

with few social divisions within individual communities or within regional groups.

The Late Bronze Age, c.1300–900 BC: the first chiefdoms?

The Late Bronze Age, the period between c.1300 and 900 BC, marked the first crucial phase in the transition between village and state societies in Etruria. It seems likely that before the Late Bronze Age the high-status individuals we can discern in the archaeological record had generally achieved their status by their actions, rather than by birthright. In contrast, the Late Bronze Age – particularly by its later stages (the Final Bronze Age in the Italian chronological system, dated c.1100–900 BC) – provides consistent and repeated indications of a limited but nonetheless concrete hierarchy. There are also clear signs of significant demographic increase and economic intensification. Put together, they imply the development of the chiefdom societies from which Etruscan state societies swiftly developed.

Settlement trends have been closely studied in the Albegna and Fiora valleys:⁵¹ whereas middle bronze age settlement spanned all parts of the topography from valley floor to hilltop with few preferences for particular situations, more than two thirds of the late bronze age settlements are on bluffs and hilltops overlooking the rivers, often narrow *tufo* promontories with steep ground on three sides making them easily defensible (fig. 21). In the Sabine hills, there was much the same trend.⁵² Despite the shift, however, there are few signs of defence works being constructed. Caves were almost entirely abandoned as occupation sites, except perhaps as seasonal pastoral camps.

As di Gennaro⁵³ has pointed out, the distribution of the main late bronze age settlements in much of southern Etruria is remarkably regular: if all the land is divided between them, most sites have a territory of about 10 km² (fig. 22). He estimated populations between 100 and 1000, given the average size of outcrop of 4–5 ha. However, virtually none of these sites has been investigated in detail, and where one has been (the Luni acropolis), the area of settlement shown by surface remains and excavation was far smaller than the total area available.⁵⁴ Presumably average populations were nearer

51 Miari, 1987

52 Angle et al., 1982

53 di Gennaro, 1982, 1986, 1988

54 Östenberg, 1967

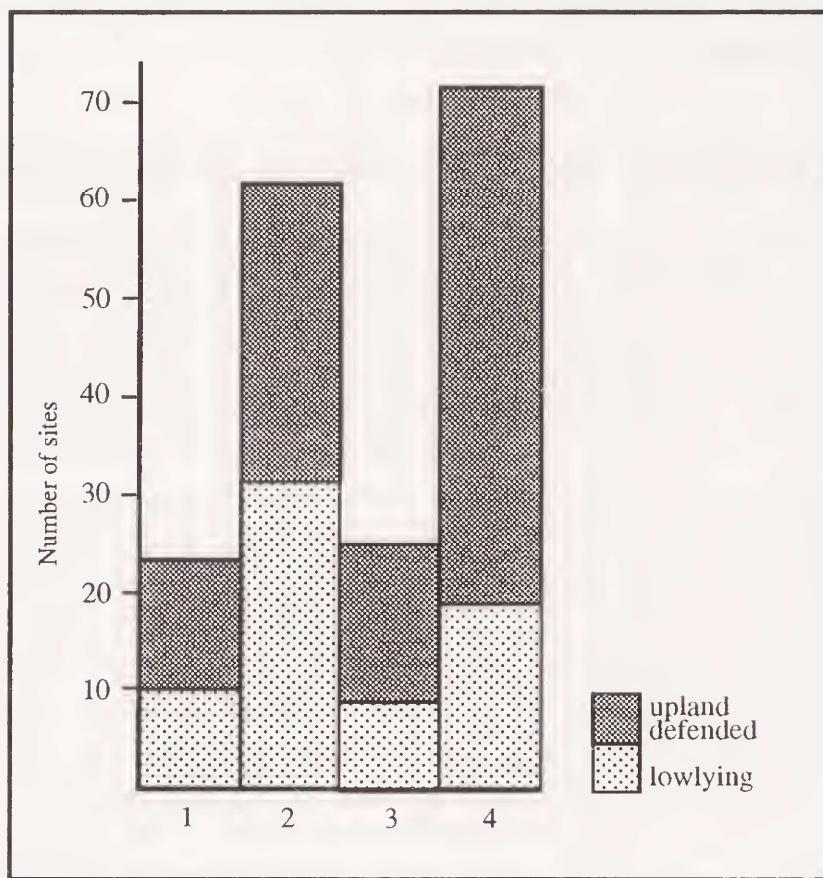


Figure 21 Topographical distributions of bronze age sites in Etruria: 1 early bronze age; 2 middle bronze age; 3 late bronze age; 4 final bronze age. (Adapted from Barker and Stoddart, 1994 and Miari, 1987)

100 than 1000. Moreover, we should probably not exaggerate the process of nucleation indicated by the crude distribution maps of known settlements. When intensive field-walking on a systematic basis was applied to the postulated territory of one of the 'major' late bronze age settlements in figure 22, the San Pietro acropolis of Tuscania, we found more than a dozen small sites contemporary with the San Pietro settlement, some on low hills, some in streamside positions on valley bottoms and some on the intervening slopes.⁵⁵ Field survey indicates similar distributions around the late bronze age settlement of Narce.⁵⁶ Undoubtedly the process of nucleation that was to develop into full Etruscan urbanization had begun in this period, but the countryside was certainly not denuded of its population.

55 Barker and Rasmussen, 1988; Barker et al., 1993

56 Potter, 1979: 59

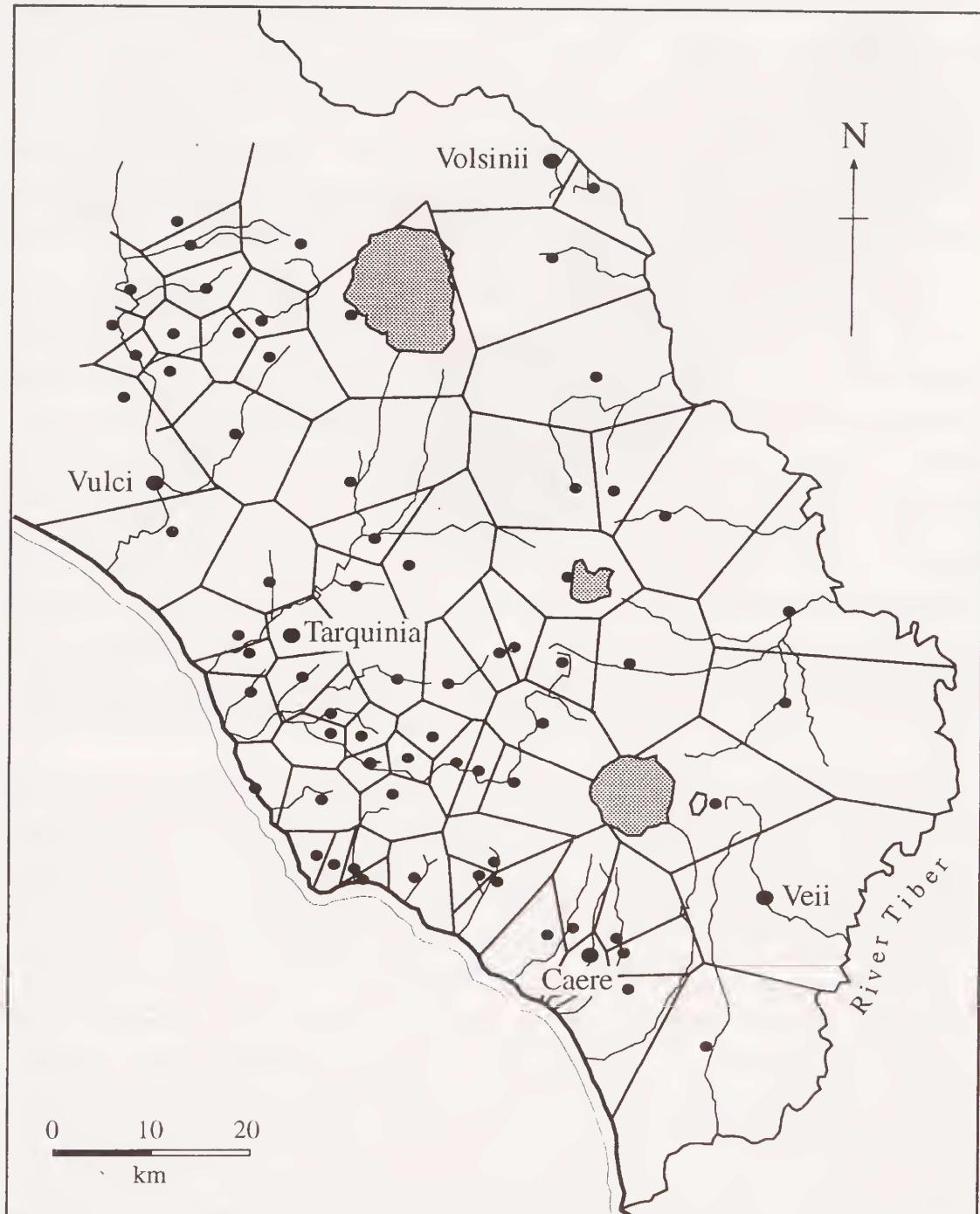


Figure 22 *The distribution of major late bronze age settlements in Etruria, with hypothetical territories ('Thiessen polygons'). (Adapted from di Gennaro, 1982)*

In northern Etruria, by contrast, surveys indicate far lower settlement densities and no evidence for settlement hierarchies in the Late Bronze Age,⁵⁷ except perhaps around Monte Cetona.⁵⁸ Much the same is true of the intermontane basins such as Gubbio.⁵⁹ In the Gubbio basin the shift to hilltop locations began in the Middle Bronze Age, and there was then an expansion of settlement during the Late Bronze Age, both along the hills overlooking the basin and down to the lower slopes.

