

The Etruscan City-State¹

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1. Introduction

During the last three decades scholarly interest in the Etruscan type of city-state has increased considerably, as archaeologists, previously attracted by the rich cemeteries of Etruria, have paid more attention to settlements than in the last hundred and fifty years, i.e. from the beginning of modern historical speculation on the Etruscan civilization. As a matter of fact, a few great cities of Central and Southern Etruria, namely Veii,² Caere,³ Tarquinia⁴ and Rusellae,⁵ have undergone extensive excavations from the 1960s onwards, though none of these excavations can be considered satisfactory as far as the evidence for the early urban phases is concerned. On the other hand, extremely significant evidence concerning these early periods has been retrieved from minor sites of the 7th and 6th centuries, such as Murlo⁶ and Acquarossa,⁷ townlets located in the historical territories of, respectively, Clusium and Tarquinia. These sites were destroyed at the end of the 6th century and never rebuilt; but they have produced valuable material for clearer insights into the early urban phases of the major cities of Etruria where the early layers, with their evidence related to the centuries of the formation of the Etruscan city-states, can only rarely be reached because of the superimposition of substantial Roman buildings.

Moving from archaeological to historical research, we may observe that in the first half of the 20th century historians focussed mainly on themes of political significance, such as the origin and development of magistracies, as well as on the civic and everyday life of the Etruscan towns. In the last fifty years, however, more and more attention has been paid to social and economic forms, with special emphasis on the process responsible for the birth of the city in Etruria and early Latium, two regions strongly interconnected in this regard as we shall see in the course of this paper. Much of the earlier debate was inspired by the monumental work on early Rome by E. Gjerstad,⁸

which obviously had significant implications for the origins of the South Etruscan cities. By contrast, later research has moved from chronological to socio-economic questions and, more recently, to settlement history:⁹ as a matter of fact our discourse will start precisely from the genesis of the Etruscan cities, a crucial phenomenon destined to shape the ensuing history of the urban form in Etruria.

2. The Cradle of the Etruscan City: the Protovillanovan Village

As may be expected from great historical events, the genesis of cities in Etruria depends upon a number of complex socio-economic, ideological and political factors, which are not connected with just one single event or caused by one single phenomenon. In other words, it is meaningless to look for a precise moment in the Archaic period when, e.g., Tarquinia or Caere moved from the pre-urban into the urban phase; similarly we must resist the temptation to deduce the beginning of urban life from a single fact, either material, such as the existence of a city-wall or an assembly place, or ideological, such as a particular organisation of power. It is the manifold nature of the causes and the hierarchy of their importance and meanings that concur to characterize urban growth at any given moment.

The birth of cities in Etruria (and Latium) no doubt has remote origins. The long period of the Apennine culture, as prehistorians call the Middle and Late Bronze Age civilization of the Italian peninsula, saw villages inhabited only in rather provisional periods, due to the extensive practice of shifting agriculture and to the importance of cattle breeding. These economic features of the period compelled the population to change the location of their settlements frequently. The first certain step towards a more permanent location of settlements occurred in the Final Bronze Age, i.e. in the 11-10th centuries,¹⁰ for which period

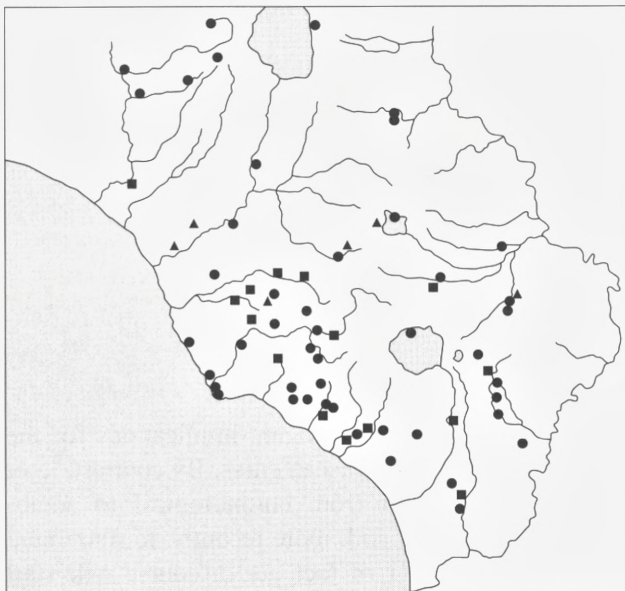


Fig. 1. Distribution of settlements in Etruria from the Middle to Final Bronze Age: circles indicate sites attested only in the Middle Bronze Age; triangles indicate sites attested only in the Final Bronze Age; squares indicate sites attested both in the Middle and Final Bronze Age (after Bartoloni).

we have clear evidence of the end of provisional sites and of cave settlements, still common in the Apennine culture (Fig. 1).

All major centres of Etruria have yielded material from the Final Bronze Age culture, the so-called Protovillanovan culture,¹¹ to some extent the ancestor of the Villanovan culture of the Etruscan Iron Age and very similar to the Protolatin culture known from the settlements and cemeteries of contemporary Latium. The Final Bronze Age sites, both in Etruria and Latium, tend to favour hilltops, frequently, though not always, fortified with ditches and rudimentary defensive walls constructed in coarse stone blocks (*aggeres*). Such settlements are very likely the result of technical improvements and a growing importance of cultivation: as a matter of fact, during the immediately preceding centuries cultivation had gradually overtaken cattle- and sheep-breeding as the primary form of accumulation of wealth, whereas husbandry was probably of greater economic importance in the earlier phases of the Bronze Age.

In Etruria and elsewhere in Italy the emergence of regional cultures, though still a rather slow process, was the product of the beginning of the segmentation process of the earlier tribal groups, though their original Bronze Age cohesion not only survived for centuries in the spheres of religion and language, but also

were to be frequently revived during historical times for military and political purposes in the form of ethnic "leagues" centred on great prehistoric sanctuaries and early collective cult practices. The direct heir of this primitive tribal situation is the loose political unity of Etruria secured by the religious ceremonies performed annually by the supreme magistrates (and formerly, we may surmise, the kings) of the major cities *ad fanum Voltumnae apud Volsinios*, the celebrated national shrine of the Etruscan god *Tinia Velthumna*, a local version of Zeus-Jupiter with strong powers over the vegetation processes.¹² Production was now organized within extended family groups settled in villages of various sizes, and the number of huts could range from a few up to some score. The socio-economic foundations of this society lay in the progressive diffusion of private ownership of land, a social feature now securely attested for the first time in the Italian peninsula. The settlement pattern indicates exploitation of the best soils, especially those close to other primary resources such as internal water-courses or lakes (cf. Di Gennaro [1986]); usually fortified, as we have seen, villages are placed at a distance of five to fifteen kilometres from each other and tend therefore to form clusters (Fig. 2), and are thus in a way the ancestors of the system of *pagi* and *vici* of historical times. These clusters may often signal also the existence of homogeneous agricultural conditions or the emergence of common patterns in the circulation of metal objects or of cultural fashions, creating cultural sub-regions (Bietti Sestieri [1997] 371ff.). Generally we may say that in their groups the villages show potential characteristics of productive integration along lines of social and economic solidarity similar to those found in the early stage of urbanization.

In spite of regional differences, the Protovillanovan culture presents consistent homogeneous features throughout the Italian peninsula, *vis-à-vis* the specific character of the contemporary culture of Latium, which now differs from the rest of the Peninsula. The Protovillanovan uniformity should probably be understood as the consequence of the still backward conditions of the groups in possession of such a culture (including therefore also the Early Etruscans) in comparison with the neighbouring Early Latins, visibly much more advanced than all other Italic peoples in the process of ethnic differentiation. It is presumably this backwardness of the groups populating the future Etruria during the Final Bronze Age that accounts for some significant cultural and ideological features, such as the massive presence of

Latin names of gods in the pantheon of the Etruscans in historical times (and not vice versa!).¹³

The preference for hilltop settlements in the earlier part of the Final Bronze Age shows in the distinct prevalence of mountain or highland sites over those in the plain or on gentle low hills (cf. Angle *et al.* [1982] 80ff.). The presence of important settlements on the heights close to the more comfortable sites occupied by the major cities of historical times is a well known pattern of the Final Bronze Age settlement in Etruria: thus, the town of Caere is faced by the Proto-villanovan sites on the Sasso di Furbara, Tarquinia by the Protovillanovan villages on the Tolfa Mountains, Vulci by the numerous sites of the Final Bronze Age on the steep hills of the Fiora Valley, Clusium by the great fortified villages on the Mountain of Cetona, and so on, in a relationship that shows strong analogies with the major Latin cities and with the villages on the Alban Hills, very prominent in the Final Bronze Age.

The village culture of the Final Bronze Age profoundly influenced the future organization of the Etruscan (and Latin) city-states. Several religious and social features of the city life of later centuries are derived directly from this period. The most important of these is the institution of the *curiae* (literally “reunion of men”, from **co-vir-ia*). *Curiae* are well attested as the crucial form of social and political organization of the early Roman world, but are also known in Etruria: thus, a Caeretan inscription of the early imperial age mentions a *curia Asernia* (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* XI 3593) and recently archaeology has unearthed, in the centre of ancient Tarquinia, an open air shrine of the 10th century (referred to above) which has been interpreted as a *curia* (Torelli [1988a] 129ff.). As the Roman example informs us, the *curiae*, preserved in historical times because of their great religious significance, had a pivotal importance for the establishment of collective political power, the *imperium*, formally acquired by the *rex* (and subsequently by the republican magistrate) through the rite of the *comitia curiata*, the assembly of the *curiae*, which was still performed in the late Republic and possibly even in the early Empire, though in a perfunctory way by the sole licitors with the *fascēs* (De Martino [1972a] 106ff.). All these circumstances tend to suggest that the roots of power and of political organization of the early cities of Etruria and Latium are to be found in the primitive organization of village society in the Final Bronze Age.

