The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)

Sabellus: Sabine or Samnite?

E. A. Sonnenschein

The Classical Review / Volume 11 / Issue 07 / October 1897, pp 339 - 340

DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00039251, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00039251

How to cite this article:

E. A. Sonnenschein (1897). *Sabellus*: Sabine or Samnite?. The Classical Review, 11, pp 339-340 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00039251

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

I suspect ταύτας should be τὰς αὐτάς or more probably αὐτάς.

11, 8. τῷ μὲν δικάῳ ἀρκεῖν ἡγούμενος τὸ εἶναι τὰ ἀλλότρια, τῷ δ' ἐλευθερίῳ καὶ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ προσωφελήτερον εἶναι.

Τῶν ἑαυτοῦ cannot be a partitive genitive. Such a genitive could only be used here after a verb usually taking an accusative, 'give (some) of his own money,' etc. It never occurs except as the object, if so it may be called, of such a transitive verb. It is clear that an ἀπό or ἐκ has been lost here. Probably καί stands for κακ.

11, 14. οὐκ ἀπέειπε μεγάλην καὶ καλὴν ἐφίεμενος δόξαν.

The accusative after ἐφίεσθαι would be

unique. Τοῦτ' ἐφίεσαι (Soph. *O.T.* 766 : Linwood τοῦδ' ἐφίεσαι) is quite different by reason of τοῦτο being a neuter pronoun and = 'having this desire.' Perhaps Schneider is right in doubting ἐφίεμενος. Some change is indispensable.

11, 15. καίπερ ἤδη πρὸς τῷ στόματι τοῦ βίου ὦν.

X. uses στόμα in a peculiar way of the front ranks of an army, but neither that nor any other use of it seems exactly parallel to this. In *R.L.* 10, 1 we have ἐπὶ τῷ τέρματι τοῦ βίου, and possibly X. wrote that here, but I should hardly venture to substitute it.

HERBERT RICHARDS.

SABELLUS: SABINE OR SAMNITE?

It is a curious fact that, in an age remarkable for the enormous advances which are being made in lexicography and the interpretation of the classical authors, our feeling for the meaning of any word should be getting blunted; but such seems to me to be the case in regard to the word *Sabellus*. Scholars of the 16th cent. (Lambinus, Lipsius, Cluver) and Niebuhr, seem to have been quite familiar with the fact that *Sabellus* may denote 'Samnite,' though they often hesitated as to the possibility of its also meaning 'Sabine.' But modern lexicographers and commentators seem to be gradually settling down to the idea that it always means 'Sabine'; Lewis and Short exclude 'Samnite' altogether, and commentators on Horace and Virgil posterior to Conington adopt the same attitude.¹ Yet I hope to show that in the large majority, at any rate, of the passages in which the word is found in the ordinary classical authors the meaning is 'Samnite' and not 'Sabine.' My argument has also an important bearing on the question of the nationality of Horace. I think it may be inferred from his use of

the word *Sabellus* that he was of Samnite blood, perhaps belonging to a family which was enslaved during the Samnite wars. It may be replied, of course, that Samnite and Sabine are ultimately the same; that the Samnites were an offshoot of the Sabines of Sabina. Be this as it may—and I would leave the question to be settled by historians of Rome²—it does not affect my argument, which is that in current use the word *Sabelli* denoted to the Romans the offshoot and not the parent stock, or the offshoot rather than the parent stock. The evidence for this is to my mind so clear that I can only explain the statements of the lexicographers to the contrary by the supposition that they have been the victims of their philology; the connexion between *Sabellus* and *Sabinus* seemed to them obvious, and they did not see the still closer connexion between *Sabellus* and *Samnis* or *Samnitis* (= *Safnis*, *Safnitis*).³

But whether or no, it is impossible to dispose of the fact that there is no single passage in Horace or Virgil which demands the sense 'Sabine,' whereas there are many passages in these and other authors which either absolutely demand the sense 'Samnite' or on a fair interpretation make for that sense. Absolutely demanded it is in Livy viii. 1, 7 (dealing with the events of

¹ Thus, too, Sir E. H. Bunbury in the *Encycl. Brit.* (SABINES), vol. xxi. p. 129: '*Sabellus* is frequently found in Latin writers as an ethnic adjective equivalent to Sabine; but the practice adopted by modern writers of using it to denote all tribes of Sabine origin, including the Samnites, Lucanians, etc. was first introduced by Niebuhr and is not supported by any ancient authority.' The first part of this statement I consider wrong. *Ibid.* 'All readers of Horace must be familiar with his frequent allusions to the moral purity and frugal manners of the people that surrounded his *Sabine villa*.' The italics are mine and I venture to put a query to them.

² Prof. R. S. Conway informs me that the Sabine dialect may with certainty be inferred from the glosses that survive to have belonged to the Latin group, not to the Umbro-oscian group of dialects.

³ *Sabellus* would, I think, be a diminutive of a stem *Safn-* or *Safen-*, rather than of *Sabino-*; but it is a pure Latin word as Latin is the only dialect which rejects medial *f*.—R. S. Conway.

