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Birds of a Feather Flock Together? Etruscan Sarcophagi as an Expression of Social Differences and Hierarchies within a Gens

Abstract: *The so-called jüngeretruskische Steinsarkophage have mainly been treated in earlier research regarding their significance in art history and their craftsmanship. Consequently, there are many decontextualized sarcophagi surviving today which can be studied chronologically, typologically, and iconographically, but in their isolation hardly allow for any further conclusions on a social level. The (re)examination of preserved or reconstructed contexts with sarcophagus burials has allowed us to outline possible social differences and hierarchies among members of a gens who had been buried together. It has thus become clear that the status which individuals possessed during their lifetime is not manifested in the arrangement of their respective sarcophagi in the chamber. Rather, hierarchical distinctions were created by the association of sarcophagi of outstanding quality and singular iconography with much simpler or entirely undecorated pieces within the tomb. An extensive series of sarcophagi with female lid figures testifies that an elevated social or hierarchical distinction from other family members is not found only in the male sphere, but that women were also able to make their former status in the family clear using appropriate sarcophagi. In strong contrast to the differences within a gens are the finds from the Tomba Bruschi, which is an example of singular uniformity and possibly also gives evidence of the social structures of the Etruscans in the fourth century BC.*

This paper deals with possible visible differences in status and hierarchies among members of a common gens buried together in one tomb. Thanks to numerous depictions and inscriptions on urns, sarcophagi, and tomb paintings, it is known that there were personalities of high rank, such as priests or magistrates, within Etruscan society. It can be assumed that these men enjoyed great prestige and stood out from the crowd in a certain way during their lifetime, through clothing, wealth, or public appearances. How far the differences and hierarchies within the same gens were lived out is unclear due to missing sources concerning the social networks of Etruscan families. If we start from the assumption that the tombs of the great Etruscan gentes reflect their lives, we should be able to find clues about internal family structures in them.

Note: Parts of this article are related to my current PhD project on Etruscan stone sarcophagi from the Hellenistic period, which is based in the Institute of Archaeological Sciences at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum and is funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation, to whom I would like to express my deep gratitude.

The stone sarcophagi of the Hellenistic period are particularly well-suited for the investigation of this question since, as personalized burial containers, they represent the individual himself and thus his associated status during his lifetime.

The beginnings of these so-called *jüngeretruskische Steinsarkophage*¹ date back to the middle of the fourth century BC. They were produced for about 200 years, mainly in southern Etruria, and are characterized by their chests decorated with figural reliefs and/or paintings which deal with different topics. Their lids can also take different forms: in addition to the rather simple lids, the life-size figures – either lying flat on their backs or propped up on an elbow on their side, as in a banquet – are the rule. These figures represent the deceased, as can be deduced from numerous inscriptions of their names on the lids or the chests.

The main problem in the study of Etruscan sarcophagi has always been the approach used in early excavations. Their contexts were largely neglected because the main aim was to obtain interesting finds for museums at home and abroad. Thus, even at earlier stages, such as when deciding which sarcophagi should be documented at all, the categories of “important” and “unimportant” were already used and the undecorated specimens were listed but not considered further. The richly sculpted sarcophagi, on the other hand, were described as art objects, sometimes very precisely, which was of course due to the interest at that time in mythological representations, in those that thematized the afterlife, or even those that showed scenes from life and could thus provide information about the Etruscans, including their relationship to Rome. The consequence of this approach is characterized by the high number of isolated sarcophagi that, through their decontextualization, became objects of art and were thus no longer considered as a part of a large complex in which, in communion with the other pieces, they had a wider expressive significance. Representative of this practice of excavation documentation may be the reports, briefly presented in this paper, on the contexts of the gentes Partunu, Apuna, and, with reservations, Vipinana.

In the further course of this article, several graves with sarcophagi are presented, based on which hierarchies and separations, but also unions, among the family members can be recognized in different ways, which in turn leads to further questions and considerations regarding the intra-family structures of the Etruscans and the position of individual persons in society.

¹ General literature about Etruscan stone sarcophagi: Reinhard Herbig, *Die jüngeretruskischen Steinsarkophage*, *Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs* 7 (Berlin: Mann, 1952); Klaus-Peter Goethert, *Typologie und Chronologie der jüngeretruskischen Steinsarkophage* (Altendorf: Gräbner, 1974); Lammert Bouke van der Meer, *Myths and More on Etruscan Stone Sarcophagi (350–200 BC)*, *Monographs on Antiquity* 3 (Louvain: Peeters, 2004).

1 The Problems of Early Documentation

In the case of the Tomba dei Partunu, discovered in Tarquinia in 1876, we can understand the method used based on a sketch published shortly after its discovery: The three sarcophagi classified as important, known today as those of the priest, the magistrate, and the obeso, are indicated in the plan with solid lines, while the others were drawn using dotted lines² (Fig. 1). Also, in the subsequent description, these three pieces are clearly in focus, while of the remaining twelve sarcophagi, only six others are mentioned, with an indication of the gender or with one or two concise features. The remaining sarcophagi, which had no decoration, even though some had inscriptions, were apparently not of interest.³ Thanks to this sketch, which served both as summary and documentation, it is known where the sarcophagi were located in the chamber and in which place each of the “significant” pieces was found,⁴ but the exact identity of each chest in the plan remains uncertain due to the lack of information.⁵

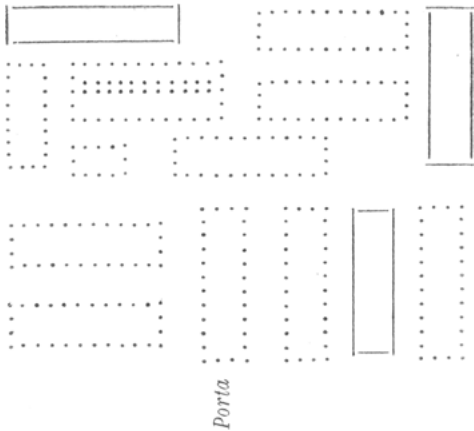


Fig. 1: Sketch of the Tomba Partunu.

