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Plebeian Rituals and Peasant Cults? Religious Transformations in Etruria during the Sixth and Early Fifth Centuries BCE and their Socio-Political Context

Abstract: *The Etruscan sacred landscape changed profoundly in Central Etruria during the sixth and early fifth centuries BCE. In this period, the number of attested sanctuaries and votive findings increased significantly, votive practices seem to have become less prestigious and exclusive, while dedicatory inscriptions changed from long, formulaic texts to short consecrations and indications of property. Additionally, some cults associated with social underclasses became popular toward the end of the sixth century BCE. Scholars have observed these religious transformations for a long time and often interpreted them as signs of some kind of peasant religion (culto plebeo) in Etruria.*

This article discusses religious transformations in Etruria in the sixth century BCE and their broader socio-political implications by analysing three contexts of the Etruscan sacred landscape. The first chapter gives an overview of elite practices in cult places in the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE through three case studies. The second part of this article studies long-term and gradual changes in Etruscan sanctuaries during the sixth century BCE, particularly in regard to architecture, pottery assemblages and votive inscriptions. Finally, this article deals with radical shifts in Etruscan religion around 500 BCE that could have been part of broader political changes and whether these might have been connected to ‘peasant cults’. The result is an evaluation of the socio-political reasons behind changes in Etruscan religion during the sixth century BCE as well as if the paradigm of plebeian cults might be an explanation for these developments.

1 The Etruscan Sacred Landscape and Social Elite Practices during the Seventh and early Sixth Centuries BCE

During the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE, Central Italy and Etruria (Fig. 1) saw the emergence of a social elite that represented itself through various media and resources and formed a new ‘aristocratic culture’. The ownership and display of key resources, in particular livestock, land and metal, as well as of exotic commodities

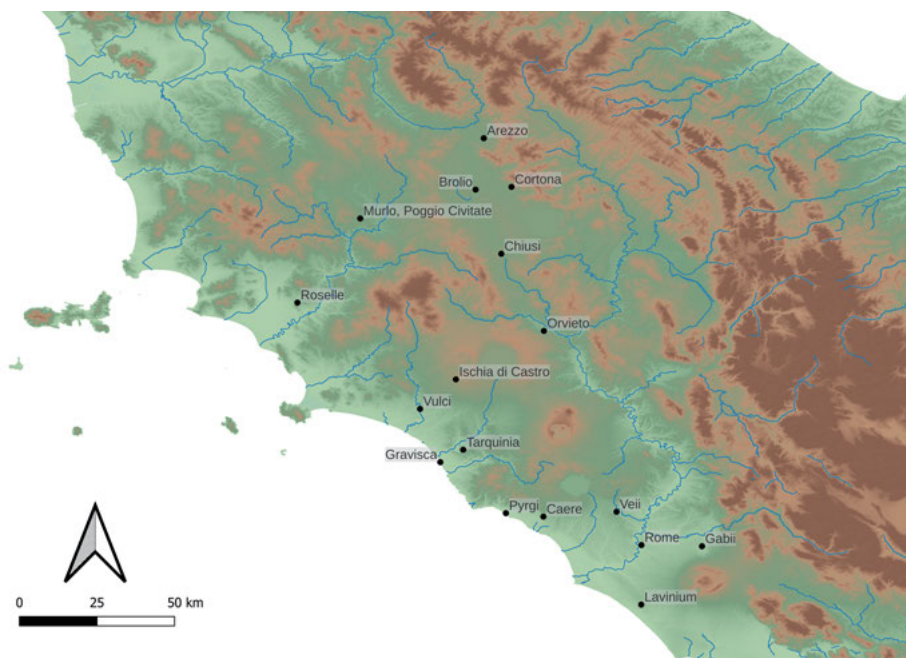


Fig. 1: Map of key sites mentioned in this article.

(for example, ivory, Baltic amber,¹ ostrich eggs,² purple³ and incense) and Mediterranean imports were important parts of elite representation strategies. Other means and media that elite members used to accumulate social capital were literacy (and its limited diffusion or the limited access to it at that time) and the appropriation of ‘Orientalizing imagery’ such as griffins, sphinxes, lions and other felines, hybrid creatures (*Mischwesen*) and animal friezes.⁴ Finally, Etruscan elite members of the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE would engage in various forms of conspicuous consumption,

1 Laura Maria Michetti, “L’Etruria e l’area laziale,” in *Ambre: trasparenze dall’antico*, ed. Maria Luisa Nava and Antonio Salerno (Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2007): 160–67; Maria Letizia Arancio and Simonetta Massimi, eds., *Ambra: dalle rive del Baltico all’Etruria* (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2012).

2 Annette Rathje, “Five Ostrich Eggs from Vulci,” in *Italian Iron Age Artefacts in the British Museum: Papers of the Sixth British Museum Classical Colloquium*, ed. Judith Swaddling (London: British Museum Publications, 1986): 397–404; Tamar Hodos et al., “The Origins of Decorated Ostrich Eggs in the Ancient Mediterranean and Middle East,” *Antiquity* 94 (2020): 381–400.

3 Hartmut Blum, *Purpur als Statussymbol in der griechischen Welt* (Bonn: Habelt, 1998); Beatriz Marín-Aguilera et al., “Colouring the Mediterranean: Production and Consumption of Purple-Dyed Textiles in Pre-Roman Times,” *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 31, no. 2 (2018): 127–54.

4 Maria Cristina Biella et al., eds., *Il bestiario fantastico di età orientalizzante nella penisola italiana* (Trento: Tangram Edizioni Scientifiche, 2012); Lorenz Winkler-Horaček, *Monster in der früh-griechischen Kunst: Die Überwindung des Unfassbaren*, Image & Context 4 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015);

in particular the use of wine, feasting and banqueting,⁵ the possession of prestigious objects and the distribution of those through gift exchanges.⁶

The result of these diacritical practices and ‘codes of power’ was the development of a specific aristocratic habitus and lifestyle for a leisure class, which had three main purposes: (I) the formation of an interconnected, cross-cultural and international community of practice with a high degree of communication, exchange and mobility as well as access to wide-ranging and dense networks, relationships and alliances across the Mediterranean;⁷ (II) the naturalization and legitimation of status differences and of a ruling political position over lower social classes; and finally, (III) as a means of facilitating competition, power struggles and ‘bloodless conflicts’ through the conspicuous consumption of precious objects and commodities among social elite members and families within the Etruscan city-states.

The habitus, lifestyle and practices of Etruscan social elite members of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE, which can only be briefly mentioned here, took place in representative institutions and social spaces, particularly in *tumuli* and prestigious family tombs with lavish burials as well as in prestigious courtyard buildings and seats of power, sometimes referred to as ‘palaces’ (Ancient Greek: *anaktora*, Latin: *regiae*). However, sanctuaries played a particularly important role as key spaces for the socio-political representation of Etruscan social elite members and families.⁸ The different aspects of elite agency, habitus and practices in Etruscan sanctuaries during the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE shall be discussed here briefly through three case studies, each of them representing a different topographical context: Brolio, a rural cult place in the hinterland of Cortona; the ‘Casa con Recinto’ at the socio-political centre of Roselle; and the suburban Portonaccio sanctuary directly outside the city gate of Veii.

Maria Cristina Biella and Enrico Giovanelli, eds., *Nuovi studi sul bestiario fantastico di età orientalizzante nella penisola italiana* (Trento: Tangram Edizioni Scientifiche, 2016).

5 Annette Rathje, “The Banquet through Etruscan History,” in *The Etruscan World*, ed. Jean MacIntosh Turfa (London: Routledge, 2013): 823–30.

6 Alessandro Naso, “The Etruscan Aristocracy in the Orientalizing Period: Culture, Economy, Relations,” in *The Etruscans*, ed. Mario Torelli (Milan: Bompiani, 2000): 111–29; Maurizio Sannibale, “Orientalizing Etruria,” in *The Etruscan World*, ed. Jean MacIntosh Turfa (London: Routledge, 2013): 99–133.

7 Erich Kistler, “Die Mediterranée im 6. und frühen 5. Jh. v. Chr. – eine Welt in Bewegung,” *Archäologischer Anzeiger* (2014): 181–204.

8 Robinson Peter Krämer, “Places of Gods and Men: Socio-Political Interactions and Ritual Practice in the Etruscan Sacred Landscape (Eight to Fifth Centuries BC),” in *Urban Practices: Repopulating the Ancient City*, ed. Annette Haug and Stephanie Merten (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2020): especially 126–30; Robinson Peter Krämer, *Etruskische Heiligtümer des 8.–5. Jhs. v. Chr. als Wirtschaftsräume und Konsumtionsorte von Keramik*, Italiká 8 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2022): 146–48.

1.1 Elite Imagery and Social Ideals: The Cult Place of Brolio

The cult place of Brolio was situated at the foot of a hill directly on the river Chiana (Etruscan: *Clanis*) and on the western border of the territory of the Etruscan city-state Cortona. The site of Brolio is often referred to as a votive deposit, but finds of poles and wooden materials as well as the chronological distribution of the findings indicate the probable existence of architectural structures and of a permanent cult place at least from ca. 580/570 to the early fifth century BCE. The topography of Brolio is of importance for the interpretation of its function as a sanctuary. On the one hand, it was positioned in the rural countryside and at a geographical and political border; on the other hand, it was located on the river Chiana, which was a significant gateway and a communication, trade and travel route that connected Cortona with Arezzo and the Arno Valley to the north; with Chiusi and Lake Trasimeno to the south; and possibly even with Murlo, the Ombrone Valley and the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west (Fig. 2).⁹

Because of its important topographical position, Brolio has been interpreted as a *sacrum gentilicium*, a sanctuary under the direct control of an elite clan of the *ager Cortonensis*.¹⁰ The many precious bronze objects that were offered at Brolio confirm its interpretation as the sanctuary and meeting place of an Etruscan social elite circle in the sixth century BCE, and illustrate the ideals, norms and values of those actors within a key institution and social space. In this sense, the imagery of the bronze votives represents an elite habitus and allows us to decipher some of the aristocratic codes of power at Cortona and its hinterland.

One important group of bronze objects consists of male and female figurines from the sixth and early fifth centuries BCE. The female figures are wearing jewellery and lavish clothes, such as *tutuli*, long woolen mantles, *himatia* and fine tunics with geometric decorations. In three cases, the women are holding the garments with their left hand, just like Greek *korai* statues from that period. The male figurines are characterized as cult participants or as warriors with shields and raised spears. The warrior figurines are wearing Corinthian, Cretan or Illyrian-type helmets, breastplates, greaves and other types of armour. In some cases, the warriors are shown with an aggressive *promachos* gesture, their left leg is extended far forward, the right hand is holding a spear and is raised above the head, while the left hand is covering the body

⁹ On the Etruscan cult place of Brolio, see Mauro Cristofani, *I bronzi degli Etruschi* (Novara: Istituto Geografico De Agostini S.p.A., 1985): 78–87, 247–50; Antonella Romualdi, “Il deposito di Brolio,” in *Santuari d'Etruria*, ed. Giovanni Colonna (Milan: Electa editrice, 1985): 162–64; Antonella Romualdi, “Il ‘deposito’ di Brolio,” in *Castiglion Fiorentino: un nuovo centro etrusco*, ed. Paola Zamarchi Grassi (Cortona: Calosci, 1995): 85–109; Sybille Haynes, *Etruscan Civilization: A Cultural History* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2000): 128–29; Lucio Fiorini, “I santuari del territorio,” in *Il Museo della città etrusca e romana di Cortona: catalogo delle collezioni*, ed. Simona Fortunelli (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2005): 300–309; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 182–83 ch. VI.1.3.1, with several references.

¹⁰ Romualdi, “Il ‘deposito’ di Brolio”: 87–88; Haynes, *Etruscan Civilization*: 129; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 182–83.

