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Introduction

In the past, most studies on Pre-Roman societies of the first millennium BCE on the Italian Peninsula focused on the social elites, their self-representation and cultural contacts. Recently, however, research on dependency and social inequality in pre-modern societies of various regions has considerably increased. During the last years, there have been several conferences and edited volumes about this topic that adopted either a more historical, anthropological, sociological or archaeological point of view, which opened a new scientific discourse on *non-elite*, *marginalized* or *subaltern* social groups.¹

The approach of this volume, which is the result of a conference held at the *Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS)* on 16–18 June 2022, is based on the newly developed theoretical concept of ‘(strong) asymmetrical dependency’.² This

¹ See, for example, Elisa Perego and Rafael Scopacasa, eds., *Burial and Social Change in First Millennium BC Italy: Approaching Social Agents: Gender, Personhood and Marginality* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2016), which concentrated on the funerary evidence; Richard Bussmann and Tobias Helms, eds., *Poverty and Inequality in Early Civilizations*, Studien zur Wirtschaftsarchäologie 4 (Bonn: Habelt, 2021), with a broad, worldwide view; Orlando Cerasuolo, ed., *The Archaeology of Inequality: Tracing the Archaeological Record* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021), with case studies from America and the Mediterranean, including Greece and Rome; Cyril Courier and Julio Cesar Magalhaes de Oliveira, eds., *Ancient History from Below: Subaltern Experiences and Actions in Context* (London: Routledge, 2022), which focused mainly on written sources; Ute Kelp and Wolf-Rüdiger Teegen, eds., *Wealthy and Healthy? Methodological Approaches to Non-Elite Burials, Panel 1.2, Proceedings of the 19th International Congress of Classical Archaeology, Cologne and Bonn 2018*, vol. 1 (Heidelberg: Propyläum, 2022), <https://books.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/propylaeum/catalog/book/926> [accessed 25.07.2024]; Petra Amann and Luciana Aigner-Foresti, eds., *Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der Etrusker: Akten der internationalen Tagung, Wien, 8.–10.6.2016*, Phersu. Etrusko-italische Studien 1 (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2018).

² A comprehensive and generally accepted theory of (strong) asymmetrical dependency does not yet exist in sociology and social theory. For some preliminary works, see Richard M. Emerson, “Power-Dependence Relations,” *American Sociological Review* 27, no. 1 (1962): 31–41; James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Tiziana Casciaro and Mikolaj J. Piskorski, “Power Imbalance, Mutual Dependence, and Constraint Absorption: A Closer Look at Resource Dependence Theory,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 50, 2 (2005): 167–99. The theoretical concept used in this volume is based on the working definition provided by the *Bonn Center for Depen-*

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seems to be beneficial as it allows us to overcome the outdated dichotomy of ‘slavery’ and ‘freedom’,³ which is not only too simplistic, but also ideologically charged as it is closely connected to Eurocentric views and the events associated with the transatlantic slave trade.⁴ According to this definition, the emergence of asymmetrical dependency is based on the ability of one actor to control the actions and the access to resources of another actor. By doing so, one of the actors loses his autonomy and an unequal distribution of power is established. Usually, such dependency relationships are permanent and supported by an institutional background, which prevents a dependent actor from changing his or her situation by either going away (‘exit’) or articulating protest (‘voice’). Asymmetrical dependencies do not arise by chance, but rather have to be considered as constitutional elements that shape the respective society. Moreover, the concept can be applied to some scenarios that do not directly refer to human relationships but condition them, such as resource dependency or dependency on other non-human factors like divine beings or climate conditions (droughts, natural disasters).

