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Urbanization and Foundation Rituals

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Abstract:

Recent studies on Etruscan and, more generally, Mediterranean urbanization have underlined the startlingly early developments leading to the formation of urban centres in Etruria: as a result today, we no longer see the growth of early Etruscan cities as a consequence of contact with Greeks or Phoenicians. New excavated material from the earliest phases of these centres has added a further dimension that was relatively unknown up until recently, namely the role of religious ritual in these earliest phases; in particular, new fascinating suggestions have been put forward on the possible existence of foundation rites marking the beginnings of some Etruscan cities. In this chapter, I shall critically review this material and these new hypotheses, and will propose that we understand these rites taking place at the heart of the settlement in conjunction with other ritual practices taking place on the settlement boundaries, in the cemeteries; only by investigating the relationship between these distinct, but closely interlinked practices, will we be able, I suggest, to throw further light upon the socio-political processes that led to the growth of urban centres in Etruria.

Keywords: urbanization, foundation rituals, Tarquinia, *Veii*, proto-history, early Iron Age, early Rome

The origins of urbanism in Etruria and central Tyrrhenian Italy have been the concern of both Etruscology and the Roman School of Italian proto-history (henceforth abbreviated to proto-history)ⁱ since at least the 1960s, and largely, though not exclusively, centred on the origins of Rome and its chronology since Gjerstad established a sequence for the tomb groups of the Forum and Esquiline (Gjerstad 1956; Bettelli 1997, 19-35). Yet, over the proceeding twenty years their views on urbanization and interpretation of the archaeological evidence significantly diverged. This divergence began to soften in the 1990s when new evidence prompted a cross-disciplinary dialogue which led to a broad consensus on the urban formation in Tyrrhenian Italy in the early first millennium BC. These developments have gone hand in hand with studies, limited to English-speaking scholars, that have radically altered our understanding of Greek and Phoenician colonization following the post-colonial turn and network thinking. Thanks to these momentous changes we can now reconstruct the early phases of Etruscan urbanism in great detail. More recently, thanks to new excavation results, archaeologists have focussed their attention on rituals occurring in these early phases that are interpreted as foundation rites. Today, we are able therefore to draw a detailed picture of Etruscan urbanization and its accompanying rituals; this is, in fact, the aim of this chapter, in which I will critically examine these rituals. I shall first consider the scholarly history and the milestones in thinking that have occurred over the last thirty years before moving on to discuss urbanization as we know it today.

From the Classicistic prejudice to the Etruscan non-*polis*ⁱⁱ

The belief that Central Tyrrhenian Italy underwent urbanization in the early 1st millennium BC is not new. In a fundamental study of the chronology of Rome's burial groups, Müller-karpe (1959; 1962) proposed that Rome was already a city in the 8th century BC, grown from a nucleus in the Palatine and Forum area. Following Gjerstad's much criticised Roman chronology, the seeds for an enduring debate on urbanization were sown. In 1960, Pallottino largely concurred with Müller-Karpe's proposal, but was doubtful that one could ascertain whether the urban settlement had formed out of a coalescing of autonomous villages or by the expansion of a core area: in fact, he considered opposing one process against the other to be unhelpful given the complex topographical and spatial transformations leading to urbanism that peaked with architectural monumentalization and urban planning in the 6th century BC (1960, 24-26; cf. Carandini 2006, 456-457).

Some years later, these concerns were extended to Etruria, particularly the urban plateaux of Southern Tyrrhenian Etruria, which, from the 1960s, had increasingly become the subject of archaeological surveys and excavations producing new evidence on the topography and archaeology of some of Etruria's largest cities. Foreign teams were responsible for the earliest field projects that amplified an interest in the origins of Etruscan urbanism: these were the South Etruria survey coordinated by John Ward-Perkins and the British School at Rome (Potter 1979), in conjunction with the Italo-British excavation of the Quattro Fontanili cemetery at *Veii*, promptly published in *Notizie degli Scavi* (e.g. Fabbricotti 1976), and the excavations and field surveys of Acquarossa and San Giovenale by the Swedish School (Roos and Wikander 1986). The debate on urbanization enjoyed a renewed phase in the late 1970s as Etruscologists, proto-historians and ancient historians gathered at a seminar to discuss urbanism in Latium (Ampolo *et al.* 1980): this gathering also revealed deep disagreement among scholars, mostly between proto-historians on one side, and Etruscologists and historians on the other (cf. Guidi 1982; Ampolo 1983). The disagreement centred primarily upon the dynamics and, secondarily, on the dating of urbanization (Colonna 1983, 433; Peroni