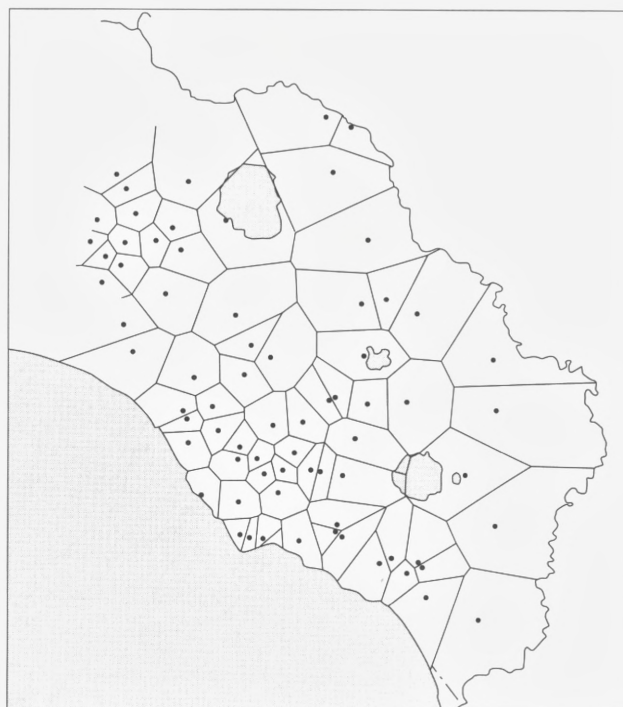


Fig. 2. Clusters of settlements as shown from the application of the ‘Polygons of Thysen’ in Southern Etruria in the Final Bronze Age (after Di Gennaro).

3. The First Steps of the Etruscan City: the Emergence of the Villanovan Society

Even though we cannot consider it an integral part of the process of the genesis of urban centres, the Final Bronze Age settlement is nevertheless a fundamental and direct antecedent of the historical city. In the clusters of villages of that period, as reconstructed by archaeological research, it is not difficult to detect which particular settlement – sometimes not even the most prominent one of the cluster – was destined to emerge in the Early Iron Age as the leading community and dominant centre of a particular cluster and finally as the socio-political centre of a historical city, very likely after a period of fierce fighting and military confrontations. In Etruria the Protovillanovan culture was now replaced by the distinct Villanovan culture (9th-8th centuries),¹⁴ characterized by great uniformity and by strong military aspects. The Villanovan culture was diffused in Etruria and in areas of the Italian peninsula, such as Central and South Campania and the eastern valley of the Po river, where in historical times we find Etruscans established and fighting their neighbours, often the previous inhabitants of the areas, *viz.*, Celtic, Venetic and Umbrian tribes in the north, Oscans and Cam-

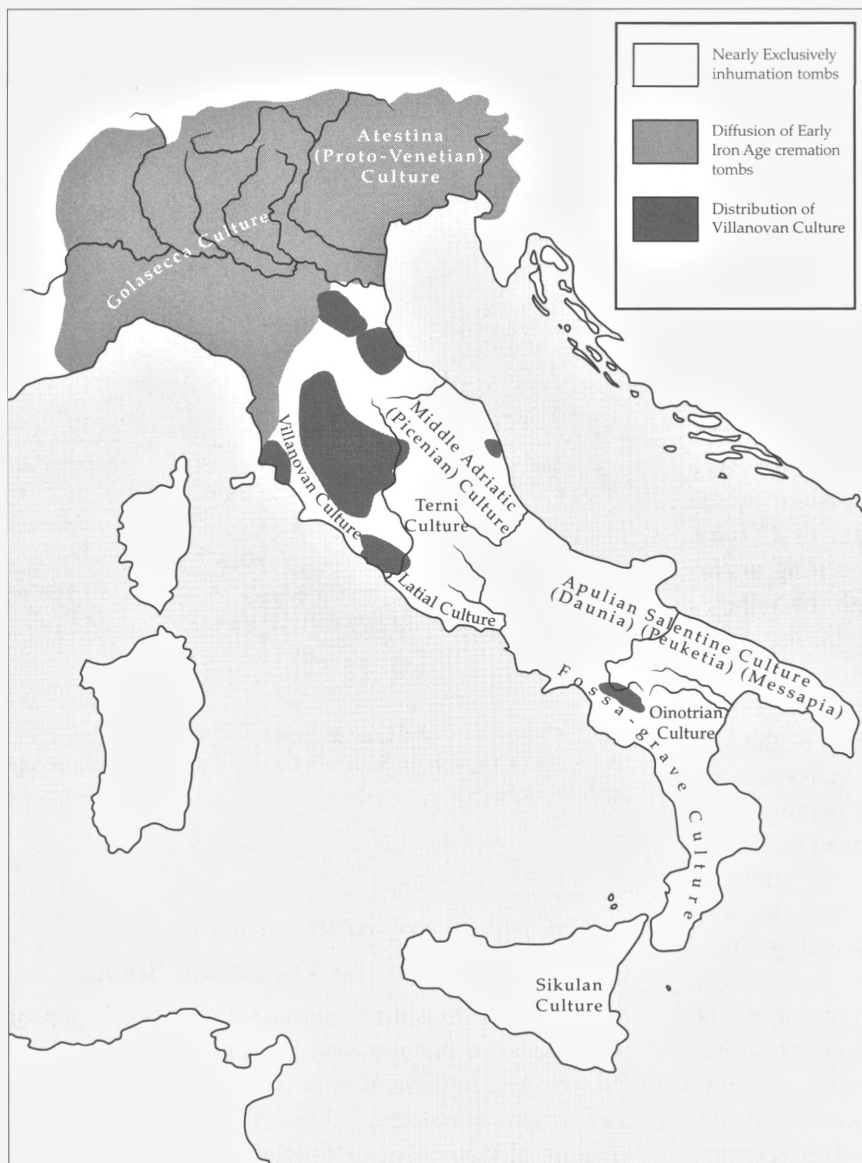


Fig. 3. Iron Age cultures of Italy (after Bartoloni).

panians of Italic stock in the south (Fig. 3). Since the spread of the Villanovan culture overlaps almost perfectly with the historical diffusion of the Etruscans,¹⁵ the obvious conclusion seems to be that the cultural background of Etruscan urban civilization was the rise of the Villanovan culture, though at the very beginning the Villanovan settlement pattern appears still to be in villages, very similar to that of the previous period. But it is important to note that the urban development of the Early Iron Age takes place in an environment which is different from that of the Final Bronze Age, dominated by settlements on steep hilltops: the historical Etruscan cities, whose process of urbanization takes place between the 9th and the 7th centuries, i.e. in the Iron Age and in the Orientalizing period, are invariably situated on very gentle

hills near extensive plains and water courses, which indicates that cultivation of crops has now acquired a definite economic superiority over husbandry. Another factor of economic growth, as archaeology has shown, is the exploitation of vast iron and copper ores (Elba, Tolfa Mountains, Mine District in the modern Maremma) which was now of much greater importance than in the past. The excellent geographical position of the emerging centres must have enormously favoured commercial exchange, stimulated by the mining activity and by the considerable surplus derived from the greater profitability of agriculture.¹⁶

At the beginning of the 9th century then, we witness the appearance of two interlocking phenomena: the rise of early cities and a gigantic effort of colo-

nization of new arable land, undertaken by the Villanovans (i.e. the Proto-Etruscans) both in the original areas of the Villanovan civilization (i.e. Etruria proper), and outside it, towards the south in the fertile regions of Campania and towards the north in the vast plains of the eastern Po Valley (Torelli [1981a] 35ff.). As far as cities are concerned, we can map the almost impalpable contours¹⁷ of the settlements that are in the process of developing into the historical Etruscan towns. This, of course, is true only for the cities of southern Etruria, since the birth of the towns in northern Etruria and in the Etruscan colonies of Campania and of the Po valley is somewhat slower, in some instances even dating as late as the 6th century.

Etruscan urbanization, however, does not follow uniform paths, as is shown by the different patterns of urban growth at Tarquinia and Veii, the two major towns of south Etruria. In both cases we possess detailed information, and both cities testify to the embryonic character of urbanization during the Early Iron Age (9th century). In the area of what was to become the city of Tarquinia, a vast and undulating plateau (about 150 hectares) surrounded by water courses and easy to defend, new excavations have brought to light the Protovillanovan shrine referred to above, which functioned continuously till the 3rd century, possibly as the place for religious ceremonies and assemblies of a local *curia*. The new discoveries are very important, for they prove that the area of the historical town was already being used in the Final Bronze Age, in the same way as many early Latin towns were. In the Early Iron Age, i.e. between the 9th and the first half of the 8th century, we see the sudden growth of at least ten separate cemeteries, connected with this area and with a number of other villages of the Final Bronze Age, of which however only three or four have been explored or clearly located on the ground (Fig. 4).

All these villages and their cemeteries appear to gravitate around the area of Tarquinia,¹⁸ though only a few of them are actually placed inside the perimeter of the future town. The existence of villages close to the site of the historical city can be inferred from the cemeteries of Civitucola, Poggio dell'Impiccato, Poggio Selciatello di Sopra, Poggio Selciatello di Sotto, Poggio Gallinaro, Poggio Quarto degli Archi and Fosso San Savino. Other settlements and their dependent cemeteries appear to be situated at some distance from the site of the historical city of Tarquinia, but still in the range of two to four kilometers: this is for instance the case of the best explored village, the one on the site of Calvario, on the plateau of

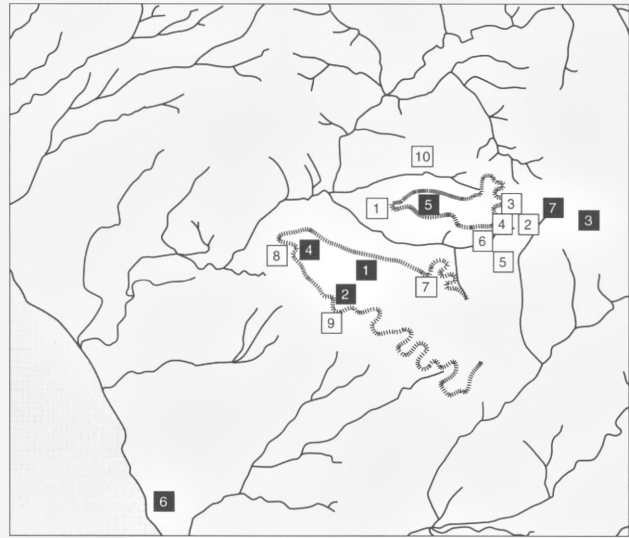


Fig. 4. Tarquinia, settlements and cemeteries. Settlements (in black): 1. Calvario; 2. Corneto; 3. Macchia della Turchina; 4. Corneto (?); 5. Civita; 6. Saline; 7. Pian della Sorgente. Cemeteries (in white): 1. Civitucola; 2. Poggio dell'Impiccato; 3. Poggio Selciatello; 4. Poggio Selciatello di Sopra; 5. Poggio Quarto degli Archi; 6. Fosso San Savino; 7. Arcatelle; 8. Le Rose; 9. Villa Falgari; 10. Poggio Gallinaro (after Torelli).