We use the concept of ‘asymmetrical dependency’ in this volume as an umbrella term for a relatively broad range of phenomena that has been studied in archaeological and historical research under various key terms, such as power imbalance (for example, slavery, captivity, patron-client relationships), social inequality (expressed by poverty or marginality) as well as social inclusion or exclusion as seen through the concept of ‘otherness’ or alterity (for example, strangers, ‘barbarians’, persons with short stature, physical deformities, etc.). Our aim is to look at social groups such as servants, peasants, mercenaries, captives, ‘foreigners’, women and children, who are less visible in the archaeological, epigraphical and literary records of societies from Iron age and later Pre-Roman or Early Roman Italy. We also aim to discuss the methodological challenges connected to this quite new field of research: Is the evidence representative enough for the definition of different forms of dependency and inequality? Can we rely on written and pictorial sources, or do they only reflect the external Greek and Roman points of view and their respective iconographic conventions? Which social groups can be traced in the literary and archaeological record, and is it possible to denominate them specifically (slaves, freedpeople, clients)?

dependency and Slavery Studies, which has recently been formulated in two papers: Julia Winnebeck et al., “The Analytical Concept of Asymmetrical Dependency,” *Journal of Global Slavery* 8, no. 1 (2023): 1–59; Christoph Antweiler, “On Dependence, Dependency, and a Dependency Turn: An Essay with Systematic Intent,” *BCDSS Discussion Paper* 1 (2022), <https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/images/pdf-files/discussion-papers/dp-1-antweiler.pdf> [accessed 25.07.2024].

³ For the opposition between ‘slavery’ and ‘freedom’ in previous research, see, for example, Tom Brass, “Introduction: Free and Unfree Labour: The Debate Continues,” in *Free and Unfree Labor: The Debate Continues*, ed. Tom Brass and Marcel van der Linden (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997): 11–42 for the field of labour history.

⁴ Christian G. De Vito et al., “From Bondage to Precariousness? New Perspectives on Labor and Social History,” *Journal of Social History* 54, no. 2 (2020): 1–19.

The period we are dealing with – roughly the first millennium BCE – is a period of profound social and economic changes in Italy, which was inhabited by a heterogeneous mix of different population groups. We can observe colonization, population growth and urbanization processes in many regions as well as their integration into the Mediterranean economy, which brought about globalization phenomena and different local responses. With the growing Roman hegemony on the Italian Peninsula since the fourth century BCE, the situation changed again.

Needless to say, it is impossible to cover all aspects of such a vast topic, but we tried to look at it from complementary perspectives using different methods, relying on written as well as various material sources coming from a broad range of contexts. Most phenomena dealt with in this volume are situated on a relatively microscale level and are therefore less concerned with a macro-orientated dependency theory and global phenomena. Consequently, our approach is based on the insight that ‘microhistory can provide the epistemological foundations for a renewed social history’.⁵ This is also due to the fact that there are such few older studies to rely on that we first have to create a new basis in order to be able to start the discussion. It has become very clear that there are no simple answers, but that we have to consider many regional patterns which change over time.

In the following part, we have focused on a few fields which are mostly defined by the different kinds of sources or contexts that they deal with: historical and epigraphical studies, images, material culture from sanctuaries and necropoleis. Within these fields, the authors of the individual contributions adopted very different methods to be able to detect indicators for measuring different degrees of social inequality and dependency.

1 Historical and Epigraphical Sources

When studying early societies, one challenge is the lack of written sources. For the history of Pre-Roman Italy, there are almost no Etruscan/Italic literary sources, but at least some Greek and Roman ones are available. However, the latter provide us only with a perspective from outside, which is not always reliable due to the chronological distance, cultural misunderstandings as well as the specific ideological intentions of the respective authors. Connected with this is the common practice in research to adapt the well-known Greek and Latin terminology for dependency (*patronus*, *servus*, *cliens*, *penestai*, etc.) to the situation in Etruscan/Italic societies. As *Petra Amman* shows in her contribution, this has led to a biased and too simplistic concept of an Etruscan society consisting only of free masters and unfree servants. This outdated

⁵ Winnebeck et al., “Dependency”: 6.

dichotomy has to be modified through rigorous source criticism and by including evidence from material culture.

Slaves and manumitted slaves can be traced in the numerous epigraphical record in Etruria, which is one of the main sources for the reconstruction of Etruscan social history.⁶ *Enrico Benelli* argues against a presumed standardized typology of name forms in all of Etruria that gives information on unfree birth. He argues in favour of a more differentiated regional and chronological view. Using funerary inscriptions, he notes the occurrence of social change in the territory of Chiusi around the middle of the second century BCE: the disappearance of large estates owned by elite families and their transformation into smaller plots assigned to freedpeople and other non-elite families.

