that the second Games were held during the consulate of M. Valerius Corvus, while the *quindecimviri* had arrived at their date by calculating backwards from 17 in intervals of 110 years.<sup>16</sup>

15 Rapisarda (1991), 207. Grafton (1985) criticizes Sallmann's edition of Censorinus, and Winterbottom (1993) sees Rapisarda's edition as a partial improvement upon Sallmann. I have used Sallmann for the passages in question because his conjectures are logical and complete the narration, whereas Rapisarda has not attempted any reconstructions and lets the lacunae stand.

16 If his *saeculum* of 110 years had been followed precisely, Augustus's *ludi saeculares* would have been held in 16, not 17.

Here, the text of Censorinus provides further support for supplying Antias in the lacunae: in the years of the first and second celebrations, the first consul mentioned is a member of the *gens* Valeria. The later Republican *ludi saeculares* all occur during the consulates of members of other *gentes*, and the names of multiple sources for these celebrations do survive (Hemina, Piso, Gellius, Antias, Varro, and Livy). It is likely that Antias was the sole source for the two early performances of the Games held in the consulship of famous ancestors, Valerius Publicola and Valerius Maximus Corvinus, which yields the sequence 509–348–249. Antias's second and third celebrations fall nearly 100 years apart, and his decision to depart from the date of 146 for the fourth Games (attested by Hemina, Piso, and Gellius) and change it to 149 may be due to a desire to 'tidy up' the sequence with another interval of 100 years. He may be following the instructions preserved in Varro for the repetition of the *ludi Tarentini* in that amount of time, as will be discussed below. Yet the attribution of Games to 509 and 348 could easily have predated Antias and derive from an earlier, pro-Valerian source. Further, the situation of the first Games in the consulship of Valerius Publicola in 509 disrupts this even sequence of centuries. The significance of this odd, partially fabricated 'Valerian' chronology will be discussed below.

Censorinus's citation of Varro is not hampered by textual difficulties and provides the earliest surviving description of the rituals and purpose of the Republican ancestor to the *ludi saeculares* in 249:

nam ita institutum esse, ut centesimo quoque anno fierent, id cum Antias aliique historici auctores sunt, tum Varro de scaenicis originibus libro primo ita scriptum reliquit: 'cum multa portenta fierent, et murus ac turris, quae sunt inter portam Collinam et Esquilinam, de caelo tacta essent, et ideo libros Sibyllinos xv uiri [*sic*] adissent, renuntiarunt, uti Diti patri et Proserpinae ludi Tarentini in campo Martio fierent tribus noctibus, et hostiae furuae immolarentur, utique ludi centesimo quoque anno fierent.'<sup>17</sup>

In this fragment from *De scaenicis originibus*, on the origins of the *ludi scaenici*, Varro describes certain ritual elements that later authors would find characteristic of the *ludi saeculares*, although the rites are described as *ludi Tarentini*. First, the *ludi* fall under the governance of the *quindecimviri* (described as such anachronistically, although they would have been *decemviri* in this period), who consult the Sibylline books in response to prodigies; second, the rite entails the nocturnal sacrifice of black animals to Dis Pater and Proserpina in the Campus Martius, presumably in the area called the Tarentum, and involves some kind of *ludi*; and lastly, the 'games' are to be held 'every hundredth

17 'For thus it was instituted, that [the Saecular Games] should be held every hundredth year. So Antias and other historical writers thought, and also Varro, in the first book, *De scaenicis originibus*, writes thus: "When many portents appeared, and both the wall and the tower which are between the Colline and Esquiline Gates were struck from heaven, the *quindecimviri* [*sic*] consulted the Sibylline books and announced that the *ludi Tarentini* should be held for Dis Pater and Proserpina in the Campus Martius for three nights, and black victims should be immolated, and that the games should happen every hundredth year.'" (Censorinus, DN 17.8, ed. Sallmann 1983; cf. Cardauns 1968, 59.)

year'. Varro's use of *ludi* is rather ambiguous: in all likelihood, he means that the both the *ludi* and the sacrifices associated with the *ludi Tarentini* were to be repeated every 100 years, taking the games and the sacrifices together as a single performance, but this is not entirely clear from the phrasing.<sup>18</sup> Varro was familiar with the concept of calling a period of 100 years a *saeculum*, so it is notable that he does not use this term here, nor is the *saeculum* alluded to in the name *ludi Tarentini*.<sup>19</sup> This summary of the celebration shows important similarities with the description of the ritual sequence in the *Acta* of the *ludi saeculares* of 17, in which the *quindecimviri* oversee the ceremony, the sacrifices are still held at the Tarentum, and the games are to be held once every *saeculum* of 110 years. We should exercise caution in identifying the kind of *ludi* performed in 249, since Varro only describes them through the name of the entire performance. *Ludi scaenici* were first performed in Rome in 364, but were comprised of pantomime dances to flute music until 240, when plays were introduced at the *ludi Romani* by Livius Andronicus. This would lead us to assume that the *ludi* of 249 would have been pantomimes.

The fact that Varro calls these games *ludi Tarentini* invites the question of how precisely the Augustan *ludi saeculares* are related to the Republican celebrations listed in Censorinus, which will be discussed in greater detail. Later in Censorinus, Varro is cited as evidence for dating of the fourth Games in 149 (agreeing with Antias), the last to be celebrated before the Augustan *ludi* in 17, but even as late a source as he does not refer to them as *ludi saeculares*, at least in this surviving fragment. The greatest question is the source of Varro's information on the rites at the Tarentum: it is impossible to identify with any certainty a single author or record that Varro consulted, but there is some chance that Varro may have used a lost passage of Valerius Antias, who had assigned the first Tarentum rites to Valerius Publicola. Rich argues persuasively that Antias's writing should be dated to 80–60 and notes several other instances where he and Varro agree.<sup>20</sup> This may be the result of Varro following Antias, or both authors following another source. In either case, Varro and Antias's agreement over the performance of Games in 249 and 149 stands in opposition to the dates 249 and 146, supplied by earlier historians (Hemina, Piso, and Gellius). Thus, as can be observed in Table 1, even pre-Augustan sources for the *ludi Tarentini* / *ludi saeculares* reveal a lack of consensus concerning their history by the first century BCE in the manipulation or confusion of their dates.

18 I thank Jarrett Welsh for pointing out the ambiguity inherent in this passage, and its implications for Augustan interpretations of the text.

19 Cf. Varro, *De Ling. Lat.* 6.11; in this he follows Piso, who had conceived of a 'civil *saeculum*' as being 100 years in length (Censorinus, *DN* 17.19).

20 See Rich (2005): at p. 146 n.34, he notes that Varro and Antias agree in four places (Antias fr. 3, 17, 18, and 55 Peter = *FRHist F* 5, 21, 22, 64).

Table 1: Dating of early *ludi saeculares* in Pre-Augustan sources

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Cassius Hemina (fl. second half of second cent.) <sup>21</sup>				146	
Calpurnius Piso (c. 180–120)				146	
Gnaeus Gellius (fl. 120–100)				146	
Valerius Antias (fl. c. 80–60)	509	348 ( <i>text is corrupt</i> )	249	149	
Varro (c. 116–27)			249	149	

As Table 1 indicates, of all the pre-Augustan authors, only Valerius Antias provides dates for celebrations of *ludi Tarentini* before 249. The full significance of this will be made clear when evidence for post-Augustan sources and chronologies is discussed in the next section.

### III. Post-Augustan sources for the Republican *ludi saeculares*

Several authors from the Augustan age (Livy, Verrius Flaccus) and later imperial periods (Valerius Maximus, Plutarch, Zosimus) transmit legends concerning the institution of the Saecular Games and give fuller descriptions of how and where the celebrations were held. These sources must be treated with caution, since their perceptions of the ‘Republican *ludi saeculares*’ were shaped by the structure and significance of the Augustan Games. In none of these authors, for example, are the Republican Games called *ludi Tarentini*. On the other hand, the dates provided by these authors do not reflect the drastic revision to their chronology undertaken by the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* in their *commentarii* (preserved in Censorinus). In Table 2, we can observe how the majority of imperial sources follow Antias’s chronology for *ludi saeculares*.

21 Censorinus, *DN* 17.10–11 is the source for all authors and their dates for the Games, unless otherwise noted. Dates for Hemina, Piso, and Gellius follow Beck/Walter (2005) and for Antias, Rich (2005); all other author dates follow *DNP*.