Monterozzi, which included around thirty huts on an area of about two hectares (Linington *et al.* [1978] 3ff.; Linington *et al.* [1982] 117ff.; Fig. 5) and had its cemetery nearby, on the site of Arcatelle, south-west of ancient Tarquinia. We know of other villages located on the same system of hills as the plateau of Monterozzi, close to, but clearly separated from, that of Calvario. One such "village" was found during excavations in the last century near the site of Corneto (the medieval name of the modern town of Tarquinia), to be linked with the necropolis of Le Rose.

Another is the village at Infernaccio, whose cemetery was at Villa Falgari. This impressive cluster of small villages includes also more distant settlements, placed in the range of five to ten kilometers towards the east, such as Macchia della Turchina and Poggio della Sorgente, not to mention the even more distant Villanovan village at Saline, some 12 km south-west of the ancient town of Tarquinia, destined to become the port of Tarquinia in the late 7th century, Gravisca. Around the middle of the 8th century the situation undergoes a radical change. The villages on the plateau of Monterozzi (and on the attached hill of Corneto) are abandoned and the small cemeteries west and north-west of the other plateau of Civita disappear simultaneously, and the synoecism of Tarquinia on

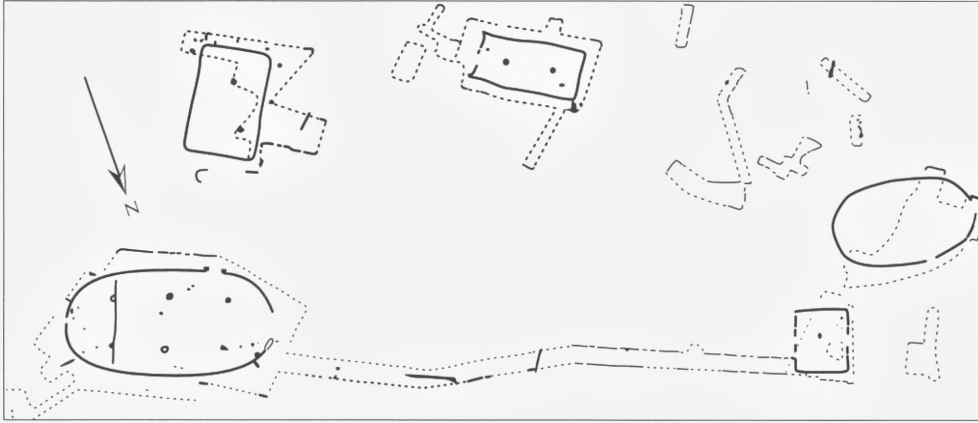


Fig. 5. Tarquinia, Calvario, one sector of the village with five huts (after Bartoloni).

the wide plateau of Civita is now accomplished (Fig. 6). We can describe this synchronous phenomenon, almost paradoxically, in the following manner: the “victorious” settlements, situated on the plateau of Civita, lose their cemeteries, and the “defeated” settlements, those located on the plateaus of Monterozzi and Corneto, become the area of a single, vast necropolis of a unified city. Invisible up to the middle of the 8th century, the urban centre suddenly surfaces from a galaxy of villages.

The formation of Veii, on the other hand, shows some analogies with, but also significant differences from, that of Tarquinia. Archaeological excavations in the area of the historical city have revealed scant evi-

dence of Final Bronze Age occupation – just one Protovillanovan tomb,¹⁹ found in the middle of the crowd of Villanovan pit and trench graves in the Casale del Fosso cemetery.

It is very likely that the settlement to which this tomb belonged should be found on the plateau where the historical town of Veii developed; still, the importance of the Protovillanovan period in this area seems to have been minimal. This feeble trace of the Final Bronze Age is followed by the usual 9-8th century “explosion” of Villanovan settlement, which is situated on this huge (about 180 hectares) and relatively flat plateau (Fig. 7), which is easily defensible and delimited by small rivers. A number of apparently small villages have been located in various places on this plateau (Guaitoli [1981] 79, Fig. 1), to which belonged two vast cemeteries, Quattro Fontanili and Grotta Gramiccia, situated east and north of the settlement area, on two adjoining low hills. Yet, archaeological explorations have located an independent Villanovan settlement at nearby Piazza d’Armi, a separate small hilltop very close to the southernmost tip of the main plateau and provided with an individual cemetery, that of Valle La Fata, placed to the west: this small settlement, now under intensive excavation, appears to have been abandoned in the late 6th century and, in spite of its separation from the main part of the actual city, to have survived the synoecistic process, which at Veii, as at Tarquinia, takes place around the middle of 8th century or a little later (Fig. 8). Unlike at Tarquinia, we have at Veii no unified cemetery: each main Villanovan necropolis continues to be used as a cemetery during the Orientalizing and Archaic periods (7th-6th century), those of Picazzano and Casale del Fosso-Riserva del Bagno, continuations of the two Iron Age cemeteries of Quattro Fontanili and Grotta Gramiccia respec-



Fig. 6. Unified settlement (Civita) and cemetery (Monterozzi) of Tarquinia in the Orientalizing period (7th century). Circles indicate the monumental tumuli: 1. Poggio Gallinaro; 2. Infernaccio (two tumuli); 3. Doganaccia (two tumuli); 4. Poggio del Forno (after Torelli).

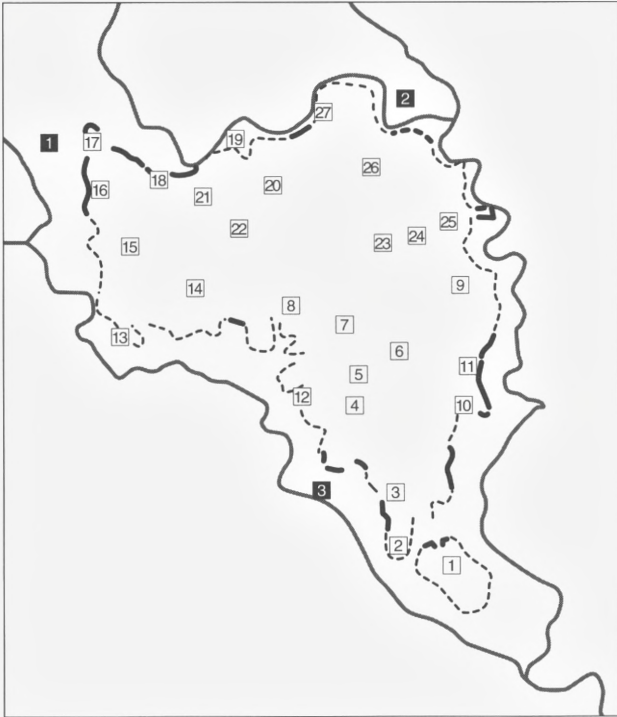


Fig. 7. Veii, settlements and cemeteries. Settlements (in white): 1. Piazza d'Armi; 2. to 27. Finds of the Villanovan period from the plateau. Cemeteries (in black): 1. Grotta Gramiccia; 2. Quattro Fontanili; 3. Valle La Fata (after Torelli).



Fig. 8. Veii in the Orientalizing period (the archaic city walls are marked with a continuous line where preserved, with a dotted line where reconstructed). The areas of the cemeteries are printed on the map; circles indicate the monumental tumuli (the other tumuli of Monte Aguzzo and Quaranta Rubbie are placed outside the map): 1. Monte Campanile; 2. Monte Oliveto; 3. Vaccareccia (after Torelli).

tively. Veientan synoecism seems to have been less coherent and slower than that of Tarquinia, perhaps as a consequence of a more compact character of the 9th century settlement, which in its turn appears to be the product of a more unified process of "colonization" of a land where the Protovillanovan groups might have been less active than in the Tarquinian area.

These two instances of synoecism are in a way emblematic of the formation process of many early cities of Etruria and of Latium. The case of Tarquinia is very similar to that of Clusium (and of Rome), while the birth of Veii shows similarities to that of many other Etruscan cities, such as Vulci, Falerii and Caere. Obviously, we can speak of synoecism and of processes of unification only for the leading cities of Etruria. Actually, we know of a great many minor settlements grown from smaller and isolated villages that existed independently, with varying degrees of success, between the 9th and the 6th centuries. Good examples are the above-mentioned sites of Acquarossa and Murlo, which have revealed not only a series of clear instances of 7th and 6th century

dwelling, but also two important buildings convincingly identified as *regiae*, residences of local kings (Torelli [1985] 21ff.; Torelli [1992] 249ff.). In a process that started during the 7th century and ended in the final years of the 6th century, and in perfect and significant synchronism with the rise of republican regimes in all the major cities of Etruria and Latium, these minor sites one by one fell easy prey to the leading centres and were invariably destroyed and abandoned after their conquest; the victorious towns took great advantage of such gradual expansion, from which they acquired land and population that greatly contributed to their economic and demographic growth. The conquest of the smaller centres resulted in the formation of vast territories around the major towns, a process that came to an end only in the last years of the 6th century in connection with the emergence of the *dodecapolis* of the so-called Etruscan League. At the same time the monarchies were replaced by aristocratic constitutions, and that marks the final stage in the long process of urbanization of the chief cities of Etruria: the Etruscan Dodecapolis

had emerged. Each city covered an area of from 60 to 180 hectares, and was located in the middle of a large territory ranging between 500 and 1,500 km². The Etruscan city-states were destined to survive until they came under Roman rule after the wars of conquest in the 3rd century.

4. The Social Foundations of the Etruscan City

The Villanovan “colonization”, which began in the early 9th century and undoubtedly continued all through the 8th century, represents the demographic corner-stone on which the Etruscan city was built and initiated a process which again has strong analogies with the contemporary development of the city in neighbouring Latium. Without this impressive movement of population and the corresponding appropriation of land, we cannot understand the social background of the genesis of the city-state in Etruria and Latium, events that we may consider virtually simultaneous. Yet this impressive land appropriation is not the sole cause responsible for the rise of the Etruscan city: though to some extent still depending upon the Villanovan colonization, other interacting factors too, both socio-economic and ideological, provided a fundamental contribution to the rise of the Etruscan city.