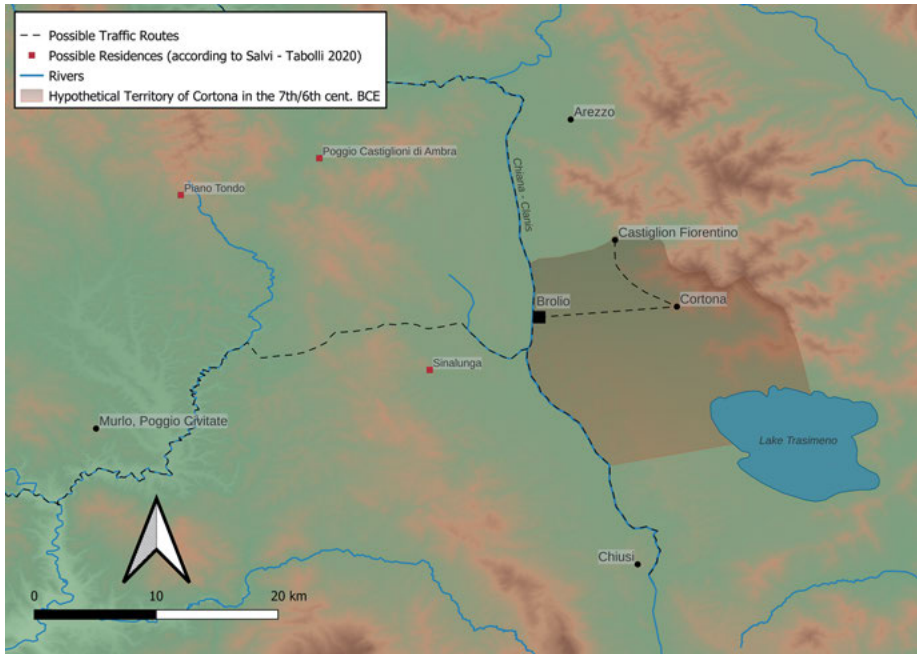


Fig. 2: Map of the position of Brolio at the river Chiana (Etruscan *Clanis*) and the political borderline of the city-state of Cortona. Possible traffic and transportation routes indicate significant gateway and communication functions of the site.

with a shield.¹¹ These votives show the social ideals and habitus of the Etruscan elite in the sixth century BCE: the precious clothes and jewellery worn by the beautiful women, representing grace (*charis*) and finding close parallels in the *korai* in Greek sanctuaries, as well as the warrior status, virtue and valour (*areté*) of the men. At the same time, it is also possible that the bronze figurines were meant to perpetuate ritual practices and commemorate the visits and participations of specific elite members in the cult place of Brolio.

Bronze figurines of deer, roes and hares from the second quarter of the sixth century BCE depict another important elite theme and probably served as rim decorations of large mixing bowls or similar bronze vessels.¹² These animals did not necessarily serve as substitutes for sacrificed animals, but rather they can be interpreted as symbols of hunting activities, as deer and hares are frequently shown in Etruscan hunting

¹¹ Cristofani, *I bronzi*: 78–85, 248–50 nos. 2.1–2.13; Romualdi, “Il ‘deposito’ di Brolio”: 96–104 nos. 14–26; Fiorini, “I santuari del territorio”: 303–7 nos. VII.33–45.

¹² Cristofani, *I bronzi*: 86–87, 250 nos. 2.15–2.21; Romualdi, “Il ‘deposito’ di Brolio”: 92–95 nos. 4–8, 10–11; Haynes, *Etruscan Civilization*: 128 fig. 107–9; Fiorini, “I santuari del territorio”: 301–2 nos. VII.22–VII.26, VII.28–VII.29.

scenes from the Orientalizing and Archaic periods.¹³ In such case, the social context of hunting was not the obtainment of food, nor was it a display of dangerous and heroic fights against lions and wild beasts. Instead, the deer and hares represent the pastimes and the relaxed lifestyle of an Etruscan leisure class; Greek aristocrats of that time used hunting imagery in a similar manner as a diacritical tool for social representation and the creation of an aristocratic habitus.¹⁴ Likewise, a figurine of a horse and a rod with a bull protome¹⁵ can be connected with the possession of livestock, in particular horses and cattle, and thus with prosperity and economic capital.¹⁶

Aside from pottery,¹⁷ there are also some bronze vessels attested at Brolio: one ladle with a long handle (*simpulum*), two *omphalos* bowls and three large basins, one of which is decorated with an embossed rim (*Perlrandbecken*).¹⁸ The presence of these metal vessels may be linked to libations and the ritual pouring of liquids, or, more likely, to the banqueting practices of elite members in the cult place of Brolio. Banqueting and the conspicuous consumption of wine were important parts of Etruscan elite habitus and are the key motifs of terracotta frieze plaques that decorated residences and courtyard buildings (*anaktora, regiae*), such as Poggio Civitate in Murlo.¹⁹

13 Giovannangelo Camporeale, *La caccia in Etruria* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1984): 35–43, 64–68, 93–105, 116–27. Hunting scenes are a theme in Etruscan wall paintings from the late sixth century BCE, e.g., that in the Tomba della Caccia (Tomb of the Hunting; now lost; end of the sixth or beginning of the fifth century BCE) in Chiusi as well as in the Tomba della Caccia e Pesca (Tomb of the Hunting and Fishing; ca. 510 BCE) and in the Tomba del Cacciatore (Tomb of the Huntsman; ca. 510/500 BCE) in Tarquinia (Stephan Steingraber, ed., *Etruskische Wandmalerei* (Stuttgart: Belser, 1985): 274 no. 14; 301–4 nos. 50–51).

14 Judith M. Barringer, *The Hunt in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001): 10–124; Matteo D'Acunto, *Il mondo del vaso Chigi: Pittura, guerra e società a Corinto alla metà del VII secolo a.C.*, Image & Context 12 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013): 48–52. In Archaic Greece, the hunting activities of the social elite were also associated with athletics, warfare and the *ephebeia*, the rite of passage to adulthood.

15 Cristofani, *I bronzi*: 86, 250 no. 2.14; Romualdi, “Il ‘deposito’ di Brolio”: 94 no. 9; 104 no. 27; Fiorini, “I santuari del territorio”: 302–3 nos. VII.27, VII.30.

16 Horse husbandry and ownership were, in a similar way, important status symbols for Greek aristocrats of the Archaic period, as the aristocratic titles *hippeis* (horsemen or riders) and *hippobotai* (horse rearers or nourishers of horses) show. For the extensive imagery of horse husbandry and its elite context in Attic vase painting, see Wolfgang Filser, *Die Elite Athens auf der attischen Luxuskераmik*, Image & Context 16 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017): 398–565.

17 Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 183 with footnotes, 1177–82.

18 Romualdi, “Il ‘deposito’ di Brolio”: 104–6 nos. 28–32, 34; Fiorini, “I santuari del territorio”: 307–8 nos. VII.46–VII.50, VII.53.

19 Mario Torelli, “I fregi figurati delle *regiae* latine ed etrusche: immaginario del potere arcaico,” *Ostraka* 1 (1992): especially 251–52 with fig. 2 a–b = Mario Torelli, *Il rango, il rito e l'immagine: alle origini della rappresentazione storica romana* (Milan: Electa, 1997): 87–121, especially 89–90 fig. 62–63; Mario Torelli, “*Regiae* d'Etruria e del Lazio e immaginario figurativo del potere,” in *Eius Virtutis Studiosi: Classical and Postclassical Studies in Memory of Frank Edward Brown*, ed. Russell T. Scott and Ann Reynolds Scott (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1993): 85–121; Rathje, “Banquet”: 825–26.

Furthermore, Etruscan basins with embossed rims, such as the one from Brolio, have been interpreted by Erich Kistler as being prestigious icons (*symbola*) that circulated in trans-Mediterranean elite networks and formed part of aristocratic gift-exchange, mobility and gatherings, with banqueting as a key practice.²⁰ Two griffin protomes were part of a large cauldron of Etruscan production (ca. 580–550 BCE, maybe from a workshop in Chiusi),²¹ an object that may not only be connected to banqueting, but may also be interpreted as a *symbolon* of a cross-cultural community of practice since griffin cauldrons were part of the Orientalizing (or rather trans-Mediterranean) imagery and iconic objects that had been shared, gifted, dedicated and exchanged among elite members across the entire Mediterranean.²²

In this sense, the bronze objects from the cult place of Brolio paint a picture, kaleidoscope-like, of a proper and complex ‘idea-scape’ or ‘consumptionscape’ of ideals, values and norms for the Etruscan social elite in the sixth century BCE, thus turning it into symbolic imagery of elite habitus and lifestyle that was represented and perpetuated in sanctuaries and institutions. The important themes at Brolio were the elevated social position and warrior status of cult participants, hunting, ownership of livestock (horses and cattle), banqueting, as well as Orientalizing imagery and iconic, symbolic objects that had been shared across the Mediterranean.

1.2 Conspicuous Consumption and Banqueting: The ‘Casa con Recinto’ at Roselle

The second case study, the ‘Casa con Recinto’ (House with Enclosure), is situated at the political centre and the public space of the city-state of Roselle, which would later become the Forum of the Roman settlement. The central and northern parts of this area were occupied by several buildings from the Orientalizing and Archaic period, the largest structure being the ‘Casa con Recinto’. This structure consisted of a large enclosure with a rectangular floor plan (ca. 7.5 x 25.8 m) and a room at its centre that incorporated the perimeter walls and divided the enclosure into two open courtyards of approximately the same size. Both the enclosure and the room at its centre were built with unfired clay bricks. While the exterior walls of this edifice indicate an almost square floor plan of ca. 5.0 x 5.0 m, the inside room was oval in shape (diameter: ca. 4.5 m) and had a vaulted ceiling.²³

²⁰ Kistler, “Mediterranée”: 184–88 in particular.

²¹ Romualdi, “Il ‘deposito’ di Brolio”: 91–92 nos. 2–3; Fiorini, “I santuari del territorio”: 300–301 nos. VII.20–VII.21.

²² On griffin cauldrons in their cross-Mediterranean contexts, see the recent work of Nassos Papalexandrou, *Bronze Monsters and the Cultures of Wonder: Griffin Cauldrons in the Preclassical Mediterranean* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021).

²³ On the ‘Casa con Recinto’ and the Forum area at Roselle, see Soprintendenza archeologica della Toscana, *Roselle: gli scavi e la mostra* (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 1975): 21–33; Piera Bocci Pacini, “Una casa

The 'Casa con Recinto' was probably erected around the middle of the seventh century BCE and was frequented until ca. 600 BCE, when the building was obliterated and covered by a public square. The site features some interesting characteristics: its central and dominant position at the core of Roselle, the monumental size of this context compared to the other buildings in its surroundings and at that time, as well as its unique architecture with a square floor plan and an oval, vaulted interior. The 'Casa con Recinto' and its unusual design have been interpreted as being a *tholos*-like sacred building, or as a reminiscence and reference towards a kind of ancestral and traditional hut architecture, with its enclosure serving as a *temenos* wall.²⁴ The reading of an inscription on a dolium rim from the 'Casa con Recinto' from the late seventh century BCE is not entirely clear, but it seems to support the interpretation of this context as an early cult place in the heart of Roselle.²⁵

The rear courtyard to the west of the central *tholos* contained the remains of an open hearth, animal bones and pottery, which makes the 'Casa con Recinto' a particularly interesting case of Etruscan elite agency and means of representation in a sanctuary from the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE. The pottery assemblage is chronologically very homogenous and can be dated to the second half of the seventh century BCE. Based on the vessel shapes (Diagram 1), their use in textile production as well as the storage, preparation and especially the bearing of food and beverages for consumption were essential functions of the pottery at the 'Casa con Recinto'. Additionally, imported Greek pottery and Etruscan imitations of Greek vessel shapes, in particular banqueting vessels such as *kraters*, *holmoi* and *cotylai*, were important at this cult place.²⁶

nell'età orientalizzante a Roselle," in *Santuari d'Etruria*, ed. Giovanni Colonna (Milan: Electa editrice, 1985): 53–57; Giovanni Colonna, "Urbanistica e architettura," in *Rasenna: Storia e civiltà degli Etruschi* (Milan: Libri Scheiwiller, 1986): 401–2; Mariagrazia Celuzza, ed., *Signori di Maremma: Elites etrusche fra Populonia e il Vulcente* (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2009): 112–13; Mario Cygielman, "Roselle fra tarda età del ferro e periodo orientalizzante," in *Signori di Maremma: Elites etrusche fra Populonia e il Vulcente*, ed. Mariagrazia Celuzza (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2009): 56–57; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 212–17, ch. VI.1.9.2, with several references.

