

confirmed by names of Etruscans scratched on pottery from the cemetery. It is possible that an Etruscan with a first name of Venel, who was active in southern France in the fifth century and involved in a transaction recorded on a fragmentary lead tablet found at Pech-Maho, was an entrepreneur from here; at any rate it has been argued that the script tallies with Alérian inscriptions.⁵⁶

Expansion in Italy

Servius, in his commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid* (11.567) wrote that 'nearly all Italy was under the domination of the Etruscans'. That was never literally true, though Etruscan influence must have been felt far and wide. It was certainly felt at Rome, where there were generations of Etruscan kings, though Rome was never an Etruscan city and the bulk of the population remained Roman and Latin-speaking. According to the Roman annalists, the Tarquin dynasty lasted from 616 to 509 BC, but some modern authorities would place its beginning later: Cornell, for example, argues for a date towards the middle of the sixth century.⁵⁷ What is at stake here is whether or not the Etruscans were a major influence on Rome's early urbanization, for it is during the period traditionally assigned to the Tarquins that Rome for the first time took on the trappings and amenities of a major urban centre, with big temples and planned public spaces; by the end of the period, its outward appearance was in the same league as the larger cities of Etruria and Greece. Rome's power and prestige in the sixth century were very considerable, as comes across in the catalogue to the vast exhibition held in Rome in 1990 documenting early Roman material culture as uncovered by excavation.⁵⁸ The organizers of the show followed the traditional chronology, as is clear from their title – *La grande Roma dei Tarquini*.

It may have been before the period of the Etruscan dynasty at Rome that bands of Etruscans began to push further south to colonize the rich lands of Campania, the culture of which in the Early Iron Age and Orientalizing phase had been closely related to that of Etruria itself – indeed, from indications given by Velleius Paterculus, they may even have founded Capua around 800 BC. The scripts of the graffiti on pottery suggest that the coastal southern cities such as Pontecagnano and Fratte were reached by sea from coastal southern

56 Cristofani, 1995

57 Cornell, 1995: 126. For a contrary view: Rasmussen, 1997

58 Cristofani, 1990

Etruria, but the push towards the inland northern centres such as Capua and Nola seems to have been made overland from the area around Veii.⁵⁹ The ancient sources speak of an Etruscan league of Campanian cities, but major centralized control seems unlikely,⁶⁰ and although the Etruscans may have provided the leaders, the populations of the individual settlements are likely to have been of mixed stock: Etruscan, Greek, Italic. Such seems to have been the make-up of early Pompeii, where an Etruscan presence is proved by graffiti on *bucchero*. The Etruscan influx into Campania included craftsmen, notably potters who set up *bucchero* workshops at Capua and elsewhere⁶¹ and Etrusco-Corinthian workshops at Pontecagnano.

A similarly loose political system may have existed in the Po valley, where the major settlements were at Bologna and Mantua. To this area Etruscans from northern Etruria brought the initial impulse towards urbanization, which is best seen at Marzabotto (see chapter 5, p. 156), and which around Bologna replaced the essentially village culture of the Villanovan Iron Age. Here already at the end of the seventh century there were Etruscan-speakers,⁶² but most inscriptions from around the Po are of the following two centuries; few have been found in context, with the notable exception of those excavated at Bagnolo San Vito.⁶³ The east coast towns of Adria and Spina were Etruscan-controlled trading emporia where Etruscans and Greeks seem to have lived and worked in close co-operation, and through which enormous numbers of Greek goods, especially painted pots, were channelled into the interior of northern Italy (see chapter 6).

The Etruscans suffered reversals of fortune in these new areas of settlement already at the end of the sixth century, first at Rome, from where the Tarquins were expelled in 509 BC, and then in Latium, where a major Etruscan force was defeated a few years later at Aricia by a combined army of Latins and Cumaean Greeks. In Campania, relations with the Greeks worsened, culminating in the defeat of an Etruscan fleet off Cumae in 474 BC at the hands of the Greeks of Cumae and Syracuse. So the Campanian Etruscans became further isolated; but in the north, the urban settlements of the Po valley suffered a series of incursions from the Gauls, and many of them, including Marzabotto, were abandoned in the fourth century.

59 Cristofani, 1979b: 384

60 Frederiksen, 1984: 126

61 Rasmussen, 1986

62 C. Morigi Govi in Cristofani, 1985a: 87

63 Pandolfini, 1988

5

Settlement and Territory

Probably in Etruscan days it was much the same, but there must have been far more people on the land, and probably there were many little straw huts, little temporary houses, among the green corn: and fine roads, such as the Etruscans taught the Romans to build, went between the hills: and the high black walls, with towers, wound along the hill-crest.