The documentations of Gregorio Mariani for the Tomba Bruschi in Tarquinia and of Otto Jahn for the Tomba Vipinana in Tuscania are also comparable with such a one-sided approach. Mariani reported in a letter that the sarcophagi in the Tomba Bruschi found in 1864 were of such little artistic importance that he did not devote more effort

² Wolfgang Helbig, “Scavi di Corneto,” *Bullettino dell’Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* (1876): 70.

³ Helbig, “Scavi di Corneto”: 71.

⁴ On the thesis that the place of honor is along the back wall of the chamber: Jürgen Thimme, “Chiusinische Aschenkisten und Sarkophage der hellenistischen Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Chronologie der etruskischen Kunst,” *Studi Etruschi* 23 (1954): 44–46; 52 note 29.

⁵ An exception is the only urn in the context, which can probably be seen in the small, dotted rectangle in the upper left area of the chamber and stands out from the sarcophagi due to its size and shape.

than a quick drawing of them;⁶ however, Jahn, in his description of the Vipinana context, limited his attention to the sarcophagi that he himself considered as important: “ora parlerò solamente delle più importanti delle suddette 27 casse mortuarie” (“I will now only discuss the most important of the 27 sarcophagi mentioned above”).⁷

This focus on artistic value without questioning the method has been instrumental in manifesting the objects as significant pieces in art history, which were automatically equated with the rank and status of the individuals buried within them – an idea that is still present today and is reflected, for example, in the selection of items for exhibits in museums and in the repeatedly decontextualized presentation and treatment of individual sarcophagi.⁸ In addition to quality and iconography, the positioning of individual sarcophagi in context also plays a major role in the question of visible social differences.

2 Hierarchical Structures in the Tomba Giglioli

The Tomba Giglioli (from the end of the fourth to the third century BC) in Tarquinia can be considered as an example par excellence of a superior arrangement as compared to the other sarcophagi in the tomb, which has made clear that the person buried in it can be classified as the most important and therefore the highest-ranking.⁹ The grave, discovered in 1959, has been written about mainly because of the well-preserved grave paintings and the remains of their inscriptions; it had already been looted when it was found, and the inventory, which is no longer complete, has also not (yet) been published.¹⁰

The fact that the main burial in the centre of the back wall is within the field of vision of the entering viewer is obvious. The tomb with a large, almost-square chamber – which, according to the inscriptions, belonged to the Pinie family – has pseudo-

6 Valentina Vincenti, *La tomba Bruschi di Tarquinia*, *Archaeologica* 150, *Materiali del Museo archeologico nazionale di Tarquinia* 17 (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 2009): 3 note 13.

7 Otto Jahn, “Scavi Etruschi,” *Bullettino dell’Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* (1839): 25.

8 A comprehensible reason is certainly the lack of space. An example of a fully exhibited context, which includes smooth sarcophagi, is that of the gens Alvethna in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia.

9 Carlo Maurilio Lerici, *Nuove testimonianze dell’arte e della civiltà etrusca* (Milan: Lerici Editori, 1960): 74–75 fig. 140–43; Mario Moretti, *New Monuments of Etruscan Painting*, trans. Dawson Kiang (Milan: Lerici Editori, 1970): 307–16; Giovanni Colonna, “Per una cronologia della pittura etrusca di età ellenistica,” in *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 2 (Milan: Saggiatore, 1984): 139–42; Stephan Steingräber, *Etruskische Wandmalerei* (Stuttgart: Besler, 1985): 317 no. 69.

10 The wall painting is in good condition, while that on the chests is only fragmentarily preserved. Three heads of figural sarcophagus lids were found in the chamber, as well as a lid with a female reclining figure without a head, erroneously described as male by Moretti (Moretti, *Etruscan Painting*: 311).

sarcophagi on three sides:¹¹ three on each of the side walls and a single one on the back wall. They belong to the so-called *Holztruhentypus*, characterized by an indication of chest feet and a narrow rectangular impression on the sides of the chest, known as the *Spiegel*.¹² All the sarcophagi are painted figuratively or ornamentally on their front part.¹³ The central one at the back wall, apart from its isolated and pointed position, stands out from the others especially because of its size and the insignia of a magistrate painted on the back wall.¹⁴ In keeping with the theme of the painting, three of the eight inscriptions refer to the high offices held (according to the genealogical succession of generations proposed by Giovanni Colonna) by the head of the family, Vel Pinie himself, and by two of his sons, Larth and Laris.¹⁵

Thanks to this epigraphic evidence, an intra-family hierarchy can be discerned in the Tomba Giglioli: Vel Pinie was buried as the tomb leader and paterfamilias in an emphatically large sarcophagus at the back wall of the chamber, which highlights his status. To his right, with the narrow side placed facing the back wall, is the sarcophagus of his wife Thanachvil – the only female burial in the pseudo-sarcophagi; next to it, by the left wall, is that of their common son Larth, who was married to a woman from the gens Apuna.¹⁶ On the other side of the chamber lies, to the left of Vel, his second son, Laris. In the two sarcophagi closer to the entrance, to its left and right, the sons of Larth were buried. For them, no office can be identified in the inscriptions. Who exactly was buried in the central sarcophagus on the right side must remain unknown because of the destruction.¹⁷

In addition to this obviously hierarchical family structure of father, mother, eldest son, and eldest grandchildren, there is the question of the wives of the two sons: Ac-

11 The so-called pseudo-sarcophagi are chests that are not mobile but have been carved out of the rock of the chamber or from the stone benches. They were common in Tarquinia in the second half of the third century BC but could be dated to as early as the end of the fourth century BC (Gilda Bartoloni and Maria Paola Baglione, “Elementi scultorei decorativi nelle tombe tarquiniesi del primo ellenismo,” in *Tarquinia: ricerche, scavi e prospettive: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi La Lombardia per gli Etruschi*, Milano, 24–25 Giugno 1986, ed. Maria Bonghi Jovino and Cristina Chiaramonte Treré [Milan: Edizioni ET, 1987]: 234 note 9).