1983): without wishing to minimize the complexity of the debate, nor ignore scholars who embraced multiple viewpoints (Colonna 1983; cf. Carandini 1997, 458) and others who deplored inflexible positions (Cristofani 1986, 9), one may concur that the proto-historians argued for a long process of change beginning in the Recent and Final Bronze Age, leading to proto-urbanization in the Bronze/Iron Age transition (*circa* 1000 BC in the traditional chronology), and to settlement nucleation and synoecism, as it was first called (Peroni 1969, 157), and urbanization in the early Iron Age (Gnesotto 2006). For proto-historians, the final phase of the Bronze Age was crucial; this is a period of fracture when many smaller settlements of Tyrrhenian Etruria were abandoned, and concurrently new, much larger settlements, the future cities, were occupied; proto-historians called this new phase proto-urbanization, a term first applied to early Iron Age Italy by Renato Peroni (1969, 138, 157-158).

Etruscologists did not see this proto-urban phase as being key to later transformations, and considered these early Iron Age settlements on the future urban plateaux of Southern Etruria as loose groups of habitation nuclei that were topographically and politically autonomous (Ward-Perkins 1959, 78-79; 1961, 22; Ampolo 1988; Cristofani 1986; Rendeli 1993, 223-226, 286-289). To the Etruscologist, only the unitary nucleated settlement of the 7th century with spatially or architecturally demarcated public areas could be truly considered as urban (Rendeli 1990; 1991; Steingraber 2001). To some of its detractors (Carandini 1997, 458, 463), this seemed to be a primitivistic outlook, according to which proto-urban settlements were closer to villages than to cities. These contrasting views are ascribed to the different scholarly traditions of each school and respective research fields, namely European prehistory and Classical archaeology; one should also consider the impact of Anglo-American evolutionary approaches to state formation and mathematical spatial modelling on Italian proto-history that, during the 1980s, brought some scholars to study the relationship between proto-urbanization and incipient state formation and the relationship between the future cities and their hinterland (di Gennaro 1982; Guidi 1985; cf. Riva in press). Etruscologists, too, were concerned with this relationship, but in respect to the structuration of space through monumental and/or public architecture that became manifest between the end of the 7th and the early 6th century BC when, according to Etruscologists, the city-state, with its own politically controlled and economically managed territory, was formed (Rendeli 1990; 1991; 1993, 348). If there was ever a model of urbanization for Etruscology this was one based upon the Greek *polis* derived from ancient written sources (Ampolo 1988, 155), and archaeological studies on Greek urbanism (Snodgrass 1986), which, between the late 1980s and early 1990s, offered young Etruscologists a conceptual framework, peer polity interaction, for understanding urbanism (Rendeli 1991, 17); hence, the accusations of a Classicistic prejudice brought against Etruscology (Carandini 1997, 455-456, 486-487).

While this debate centred superficially on the modes and chronology of urbanization, at much greater stake was the underlying issue of the role of outside influences on social and political change: proto-historians saw the Bronze-Iron Age transition as a phase of radical fracture with the preceding social and political structures, that was caused by internal social, economic and political transformations (Gnesotto 2006); Etruscologists, by contrast, considered the impact of Greek settlements in the Central Mediterranean as pivotal and a causal factor for the birth of Etruscan urbanism (Ampolo 1983, 429; cf. Rendeli 1991, 40). Such contrasting views began to soften during the 1990s: thanks to newly-recovered material from urban sites, including Rome, and the proto-historians' involvement in fieldwork on the large urban plateaux of Tyrrhenian Etruria (e.g. Pacciarelli 1991a; Iaia & Mandolesi 1993; Mandolesi 1999) that had begun in the 1970s, the 1990s were marked by a growing cross-disciplinary dialogue that ultimately induced