24 Colonna, "Urbanistica e architettura": 401–2; Cygielman, "Roselle": 56–57; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 212–14.

25 The most probable reading is: *min[i] mulvanik[e] venel rapales laiven[alaš]* – Venel Rapale, son of Laivena, dedicated me. In this case, the dolium would be a dedication in a sanctuary. However, possible alternatives are: *min[i] mulvanik[e] venel rapales laiven[asi]* – Venel Rapale donated me to Laivena; *min[i] mulvanik[e] venel rapales laive m/n[---]* – Venel Rapale and Laive M/N . . . (name of a *gens*) donated/dedicated me. In these cases, the dolium could have been a donation that circulated in the context of aristocratic gift exchange instead of a dedication in a sacred context. On the inscription, see Bocci Pacini, "Una casa nell'età orientalizzante": 56 no. A7; Celuzza, *Signori di Maremma*: 112 no. 3.1; Cygielman, "Roselle": 56–57 fig. 2; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 294 no. R001, with references; ET Ru 3.1.

26 Soprintendenza, *Roselle*: 21–33; Celuzza, *Signori di Maremma*: 112–13; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 213 diagram 67; 214–17 with tab. 52.

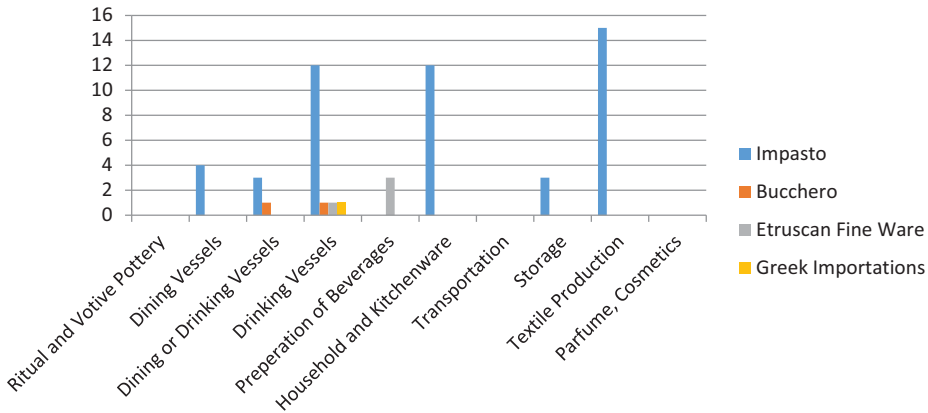


Diagram 1: Roselle, ‘Casa con Recinto’: Pottery Assemblage according to Functional Groups.

The ‘Casa con Recinto’ and the vase findings in its rear courtyard allow for the reconstruction of a monumental building that served as a political nexus and as a central social space for the early community of Roselle. The pottery assemblage suggests that banqueting and the conspicuous consumption of wine were important activities of the social elite members, who used the sanctuary in the second half of the seventh century BCE for gatherings and regular meetings. Imported Greek objects and their regional imitations generated prestige within the community of Roselle and at the same time linked the local participants to the trans-Mediterranean and cross-cultural elite community of the Orientalizing and Archaic periods. Finally, the dolium with the inscription represents an early manifestation of Etruscan literacy that commemorated the prestigious dedication by Venel Rapale in the sanctuary.

In this sense, the ‘Casa con Recinto’ can be interpreted as a key institution or even as a stage, a prominent location where social elite members could gather, represent themselves and convert resources and economic capital into prestige and social capital. Banqueting, wine consumption, imported objects and literacy thus became beneficial practices and diacritical tools that served to maintain an elevated political rank and legitimate an elite status and the social differences within the community.

1.3 Literacy, Gift Exchange and Interregional Elite Networks: The Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii

In Etruria in the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE, literacy was a scarce cultural resource and mainly limited to public institutions and elite contexts. Literacy and inscriptions were primarily used to highlight property and gift exchange as well as to commemorate status, kinship (in particular through the names of clans and *gentes*) or social bonds, friendships and alliances. Therefore, similarly to banqueting and other

practices, literacy became an important diacritical tool for Etruscan elite members, used to facilitate communication, to accumulate prestige and to enforce status differences and social segmentation.

Important examples of these complex cultural practices and mechanisms are property markers containing the word ‘*mi . . .*’ (I belong to . . .) followed by a personal name, and formulaic inscriptions with the expression ‘*mini muluvanice . . .*’ (. . . gave me as a gift) or similar forms of the verb *mul-*, which commemorate the donation of an inscribed object.²⁷ Among the inscribed objects that circulated through gift exchange in Etruscan elite contexts were precious metal objects or jewellery,²⁸ and in particular ceramic vessels such as aryballoi with perfumes²⁹ and giant kyathoi, both produced in bucchero.³⁰ Finally, Etruscan elite members and families commemorated and perpetuated friendships and alliances with *tesserae hospitales*, carved bone and ivory plaques that seem to have served as tokens of agreed friendship contracts (*hospitium*). Etruscan *tesserae hospitales* were found at the residence at Poggio Civitate in Murlo,³¹ but even as far as Carthage and the Sant’Omobono sanctuary in Rome, thus highlighting the cross-cultural and international contexts and institutions in which they circulated.³²

27 On *muluvanice*-inscriptions and the gift exchange between elite members and families in Etruria and Central Italy, see Mauro Cristofani, “Il ‘dono’ nell’Etruria arcaica” *La Parola del Passato* 30 (1975): 132–52; Anthony Tuck and Rex Wallace, *First Words: The Archaeology of Language at Poggio Civitate* (Hanover, PA: The Sheridan Press, 2013): 11–15; Petra Amann, “Gaben unter Eliten: Zu den etruskischen *mulu/muluvanice*-Inschriften,” in *Sanctuaries and the Power of Consumption: Networking and the Formation of Elites in the Archaic Western Mediterranean World: Proceedings of the International Conference in Innsbruck, 20th–23rd March 2012*, ed. Erich Kistler et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015): 63–81.

28 Amann, “Gaben unter Eliten”: 67–68, with references.

29 Christian Briesack, “Etruskische Bucchero-Aryballoi,” *Kölner und Bonner Archaeologica* 3 (2013): 9–39. The fact that 14 of the 80 known bucchero aryballoi contain inscriptions highlights the distinctive function of these vessels as prestigious donations in the context of aristocratic gift exchange.

30 Luca Cappuccini, “I kyathoi etruschi di Santa Teresa di Gavorrano e il ceramista dei Παῖθινα,” *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts: Römische Abteilung* 113 (2007): 217–40; Luca Cappuccini, “Un kyathos di bucchero da Poggio Pelliccia: la ‘bottega vetuloniese’ e il suo ruolo nella trasmissione della scrittura in Etruria,” *Studi Etruschi* 80 (2017): 61–82.

31 Adriano Maggiani, “Dinamiche del commercio arcaico: le *tesserae hospitales*,” *Annali della Fondazione per il Museo Claudio Faina* 13 (2006): 321–25 nos. 3a–7; Rex Wallace, “Etruscan Inscriptions on Ivory Objects Recovered from the Orientalizing Period Residence at Poggio Civitate (Murlo),” *Etruscan and Italic Studies: Journal of the Etruscan Foundation* 11 (2008): 67–80; Tuck and Wallace, *First Words*: 16–20, 31–36 nos. 3–8.

32 On *tesserae hospitales* and their role in Central Italy and in the Western Mediterranean, see Maggiani, “Dinamiche del commercio”; Giovanni Colonna, “A proposito del primo trattato romano-cartaginese (e della donazione pyrgense ad Astarte),” *Annali della Fondazione per il Museo Claudio Faina* 17 (2010): 287–89; Robinson Peter Krämer, “Trading Goods – Trading Gods: Greek Sanctuaries in the Mediterranean and their Role as *emporía* and ‘Ports of Trade’ (7th–6th Century BCE),” *Distant Worlds Journal* 1 (2016): 85–86 fig. 8; <https://doi.org/10.11588/dwj.2016.1.30154>.

Lavish burials and *tumuli* as well as monumental courtyard buildings and residences (*anaktora, regiae*), such as the one at Poggio Civitate,³³ were the main socio-political spaces and meeting places, where inscribed gifts and prestige objects would circulate and where literacy would have been used by the interconnected elite members of Central Italy in the seventh–sixth century BCE. However, literacy also played an important role in Etruscan sanctuaries, serving as a limited cultural resource used in elite representation and networking.³⁴

The Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii, with its exceptionally high number of inscribed dedications, is a particularly interesting case study on the use of literacy as well as for the reconstruction of intercultural gatherings, social networking and diplomatic contacts of social elite members at Etruscan cult places between the end of the seventh and the middle of the sixth centuries BCE.³⁵ The suburban sanctuary was located on top of a natural terrace on the west side of the settlement plateau of Veii, and it was built directly at one important city gate. Ritual activities have been attested from at least the first half of the seventh century BCE, when the cult was performed in the open air, until ca. 540/530 BCE. During this phase, votive offerings (many of them vessels with long, formulaic inscriptions) were deposited next to a small shrine or *aedicula* in the eastern part of the sanctuary. In the western part of the cult place stood a trapezoid building that has been interpreted to be a banquet hall for visitors; in addition, the presence of a *scriptorium*, a writing school or a writing place with scribes that was embedded into the cult place, has been suggested. The main goddess of the sanctuary was Menerva, while the deities Aritimi/Artumes, Turan, Vena(i), Rath and Hercle were venerated as well.³⁶

At Portonaccio, votives usually describe the dedicating person to the reader in one formulaic sentence written in the first person, such as ‘*mini muluvanice . . .*’ (. . . dedicated me) or a similar expression. The dedicating person is mentioned with his name and the name of his *gens*, sometimes the name of the receiving deity is documented as well. The inscriptions on the votive offerings from this phase in the Portonaccio Sanctuary highlight the presence of a vast interregional and cross-cultural network of elite members that seemed to have a high degree of personal mobility and regularly gathered at

33 On literacy at the Etruscan residence at Poggio Civitate in Murlo, see Wallace, “Etruscan Inscriptions”; Rex Wallace, “*Muluvanice* Inscriptions at Poggio Civitate (Murlo),” *American Journal of Archaeology* 112 (2008): 449–58; Tuck and Wallace, *First Words*.

34 On the role of literacy and inscriptions in Etruscan sanctuaries, see Krämer, “Places of Gods”: 122–24; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 117–20 ch. III.4; 132–40 ch. IV.3, with further references.

35 At the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii, 60 pottery inscriptions with at least three letters from the late seventh century to the first half of the sixth century BCE have been documented (Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 297–301 nos. VP01–VP60, with references).

36 On the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii, see Anna Maria Moretti Sgubini, ed., *Veio, Cerveteri, Vulci: città d'Etruria a confronto* (Rome: “L’Erma” di Bretschneider, 2001): 37–88; Giovanni Colonna, “The Sanctuary of Portonaccio,” in *Veii*, ed. Jacopo Tabolli (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019): 117–25; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 260–65 ch. VI.1.13.6, all with many further references.

this cult place, engaged in gift-exchange, attended funerals of fellow elite families and migrated to other cities.³⁷

The *gens Velkasna* (Tab. 1, no. 1) was likely a local clan from Veii, but it is also attested in the Cardarelli Tomb at the Monterozzi necropolis in Tarquinia. Therefore, this *gens* probably resided in Veii and attended the funeral of a member of a fellow *gens* in Tarquinia. The *gens Teiθurna* (Tab. 1, no. 2) is represented only once at Portonaccio, but appears on several objects from the seventh–sixth century BCE that can be attributed to Caere; it is likely that this family was mainly active in Caere, while one member of the *gens* visited the Portonaccio Sanctuary. Similarly, Larice Vestricinas (Tab. 1, no. 3) and his *gens* were probably from Caere, where the family member Ramuθasi Vestiricinai was buried at the end of the seventh century BCE, while the *gens Amana* (Tab. 1, no. 4) is attested in Orvieto by a chamber tomb for Larθ Amanas in the Crocifisso del Tufo Necropolis.