Although there are few signs of elaborate political hierarchization at this time, it is tempting to suggest that central sites in southern Etruria like San Pietro, Luni and Narce acted as foci of some kind for the small sites in their hinterland, as Pacciarelli has argued in the case of Luni.⁶⁰ Certainly it must be significant that all of these, like so many of the other acropolis settlements in figure 22, continued as local centres into the Etruscan period. We also have to bear in mind that we know little about the extent of settlement at this time on the sites of the major Etruscan cities: late bronze age material has been found in recent years at most of the major Etruscan sites in southern Etruria such as Bisenzio, Cerveteri, Orvieto, Tarquinia and Veii,⁶¹ and it is conceivable that Etruscan urban sites had quite substantial late bronze age occupations.

By far the best evidence for internal organization in the major late bronze age settlements is from Sorgenti della Nova, a 15-ha *tufo* outcrop in the Fiora valley (fig. 23).⁶² On the top of the hill there were rock-cut pits interpreted as hut foundations, and along an artificial terrace cut into the hillside was a series of small oval huts, each measuring some 10 × 5 m, surviving as rock-cut depressions and post-holes. Artificial caves near the huts were also used for domestic activities on the evidence of midden deposits and hearths. The excavators argue that the community was stratified socially, the elite living in the huts on the hilltop and the commoners on the hillside.⁶³ They may be right, though there seem to be few if any differences in the structural evidence and cultural residues. On the other hand, the high frequency of pig at the site may be significant:

57 Barker and Symonds, 1984; Barker et al., 1986; Tracchi, 1978

58 Cipolloni, 1971

59 Malone and Stoddart, 1984, 1986, 1994

60 Pacciarelli, 1982

61 Bonghi Jovino, 1986b; Cardarelli et al., 1980; di Gennaro, 1986; Fugazzola Delpino and Delpino, 1979

62 Negroni Catacchio, 1981, 1986, 1989

63 Negroni Catacchio, 1989; Negroni Catacchio and Domanico, 1986

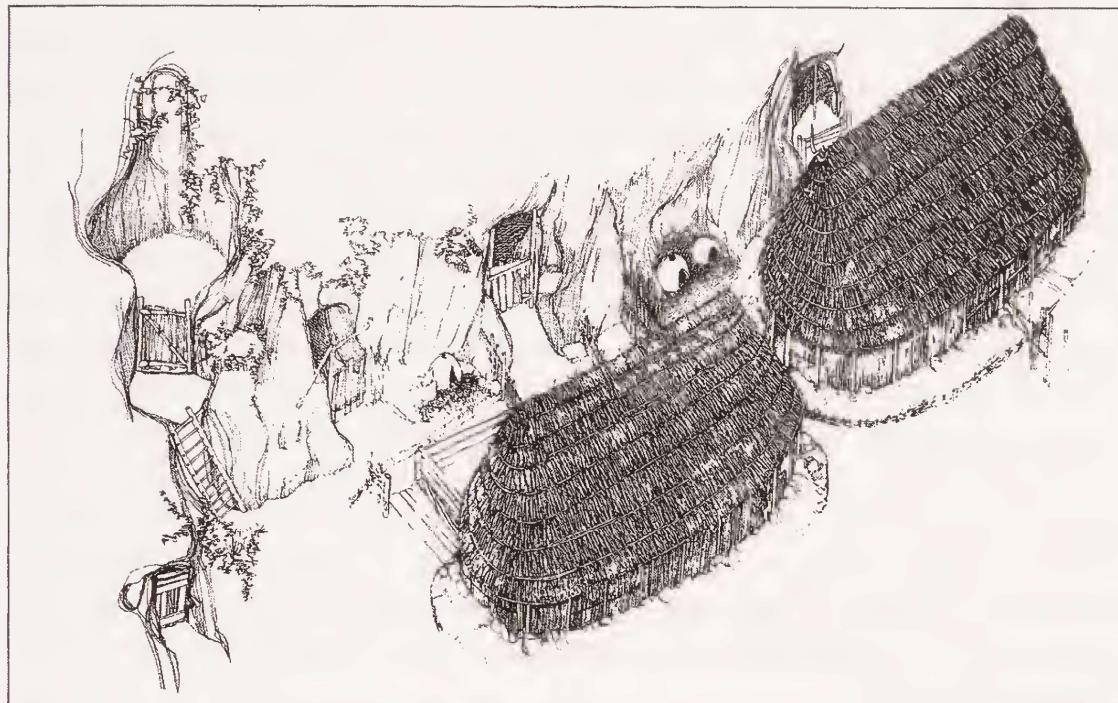


Figure 23 Sorgenti della Nova: a reconstruction of part of the late bronze age settlement. (Reproduced with kind permission of N. Negroni Catacchio)

as we described in chapter 1, it is something of a luxury to keep an animal that only provides meat – in Britain, for example, prehistoric, Roman and medieval sites identified on other grounds as being of high status very often have high frequencies of pig.⁶⁴ Monte Rovello, another major settlement, had a large central building measuring some 12×8 m, cut into the rock to a depth of up to 3 m.⁶⁵

It does at least seem clear that a ‘central place’ settlement such as Sorgenti della Nova was significantly different in its scale from the small sites in the countryside. Torrionaccio, for example, which is in the vicinity of Sorgenti della Nova, probably consisted of a cluster of small huts.⁶⁶ At Narce, the hut settlement of the Middle Bronze Age was succeeded in the Late Bronze Age by rectangular huts on stone footings, probably enclosed within a timber stockade.⁶⁷

The development of some kind of settlement hierarchy coincided with significant changes in economy. There is evidence for intensification in the agricultural system in the form of new crops.⁶⁸

64 Grant, 1988, 1989

65 Biancofiore and Toti, 1973

66 Cassano and Manfredini, 1978

67 Potter, 1976

68 Follieri, 1981; Jarman, 1976

Locational studies indicate that many lowland sites were positioned to have easy access to increased areas of arable soils.⁶⁹ An expansion in arable cultivation is registered in the pollen diagrams.⁷⁰ Animal secondary products were increasingly important,⁷¹ and there may have been diversification and specialization: sheep are the most frequent stock at Narce and Torrionaccio, cattle at Luni and Monte Rovello, pig at Sorgenti della Nova.⁷² The amount of metal in circulation increased dramatically, as did the range of types, produced now consistently in tin bronze.⁷³ New settlement clusters developed around the metal ores, suggesting that control of mineral resources was increasingly critical.⁷⁴ Many of the objects produced were items of dress and display such as dress and cloak pins, but there were also effective tools and weapons such as axes, knives and sickles. Flint became more or less redundant as the manufacture of small tools like chisels, blades and needles resulted in dramatic advancements in the technologies for working other materials such as wood, bone and textiles.

Although Mycenaean trading posts and perhaps colonies were established on the southern coasts of the Italian peninsula from the fourteenth century BC, Etruria was at the very end of the exchange network and there is no evidence that it was in direct contact with Mycenaeans.⁷⁵ Similarly, the bronze age communities of the Po valley were in trading contact with the communities on the other side of the Alps, but there is little evidence that Etruria was involved in such long-distance commerce. Rather, the artefact distributions emphasize the importance of regional exchange networks in Etruria.⁷⁶

Another significant change in the archaeological record of the Late Bronze Age is the appearance of cremation cemeteries, the beginning of a new way of burial that was to be particularly common in the ensuing centuries. In Etruria, most of the tomb groups are small, in the order of five to fifteen cremations, though there are occasional examples of large cemeteries with up to fifty burials.⁷⁷ It

69 Pacciarelli, 1982

70 Alessio et al., 1986; Frank, 1969; Hunt and Eisner, 1991

71 Barker, 1976; de Grossi Mazzorin, 1995

72 Narce and Torrionaccio: Placidi, 1978; Luni: Gejvall, 1967; Monte Rovello: Caloi et al., 1988; Sorgenti della Nova: Caloi and Palombo, 1981

73 Barker and Slater, 1971; Bietti Sestieri, 1973

74 Giardino, 1984

75 Marazza and Tusa 1976

76 Bietti Sestieri, 1976, 1984b; Stoddart, 1987

77 Bietti Sestieri, 1984b

used to be thought that the appearance of the burial rite marked the arrival of new people from central Europe, where the rite appears first,⁷⁸ but the theory is now discounted. Differences in the burial arrangements (most are in simple pits, others are in stone cists, a few are under mounds) and in the associated gravegoods (most people were buried with one or two pots and metal items, a few were buried with more, some were buried with nothing) make it clear that everybody now was definitely not of the same status. In this respect the funerary archaeology correlates with the settlement archaeology and the evidence of the hoards for unequal access to resources.