these contrasting views to converge. Partly responsible for this dialogue was the interaction between proto-historians who had studied early Roman material since the 1960s (Bettelli 1997, 20-23) and archaeologists of early Rome, particularly Andrea Carandini, who, in the 1990s, wrote a new narrative, not without severe criticism (cf. Torelli 2011, 24-30), on Rome's urbanization (Carandini 1997; 2006). An early indication of these developments is the publication of the exhibition catalogue *La Grande Roma dei Tarquini* (Cristofani 1990), where Etruscologists, archaeologists of early Rome and proto-historians were brought together to examine the relationship between Archaic Rome, Latium and Etruria. Ten years later, another exhibition catalogue (Carandini and Cappelli 2000) testifies to the remarkable amount of new archaeological evidence recovered, and the consensus reached on the early processes leading to Etruscan and Roman urbanization (d'Agostino 1995; 2005, 21). This consensus led to two important consequences: firstly, scholars acknowledged the unique and culturally-specific dynamics underlying Etruscan urbanism, which were distinct from those of Greek urbanism; secondly, scholars recognised the diversity of these dynamics across Etruria (d'Agostino 1998). I shall now turn to these very dynamics and briefly discuss the origins of the Etruscan non-*polis* before moving on to consider the rituals associated with them.

Urban networks and diversity

As intimated above, the debate and final consensus mainly concerned the large urban plateaux of Southern Tyrrhenian Etruria, namely *Veii*, *Caere*, Tarquinia and Vulci; this is understandable given the concentration of research and fieldwork on these sites. It is only recently that sites located in the interior and further north, which underwent similar yet distinct transformations, have received attention; scholars have now consequently recognized the diversity of Etruscan urbanization (Figure 1).

This diversity is firstly seen in the proto-urban phase. In Southern Tyrrhenian Etruria, we see a contemporaneous extensive abandonment of Final Bronze Age sites and occupation of large plateaux; of the seventy known Final Bronze Age sites, less than ten produced early Iron Age finds (Pacciarelli 1991b, 166–7; 2001, 104–9; Riva 2010, 18-19). We have evidence of sporadic or more substantial Final Bronze Age occupation on some of these plateaux (Riva 2010, 13-18), but generally, save for Tarquinia and perhaps Vulci (Pacciarelli 2001, 162-164; Moretti Sgubini 2006), extensive occupation on these plateaux is new. In northern Etruria, we also see a proto-urban phase in the substantial occupation of areas that would be urbanised as well as cases of sites with Final Bronze Age activity such as Vetulonia (Pacciarelli 2001, 164); recent research, however, notably at Chiusi and Populonia, has demonstrated the diversity of this occupation, undoubtedly partly due to the different geomorphology of these sites. At Chiusi, Final Bronze age occupation extended over four hundred hectares and continued into the early Iron Age over five plateaux with the concurrent abandonment of others: here we have a rather fragmented occupation on smaller plateaux (Cappuccini 2008). Populonia's beginnings were not dissimilar from the proto-urban South Etruscan sites (Cambi and Acconcia 2011), but there the topography of the site is distinctive: the town was located on a coastal promontory overlooking the Gulf of Baratti and facing the island of Elba. Final Bronze Age sites with brief Iron-Age occupation are found along the gulf, while the earliest nucleus at the beginning of the Iron Age was located between three hilltops, Poggio del Telegrafo, Poggio al Castello and Poggio della Guardiola (Cambi and Acconcia 2011, 6).

The dynamics of the urban phase are similarly diverse. Southern Tyrrhenian sites occupied the vast, naturally defended tufa tablelands that were surrounded by smaller hillocks where the cemeteries developed in the early Iron Age and continued to be used in later centuries. In cases like Tarquinia (Figure 2), while the main settlement developed

on the plateau of Pian di Civita and Pian della Regina, separate habitation clusters grew on the nearby Monterozzi plateau, where the future urban *necropolis* would flourish (Mandolesi 1999, 194-202; Iaia Mandolesi 1993, 24); these clusters were abandoned at the end of the 8th century BC when the area was used for burials only and the settlement concentrated on Civita and Pian della Regina (Iaia, Mandolesi, Pacciarelli and Trucco 2001; Bonghi Jovino 2005, 41). At *Veii*, (Figure 3) early Iron Age structures have been uncovered in several spots on the main plateau, starting with the 1960s British excavation at the North-West gate (Ward-Perkins 1959) to the recent excavation campaigns run by the University of Rome (e.g. Fusco and Cerasuolo 2001), that revealed the transition from hut structures dating as early as the 9th century to tufa block structures in the 7th century (D'Alessio 2001). At *Veii*, too, burial grounds were established on hillocks around the plateau from the end of the 8th century; the earliest cemeteries developed to the north and south of the settlement (Bartoloni 2001). Recent excavation, not far from the area investigated by Ward-Perkins, has uncovered a rampart, probably dated to the first half of the 8th century, constituting the earliest artificial defensive structure (Boitani, Biagi and Neri 2008). At Caere (Merlino and Mirenda 1990, 4-26; Maggiani and Rizzo 2001) and Vulci (Pacciarelli 2001, 36-58) we see similar developments. The plateau of Vulci is mostly known from surface survey although recent excavation near the Western gate has also revealed an earthenwork dated to the middle or second half of the 8th century (Moretti Sgubini 2008, 171). As seen at other sites, the growth of the settlement is most visible by the expansion of its *necropoleis* on high grounds adjacent to the main plateau (Riva 2010, 27-28 for a detailed overview).