Judging from our main archaeological source, the grave contents of the vast Iron Age cemeteries, the early Villanovan culture (9th century) might be described as the product of an egalitarian society, where distinctions among the members of the group were not drawn along lines of class, but only along lines of sex and age (Torelli [1974-75] 3ff.). Moreover, few graves contain peculiar objects which mark them as graves of individuals in possession of special roles, such as those of priest or tribal chieftain (Torelli [1996] 333ff.). It is likely, however, that social differences based on economic conditions were already apparent, or, better, in the process of formation (*ibid.*); but the severe ideology regulating the burial rites prevent these embryonic social distinctions from becoming fully recognisable to the archaeologist. Around the middle of the 8th century, the material culture revealed by the grave contents in the ever larger Villanovan cemeteries indicates the appearance of class differences and the formation of a powerful, but small aristocratic segment of population, which was destined to grow enormously in the late 8th and early 7th centuries and to become the ancestor of the historical Etruscan *principes*, as our sources

repeatedly call the individuals who formed the dominant group in the cities of Etruria (Torelli [1981a] 53ff.). Imbued with Oriental and Greek luxurious customs, such aristocrats carefully exploited and paraded the paraphernalia of the splendour of Eastern kings to increase their own power.²⁰ Such attitudes on the part of these early Etruscan aristocrats contributed in the following two or three generations to the destruction of the old social order founded on kinship and on sex and age group distinctions, i.e. the Final Bronze Age society of the *curiae*, which, as we have seen, still existed in the Early Iron Age. The large Villanovan cemeteries now suddenly disappear though quite often a sort of symbolic memory of them seems to be present in isolated princely chamber tombs under monumental tumuli of the Early and Middle Orientalizing period (Figs. 6 and 8) that were built on the site of previous Villanovan cemeteries.²¹ The end of the old Villanovan cemeteries, heirs of the large “Urnenfelder” of the Protovillanovan period, and the almost simultaneous appearance of chamber tombs in the course of the 7th century are the clearest signs that the birth of the Etruscan city cannot be separated from the swift emergence of the early aristocracy.²² Furthermore, in the endemic military conflicts between the different settlements from the Early Iron Age onwards, the growing need for larger armies and the introduction of Greek hoplite warfare no doubt acted as a powerful stimulus for the creation of larger and larger groups under the control of the aristocrats:²³ the 7th and 6th century Etruscan figurative representations of kings and aristocrats as Homeric heroes on the otherwise obsolete chariot, but at the head of a hoplite *phalanx* (Torelli [1992]), are rather eloquent in this regard and help to explain the atmosphere in which the archaic aristocracy of Etruria became the ruling class of the country.

The power of these Etruscan *principes* rested on a complex organization of production, which we may describe as serfdom, a *servitus* whose members are referred to by ancient Greek sources with such terms as *oiketai*, *penestai* and *pelatai*, analogous with those employed by the same sources to describe the serfdom of Thessaly and of other peripheral areas of Greece.²⁴ The term used by Greek historians to describe the behaviour of the Etruscan masters, τρυφή, “luxurious idleness”, appears picturesque to us, but it may be considered a very effective way of emphasizing the typical attitude of the Etruscan ruling class, *viz.*, to use luxury as a powerful ideological instrument to maintain social control over the *servi* (cf. Ampolo [1984] 469ff.).

In inscriptions of the 7th century the birth of the aristocratic system in Etruria and in Latium (and later in other areas of Italy, such as Samnium, Campania and Umbria), is reflected in a generalized use of a very peculiar onomastic system, based on the coupling of a single name, the *praenomen*, designating the individual, with a *nomen gentilicium*, derived from an old patronymic which was in its turn formerly a personal name (Colonna [1977] 175ff.; Menager [1980] 148ff.). In Rome, and presumably in Etruria as well, this system designated the bearers as members of a *familia*, an extended family controlled by the *paterfamilias*, a patriarchal figure of extraordinary power. The onomastic system is a very clear indication that this society was founded on the transmission of the familial land allotment, called *heredium* (from *herus* "master"): therefore the familial group was in theory named after the original possessor of the land allotment, the first *paterfamilias* of the group, whose individual name was transformed into an adjective functioning as a fixed part of the onomastic system of the group, the *nomen gentilicium*, transmitted through generations. With the development of the early social differences and conflicts, the *familia* begins to include individuals who, though originally non-kinsmen, had made formal submission to the victor or to the head of the most powerful group: this act, which Roman legal sources call *in fidem clientelamque venire*, implied the partial loss of the personal freedom of those who, according to the verbal meaning of the formula, after a formal submission had become members of the familial group of the victor with the obligation to work for the masters, and to follow them in case of war, and to assume the new master's *gentilicium* instead of their original one. In these cases the *gentilicium* is not a designation of familial descent, but simply a stereotyped indication of membership in an extended family group, the *gens*, that included both kinsmen and non-consanguineous individuals. By the middle of the 7th century, even though a number of free peasants must have survived the rise of aristocratic power, the *principes* had been able to take control of a considerable part of the arable land and the labour of substantial masses of subject men. The dominant mode of production thus established was destined to survive for centuries, in southern Etruria up to the 4th century, in the northern cities, such as Clusium or Perugia, until the end of the 3rd century, when the former *servi* were given more or less extended political rights.²⁵

Archaic and classical inscriptions show that the Etruscan *oiketai/servi* had no *gentilicium*. From this we

may infer that the Etruscan *servi* were of partially unfree status, by which they presumably were bound to the land more than to their *domini*. This is suggested by the fact that their later enfranchisement did not imply the acquisition of a *gentilicium* derived from that of their former master as happened with Roman freedmen, but from their older individual name.²⁶ As we have just seen, it has been reasonably argued that the Etruscan *servitus* shows strong analogies with the Roman *clientela* (Torelli [1988c] 241ff.), a statement frequently repeated in recent literature. It is, however, appropriate to emphasize the fact that, in spite of the similarities, the Roman institution, because of the personal character of the bond between *patronus* and *cliens*, had a much more unstable character than the Etruscan *servitus*, which shows instead the type of stability implied by a bond between the serf and the land to which he is attached. We should also remember that even in the Archaic period the *clientes* in Rome apparently enjoyed civil rights, a prerogative denied to the Etruscan *servi*, if we understand the sole exhaustive account of their social conditions correctly, a description of the revolt of the local *servi* against the *principes* at Volsinii in 265 (see Torelli [1981a] 257f.). Actually, our sources make clear that the Etruscan *servi* not only shared the exclusion from *commercium* and *conubium* rights with the upper classes which marked the social condition of Roman plebeians and clients, but, unlike the Roman *clientes*, were originally also excluded not only from all sorts of public office, minor magistracies and religious charges, but even from military service.²⁷ Again, Etruscan epigraphical evidence of the 6th and 5th centuries demonstrate that craftsmen,²⁸ with very few and questionable exceptions,²⁹ were designated by individual names, which gives them a social status similar to that of the *servi*. In conclusion, Etruria had nothing comparable to the Roman *plebs*, another important difference between the social composition of the urban population in Rome and in Etruria.

5. The Religious Foundations of the Etruscan City

While the social setting of Etruria (and Latium) between the Late Iron Age and the Archaic period underwent profound changes, the religious foundations of the early Etruscan (and Roman) city-state continued to rest firmly on the Bronze Age practice of *auspicia*, the pan-Italic rite of divination through bird-watching which endowed the kings with possession of *imperium*, i.e. the absolute control of judicial and mil-

itary affairs (cf. Magdelain [1968]). The religious ritual of the *augurium*, from which the investiture of the *auspicia* derived, put significant emphasis on the hilltops, where it was customary to take the *auspicia*. This detail is consistent with the primary role of settlements on mountains and steep hills which is a characteristic of Etruria and Latium during the Final Bronze Age. It is not a coincidence that the Etruscan terminology used in the religious ceremonies³⁰ – which surely reflects very early conceptions – includes a whole range of terms with strong political connotations, such as *cilθ*, *meθlum*, *spur* and *mex rasna*, meaning, respectively, *arx*, *ager*, *urbs* and *res publica*. Our sources emphasize a formal opposition between *cilθ*, *meθlum* and *spur*, basically the same known in the Oscan politico-religious language, which opposes *ocar* to *touta*, i.e. *arx* to *civitas* (Prodocimi [1978] 624ff.), where the *arx* is thought to be the centre of the whole of the community. The *arx*, the hilltop site and the location of the rite of the *augurium*, had, accordingly, a crucial role in the formation of the Etruscan (and Latin) city-state: it is worthwhile remembering that the *arx* of Praeneste is situated where the modern village of Castel San Pietro is: on top of a mountain over 700 meters high, about 10 kilometers from the centre of the town, located some 300 meters below (Torelli [1989b] 15ff.). The site of the *arx* could then be largely separated from and even independent of the main area of the town, but it was always considered the main focus of political life during the early days of the city-state in the Italian area, in much the same way as it had been during the religious and political experience of the tribal villages in the Final Bronze Age.