In recent and contemporary ethnography, 'chiefdom societies' have been classically defined as 'ranked', with a chief acting as the focus for the economic, social, political and religious activity of the group, a principal role being to act as the permanent central agency of co-ordination for systems of redistribution of goods and services within the chiefdom territory.⁷⁹ The archaeological correlates for the development of chiefdoms have been taken to include larger populations, higher settlement densities, larger residence units, evidence of ranking (most visibly in burials), increased subsistence production, and improved craft specialization and exchange.⁸⁰ As we have seen, the archaeological record for the Late Bronze Age in Etruria contains evidence for all of these changes. We should probably not exaggerate the degree of competitiveness in Etrurian society at this time, but whilst some of the characteristics of recent chiefdoms cannot be discerned, the evidence suggests that Etrurian societies were by now organized within comparable systems of ranking.

The reasons for the emergence of bronze age elites is one of the great debating issues of European prehistory, and where we have the best information of all, the Greek Bronze Age, we are furthest away from consensus. To simplify the theories at the risk of unfairness to their proponents, one extreme view has been that the elites of the Greek Bronze Age developed because they were fundamentally advantageous for their communities in their control of the economy, so people easily acquiesced to their authority.⁸¹ At the other end of the spectrum is the view that these elites were more like the worst feudal barons of medieval times, seizing power (particularly the critical means of production such as ox teams) for their own

78 Hencken, 1968a, 1968b

79 Service, 1962

80 Renfrew, 1972, 1973

81 Renfrew, 1972

ends and exploiting the peasantry for all their worth.⁸² A related theory holds that control over people would have been more important than over any other resources.⁸³ Between such views is the 'social storage' theory that much of the economy stayed at a subsistence level but that a limited public sector developed whereby the commoners were required to pay the elites gifts of agricultural surplus in return for elite assurance of assistance in times of bad harvests.⁸⁴ The role of the elites of late bronze age Etruria could have had any or none of these characteristics. With so little precise data for the organization of the production, distribution and consumption of resources, we can do little more than speculate. But of the existence of comparable elites in Etruria there seems little doubt.

The 'Villanovan' Iron Age, 900–700 BC

The Iron Age of Etruria is usually named 'Villanovan' after a cemetery which Giovanni Gozzadini excavated in 1853 on his land at Caselle near Villanova on the outskirts of Bologna.⁸⁵ From then until very recently, Villanovan cemeteries and their associated rite of cremation have often been taken as evidence for the arrival of a new people in Italy from north of the Alps, archaeological proof of the 'continental' theory of Etruscan origins.⁸⁶ However, as explained above, the consensus now is that the rite of cremation was adopted in late bronze age and iron age Italy, as elsewhere in Europe, in much the same way as it was in Britain or the United States in the twentieth century: the spread of a cultural phenomenon that certainly reflected important developments in ideology and social relations, but not a new people.⁸⁷ In the following discussion, therefore, it is important to remember that Villanovan is simply a descriptive term for the Etrurian Iron Age, not a reference to incoming Villanovans.

Settlement trends

The ninth century BC witnessed profound developments in settlement structure in Etruria, where – at least in the southern part –

82 Bintliff, 1982; Gilman, 1981

83 Webster, 1990

84 Halstead and O'Shea, 1982

85 Bartoloni, 1989a

86 Hencken, 1968a, 1968b

87 Champion et al., 1984

there are signs of a dramatic process of nucleation. Here, the number of major sites (the kind of settlements shown in figure 22, not the very small sites found, for example, in our Tuscania Survey) shrank from about fifty to just over ten. Whereas in the tenth century most sites measured between 1 and 5 ha, with a few measuring 5–15 ha, in the ninth century in southern Etruria five huge centres developed measuring between 100 and 200 ha, followed by a succession of far smaller sites (fig. 24).⁸⁸ South of the Tiber, by contrast, the size-ranking of settlements throughout the tenth and ninth centuries was fundamentally the same as the tenth century pattern in southern Etruria. To the east of southern Etruria, in the Sabine hills, there is no evidence for the dramatic polarization in settlement size suggested for southern Etruria in the ninth century, though the fact that settlement declines at this time have been noted by surveys in the pre-Apennine hills and intermontane basins⁸⁹ has been taken by some as further proof of a 'flight from the countryside' to large population centres.

The five centres at the top of the Villanovan settlement hierarchy in southern Etruria all developed into the major Etruscan and Roman cities of this region: Caere (Cerveteri), Tarquinia, Veii, Volsinii (Orvieto) and Vulci (fig. 22). Accordingly, several scholars have been tempted to draw a political map for ninth century Etruria with the Villanovan centres controlling large territories like those which the later cities may have controlled: if all the land is divided between them by standard geographical techniques such as Thiessen polygons, each Villanovan centre ends up with a theoretical territory of between 1000 and 2000 km².⁹⁰ The location of smaller centres within these territories has also led di Gennaro to argue that the earlier part of the ninth century was characterized by competing pairs of local centres controlling smaller territories, the successful centres then expanding rapidly both in their own size and in the size of the territories they controlled.

A problem with this model is that all of the finer dating for the ninth century has been developed from the study of cemetery material, little or none of which is likely to be found on small domestic sites in the countryside. In the case of the Tuscania Survey, for example, the paucity of domestic sites precisely dated to the ninth century could be taken as evidence for a process of sudden nucleation

88 Guidi, 1985

89 Angle et al., 1982; Bonomi Ponzi, 1985; Carancini et al., 1986

90 Bartoloni, 1991; di Gennaro, 1982, 1986, 1988

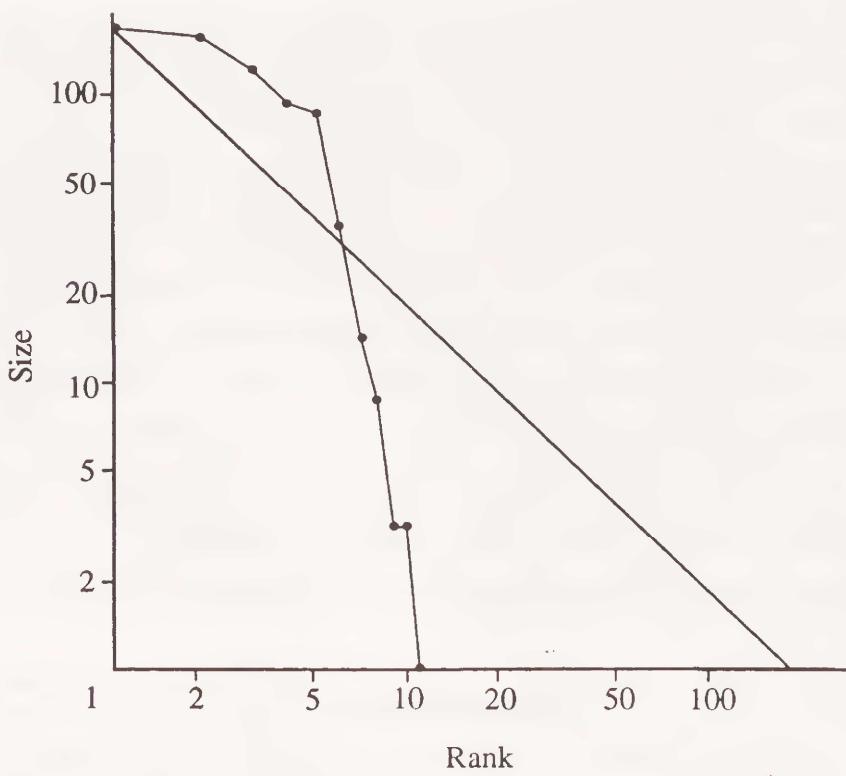
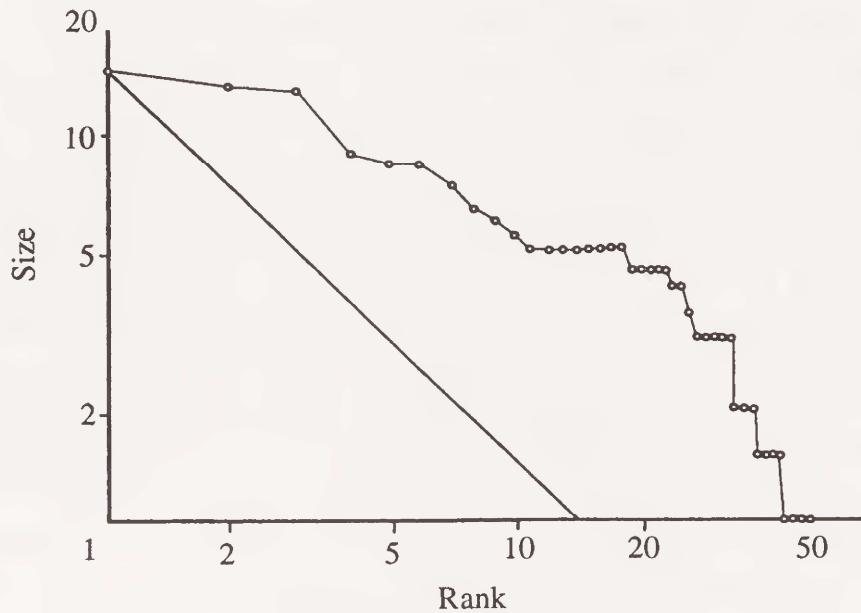