Elsewhere in Etruria, urban formation is also seen from the cemeteries with some notably different occupation patterns: beside Populonia that developed on a coastal acropolis, some sites, namely Bisenzio and Chiusi, are rather distinctive. Bisenzio developed out of a Final Bronze Age settlement on a promontory overlooking lake Bolsena (Delpino 1977; Pacciarelli 1991b, 172; 1994, 236-237; 2001, 131) and included a dispersed occupation on lower grounds (Driehaus 1987, Figure 3; Berlingo' 2005, 559). Bisenzio is also distinctive for the burial rite of its cemeteries that is unlike that of other contemporary South Etruscan cemeteries, and for the short duration of its occupation: this ceased at the end of the 6th century for reasons that scholars have linked to the expansion of neighbouring *Volsinii's* territory (Berlingo' 2005, 553-564). At Chiusi, the early Iron Age settlement developed into a sizeable centre of 130 or 140 hectares in the 7th and 6th centuries, and included the low grounds surrounding the high hill where the urban cults were located (Pacciarelli 2001, 131-132); however, the formation of a settlement distinct from its *necropoleis* only occurred at the end of the 7th century (Cappuccini 2008, 65, Figure 15). Other urban centres to the north and interior such as Vetulonia, Volterra, *Volsinii*, were all located on naturally defended high grounds overlooking fertile plains.

Despite the range of occupation patterns there are two fundamental aspects that characterise Etruscan towns: firstly, the expansion of their cemeteries indicating demographic growth as well as the growing social differentiation that was materialised in burial ritual; in some cases, as at Tarquinia (Iaia 1999, 13-71) and Populonia (Bartoloni 2002), these changes are visible in the early Iron Age. Again, there is a significant range of variation from site to site in the timing and ways in which social differentiation was manifested in burial ritual; this partly depends upon the differing quantity and quality of published data available, and partly with unquestionable differences in ritual practices as identified at Chiusi (Tuck 2012, 54). However, the shift from horizontal to vertical social differentiation is common to virtually all early urban centres: analyses of tomb-groups at different sites (e.g. Iaia 1999) have, in fact, demonstrated a shift between the organization of cemeteries according to family groups to one in which social differentiation, expressed

in burial ritual, is structured and complex (Riva 2010, 29-38). The second aspect shared by all Etruscan urban settlements is their location in a resource-rich landscape, regardless of their particular setting, either on the coast or in the interior, on high grounds or lower hills: maximising accessibility to resources, whether mineral, agricultural or maritime, was key to urbanisation, as was accessibility to other settlements and the wider world (Riva 2010, 22). This is common to other forms of urbanization across the Mediterranean: as Osborne (2005, 12-13) argued for Greek urbanization, this accessibility allowed urban communities to exploit resources and communication for economic and political ends. The exchange network that this engendered also affected non-urban settlements across Central Italy (Riva 2010, 179-188).