Table 2: Dating of early *ludi saeculares* in post-Augustan sources

Livy (59–17 CE)		<i>lectisternium</i> 348 (Livy 7.27)	249	149	17
Verrius Flaccus (fl. 10–14 CE) (Festus, <i>Gloss. Lat.</i> 420)		348	249 (Pseudo-Acro)		
<i>commentarii</i> of the <i>quindecimviri</i> (first cent. BCE)	456	346	236	126	17 (attested by many others)
Valerius Maximus (fl. 27–31 CE)	509 or 504 (unclear)				
Plutarch (c. 50–120 CE) ( <i>Publ.</i> 21)	504				
Zosimus (c. 425–518 CE) ( <i>Περὶ Μακροβίων</i> 2.1–2.4)	509	350 = 348 (text is corrupt)	252 = 249 (text is corrupt)	149	17

Of these imperial sources, only Zosimus, the latest, preserves the full span of dates for the Saecular Games. Valerius Maximus and Plutarch only assign games to a consulate of Valerius Publicola, whereas Livy omits the Publicola legend and recounts a *lectisternium* in 348 that is not explicitly associated with Tarentum sacrifices. Verrius Flaccus's text is highly corrupt, and must be used with caution, as will be discussed below. Despite the apparent rejection of the new 'official' chronology created by the *quindecimviri*, all of these authors make assumptions about ritual elements of these Republican celebrations that draw upon the ritual sequence created by Augustans.

After Varro, Censorinus cites Livy for the dates of the third and fourth Republican Saecular Games in 249 and 149, again with no additional information beyond the names of the consuls in those years. Further details for the third Games in 149 can be found at *Per.* 49: *altero et sescentesimo ab urbe condita anno ... ludi Diti patri ad Tarentum ex praecepto librorum facti, qui ante annum centesimum primo Punico bello, quingentesimo et altero anno ab urbe facti errant.*<sup>22</sup> Censorinus also includes a brief quotation from Livy's lost Book 136 concerning the Augustan Games: *Eodem anno ludos saeculares Caesar ingenti apparatu fecit, quos centesimo quoque anno – his enim terminari saecula – fieri mos erat.*<sup>23</sup> In his dating, Livy seems to be following Varro and/or Antias, rather than earlier Republican historians, but the names and intervals assigned to the Games show the distinction between the pre- and post-Augustan tradition. In *Per.* 49, the Games of 149 are simply

22 'In the six hundred and second year from the foundation of the city ... games for Father Dis were performed at the Tarentum under the direction of books, which had been performed a hundred years previously in the First Punic War, in the five hundred and second year from the foundation of the city.'

23 'In the same year Caesar held the Saecular Games with magnificence, which it was the custom to hold every hundred years, since by these years ages are delimited' (Censorinus, *DN* 17.9). Sallmann (1983) lists several variants to his *enim terminari saecula*.

referred to as ‘games for Father Dis at the Tarentum’, which follows Varro’s description for 249, and the two performances are noted to be 100 years apart. But for his reference to ‘*ludi saeculares*’ of 17, Livy has taken up the new name and even explained its association with a *saeculum* of 100 years. This discrepancy could be due to the long separation between Livy’s writing of Books 49 and 136: Book 49 could have been composed before the Games of 17. But the *saeculum* of 100 years is likely an outright rejection of Augustus’s new *saeculum* of 110 years, particular in Livy’s decision to use the same expression as Varro, *centesimo quoque anno*.

The scholar Verrius Flaccus, who was tutor to Augustus’s grandsons, also seems to have been caught between Republican source material and the revised Augustan tradition. Two fragments of Verrius partially preserved in Festus and Paulus indicate that Verrius had accepted the new name for the rites, referring to them as *ludi saeculares*. In many details he seems to follow Varro: he briefly describes an altar to Dis and Proserpina sunk below ground at the Tarentum and associates this altar with a consul whose name is lost. The sacrifices held at the Tarentum involve black victims, *hostis furuis*, a rare descriptor found also in Varro. M. Valerius Corvus, consul in 348, is mentioned, and another sacrifice occurs dated in relation to his consulship (99 years later, in 249, although this is obscured in part by a lacuna). But he describes the length of a *saeculum* as a period of 100 years: while this accords with Antias and Varro’s efforts to understand the *ludi Tarentini* as being celebrated at intervals of a century, and accords with the Varronian timespan, it contradicts Augustus’s redefinition of the *saeculum* as being 110 years.<sup>24</sup>

The extent to which Verrius tried to reconcile Republican and Augustan tradition for the Tarentum rites is further complicated by a citation in Pseudo-Acro, from the fifth century CE:

Valerius (*leg. Verrius*) Flaccus refert carmen saeculare et sacrificium inter annos centum et decem Diti et Proserpinae constitutum bello Punico primo ex responso decemuirorum, cum iussi essent libros Sibyllinos inspicere ob prodigium, quod eo bello accidit. Nam pars murorum urbis fulmine ictu ruit. Atque ita responderunt: bellum aduersus Kartaginienses prospere geri posse, si Diti et Proserpinae triduo, id est tribus diebus et tribus noctibus, ludi fuissent celebrati et carmen cantatum inter sacrificia. Hoc (autem) accidit consulibus P. Claudius Pulchro L. Iunio Pullo. Cum Roma pestilentia laboraret, ex libris Sibyllinis iussum est, ut Diti Patri ad Terentum stipes mitteretur. Hoc etiam idem libri iusserunt, ut nobilium liberi in Capitolio hoc carmen decantarent.<sup>25</sup>

24 Paulus, *Gloss. Lat.* 420 = Lindsay 1913, 441; Paulus, *Gloss. Lat.* 441 = Lindsay 1913, 479. A close analysis of textual issues in Verrius’s entry for the *ludi saeculares* is found in Dunning/Dunning (forthcoming).

25 ‘Verrius Flaccus recounts that the Saecular hymn and sacrifice every 110 years to Dis and Proserpina were established in the first Punic War from the response of the *decemviri*, when they were commanded to inspect the Sibylline Books on account of a prodigy that occurred in this war. For a portion of the walls of the city collapsed from a lightning strike. And they replied in this way: that war could be waged favourably against the Carthaginians if games were celebrated for Dis and Proserpina for a *triduum*, that is for three days and three nights, and a hymn sung, along with sacrifices. This happened when P. Claudius Pulcher and L. Junius Pullus were consuls [=249]. When Rome was oppressed by a plague, it was commanded by the Sibylline Books that *stipes* should be sent to Father Dis at Terentum. The same books commanded this

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Here, Verrius's account of *ludi* and sacrifices to Dis and Proserpina held during the First Punic War is again similar to that of Varro (the lightning striking the walls, the consultation of the Sibylline books by the *decemviri*), but some of the details found are nowhere else in pre-Augustan sources, aligning closely with the *ludi saeculares* of 17: the singing of the *Carmen Saeculare*, the celebration of the rites for three nights and three days after a span of 110 years, the gift of *stipes* to Dis (a parallel with the offering of *fruges* in 17?). The mention of a plague at Rome is particularly interesting (and is referred to earlier in the commentary on v. 1),<sup>26</sup> because it parallels later accounts of the foundation of the Tarentum rites to be discussed below. It is difficult to determine if Pseudo-Acro (or the genuine second-century CE Acro) derived these additional details from the original version of Verrius's encyclopaedia (as opposed to Festus and Paulus's epitomes above), or if they are the result of independent scholarship attempting to reconcile various conflicting traditions. The 110-year *saeculum* must be a correction, since it contradicts the span spelled out clearly as 100 years in Paulus's epitome. In either case, the name *ludi saeculares*, the singing of the *Carmen Saeculare*, and the association of the Tarentum rites with the *saeculum* cannot be applied to the *ludi Tarentini* in 249, or at any date during the Republic: Varro and Livy do not describe them, and there is no hint that they could be restored in the lacunae of Festus's epitome of Verrius.<sup>27</sup>

Later authors of the imperial period provide evidence emphasizing the earliest origins of the *ludi saeculares*. The first, Valerius Maximus, gives a detailed account of the first performance of the Saecular Games that appears to be an aetiological legend associated with the *gens Valeria* (2.4.5). Valerius Maximus describes how a certain Valesius, who lived in the Sabine region, prayed for a cure for his three sick children. Valesius was told to give them water from the altar of Dis Pater and Proserpina at (the) Tarentum; thinking that he was supposed to travel to Tarentum in Apulia, he prepared to sail down the Tiber. Along the way, he heard of a place called the Tarentum in the Campus Martius, and immediately boiled water for his children at a place where the ground was smouldering. The children recovered, fell asleep, and awoke to tell their father that a god had instructed them in the rites that should be celebrated at the Tarentum in the future. These rites included the sacrifice of black animals (as in Varro and Verrius Flaccus: *furuae hostiae immolarentur*) at an altar to Dis Pater and Proserpina, *lectisternia*, and nocturnal *ludi*. Valesius made preparations to build an altar there, but his workmen discovered an altar with an inscription to Dis Pater and Proserpina twenty feet below the earth.<sup>28</sup> Valesius therefore celebrated the *ludi* at that altar for three nights before cover-

also, that the children of nobles should recite this hymn on the Capitoline.' (Pseud.-Acro, *Exp. in Car. Saec.* v. 8, Keller 1902, 471.)