In spite of some formal analogies, the role of religion and religious ideology in the formation of the city of the Etruscan, Latin and Italic areas appears to be profoundly different from the role of religion in the creation of the Greek *polis*. As already Fustel de Coulanges saw,³¹ in the Greek world religion played a crucial role as a unifying factor of the city-state, since the *koinonia* – the “partnership” – of cults, i.e. of the beliefs and the related ceremonies belonging to different groups, enhanced the sense of membership in the same human society and thence of belonging to the same town: the ancestral cults were placed “in the middle”, ἐν μέσῳ, by the members of the early communities on their way to giving political and material form to the *polis*. In the Etruscan and Roman world, much more significant than the community of cults was the celebration of power by rituals of tribal origin, unveiling the character of military conquest and sub-

jugation implied by the synoecistic process. The Roman *Septimontium* is an Early Iron Age festival which sheds light on the remarkable degree of unification reached by the city already in the 8th century; but, by contrast with the great Greek festivals, it does not involve the worship of a particular divinity whose celebration was crucial for the birth of the *polis*; without involving a definite deity it aims instead at the performance of a collective magic rite. Yet another fundamental feature of the early religion played a great role in the life of the early Etruscan (and Latin) city-state – the gentilicial cults, which were vitally important for the political cohesion of the various aristocratic groups. This is revealed by our scanty literary sources and, much more importantly, by the archaeological discovery of a few *regiae*, both in Etruria and in Latium, dating to the 7th and (mostly) the 6th century, i.e. to the age of the transition from the older form of non-hereditary kingship of tribal origin to the new type of monarchy similar to Greek tyrannical government. In these sometimes huge and sumptuous buildings, the figurative friezes stress the fundamental importance of the structures for the celebration of ceremonies connected with the *gens* (Torelli [1992]), such as marriages, games, *symposia* and the apotheosis of the head of the house. Our literary sources record that some of these princely houses – e.g. that of Valerius Publicola – were destroyed in the early days of the republican state and replaced by temples.³³ This detail helps us not only to obtain precious information about the birth of the republican regimes, a widely disputed theme in modern historiography,³⁴ but also to understand the political ambiguity of these princely houses, which possessed both a public and a private character: they were at one and the same time princely dwellings and places for the celebration of ceremonies which were considered crucial for the cohesion of the large groups that formed the *gentes*. The considerable importance of the gentilicial cults in the social and political scenario of the early Etruscan and Latin city-state may perhaps be seen as a sort of confirmation of the “federal” nature of the early city-states of Latium (and Etruria), a “federalism” which several historians of Roman law have conjectured in order to explain the relationship between the earliest curiate structure and the social organization based on *familia* and *gens* with their peculiar familial rites (De Martino [1972a]).

At the end of the 6th century, *regiae* decorated with friezes depicting the rituals of the royal (and aristocratic) power disappear, and, in conformity with the isonomic rules of the newly founded aristocratic republics, private houses no longer received architect-

tural terracotta decorations: as Ehrenberg taught us, *isonomia* is primarily an aristocratic slogan, being at first “equality of Peers”. A new emphasis is instead put on monumental religious architecture, which emerges exactly in those years to which we may date the end of expenditure on private luxury in city dwellings as well as in tombs. As a matter of fact, after a rather slow beginning in the 6th century, there is a veritable explosion in the construction of temples and sanctuaries both inside and outside the Etruscan cities, contemporary with the diffusion of new architectural and decorative forms (Colonna [1985]). Etruscan temples now show a definite plan, obeying very strict rules, the *Tuscanicae dispositiones*, as Vitruvius calls them, destined to become traditional throughout Etruscan (and Roman) architectural history. However, the new style of architectural fictile decoration, including painted plaques, moulded polychrome revetments and acroterial groups of mythical subjects, derived from that of the great city temples of the Greek colonies in Magna Graecia and Sicily (Colonna [1984] 396ff.; Colonna [1979] 303ff.), appears to be even more significant from the historical point of view, since it emphasizes the importance that the great ethnic models derived from the *paradeigmata* of Greek myth and Greek political institutions had for the life of the city-state. Similarly, at Rome the first great urban temples expressing a collective and political meaning – located in the Forum or on the adjoining Capitol – belong to the early days of the republican state, i.e. the last years of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th century, when both written and archaeological evidence (beginning with the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus) suggest the existence of a strong interest in large sacred buildings, which were virtually unknown in the previous two centuries of monarchic rule. As is the case in all the Etruscan cities, Roman sacred buildings of the royal period, such as the Sant’Omobono temple or the (archaeologically unknown) sanctuary of Diana on the Aventine, are exceptions explicable only by the tyrannical character of the reign of Servius Tullius and his successor. Furthermore, their peripheral location definitely does not aim at stressing the political significance of the central area of the Roman Forum. After two centuries of Hellenization of gods (Torelli [1986]), the definitive Hellenization of the cults, in conjunction with the constitution of vast half-deserted subject territories around the great city-states, marks the birth of the twelve Etruscan republican city-states of Greek type, ruled by powerful and wealthy oligarchs, that we know as the historical Etruscan Dodecapolis (Fig. 9).

6. Socio-Political Developments of the Etruscan City-State

Archaeological evidence proves that the birth of the republican state between the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th century was a roughly simultaneous phenomenon throughout the territories dominated by the Etruscans. Some cities changed their constitutional system quite early, some did it slightly later, but the change was general. Also general was the subsequent establishment of an oligarchic constitutional order: the republics do not seem from the outset to have been oligarchies; and the emergence of oligarchies does not seem to have taken place before the second quarter of the 5th century. At that precise moment we witness the reduction of the quantity (though not of the quality) of grave goods and the concurrent end of the emphasis on public works and on great religious buildings which had started in the previous century:³⁵ all these phenomena show that the ruling class had made a definite choice in favour of a radical policy of *isonomia* and austerity, a commonplace of more or less stern oligarchic governments in



Fig. 9. The territory of Tarquinia in the mid-4th century with the capital city surrounded by a series of minor towns, later in Roman times destined to become independent as *municipia* (after Torelli).

the ancient world, as the well known Spartan example reminds us. The apparent, continuous development of cities in Etruria (and in Latium, always connected with the Etruscan socio-political situation) then comes to an abrupt end. The rigid control imposed by the Etruscan aristocracies over urbanization and over the consumption of luxury goods strongly limited the intense social mobility of the Archaic period and the great impetus of commercial exchanges with the Greek East, which had been the main source of supply for the conspicuous consumption of the early aristocracies during the 7th and 6th centuries; the end of the Greek presence around 490-480 in the *emporion* of Gravisca, the port of Tarquinia, is good evidence of the new social and political climate (Torelli [1977a] 398ff.).

The consequences of such a policy for the urban population of the Etruscan cities, depending mainly on commerce and craftsmanship, were severe. From the *Elogia Tarquiniensia's* reference to a *bellum servile* in 4th-century Arretium (Torelli [1975] 79ff.) and other similar references we learn that all over Etruria there was a sudden appearance of acute social distress, comparable to the social and political conflicts between patricians and plebeians in Rome at the same period. The drastic reduction of consumption also affected the standard of living of the more backward neighbouring tribes, Samnites and Gauls, who lived on the borders of the more developed areas inhabited by the Etruscans and the Latins and had various economic connections with them. During the Archaic period and up to ca. 470 the chieftains of these barbarian groups had easy access – frequently together with their clients – to the better-off Etruscan and Latin cities. One indication of such relations is the well-known arrival of the Claudian tribe at Rome from the land of the Sabines in 495 (Livy 2.16.4). Another is the massive presence of Italic names in the lists of gentilicial names in many leading Etruscan cities such as Orvieto.³⁶ Here they could settle with their clans, or, as was most frequently the case, have intense economic exchanges with their Etruscan aristocratic counterparts. They were interested in the acquisition of the products of Italic cattle and sheep and of cheap labour for agricultural and military purposes which these barbarian chieftains could easily provide through their dependants. We know that from the beginning of the 5th century onwards these tribes, abandoning their homelands, put strong military pressure on the city-states of Etruria, Latium and Magna Graecia, a process which ended with the conquest of large portions of these fertile and, we can easily

imagine, long coveted territories. At the beginning of the 5th century the invasion by the Umbrian tribe of the Volscians deprived Rome of its primary source of grain, the Pomptine plain, and all through the subsequent two centuries the Latins engaged in a mortal conflict against the Italic tribes of the Volscians, Equians, Sabines and Samnites, that ended with the foundation of the Roman conquest of Italy in the 4th-3rd centuries.

The Etruscan dominions outside Etruria proper suffered a much graver fate. While two great Greek colonies fell, Kyme (conquered by the Samnites in 421) and Poseidonia (which fell in ca. 400 to the Lucanians, a tribe of Samnitic stock), in 423, Capua and the other Etruscan cities of Campania were conquered by the Campanians – another tribe of Samnitic origin who had gradually infiltrated first the countryside and subsequently the towns and left to their former Etruscan masters only a small area around Salerno. Next, in the middle of the 4th century, after a century of continuous wars, the Etruscan cities of the Po Valley, beginning at Bologna, were occupied by the Gauls, who also took possession of portions of land belonging to the neighbouring Venetic and Picene tribes, thus establishing their rule over a great part of northern Italy, that accordingly took the name of Cisalpine Gaul (Grassi [1991]).

As happened in Rome after the secular struggle between patricians and plebeians, the social conflicts gradually changed the internal political order of the Etruscan city-states. We have virtually no information about the constitutional organization of the earliest republican state of the Etruscans.³⁷ The old Etruscan word for king, *lauḡume*, lat. *lucumo*, sometimes used as a *praenomen* (cfr. the Latin use of the term *rex* as a *cognomen*, as in the case of Q. Marcius Rex), survives in the calendar of the text of the Zagreb Mummy: in this famous *liber linteus*, the locative form *lauḡumneti* designates a building connected with religious rituals, identical with the Roman *regia*, which we know was the seat of the *rex sacrorum* and as such had great importance for the performance of archaic rituals.³⁸ It is, however, worthwhile remembering that both literary and epigraphic sources record the exceptional presence of kings in some Etruscan towns much later than the end of the 6th century: referring to 432, Livy speaks of the abnormal presence of a king in Veii, a circumstance which caused the abandonment of its defence by the other aristocratic city-states of the Etruscan League of Fanum Voltumnae (Livy 5.1.3); similarly the *Elogia Tarquiniensia* records a king at Caere in connection with the war between Rome and

Tarquinia in 358-351 (Torelli [1975] 70ff.). As for the real exercise of power in the republican Etruscan city-states, Roman sources speak only of the local senate of the various towns, assemblies ruled by *principes* (a term apparently corresponding to *δυνατότατοι* in the Greek texts) and they give no clue for the forms of the internal organization of the Etruscan city-states. As in the case of Latin inscriptions of the early Republic, Etruscan epigraphical texts of the 5th century do not furnish us with any example of titulature of the magistrates which ruled the towns in the years up to the first half of the 4th century. However, a very early (ca. 600) text from the Etruscan dominions in the Po valley, a decorated and inscribed cippus from Rubiera near Reggio Emilia,³⁹ mentions a person who had been *zilaθ*, the Etruscan term which in inscriptions of the 4th-2nd centuries usually corresponds to Latin *praetor*; another archaic instance of magisterial nomenclature, handed down to us by the famous golden tablets of Pyrgi (*ET Cr 4.4.* ca. 500), is *zilac(al)*, a term which the Phoenician translation, however, apparently renders as “kingdom”. Confronted with these texts we have to infer that the office of *praetor/zilaθ* existed already in the era of monarchic and tyrannical rule in Rubiera and Pyrgi, i.e. in the 7th and 6th centuries respectively. As suggested by Bernardi many years ago for the early Roman magistrates⁴⁰ this term might derive from that of the officials who in the monarchic period were in charge of specific military offices as auxiliaries of the king.