Urban beginnings and ritual foundations

An emphasis on urban networks in Etruria parallels recent studies on Mediterranean urbanization and colonization that have been influenced by network thinking and the post-colonial turn taking place in historical and social sciences over the last decade (e.g. Cunliffe and Osborne 2005; Malkin 2011; cf. Fulminante & Stoddart 2010). Within Etruscology, on the other hand, this last decade has seen a significant trend towards relating urban beginnings to ritual acts of foundation identified in newly-excavated data. Two concurrent developments may be responsible for this: firstly, Etruscologists have been increasingly interested in the early Iron Age which had been largely the proto-historian's field of expertise. Testimony to this is the heavy investment into the excavation of Tarquinia (Bonghi Jovino and Chiaramonte-Trere' 1997; Chiaramonte-Trere' 1999; Bonghi Jovino 2001a). Continuing excavations there and elsewhere have produced striking new results, upon which only nowadays are we able to reflect (Sgubini Moretti 2005). The second development are the equally impressive results from Carandini's excavations in Rome (Carafa 2000 for a brief overview), where foundation rituals have been identified in foundation pits near Iron Age huts on the Cermalus hill (Brocato 1997) and underneath a wooden entrance of the first fortification walls of the Palatine (Carandini 1997, 503; Brocato 2000). In interpreting Rome's urbanization from these results, Carandini has upheld Romulus' foundation rites, known from later Roman sources, as historically truthful; according to him, these rites sealed Rome's proto-urban phase in the second half of the 8th century (Carandini 1997, 251-257, 491-520; Carandini 2011 for an overview). All this has stimulated a growing dialogue between early Rome archaeologists and Etruscologists in the study of foundation rituals, and has prompted the latter to use Roman ancient sources to interpret Etruscan evidence. I shall turn to this evidence in order to understand these rituals by concentrating on two key south Etruscan sites, Veii and Tarquinia.

Veii

Veii is a typical south Etruscan centre developing on a large plateau with its cemeteries located on adjacent terraces (Figure 3). Like other sites in the region, there is evidence of occupation on nearby terraces at the end of the Bronze Age (Pacciarelli 2001, 159). The key early Iron Age evidence comes from Piazza d'Armi, the southern offshoot of the main plateau. Here, excavation of the western sector revealed a male adult inhumation trench surrounded by small post holes (Bartoloni 2002-2003; 2006; 2007-2008). The grave, radio-carbon dated to 940-810 BC, had no grave-goods except for a bronze fibula and an *impasto* fragment, and was unusual for its orientation and ritual at a time when cremation was the norm. North-west of the burial was a small pit containing burnt animal remains, and also encircled by post holes. According to the excavator, the post-holes indicate an elliptical hut structure covering burial and pit, with a north-west

entrance overlooking the main plateau. This structure and other coeval huts found in earlier excavations are probably the earliest settlement on Piazza d'Armi that was ritually marked by the exceptional burial, which, according to Bartoloni (2007-2008, 828-829), held the body of an eminent personage. In the second half of the 8th century, a wooden rectangular building replaced the earlier hut, indicating the need to preserve the original site (Bartoloni 2007-2008, 823). More recently, another inhumation burial, dated to the end of the 9th century at the latest, was found inside an early Iron Age hut associated with a pottery kiln not far from the North-West gate: the burial contained an adult female inhumation, a bronze fibula and a ring, and was protected from the Archaic city walls (Boitani, Neri and Biagi 2007-2008). The investigation of the layout of two roads has linked the position of the male inhumation to the road system that was put in place in the middle of the 7th century, indicating a first regular division of space that consisted of orthogonal boundaries tracing regular plots (Bartoloni, Acconcia and Kortenaar 2005). That this was the heart of the settlement and probably residence of elite groups is also gauged from previous archaeological finds (Bartoloni 2003, 17-19; Bartoloni, Acconcia and Kortenaar 2005, 77).

The 2002 excavations of this area of Piazza d'Armi also uncovered two parallel furrows at the edges of the secondary road, which are earlier than the ashlar masonry blocks used to organize the urban space. The north-east end of the furrows were marked by two pits dug at the intersection with the crossing road; these pits were associated with the deposition of a red *impasto olla* containing fragments of a dark *impasto* chalice (Bartoloni, Acconcia and Kortenaar 2005, 81). Bartoloni (2003, 16; Bartoloni, Acconcia, and Kortenaar 2005, 75) has interpreted these remains as evidence of the *sulcus primigenius*: this is part of Romulus' foundation of Rome, attributed to the foundation of Etruscan cities by Roman later sources, and now linked to the 8th-century finds in Rome itself (Carandini 2006, 150–156; cf. Mastrocinque 2000, 55-56). In order to assess the validity of these claim, let us reflect carefully upon these sources.