The dedication of Avile Vipiienas (Tab. 1, no. 5) might establish a plausible historicity for the tale of the brothers Avle and Caile Vibenna from Vulci, who were comrades (*sodales*) of Servius Tullius and helped him to become king of Rome in the early sixth century BCE. If one accepts the historicity of Avle Vibenna and identifies him as the Avile Vipiienas from the dedication at Portonaccio, then this person was from Vulci and played an important role in the regal period of Rome. Avile Acvilnaś (Tab. 1, no. 6) is known from two bucchero oinochoes that he gifted in a funerary context at Ischia di Castro in the territory of Vulci (ET Vc 3.4–5). However, the *gens Acvilna* is certainly connected to the Roman *gens Aquilia*, and one of its members, Caius Aquilius Tuscus, was a consul of Rome in 487 BCE.³⁸ Unfortunately, the direction of the transmission between the Latin *Aquilius* and the Etruscan *Acvilnaś* remains unclear. The Etruscan *Acvilnaś* could be a loan word from the Latin *Aquilius*, and Avile Acvilnaś might have been a Roman aristocrat (probably Aulus Aquilius) who then became an integrated member of the southern Etruscan elite, used the Etruscan language and participated in rituals at the Portonaccio Sanctuary, as well as in gift exchanges with members of the social elite in Vulci. Finally, Mamarce Apuniie (Tab. 1, no. 7) is also known from an inscribed bucchero amphora that he dedicated in a rich funerary context at Lavinium during the second quarter of the sixth century BCE.

The pottery inscriptions from the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii demonstrate the connectivity and mobility of social elite members in Central Italy between Veii, Rome and Latium vetus, as well as the Etruscan city-states of Tarquinia, Caere, Vulci and

³⁷ On the intercultural elite network at the Portonaccio Sanctuary, see also Robinson Peter Krämer, “Interregional and Cross-Cultural Networks as Economic Resources in Sanctuaries of Central Italy (7th to 5th Centuries BCE),” in *Networks as Resources for Ancient Communities*, Ressourcenkulturen 22, ed. Raffaella Da Vela et al. (Tübingen: Tübingen University Press, 2023): in particular 208–12 with tab. 1 and fig. 2; 221–23 appendix I.

³⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 8.64–67; Livy 2.40.14.

Tab. 1: Overview of individuals and *gentes* at Veii, Portonaccio and their personal mobility.

No.	Name of <i>gens</i> or Person	Text and Translation	Connection	Type of Personal Mobility	References
1	<i>gens Velkasna</i>	<i>laris velkasna[s ---] menervas</i> – Laris Velkasna[s dedicated me] to Menerva	Veii – Tarquinia	attendance of funeral in Tarquinia, gift exchange	Briquel, “inscriptions”: 49–50; Krämer, <i>Heiligtümer</i> : 299 no. VP20; Krämer, “Networks”: 222 no. I.12; ET Ve 3.10.
2	<i>gens Teiθurna</i>	[---? <i>lari[s teiθurn(a)s</i> ---?] – . . . [Lari]s Teiθurn[as] . . .	Caere – Veii	visit to Veii, dedication	Briquel, “inscriptions”: 61–62; Krämer, <i>Heiligtümer</i> : 301 no. VP46; Krämer, “Networks”: 223 no. I.18; ET Ve 3.37.
3	<i>gens Vestricina</i>	<i>mine mulvanice larice ves.tricin[as ---?]</i> – Larice Vestricin[as] dedicated me; [---? <i>]arice vest[iricina (s) --- ?]</i> – [L]arice Vest(iricina) . . .	Caere – Veii	visit to Veii, dedication	Briquel, “inscriptions”: 51–52; Krämer, <i>Heiligtümer</i> : 300 nos. VP34; VP43; Krämer, “Networks”: 223 nos. I.14; I.16; ET Ve 3.3; Ve 3.15 = Ve 3.40.
4	<i>gens Amana</i>	[---]amanas:[---?] – from/of (the <i>gens</i>) Amana	Volsinii – Veii	visit to Veii, dedication	Briquel, “inscriptions”: 47; Krämer, <i>Heiligtümer</i> : 300–301 no. VP44; Krämer, “Networks”: 223 no. I.17; ET Ve 3.4.
5	<i>Avile Vipiienas</i>	<i>mine muluv[an]ece a:vile vipiien:nas</i> – Avile Vipiienas dedicated me	Vulci – Veii – Rome	visit to Veii, dedication; warfare in Rome	Briquel, “inscriptions”: 52; Krämer, <i>Heiligtümer</i> : 298 no. VP17; Krämer, “Networks”: 222 no. I.10; ET Ve 3.11.
6	<i>Aville Acvilnas</i> (*Aulus Aquilius?)	[min]e muluvenice a:vile a:cvil:naś – Aville Acvilnaś dedicated me	Rome – Veii – Vulci	attendance of funeral in Ischia di Castro (Vulci), gift exchange; dedication at Veii; migration from or to Rome?	Briquel, “inscriptions”: 46–47; Krämer, <i>Heiligtümer</i> : 298 no. VP10; Krämer, “Networks”: 222 no. I.5; ET Ve 3.7.

Tab. 1 (continued)

No.	Name of gens or Person	Text and Translation	Connection	Type of Personal Mobility	References
7	Mamarce Apuniie	<i>mini muluvanice mamar:ce a:puniie venala</i> – Mamarce Apuniie dedicated me to (the goddess) Vena(i)	Veii – Lavinium	visit to Veii, dedication; attendance of funeral in Lavinium, gift exchange	Briquel, “inscriptions”: 48–49; Krämer, <i>Heiligtümer</i> : 297 no. VP06; Krämer, “Networks”: 221 no. I.3; ET Ve 3.5.

Volsinii (Fig. 3). Among the activities were migrations, attendance of funerals, engagement in gift exchange, dedications in sanctuaries and even participation in combat as comrades (*sodales*). In this dynamic context, the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii seems to have been a particularly prestigious interregional gathering place for social elites, who might have used this institution to represent themselves, create alliances, discuss politics, negotiate economic agreements and create powerful interregional networks.

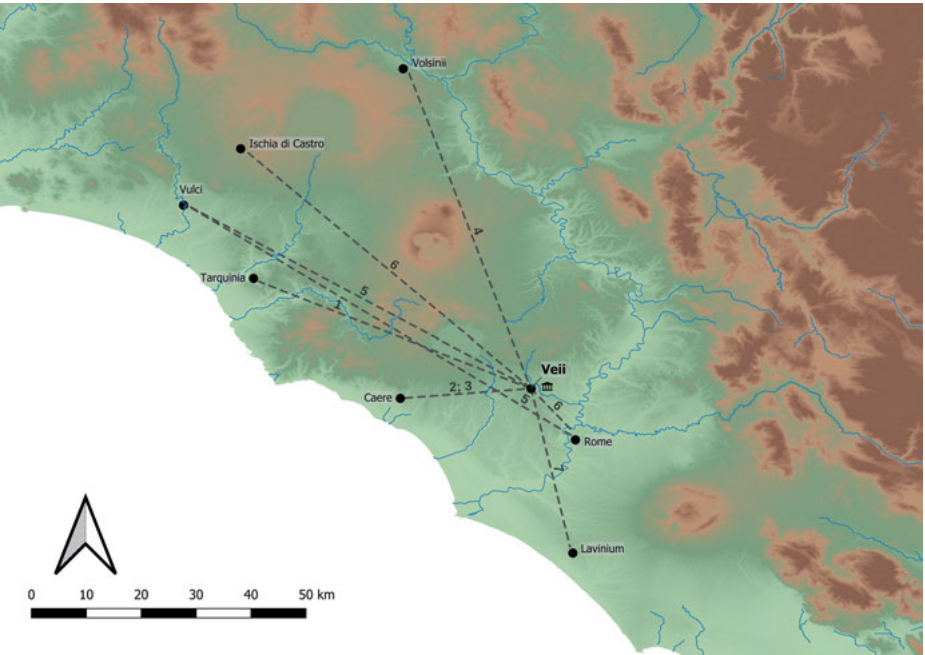


Fig. 3: Map of the interregional elite network at the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii. The numbers refer to individuals and *gentes* in Tab. 1.

2 Developments during the Sixth Century BCE:

(1) Religious Architecture

The three aforementioned case studies stand for various aspects of social elite agency and representation in Etruscan sanctuaries in the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE: the display of socio-political ideals and the habitus of a leisure class (Brolio); conspicuous consumption, banqueting and diacritical practices (Roselle, ‘Casa con Recinto’); and finally, literacy and elite networking (Veii, Portonaccio).

Against this background, the Etruscan sacred landscape changed gradually but profoundly in the course of the sixth century BCE, and during this process, the religious field seemed to become more integrative and accessible to large parts of the Etruscan city-states’ inhabitants. The complex developments during this period and their socio-political implications will be discussed here through three types of archaeological evidence: religious architecture, pottery assemblages in sanctuaries and votive inscriptions.

The sixth century BCE saw a twofold radical transformation of religious architecture in the city-states and settlements of Central Italy: the standardization of temple buildings that followed canonical layouts and typologies (particularly in the form of *peripteroi* and temples of the Tuscan order), and at the same time the emergence of monumental religious architecture that shaped Etruscan, Faliscan and Latin cityscapes during the sixth century BCE.³⁹ These representative and colossal buildings were lavishly adorned with painted plaques, pedimental sculpture, antefixes, acroteria and other elements in terracotta.⁴⁰ At the same time, the sheer number of sanctuaries is notable as their construction exploded throughout Etruria during this period.⁴¹

The dimensions and floor areas of temples and cult buildings in Etruria and Latium vetus demonstrate the profound change that took place in the sixth century BCE, and in particular from ca. 570 BCE onwards. Diagram 2 shows the chronological distri-

39 Vedia Izzet, “Tuscan Order: The Development of Etruscan Sanctuary Architecture,” in *Religion in Archaic and Republican Rome and Italy: Evidence and Experience*, ed. Edward Bispham and Christopher Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000): 34–53; Vedia Izzet, *The Archaeology of Etruscan Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 130–41.

40 Nancy A. Winter, “Gods Walking on the Roof: The Evolution of Terracotta Statuary in Archaic Etruscan Architecture in Light of the Kings of Rome,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 241–51; Nancy A. Winter, *Symbols of Wealth and Power: Architectural Terracotta Decoration in Etruria and Central Italy, 640–510 B.C.*, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome Suppl.* 9 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2009); Nancy A. Winter, “Monumentalization of the Etruscan Round Moulding in Sixth-Century BCE Central Italy,” in *Monumentality in Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture: Ideology and Innovation*, ed. Michael L. Thomas and Gretchen E. Meyers (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012): 61–81; Nancy A. Winter, “Architectural Terracottas of Central Italy within Their Wider Mediterranean Context,” in *Architecture in Ancient Central Italy: Connections in Etruscan and Early Roman Building*, ed. Charlotte R. Potts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022): 62–94.