2 The Iconography of Dependency in Visual Art

We have a large corpus of images from the eighth century BCE onwards – paintings, sculpture, reliefs, etc. – depicting scenes from ritual, everyday-life and mythological contexts, which include dependent and marginalized persons. These images, most of them from Etruria, can be analyzed with the well-proven iconographic method.⁷ This analysis was performed systematically for Etruscan art by *Patrick Zeidler* in his recently concluded PhD thesis.⁸ In general, physiognomic characteristics, size, hairstyle, clothing, attributes and other iconographic markers in combination with the narrative context of the image can provide us with information about the social status, ethnic origin, social relationships and labour conditions of the depicted persons.⁹ However, as images are

6 Enrico Benelli, “La società etrusca: Il contributo dell’epigrafia,” in *Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der Etrusker: Akten der internationalen Tagung, Wien, 8.–10.6.2016*, ed. Luciana Aigner-Foresti and Petra Amann, Phersu. Etrusco-italische Studien 1 (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2018) 219–26.

7 The iconographic method was originally developed in art history; see, for example, Erwin Panofsky, “Zum Problem der Beschreibung und Inhaltsdeutung von Werken der bildenden Kunst,” in *Ikonographie und Ikonologie: Theorien – Entwicklung – Probleme*, ed. Ekkehard Kaemmerling, *Bildende Kunst als Zeichensystem* 1 (Cologne: DuMont, 1979): 185–206; Erwin Panofsky, “Ikonographie und Ikonologie,” in *Ikonographie und Ikonologie: Theorien – Entwicklung – Probleme*, ed. Ekkehard Kaemmerling, *Bildende Kunst als Zeichensystem* 1 (Cologne: DuMont, 1979): 207–25.

8 Patrick Zeidler, “Sklaverei und soziale Ungleichheiten in Etrurien: Eine Studie zur Ikonographie der Abhängigkeit in der etruskischen Bildkunst” (PhD diss., University of Bonn, 2023, publication in preparation).

9 For the adaption of the iconographic method for the analysis of ancient images of slaves, see Nikolaus Himmelmann, *Archäologisches zum Problem der griechischen Sklaverei*, *Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse* 13 (Mainz: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1971).

intentionally constructed by the artists and their customers,¹⁰ we have to consider how reliable and ‘realistic’ these depictions are. Since most of the images seem to have been commissioned by members of the elite, the numerous representations of slaves and other dependent individuals have to be considered as an expression of status and wealth. Moreover, it has to be analyzed, which Greek (or other) iconographic conventions were imitated in Etruscan art and in how far they were adapted to local cultural habits. Finally, the context of the images and the function of the objects have to be considered for their interpretation.

These methodological challenges are discussed in two case studies. *Cornelia Weber-Lehmann* was able to recognize power imbalances and status differences between different types of figures (for example, cupbearers, athletes) in Tarquinian wall painting. However, without inscriptions, we cannot be sure about their concrete legal (and social) status. The influence of Greek mythology and iconography on Etruscan imagery is discussed by *Patrick Zeidler*, who studies numerous representations of captives. Most of them, of course, depict scenes of extreme dependency, but in the course of time, some examples of bound persons also appear in religious or magical contexts with quite a different (metaphorical) meaning and function.

During the conference, *Bouke van der Meer* presented a paper (which could unfortunately not be included in this volume) about urn reliefs from Hellenistic Volterra and their relation to certain social groups, while also considering inscriptions and grave contexts.

3 Dependencies and Status Differences in Urban and Sacral Spaces

Urban spaces as well as city and house planning are not represented properly in this volume, partly due to a lack of current research in this field. There are many recent studies on early urbanization in central Italy that reflect social changes.¹¹ In archaeological evidence, this process is often reflected more in the associated graves than in the urban structures themselves, which are rarely excavated in an extensive area. However, a recently published PhD thesis comprising a catalogue of all preserved house structures in Central and Northern Italy from the late sixth to the early second century BCE serves as a new basis for further studies in the future, which, up to now, have

¹⁰ For theoretical and methodological considerations on the construction of images, see Ralf von den Hoff and Stefan Schmidt, “Bilder und Konstruktion: Ein interdisziplinäres Konzept für die Altertumswissenschaften,” in *Konstruktionen von Wirklichkeit: Bilder im Griechenland des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, ed. Ralf von den Hoff and Stefan Schmidt (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2001): 1–25.