26 Pseud.-Acro, *Exp. in Car. Saec.* v. 1, Keller 1902, 469.

27 Suerbaum (2002, 96) suggests that Livius Andronicus wrote a *Carmen Saeculare* for the *ludi Tarentini* of 249 CE, but this is highly improbable. For more information on Republican hymns, see Welsh (2011) and Weis (2011).

28 The precise location of this altar at the Tarentum in the Campus Martius was debated in the early twentieth century, but most scholars today situate it in a region near a bend in the Tiber River where fragments of imperial inscriptions erected to commemorate the *ludi saeculares* were found. It is unlikely that the altar used for sacrifices in the imperial period was the same as that mentioned in Republican accounts, or that

ing it again. Later, Valerius Publicola, the first consul of Rome, ‘in eagerness to help his fellow citizens’ (*studio succurrendi ciuibus*), celebrated the same rites at the Tarentum.

Valerius Maximus’s narrative describes the performance of *ludi* at the first celebration of the *ludi saeculares*, as well as sacrifices to Dis Pater and Proserpina in the Campus Martius, echoing the narrative of Varro. He also describes the holding of *lectisternia*, a ritual appearing in the form of *sellisternia* in the Augustan Games, but not in Varro’s account of the *ludi Tarentini*. It appears that the *ludi* are associated with times of distress: privately, in the case of Valesius’s children, and publicly, with Valerius’s desire to assist the Roman people, even though the precise problem is not specified. There is no indication that the games are to be repeated every one hundred years, and Valerius Maximus records that Valesius, a private individual and legendary ancestor of the Valerii, instituted the games, rather than Valerius Publicola or a college of religious officials working in consultation with the Sibylline books.

The Tarentum legend of Valerius Maximus provides an important contrast to the descriptions of the Augustan *ludi saeculares* preserved in the records of the *quindecimviri*. Even though his account was written during the reign of Tiberius, not long after the celebration of 17, this is the first surviving source after Antias that explicitly links the origin of the Games with the Valerian family, making no mention of Augustus. The description of the victims as *furuae* follows both Varro and Verrius Flaccus, which could indicate use of either source. As with Varro’s description of the sacrifices, however, it is difficult to identify Valerius Maximus’s source for the legend itself, because there is no consensus concerning which authors he consulted. Helm, Humm, and Wiseman argue that Valerius Maximus had access to Antias, but Bloomer is sceptical of this.<sup>29</sup> Albrecht suggests that Varro as well as Antias may have served as sources, while Maslakov thinks that Valerius Maximus did not derive the Tarentum legend from Livy or Varro, nor perhaps Antias; he follows Taylor and looks for a source in other antiquarians such as M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, who composed a work on the Roman nobility in the Augustan period.<sup>30</sup> Those in favour of a connection between Antias and Valerius Maximus point to the fact that both were members of the *gens Valeria*, making it attractive to argue that Valerius Maximus adopted the legend of the most famous member of his *gens* from a fellow Valerius. Maslakov and Taylor look to other authors, and hesitate to credit Antias with the aetiological legend simply on the basis of family relation, since it has often

remnants of altars to Dis and Proserpina or other chthonic deities from either period have been discovered. Boyancé (1925) and Willeumier (1932) wanted to situate the Tarentum in a place to the southwest of where the *Acta* inscriptions were found, but Gagé (1934) strongly argued in favour of locating the altar near the inscriptions. Lanciani (1896, 75–78) claimed to have found the remains of the Ara Ditis in 1887, although on a subsequent visit to the site found that the monument had disappeared during construction; this identification was supported by Boyancé (1925), but should be regarded as highly suspect. The legend of the burial of this altar at the Tarentum may be due to the frequent flooding of that region of the Campus Martius in antiquity: see Aldrete (2006) on floods of the Tiber River.

29 Helm 1955, *RE* 8A, 106–107; Humm (1998), 80–2; Wiseman (1998), 75–89, 165–167; Bloomer (1992), 126–138.

30 Albrecht (1992), 1075; Maslakov (1984), 475–6, following Taylor (1969), 226–7 n.2. Maslakov follows Palmer (1974, 101–104) in rejecting Varro as a source for the Publicola legend in Valerius Maximus.

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been taken for granted that Antias sought to promote his clan in his writing, and they wish to avoid assigning all pro-Valerian material to him alone.<sup>31</sup>

The next clear association between the *ludi saeculares* and the Valerii appears in a much later source, the Byzantine historian Zosimus. Writing at the end of the fifth century CE and the beginning of the sixth, Zosimus gives an overview of the history of the *ludi saeculares* that contains an account similar to that of Valerius Maximus concerning the founding of these rites by a Valesius (2.1–3). In fact, Zosimus agrees with Valerius Maximus in many of the details of the story; notably, the instructions that the children receive from the gods are somewhat different. The children dreamt that they had sacrificed black victims to Dis and Proserpina in a three-night festival of dance and song; there is no mention of *lectisternia*. Valesius still performs the sacrifices to the gods at the Tarentum on an altar found below the earth, but Zosimus provides additional information about the origin of this altar, created in response to a prodigy during a war between Rome and Alba Longa, inscribed ‘To Dis and Proserpina’, and hidden beneath the earth at a depth of twenty feet. This detail concerning the depth of the altar recalls the accounts of Valerius Maximus and Verrius Flaccus, and may have been described in a lacunae in Festus.<sup>32</sup> Because of his role in establishing the sacrifices at Tarentum, Valesius’s name became Manius Valesius Tarentinus. Zosimus also describes the context in which Valerius Publicola reinstated the rites of his ancestor: during his first consulship, he sacrificed a black ox and a black heifer to Dis and Proserpina at the altar in the Tarentum, adding a new inscription, and held ‘spectacles’ (θεωρίας, 2.3), in order to save Rome from a plague. Like Censorinus, Zosimus’s text is at times corrupt; the significance of this will be discussed in detail below.

It is difficult to determine Zosimus’s source for the legend: Wirth and Paschoud suggest that he may be following Eunapius here, as he does for so much of his history, and that Eunapius’s information on the Saecular Games comes from Phlegon of Tralles, who composed a treatise on Roman festivals, according to the *Suda*.<sup>33</sup> Mendelssohn suggests that Phlegon’s ultimate source is Valerius Antias, via perhaps Verrius Flaccus and/or Varro; the details about the depth of the altar may indicate a common lineage.<sup>34</sup> Valerius Maximus has not been considered among Zosimus’s sources, whether direct or indirect, which would account for the variances between them. If Zosimus and Valerius Maximus did not edit or embellish their versions of the Publicola legend, it would suggest that at least two versions of the story were extant in the imperial period. It is tempting to speculate that Valerius Antias via an intermediary was the source for a first account, and that Varro (or perhaps M. Valerius Messalla Rufus in the first century BCE, who wrote a

31 Howard (1906, 165) notes that a Valerius is only mentioned once in the surviving passages of Antias, at fr. 17 Peter = *FRHist* F 21, and points out that while it is highly likely that Antias promoted the fame of his gens in his history of Rome, there is no firm evidence to prove that he did so.

32 Lindsay (1913), 440.

33 Wirth (1990), 299–300 n.1; Paschoud (1971) xl–xli.

34 Mendelssohn (1887), xxxvii and note to p. 54, l. 11; *Suda* Φ 527 4.745 (Adler). Pighi (1965, 43) agrees with Mendelssohn.

treatise on Roman clans called *De familiis*<sup>35</sup>) was responsible for another, later retelling, but it is not possible to demonstrate this with certainty. Finally, Pascal suggests that both Valerius Maximus and Zosimus may have had access to a Greek text, but it is difficult to account for an early Greek source for the Publicola legend, for which no other evidence exists.<sup>36</sup>

As was the case with Censorinus's text, Zosimus's discussion of the *ludi saeculares* also appears to be corrupt, or in error. In his description of Valerius Publicola's institution of the Tarentum rites, Zosimus records that these rites would be resumed in times of pestilence and distress at intervals during the Republic:

Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα νόσων καὶ πολέμων ἐνσκηψάντων ἔτει μετὰ τὸν τῆς πόλεως οἰκισμὸν πεντακοσιοστῶ δευτέρῳ, λύσιν εὐρεῖν ἢ γερουσία τῶν κακῶν ἐκ τῶν Σιβύλλης βουλομένη χρησμῶν, τοῖς εἰς τοῦτο τεταγμένοις ἀνδράσιν δέκα τοὺς χρησμοὺς ἀνερευνησαὶ παρεκελεύσατο. τῶν δὲ λογίων παυθήσεσθαι τὸ κακόν, εἰ θύσαιεν Ἄϊδη καὶ Περσεφόνη, προαγορευσάντων, ἀναζητήσαντες τὸν τόπον Ἄϊδη καὶ Περσεφόνη κατὰ τὸ προσταχθὲν καθήγισαν, (...) Μάρκου Ποπιλίου τὸ τέταρτον ὑπατεύοντος. Καὶ τῆς ἱερουργίας συντελεσθείσης τῶν ἐπικειμένων ἀπαλλαγέντες τὸν βωμὸν αὐθὶς ἐκάλυψαν, ἐν ἐσχάτῳ που κείμενον τοῦ Ἀρείου πεδίου. ταύτης ἐπὶ χρόνον τῆς θυσίας ἀμεληθείσης, αὐθὶς τινων συμπεσόντων ἀποθυμίων ἀνεπέσαστο τὴν ἑορτὴν Ὀκταβιανὸς ὁ σεβαστός, (ῥστατον τελεσθείσαν) ὑπάτων ὄντων Λουκίου Κηνωρίνου καὶ Μάρκου Μανιλίου [Πουηλίου], τὸν θεσμὸν Ἀτηίου Καπίτωνος ἐξηγησαμένου, τοὺς (δὲ) χρόνους, καθ' οὓς ἔδει τὴν θυσίαν γενέσθαι καὶ τὴν θεωρίαν ἀχθῆναι, τῶν πεντεκαίδεα ἀνδρῶν, οἱ τὰ Σιβύλλης θέσφατα φυλάττειν ἐτάχθησαν, ἀνερευνησάντων.<sup>37</sup>

35 Plin., *HN* 35.8. Cf. Cornell et al. (2013), 1.385–389.

36 Pascal (1979) observed that Valerius Maximus is the only source to describe the earth at the Tarentum as being 'smouldering' (*solo ... fumante*), and in a careful analysis, contrasts his account with that of Zosimus. He demonstrates that Zosimus describes the Tarentum soil with a different adjective, as a *πύροφόρον πεδίον*, in an inscription on the altar created by Valerius Publicola. Pascal argues strongly for the presence of a long upsilon in *πύροφόρον*, since it has numerous literary precedents when paired with *πεδίον*, yielding the translation 'wheat-bearing plain', rather than 'fire-bearing plain', and could refer to a myth concerning the dedication of a field of Tarquinius Superbus to Mars by throwing grain into the Tiber River. He concludes that Valerius Maximus (or another Latin source) misunderstood a Greek source that used *πύροφόρον*, but Zosimus interpreted this word correctly later; he does not state whether or not Zosimus worked directly from Valerius Maximus to make this correction, or had access to the original or later Greece sources. Cf. Livy 2.5.2, Dionysius of Halicarnassus 5.13.2–4, Plut., *Publ.* 8, Flor. 1.2, Serv., *Aen.* 9.272. Compare also to Verrius Flaccus above.

37 'After these events [during Valerius Publicola's consulate], when diseases and wars had broken out in the five hundred and second year after the founding of the city, the Senate, wanting to find relief from these evils from the Sibylline oracles, commanded the *decemviri*, who were charged with this task, to investigate the oracles. Since the prophecies indicated that the evil would cease, if they would sacrifice to Hades and Persephone, they found the place and offered a sacrifice to Hades and Persephone, just as they were instructed, (...) in the fourth consulate of Marcus Popilius [*sic*]. When the sacrifice was completed, and they had gotten rid of the evils besetting them, once again they concealed the altar, lying in some extremity of the Campus Martius. This sacrifice was neglected for some time, but after certain unhappy events, Octavian Augustus revived the festival, (which was celebrated for the last) time during the consulship of Lucius Censorinus and Marcus Manilius [Puelius]; Ateius Capito explained the rite and the times in which the sacrifice should be performed and the spectacle held, once the *quindecimviri*, who were charged with keeping the oracles of the Sibyl, had made their investigation.' (Zos. 2.4.1–2, ed. Paschoud 1971.)

When Zosimus states that the Games were held 502 years from the foundation of the city, in the fourth consulate of Marcus Popillius, he would seem to indicate 252. Censorinus's sources (Antias, Varro, and Livy) record rites in 249, which falls close to Zosimus's date. But as many editors have noted, Marcus Popillius was consul for the fourth time in either 350 or 348.<sup>38</sup> There is either a lacuna before Μάρκου (as Paschoud indicates), or Zosimus or his source has conflated the celebrations in 348 and 249, the dates of *ludi saeculares* supported by Antias. (Varro and Livy both attest to celebrations in 249.) Later, Zosimus records that Augustus revived the *ludi saeculares* 'after certain unhappy events, when Lucius Censorinus and Manius Manilius Puelius were consuls'. Here the text is again corrupt: Lucius Censorinus and Manius Manilius were consuls in 149, and Manilius is nowhere else found with the cognomen 'Puelius'. (This may be an error on Zosimus's part.) Also, it is difficult to identify the 'unhappy events' that precede the celebration: if it should be understood as referring to the Augustan Games, is Zosimus describing the chaos of the late Republic that preceded Augustus's reign? For in 17, Rome had been at peace for a number of years. If this is understood as referring to events before 149, is the war with Carthage being indicated? It is difficult to arrive at any firm conclusion here, but the conflicts between dates and consuls in Zosimus seem to resolve into a sequence of performances in 509, 348, 249, and 149, which aligns with dates supplied by Antias in Censorinus.

The last major source for the origins of the *ludi saeculares* is found in Plutarch's biography of Valerius Publicola, written at the end of the first century CE. Plutarch provides yet another description of Valerius Publicola's role in performing rites to save the city of Rome from pestilence:

Τῷ δ' ἐξῆς ἔτει ἄλιν ὑπάτερε Ποπλικόλας τὸ τέταρτον· ἦν δὲ προσδοκία πολέμου Σαβίνων καὶ Λατίνων συνισταμένων. καὶ τις ἄμα δεισιδαιμονία τῆς πόλεως ἤψατο· πᾶσαι γὰρ αἱ κνουσαι τότε γυναικες ἐξέβαλλον ἀνάπηρα, καὶ τέλος οὐδεμία γένεσις ἔσχεν. ὄθεν ἐκ τῶν Σιβυλλείων ὁ Ποπλικόλας ἰλασάμενος τὸν Ἄϊδην, καὶ τινὰς ἀγῶνας πυθοχρήστους ἀναγών, καὶ ταῖς ἐλπίσι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἠδίονα καταστήσας τὴν πόλιν, ἤδη τοῖς ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων φοβεροῖς προσείχε.<sup>39</sup>

Plutarch does not identify Valerius Publicola's games as *ludi saeculares*, but the description of the rites bears close similarities with the other histories examined above. As in Zosimus, and recalling the obscure reference to a plague connected with the Tarentum rites in Pseudo-Acro, Publicola performs the rites in response to a pestilence in the city. As in Varro and Zosimus (but not in Valerius Maximus), the games are held at the in-

38 See Paschoud (1971), 184, and Buchanan/Davis (1967), 50 n.1.

39 'In the following year, Publicola was consul again for the fourth time, when there was expectation of a war with the Sabines and Latins allied together. At the same time, a superstitious fear gripped the city, for all of the women who were pregnant at that time bore malformed offspring, and no birth reached its full term. For this reason Publicola, from the instruction of the Sibylline books, propitiated Hades and renewed certain games that had been appointed by the Pythian oracle, and after he made the city more cheerful in his hopes with respect to the gods, he immediately turned his attention to what was feared from men.' (Plut., *Publ.* 21.)

struction of the Sibylline books, with the additional detail that the games had already been instituted at the command of the oracle at Delphi. Plutarch states that Publicola made some kind of propitiation to Hades, who could be identified as the Greek equivalent of Dis Pater, the recipient of the black victims in Varro, Valerius Maximus, and Zosimus. This third version of the origins of the rites at the Tarentum complicates further attempts to locate the source of the legend. Plutarch links the *ludi* with the Sibylline oracles, calling to mind the *ludi Tarentini* in Varro, without explicitly identifying the rites as predecessors of any later games.

Could Varro be Plutarch's ultimate source? Plutarch was able to cite Galba through Juba, and may have also done so for Varro and Verrius Flaccus.<sup>40</sup> Rich notes that Plutarch directly cites Valerius Antias on three occasions, while Freyburger and Jacquemin note two references to Valerius Maximus; thus it is clear that he had direct access to these two authors or used an intermediary source.<sup>41</sup> Affortunati and Scardigli argue that Valerius Antias could have provided material for Plutarch's biography of Valerius Publicola, who is portrayed in a highly favourable light, but given the emphasis on Publicola's support for the common people, they postulate an intermediary author with 'democratic' leanings.<sup>42</sup> Their claim is substantiated by the positioning of the account of the rites for Hades in Publicola's biography, which occurs in the chapter just after Plutarch has described how the doors of Publicola's brother's house were fitted to open outward to the public, a passage that closely mirrors a fragment of Antias preserved in Asconius.<sup>43</sup> The proximity of the two stories suggests that Antias is the source for both.