41 Krämer, “Places of Gods”: 117–18 fig. 8.2; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 126–27 diagram 47.

bution of religious architecture in Etruria and Latium vetus by floor area (in sq m), with three overlapping groups (I: 200 sq m or less; II: ca. 200–600 sq m; III: more than 600 sq m).⁴² The dataset in Diagram 2 illustrates the extensive monumentalization process in Central Italy between ca. 570 and 450 BCE, which took place in two waves (groups II–III) and led to increasingly larger buildings (grey marked area in Diagram 2). It is important to note that this process can also be observed in both Etruria (Diagram 2, triangles) and Latium vetus (Diagram 2, rectangles), where it occurred at the same time, and that the chronological distribution and the building measurements in both regions

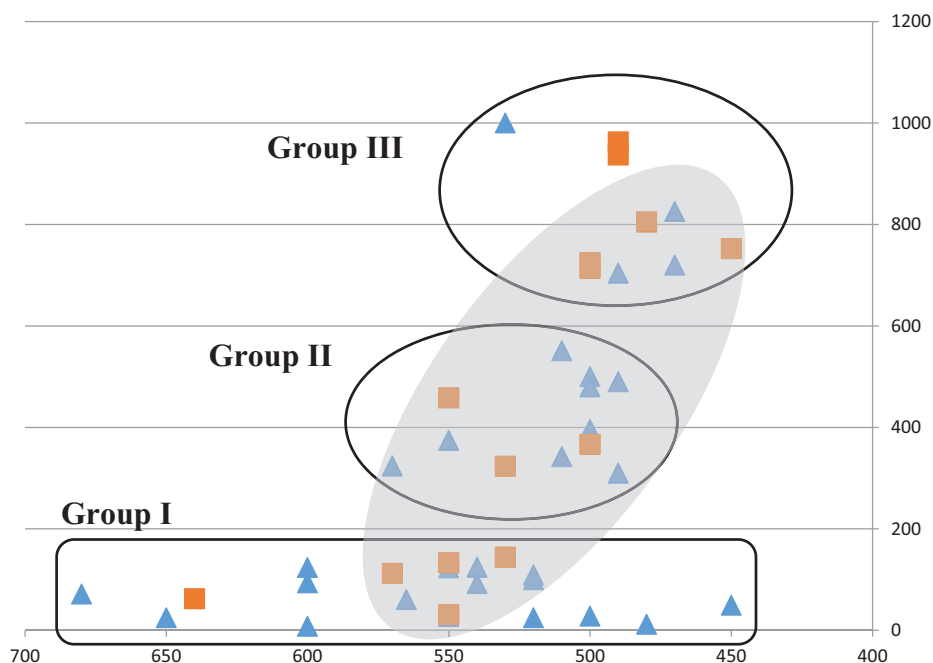


Diagram 2: Chronological distribution of cult buildings (horizontal axis – dating in BCE) in Etruria (triangles) and Latium vetus (rectangles) by floor area (vertical axis – floor area in sq m) (taken from Krämer, “Places of Gods”: 119–20 fig. 8.3–8.4; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 129–30 tab. 45 and diagram 48).

⁴² For the dataset, see Krämer, “Places of Gods”: 118–21 fig. 8.3–8.4; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 127–31 tab. 45 and diagram 48. Only temples and cult buildings are considered here, while podiums, terraces, *temenos* walls and other architectural features are not taken into account. See also Marco Rendeli, “‘Muratori, ho fretta di erigere questa casa’ (Ant. Pal. 14.136): Concorrenza tra formazioni urbane dell’Italia centrale tirrenica nella costruzione di edifici di culto arcaici,” *Rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale d’Archeologia e Storia dell’Arte* 12 (1989): 49–68; Maria Bonghi Jovino, “Tarquinio il Superbo e Tarquinia: un rapporto intricato e complesso,” in *The Age of Tarquinius Superbus: Central Italy in the Late 6th Century BC: Proceedings of the Conference ‘The Age of Tarquinius Superbus: A Paradigm Shift?’ Rome, 7–9 November 2013*, ed. Patricia S. Lulof and Christopher J. Smith (Leuven: Peeters, 2017): 145–57, with compilations and analyses of cult buildings and their floor areas in Archaic Central Italy.

are very similar and seem to follow the same patterns. After the middle of the fifth century BCE, there seems to be an abrupt halt in building activities that could be linked to economic or political crises in Central Italy.

The above-documented monumentalization process was part of extensive socio-political developments that occurred during the emergence of city-states in Central Italy in the sixth century BCE. These include the implementation of an urban infrastructure, in particular cisterns, drainage and water management facilities, the layout of public spaces and road networks, and the erection of city walls.⁴³ Etruscan, Latial and Faliscan city-states seem to have organized, coordinated and invested a considerable amount of labour force into the execution of ambitious and costly building programs that changed urban layouts permanently; this can be determined through the increased amount of specialized craftspeople, architects and workers as well as in standardized measures, in particular those used for building materials such as squared stone blocks.⁴⁴ In this context, the erection of monumental temples and the foundation of new sanctuaries in Central Italy are expressions of wider phenomena: large building programs, the formation of an ‘urbanity’ and city-states with interregional influence and power, as well as the ‘rise of monumental urban landscapes during the sixth century’⁴⁵ that included public institutions and spaces. The monumentalizations and building programs that altered the cityscapes of the sixth century BCE were probably directly connected to the profound interregional socio-political developments and changes that took place in Etruria as well as in Rome and in *Latium vetus*.

On the one hand, the religious architecture from the sixth century BCE and its elements could represent political power shifts – from social elite groups and aristocratic clans (*gentes*) to central authorities such as tyrants, kings or similar rulers, who could authorise and coordinate the implementation of ambitious building programs and encourage the religious participation of large parts of city-state communities.⁴⁶

43 Gabriele Cifani, *Architettura romana arcaica: edilizia e società tra monarchia e repubblica* (Rome: “L’Erma” di Bretschneider, 2008): 255–320; Gabriele Cifani, *The Origins of the Roman Economy: From the Iron Age to the Early Republic in a Mediterranean Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021): 83–91.

44 Gabriele Cifani, “Aspects of Urbanism and Political Ideology in Archaic Rome,” in *Papers on Italian Urbanism in the First Millenium B.C.*, ed. Elizabeth C. Robinson, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Suppl.* 97 (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2014): 18–24; Cifani, *The Origins*: 134–37; Seth Bernard, “A *Chaîne Operatoire* Approach to the Development of Early Ashlar Masonry at Rome,” in *Tracing Technology: Forty Years of Archaeological Research at Satricum*, ed. Marijke Gnade and Martina Revello Lami (Leuven: Peeters, 2021): 85–96; Gabriele Cifani, “Techniche edilizie e società nel Lazio Arcaico,” in *Tracing Technology: Forty Years of Archaeological Research at Satricum*, ed. Marijke Gnade and Martina Revello Lami (Leuven: Peeters, 2021): 41–50, in particular 43–46 fig. 4.

45 Cifani, “Aspects of Urbanism”: 15.

46 Izzet, *Etruscan Society*: 123; Cifani, “Aspects of Urbanism”: 18–24; Krämer, “Places of Gods”: 129; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 127–31, 146–49. But see also John Hopkins, “Tarquins, Romans and Architecture at the Threshold of Republic,” in *The Age of Tarquinius Superbus: Central Italy in the Late 6th Century BC: Proceedings of the Conference ‘The Age of Tarquinius Superbus: A Paradigm Shift?’ Rome,*

Several religious buildings in Etruria and Latium vetus have been interpreted in this sense as having been commissioned by a central authority, such as the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill in Rome commissioned by the Tarquins,⁴⁷ or the temples of Sant'Antonio and Pyrgi in Caere by Thefarie Velianas.⁴⁸ The monumentalization of the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii – in its third building phase at the end of the sixth century BCE, with its large Tuscan temple, architectural terracotta decoration and life-size clay statues on top of the roof – has been similarly read by Giovanni Colonna as being a representative project by a tyrant or monarch.⁴⁹ Finally, architectural terracotta elements of the Veii-Rome-Velletri decorative system, with acroteria showing Athena/Menerva and Heracles/Hercle, have been connected to symbolic imagery of 'tyrannical power' in Central Italy.⁵⁰ Political power shifts in Central Italy, from aristocracies to monarchies and central authorities, may have been an important factor for the significant building programs and the widespread erections of monumental temples.

On the other hand, monumental temples represented permanent religious institutions with established priesthoods, which certainly played important roles in the public spaces of the city-states. The religious field was increasingly defined and shaped by the ritual actions and performances of the city-state communities instead of being a restricted sphere for the distinctive representations of social elites. In this sense, com-

7–9 November 2013, ed. Patricia S. Lulof and Christopher J. Smith (Leuven: Peeters, 2017): 135–42, on the case of Rome in the sixth and early fifth centuries BCE, where he refers to the intense building activities in Rome after the regal period and calls for caution in connecting every monumental building project to the Tarquins and a central authority.

47 John North Hopkins, *The Genesis of Roman Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016): 97–125; Gabriele Cifani, "Small, Medium or Extra-Long? Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics on the Reconstructions of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus," in *The Age of Tarquinius Superbus: Central Italy in the Late 6th Century BC: Proceedings of the Conference 'The Age of Tarquinius Superbus: A Paradigm Shift?' Rome, 7–9 November 2013*, ed. Patricia S. Lulof and Christopher J. Smith (Leuven: Peeters, 2017): 113–22.

48 Vincenzo Bellelli, "Caere nell'età dei 'tiranni'," in *The Age of Tarquinius Superbus: Central Italy in the Late 6th Century BC: Proceedings of the Conference 'The Age of Tarquinius Superbus: A Paradigm Shift?' Rome, 7–9 November 2013*, ed. Patricia S. Lulof and Christopher J. Smith (Leuven: Peeters, 2017): 167–75; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 169–70, 173–78 ch. VI.1.2.1; VI.1.2.4; VI.1.2.5.

49 Giovanni Colonna, "Portonaccio," in *Veio, Cerveteri, Vulci: città d'Etruria a confronto*, ed. Anna Maria Moretti Sgubini (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2001): 40–43; Colonna, "The Sanctuary of Portonaccio": 120–23.

50 Winter, "Gods Walking on the Roof"; Winter, *Symbols of Wealth*: 311–93; Daniele F. Maras, "Miti e riti di divinizzazione in Italia Centrale nell'età tirannica," in *Le lamine d'oro a cinquant'anni dalla scoperta: dati archeologici su Pyrgi nell'epoca di Thefarie Velianas e rapporti con altre realtà del Mediterraneo*, ed. Maria Paola Baglione and Laura Maria Michetti [= *Scienze dell'Antichità* 21, no. 2 (2015)]: 75–99; Patricia S. Lulof, "New Perspectives on the Acroteria of Caeretan Temples," in *Caere*, ed. Nancy Thomson de Grummond and Lisa C. Pieraccini (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016): 131–40. See also Hopkins, *Genesis*: 66–84 on the case of Sant'Omobono in Rome, who is against the political interpretation of the acroteria with Menerva and Hercle as symbolic imagery of tyrants or monarchs.

munity members may have been more involved and integrated into cult activities and into the sacred landscape of city-states in Etruria and Central Italy during the sixth century BCE.

3 Developments during the Sixth Century BCE: (2) Pottery Consumption and Ritual Practice

As has been mentioned before, large portions of Etruscan city-state populations seem to have been increasingly involved in cult practices and integrated into the religious field. The pottery assemblages from sixth-century Etruscan sanctuaries may reflect this development as well and will be discussed here briefly through the case of the forum area in Roselle.

The conspicuous consumption by social elite members and the pottery assemblage from the ‘Casa con Recinto’ in the forum area of Roselle during the second half of the seventh century BCE have already been examined above (Diagram 1). After the obliteration of the ‘Casa con Recinto’ and its substitution by a public square around 600 BCE, a temple (ca. 11.1 x 11.2 m) was built only a few meters north in ca. 540–530 BCE. At least two votive deposits lying next to each other were located in the temples’ immediate surroundings; both deposits can be dated to the second half of the sixth century BCE and were probably ritually connected to the temple area.

The pottery assemblage (Diagram 3)⁵¹ of the votive deposits in the forum area of Roselle is entirely different from the one found in the ‘Casa con Recinto’ about two or three generations prior, and it consists mainly of small bowls, plates and miniature vessels in bucchero. Some vessels show short inscriptions (for example, *X, XII, ka, se, ni, kp*) that could be markings and numbers as well as onomastic abbreviations. Additionally, at least one oinochoe in bucchero and one impasto dolium fragment with the sacred inscription *aiser[---?]* (‘[of?] the gods’)⁵² were found in the deposits.

The communal distribution and consumption of food and beverages seem to have been the main activities at the cult place; the ritual practice may have involved: (1) the storage of wine or another beverage in the dolium with the *aiser* inscription, (2) the beverage’s public distribution using the oinochoe and (3) its consumption by cult visitors in small vessels and their deposition afterwards.