¹¹ See the contribution by Francesca Fulminante in this volume, with further references.

mainly focused on architecture and less on social-historical arguments.¹² In the Archaic period, we can distinguish between ‘palaces’ and smaller standardized houses, and we can see growing functional differentiations of space within each house. In the relatively large and well-known Etruscan settlement of Marzabotto (sixth–fifth century BCE), along the main street, we can identify large plots and houses of the elite containing elaborate spaces for different social functions, whereas the other houses seem to be rather uniform in size and might be labelled as ‘middle-class’. Spaces or dwellings for subaltern social groups, however, cannot be recognized in the urban archaeological record.¹³

The transformation of elite structures can offer strong arguments for the changes in the power balance of a community and the participation of subaltern groups. The de-monumentalization and ritual obliteration of late Archaic elite buildings and the related cults at Monte Iato (Sicily) are studied by *Erich Kistler*. Comparably, *Robinson P. Krämer* analyzes the transformation of the Etruscan sacred landscape in the same period: the old ‘palaces’ are replaced by monumentalized sanctuaries and spaces for public meetings; the smaller finds show that larger parts of the population could now participate in cult activities.

The conference contribution of *Stephan Steingraber* on anatomical votive terracottas in sub-urban and extra-urban sanctuaries, which he interpreted as typical for lower social classes, could unfortunately not be included in this volume.

Elisa Perego and *Rafael Scopacasa* present in their collaborative contribution two case studies on burial contexts and settlement dynamics in different times and regions (Iron Age Veneto and Hellenistic Apulia), which allow for a reflection on the impact of environmental stress and climate shifts on social developments and inequalities.

4 Dependencies, Status Differences and Funerary Archaeology

Burials constitute the largest field of research in the study of Pre-Roman Italy as they yield an enormous amount of evidence: different grave types and architecture, the spatial distribution of burials within the necropolis, great quantities of grave goods as well

¹² Silva Katherina Bruder, *Man lebt, wie man wohnt: Untersuchungen zur Wohnhausarchitektur Mittel- und Norditaliens vom ausgehenden 6. Bis zum beginnenden 2. Jh. V. Chr.* (Heidelberg: Propylaeum, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeum.1044>, with detailed analyses and references.

¹³ For the houses in Marzabotto, see Martin Bentz and Christoph Reusser, eds., *Marzabotto: Planstadt der Etrusker* (Mainz: Zabern, 2008): 40–47. For some general considerations, see also Petra Amann, “Wer wohnt im Haus? Familienstruktur und Hausarchitektur als sich ergänzende Forschungsberichte,” in *Etruskisch-italische und römisch-republikanische Häuser: Kolloquium Bonn 2009*, ed. Martin Bentz and Christoph Reusser, *Studien zur antiken Stadt* 9 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2010): 29–42.

as human remains. Considering all of these together provides us with multiple levels of information about society, ideology and religious beliefs. The contributions in this volume cover a very broad geographical and chronological range (see Fig. 1), with case studies encompassing regions from Northern to Southern Italy (Veneto, Romagna, Etruria, Latium, Samnium, Apulia), extending chronologically from the Early Iron age to the Hellenistic period and using very different methodological approaches.

It is easy to recognize the outstanding *princely graves* of the leading families in the earlier periods, but it is extremely difficult to distinguish between the graves of other social groups. Therefore, it seems crucial to find the correct indicators: We know that graves cannot be regarded as ‘mirrors’ of the respective societies,¹⁴ but is a large grave and/or a high quantity of grave goods nevertheless an indication of an elevated social status? Are some of the grave types linked to a specific social status? Is it not so much the quantity, but rather the quality and rarity of goods (for example, valuable imported objects) that are decisive for defining the status? Is it possible to measure and compare the material as well as the symbolic value of the objects? What significance does a central or more marginal position of a grave within the necropolis have? Can all these elements be inserted into one or more patterns, using, for example, a wealth index?¹⁵ Certainly, there is also a huge difference between studying one or a few graves and a complete necropolis with many graves that can provide the possibility to use statistical analyses. Some examples for this kind of research are the contributions by *Francesca Fulminante* and *Rafael Scopacasa* in this volume, both of which use a micro-historical approach and contextual spatial analyses in order to calculate a wealth index, which is also related to criteria such as age and gender.