Whatever might be the origin of the highest magistrates of the Etruscan republics, in the later period (4th-2nd centuries) the government of all the Etruscan city-states appears to be headed by a board of two *zilaθ mexl rasnal*, to be translated literally as “‘magistrate’ of the *res publica*”; they were both eponymous (just like the pair of Roman consuls) as shown by several documents,⁴¹ though we have some examples of eponymity of just a single *zilaθ*.⁴² To have a single eponymous official is similar to the Roman *consul sine collega*, but we might also think of the *princeps civitatis*, witnessed by Servius (*Aen.* II.669) for Etruscan city-states as an alternative to the *rex*. We have, apparently, also other types of *zilaθ*, such as the *zilaθ eterau*,⁴³ formerly interpreted as a rather odd “*praetor of the servi*” on the almost certainly wrong equation *etera = servus*: now specialists seem to prefer the interpretation of *etera* as *minor*, which introduces the possibility of boards composed of magistrates of higher and lower rank and power into the rather uniform picture of the constitutional order of the Etruscan city-states. This possibility may be used to

explain another official term *purθ* (and variants such as *eprθnev*), at least once associated with the title of *zilaθ mexl rasnal*:⁴⁴ since the etymology of the term seems to be bound to Greek *πρύτανις*, a word of Prehellenic origin implying power, *purθ* and related words could have the meaning of “higher power, dictatorship”, as opposed to the concept of minority behind the office of *zilaθ eterau*. There is, however, one case in which the term *eprθnev* may have a mere priestly meaning and denote a figure comparable to the Roman *pontifex maximus*.⁴⁵ In other words, the head of government was a pair of *zilaθ mexl rasnal*, who had, like the Roman *praetores*, both military and judicial powers, as is clearly shown by the recently uncovered but still unpublished bronze *Tabula Cortonensis*, which contains a witness of a local *zilaθ mexl rasnal* concerning property rights of private citizens of Cortona. Epigraphical evidence shows that, at least in the territory of Tarquinia (where more than one example has come to light),⁴⁶ there were also *praetors* with a different competence, referred to as *zilaθ parxis*, of whom we can simply say that the fact that they are present only in the subject cities of Tarquinia seems to imply that they were responsible precisely for the small colonies in Tarquinian territory.

Another board of magistrates charged with public affairs is that of the *maru*, whose public sphere of activity appears highly probable because of the addition of the word *maru* (or related terms such as *marniu*) to the adjective *spurana*, “urban”, Etruscan *spur* being identical to Latin *urbs*, as we have seen. Magistrates called *maru* are well attested in Umbrian towns under strong Etruscan influence, such as Assisi, where we hear of the activity of a board of five *marones*; the same word, *maro*, appears in the *cognomen* of the poet P. Vergilius Maro who was born in the territory of Mantua, an old Etruscan town of the dominions in the Po valley, and who claimed to have Etruscan ancestors. The word is also used for priestly offices: in a well-known *cursus honorum* (*ET Ta 1.184*) from Tarquinia (most of the inscriptions containing titles of magistrates come from this town) we find a *marunuχ paχanati*, undoubtedly a priest connected with the cult of *Paχα*, i.e. Bacchus, a detail which shows that the office could imply both civic duties and religious charges. In the light of all that, the best parallel to the *maru* is the Roman *aedilis*. As shown by its etymology, the Latin *aedilis* (derived from *aedes*, “temple”) was originally an official in charge of a sanctuary: initially the *aedilis plebeius* was a religious official of the Aventine temple of Ceres, Liber and Libera and only later was he invested

with public responsibilities such as the control of the market, an office to be compared with the Greek *agoranomos*. As the example of Gravisca shows, we should remember that up to the beginning of the 5th century markets were held in sanctuaries and in connection with religious festivals. It is, however, noteworthy that – as in the case of the *zilaθ parχis* – the offices of *marunuχ* and *marunuχva* surface almost exclusively in the minor towns in the territory of Tarquinia, where the office of *zilaθ*, if unspecified, is said to have been held *tarχnalθi*, “in Tarquinia”.⁴⁷

It is rare that terms connected with official posts of civic government are found in conjunction with priestly charges. The term *cepen*⁴⁸ is to be compared with the *cupencus*, a Sabine word for *sacerdos*, used by poets and antiquarians. In Etruscan inscriptions, *cepen* is always found in conjunction with *marunuχva* (*vel sim.*);⁴⁹ in the Zagreb sacred calendar it is, however, used without further specification, a circumstance which strongly supports the suggestion that it should be translated as “*sacerdos*”. Another priestly office is that of *haruspex*, a typically Etruscan priestly institution in which knowledge was rigorously transmitted inside the families of *principes* (Torelli [1988d] 109ff.), and therefore most likely of private relevance only. Its Etruscan name was *natis*⁵⁰ or *netsvis*⁵¹ and, in accordance with its transmission inside families, it is never attested in association with other priesthoods or titles of magistracies. In general we can say that, while there are good examples of individuals (in addition to *haruspices*) who had only priestly careers,⁵² magistrates seem to avoid mention of priesthoods in their *cursus honorum*; far from being the result of minor prestige being attached to religious offices (which is most unlikely, considering the Etruscan attachment to religion), this fact seems to depend simply on epigraphical usage and finds a good parallel in Roman inscriptions up to the late Republic, in which the association of magisterial and priestly offices is extremely rare. We do, however, find exceptions, namely some *zilaθ/praetors* who served also as *maru* and *cepen*:⁵³ such cases show that, at least around the middle of the 2nd century (to which time the relevant inscriptions should be dated) the Etruscan republics, like Rome, had not legislated against the assumption of public priesthoods by magistrates.

The social problems in the Etruscan oligarchic cities, in conjunction with ethnic disturbances, led gradually to conspicuous changes in the class system established in the Archaic period. Our evidence is both archaeological and epigraphical. From the archaeological point of view, we must emphasize that

the depopulation of the territories (referred to above) of the major Etruscan city-states in the late 6th century was no doubt a consequence of the interest of the dominant gentilicial groups in the extensive cultivation of land and in stock-raising and was intimately connected with the triumph of oligarchy in the capital cities a few decades after the end of the monarchies. This form of land exploitation lasted in southern Etruria until the middle of the 4th century and in northern Etruria up to the end of the 3rd century: there is no clearer sign of the end of the oligarchic regimes than this radical change in the type of settlement in the vast territories belonging to the great Etruscan republics. Such a change finds close and (for south Etruria) contemporary parallels in the occupation of land in the major Latin towns: around the middle of the 4th century the Licinian and Sextian Laws of 367/6 put an end to the monopoly of public offices and to the absolute control of the *ager publicus* by the patricians, who had held both these privileges for more than a century. The townlets, which we have seen to have been conquered and destroyed between the Iron Age and the Archaic period, were then partially rebuilt as forts or country villages (the *oppida*, *vici* and *castella* of our sources) for the defence of the vast territories of the historical city-states. Their reconstruction, together with the parallel development of small farms in the country side, signifies a new occupation and division of the land and the beginning of a different type of cultivation replacing the extensive cultivation of the Classical period; this new land organization favoured the development of middle classes of various social and political standing, who profited from the end of the old oligarchic regimes in both Latium and Etruria. One of the best known cases of territorial rearrangement in the central years of the 4th century is that of Tarquinia (Fig. 9; see Torelli [1981a] 217ff.). Between 400 and 350 we witness a sort of new colonization of the land possessed by the city-state since the end of the 6th century. This involved the foundation of small cities on or near the sites of the destroyed archaic centres: it is interesting to note that this colonization was headed by branches of some of the great aristocratic families of the capital, such as the Curunas at Tuscania.⁵⁴ These small cities functioned like real Tarquinian colonies, to the point that, as we saw above (cf. *ET Ta* 1.184), offshoots of prominent local families could even become magistrates of Tarquinia. In these small cities, clear signs of tendencies towards autonomy are noticeable during the almost two centuries of the process of Romanization (281-90). Thanks to recent excavations by the

Ecole Française de Rome at Musarna⁵⁵ we know, for example, of powerful economic patronage by the Aleθnas, a well known local aristocratic family active in Musarna since the 3rd century: just before the incorporation into the Roman state, this family supported important building activity, thus providing a good example of interest in local affairs being stronger than that given to the former capital city of Tarquinia. As a consequence of such tendencies, after 90 BC many of these small towns were considered as independent political entities and transformed into Roman *municipia*, as is certain for Ferentium, Tuscania, Blera, Sorrina (Viterbo) and likely for Axia (Castel d'Asso), Orcla (Norchia), Musarna, Cornossa (Marta). The confiscation of half of the territory of Tarquinia by the Romans after their subjugation of the city in 281 caused the abandonment of other former subject cities, such as the unnamed *oppida* of San Giuliano, San Giovenale and San Giuliano, where the Romans must have proceeded to virgane divisions and (therefore) establish a Roman *praefectura*, the *praefectura* of Forum Clodii; the former port of Tarquinia, Gravisca, became a maritime Roman colony in 181, a century after the Roman conquest of Tarquinia. Yet another piece of archaeological evidence for such a transformation comes from chamber tombs of the major Etruscan city-states of the period from 350 to 250; around the middle of the 4th century the grave contents of these tombs, mainly bronzes and pottery of Greek inspiration though strongly affected by local taste, yield evidence for the existence of this new "middle class" and of an active craftsmanship, both were revived after more than a century at a standstill.