According to Varro (Ling. 5, 143) and Plutarch (Rom. 1.11), the Romans considered their foundation rites to be Etruscan in origins; Etruscan teachings concerning these rites were contained in the *libri rituales* (Festus, 285) and the *libri tagetici* (cf. Colonna 2004, 305). The *libri tagetici* recorded the teachings of Tages, a prophetic child figure, which was born from the ploughed earth at Tarquinia, according to Cicero (*De Div.* 2.50-51.23). A much later source, Johannes Lydus (*De ostentis* 2.6.B), writing in the 6th century AD, also related the myth to Tarquinia, claiming that the man who ploughed Tages into being was Tarchon, the city founder: Lydus also claims that Tages imparted his teaching to Tarchon and these were then recorded in writing. Dominique Briquel (1997, 115-118, 148 footnote 1) has argued that this emphasis on received scriptures disclose an intent, by these later sources, to establish a deliberate parallel with early Christianity that was also based on revealed and recorded prophecy. While Briquel's suggestion may be correct, it is significant that a single source only, Macrobius' *Saturnalia* (5.19.13), dated to the late 4th/early 5th century AD, relates the *libri tagetici* to the ritual foundation of cities; most other sources, notably Cicero (*De divinatione* 2.50-51.23), claim that Tages' teachings dealt with *haruspicina*, the reading of divine will from observing a sacrificed animal's entrail, or Etruscan *disciplina* more generally.

Another source of evidence used for investigating the myth of Tages is iconographic and consists of figured representations on a series of 3rd/4th-century scarabs (Figure 4) and an often cited 3rd-century bronze mirror from Tuscania (Figure 5); a closer look at this evidence, however, reveals that the myth has little to do with urban foundations (Briquel 1991, 156-157; cf. De Grummond 2006, 28-32). On the mirror, a youth, named *pava tarchies* by the inscription, is surrounded by an older man, *avl tarchunus*, a god named *veltune* and other figures; he is represented as a *haruspex* in the act of observing an animal

liver. On the basis of the inscriptions, Pallottino (1979) identified the youth with Tages and *avl tarchunus* with Tarchon; while others have rejected and revised this interpretation (van der Meer 1995, 98-100), one may reasonably suggest that the evidence is not sufficient to accept one or other interpretation. All we can do is recognizing, on the mirror, a representation of *etrusca disciplina* in action (De Grummond 2000, 31-32). I will come back to Tages shortly.

Roman foundation rites involved the augurs who determined the will of the gods through the observation of various natural phenomena and, through the taking of auspices, instructed the city founder where to plough the *sulcus primigenius*; as described in detail by Plutarch in reference to Romulus' founding of Rome (Rom. 11, 3, 5), a second line, formed by the clods removed and placed on the inner side of the *sulcus*, marked the *pomerium* where the walls would be erected (Briquel 2000). No Roman writer claims augury to have Etruscan origins (cf. Carandini 2006, 150), and we cannot establish whether augury in Rome was influenced by Etruscan divination. Nor, unfortunately, can we make any informed assertion on the Etruscan origin of the *sulcus primigenius* or, indeed, on the Etruscan origin of divination in Rome (Scheid 2003, 12). It seems then plausible, as others have noted in regard to early Rome (Cf. Smith 2011, 26, 35, 42), not to take Roman ancient sources at face value when they claim the Etruscan origins of Rome's foundation (*contra* Colonna 2004; Briquel 2000). It is also worth reflecting on the suggestion that the Romans' attribution of particular rites associated with *haruspicina* to the Etruscans had more to do with the way in which the Romans differentiated types of skills and authority in their religion than with any genuine Etruscan origins of these rites (Beard, North and Price 1998, 19-20). Most importantly, Romulus' rites as recounted by the sources may have, in fact, pertained to the foundation of Roman *coloniae*, but were later referred to Rome's foundation (Beard, North and Price 1998, 329; Mastrocinque 2000, 55). Others have instead argued that Romulus' foundation rite is a conflation of Latin rites, *auspicia* and *auguria*, with Etruscan ones, including the *sulcus primigenius* (Colonna 2004, 305; cf. Carandini 2006, 150). Maintaining circumspection towards the sources does not imply that we have no other evidence for Etruscan foundation rituals; it is nevertheless difficult to sustain that the archaeological evidence of Rome, read through ancient sources, confirms the Etruscan origins of some of its foundation rituals and that, in turn, those very rituals can be identified in the archaeological evidence of Etruscan sites such as *Veii*.