12 Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 101–2; Goethert, *Typologie und Chronologie*: 235; Colonna, “pittura etrusca”: 140.

13 Lucia Cavagnaro Vanoni, “Tarquinii: Rivista di Epigrafia Etrusca,” *Studi Etruschi* 30 (1962): 285.

14 Colonna, “pittura etrusca”: 140; Steingraber, *Wandmalerei*: 317 no. 69.

A similar type of representation, but without (pseudo-)sarcophagi, can be seen in the Tomba dei Rilievi in Cerveteri (Horst Blanck, *La Tomba dei Rilievi di Cerveteri*, Studi di Archeologia 1 [Rome: De Luca, 1986]).

15 Cavagnaro Vanoni, “Epigrafia Etrusca”: 285–91; Massimo Pallottino, “Postilla alla nuove iscrizioni di Tarquinia e di Cerveteri,” *Studi Etruschi* 30 (1962): 301–3.

16 The gens is known from the Tomba Bruschi.

17 Pallottino refers to the possibility of a third son of Larth. Although the inscription on the chest can no longer be reconstructed, should it be the same person mentioned in the inscription on the wall above, the recognizable matronym Apunai points to a connection with the wife of Larth.

cording to the common Etruscan burial custom, they should also be expected in this grave. However, there is a possibility that they were buried in mobile stone sarcophagi, remains of which have been found in the chamber.¹⁸ Alternatively, they could have been buried in the hypogea of their fathers or in those of their possible second husbands, should they have survived the first.¹⁹

Marina Sclafani expressed a comparable thesis, one concerning a second marriage, for the burial context of the gens Matausni in Chiusi (from the end of the fourth to the third century BC).²⁰ Here, the only sarcophagus with a lid figure was buried in a niche of the dromos, while a plain example and two urns were found in the main chamber – a situation that was surprising due to the elaboration and detail of the female figure. Perhaps the woman who had been buried in the sarcophagus was the first wife of the tomb leader, who remarried after her death, and so her place next to him had to be cleared for his new wife.²¹

It should be noted that the pre-installed pseudo-sarcophagi in the Tomba Giglioli were apparently reserved exclusively for Vel as the head of the family and maybe the tomb leader, for his wife, and for his direct descendants; meanwhile, the wives of their sons and other relatives were buried either in mobile sarcophagi or elsewhere.

A comparable emphasis on the paterfamilias and his wife can be inferred from the archaeological record of Tomba I of the gens Curuna in Tuscania (from the middle of the fourth to the end of the third century BC). Four generations of the family seem to have been buried in the tomb, of which the oldest – the builders of the tomb or those first buried there – also have their place in the centre of the back wall of the chamber. At the time of discovery, the back wall was free of inhumations, but rectangular impressions indicate the locations of two former burials – perhaps in urns or sarcophagi made of perishable material that did not survive.²²

18 According to Colonna, the mobile sarcophagi were interred in the chamber after all the pseudo-sarcophagi were occupied (Colonna, “pittura etrusca”: 140 fig. 1, 141 fig. 2 no. 3d, 142).

19 That the other men of the gens Pinie were also married can be assumed based on their age. On the problem of female burials outside their husbands’ tombs, see: Marjatta Nielsen, “Etruscan Women: A Cross-Cultural Perspective,” in *Aspects of Women in Antiquity: Proceedings of the First Nordic Symposium on Women’s Lives in Antiquity, Göteborg 12–15 June 1997*, ed. Lena Larsson Lovén and Agneta Strömberg (Jönköping: P. Åströms Förlag, 1998): 69–84; Petra Amann, “Verwandtschaft, Familie und Heirat in Etrurien: Überlegungen zu Terminologie und Struktur,” in *Italo-Tusco-Romana: Festschrift für Luciana Aigner-Foresti zum 70. Geburtstag am 30. Juli 2006*, ed. Luciana Aigner-Foresti et al. (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2006): esp. 10–11.

20 The three-chamber tomb was excavated in Chiusi in 1882 and contained thirteen burials, eleven in urns and two in sarcophagi (Marina Sclafani, “La Tomba dei Matausni: analisi di un contesto chiusino di età alto-ellenistica,” *Studi Etruschi* 65 [2002]: 121–61).

21 Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: no. 161; Sclafani, “Tomba Matausni”: 129 M9, 135–36.

22 Mario Moretti and Anna Maria Sgubini Moretti, *I Curunas di Tuscania* (Rome: De Luca, 1983): 15 note 2 pl. 5.

Indeed, based on the contexts of the Pinie and the Curunas, it is not yet possible to establish a firm rule that would state that the tomb leader or the main burial is always found in a pointed position within the burial chamber. This thesis, however, seems to have gained acceptance in research based on some contexts, which include those of the gens Vipinana in Tuscania and those of the Alvethna family in Tarquinia.