Moving to the epigraphical evidence, inscriptions containing data related to the onomastic system and especially those belonging to the so-called "Vornamengentile" system (cf. Rix [1963]), reveal that the old serfdom, established at least in the 7th century and surviving in Etruria all through the 5th century, had come to an end. We have emphasized that, in spite of strong similarities, the class structure of the Etruscan towns was different from that of Rome in important respects. However, the end of the Roman *clientela* as an important agrarian and military factor under the control of the patrician *gentes*, and the crisis of the Etruscan serfdom in the first half of the 4th century in southern Etruria and in the second half of the 3rd century in central and northern Etruria show strong similarities in respect of the consequences that both factors had on the whole social and productive system. At the beginning of the 4th century, especially after the conquest of Veii and its vast territory in 396 (an

event that virtually solved the old agrarian question that had troubled the Roman *plebs*), the economic use of *clientela* in the agrarian production in Rome was becoming increasingly obsolete and finally, in the second half of the same century, was ousted by a series of laws against *nexum* and usury passed by the new ruling class, the patricio-plebeian *nobilitas*.⁵⁶ Though it survived in marginal forms until the incorporation into the Roman state, the end of serfdom in southern Etruria seems to have taken place more or less in the same period as the collapse of the old patrician state in Rome. As we have seen, in Northern Etruria the Etruscan serfdom survived much longer, till the 2nd century, and perhaps with further survivals even after the concession of citizenship to the Italian allies in the year 90, if the description of the Etruscan *servi* attributed to Posidonius is to be considered a direct observation of the author and not a quotation from an earlier writer.⁵⁷

This peculiar class system had deeply influenced the political and civil life of the Etruscan cities and had undermined their capacity to resist the assaults of external enemies, Gauls in the northern dominions, Sabellian tribes in the Etruscan Campania and finally Romans in Etruria proper. As in all instances of oligarchic government, either of the radical type, like that of the Spartans, or of a more moderate character, like that of many archaic cities of Ionia imbued with τρυφή, the Etruscan city-states suffered from a peculiar social defect, the *oliganthropia*,⁵⁸ i.e. the "lack of men" due to a series of causes, ranging from the extreme limitation of their citizen bodies to the endogamy practised by the ruling class and to the endemic warfare that characterized the life of these city-states in Archaic and Classical times. As everybody knows, we have no population figures for ancient Etruscan city-states, but the *oliganthropia* created by warfare is borne out by a few data of great reliability – e.g. the figure of three *pentekontorai* given by Thucydides as the contribution from "some Etruscan cities" to the Athenian expedition against Syracuse, which indicates a contingent of no more than 150 hoplites.⁵⁹ What happened in this period was precisely the enlargement of the body of citizens, through the enfranchisement of the former *servi* and the distribution of land. Though apparently they did not enjoy all civil rights, as is indicated by the epigraphic evidence,⁶⁰ the new citizens were clearly admitted into the state and this was in order to give strength to the feeble armies of the city-states: the "colonization" of the territories of the major south Etruscan towns during the 4th century meant simply

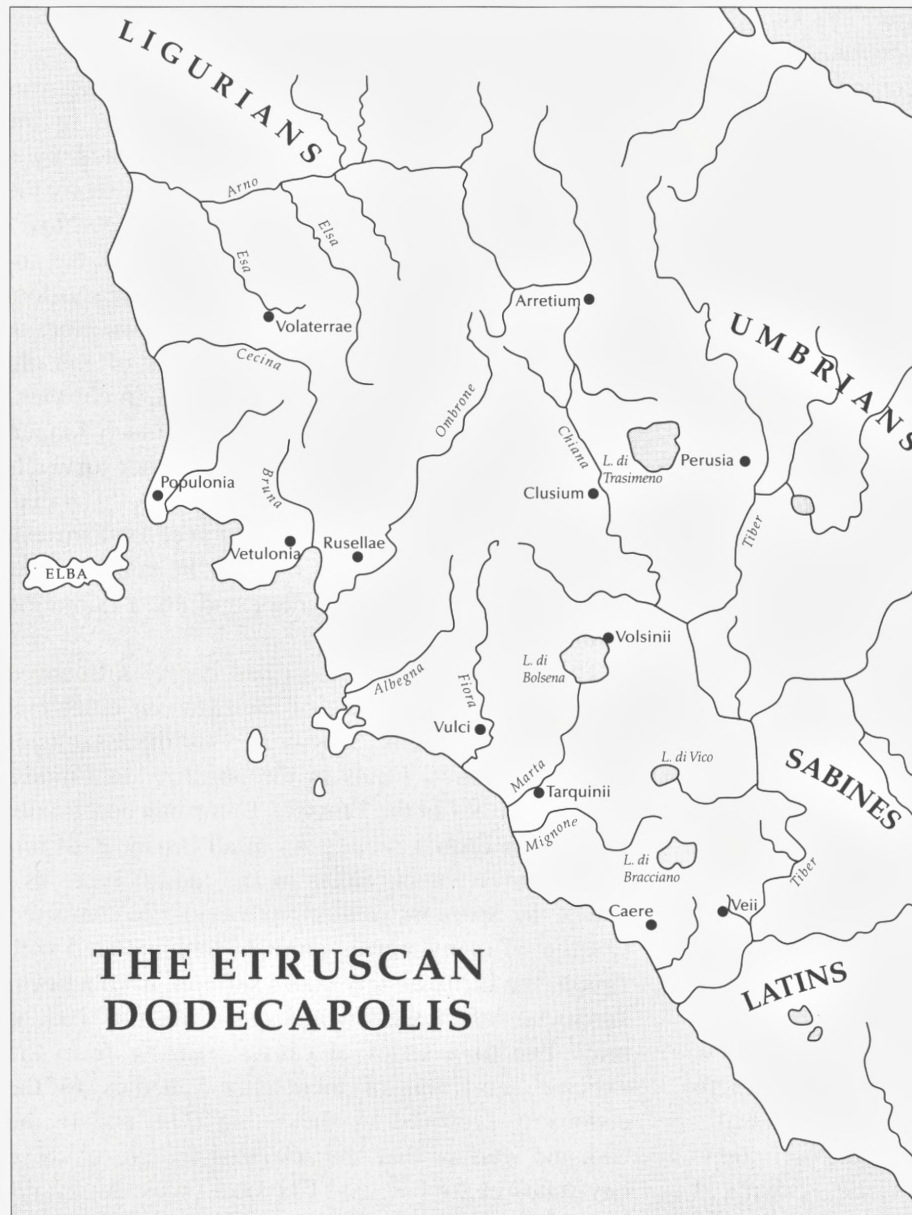


Fig. 10. The Etruscan Dodecapolis (after Weeber).

an overall distribution of land to these new citizens-soldiers, organized around *oppida* and *castella*, in reality small cities, as we have seen in the best studied case of Tarquinia, and comparable to the contemporary Latin colonies founded all through Italy under the guidance of Rome.⁶¹ Archaeology shows that in the northern cities the distribution of land was instead more similar to the *viratim* divisions of the Romans, avoiding any central settlement of urban type: the former *servi*, easily spotted by their old *praenomen* transformed into a *gentilicium* (thence the German "Vornamengentile") and by the innumerable small familial cemeteries spread across the vast territories, received their land in small farms, of which some

examples have been explored in recent times.⁶² Archaeological and epigraphical evidence shows that the Roman conquest seriously affected these new classes in the south: after the wars of conquest, the southern "middle classes", impoverished because of the drastic confiscations of land, very soon disappeared, while the small farmers of the northern cities were severely hit after the Civil Wars by the foundation of Sullan and triumviral colonies, starting a process of land abandonment that did not stop until the Late Roman period (cf. Torelli [1984] 101ff.; *id.* [1989a] 393ff.). The pro-Roman aristocracies of all the cities of Etruria were the sole beneficiaries of this final stage: as a matter of fact, at the very end they

were able to reacquire the land that was lost in the period of social unrest, thus returning to the country where they had started the long history of the Etruscan city-states.⁶³