Tarquinia

The urban formation of Tarquinia is similar to *Veii*'s (Riva 2010, 23-25), but was also marked by the building, in the course of the 8th century, of a monumental sacred complex, the Civita complex (Figure 6). This complex was preceded in the Late Bronze Age (10th century BC in traditional chronology) by votive pits, and a cultic natural cavity in the rock containing offerings that was later respected by the users of the area, and may have been a foundation pit (Bonghi Jovino 2010, 163). Linked to this cavity was a contemporary hut structure where cultic activities were carried out (Bonghi Jovino 1997, 146-149; 2001b, 73-90; 2001c: 21). Late Bronze Age occupation has also been identified on the Castellina hill, an offshoot of the main plateau (Mandolesi 1999: 100-112).

On Civita, a rectangular area near the cavity, known as *area alpha*, was fenced off and was theatre to various ritual activities including the inhumation of a brain-damaged and epileptic child between the end of the 9th and the early 8th century: the excavator has interpreted this burial as a highly-charged ritual act (Bonghi Jovino 1997, 158-159; 2010, 165). From the middle of the 8th century, stone blocks replaced the fence of the enclosure; stone structures were erected around the cavity, and an altar was probably

constructed. Various layers of burning, votive pits and remains of ritual meals and animal offerings document wide-spread ritual activities (Bonghi Jovino 1997, 160-164). The burial of an adult male, placed in a natural hollow of the rock on the border of the sacred area with no grave goods save for a Euboian-type jug, has been interpreted an act of human sacrifice (Bonghi Jovino 2001c, 24; 2010, 166). At the end of the 8th century, three infants were also buried in the open air. At the beginning of the 7th century, the area east of the cavity was given a new layout: a stone monumental building, building *beta*, consisting of two rooms with a bench-altar and a small drain, was erected (Bonghi-Jovino 1997, 167-169; 2001c, 25; 2010, 168-171); another infant burial was placed under the north wall of the building during its construction. The east-west orientation of this temple-altar was different from that of *area alpha*, probably indicating new religious meanings given to the area. Towards the middle of the 7th century, two precinct walls and a terracotta roof were added to this building *beta*, which thus became the centre of the complex (Bonghi Jovino 1997, 179-180; 2001c, 26). A votive deposit of three bronze objects, a *lituus*/trumpet, a shield and an axe head that had been ritually 'killed', and eating and drinking equipment were placed in two pits at the entrance of the building; whilst the bronze objects had a ritual and ceremonial function, the vessels, the presence of animal bones and traces of burning are all evidence of a ritual banquet dating to the construction phase of the building (Bonghi Jovino 1997, 172-175; 2000). Other burials took place in the area down to the 6th century.

At the heart and at the margins of settlements

Some scholars (de Grummond 2006, 28), including the site director herself (Bonghi Jovino 2010, 165), have related the burial of the brain damaged child at Civita to the myth of Tages. De Grummond, in particular, has linked this burial to the bronze objects, symbols of political power and elite status: Roman sources, she contends, claim that Etruscan kings, the *lucumones*, were responsible for the transmission of Tages' teachings (De Grummond 2006, 27). As fitting to the archaeology as this argument may be, however, it is one based on an insufficiency of evidence conflated from late Roman sources, as I have tried to outline above. My argument therefore is two-fold: firstly, while we need to be extremely cautious of 'mapping archaeological finds onto the literary record' (Smith 2011, 38; Torelli 2011, 28-32), the archaeological evidence available today has revealed such a complex picture of ritual activities that no Roman source can match. We do not need Rome, in other words, to imagine how Etruscan urbanism came to be. The evidence from *Vei* and particularly Tarquinia may be prominent thanks to the long-term efforts put in the excavation of these sites, but we have evidence from elsewhere showing that ritual acts, when taken together, are equally notable. Secondly, it is difficult to interpret these rituals as pertaining to urban foundations primarily because, as emphasised before (Smith 2011, 35), the concept of city foundation is a slippery one. The religious function of the Civita complex, for example, is evidently undisputable, and some well-documented rites may be convincingly interpreted as foundation rites, but this prompts a key question: what is the foundation about? Did the rites at the Civita mark the foundation of the city or of the complex itself in its various stages of transformation? Evidence of foundation rituals elsewhere elicits similar questions. At Populonia, a bronze hoard, possibly dated to the 8th century and found at Falda della Guardiola near the Hellenistic city walls, may attest to a foundation ritual marking the town boundaries traced by the later walls (Bartoloni 2004, 247). The hoard, however, must also be interpreted in conjunction with other contemporary or near-contemporary rituals taking place in the settlement; in particular, we now know of what was probably a collective wine-drinking ritual following the intentional abandonment of a rectangular elite hut that