This pottery set and the ritual actions proposed here do not seem to be connected to the aforementioned diacritical tools used by a social elite that aspired for prestige accumulation and the legitimization of status differences. Unlike at the ‘Casa con Recinto’,

⁵¹ For the vessel shapes and productions of the pottery found in the votive deposits, see Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 215 tab. 51; 217; 218–20 tab. 53.

⁵² Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 294 no. RO02; ET Ru 4.1.

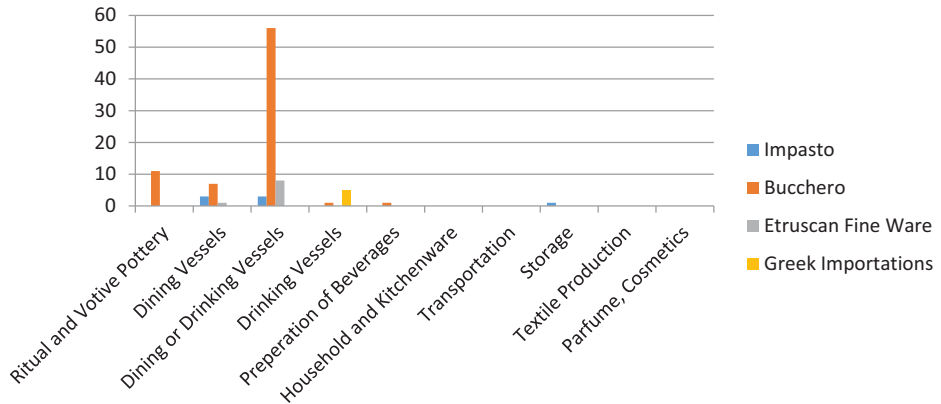


Diagram 3: Roselle, Votive Deposits. Pottery Assemblage according to Functional Groups.

the conspicuous investment of economic capital, the consumption and display of exotic and valuable resources, the banqueting practices as well as the use of formulaic dedicatory inscriptions seem to be missing in this context. Instead, the pottery found among the votive deposits seems to have been mass-produced, without high value or exclusivity, and could reflect the practices of a larger group of equal social standing (at least represented as such in this ritual context and during sacred performances), with little representative motivations. The socio-political context and functions of this sanctuary might have been inclusion and collective identity-formation rather than the display of the elite status of particular groups and the demonstration of social differences.

In this sense, the pottery assemblage and the use of short inscriptions in the forum area of Roselle stand for a larger interregional development of pottery consumption in Etruscan sanctuaries during the sixth century BCE: the shift from the prestigious and distinctive, banquet-like consumption of pottery of a small elite towards the mass consumption of large numbers of participants. This trend is tangible in the increasing number of pottery findings in sanctuary contexts from the sixth century BCE, in the gradual disappearance of prestigious banqueting sets in favour of simple dining and drinking vessels of mass production, as well as in the non-representative and simple pottery inscriptions, as shall be discussed briefly below.⁵³

⁵³ For the development of pottery consumption in Etruscan sanctuaries in the sixth–fifth century BCE as described here, see Krämer, “Places of Gods”: 121–22; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 76–81.

4 Developments during the Sixth Century BCE:

(3) Votive Inscriptions and Ritual Practice

The case study on the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii, as discussed above, has shown how friendship networks and alliances (*hospitia*), gift exchange and literacy were interconnected and embedded into Etruscan elite representation during the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE. Important practices were donations and the dedication of objects with long, formulaic *mulvanice*-inscriptions or similar texts, and with commemorated names of *gentes* and clan members. In this context, votive inscriptions and their presence in sanctuaries played a central role since literacy could almost only be accessed by elite members, who used it as a diacritical tool to accumulate prestige and highlight a privileged social position.

This would change in the course of the sixth century BCE, when the majority of votive inscriptions in sacred contexts became brief consecrations to deities, often without mentioning the dedicants at all. Giovanni Colonna and Daniele Federico Maras noticed this development in votive inscriptions and ritual behaviour; Colonna argued that this was an expression of a dichotomy in the religious field, an opposition between urban areas and the *emporion*, between the centre and the periphery, as well as between aristocratic and plebeian cults;⁵⁴ Maras, on the other hand, interpreted this shift as one that went from the aristocratic practices of the Orientalizing period towards the use of ‘Hellenized’ ritual texts, similar to those from Greece in the Classical period.⁵⁵

The inscriptions at the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii as well as those at Pyrgi and Gravisca were an essential base for these interpretations and the recognition of the changed social status of Etruscan cult visitors; particularly important in this regard were the personal names of the dedicants at Gravisca during the first half of the fifth century BCE. The votive inscriptions at this cult place feature visitors with names such as Arnza (little Arnθ), Paiθe, Tit[e] or Tit[a], and [L]arza (little Larθ), among others; the short and simple name form as well as the diminutive form, with the *-za*

⁵⁴ Giovanni Colonna, “Le iscrizioni etrusche,” *Scienze dell’Antichità* 3/4 (1989/1990): 879: “Non è certo casuale né artificiosa la contrapposizione tra Veio da un lato (e Vulci e Orvieto, donde vengono le uniche dediche lapidarie finora note), e Gravisca, S. Marinella e Pyrgi dall’altro, che è contrapposizione tra santuari urbani e santuari emporici, tra culto ‘aristocratico’ e culto ‘plebeo’, tra centro e periferia. Non v’è dubbio infatti che proprio nell’ambito emporico si sviluppino nuove forme di devozione, destinate rapidamente a grande fortuna, con riflessi sul regime delle offerte e del formulario votivo.”

⁵⁵ Daniele Federico Maras, *Il dono votivo: Gli dei e il sacro nelle iscrizioni etrusche di culto*, Biblioteca di Studi Etruschi 46 (Pisa: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2009): 31: “Si assiste nel corso del periodo arcaico ad una evoluzione del sistema epigrafico votivo, a partire dal sistema aristocratico orientalizzante verso forme affini a quelle della Grecia classica, cui fa riscontro nel mondo etrusco una sensibile diminuzione dei testi funerari di dono con l’arrivo dell’età recente.”

in Arnza and Larza, could point to a particularly low social status, such as a poor person, slave, servant or freed slave (Latin: *libertus*, Etruscan: *lautni*).⁵⁶ For this reason, these individuals have been interpreted as being servants or slaves who had worked at Gravisca, or as recently freed slaves, or even as refugees who had sought asylum in the sacred institution of the sanctuary (ἄσυλία).⁵⁷ Moreover, Mario Torelli interpreted the inscriptions at Gravisca as an expression of a radical and fundamental social upheaval (or better: a revolution) in the fifth century BCE, when a dependent and oppressed social class of slaves, serfs and servants became liberated.⁵⁸

This article argues that there was indeed a fundamental shift in ritual practice and the use of votive inscriptions during the sixth century BCE, but this was not rooted in a dichotomy of urban centres and the periphery, or in the Hellenization of Etruscan ritual practices, or in an Etruscan class conflict between slaves/servants and the aristocracy in a Marxist sense. In order to understand the change in the role of literacy and its socio-political context, it is necessary to examine the Etruscan votive inscriptions as a quantitative dataset.

There are at least 334 documented pottery inscriptions in 51 sanctuaries from the Etruscan core region between the eighth and fifth centuries BCE (Diagram 4 shows the chronological distribution of the inscriptions).⁵⁹ Most of the inscriptions are from Southern Etruria, particularly from the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii, Gravisca and the Southern Sanctuary of Pyrgi, which is why these three cult places have a great impact on all statistical analyses of the data. The text class of a votive inscription in a

⁵⁶ Mario Torelli, “Quali greci a Gravisca?” *Annali della Fondazione per il Museo Claudio Faina* 11 (2004): 130; Lucio Fiorini and Mario Torelli, “Quarant’anni di ricerche a Gravisca,” in *Material Aspects of Etruscan Religion: Proceedings of the International Colloquium, Leiden, May 29 and 30, 2008*, ed. L. Bouke van der Meer (Leuven: Peeters, 2010): 45 with footnotes, 110–16; Mario Torelli, “La rinascita del santuario (420–400 a.C.),” in *Il mare che univa: Gravisca santuario mediterraneo*, ed. Luca Mercuri and Lucio Fiorini (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2014): 44; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 281 no. GR07; 282 no. GR11, GR14, GR16; Krämer, “Networks”: 214–15, 223–24 nos. II.3, II.5, II.6, II.7; ET Ta 0.17, Ta 0.31, Ta 2.44, Ta 3.3. For the diminutive suffix *-za* in the Etruscan language, see Luciano Agostiniani, “Aspetti formali e semantici del suffisso di diminutivo *-za* in Etrusco,” *Studi Etruschi* 69 (2003): 183–93.

⁵⁷ Torelli, “Gravisca”: 129–30; Fiorini and Torelli, “Gravisca”: 44–45; Torelli, “La rinascita”: 43–45.

⁵⁸ “Nelle testimonianze epigrafiche di Gravisca si cela dunque la storia della grande trasformazione sociale avvenuta allo scadere del V secolo a.C.: la nuova fase del santuario riflette una tappa cruciale nel processo di progressiva liberazione dei *servi*, questa singolare classe subalterna, di cui le aristocrazie etrusche si sono servite largamente in tutte le attività produttive e nel lavoro domestico, e del contemporaneo emergere della schiavitù classica attestato nella prima metà del IV secolo a.C. dalla dedica a *Turan di Ramtha Venatres*.” (Torelli, “La rinascita”: 44).

⁵⁹ The collection of these 334 inscriptions includes those found on pottery from 51 sanctuaries in the Etruscan core region of the eighth–fifth century BCE. The inscriptions contain at least three readable letters; non-Etruscan inscriptions are taken into account, while single letters, fragmentary inscriptions of 1–2 letters, images, signs and symbols are not considered here. For the dataset of the inscriptions and its analysis, see Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 132–45, 279–302 ch. VI.2.

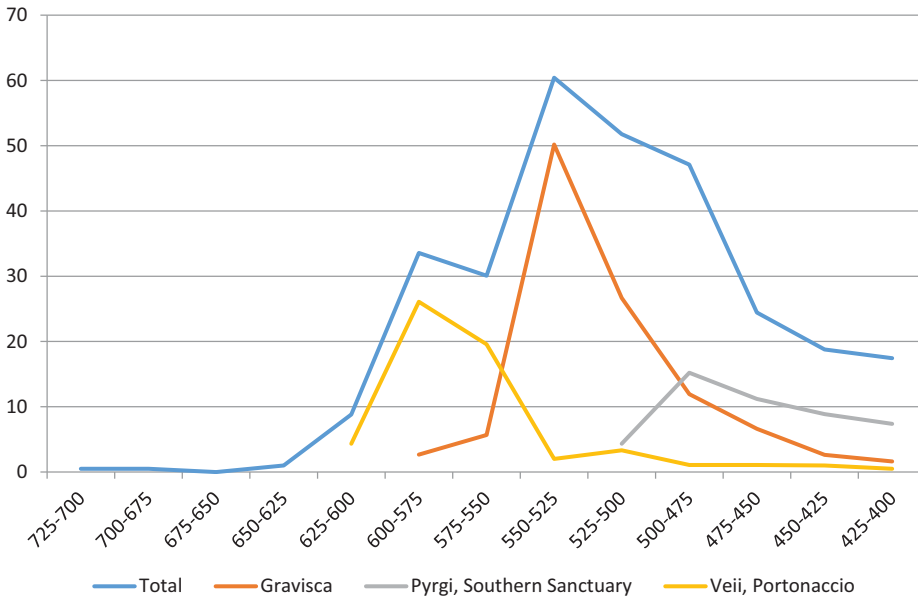


Diagram 4: Chronological Distribution of Pottery Inscriptions in Etruscan Sanctuaries (eighth–fifth century BCE).

sanctuary is an important aspect of every study and highlights changes in the function of the ritual texts. Three main functions or text classes appear regularly in pottery inscriptions:

- (1) Dedications: inscriptions with a verb indicating the dedication or donation of an object to a deity (*verba donandi*), as discussed above for the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii; for example: *mini muluvanice mamar:ce a:puniie venala* – Mamarcé Apuniie dedicated me to (the goddess) Vena(i);⁶⁰
- (2) Consecrations: votive texts that only mention the object belonging to a deity, while dedicants or dedicatory verbs are missing; for example: *mi turuns* – I belong to Turan;⁶¹
- (3) Property inscriptions: texts mentioning a person or *gens* without deities or the use of *verba donandi*; for example: *mi fasθiia alsiia* – I am of (coming from; dedicated by) Fasθia Alsi. ⁶² In sanctuaries, these inscriptions do not necessarily have to be understood as indications of possession, but rather as information about the dedicant. In this sense, property inscriptions are the exact counterpart of consecrations (which provide information about the recipient/receiving deity).