3 The Documentary Problem of the Tomba dei Vipinana

The tomb of the Vipinana family (from the middle of the fourth to the end of the third century BC), discovered by the Campanari family in 1839, and its context are considered to be well-documented,²³ in particular due to the drawings by S.J. Ainsely and George Dennis.²⁴ One of the illustrations shows the reconstruction of the burial chamber in the garden of the Campanari in Tuscania; according to the Campanaris themselves and the statements of Elizabeth Caroline Hamilton Gray and George Dennis, who visited the reconstruction between 1840 and 1842, it is true to scale and based to a considerable extent on the circumstances of the discovery.²⁵

In the centre of the grave stands a sarcophagus without a lid, around which nine other pieces are positioned along the three walls. The central sarcophagus is decorated with reliefs on all four sides. This arrangement is still considered to be authentic today.²⁶ Thus, the Tomba Vipinana would be an excellent example of the clear highlighting of a single burial, and the location of the sarcophagus in the centre of the burial chamber would additionally be made reasonable by the reliefs featuring multi-figure narrative scenes placed on all four sides of the chest. Unfortunately, these have not been completely or satisfactorily interpreted to date.²⁷ Especially the long sides prove difficult to read since iconographic or literary parallels are missing. But, even without the exact

²³ Jahn, "Scavi": 23–28; Giovanni Colonna, "Archeologia nell'età romantica in Etruria: i Campanari di Toscanella e la Tomba dei Vipinana," *Studi Etruschi* 46 (1978): 81–117; Anna Maria Sgubini Moretti, *Tuscania: Il Museo Archeologico* (Rome: Quasar, 1991).

²⁴ Colonna, "Archeologia nell'età romantica in Etruria": pl. 21, 23.

²⁵ The reports of Dennis and Gray do not serve as scientific evidence at this point. They are, however, important contemporary witnesses who confirm that the Campanari described their reconstruction as accurate (Elizabeth C.J. Gray, *Tour to the Sepulchres of Etruria, in 1839* [London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1840]: 302; George Dennis, *The Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria*, vol. 1 [London: J. Murray, 1848]: 443–48).

²⁶ Van der Meer, *Myths and More*: 54.

²⁷ Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 48–49 no. 85 pl. 31–32 a–b; van der Meer, *Myths and More*: 54–57 fig. 27.

knowledge of the content of the representations, the sarcophagus can be clearly distinguished from the others around it since they mostly have smooth chests or purely ornamental reliefs.²⁸

Several arguments, a detailed discussion of which would go beyond the scope of this paper, clearly speak against the authenticity of the Campanari reconstruction and thus against the possibility to use it for a scientific contextual analysis. The following obvious doubts are applicable:

1. Otto Jahn, representative of the Istituto di Corrispondenza, in his enumeration of the most important sarcophagi, does not mention this piece at all.²⁹
2. It is impossible to equate the reconstruction of the tomb, although it is considered to be true to scale,³⁰ with the actual situation of the find, as already evidenced by the fact that out of the over twenty sarcophagi it originally contained, only ten can be seen in the chamber.³¹

It is much more likely that the sarcophagus was placed in the centre by the Campanari as it was the most representative piece. Since the specimen is the only one with decorations on four sides, it represents a highlight that was so well-staged. According to the report of Elizabeth Caroline Hamilton Gray, inside were the mortal remains of a man with a helmet, spears, and greaves, which were intended to portray the deceased as a warrior and relate him to the martial scenes on the chest.³²

In connection with this report, it is interesting to note that the sarcophagus had an inscription, which is no longer legible today.³³ According to Giovanni Colonna, it should refer to a female burial.³⁴ Thus, the conspicuous position in the centre of the chamber would have been reserved for a woman, who would have received marital endowment, which in turn would raise quite different questions regarding Etruscan society and its funerary rites.

In this respect, I would rather consider the alleged context of the sarcophagi from the Tomba Vipinana as a staging, as it was also realized by the Campanaris in a very

28 Identification of sarcophagi according to Colonna: sarcophagi with smooth chests: nos. 15–19, 21; sarcophagi with relief: J 4 (ketoi and patera), J 6 (farewell or welcome scene), no. 20 (rider on hippocamps and mask) (Colonna, “Archeologia nell’età romantica in Etruria”: 106, 108).

29 Jahn, “Scavi”: 25.

30 Gray, *Tour to the Sepulchres of Etruria*: 302; Sgubini Moretti, *Tuscania*: 71.

31 The architecture of the chamber described by Jahn is also not visible in Ainsley’s drawing.

32 Gray, *Tour to the Sepulchres of Etruria*: 304–5.

33 The inscription is not mentioned in every publication on the sarcophagus and has already been documented by Colonna, but only in fragments. For this reason, all interpretations are highly hypothetical.

34 Herbig takes note of the inscription but does not indicate whether it mentions a woman or a man (Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 120 no. 85); Colonna, “Archeologia nell’età romantica in Etruria”: 108 note 108; Sgubini Moretti, *Tuscania*: 73; van der Meer, *Myths and More*: 54.

similar form in the exhibition in London, which opened in 1837.³⁵ This applies to the positioning as well as to the armour and the human remains that were placed in this sarcophagus.

4 The Documentary Problem of the Tomba dei Alvethna

The burial chamber of the gens Alvethna in Tarquinia (from the end of the fourth to the third century BC) is also considered to be a context with a representative central burial, thus distinguishing itself from the rest; here, too, the corresponding sarcophagus has reliefs on all four sides. The tomb (discovered in 1933), although previously plagued by looters, is nevertheless distinguished by the complete preservation of its sarcophagi.³⁶ Of the total of six sarcophagi, five stood on a low step that ran around the chamber interior in a u-shape, while one stood directly on the floor.³⁷ Two of these sarcophagi were decorated with lid figures and reliefs or *Spiegel* on the chests;³⁸ the rest were smooth, with simple lids.³⁹ Furthermore, there are inscriptions on the relief and two smooth sarcophagi, which also mention the name of the Alvethna family.⁴⁰

In his report, Pietro Romanelli describes the sarcophagi according to the order in which they were placed in the grave, starting on the left wall. The first one is at the same time the one with the highest quality of craftsmanship: The chest, made of Nembro, is both relieved and painted on all four sides. On both long sides, there is a wide,

35 Judith Swaddling, "Exhibiting the Etruscans in Bloomsbury and Pall Mall," in *An Etruscan Affair: The Impact of Early Etruscan Discoveries on European Culture*, ed. Judith Swaddling (London: British Museum, 2018): 42–62. The room where the Tomba delle Bighe was exhibited is particularly suitable for comparison: In the centre of the chamber was also a sarcophagus with reliefs on all sides. The themes were interpreted as human sacrifice, and inside the chest lay a skeleton and weapons, as in the Vipinana context. That the sarcophagus, however, cannot come from this painted chamber tomb and is therefore no proof of a central positioning has already been proven (Cornelia Weber-Lehmann, "Die sogenannte Vanth von Tuscania: Seirene-Anasyromene," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 112 [1997]: 194, no. 16).