If Antias is the source for Valerius Maximus and Zosimus's accounts of Valerius Publicola, which contain so much more detail than the version in Plutarch, one key to reconciling the differences among the accounts lies in Plutarch's statement that Publicola 'renewed [*or celebrated*] certain games that had been appointed by the Pythian oracle' (τινας ἀγῶνας πυθοχρήστους ἀναγῶν). The introduction of Delphi is probably an addition from Plutarch or another Greek source, since the institution of new cults in the Greek world were often authorized by this oracle. If ἀναγῶν is translated as 'renewed', it can be assumed that Plutarch had access to a story of the mythical Valesius and chose to dwell on Valerius Publicola's celebration of the rites to gods of the underworld, whereas Valerius Maximus and Zosimus give fuller accounts of the history of the *ludi*, since that is their primary concern. If ἀναγῶν is taken to mean simply 'celebrated', there is no way to determine whether Publicola instituted or repeated the rites, but it could be used to support the statement assigned to Antias in Censorinus that Publicola was the first to perform the rites (*primos ... ludos saeculares ... a Valerio Publicola institutos esse*, 17.10). Perhaps the Valesius legend came from an unknown source used by Valerius Maximus, while Antias and Varro disseminated the Publicola story. Either author could have been

40 Cf. *FRH* vol. 3, 531, n. to F1.

41 Rich (2005), 146 n.35 (he does not identify the passages, but they are fr. 3, 7, and 12 Peter = *FRHist* F 5, 9b, 20); Freyburger/Jacquemin (1998), 158–159 (see *Plut., Marc.* 30.5 and *Brut.* 53.5).

42 Affortunati/Scardigli (1992), 120. The authors recognize (at 123 n.6) that this would imply that Plutarch had a fairly strong knowledge of Latin, which is controversial.

43 *Plut., Publ.* 20; Valerius Antias fr. 17 Peter = *FRHist* F 21.

used by Plutarch, for it is strange to think that he could have had access to Antias and not to Varro, or could not have had both authors before him (or an intermediary source) as he wrote.

Further support for the influence of Varro on Plutarch may be observed in his reference to a plague of miscarriages among Roman women, which is not mentioned in Valerius Maximus or Zosimus. In these sources, Publicola's sacrifices to chthonic deities are only connected with Valesius's cure of his sick children from fever (Zosimus 2.1–3, Valerius Maximus 2.4.5), Valerius Publicola's cure of Rome's 'plague' (λοιμός, Zosimus 2.3.2–3), and the Senate's later response to 'diseases' (νόσοι, Zosimus 2.4.1). In Valerius Maximus, Publicola's sacrifices are performed only to help citizens (*studio succurrendi ciuibus*); no plague or disease is mentioned. Plutarch may have derived this reference to miscarriages (directly or indirectly) from the Augustan *ludi saeculares*, in which the propitiation of various deities connected with women and childbirth (such as Juno, Diana, and the Ilithyiae) was of particular significance, especially since Augustus's daughter Julia had borne a child a few months prior to the games.

The emphasis on childbirth and young children in the Augustan *ludi saeculares* may be due to the accidental or intentional conflation of the sacrifices at the Tarentum with the *ludi Taurii*, which were also associated with childbearing and included sacrifices to *di inferi* in the Campus Martius. Immediately following the entry for 'Tarentum', an alternative spelling of 'Tarentum', Verrius Flaccus records that the *ludi Taurii* were sacrifices to *di inferi* made in the Circus Flaminius in the Campus Martius to avert pestilence in pregnant women; Varro is cited as an authority for some of this information (*Gloss. Lat.* 441). It is possible that Varro distinguished between the *ludi Tarentini* and *ludi Taurii*, but Plutarch derived his Publicola account from a post-Augustan intermediary who had reworked Varro's account.<sup>44</sup> Münzer suggests that Plutarch himself may have made an error on his own by confusing the *ludi Tarentini* with the *ludi Taurii*.<sup>45</sup>

Several conclusions can be drawn from this examination of the surviving accounts of the *ludi saeculares* up until the time of Augustus. First, all accounts of the development of the *ludi saeculares* reveal a broad agreement concerning the ritual that was considered to be the kernel of the ceremonies: the sacrifices of black victims to Dis Pater and Proserpina at the Tarentum, which were called *ludi Tarentini* by 249. Second, three post-Republican sources – Valerius Maximus, Zosimus, and Plutarch – emphasize the roles of members of the Valerian *gens* in instituting the rites, which is alluded to in Antias's dates preserved in Censorinus, but not in what survives of Hemina, Piso, Gellius, Varro, or Livy. Next, there appear to be two 'founding myths' about the rite in these sources, in the first of which Valesius is the founder of the Tarentum rites, and in the second, the founder is Valerius Publicola. Valerius Maximus may have adopted the first myth from an unknown source and joined it to the second, which could have been disseminated by Antias and Varro and may survive in Plutarch. Finally, there are three possibilities

44 I thank Jarrett Welsh for identifying the potential link between the *ludi Taurii* in Festus and the reference to sacrifice for the cure of miscarriage in Plutarch.

45 Münzer (1891), 8.

for Antias's contribution to the historical tradition: Antias is completely responsible for creating an account of the Valerii performing sacrifices to Dis and Proserpina, or Antias is passing on an account of Valerian religious practices that another source (possibly another member of the Valerian *gens*, but not necessarily) has invented, or Antias does in fact preserve a record of a Valerian gentilician cult (known from oral or written tradition, or even first-hand experience).

#### IV. Re-evaluation of the origin of the rites at the Tarentum: The Valerian connection

If the only surviving evidence for a connection between the Valerii and the founding of rites to Dis and Proserpina at the Tarentum were the narratives of Valerius Maximus, Plutarch, and Zosimus, it could be concluded that the legend of Valesius was an entirely post-Augustan invention, designed to gain honour for the *gens* by their association with an important imperial festival. Yet the fragments of Valerius Antias preserved in Censorinus bear witness to links between the Valerii and the Tarentine rites that existed in the early first century. Weiss claimed that these records are Antias's own inventions, and his hypothesis should not be rejected outright.<sup>46</sup> But a survey of religious rituals associated with other *gentes* during the Republic and later periods shows that it would not have been extraordinary for the Valerii to have had their own cult to Dis and Proserpina from an early date. In this section, the significance of gentilician cults (*sacra priuata*) in Roman society will be discussed. Next, it will be shown that the transfer of the Tarentum cult from the gentilician to civic sphere is very unusual in recorded Roman history. This development is likely due to a Valerian tradition associating the foundation of the cult with Valerian consuls who held office during years in which Rome was supposed to have contracted treaties with Carthage in 509 and 348, which was furthered bolstered by the ancient assumption that a *lectisternium* held in 348 was also a rite at Tarentum.

A number of Roman sources mention the existence of rituals that are unique to a clan or family, often distinguishing them from 'public' rituals.<sup>47</sup> Cicero lays great emphasis on the need to maintain and hand down to future generations *ritus familiae*, 'rites of the family', and *sacra priuata*, 'private' or 'non-civic rituals'.<sup>48</sup> There are at least ten surviving references to gentilician cults in sources from the Republican period and later: a cult of Sol among the Aurelii,<sup>49</sup> a cult of Hercules among the Pinarii and Potitii,<sup>50</sup>

46 Weiss (1973).

47 See, for example: Cato, in Fest., *Gloss. Lat.* 434; Cicero, *Dom.* 35, *Har. resp.* 32, *Arn.*, *Adv. nat.* 3.38; Fest., *Gloss. Lat.* 357; Macrobian, *Sat.* 1.16.7.

48 Cic., *Leg.* 19–22, 27.

49 Paul. Fest., *Gloss. Lat.* 120.

50 Liv. 1.7.12–14, 9.29.9–11; Verg., *Aen.* 8.268–305; Serv., *Aen.* 8.270; Diod. Sic. 4.21.2; Dion. Hal. 1.40.3–5; Cic., *Dom.* 134; Macrobian, *Sat.* 1.12.28, 3.6.12–14; *CIL* VI.313; Plut., *Quaest. Rom.* 60 = *Mor.* 278e; Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 343; Val. Max., 1.1.17; Jer., *De vir. ill.* 34.3; Symm., *Or.* 2.32.