Figure 24 Changes to the settlement system of southern Etruria between the tenth and ninth centuries BC (above and below, respectively). The points mark individual settlements of the kind shown in figure 22, with their size shown in hectares. The five Villanovan sites over 100 ha in size in the lower figure are Caere (Cerveteri), Tarquinia, Veii, Volsinii (Orvieto) and Vulci. (Adapted from Guidi, 1985)

at Tuscania, where evidence of ninth century settlement has been adduced from burial material. Yet the survey record shows a number of small rural sites around Tuscania with pottery that can only be dated loosely between the tenth and eighth centuries BC, which could therefore indicate the continued existence of dispersed settlement around Tuscania in the ninth century. In the territory of Veii, too, Potter⁹¹ has argued that the occurrence on survey sites of red *impasto* pottery, a domestic ware which he suggests on the basis of his excavations of the Narce settlement can be reliably dated to the ninth and eighth centuries, indicates a pattern of dense rural settlement in the countryside around Veii rather than large-scale desertions (fig. 25). At Narce itself, the period was marked by an extension of the settlement zone from the river terrace occupied in the Bronze Age to include the rock summits to the north and south. Survey has also shown that the Iron Age was marked by a significant increase in the number of small rural settlements around Cerveteri⁹² and within the territory of the modern city of Rome.⁹³

The debate about the scale of aggregation in southern Etruria is only likely to advance if we can establish reliable chronologies for the domestic coarse wares that make up the bulk of the surface assemblages of settlements, and extend systematic survey of the kind practised around Tuscania, Veii and the Albegna valley⁹⁴ to the rest of the region. The argument about whether or not the major centres controlled large territories will also run and run without significant progress until we can map settlement sufficiently to judge whether or not there were boundary zones empty of settlement. In the meantime, it is at least clear that, whatever the nature of settlement in the countryside, the ninth century in southern Etruria was certainly characterized by the development of nucleated population centres, a few of them very large indeed.

Much less is understood of contemporary settlement trends in northern Etruria. On the western lowlands, most late bronze age settlements found by surveys are concentrated on the coast,⁹⁵ but during the ninth century – on the evidence of cemeteries, it has to be said, rather than settlement sites – there seems to have been a process of settlement clustering around the sites of the later Etruscan

91 Potter, 1979: 59

92 Enei, 1995

93 Bietti Sestieri, 1984a

94 Attolini et al., 1991

95 Cucini, 1985; Fedeli, 1984

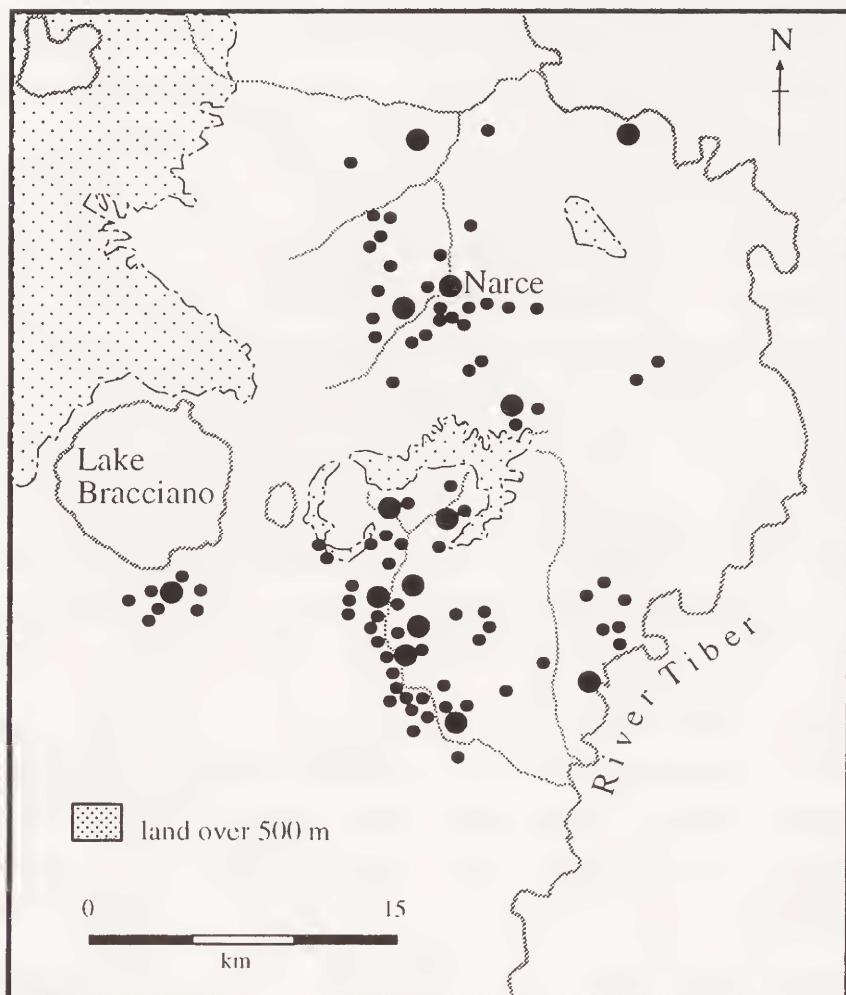


Figure 25 Villanovan rural settlement around Narce: the Villanovan Iron Age marked a massive change in the scale and density of settlement. Large circles: bronze age sites; small circles: iron age sites. The distribution of small sites approximately denotes the size of the British School at Rome's South Etruria survey. (After Potter, 1979: 59)

cities, a less extreme version of the process of nucleation further south.⁹⁶ In the Etruscan period, the two main settlements here were Populonia and Vetulonia, assumed to be mining centres given their geographical position. On the promontory of Piombino opposite the island of Elba, the distribution of Villanovan cemeteries suggests that there was a cluster of distinct but grouped settlements in the ninth century, preceding the development of the single settlement of Populonia in the middle of the eighth century.⁹⁷ Further inland,

96 Bartolini, 1991

97 Fedeli, 1983

there seems to have been a pattern of small more or less undifferentiated settlements at this time, some of which (such as Chiusi) were to develop into substantial Etruscan centres, whereas others (such as Montepulciano, Chianciano and Sarteano) were not. In the Siena region, systematic survey at Montarrenti has indicated a landscape of small farms at this time.⁹⁸ In many parts of northern Etruria, the lack of systematic survey is such that we know almost nothing about iron age settlement, apart from a few negative hints such as the lack of evidence for settlement of this period under the Etruscan city of Arezzo. Despite the unevenness of research, however, it seems clear that there were dramatic shifts in settlement in the ninth century in southern Etruria and comparable, if less extreme, trends on the lowlands further north, with little significant change in the interior.

Settlement structure

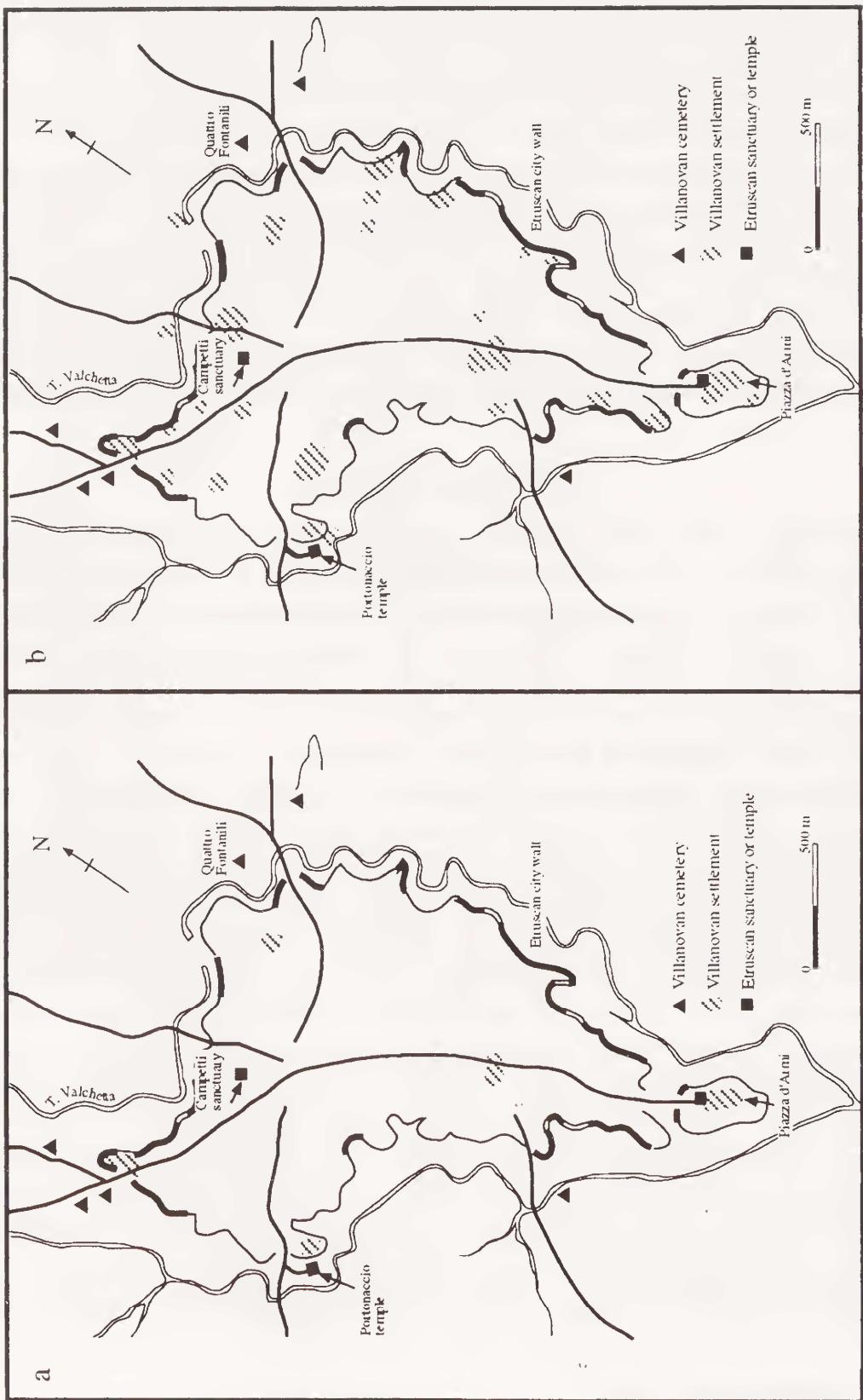
The major Villanovan centres are frequently described as 'proto-urban', but in fact their internal organization is not clear. The fact that most of them were used for later occupation has made systematic research difficult. Many of the theories about their possible size and character have been based on inferences made from their surrounding cemeteries rather than from direct evidence from the settlements. Opinions have varied from one extreme, that they were no more than collections of hamlets or villages separated by open ground, to the other, that they were proto-towns with large continuous zones of occupation and large numbers of inhabitants.