36 Pietro Romanelli, "Tarquinia – rinvenimenti fortuiti nella necropoli e nel territorio (1930–1938)," *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* (1944): 225–30.

37 "[Un] sesto era nel mezzo della stanza, sul piano stesso di essa verso destra." (Romanelli, "Tarquinia": 225–26).

38 The lids of these sarcophagi were pushed off by a grave robber and left in the centre of the chamber. "[A]lcuni dei coperchi delle casse erano rovesciati fra la terra: tutto dava indizio di una larga opera di violazione e di rovistamento subita dalle deposizioni." (Romanelli, "Tarquinia": 225–26).

39 Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 64–65 no. 126; 65 no. 127.

40 Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 64–65 no. 126 pl. 17 a; Tarquinia Museo Archeologico Nazionale inv. 1900, 1901.

profiled *Spiegel*, which served as a picture field for the painting and is now almost completely gone. On the left long side, the red background with the outlines of several human figures has been preserved to such an extent that a battle or a hunt, perhaps even an Amazonomachy, can be assumed to be depicted in this scene. Below the *Spiegel*, on each side, is a relief showing an animal fight (Fig. 2). The narrow sides also have a *Spiegel*, but without any reliefs or paintings.



Fig. 2: Sarcophagus of Larth Alvetina (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia, RC 1898).

On the roof-shaped lid, originally with three gable acroteria in the form of female and satyr heads as well as two dolphins in each gable field, there lies a male figure representing the deceased. It lies flat on its back, as if embedded on the ridge of the lid.⁴¹ The legs are parallel and close together, with the right one being minimally bent. The conspicuous clothing of the man – consisting of shoes, a chiton, a long cloak held together on the chest with a large, round brooch, and a hat with a far-protruding brim and a central conical elevation – has already been interpreted by Adriano Maggiani

⁴¹ For an initial compilation of these lids and an observation of the phenomenon, see: Nike Meissner, “Die Inszenierung des Jenseits: Die Reaktion in Etrurien auf den sogenannten Priestersarkophag in Tarquinia,” in *Sepulkrä- und Votivdenkmäler östlicher Mittelmeergebiete (7. Jh. v. Chr.–1. Jh. n. Chr.): Kulturbegegnungen im Spannungsfeld von Akzeptanz und Resistenz: Akten des internationalen Symposiums Mainz, 01.–03.11.2001*, ed. Renate Bol and Detlev Kreikenbom (Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, 2004): 183–92.

as the costume of a Haruspex.⁴² The mentioned inscription in the rightmost area of the long right side names the deceased as Larth Alvethnas.⁴³

The second sarcophagus with a figure on the lid is much simpler and does not appear to have been fully worked out. Nevertheless, it can be seen from the figure lying flat on its back that the deceased person was a woman.⁴⁴ The remaining sarcophagi consist of simple and smooth chests with pediment lids, which were roughly hewn from Nenfro⁴⁵ and local limestone.⁴⁶

The arrangement of the sarcophagi in the context is additionally clarified by two sketches of the archaeological discovery. In connection with the written report of Romanelli, they generally suggest that the sarcophagus of Larth Alvethna once stood in the centre⁴⁷ of the chamber, which would make good sense of its representative elaboration⁴⁸ (Fig. 3–4). Thus, this sarcophagus is also considered as the oldest and the main burial, having been reserved the most significant place in the middle of the chamber and with the four sides in relief also remaining visible.⁴⁹

However, a look at the sectional drawing of the burial chamber shows that this was not the case (Fig. 5): It is clear that no complete sarcophagus stood in the centre; instead, the two figural lids of the open chests lay there on top of each other, namely the lids of the sarcophagi on the left side and the back wall.⁵⁰ Romanelli's slightly misleading description, in which he mentions the sixth sarcophagus as standing on the right side and at the same time in the centre of the chamber, has led to a misunderstanding that seems to have prevailed in the literature. What was meant was not the actual centre of the room, but the floor next to the circumferential step.⁵¹ So, the sar-

42 Adriano Maggiani, "Immagini di aruspici," in *Secondo Congresso Internazionale Etrusco: Firenze 26 Maggio–2 Giugno 1985* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1989): 1159–61.

43 Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 65; Maggiani "Immagini di aruspici": fig. 1; Helmut Rix, *Etruskische Texte: Editio minor* (Tübingen: Narr, 1991): Ta 1.142.

44 Romanelli, "Tarquinia": 228–29 no. 2, fig. 12; Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 66 no. 127.

45 Museo Archeologico di Tarquinia Inv. 1900, 1901.

46 Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: no. 129, 130.

47 Maria Cataldi, *Tarquinia*, Guide territoriali dell'Etruria meridionale 8 (Rome: Quasar, 1993): 106; Maria Donatella Gentili, "I sarcofagi dall'area di Villa Tarantola: esemplari inediti e nuove osservazioni," *Mediterranea: Quaderni Annuali dell'Istituto di Studi sul Mediterraneo Antico* 11 (2014): 90; van der Meer, *Myths and More*: 15.

48 Cataldi, *Tarquinia*: 106. In the Archaeological Museum of Tarquinia, the sarcophagi have been placed in such a way that their positions more or less reflect the placement in the burial chamber. In this case, the sarcophagus of Larth Alvethnas is in the centre, while the others are grouped around it on three sides.