D.H. Lawrence (1932) *Etruscan Places*

Introduction

Our understanding of Etruscan settlement is still far less comprehensive than we would wish. Until a generation ago, most discussions of Etruscan settlement largely had to have recourse to two sets of indirect evidence: the comments made by later Greek and Roman writers (the biases of which will be all too clear from the discussion in chapter 3); and the inferences that could be drawn from the location, architecture and contents of Etruscan tombs. The astonishing riches of the Etruscan cemeteries inevitably created a research tradition which focused on the aristocracy, rather than on Etruscan society as a whole. The development of Roman, medieval and modern cities on top of several of the major Etruscan sites – Orvieto (fig. 50) is a good example of this phenomenon – made the investigation of their layout and organization a daunting proposition. Such urban excavation as had taken place was limited largely to clearance operations in the monumental centres, rather than stratigraphic excavation of domestic or industrial areas. Knowledge of settlement in the countryside was even more rudimentary. In retrospect, much of the oft-quoted ‘mystery of the Etruscans’ was largely a product of the bias in the history of archaeological research in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: most Etruscans were more invisible than mysterious!



Figure 50 Oriente: a typical location of an Etruscan city, occupied from Etruscan times to the present day. (Photograph: G. Barker)

As this chapter describes, however, the picture has been transformed by archaeological research since the 1970s, many of the most significant results coming from field projects that have either been completed very recently or are still in progress. Whilst we still know all too little about the internal appearance of the major centres, the domestic landscape of the Etruscans can be described with increasing confidence both in terms of the structure and appearance of the major classes of settlement type, and in terms of their regional diversity.

The Etruscan settlement hierarchy

The Etruscan settlement system was of course dominated by the major centres of population, the cities. There seem to have been about fifteen major centres between the Arno and the Tiber (see figure 4, chapter 1): (from north to south) Faesulae (Fiesole) above Florence in the middle Arno valley; Volaterrae (Volterra) in the north Tuscan hills; Arretium (Arezzo), Cortona and Clusium (Chiusi) in the Val di Chiana; in Umbria, Perusia (Perugia) in the upper Tiber valley and Orvieto in the basin of the Paglia valley near its junction with the middle Tiber; Populonia, Vetulonia and Rusellae (Roselle) on the Tuscan Maremma; and on the volcanic lowlands of southern Etruria, Vulci in the lower Fiora valley, Tarquinii (Tarquinia) in the lower Marta valley, Caere (Cerveteri) and Veii south of Lake Bracciano.

The major Etruscan cities of southern Etruria, which, as chapter 2 described, had all been significant population centres from Villanovan times, were – in terms of their size at least – at the top of a distinct settlement hierarchy, each measuring some 200–300 ha.¹ The next level of settlement consisted of minor centres, a few of which, such as Falerii Veteres, Acquarossa, Nepi, Castel d'Asso and Narce, were between 100 and 10 ha in size, but most of which (more than forty) were between 10 and 2 ha. There was also a clear settlement hierarchy in northern Etruria, but without such dramatic differences between the larger and smaller centres. Further north in the Po valley, there are similar indications of settlement hierarchy, with major sites such as Felsina (modern Bologna) and the Adriatic port of Spina in the upper level and sites such as Bagnolo San Vito, Casalecchio di Reno, San Polo d'Enza and Voghiera in the

1 Judson and Hemphill, 1981

intermediate level. Some scholars argue that Felsina was a regional capital at the top of the hierarchy.

Throughout the Etruscan world, on the evidence of a number of intensive programmes of field-walking, there was a variety of still smaller settlements below the minor centres. Some of these measured about a hectare, but most measured less than 50×50 m in their surface remains. These can probably be interpreted as hamlets and farms. The discovery of these sites – where the majority of Etruscans probably lived – has been one of the most important results of modern archaeological research in Etruria.

The first indications of the density of Etruscan rural settlement were provided by the British School at Rome's survey of part of the Ager Veientanus, the territory of the city of Veii, in the 1950s and 1960s. Teams of students traversed the fields every autumn after ploughing, picking up the archaeological artefacts they could see on the surface, mainly pieces of tile and pottery. In this way they were able to map the distribution of ancient sites preserved as discrete concentrations of artefacts, normally in dense scatters some 50–100 m in diameter. The distribution of sites with *bucchero* pottery was astonishingly dense: 137, compared with sixteen sites with Villanovan pottery in the same area. The evidence suggested that the development of the Etruscan city coincided with an extraordinary population explosion in the countryside as well.² Comparable regional studies were undertaken by the British School around Sutri, Narce and Capena.³ Whilst there were regional variations in the data (in part probably due to different search and collection methods), the total number of sites rose from seventy-nine Villanovan to 314 early Etruscan (fig. 51).⁴

Further confirmation that this density of rural settlement was the rule rather than the exception has been provided by regional field-walking surveys conducted in recent years. Our own survey of the countryside around Tuscania, for example, has provided significant new information about the remarkable density and complexity of rural settlement around this minor Etruscan centre, which was probably within the political sphere of the city of Tarquinia.⁵ We investigated a circular territory with a radius of 10 km centred on the San Pietro acropolis, an area which we regarded as large enough to have encompassed the likely territory of the town in antiquity, given

2 Potter, 1979; Ward-Perkins et al., 1968a

3 Sutri: Duncan, 1958; Narce: Potter, 1979; Capena: Jones, 1962, 1963

4 Potter, 1979: 74

5 Barker and Rasmussen, 1988; Barker et al., 1993; Rasmussen, 1991