Claudian sacrifices,<sup>51</sup> Fabian sacrifices on the Quirinal (to Vesta?),<sup>52</sup> Horatian rites at Tigillum Sororium,<sup>53</sup> the cult of the Lares Hostilii,<sup>54</sup> the Julian cult of Vediovis,<sup>55</sup> a cult of Minerva among the Nautii,<sup>56</sup> sacrifice to a copper coin among the Servilii,<sup>57</sup> and gentilician sacrifices in the temple of Diana on the Caelian disturbed by L. Piso.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the Lapis Satricanus may preserve evidence of a Valerian cult of Mars.<sup>59</sup> Two fragments concerning gentilician cults found in Festus belong to Ateius and overlap in terminology with Cicero: the one attributed to him discusses the difference between civic and non-civic religious rituals, *publica sacra* vs. *priuata sacra*.<sup>60</sup> The other identifies him as its source, describing a sacrifice peculiar to the Claudii (*Gloss. Lat.* 345).<sup>61</sup>

It is tempting to render the Latin terms *sacra publica* and *sacra priuata* as ‘public rites’ and ‘private rites’, but in English, these translations can distract us from the question of who was in charge of performing and funding the ceremony, leading instead to a discussion of the ‘visibility’ of the cult. Many *sacra priuata* were performed in highly public places: the Fabii, for example, sacrificed on the Quirinal. For this reason, I have chosen to translate the terms as ‘civic’ vs. ‘gentilician’, with the emphasis being on the parties who supervised a cult. Likewise, the Romans did not view the performance of *sacra priuata* as solely for the benefit of a single clan or family: Cicero makes it clear that these gentilician rites contribute to the wellbeing of the entire state, and their transmission should be protected by the college of pontifices.<sup>62</sup> In these *gentes*, heirs provided continuity not only for a family’s name and property, but also their religious obligations.

Furthermore, we should exercise caution in insisting on too strict a division between ‘civic’ and ‘gentilician’ rites, between *sacra publica* and *sacra priuata*, across several centuries. The distinction between civic and familial religious performances is not always straightforward. Livy (10.23) records the story of Verginia, who dedicated an altar to Pudicitia Plebeia in a section of her own house for the sake of plebeian women barred from worshipping at the temple to Pudicitia Patricia in the Forum Boarium. Winterling’s adoption of Luhmann’s distinction between ‘social structure’ and ‘semantics’ is useful for understanding how the Latin terms *publicus* and *priuatus* functioned: while

51 Fest., *Gloss. Lat.* 345.

52 Liv. 5.46.2–3 and 5.52.3, Val. Max. 1.1.11; Cass. Dio fr. 25.5–6; Cassius Hemina fr. 19 Peter = *FRHist F* 22.

53 Liv. 1.26.13.

54 Paul. Fest., *Gloss. Lat.* 223.

55 Inscription on an altar at Bovillae: *ILS* 2988 = Degrassi 270 (cf. Weinstock 1971, 4–12).

56 Serv., *Aen.* 2.166, 3.407, 5.7040.

57 Plin., *HN* 34.137.

58 Cic., *Har. resp.* 32. For a summary and discussion of gentilician rites, see Beard/North/Price (1998a), 42, 67–68, 89; (1998b), 17–19; Smith (2006), 44–50.

59 See Versnel (1980).

60 Fest., *Gloss. Lat.* 350. The identification of Capito as the author of this text was made by Reitzenstein (1887, 46, 50–54).

61 *propudialis porcus dictus est, ut ait Ateius Capito, qui in sacrificio gentis Claudiae uelut piamentum et exsolutio omnis contractae religionis est.* ‘The *propudialis porcus*, as Ateius Capito says, is the name for that which in the sacrifice of the Claudian clan is an expiation and absolution of all contracted obligation of religion.’ (Fest., *Gloss. Lat.* 345.) These fragments demonstrate that Augustus’s most important consultant for the creation of his *ludi saeculares* was well-versed in the study of gentilician religious practices and laws.

62 Cicero, *Dom.* 35; *Leg.* 19–22, 27.

the Romans maintained a dichotomy between ‘public’ and ‘private’, these terms did not map perfectly onto the realities of diverse social and political contexts in the Republic and Empire. The later ‘imperial’ category, for example, blended public and private contexts and gradually took over the public sphere.<sup>63</sup>

The significance of the theory that Valerian rites passed to civic supervision in 249 has not been fully recognized, perhaps because there is only one commonly cited example of a gentilician cult being transformed into a civic religious ritual in the Republic. This appears in Livy’s account of the cult of Hercules, originally celebrated by the Pinarii and the Potitii. According to Livy, the censor Appius Claudius Caecus had the Potitii transfer the rites to civic supervision.<sup>64</sup> In Livy’s account, it is clear that the movement of a family cult to a civic setting had tragic consequences. The angered gods sent some kind of disaster to kill the entire clan of the Potitii, and struck the censor blind. The transference of the cult from the oversight of the *gens* to the civic sphere is only achieved by the insistence of Claudius, whose role in initiating the innovation is depicted by Livy as an act of foolishness and impiety. Bendlin identifies a second instance of a gentilician cult that passed from familial to civic supervision during the Republic in Suetonius: sacrifices of the Octavii to Mars at Velitrae.<sup>65</sup> Suetonius describes the cult at an earlier stage when an Octavius performed the rituals, but then describes a decree of the people of Velitrae concerning the maintenance of the cult, giving no indication that there had been any negative reaction to the movement of the cult into the civic sphere. Smith also mentions in passing the roles of the Quinctii and the Fabii in the Lupercalia.<sup>66</sup> In these cases, it seems that the *sacra priuata* become *publica* when they are administered and funded by civic authorities, as opposed to members of specific clans. If the Valerii did indeed oversee private sacrifices at the Tarentum, would the adoption of their cult as civic rituals have been viewed in a favourable or unfavourable light?

The key to understanding the process by which a gentilician cult could become a civic rite lies in Varro’s account of the Games of 249, the first celebration of the *ludi Tarentini* for which we have secure evidence. Varro makes it clear that the Games were instituted at a time of crisis, in response to prodigies during the First Punic War, and the procedure was overseen by a college that specialized in the introduction of new cults, the *decemviri sacris faciundis*, through consultation of the Sibylline Books. Thus, in 249 the cult became a civic obligation under due authority and would have been viewed very positively, as a remedy for restoring proper relations with gods in order to ensure success against Carthage. If Antias or other members of the Valerian clan were attempting to gain glory for their line by recording early celebrations of the Tarentum rites, they would have thought that their transference to the civic sphere was a sign of the piety of authorities who presided over the process.

63 See Winterling (2005), following Luhmann (1990), 170–182.

64 Liv. 9.29; at 1.7.12–14, he provides an explanation of how the *gentes* of the Pinarii and Potitii were entrusted with the sacrifices to Hercules. Cf. Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1.38–40.

65 Suet., *Aug.* 1.1. See Bendlin (1998), 304.

66 Smith (2006), 310–311.

The Valerian connection to the *ludi Tarentini* is also likely linked with Rome's conflicts with Carthage. Antias associated two early celebrations of the Tarentum sacrifices with years in which Valerii served as consuls, 509 and 348. There was also a tradition that Rome had made treaties with Carthage in those years. If Antias were aware of the legends of Valesius and Valerius Publicola preserved in later sources, it would seem that he either believed that these two celebrations were clan affairs, or that he found it natural that the rites at the Tarentum would become a civic matter at a time when the Valerii would have held more political influence than usual. Valerius Maximus, Plutarch, and Zosimus all describe how Valerius Publicola performed the rites to Dis and Proserpina in order to assist all of Rome in a time of distress, although these sources do not agree on the cause (war or disease). Even though the *decemviri* presided over the transfer of the *ludi Tarentini* in 249, Antias or his clan's tradition seemed to emphasize the role of consuls in instituting the sacrifices on behalf of the Romans. No Valerii served as consuls in 249 or 146/149, even though they often held this office during the Republic. The tradition of *ludi Tarentini* in 348 was attributed to the consulate of the famous M. Valerius Corvus approximately a century before 249, but the decision to attribute Games to Publicola in 509 cannot have been governed merely by the desire to associate the rite with one of the first consuls. L. Valerius Potitus was elected consul in 449 after he supported the plebeians' cause against the tyranny of the second decemvirate: *ludi Tarentini* were never attributed to his consulate, despite the convenience of creating a series of celebration that would run at nearly perfect intervals of 100 years: \*449–348–249–149. Instead, the pattern of dates that Antias provides coincide with the tradition of the first two treaties with Carthage described in Polybius: 509–348–279/8–241–226.<sup>67</sup> Antias seems to have invented or inherited a tradition that conflated the roles that the Valerian consuls would have played in establishing treaties with Carthage with the performance of the *ludi Tarentini* during the First and Third Punic Wars. This confusion of dates makes sense if Antias or his source understood the *ludi Tarentini* to function primarily as a religious performance to secure Roman interests against the Carthaginians; thus, Antias's celebrations of 509 and 348 were not created to follow an early Republican concept of a 100-year *saeculum*.