⁶⁰ See above Tab. 1, no. 7, with further references.

⁶¹ Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 281 nos. GR01, GR03–GR05; ET Ta 4.1, Ta 4.5–Ta 4.7.

⁶² Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 295 no. SB07; ET AT 2.41.

Diagram 5 shows the chronological distribution of pottery inscriptions in Etruscan sanctuaries according to text classes and functions. It is clear that the practices of writing votive inscriptions on pottery started out in the late seventh century BCE, became very popular throughout the sixth and early fifth centuries BCE and declined suddenly in the second quarter of the fifth century BCE (see Diagram 4). According to the chronological distribution of the text classes, votive inscriptions from the period of ca. 630–550 BCE were written for the most part as dedications with *verba donandi*; these inscriptions often mentioned the names of *gentes* and can be attributed to social elite members, as in the case of the Portonaccio Sanctuary. Around the middle or in the third quarter of the sixth century BCE, a profound shift occurred when dedications were gradually replaced by consecrations and property inscriptions. As mentioned before, the dataset is heavily biased towards Pyrgi, Gravisca and the Portonaccio Sanctuary of Veii, but pottery inscriptions from other cult places seem to confirm that this shift was indeed a general trend in urban, suburban and rural sacred contexts in Northern and Southern Etruria. Therefore, the shift can be assumed to have taken place in the entirety of the Etruscan sacred landscape during the sixth century BCE.⁶³

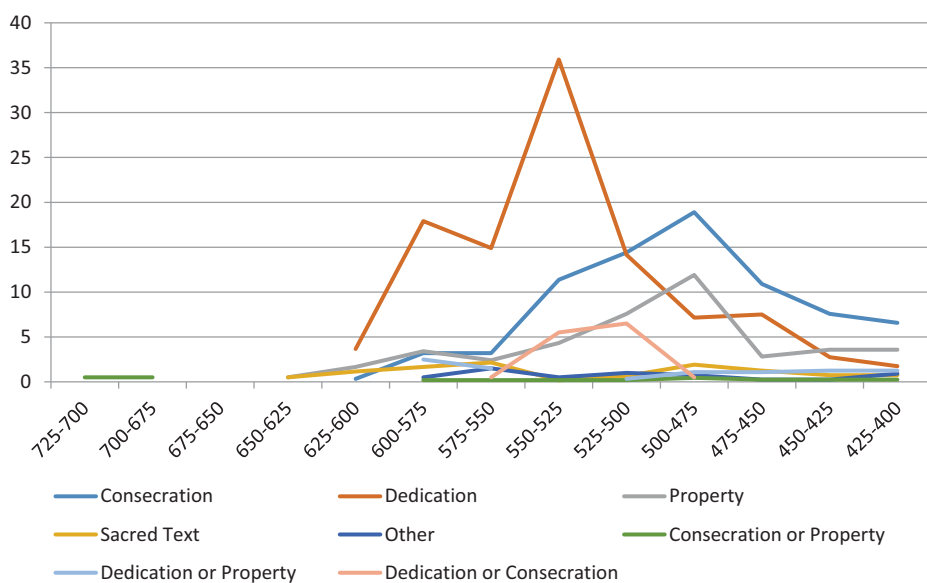


Diagram 5: Chronological Distribution of Pottery Inscriptions in Etruscan Sanctuaries (eighth–fifth century BCE) according to Functions and Text Classes.

What could have been the reasons and the socio-political context behind such a radical and fundamental change in the use of votive inscriptions? It is argued here that similar

⁶³ Krämer, “Places of Gods”: 122–24; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 133–40.

developments, as in the case of pottery consumption discussed above, took place: the shift from the prestigious, restrictive and diacritical practices of a small elite towards a more open, inclusive and collective use of votive inscriptions by a larger group of visitors from a greater and more diverse social spectrum. This does not indicate a dichotomy of centre and periphery, a Hellenization of the religious field or a fundamental social revolution and the upheaval of an oppressed servant class; rather, it seems to suggest the higher accessibility to literacy in Etruscan communities, with the effect that votive inscriptions became shorter and non-representative since they were no longer effective tools for the accumulation of prestige and the display of an elite social status. This development fits well with the erection of monumental temples and sanctuaries in the sixth century BCE, which served as communal religious institutions that replaced former elite spaces and were open to a larger audience. In this sense, the short and non-representative votive texts were probably not part of 'plebeian' rituals, nor were they expressions of a peasant cult from a social underclass. Instead, they were general, widespread practices of a broad religious collective within the Etruscan city-states.

5 Radical Shifts in the Etruscan Sacred Landscape around 500 BCE and 'Plebeian Cults'

The previous chapters on architecture, pottery consumption and votive inscriptions reconstructed the gradual and long-term change in the Etruscan sacred landscape of the sixth century BCE – a change that moved from elite-centred, prestigious and restrictive gathering places towards monumental sanctuaries and city-state institutions open to the entirety of society and ritual communities. However, the end of the sixth century and the beginning of the fifth century BCE seem to mark the radical shifts that occurred in (at least some) Etruscan city-states, in their political systems and in their respective religious fields.

The plateau of Piazza d'Armi in Veii is an interesting case study in this regard. At the end of the seventh century BCE, a courtyard building and an *oikos*, both decorated with architectural terracotta of exceptional quality, were erected right at the centre of the plateau (Fig. 4). The *oikos* has been interpreted as a cult building belonging to the residential complex of an aristocratic *gens* that controlled the plateau of Piazza d'Armi and could have been responsible for the monumentalization and urban transformation of the area. In the second half of the sixth century BCE, the residence was completely dismantled, and the terracotta decoration was deposited into a hollow carved into the bedrock, which indicate the possible ritual obliteration of the building complex. Additionally, the road system, infrastructure and buildings of Piazza d'Armi were rebuilt and restored in the same period, indicating a profound and radical

change in the social and political system in Veii that was connected to the dismantling of a sanctuary and an elite residence.⁶⁴

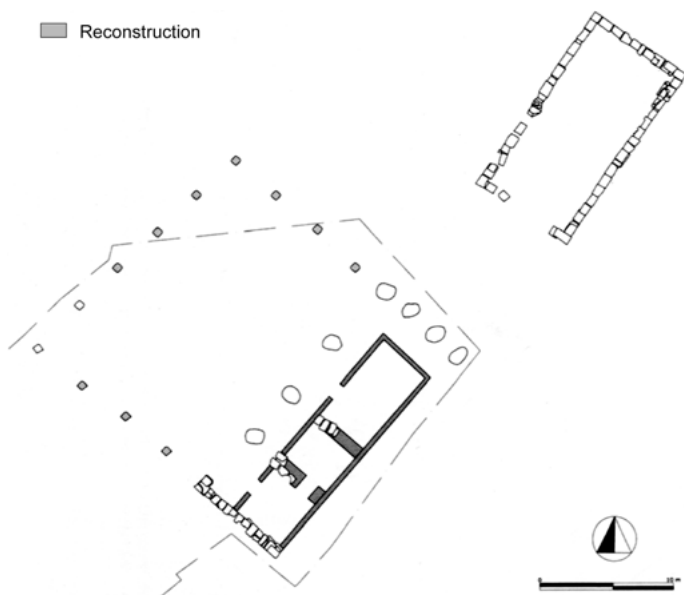


Fig. 4: Veii, Piazza d'Armi. Reconstruction of the Residential Building in front of the *oikos*.

The case of the city-state of Caere at the end of the sixth century BCE, with Thefarie Velianas as its ruler, marks the best-documented example of a radical political shift that can be traced in the Etruscan sacred landscape. Thefarie Velianas is known for his dedication of Temple B and the eastern part of the northern/monumental sanctuary of Pyrgi around 510 BCE, which were commemorated in three inscribed golden sheets that may have been affixed onto the door frame of Temple B. After the end of the reign of Thefarie Velianas around 470/460 BCE, Temple A – a new cult building – was built, and the size of the northern sanctuary of Pyrgi was nearly doubled. Since the pediment relief depicted two episodes of the myth of the Seven against Thebes, which involved Tydeus and Capaneus being punished by Zeus and Athena for their *hybris* and blasphemous acts, the common theme has been interpreted as a warning and a message sent by the new political system to aspiring tyrants and strongmen, suggesting that arrogance and brutality will be punished. If this is the case, then the

⁶⁴ Gilda Bartoloni et al., “Veio, Piazza d’Armi: la fossa del cane,” *Archeologia Classica* 63 (2012): 55–126; Valeria Acconcia, “Veii, the Stratigraphy of an Ancient Town: A Case Study of Piazza d’Armi,” in *Veii*, ed. Jacopo Tabolli (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019): 12–14 with fig. 1.6, 1.8; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 258–60 ch. VI.1.13.4, with further references.

expansion of the northern sanctuary of Pyrgi and the decoration of Temple A could have been commissioned by a new and probably republican government.⁶⁵

In this context, the site of Vigna Parrocchiale in the centre of the city plateau of Caere is of interest. In the first two building phases during the sixth century BCE, a residence complex (*residenza arcaica*) that may have belonged to the aforementioned Thefarie Velianas was built (Fig. 5–6). A pot sherd with the inscription ‘*mi calaturus*’ (I belong to the herald), which was found at the residence, suggests that it had official and public functions involving the regular presence of heralds. However, the residence was destroyed at the end of the sixth century/beginning of the fifth century BCE, and the rubble (*scarico arcaico*) was dumped into a cistern. Shortly afterwards, the area was replaced and ‘sacralised’ by a monumental temple of the Tuscan order, which was built directly on top of the former residence complex (Fig. 7). At the same time, around 490–480 BCE, a large building with an elliptic shape (*edificio ellittico*) was constructed nearby, which has been interpreted as an *ekklesiasterion*, a public building for meetings, similar to a town hall.⁶⁶

The sanctuary of Sant’Antonio on the southeastern margin of the city plateau and at a main gate of Caere offers interesting parallels. The first architectural structures were built during the sixth century BCE, and among them was a cistern that was carved into a rock, a temenos wall, a building with three chambers and the first cult building (Temple proto A). However, around 500 BCE and therefore shortly before the transformation of Vigna Parrocchiale from a residence area into a sanctuary, the edifices of Sant’Antonio were dismantled, covered and replaced by two monumental temples (Temple A and B) and an altar.⁶⁷ It seems that the restructuring at Sant’An-

65 On the northern/monumental sanctuary of Pyrgi, the dedication by Thefarie Velianas and the pediment relief of Temple A, see, for example: Maria Paola Baglione, “Pyrgi, un santuario nel cuore del Mediterraneo,” in *Gli Etruschi e il Mediterraneo: La città di Cerveteri*, ed. Françoise Gaultier et al. (Rome: Azienda Speciale Palaexpo, 2014): 205–11; Laura Maria Michetti, “Ports: Trade, Cultural Connections, Sanctuaries, and Emporia,” in *Caere*, ed. Nancy Thomson de Grummond and Lisa C. Pieraccini (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016): in particular 79; Laura Maria Michetti, “Caere e Pyrgi: la città arcaica nelle sue forme sociali e politiche e la nascita degli empori,” in *Etruschi: viaggio nelle terre dei Rasna*, ed. Laura Bentini et al. (Milan: Electa, 2020): 163–64; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 173–74, with several references.

66 Mauro Cristofani, ed., *Lo scarico arcaico della Vigna Parrocchiale*, vol. 1, *Caere 3.1* (Rome: Consiglio nazionale delle ricerche, 1992); Mauro Cristofani, ed., *Lo scarico arcaico della Vigna Parrocchiale*, vol. 2, *Caere 3.2* (Rome: Consiglio nazionale delle ricerche, 1993); Robinson Peter Krämer, “The Cleansing of a Political System: Obliterations, Burials and ‘Reuse’ of Palaces and Seats of Power in Central Italy (Seventh–Fifth centuries BCE),” in *Cleaning and Value: Interdisciplinary Investigations*, ed. Isabel Bredenbröker et al. (Leiden: Sidestone, 2020): 202–3 fig. 3 a–c.