Veii has been proposed as an example of both settlement models! Limited field-walking within the 2000 ha enclosed by the Etruscan walls suggested to Ward-Perkins⁹⁹ that the Villanovan settlement was simply a collection of perhaps five hamlets, each placed at the margin of the settlement zone with a related cemetery nearby outside the acropolis area (fig. 26a). However, more extensive field-walking across the middle of the acropolis area indicated to Guaitoli¹⁰⁰ that it was more likely to have been a large and continuous settlement (fig. 26b). In fact this detailed survey still found large areas of empty ground, and some of the surface material mapped may be the result of the inhabitants using household rubbish to manure their garden plots rather than occupation debris. Hence the likelihood is

98 Barker et al., 1986

99 Ward-Perkins, 1961

100 Guaitoli, 1982



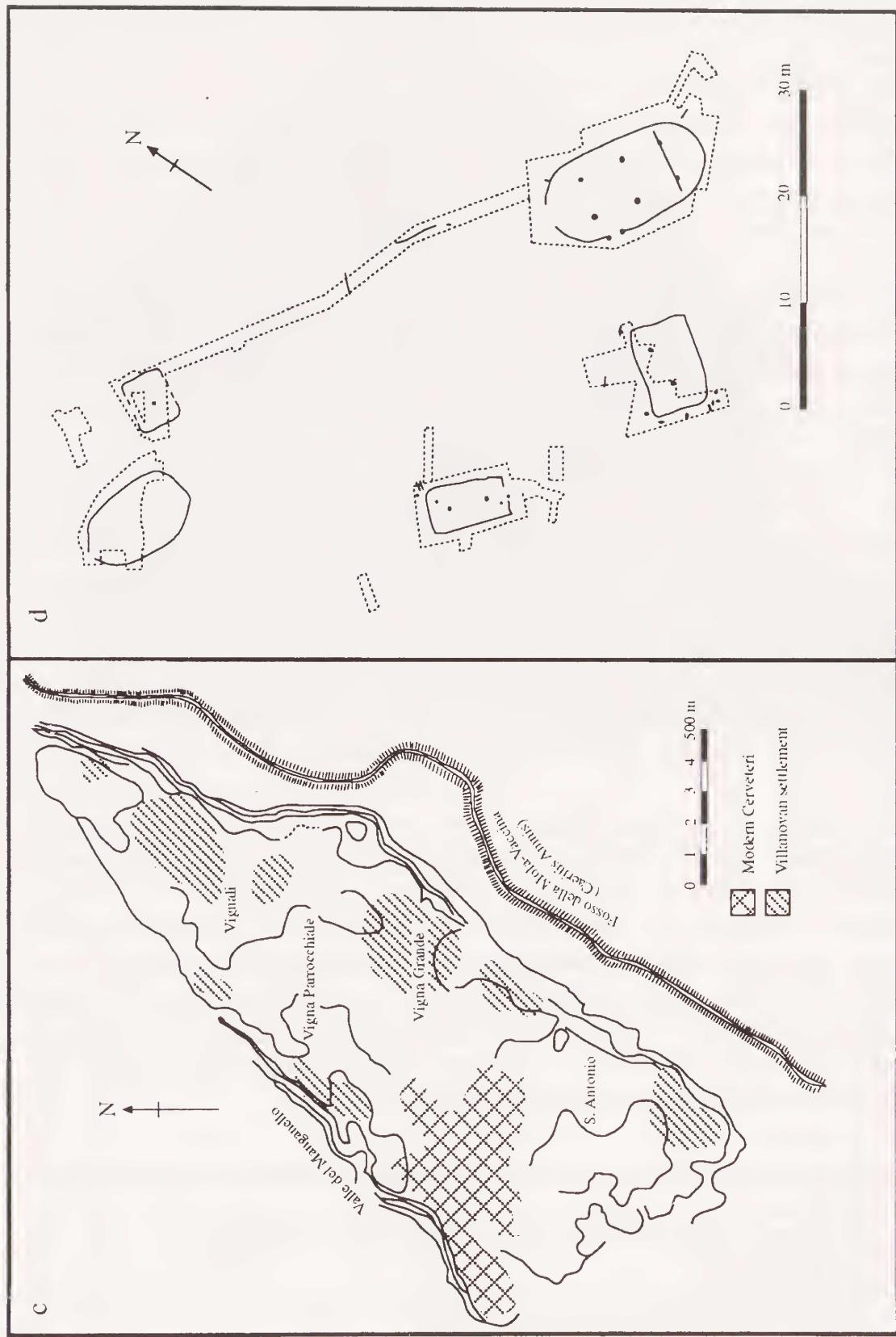


Figure 26 The internal organization of Villanovan centres: (a) Veii, after Ward-Perkins 1961; (b) Veii, after Guaitoli, 1982; (c) Cerveteri, after Merlini and Mirenda, 1990; (d) Tarquinia after Linington, 1982.

that the Villanovan settlement of Veii was somewhere between the two extreme models: a very substantial settlement of a scale that was entirely new to Etruria, but in its structure and density not yet a town or city of the kind that was to develop later on the same site.

The evidence from the other major settlements supports this interpretation. At Tarquinia, the iron age settlement seems to have consisted of a series of habitation zones forming clusters across two adjacent spurs of high ground. At Cerveteri, eight zones of settlement have been defined along the plateau behind the later town (fig. 26c), and whilst these partly reflect different levels of archaeological visibility, their similarities with the settlement zones of Veii and Tarquinia are striking.¹⁰¹ The evidence of cemetery distribution suggests that Vulci was probably settled along similar lines, and at Orvieto there were probably at least two distinct occupation areas at either end of the acropolis.¹⁰²

At Tarquinia, moreover, geophysical survey of one of the settlement zones by the Lerici Foundation followed up by excavation showed that it consisted of a series of huts which varied considerably in shape and size (fig. 26d): there were a few oval structures, generally rather large (up to 15 × 7 m), and several smaller rectangular structures (generally 6–8 × 4 m), though the arrangements of the post-holes inside suggest they probably all had pitched roofs of thatch.¹⁰³ Fragments of daub found in the excavations presumably come from the walls. There are indications of the same range of structures at Veii.¹⁰⁴ The similarities with the two kinds of huts at Sorgenti della Nova are striking, as Negroni Catacchio and Domanico have pointed out.¹⁰⁵ One possible interpretation is that Villanovan settlements consisted of several distinct social groups or clans. Bartoloni¹⁰⁶ argues that the smaller huts would have housed nuclear families and the larger dwellings extended families, though it is possible that the latter had administrative functions like the large ‘public’ buildings on Aegean early bronze age centres that were used for administrative control of the agricultural and other products involved in redistribution and exchange.¹⁰⁷

101 Tarquinia: Spivey and Stoddart, 1990: 51; Cerveteri: Merlino and Mirenda, 1990

102 Vulci: Pacciarelli, 1989–90; Orvieto: Bartoloni, 1989a: 110

103 Linington, 1982

104 Stefani, 1944, 1953

105 Negroni Catacchio and Domanico, 1986

106 Bartoloni, 1989a: 116

107 Renfrew, 1972



Figure 27 Terracotta hut urn of the Early Iron Age, from near Castel Gandolfo (Latium), in the British Museum, London. (Photograph: copyright British Museum)

Structural evidence from 'lower order' sites is extremely rare. A small Villanovan village has been preserved in lake muds on the eastern shore of Lake Bolsena at Gran Carro. The site consisted of rectangular wooden and thatch huts, the settlement zone being about a ha.¹⁰⁸ We know nothing of the appearance of the very small rural sites found by the systematic surveys around Tuscania and Veii.