took place in the first quarter of the 7th century at the south-east end of Poggio del Telegrafo, documented by the deposit of almost one hundred *kyathoi* and a dark *impasto olla* in a pit cut near the post-holes of the hut (Bartoloni and Acconcia 2007). Beside this association, the hoard may also be connected to the contemporary end of an isolated burial ground at Poggio del Telegrafo itself (Cambi and Acconcia 2011, 6).

At Populonia, as at *Veii*, Tarquinia and elsewhere (cf. Carafa 2007-2008 for an overview), a complex range of ritual acts, each pertaining to precise contexts of use (e.g. a earthenwork or wall, a door, a building's destruction, a cult area), took place in the early phases of urbanization and therefore must be understood within that background. However, rather than singling out specific rites as acts of urban foundation, it would be more helpful to consider all of these rites as evidence of newly urbanised communities undergoing rapid social and political change, which could generate conflict and social stress, as Vanzetti (2007-2008) has suggested in his analysis of early Iron Age intra-mural burials. We should also examine these rites in conjunction with others taking place at the physical boundaries of the city, the cemeteries, where burial practices became increasingly elaborate in the course of the 8th century. While it is important to emphasize the diversity in the range of burial rites and temporal development of each cemetery across Etruria, the increasing complexity and monumentalisation of the cemeterial space, the changing tomb structures and grave-goods deposited are characteristics common to many urban cemeteries between the 8th and 7th centuries BC (Figure 7); as I have argued elsewhere (Riva 2010), this evidence indicates an increasing attention to funerary practices, which contributed to the structuring of political relationships taking shape within emerging urban communities. Integrating these practices with the rites that took place at the heart of the settlement helps us understand better the impact of ritual activities in Etruscan urbanization. Foundation rituals, however, occurred throughout the history of urbanism in Etruria as elsewhere in Italy and other Mediterranean regions (cf. Brocato 2000, 154-158); in Etruria, by the 6th century and later, these rituals were, in fact, highly codified, as attested by the monumental cultic area on the acropolis of Marzabotto in Etruria Padana, which was linked to the town's orthogonal plan. Here, the earliest known structure, the altar/well B, has been interpreted as a *mundus*, an underground space that linked the world of the living with the underground world and its chthonic deities (Vitali 2001, 28-34). Altars similarly devoted to chthonian cults are also known at other Archaic sanctuaries (cf. list in Colonna 2004, 307).

Conclusion

Over the last thirty years, we have come to a clearer understanding of Etruscan urbanization than it has ever been possible before: the picture of an early process beginning at the end of the Bronze Age with the stable occupation of hills or vast tablelands that would become the future cities is no longer contested. Scholars have recently focused on the early phases of urbanization and the ritual activities occurring alongside it. By integrating these activities to all ritual practices taking place both at the heart and boundaries of towns we can begin to shift our focus from foundation acts and events, as recounted by later Roman sources, towards the cumulative impact of the long-term political process underlying urbanism. By that I mean a process at the centre of which is the politicization of social relations within growing urban communities, that took place, we can only surmise, not without conflict; the ritual arena was an appropriate space where such conflict was negotiated. How we can read the archaeological record of Etruscan urbanization vis-à-vis Roman sources remains a critical matter, but the recent emphasis on foundation rites seems to be the result of a disproportionate concern with what the texts tell us in order to interpret the archaeology; what the texts tell us, however, has more to do with the foundation of Roman *coloniae* than it has with

Etruscan urbanization. The picture afforded by the archaeology, on the other hand, is much richer than what we may reconstruct from literary sources.

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Suggestions for further reading:

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Biographical note

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NOTE FOR COPYEDITOR: British English spelling was used in this chapter

ⁱ The Roman school of Italian proto-history was developed around the studies and teaching of Renato Peroni who instituted the first chair of European proto-history at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' in 1963 and established a scholarly tradition of studies on the Italian Bronze and Iron Ages that was inspired by Continental European archaeology and the studies of Müller-Karpe

ⁱⁱ The expression is d'Agostino's (1998)