49 Gentili, "Villa Tarantola": 90–91.

50 Romanelli, "Tarquinia": 227, fig. 10 b.

51 Romanelli, "Tarquinia": 225–26.

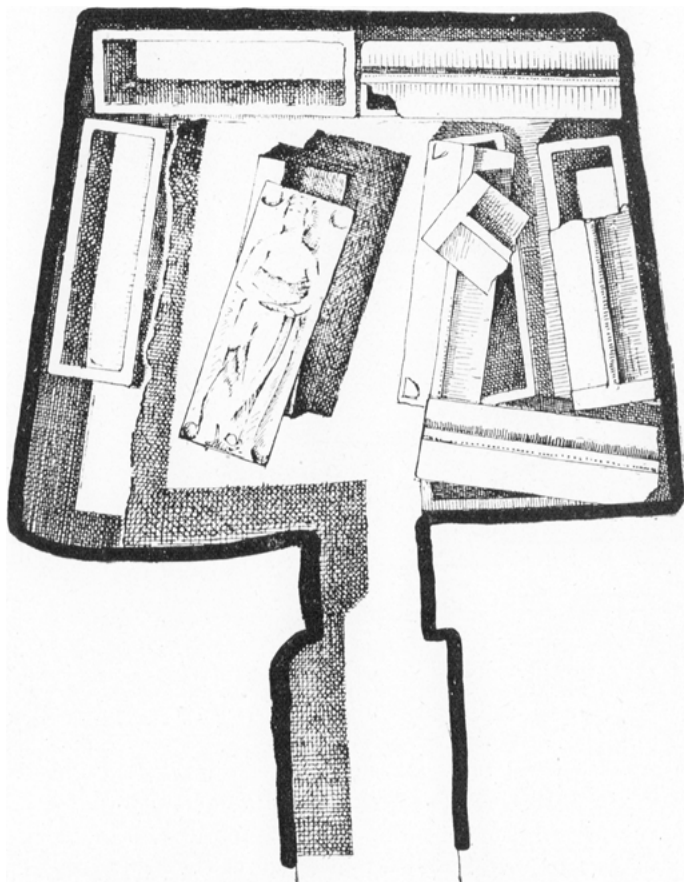


Fig. 3: Sketch of the Tomba Alvethna.

cophagus of Larth Alvethna did not stand in the middle of the burial chamber, but in a row with the others by the wall.⁵²

Even if his burial's distinctive positioning is not correct, the conspicuously large discrepancy between its craftsmanship and that of the other sarcophagi remains, which does not invalidate the question of a possible social inequality during his lifetime. Since Larth held a high-ranking office, which was presumably rather rare and did not occur in every family nor several times within one and the same family, it could be assumed in this case that showing an inequality in the sense of rank differ-

⁵² It can be assumed that it is the sarcophagus on the left wall since Romanelli apparently describes the pieces in order, from left to right.



Fig. 4: General view of room 8 in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia with the sarcophagi from the Tomba Alvethna.

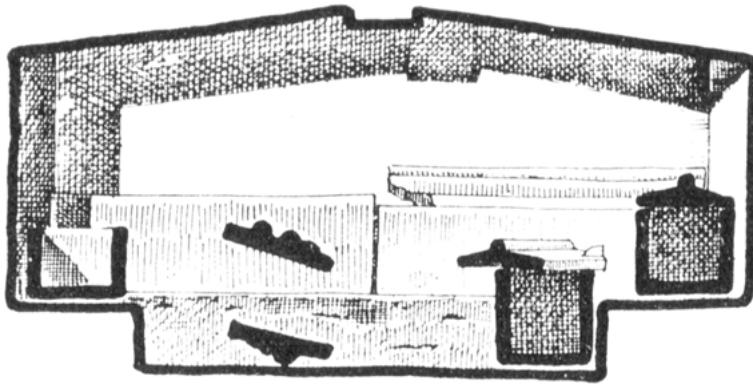


Fig. 5: Sketch of the Tomba Alvethna.

ences within the gens was the intention of these visible differences in the technical execution of the sarcophagi, ranging from the sarcophagus of Larth, to the less elaborate one of the woman with the lidded figure, to the simple pieces with and without inscriptions.

5 Various Tombs

A comparable discrepancy between artistic execution and iconography and the positioning in the tomb can be recognized in the sarcophagus of the woman from the *dro-mos* niche, in the already-mentioned tomb of the gens Matausni.⁵³ Since the lid figure holds a *krateriskos* in her hands, she is counted by Giovanni Colonna among the initiates of the cult of Dionysus.⁵⁴ He sees this as a criterion for a higher status as compared to the others.⁵⁵ However, her higher reputation, expressed by her attributes or her higher social position – as with Larth Alvethna – seems to have had no influence on assigning her sarcophagus to a prominent location in the burial chamber.

This assumption is supported by examples in which the so-called *posto d'onore* of the paterfamilias is “occupied” by a female burial. Representative of this is a context found in Chiusi in 1877. It shows a very similar situation with different sarcophagi, as we know from the Alvethna tomb: In a small chamber, there were an urn with reliefs and three sarcophagi – two left smooth and one with a chest in relief and a lid figure.⁵⁶ The relief sarcophagus is dated to around 300 BC and belongs to the rather rare *Klinentypus*.⁵⁷ The female figure on the lid is lying on her back, slightly inclined to the left side, and is completely wrapped in a cloak that also covers the back of her head. A round object can be seen in her hand. The bed is upholstered with animal skin and two pillows. Thanks to an inscription on the edge of the lid, the deceased has been named Ravnthu Vetanei.⁵⁸

Relevant to the question of social differentiation within the tomb is the fact that the sarcophagus of Ravnthu was the only one placed on the back wall of the chamber, the so-called *posto d'onore*. The context may serve as evidence that the space at the back wall of the burial chamber was not exclusively for the burial of the tomb leader or the head of the family. Perhaps Ravnthu was a beloved daughter who died before her parents, who were therefore able to provide her with this elaborate sarcophagus and prominent placement. It is also conceivable that Ravnthu was given the sarcophagus by her husband as a predeceased wife.