Both the oval and rectangular structures of Tarquinia are represented in the ceramic 'hut urns' that are found in Villanovan cemeteries, the details of which suggest that they were, to some extent at least, modelled on domestic structures (fig. 27). There are indications on a few of them of the subterranean foundations that have

been found at some sites: one from a cemetery at Vulci, for example, has a clearly demarcated plinth below the floor of the house indicated by the door threshold.¹⁰⁹ The walls shown on the urns seem sometimes to be wattle and daub laid directly on the ground surface, in other cases laid on drystone foundation walling, with external timber posts supporting the roofs. The single door is usually on one of the shorter walls, frequently under a protective porch. In the interior there is often a circular hearth outlined on the floor at the centre of the dwelling. The walls and roofs of the huts are frequently decorated with incised patterns, the central roof ridge and the front roof lines with elaborate moulded decoration. Whilst much of this decoration echoes that of other funerary pottery vessels and no doubt served to emphasize the role of the hut urns within Villanovan funerary ideology, it does seem likely that Villanovan houses were decorated with clearly visible symbols, perhaps of the particular social group to which the inhabitants belonged, like the lodge or wigwam decorations and totem poles of Native American settlements.

Burial ritual

The settlement changes were paralleled by as dramatic changes in the size and formality of cemeteries. We have already noted how the major centres were surrounded by several cemeteries: each of these might now contain burials in many hundreds. By far the best studied in Etruria is that of Quattro Fontanili, one of Veii's cemeteries, excavated by the British School at Rome between 1961 and 1972.¹¹⁰ It was used as a burial ground from the ninth to the seventh centuries BC (fig. 28), and the analysis of its 650 excavated burials (first by Joanna Close-Brooks, one of the excavators, and latterly by Judith Toms) has provided the cornerstone of Villanovan funerary chronology.¹¹¹ It is probably typical of most cemeteries in that the earliest burials were on the summit of the hill and ensuing burials spread outwards downslope.

Pits were cut into the bedrock and sometimes lined with stones, and the ashes were placed in the burial urn covered by an upturned bowl. Some burials were marked above ground by gravestones. The burial urn is generally of a standard type also found on settlement sites, thought to have been used in domestic contexts as a water

109 Bartoloni, 1989a: 113

110 Ward-Perkins et al., 1968b

111 Close-Brooks, 1965; Toms, 1986

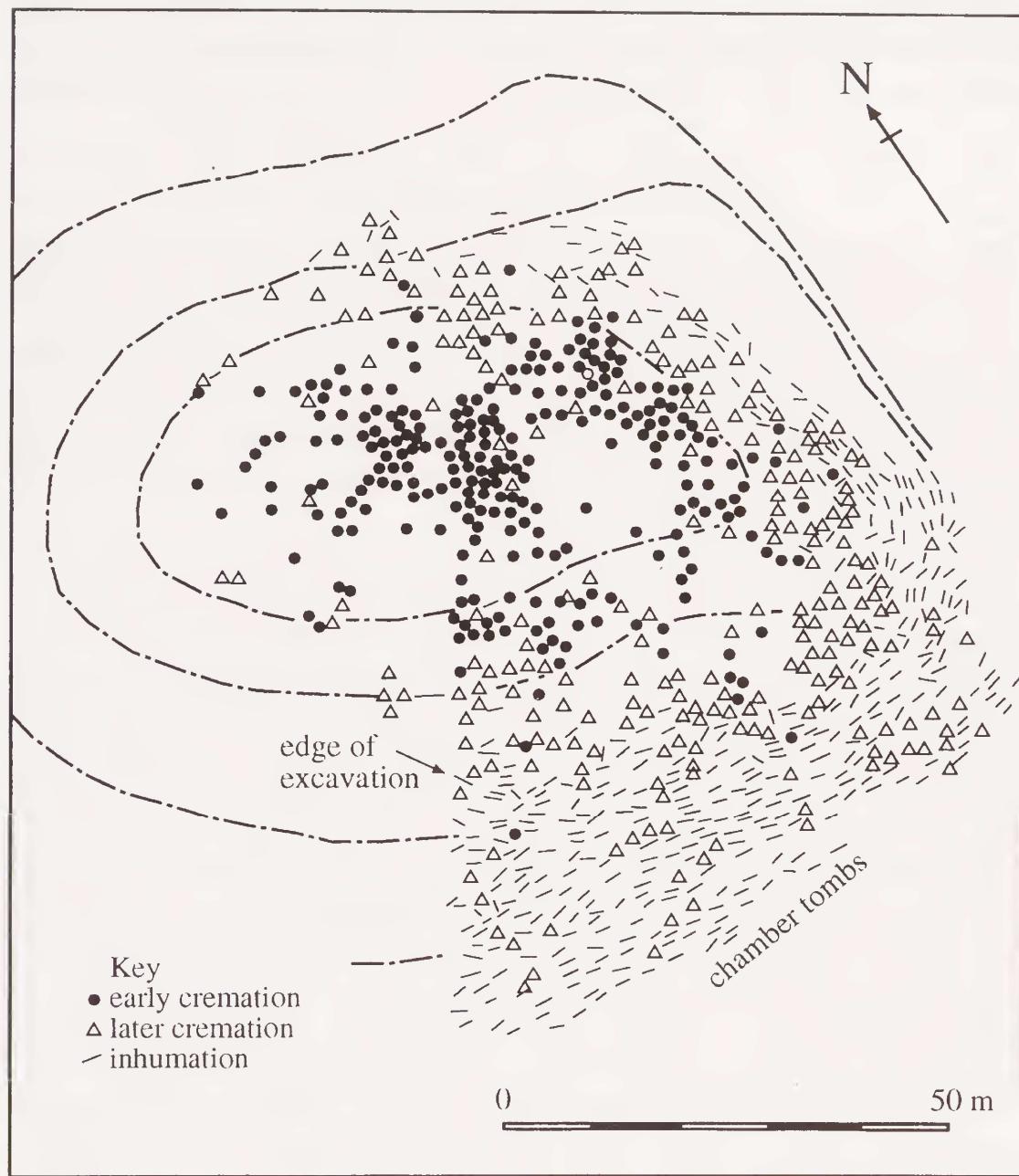


Figure 28 Plan of the Villanovan cemetery of Quattro Fontanili, Veii.
(After Potter, 1979: 64, following Close-Brooks, 1965)

carrier,¹¹² though occasionally other types of vessel were used such as a hut urn. There were a few unusually rich graves at one end of the spectrum and, at the other, some with no gravegoods, but most people were buried with a small number of artefacts. The commonest gravegoods divide into two groups: fibulas (large safety pins for cloaks) and spindle whorls; or fibulas, knives and razors. The shapes

112 Bartoloni, 1989a: 124

of the fibulas in the two groups are different. The assumption is that the former set of artefacts was buried with women and the latter with men, but the cremated bones with them are so fragmentary that the hypothesis cannot be proved by skeletal analysis.

The details of the burial rite varied somewhat from region to region: in the cemeteries around Populonia and Vetulonia, for example, inhumation graves are mixed in with cremations from an early date, and there are also a few chambered tombs.¹¹³ What does seem clear is that the distinctions are not simply to do with different levels of status and wealth: as well as the common group identity indicated by membership of the cemetery population, there were important allegiances to particular social sub-sets such as kin-groups or clans.¹¹⁴ The parallels with the social groupings discernible within the settlement archaeology are obvious.

The most important iron age cemetery excavated in recent years is that of Osteria dell’Osa on the eastern outskirts of Rome.¹¹⁵ Though just outside Etruria, the quality of information from its exemplary investigation has provided invaluable insights into social structure at this time. Like Quattro Fontanili, it was used from the ninth to the seventh centuries for a similar number of burials, and the layout shows clear evidence of a formal structure. The burials cluster into distinct groups according to burial type, location and gravegoods. The main groups identified include: cremated males buried in central positions accompanied by miniature versions of pottery vessels and weapons that indicate particular status; cremated males in peripheral locations buried with miniature or normal-sized gravegoods; inhumation burials of juvenile males without high-status gravegoods; children buried with or without gravegoods (and, if present, not sexually differentiated); adult and old women, mainly buried around the central males, with personal ornaments as their gravegoods; young women and girls with rich sets of personal ornaments; and children buried with personal ornaments indicating their sex. The differences are interpreted as evidence for the division of this community into extended families or clans, which were in turn stratified vertically into different social levels mostly according to age and sex but including adult males of particular high status, assumed to be the clan chiefs. A similar structure has been identified in the ninth century cemeteries around Bologna: the burials were ‘concentrated in groups internally distinguished both according to sex and

¹¹³ Bartoloni, 1991

¹¹⁴ Teegen, 1995

¹¹⁵ Bietti Sestieri, 1979, 1992a, 1992b; Bietti Sestieri and de Santis, 1985

according to the role of individuals' which were interpreted as 'family units (extended families or aristocratic groups) linked to one or two privileged male burials'.¹¹⁶

Subsistence and exchange

Given the tremendous changes to the landscape implied by the settlement archaeology, and the equivalent implications of the cemetery archaeology for social change, it is very frustrating how little evidence exists for the Villanovan way of life. It is assumed that the basis of the economy was agriculture, but in fact almost no direct evidence has been collected in the form of botanical and faunal remains. One exception is the settlement of Narce. The ninth century plant residues here included emmer wheat, barley, millet and a range of legumes,¹¹⁷ which were associated with weed and parasite infestations suggesting increasingly intensive agricultural systems. Another important indicator of change comes from the lakeside settlement of Gran Carro, where the plant remains show, in addition to the cultivation of cereals and legumes and the collection of fruits and nuts, the systematic exploitation of vines at this time.¹¹⁸ As later chapters describe, wine production was an important component of Etruscan agriculture, and wine-drinking was of great social importance for Etruscan elites, so although there is as yet no direct evidence for wine production in the Iron Age, it would certainly not be surprising to find that the systematic cultivation of the vine began at this time in Etruria to provide wine for the emergent elites. The kind of fine tableware that would have been associated with wine-drinking would almost certainly have been urns and bowls of the kind buried in the cemeteries.