As discussed above, legends concerning the earliest origins of the *ludi Tarentini* / *ludi saeculares* did not attribute their foundation to conflicts with Carthage, but instead focus on Valesius's cure for his sick children (Valerius Maximus, Zosimus) and Valerius Publicola's efforts to save Rome from a plague (Plutarch, Zosimus). This connection between the Tarentum sacrifices and relief from disease may also have contributed to the attribution of *ludi Tarentini* to 348. Livy refers to a *lectisternium* held in a time of plague in 348 BCE, during the consulate of M. Valerius Corvus:

67 Pol. 3.22–7. On the treaties between Rome and Carthage, see Serrati (2006), Russo (2008).

exercitibus dimissis, cum et foris pax et domi concordia ordinum otium esset, ne nimis laetae res essent, pestilentia ciuitatem adorta coegit senatum imperare decemuiris ut libros Sibyllinos inspicerent; eorumque monitu lectisternium fuit.<sup>68</sup>

This *lectisternium* is clearly administered at the civic level, not as a gentilician affair. Censorinus preserves Antias's record of a celebration of the second *ludi saeculares* during the same year and consulate, but he does not describe the nature of the celebration.<sup>69</sup> It is difficult to determine what to make of the ritual in Livy, which is only identified as a kind of supplication; could it be a vague description of a ritual held at the Tarentum? There is no mention of sacrifices to Dis and Proserpina or the involvement of Valerii, and there is certainly no mention of *ludi* included in the ritual, or that the games had any association with *saecula*. There are only two elements that could connect the ritual with the history of the *ludi saeculares*: the role of the *decemuiri*, and the *lectisternium*. These two elements both appear in the Augustan Saecular Games (although the *lectisternia* have become *sel-listernia*), but Varro is our only source for the role of *decemuiri* in the *ludi Tarentini*, and Valerius Maximus records that Valerius Publicola celebrated a *lectisternium* in conjunction with rites at the Tarentum.<sup>70</sup> This suggests that even if Livy were describing a ritual at the Tarentum, he has not used Antias as his primary source, because the description of the rite is so different from what we might expect from the historian taking pains to preserve his family traditions. Perhaps Antias and Livy were relying on the same source that contained a vague reference to a civic *supplicatio* in 348. If Antias or his source believed that the Valerii had a tradition of offering sacrifice to Dis and Proserpina in times of plague from an early date, he could have assumed that the *lectisternium* held during the consulate of a Valerius should be identified with the Valerian ritual against plague. The *ludi Tarentini* of 348 would then be fictitious.

It is possible that the ritual in 348 included sacrifices to Dis and Proserpina at the Tarentum as well as a *lectisternium*. If these sacrifices were held, it could have been due to the influence of the Valerian consul in that year, but the Tarentum sacrifices of 249 fell under the oversight of the college of *decemuiri*, who consulted the Sibylline books. Although there are many references to Republican plagues and prodigies that were averted by rites planned in accordance with the books' instruction, the role of the *decemuiri* became a characteristic of later celebrations that were identified as *ludi saeculares*. In 367, the size of the college had been increased from two members to ten, and while no evidence has been preserved to testify to the presence of a Valerius in the college in this period, the new openings in its membership would have been attractive to many high-ranking families at Rome. With the changes to the structure of the college, further religious innovations would have been likely to follow; for example, *ludi scaenici* had

68 'Once the armies were dismissed, when there was both peace abroad and leisure at home thanks to concord among the orders (*concordia ordinum*), lest the state be too joyful, a pestilence that assailed the city compelled the Senate to command the *decemuiri* to inspect the Sibylline books; at their instruction, there was a *lectisternium*.' (Liv. 7.27)

69 Censorinus, *DN* 17.10.

70 Varro in Censorinus, *DN* 17.7–8; Val. Max. 2.4.5.

been introduced into Rome in 364 in response to a similar situation of pestilence. A Valerian consul or *decemuir* might have suggested that a family ritual become a civic celebration in a time of distress and pestilence. We may even go so far as to ponder the possibility of *ludi* being coupled with the *lectisternium* of 348, which would demonstrate an even closer connection with the later *ludi Tarentini*, but again, there is no direct testimony for this.

Taylor had identified the *lectisternium* of 348 as the first civic celebration of the *ludi Tarentini* on the basis of certain prayers from the Severan *Acta* in 204 CE, which make the highly anachronistic request for the obedience of the Latins (*utique semper Latinus optemperassit*), and which mirror language used in the Sibylline oracle from the Augustan period and Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*.<sup>71</sup> This phrase could not date from 249, she claims, because the loyalty of the Latins was not an issue at that point during the First Punic War, and it would have been insulting to include it later. The evidence from the Sibylline oracle is problematic: the books were rewritten and edited during the Augustan period,<sup>72</sup> and the language of Latin submission in the later *ludi saeculares* material could have been carefully designed to sound archaic, or adapted from other early sources by Ateius Capito. While Russo considers it possible that the *ludi Tarentini* were held in 348, he demonstrates that the Carthaginian threat during the First Punic War posed a great danger to Italian unity, and thus it would have made sense for the Romans to have included prayers for Latin obedience in the *ludi Tarentini* of 249.<sup>73</sup> But by this logic, if Rome's alliance with the Latins was a major concern in 249, the Latin prayers could very well have been created in that same year.

It may be objected that the sacrifices at the Tarentum only came to be associated with the Valerii later in the Republic, after they had been introduced to Rome in some manner, and thus should not fall under the category of *sacra priuata*, as a tradition not native to Romans. One might argue that the *decemuires* were primarily concerned with rites perceived as 'non-Roman', such as the cult of Mater Magna:<sup>74</sup> since some of the sacrifices of the Augustan and Severan *ludi saeculares* were celebrated *Achiuo ritu*, with the head uncovered,<sup>75</sup> it makes sense for them to be associated with the instructions of the Sibylline books. But on the other hand, could the cult of a Roman *gens* be considered foreign? Yet there is no simple solution, since there is no evidence to prove that gentilician cults had to be celebrated in any particular fashion.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the later Roman charac-

71 Zos. 2.5–7; Horace, CS 65–68.

72 Taylor (1934). On the editing of the Sibylline Books in the Augustan period, see Cass. Dio 54.17.2.

73 Russo (2008), 128–129.

74 Liv. 29.10–11. M. Valerius Laevinus led the delegation to bring the image of Mater Magna to Rome, but there is no record of him being a *decemuir* in that year.

75 *Acta* of Augustan *ludi saeculares* 91 (to the Moerae), perhaps 119 (to Juno Regina), and 134 (to Terra Mater), Schnegg-Köhler (2002), 34, 38, 40; *Acta* of Severan *ludi saeculares* 4.6 (to Juno Regina), Pighi (1965), 156. At line 119, Schnegg-Köhler (2002) has supplied *Achiuo ritu* after in *Capitol[io i]nmolauit lunoni reginae bouem femin[am]* to describe Agrippa's daytime sacrifice to Juno, but Pighi (1965) and Moretti (1995) have supplied variations on *Imp. Caesar Augustus, ibidem alteram*.

76 Scheid (1995) has argued that festivals celebrated *Graeco* or *Achiuo ritu* are more instructive for understanding Roman (rather than Greek) religion. Glinister (2009) demonstrates that the picture is far more

terization of the sacrifices should not be pressed too hard to reveal their earliest origins, which nevertheless were almost certainly Greek. Cults to Pluto and Persephone were performed in Magna Graecia during this period: for example, a fifth-century pinax from Locri depicts the pair seated together. It is tempting to assume that the name Tarentum is derived from that of the Greek city in southern Italy, as Erkell argued;<sup>77</sup> if that is the case, this need not exclude the Valerian connection, for it is not impossible that a Roman *gens* could have adopted a cult from another region for its own use without needing to be supervised by a civic authority like the *quindecimviri*. Cincius Alimentus had claimed that the Romans would divide rites from conquered cities and place some among families, others under civic supervision; the Tarentum sacrifices may have been introduced into the Valerian clan in a similar fashion, perhaps after Rome's conquest of the city in 272.<sup>78</sup> Many scholars find it implausible that Dis Pater and Proserpina/Pluto and Persephone could have been the original recipients of the Tarentum cult, and have sought to identify a deity behind Dis Pater: Dionysos, Faunus, Mars.<sup>79</sup> Bernstein and Schnegg-Köhler provide critiques of the majority of these theories, which are highly speculative.<sup>80</sup>

At the other extreme, one may suspend skepticism and argue that the conflation between treaties with Carthage and the *ludi Tarentini* in 509 and 348 indicates that the rite was indeed held during these years under the authority of Valerian consuls. But if the rite were performed in the 'civic sphere' at an early date, how could it be identified as a 'gentilician cult'? In theory, the Valerii could have maintained their own *sacra priuata* to be performed quietly among a few members of their *gens*; in practice, the celebration of their rites would have been common knowledge, and could have been observed by many passers-by. (The 'nocturnal' element of the Tarentum sacrifices could have meant that the rites received less attention than daytime *sacra priuata*, such as the sacrifices of the Fabii on the Quirinal.) Thus, like the elite Roman *domus*, the rites would have been 'private' by virtue of the original authority in charge of supervising and preserving

complex: the practice of veiling the head was not unique to Romans, nor was an unveiled head unique to Greeks, but examples of both practices may be found throughout Italic and Etruscan towns, independent of Roman influence.