67 On the sanctuary of Sant’Antonio at Caere, see Adriano Maggiani, “Il santuario in località Sant’Antonio: la fase arcaica,” in *Gli Etruschi e il Mediterraneo: La città di Cerveteri*, ed. Françoise Gaultier et al. (Rome: Azienda Speciale Palaexpo, 2014): 176–78; Maria Antonietta Rizzo, “Cerveteri (Roma), il santuario di Hercle in località Sant’Antonio,” in *Etruschi: Viaggio nelle terre dei Rasna*, ed. Laura Bentini et al. (Milan: Electa, 2020): 168; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 169–70 ch. VI.1.2.1, with further references.



Fig. 5: Caere, Vigna Parrocchiale. Phase 1 of the Archaic 'Residence Building'.

tonio, the radical transformation of Vigna Parrocchiale and the construction of Temple A at Pyrgi might have been part of one large building program after the fall of Thefarie Velianas, meant to shape the cityscape and the sacred landscape of Caere at the beginning of a new political system (a republican form of government?).⁶⁸ In this sense, the introduction of new deities at Caere, such as the goddess Vei at Vigna Parrocchiale⁶⁹ or the *Thusxva* at Sant'Antonio,⁷⁰ has been interpreted by Adriano Mag-

⁶⁸ "La fondazione del nuovo tempio A si colloca in un momento di grandi trasformazioni degli edifici pubblici di Cerveteri; esso sembra precedere di poco la fondazione del tempio (consacrato a Vei?) nel cuore della città, nell'area della Vigna Parrocchiale." (Maggiani, "Il santuario": 177).

⁶⁹ Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 281 cat. CA01, with references.

⁷⁰ Adriano Maggiani, "Thusxva, divinità etrusca," in *Corollari: Scritti in antichità etrusche e italiche in omaggio all'opera di Giovanni Colonna*, ed. Daniele F. Maras (Pisa: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2011): 138–49; Krämer, *Heiligtümer*: 280 cat. CB03, with references.

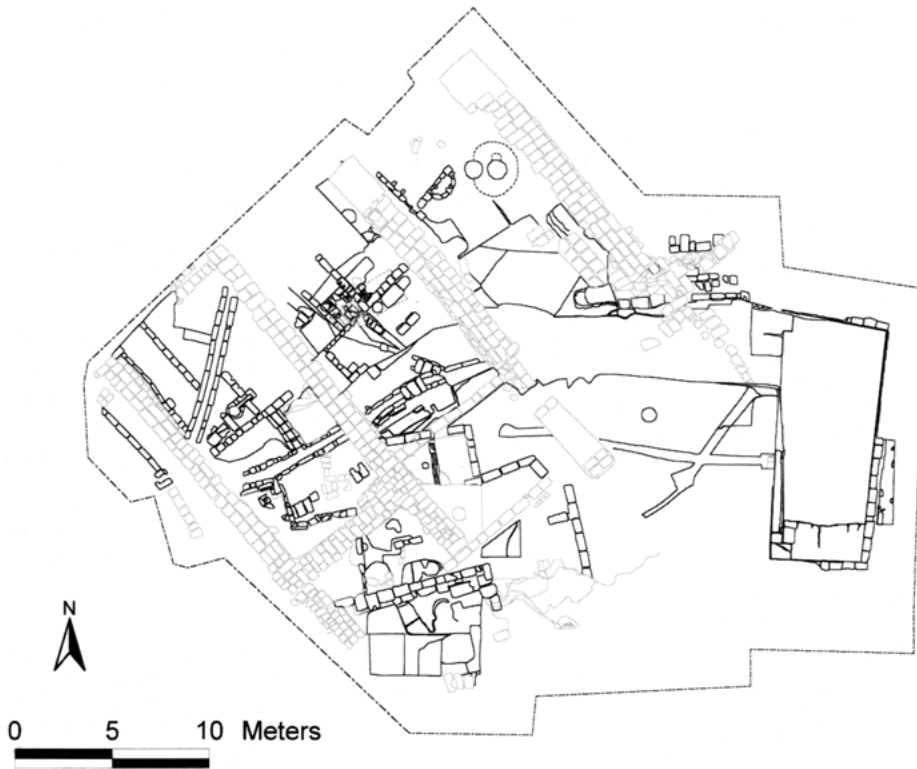


Fig. 6: Caere, Vigna Parrocchiale. Phase 2 of the Archaic 'Residence Building'.

giani as being a part of new plebeian cults that conspicuously replaced those of the former monarchy in terms of architecture, rituality and ideology.⁷¹

The shifts in the Etruscan sacred landscape are not isolated phenomena, but part of larger socio-political upheavals. The author of this article has argued elsewhere that the time between the end of the sixth century and the early fifth century BCE marks a period in Central Italy in which seats of power and residences were frequently destroyed and autocratic regimes overthrown in favour of republican forms of government. The city-state communities and societies of Central Italy chose different strategies in dealing with

⁷¹ "Ci sono indizi per sostenere che il periodo tra la fine del VI e l'inizio del V sec. sia stato anche per questa città un momento di grandi trasformazioni sociali e politiche. Può essere il momento della caduta della "monarchia" di *Thefarie Velianas* e di un forte rivolgimento sociale, con pesanti ricadute anche sul piano urbanistico e architettonico, che vide nella zona della Vigna Parrocchiale, nel cuore dell'abitato, l'abbattimento di un intero quartiere aristocratico, per far posto a un santuario dal possibile carattere plebeo (vedi la dedica a *Vei = Demetra*), mentre nel santuario in località S. Antonio si verifica una radicale trasformazione in senso più monumentale degli apparati di culto dell'area sacra." (Maggiani, "*Thluschva*": 147).

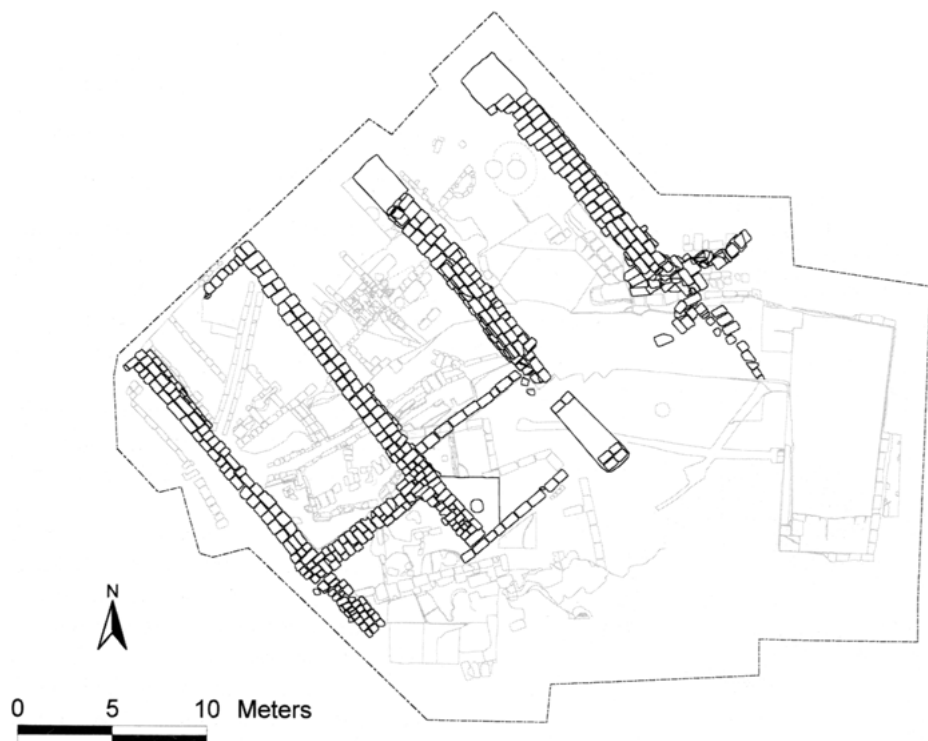


Fig. 7: Caere, Vigna Parrocchiale. Temple of the Tuscan order that was built on top of the Archaic 'Residence Building'.

these seats of power and spaces of former regimes and in cleansing the public memory of the unwelcome past. These were accomplished through destruction, obliteration rites, curses and desecrations, as well as through the re-use of buildings. Among the examples of such measures are the *regiae* of Gabii and Rome, Poggio Civitate and the aforementioned site of Vigna Parrocchiale in Caere.⁷² Furthermore, the entire imagery and ideology of aristocratic culture vanished during this period: courtyard buildings (*anaktora*, *regiae*), *tumuli* and exotic commodities disappeared. The rich architectural terracottas with life-size acroterial figures and plaques containing powerful elite scenes, and especially the Veii-Rome-Velletri decorative system with its imagery possibly symbolic of tyrannical power, were all replaced by simple ornamental plaques and terracottas.

⁷² Krämer, "The Cleansing."

6 Towards an Interpretation of Religious Transformations in Etruria during the Sixth and Early Fifth Centuries BCE

This article discussed and interpreted three socio-political contexts: (1) sanctuaries in the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE as spaces for aristocratic representation and elite practices; (2) long-term developments in the Etruscan sacred landscape during the sixth century BCE based on three datasets (architecture and monumentalizations, pottery assemblages and votive inscriptions); (3) the ‘radical’ shift in the Etruscan sacred landscape around 500 BCE, during a period of social upheavals and political changes.

All of the three contexts show how the sanctuaries and the religious field were embedded into the socio-political structures of the Etruscan city-states and how they reflected the developments and changes within Etruscan society. The early cult places evidenced the various representational strategies and mechanisms used by elite members in the sanctuaries: the creation of ‘idea-scapes’ with imagery depicting social values, codes of power and elite habitus; conspicuous consumption, banqueting and the showcase of trans-Mediterranean luxury objects or commodities; as well as gatherings, gift exchange and the use of literacy as a diacritical practice.

In the course of the sixth century BCE, long-term developments can be traced in Etruscan sanctuaries. Standardized, monumental cult buildings were erected within the city-states, and at the same time institutions with priesthoods replaced private cult places. The pottery assemblages and votive inscriptions indicate that sanctuaries became more open, inclusive and accessible to a large part of society, and that even mass consumption and non-representative ritual activities took place. This gradual increase in representation and access that the middle class had in the religious field can be found similarly in funerary contexts, where large *tumuli* were replaced by smaller ones and by *tombe a dado* arranged along rectilinear and orthogonal streets in the necropoleis. In this sense, the change in the Etruscan sacred landscape in the sixth century BCE seems to stand for the new-found religion of the city-state (one might think of the concept of ‘polis religion’ in Greece), but it cannot be interpreted as being a peasant cult or the plebeian rituals of a social underclass, since a large portion of society seems to have been involved.

Finally, the time around 500 BCE represents the end of the aristocratic culture, and in particular a wave of socio-political upheavals and shifts in Central Italy that can be traced in sanctuaries and in the religious field. The toppling of an autocratic regime and the successful instating of a republican form of government during this period was celebrated with the erection of monumental cult buildings, commemorated with symbolic imagery and the creation of new plebeian cults as well as with the replacement and covering of seats of power with sanctuaries. These measures must have been of great symbolic and ideological value, and they certainly provided a visible documentation of the political change to everyone. However, these developments were less part of plebeian

cults or an underclass religion since the goal seems to have been to clearly mark the political shifts within the city-states and to distance society from past regimes and autocrats.

The Etruscan sacred landscape changed profoundly from the seventh to the fifth centuries BCE, and it gives many insights about socio-political structures, developments and even radical shifts. However, this article has hopefully demonstrated that the religious fields of Etruscan city-states and their social contexts should not be prematurely framed as expressions of peasants, plebeians and lower social classes in Etruria in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. For the moment, it seems difficult to determine the existence of peasant cults in Central Italy during the Archaic period.

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