The animals whose remains have been most frequently identified in tombs (presumably food offerings placed with the dead) are pigs, but pigs were identified far less frequently in the food refuse of the Villanovan levels at the settlement of Narce.¹¹⁹ The stock of the Villanovan community here consisted mostly of sheep and goats, and the mortality data indicate that they were being kept increasingly for milk and (in the case of sheep) wool, a trend that correlates with the large numbers of loom weights and spindle whorls found in Villanovan cemeteries. Cattle were also important at Narce,

116 Giardino et al., 1991: 17

117 Jarman, 1976

118 Costantini and Costantini Biasini, 1987

119 Barker, 1976

their age suggesting they were mainly plough cattle killed at the end of their working lives. The small faunal sample from Gran Carro is somewhat similar in the proportions of the species and the (admittedly restricted) mortality data.¹²⁰ It seems likely that pigs were becoming something of a luxury food (like wine?), with most of the meat eaten on the ordinary settlements coming from adult sheep and cattle raised primarily for their secondary products. The increased emphasis on secondary products makes sense in terms of the food requirements of the rapidly expanding population, which was presumably dependent on an increasingly cereal-dominated diet. Producing the cereals to feed them must have entailed increasing amounts of arable land, and therefore more cattle to work and manure the fields. In the same way, it would have been more efficient to use flocks to produce cheese as the main fat and protein supplement to the diet, rather than kill off most surplus animals for meat.

Studies of the fabrics of Villanovan pottery, both domestic and funerary, suggest that production was still mainly at the household level, even though the regional similarities in shape and design show well defined traditions of craftsmanship. In the case of metalwork, the period witnessed a rapid expansion in the amount of metal in circulation, sufficient to meet the needs of people in both life and death. There was a sudden expansion, too, in the repertoire of forms produced. Numbers of hoards, consisting mainly of everyday objects such as axes, many of them broken, indicate that bronze-smiths may have been moving from community to community, selling new pieces, repairing others and acquiring broken pieces for re-casting. Bartoloni¹²¹ argued from the typologies of these hoards that the raw materials for most of the metalwork in central Italy were being mined now in the Colline Metallifere, with Populonia and Vetulonia developing as centres of metalworking.

Metal objects moved freely over considerable distances: a burial at Populonia, for example, has two vases with applied metal decoration from Tarquinia, two fibulas from the Bologna region, and a bronze button and a sheet bronze container from Sardinia.¹²² The repertoire also includes a few bronze pieces recognized as being from regions outside peninsular Italy such as Sardinia, Sicily, Spain and Cyprus. The metalwork at Populonia demonstrates links with Sardinia on the one hand and Bologna on the other, and Bologna's

120 Scali, 1987

121 Bartoloni, 1991

122 Bartoloni, 1991: 109–11

metalwork has as many links with continental Europe as with Etruria. What mechanism or mechanisms caused these movements? It is unlikely that we can talk of formalized trade at this time: most of the movement of valuable metal objects probably took place within a system of competitive exchange or ‘ritualized friendship’, as the emergent elites of Etruria endeavoured to cement alliances with their neighbours or with more distant contacts.¹²³ A similar system of prestige gift exchange was to characterize the Etruscan aristocracy.¹²⁴ Interestingly, most of the exotic objects at Populonia are in female burials, leading Bartoloni¹²⁵ to conclude that ‘we must assign to the institution of marriage an important role in the exchanges that took place in the Villanovan world. Marriage appears to have been the main instrument of trade between communities (or families)’.

Greeks and Phoenicians

In the late ninth century, and more particularly during the course of the eighth century, the Villanovan chieftains of Etruria came into contact with Phoenicians and Greeks as the latter expanded westwards across the Mediterranean.¹²⁶ The Phoenicians (from the Levant, around modern Lebanon) established colonies on the north coast of Africa, western Sicily, Sardinia and southern Spain, and the Greeks settled in southern Italy, eastern Sicily, Corsica, southern France and eastern Spain (see fig. 1 in the Introduction).¹²⁷ In Italy, the first Greek colony was established by people from the island of Euboea at Pithekoussai (or Pithecusae) on the island of Ischia in the Bay of Naples. Whilst the exact date of the foundation is disputed, excavations have revealed a substantial population on the site by 750 BC.¹²⁸ Cumae on the mainland opposite was founded in about 745 BC, and another colony was established overlooking the site of the modern city of Naples at the beginning of the seventh century. Other colonies were founded at the instep of the Italian peninsula towards the end of the eighth century or early in the seventh century BC.¹²⁹ The colonies were established to provide new land for the expanding population of the Greek mainland and to develop

123 Bartoloni, 1989b

124 Cristofani, 1975a

125 Bartoloni, 1991: 111

126 Ridgway, 1992

127 Boardman, 1980; Sherratt and Sherratt, 1993

128 Buchner, 1979; Frederiksen, 1979; Ridgway, 1973

129 de la Genière, 1979

trade networks to supply the homeland with raw materials. Once established, they could trade directly with the indigenous populations and act as 'ports of trade' or intermediaries for trade with the homeland. An indication of the remarkably polyglot nature of these early trading ports is an Aramaic and a Phoenician inscription at Pithekoussai.¹³⁰

Greek and Phoenician trade with the Italian peninsula certainly preceded the foundation of the Greek colonies, and it is commonly assumed that the search for metal ore was the principal stimulus.¹³¹ Etruria was especially attractive in having copper, tin and lead near the coast in the Colline Metallifere, and rich sources of iron on the island of Elba. However, the distribution of Greek objects indicates that contacts were not just with this region: for example, there are Greek objects in rich eighth-century graves at Bologna, Bisenzio (on Lake Bolsena in inland central Etruria), Tarquinia, Vulci, Veii and Osteria dell'Osa,¹³² as well as in cemeteries nearer the colonies in Campania. Villanovan objects have also been found at Pithekoussai and in Greece.¹³³

By the mid eighth century there must have been direct exchanges between the elites of the Greek colonies and of Etruria. Although a piece of iron ore from Elba has been found at Pithekoussai, most Greek imports have been found in the cemeteries of the major Villanovan centres of southern Etruria: one of the most celebrated early pieces from Cerveteri is a Greek mixing bowl for wine and water (*krater*) signed in Euboean Greek by one Aristonothos, who probably lived in Cumae.¹³⁴ There is no evidence for such contact with Populonia and Vetulonia, the centres nearest the metal ores. It has therefore been suggested that the elites of Veii, Tarquinia, Cerveteri and Vulci may have acted as intermediaries in some way, providing safe conduct through their territories and perhaps armed escort into the hinterland.¹³⁵ Any maritime trade from the Greek colonies up the Tyrrhenian coast had to pass through waters that could be easily controlled by Cerveteri, Tarquinia and Vulci, and Veii had a similarly strategic location for controlling access up the Tiber. The elites of Populonia and Vetulonia seem to have had more

130 Frederiksen, 1979: 283

131 de la Genière, 1979; Frederiksen, 1979

132 Bartoloni, 1987; Bietti Sestieri 1992a, 1992b; Boitani et al., 1985b; Delpino, 1982, 1984; Descoeudres and Kearsley, 1983

133 Ridgway, 1973

134 Martelli, 1987

135 Bartoloni, 1987; Cristofani, 1983b; Delpino, 1984, 1987; Torelli, 1982

effective alliances westwards across the sea to Sardinia, both with indigenous peoples there and with Phoenicians: in addition to the Sardinian metal pieces noted earlier, Phoenician pottery occurs in graves outside the two centres dated to the second half of the eighth century.¹³⁶

As far as we can tell from well dated tomb groups, no sooner had fine Greek drinking services started to appear in Etruria than local copies were being produced (certainly by the mid eighth century). Analysis of the clay fabrics of the two types of vessel has shown such similarities in potting technology that it is thought that the local copies must have been made by Greek craftsmen who had come to work in the major Villanovan settlements like Veii, Tarquinia and (a few decades later) Vulci.¹³⁷ Local craftsmen were then able to copy and develop the technology. From the mid eighth century the workshops of southern Etruria concentrated on producing fine vessels to accompany wining and dining, either closely imitating Greek style or faithful to Villanovan traditions.¹³⁸ Both kinds of pottery entered the internal exchange system linking the Villanovan elites and have been found, for example, at Bologna.¹³⁹