B.C. 341) *alteri consuli Aemilio ingresso Sabellum agrum non castra Samnitium, non legiones usquam oppositae*: x. 19, 20 (B.C. 296) *cohortium Sabellarum*. So too in Horace *Sat.* ii. 1, 36 (relating to the foundation of Venusia in B.C. 291 after the close of the third Samnite War); I quote from line 34: *sequor hunc Lucanus an Apulus anceps*: | *nam Venusinus arat finem sub utrumque colonis* | *missus ad hoc pulsus, vetus est ut fama, Sabellis*, | *quo ne per vacuum Romano incurreret hostis, sive quod Apula gens seu quod Lucania bellum* | *incuteret violenta*. Here *Sabellus* clearly means 'Samnite,' and we may also note the use of the plural as a noun, 'the Samnites,' a use found also in Pliny iii. 12, 107, (quoted below). What tribes precisely Horace would have included under the term is of course uncertain; but it is clear that the Sabines of Sabina were not prominently before his mind when he wrote this line.¹ *Lucanus* and *Apulus* are geographical expressions, which have no direct relation to the ethnic term *Sabellus*; but, to say the least, there is nothing here to prevent our regarding the inhabitants of these districts from being included among the *Sabelli*. In the light of this passage is it possible to doubt that when Horace calls himself *Sabellus* in *Epist.* i. 16, 49 (*renuit negatque Sabellus*) he is referring to his Apulian origin, and not to the fact that he possessed an estate in the Sabine country² (as all commentators that I have seen incline to think)? To my mind *Sabellus* here means 'Samnite'; and Horace is tracing his gift of shrewd common sense to his Samnite ancestors, just as in the passage above cited (*Sat.* ii. 1, 34 foll.) he traces his Lucilian pugnacity to his connexion with the same gallant race. Again the Sabellian crone of *Sat.* i. 9, 29 who prophesied as to his future when he was a child should surely be located in Apulia, not in Sabina. In *Epod.* xvii. 28 (*Sabella pectus increpare carmina, caputque Marsa dissilire nenia*) the juxtaposition of the words *Sabellus* and *Marsus* points in the same direction.³ *Od.* iii. 6, 38 (*Sabellis docta*

ligonibus versare glebas) would be inconclusive either way, were we not reminded by the whole passage (33-40) of the *Marsus et Apulus* of the preceding ode (l. 9).

When Horace means 'Sabine,' he says *Sabinus*: *Od.* i. 9, 7 (*Sabina diota*), i. 20, 1 (*vile Sabinum*), i. 22, 9 (*silva in Sabina*, a wood on his Sabine estate, as Dr. Gow says in his excellent edition), ii. 18, 14 (*unicis Sabinis*), iii. 1, 47 (*valle Sabina*), iii. 4, 22 (*in arduos Sabinos*), *Epod.* ii. 41 (*Sabina qualis aut perusta solibus pernecis uxor Apuli*: in fact *qualis Sabina aut Sabella*), *Epist.* i. 7, 77 (*arvum coelumque Sabinum*), ii. 1, 25 (*vel cum rigidis aequala Sabinis*), *Sat.* ii. 7, 118 (*opera agro nona Sabino*).

The same tale is told by the Virgilian use of the two words *Sabellus* and *Sabinus* (metrical equivalents). Conington on *Georg.* ii. 167 and *Aen.* vii. 665 interprets *Sabellus* as 'Samnite'; and this is I think supported by the proximity of *Marsi* in the former passage. *Aen.* viii. 510 (*mixtus matre Sabella*) is inconclusive; so is *Georg.* iii. 255 (*Sabellicus sus*). But could Virgil have written *raptas sine more Sabellas* in *Aen.* viii. 635, instead of *r. s. m. Sabinas*? For his use of *Sabinus* see also *Georg.* ii. 532 (*veteres Sabini*), *Aen.* vii. 709 (*postquam in partem data Roma Sabinis*), *ibid.* 706 (*Sabinorum prisco de sanguine*); *ibid.* 178 (*Sabinus* as a proper name).

Turning to Juvenal we find that he too uses two distinct words, *Sabellus* and *Sabinus*, presumably in distinct senses: iii. 169 *ad Marsos mensamque Sabellam* (in the same connexion as in Hor. *Epod.* xvii. 28), *ibid.* 85 *baca Sabina*, x. 229 *veteres imitata Sabinos*.

To these passages I have to add two distinct statements by classical writers of widely different ages to the same effect. Varro, *Nat. Menipp.* 17 (ed. Bücheler) says *Terra culturae causa attributa olim particulatim hominibus, ut Etruria Tuscis, Samnium Sabellis*: this passage is quoted by Junius Philargyrius on Virg. *Georg.* ii. 167, and seems tolerably conclusive. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* iii. 12, 107 *Samnitium, quos Sabellos et Graeci Saunitas dixerunt, colonia Bovianum*, etc.

The above does not claim to be an exhaustive list of instances. But I should be surprised if the evidence which it affords is overthrown by any passages which can be cited. What is the evidence for *Sabellus* = 'Sabine'?

E. A. SONNENSCHN.

¹ If Horace included the Sabines, we have an instance of the word in a classical author in the Niebuhrian sense.

² A man who owns a Scottish moor does not for that reason call himself a Scot!

³ So at least thought Niebuhr, *Hist. of Rome*, p. 91 'The Marsians, Pelignians, Samnites and Lucanians called themselves *Savini* [Safinim?]; this is certain at least about the Samnites, from the denary coined during the Social War.' How far more modern research confirms the connexion between the Marsi and the Samnites I do not undertake to say.