The hierarchy and status differences within wealthy Etruscan *gentes* are analyzed by *Laura Nazim*, who investigates sarcophagus burials within chamber tombs and

¹⁴ ‘As it is well-known, for over 30 years the question of whether funerary practices can provide an “accurate” image of society, its stratification and its complexity, has been the central issue in the archaeological study of funerary sites’; see Mariassunta Cuozzo, “Theoretical Issues in the Interpretation of Cemeteries and Case Studies from Etruria to Campania,” in *Burial and Social Change in First Millennium BC Italy: Approaching Social Agents: Gender, Personhood and Marginality*, ed. Elisa Perego and Rafael Scopacasa (Oxford: Oxbow, 2016): 3. For a summary of the long-lasting discussion in research about processual and post-processual approaches as well as the ‘Ideologia funeraria’, see Orlando Cerasuolo, “Archaeological Perspectives on Inequality,” in *The Archaeology of Inequality: Tracing the Archaeological Record*, ed. Orlando Cerasuolo (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021): 1–20; Elisa Perego and Rafael Scopacasa, “Introduction: Burial and Social Change in First Millennium BC Italy: An Agent-Focused Approach,” in *Burial and Social Change in First Millennium BC Italy: Approaching Social Agents: Gender, Personhood and Marginality*, ed. Elisa Perego and Rafael Scopacasa (Oxford: Oxbow, 2016): xi–xxiv; Cuozzo, “Theoretical Issues,” with references.

¹⁵ See, for example, the discussion about the Gini coefficient, used in modern economic research and adapted for archaeology: Timothy A. Kohler and Michael E. Smith, eds., *Ten Thousand Years of Inequality: The Archaeology of Wealth Differences: Symposium at the 81st Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Orlando, Florida, 2016*, Amerind Studies in Anthropology (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019), with different uses and references.



Fig. 1: Map of the Italian Peninsula showing the most important sites mentioned in the essays.

takes inscriptions and spatial arguments into account for her interpretation. A further example for the contextual analysis of tombs is the study by *Massimiliano Di Fazio* on the graves of pastoral societies in Central Italy.

The two case studies by *Marina Micozzi* and *Claudio Negrini* demonstrate that infants and children were, in some periods, not considered as an equal part of the adult society and were therefore excluded from formal burials or buried elsewhere.

Anthropological and bioarchaeological methods, which have developed very fast in the last years, have become more and more important as they can provide us with information in regard to age, sex, origin, family relations, diet, health status but also burial rituals – important arguments for interpreting grave contexts. A peculiar single burial with a shackle-bound skeleton from Etruscan Populonia is studied by *Giorgio Baratti et al.* in a comprehensive way, taking bioarchaeological and spatial arguments into account. The authors propose that the male individual was of foreign origin and belonged to a marginal social group, possibly a slave who had to wear shackles as a punishment. *Mauro Rubini* uses a larger dataset of skeletons from Sicily and discusses markers of inequality comparing colonial Greek and indigenous individuals of different sex, also in comparison with data from Central Italy. The contribution by *John Robb* on “Inequality, the Skeleton, and Treatment of the Dead: Basic Principles and Some Case Studies from Prehistoric Italy” and *Andrea Acosta’s* “In Search of the Roman *Gens*: A Bioarchaeological Study of Family Structure and Social Change in Iron Age Italy (900–700 BCE),” both of which were presented at the conference, could unfortunately not be included in this volume.

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Fig. 1 Map created by Till Müller; dataset: Tinitaly DEM (© Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia), <https://doi.org/10.13127/tinitaly/1.1>