77 Erkell's (1967); he attempts to identify the *ludi latini saeculares* mentioned in the Acta of the *ludi saeculares* of 17 with the *φλύακες* ('farces') of southern Italy, arguing that after Rome conquered the Greek city of Tarentum in 272, there was a strong Greek influence at Rome, and the *quindecimviri* [sic] in 249 combined the Greek *φλύακες* with the separate tradition of the sacrifices at the Tarentum of the city of Rome. This is not implausible, but he links the Dis Pater of the Campus Martius with Dionysos, who was associated with the *φλύακες*, and follows Schauenburg (1953) in arguing that the image of Dionysos with a cornucopia on a Faliscan skyphos from the fourth century demonstrates an ancient identification of Dionysos with Pluto. It is difficult to find further evidence to support or disprove such a claim, since there is no surviving trace of any overt association with Dionysos or Bacchus in the Republican or Augustan *ludi saeculares*. In addition, the desire to link the *ludi* of 249 with *φλύακες* from Tarentum in particular, as opposed to another Greek city in southern Italy, seems to be motivated by the similarity between the names of the city and the *ludi*.

78 Arnob. *adu. nat.* 3.38 = *FRHist* F 8; see also Smith (2006), 360 and n.16.

79 For Dionysos, cf. Erkell (1967) and Nielsen (2007, 246–247). For Faunus, cf. Aronen (1989). For Mars, cf. Wagenvoort (1956), 193–235; Versnel (1982) and (1993), 323–324; Coarelli (1997), 112 ff. For the conflation of the *ludi Tarentini* with M. Curtius's ride into the Lacus Curtius, see Forsythe (2012), 49–76.

80 Bernstein (1998), 137–138 n.105; Schnegg-Köhler (2002), 171–172.

them, not necessarily 'secret'. If the Tarentum sacrifices truly preceded the foundation of the Republic, and powerful Valerii performed them during their consulates, it would become difficult to separate their function as a rite to benefit the Valerian *gens* from the civic authority wielded by these consuls for the welfare of Rome. Smith is careful to avoid the extreme claim that all *sacra publica* were derived from *sacra priuata*, but he does acknowledge that *sacra priuata* contributed to the influence of elite clans, in addition to the positions they occupied in overseeing *sacra publica*.<sup>81</sup> The very nature of the offices occupied by patricians throughout the Republic would have 'publicized' their 'private' cults, such that the civic religious sphere would have overlapped with that of the *gens*. In the legend of the Potitii and the Pinarii, a clean break with the original clans was made when the cult of Hercules passed to civic control. In the case of the Tarentum cult, the sacrifices passed to the civic authority of the *decemviri* in 249 without any record of Valerian influence, but an association between the Valerii and the Tarentum rites continued into the imperial period.

The later history of the *ludi Tarentini* demonstrates that the connection between the Valerii and the Tarentum rites was recognized and maintained in future centuries, even though the *gens* had ceased to have sole authority over the cult. The Valerii fostered connections with the *quindecimviri* and Sibylline books: Lactantius records that L. Valerius Flaccus, a *quindecimvir* from about 80–54, was a member of the delegation sent to Erythraea in 76 to bring back new copies of the Sibylline books after they had been destroyed in 83 by a fire on the Capitoline, where they were stored.<sup>82</sup> He was the first Valerius in the college for whom we have record in over sixty years, but he never oversaw a performance of the *ludi Tarentini* during his tenure. Then in 45, a L. Valerius Acisculus minted coins, some of which bear images of the Sibyl and Apollo, others of which have a different image of the Sibyl on the reverse, which some have linked with the Sibylline Books.<sup>83</sup> Perhaps the Valerii desired Rome to hold games in the 40s, on the model of the hundred-year intervals created by Antias or by tradition, but were prevented by the conflicts at Rome during that period; it is also possible that the young Octavian was aware of the rhetoric surrounding the coming of a new *saeculum* at Rome, and bided his time for an opportunity to capitalize on the idea once his authority was established. Augustus's close ties to powerful members of the Valerian clan, including M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, influenced his decision to rework the Republican tradition of the *ludi Tarentini* into *ludi saeculares*. Three Valerii were given influential positions among

81 Smith (2006), 310–311.

82 *Fenestella diligentissimus scriptor de quindecimviris dicens ait 'restituto Capitolio rettulisse ad senatum Gaium Curionem consullem, ut legati Erythras mitterentur, qui carmina Sibyllae conquisita Romam deportarent; itaque missos esse Publium Gabinium, Marcum Otacilium, Lucium Valerium, qui descriptos a priuatis uersus circa mille Romam deportarunt'. idem dixisse Varronem supra ostendimus.* ('Fenestella, a most diligent writer, speaking about the *quindecimviri*, says that 'When the Capitol was rebuilt, the consul, Gaius Curio, proposed to the Senate that ambassadors should be sent to Erythrae, so that they might bring back the collected writings of the Sibyl; and so Publius Gavinius, Marcus Otacilius, and Lucius Valerius were sent, who brought back to Rome about a thousand verses copied out by private persons'. We have shown previously that Varro said the same thing.') (Lactant., *Div. inst.* 1.6.14.) Cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.62.5.

83 Crawford (1974), 483–485. See also Sobocinski (2005).

the *quindecimviri*, and two were present in the college for the Saecular Games of 17.<sup>84</sup> Valerii would continue to appear in the college of *quindecimviri* at each due celebration of the Games in the imperial period (47 CE, 88 CE, 148 CE, 204 CE, 248 CE), but would not occupy positions in this college continuously, which indicates that the Valerian connection with the Tarentum rites was carefully maintained under the emperors, even if unacknowledged in the official epigraphic and numismatic records of each celebration.<sup>85</sup>

In sum, we have good evidence that the sacrifices at the Tarentum formed an ancient gentilician cult performed by the Valerii. We lack concrete evidence for locating in 348 a situation in which this Valerian cult came under civic supervision, and while we should recognize the possibility that a Valerian consul officiated such rites in that year, the vagueness of Livy's reference to a *lectisternium* with no further information about the ceremonies could equally support the view that Valerius Antias or an earlier tradition invented the Tarentum rites of 348. Whether or not the '*ludi saeculares*' of 509 and 348 were fact or fiction, a conflation with the Carthage treaties or genuine sacrifices performed by Valerian consuls, a creation of Antias or another, matters less than how the rites were interpreted and utilized by the Valerii, Augustus, and authors in later centuries.

## V. Conclusion

A very real connection between the Valerii and the Tarentum sacrifices existed before the time of Augustus, and while it is difficult to reach a conclusive answer as to how early it developed, the historian Valerius Antias assumed this relationship, which he either inherited or invented. The attribution of *ludi Tarentini* to the consulates of Valerii in 509 and 348 was likely due to a conflation with the tradition of Rome's treaties with Carthage in those years, based on the performance of this elaborate rite during the Punic Wars in 249 and 146. Various aetiological legends surrounding the foundation of the cult at Tarentum were in circulation in the late Republic and early Augustan period, influencing later historians. Post-Augustan accounts of the foundation of the cult offered to Dis and Proserpina at the Tarentum, officiated by an ancestor of the Valerian clan, sometimes allude to *ludi scaenici* as part of the original performance, but the oldest and most distinguishing rites were the nocturnal sacrifices of dark victims (*hostia furuae*). The legend of a buried altar to Dis Pater at the Tarentum is not attested before Verrius Flaccus. *Ludi* were attached to these rites by 249, when the gentilician cult of the Valerii was performed in the civic sphere during the crisis of the First Punic War as the *ludi Tarentini* under the supervision of the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*. It is possible, but un-

84 Pottius Valerius Messalla had joined the college in 39, the same year that Octavian and Agrippa appear in the membership lists, and served as a member until 11 (Rüpke 2005, 138–156, 1352). M. Valerius Messalla, the elder son of Messalla Rufus, was added in 35, and continued to serve until his death shortly before 19 (*ibid.*, 140–149, 1351). Significantly, the new member of the college whom Augustus chose to replace Valerius Messalla in 20 was M. Valerius Messalla Messallinus, son of Corvinus, who would be consul in 3, thereby maintaining the number of Valerii in the college (*ibid.*, 150, 1353).

85 Valerian involvement in the imperial *ludi saeculares* is discussed in Dunning (forthcoming).

likely, that the Tarentum sacrifices were performed at the civic level in 348, accompanied by a *lectisternium*. This transition of *sacra priuata* to state control was a rare occurrence, and its positive role as a remedy for Rome's crisis during the First Punic War stands in contrast with Livy's account of divine wrath at the transference of the Potitii's cult to public slaves. While the religious performances at the Tarentum were not described as *saeculares* during the Republic, these sacrifices had begun to be identified with repetitions every hundred years as early as the time of Antias, and perhaps earlier. Yet this span of time was not described as a *saeculum* until Augustus and Capito created a new chronology for the *ludi saeculares* of 17.

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