53 Sclafani, “La Tomba dei Matausni”: 19.

54 Sclafani, “Tomba Matausni”: 129 note 34.

55 Giovanni Colonna, “Riflessioni sul dionisismo in Etruria: appendice: le tombe tarquiniesi dei Camna,” in *Dionysos: mito e mistero: Atti del Convegno Internazionale Comacchio 3–5 novembre 1989*, ed. Fede Berti (Ferrara: Liberty House, 1991): 117–55.

56 Giuseppe Fiorelli, “Chiusi,” *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* (1877): 141; Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 12, no. 4 pl. 45 a; Giovanni Colonna, “I sarcofagi chiusini di età ellenistica,” in *La civiltà di Chiusi e del suo Territorio: Atti del 17 Convegno di Studi Etruschi ed Italici, Chianciano Terme, 28 Maggio–1 Giugno 1989*, ed. Luisa Tamagno Perna and Guglielmo Maetzke (Florence: Olschki, 1993): 342–44.

57 For a detailed description, see Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 12, 102–3.

58 Rix, *Etruskische Texte*: Cl 1.107.

The other burials also have inscriptions. On the basis of these, however, no family connections can be identified with certainty. For a hypothetical genealogy, see: Colonna, “sarcofagi chiusini”: 343.

The phenomenon that single, conspicuously high-quality sarcophagi were associated with plainer or completely smooth pieces in relatively small chambers can also be illustrated by several examples in Tarquinia:

A sarcophagus sculpted from Nenfro (325–300 BC) comes from a small grave that contained three other burials in simple, undecorated chests made of local limestone with flat lids. The sarcophagi were placed in pairs along the left and right walls.⁵⁹ The chest of the Nenfro sarcophagus is sculptured on all four sides. On the two long sides, an animal fight scene can be seen, in which two lions and a griffin are respectively tearing apart a boar and a deer. On each of the narrow sides is a Gorgon head.

On the lid, between two volute pediments (each containing a palmette), lies a female figure turned almost completely to the left side. Her head rests on a pillow and is adorned with a wide wreath tied at the back of her head. The hair peeks out from under it and covers her forehead. To the side, it falls in twisted curls, almost to her shoulders. She is dressed in a short-sleeved chiton and a himation, into which she reaches with her left hand, while in her right she holds an omphalos bowl that rests on her thigh. On her left ring finger, she wears a ring.⁶⁰ The sarcophagus of the woman is among the exceptionally high-quality pieces of the genre and thus stands out just as much from its burial context as the previous examples. In addition to the sculptural decoration, the different stone material in this case also points to a social differentiation among the burials.

The second case is also a particularly high-quality piece from a small burial chamber, which was associated with only one other less elaborate sarcophagus (325–300 BC).⁶¹ This, again, concerns a female burial.⁶² The iconography on its long and narrow sides is strikingly identical with that of the preceding sarcophagus, but a winged demoness is added on both sides of the animal fights. In each of the pediment fields of the lid, three rosettes can be seen, and in the middle of each one, a Gorgon head is set.⁶³ The lid figure

59 Wolfgang Helbig, “Scavi di Corneto,” *Bullettino dell’Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* (1881): 45–46.

60 Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 53 no. 98, pl. 13 a–b, 14 a; van der Meer, *Myths and More*: 139, with literature; Flavia Morandini, *Iconografia del leone in Etruria tra la fine dell’età arcaica e l’età ellenistica*, *Studi Etruschi* 61 (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 2018): 328 no. 7.

61 Giuseppe Fiorelli, “Corneto-Tarquinia,” *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* (1879): 9. The second sarcophagus from the chamber cannot be identified with any known piece so far. According to the description, it seems to be one with a reclining lid figure on a smooth chest.

62 Together with the context from which the so-called Amazon sarcophagus comes (Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: no. 27), these two examples represent the only female tombs documented at Tarquinia. On this subject, see: Marjatta Nielsen, “Common Tombs for Women in Etruria: Buried Matriarchies?” in *Female Networks and the Public Sphere in Roman Society*, ed. Liisa Savunen and Päivi Setälä (Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 1999): 65–136, esp. 78.

63 The assumption that both sarcophagi, together with two others, come from the context of the Vestarcianias is probably due to their iconographic and stylistic similarities (van der Meer, *Myths and More*: 15, 139; Morandini, *Iconografia del Leone*: 325). The documentation attests to burials in individual chambers (for Herbig no. 100, see: Giuseppe Fiorelli, “Corneto-Tarquinia,” *Notizie degli Scavi di*

lies flat on her back with her right leg slightly bent. She wears a long-sleeved chiton, a himation, and sandals. Her hair is parted in the middle and rests in waves on either side of her head – as is the case with numerous lid figures who wear buns at the napes of their necks. On top of her head, she wears a broad, textured tiara. Other jewellery pieces include large earrings, a choker, and a necklace with large triangular and crescent-shaped pendants. In her left hand she holds a bird.⁶⁴

If one assumes that a common burial for members of a family is intended to maintain the connections among them and at the same time serve as a representation of the family association, it seems astonishing that these two specimens of outstanding craftsmanship, made for two women who certainly belonged to a wealthy gens, were found in relatively small chambers with only one and three other burials, respectively.⁶⁵ The question of why these women in particular were not buried in the hypogea of their nuclear families cannot be pursued within the framework of this article.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, it can be stated that in the mentioned contexts, clear differences between the sarcophagi can be recognized, and that with them, rank differences may have also been meant. Likewise, it can be assumed that a social differentiation, which can be interpreted in any way, could also and precisely have accounted for these women being buried separately from the family.