Villanovan society and economy

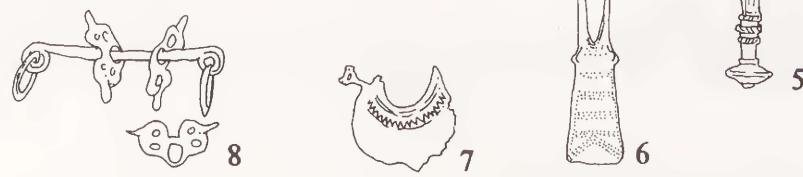
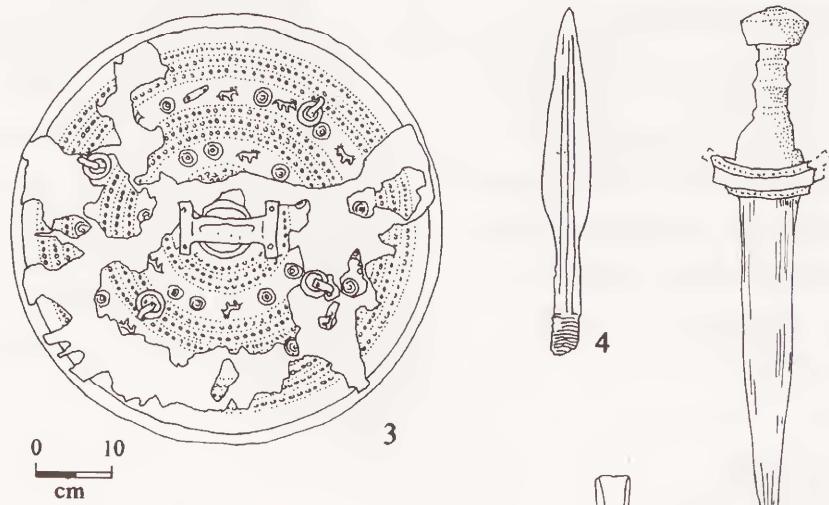
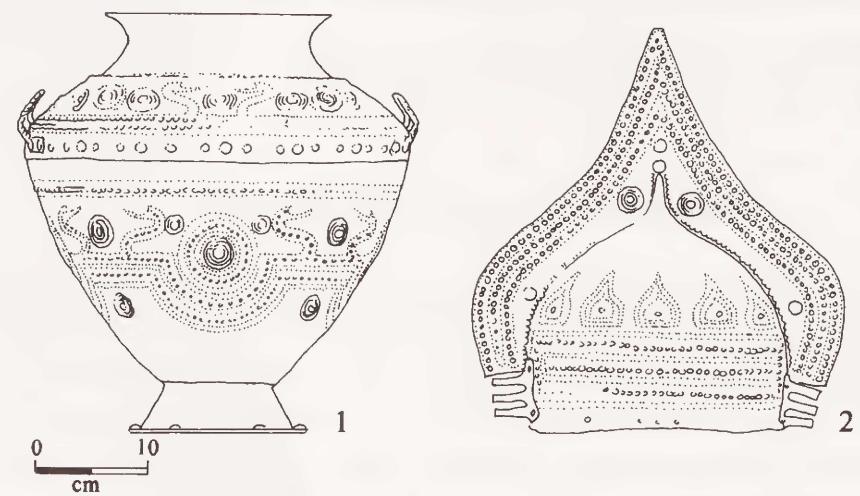
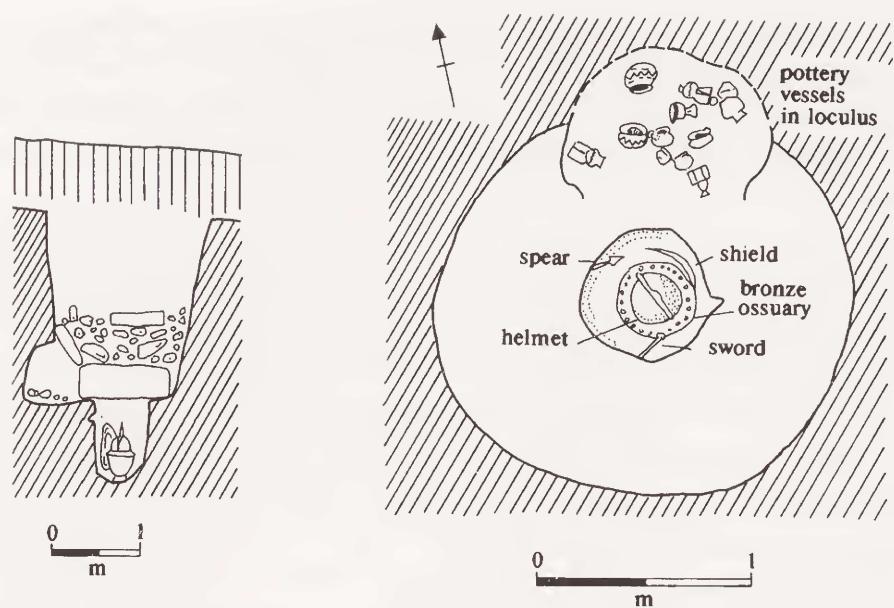
Villanovan society has frequently been described as ‘proto-urban’, though what precisely such a term might mean has not been properly defined. Certainly the cemetery archaeology indicates a social structure divided both horizontally (into clearly demarcated social groups such as clans) and vertically (into well defined degrees of status) – in anthropological terms, respectively, segmented and stratified. It also seems clear that vertical ranking had increased substantially by the middle of the eighth century, when the first really rich burials appear in the cemeteries. At Quattro Fontanili, for example, the cremated remains of one individual were interred in a pit grave inside a decorated bronze casket, accompanied by more than fifty gravegoods: the casket was covered by the warrior’s bronze and iron armour including a shield, sword, spear, axe and helmet, together with his horse’s bridle bit (fig. 29), and there were sixteen

136 Bartoloni, 1991

137 Boitani et al., 1985b

138 Bartoloni, 1987; Delpino, 1984

139 Giardino et al., 1991



pottery vessels and a set of personal possessions including metal bracelets, rings, brooches, ear-rings, a razor, glass beads and a 'scarab' or seal of faience (a glass paste) almost certainly from Egypt.¹⁴⁰ There are female graves with equally notable wealth. At Osteria dell'Osa, too, there are male and female burials of equivalent status at this time, one of the richest 'warrior' burials including the metal fittings of a wooden chariot. Four chariot burials have also been found at Castel di Decima immediately south of Rome. The presence in the richest graves of exotic imported materials such as gold, silver, lead and amber, and of metal objects manufactured to the highest standards of craftsmanship, shows that access to valuables and the control of production were increasingly in the hands of a few powerful individuals in each community.

As we have seen, the settlement archaeology indicates similar complexity. In southern Etruria in particular, there was a hierarchy of domestic sites, with numerous small farms or hamlets forming the base of the triangle, villages or local centres the middle layer, and the few huge centres at the apex. The centres in turn seem to have been divided into distinct communities, interpreted as specific kin-groups, each perhaps occupying (on the evidence of Tarquinia) a settlement unit consisting of a set of smaller structures grouped around a larger one.

Given the evidence for horizontal and vertical divisions, and the dominance of particular locations and individuals in the control of the production and distribution of resources, the likelihood is that Villanovan society was characterized by a well developed system of clientship, with local chiefs controlling dependent groups, and these chiefs in turn acting as vassals to more powerful 'paramount' chiefs. By the later eighth century there may even have been a few all-powerful individuals controlling large regions, though the different chronologies of Greek imports at the major centres suggest that, if so, such power was short-lived and no centre had a particular monopoly.

140 QF, 1970

Figure 29 (opposite) A rich burial at Quattro Fontanili, Veii: tomb AA1 (760–730 BC). Top: section and plan. Bottom: some of the objects: 1 bronze ossuary; 2 bronze helmet; 3 bronze shield with an iron rim; 4 bronze spearhead; 5 iron sword with an ivory and bone hilt and a bronze scabbard; 6 bronze axe; 7 bronze razor; 8 bronze and iron horse bit. 1 and 2 are drawn at the same scale. (After Potter, 1979: 65 and 66, following Close-Brooks, 1965)

Local leaders would have been linked to their clients in a set of mutual obligations, such as receiving gifts, tribute, labour and so on in return for providing protection, communal services and food-stuffs. In turn, they would have been beholden to more powerful leaders in parallel systems of clientship. The economic systems associated with social structures of this kind typically involve the use of the labour of the paramount's dependent group to produce foodstuffs and domestic prestige items for redistribution, as well as commodities for external trade.¹⁴¹ Given the biases of the data, we can best discern the latter part of the system, but it is highly likely that the production and distribution of foodstuffs such as cereals and legumes, meat, cheese and wine (together with important side-products such as wool), and the technology of agricultural production such as cattle or ox teams and ploughs, were also increasingly within the control of the Villanovan elites. Presumably the control of raw materials such as metal ores, or at least access to them, was also critical.

The problem of the Etruscan language

The social context of Etruscan literacy is discussed in the next chapter, but a few comments are needed here on the vexed problem of the origins of the Etruscan language. Although, as described in the preceding sections of this chapter, the archaeological evidence overwhelmingly suggests that Etruscan society developed out of the preceding societies of Etruria, the linguistic evidence has frequently been cited as conclusively pointing to exotic origins. Virtually all the languages of Europe share a number of common word stems that indicate they belong to a 'family' of related languages, termed Indo-European; Etruscan, however, along with Basque, Hungarian and Finnish, is not part of this family. Thus in Indo-European languages, both ancient and modern, numerals typically have common roots which we can recognize even if we don't know the language: one, two, three; un, deux, trois; ein, zwei, drei; uno, duo, tre, etc. The same numbers in Etruscan are the completely unfamiliar *thu*, *zal* and *ci*. The Etruscan language is unrelated to any of the other (Indo-European) ancient languages spoken in Italy such as Umbrian, Oscan and Latin.¹⁴² The only known similarity is with a dialect that

¹⁴¹ Frankenstein and Rowlands, 1978; Webster, 1990

¹⁴² Bonfante, 1990; Bonfante and Bonfante, 1983