Notes

- All dates are BC; Etruscan inscriptions are quoted from H. Rix, *Etruskische Texte* (Tübingen 1991), abbreviated *ET*.
- Monumenti antichi* 11 (1944) 225ff.; *Studi etruschi* 41 (1973) 551 (Piazza d'Armi); *Papers of the British School at Rome* 27 (1959) 38ff.; *Papers of the British School at Rome* 31 (1963) 33ff. (NW Gate); *Notizie degli scavi di antichità* (1922) 379ff. (NE Gate); Comella (1990).
- Fasti archeologici* (1947) 188, n. 1578; *ArchClass* 9 (1957) 18ff.; *Studi etruschi* 41 (1973) 539ff.; *Bolletino d'arte del Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali* 35-36 (1986) 3ff.; *Archeologia della Tuscia* (Atti del II incontro di Studio, Viterbo 1984) (Rome 1986) 15 ss.; Cristofani (1988) 61ff.; Fuchs *et al.* (1989); Cristofani *et al.* (1992-93).
- Mandolesi (1995) 273ff.: Bronze Age settlement; Bonghi Iovino (1995) 225ff.; Zifferero (1995) 257ff.: Villanovan period; *Studi etruschi* 46 (1978) 3ff.; Bonghi Iovino (1986) 63ff.; Pacciarelli (1991) 163ff.; *Studi etruschi* 58 (1992) 557ff.; Bonghi Iovino & Chiaramonte Trerè (1997): Villanovan and archaic settlement.
- Studi etruschi* 27 (1959) 3; *Studi etruschi* 28 (1960) 189; *Studi etruschi* 29 (1961) 31; *Studi etruschi* 30 (1963) 39ff., 53ff.; *Studi etruschi* 33 (1965) 49; *Studi etruschi* 37 (1969) 577; *Studi etruschi* 39 (1971) 521ff.; Laviosa (1975); Michelucci (1985); Nicosia (1990); *Studi e Materiali* 6 (1991) 341ff.; Donati (1994).
- The main evidence for these sites is very conveniently assembled in Stopponi (1985); cf. also the discussion by Smith (1994) 285ff.
- The best general presentation is still the book by Oestenberg (1975); see also Torelli (1985) 21ff.
- A synthesis of his ideas is found in Gjerstad (1973); on early Rome see also the recent book by Cornell (1995).
- An updated bibliography can be found in the otherwise debatable book by Rendeli (1993); cf., e.g., the review by L. Cerchiai, in *Ostraka* 5 (1996) 189ff.
- On this period, see *Il Bronzo finale in Italia*, Atti della XXI Riunione scientifica dell'Istituto Italiano di Preistoria e Protostoria (Florence 1979); on the settlement patterns, see also Bartoloni (1989) 59ff.
- A good general presentation of this culture is given by F. Di Gennaro (1996) 488ff. s.v. Protovillanoviano.
- On this shrine, to be located in the vicinity of Orvieto, the ancient town of Volsinii before its destruction in 265 BC and before the subsequent transfer of the entire population to Bolsena, see the acts of the colloquium published in the *Annali della Fondazione per il Museo C. Faina* 2, 1985.
- See the discussion by Torelli (1986) 159ff.
- For a general view of this civilization see Bartoloni (1989).
- In a few instances Villanovan groups, such as the owners of the extensive necropolis of Sala Consilina in SE Campania (Ruby [1995]) or those buried in the much smaller cemetery of Fermo in Southern Umbria (Annibaldi [1956] 230ff.; see also *Fasti archeologici* 11 (1958) 176; *Rivista di studi preistorici* 23 [1968] 414), make an isolated appearance in territories inhabited by contemporary tribes with a different culture and disappear after a period of splendour, either brief (Fermo) or long (Sala Consilina), without leaving traces of an Etruscan presence in the area: this fact contributes to strengthen the view that the diffusion of the Villanovan culture in the Italian peninsula was due to a great colonial effort started from the central area of southern and central Etruria, as stated below.
- On early exchange, see Ridgway (1984); on the role of Pithekoussai: Torelli (1981b); Greek archaic commerce: Cristofani (1985); on the Etruscan commerce: Torelli (1996b) 295ff.; on the role of Greeks and Phoenicians: the best summary of the evidence for archaic commerce is given by Gras (1985) with bibliography.
- On this subject, see Torelli (1974-75) 3ff., and Harris (1989) 375ff.
- For this analysis of the formation of Tarquinia and Veii, see Gros & Torelli (1988) 7ff.
- Tomb no. 838, published by Vianello Cordova (1967) 295ff.
- Cf. the acts of the conference *Aspetti delle aristocrazie fra VIII e VII secolo a.C.*, in *Opus* 3 (1984).
- On this point, besides Torelli (1981a), see also Massa Pairault (1996) 36ff.
- A summary of the evidence is found in Prayon (1975).
- See the evidence for early warfare in Central Italy collected by Stary (1981).
- Cf. Frankfort (1959) 3ff.; Heurgon (1959) 713ff.; Lotze (1959); an excellent discussion is given by Harris (1971) 114ff.
- On this subject, see Torelli (1975) 61ff.
- As demonstrated in the classic book by Rix (1963).
- Zon. VIII.7.4-8; Iohann. Ant. fr. 50 M; cf. Flor. I.16.21; Auct. *De vir. ill.* 36; Oros. II.5.3-5; Val. Max. IX.1, ext. 22.
- Cf. Colonna (1975) 181ff.; Colonna (1993) 61ff. See also the important inscriptions, from the "industrial" quarter of the great commercial town of Populonia, published by Martelli (1981) 161ff.
- One such exception seems to be the case of *Arnθ Praxias*, a 5th century painter of Etruscan red figured-vases settled in Vulci, who, originally a Greek named Praxias, on becoming a Vulcian metic acquired the Etruscan *praenomen* *Arnθ*, in the purest style of Rix' *Vornamengentilicia* of the 2nd century: see Torelli (1991a) 125ff.
- Colonna (1988) 15ff.; Rix (1984) 455ff.; cf. also Torelli & Cristofani (1984) 120ff.
- F. de Coulanges (1888); more recently, de Polignac (1984).
- On this important rite (still awaiting a modern treatment after the classic, but obsolete pages of Wissowa's and Latte's books), see the evidence collected by Palmer (1970); cf., more recently, Grandazzi (1991) 191ff.
- Liv. II.7.12; Plut. *Popl.* 10.6; cf. also Asconius, in *Pis.* 52, p.13 C, who modernizes the name of the archaic goddess of victory as *Victoria*.
- See e.g. the conference held at the Fondation Hardt in 1965, *Les origines de la République Romaine* (Genève 1967).
- Torelli (1990) 189ff.; for other contributions on the same subject, see the essays published in the same volume of *Acts*.
- Cf. Cristofani (1987) 107ff.; on the social mobility of the Archaic period, see Ampolo (1981) 45ff. and Torelli (1988c) 247ff.
- Cf. Pallottino (1954) 45ff.; Heurgon (1957) 63ff.; Lambrechts (1959); Heurgon (1967) 97ff.; De Martino (1972b) 217ff.; Cristofani (1984) 120ff.

38. The same root for “king” may also be found in *lucairce*, “was rex (scil. *sacrorum*?)” present in the famous inscription of Laris Pulenas, a person with a long series of priestly charges: see below, note 52.
39. *ET Pa* 1.2: “... *zilaθ misalalati amake*”, very likely to be translated “... (he) was *praetor* at *misalala* (loc.)(?)”.
40. Bernardi (1950) 3ff.; see *id.* (1945-46a) 3ff., and *id.* (1945-46b) 15ff.
41. Cfr. e.g. *ET Ta* 8.1 “*zilci ceisiniesi v. [— —]Jesic v. ...*”, i.e. “... in the *zilaθ*-period (locat.) of Vel Ceisinie and Vel [— —]e ...” (Tarquinia).
42. Cfr. e.g. *ET Ta* 5. 4 and *Ta* 5. 5: “... *zilci velusi hulχniesi*”, i.e. “... in the *zilaθ*-period (locat.) of Vel Hulχnie” (Tarquinia).
43. Cfr. e.g. *ET AT* 105 (Musarna, Ager Tarquiniensis).
44. *ET Vs* 1.179, *cursus honorum* of Vel Laθite, aristocrat from Volsinii, buried in one of the two painted tombs of Sette Camini.
45. It is the inscription *ET AT* 1. 108, from Musarna, a subject city of Tarquinia, belonging to Avle Aleθna son of Arnθ and of Θanχvil Ruvfi; after having recorded that Avle Aleθna had been *zilaθ spureθi* (possible meaning: “praetor in the city-state”, scil. of Tarquinia), the text says that he was a priest of one or two different *collegia* (*marunuxva cepen tenu*, possible translations “having been *cepen* of the *maru*” or “having been *maru* and *cepen*”); cf. *ET Ta* 1.171 (Norchia), where we find the same type of association of *maru* and *cepen*, in the form of *marunux spurana cepen*, which renders problematic the translation of *marunux spurana* as *maro publicus*.
46. *ET AT* 1.105, in association with the office of *zilaθ eterau* (Musarna)
47. See *arnq aleqnas* (*Testimonia Linguae Etruscae*² 170 = *ET AT* 1.100), a member of the noble family of Musarna, who asserts in his sepulchral elogium that he was *zilaθ tarχnalθi*, i.e. *praetor* in Tarquinia.
48. Verg. *Aen.* 12, 539; Sil. It. 4, 537; Serv. Verg. *Aen.* l.1.
49. Cfr. e.g. *ET Ta* 1. 23; 1. 34; 1. 184 (Tarquinia); *AT* 1.108 (Musarna); 1.171 (Norchia).
50. This word is inscribed near a figure of a *haruspex* on a gem from Volaterrae (*ET Vt G* 1); same title also in *ET Cl* 1. 1036.
51. This title is known from an inscription (*ET Cl* 1. 1461) on a cinerary urn from Clusium (no exact findspot given: note the unusual *praenomen* of the man, *salie*, no doubt Latin *salius*, priestly office used as a *praenomen*) and from the famous bilingual text in Pesaro (*ET Um* 1. 7): this inscription translates the Latin title *haruspex fulguriator* as *netsvis trutnvt*, where *netsvis* obviously stands for *haruspex* and *trutnvt* for *fulguriator*.
52. The most famous of these priestly careers is found in the long inscription of the Tarquinian sarcophagus which gives the *cursus honorum* of Laris Pulenas (*ET Ta* 1. 17).
53. See note 45 above.
54. For the Curunas of Tuscania (inscriptions *ET AT* 1. 5; 1. 6; 2. 24; 2. 25; 2. 26), see their luxurious tomb published by M. Moretti *et al.*, *I Curunas di Tuscania*, Roma 1983; the Tuscania family obviously derives from the aristocratic Curunas of Tarquinia, attested by a series of texts (*ET Ta* 1. 35; 1. 68; 1. 90; 1. 196c.), of which one (*ET Ta* 1. 35) gives the holder as *zilaθ*.
55. Preliminary reports by Jolivet & Broise (1986) 113ff.; “le bain en Etrurie à l’époque hellénistique,” in *Les thermes romains*, Actes de la table ronde, Rome 11-12 novembre 1988 (Rome 1991) 79ff.; “Musarna (Viterbe),” in *Mélanges d’Archéologie et d’Histoire de l’École Française de Rome, Antiquité* 106 (1994) 454ff.; “Musarna (Viterbe). Le site étrusco-romain,” in *Mélanges d’Archéologie et d’Histoire de l’École Française de Rome, Antiquité* 108 (1996) 455ff.
56. On this argument, see Ferenczy (1976) 61ff.
57. *Apud* Diodorus Siculus 4.40: see the discussion by Harris (1971) 119f.
58. The Spartan case has attracted the attention of many scholars (see e.g. Toneatto (1974-75) 179ff.; Bernini (1978) 29ff.; Cozzoli (1979); Kunstler (1983); Hodkinson (1986) 378ff.; Cartledge (1987); for more general discussions, see the still classic essays by Asheri (1963) 1ff., and Forrest (1983) 285ff. It is worth noting that, as we have seen, the end of “helotism” came, significantly, at the same time as the Northern Etruscan *principes* enfranchised their *oiketai*.
59. On this subject, see Torelli (1975) 61ff.
60. As demonstrated by Rix (1963), inscriptions reveal the existence of differences of status between the new citizens of Clusium, where apparently there was no *conubium* between the former *servi* and the *domini*, and of Perugia, where instead we have documented cases of intermarriage among members of the two classes; in connection with this see also the interesting studies on women’s status by Nielsen (1988-89) 53ff., and *ead.* (1985) 192ff.
61. I have discussed the archaeological aspects of this crucial question elsewhere: Torelli (1991b); see also Torelli (1988b) 65ff.; *id.* (1988e) 33ff.
62. See e.g. the farm at Poggio Bacherina in the territory of Clusium: Paolucci (1992) 35ff.
63. Torelli (1969) 285ff.; *id.* (1977b) 251ff.; *id.* (1982) 275ff.; *id.* (1991b) 459ff.

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