6 An Example of Uniformity in the Grave: Tomba Bruschi

In addition to such tombs in which the differences in material and iconography are particularly striking, a context is known in Tarquinia which, in contrast, stands out for its homogeneity. In the tomb of the gens Apuna (from the end of the fourth to the third century BC), more commonly known as Tomba Bruschi, numerous sarcophagi were found in 1864 and 1964.⁶⁷ The chamber was not fully measured in either excava-

Antichità [1876]: 19–20; Massimo Morandi, “Rivista di Epigrafia Etrusca,” *Studi Etruschi* 63 [1999]: 395–97; for Herbig no. 97, see: Wolfgang Helbig, “Scavi di Corneto,” *Bullettino dell’Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* [1875]: 176).

⁶⁴ Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: 54 no. 99, pl. 14 b–c; van der Meer, *Myths and More*: 129 H99, with lit.

⁶⁵ The tomb with the single burial of Arnth Paipnas proves that there were also male burials in Tarquinia in sarcophagi of striking quality, buried outside large family groups (Fiorelli, “Corneto-Tarquinia”: 19; Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: no. 96; Cataldi, *Tarquinia*: 107–8 fig. 145–46; van der Meer, *Myths and More*: 138 H96).

⁶⁶ This problem is part of my current dissertation project on Etruscan Hellenistic stone sarcophagi.

⁶⁷ The tomb was backfilled after the first excavation for conservation reasons and was forgotten for a century. For a detailed treatment of the entire context and its problems, see Vincenti, *Tomba Bruschi*.

tion, but it had a square floor plan, two asymmetrically placed pilaster, and two niches in the right wall. This corresponds to the funerary architecture of Hellenistic Tarquinia, but the tomb is significantly larger than the chambers that have been described so far.⁶⁸ It was used for several generations and contained different types of sarcophagi. These include smooth-leaved sarcophagi⁶⁹ and one with a painted garland frieze.⁷⁰ There are examples with lidded figures⁷¹ and reliefs on the chests⁷² as well as two strikingly small examples with roof lids.⁷³ This heterogeneous group is distinguished by the presence of five figural lids made of grey Nenfro, which are conspicuous due to their uniformity.

First, these lid figures are also exclusively female. They lie stretched out on their backs with their right leg slightly bent, and all show a slight tilt to the left side. Their heads are pillowed on cushions, and the flat bearings are framed at either end by simple pediments. All the women wear a chiton and a himation. Two have conspicuously large necklaces. Otherwise, it is mainly the attributes in the women's hands that distinguish them from one another.⁷⁴ This observation may be decisive for a differentiation within the group, but it does not explain why this common distinction from the other sarcophagus burials exists at all (Figs. 6–10).



Fig. 6: Sarcophagus from Tomba Bruschi (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia, inv. 137299).

⁶⁸ The size of the Tomba Bruschi corresponds to the hypogea of the gentes Giglioli, Meracareccia and Scudi (Vincenti, *Tomba Bruschi*: 11–12, 14).

⁶⁹ Vincenti, *Tomba Bruschi*: 94 no. 13, note 99, no. 14.

⁷⁰ Vincenti, *Tomba Bruschi*: 94 no. 12, note 97.

⁷¹ Vincenti, *Tomba Bruschi*: 84–86 no. 6, note 59, pl. 20 a.

⁷² Vincenti, *Tomba Bruschi*: 90–93 no. 9, note 84, pl. 21 a.

⁷³ Vincenti, *Tomba Bruschi*: 86–89 no. 7, pl. 20 b, 89–90.

⁷⁴ Inv. 137299 crateriskos; inv. 137300 dove; inv. 137302 patera; inv. 137301 patera; inv. 137303 none.



Fig. 7: Sarcophagus from Tomba Bruschi (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia, inv. 137300).



Fig. 8: Sarcophagus from Tomba Bruschi (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia, inv. 137301).



Fig. 9: Sarcophagus from Tomba Bruschi (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia, inv. 137302).



Fig. 10: Sarcophagus from Tomba Bruschi (Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia, inv. 137303).

Of particular interest are the so-called head pads, which all the lid figures wear.⁷⁵ That they are literally pads that fill the area between the head and the sarcophagus gable is something I consider questionable.⁷⁶ It is also countered by their exclusive occurrence on the lids from the Tomba Bruschi. Likewise, their practical use is invalid for a stone sculpture. Rather, the elaboration, with bulging thickened edges, refers to actual headgear that was worn by women “in real life.”⁷⁷ Two of the headdresses appear to have something like an image field, perhaps originally adorned by painting.⁷⁸ This is also conceivable for the others, though without any corresponding elaboration. It can be thought of, for example, as having a similar structure to that seen in the diadem of the previously discussed cover figure with the bird – only that this was painted on.

A final feature that unites these lids and at the same time distinguishes them from the others is their size. The standard length of sarcophagi for women is about 2.00 meters. All the pieces from the Tomba Bruschi clearly exceed this length.⁷⁹ Two

⁷⁵ As for the hairstyle, the suggestion that they should be *seni crines*, which was intended for *novae nuptae*, seems to be *communis opinio* (Valentina Vincenti, “I sarcofagi della Tomba Bruschi di Tarquinia,” in *Sepulkral- und Totivdenkmäler östlicher Mittelmeergebiete (7. Jh. v. Chr.–1. Jh. n. Chr.): Kulturbegegnungen im Spannungsfeld von Akzeptanz und Resistenz: Akten des internationalen Symposiums Mainz, 01.–03.11.2001*, ed. Renate Bol and Detlev Kreikenbom [Möhnesee: Bibliopolis, 2004]: 194; Vincenti, *Tomba Bruschi*: 76; on this, see also: Mario Torelli, *Lavinio e Roma: riti iniziatici e matrimonio tra archeologia e storia*, *Lectiones Planetariae* [Rome: Quasar, 1984]).

⁷⁶ Marijatta Nielsen earlier suggested, for other examples with conspicuously wide diadems, that the volume is due to the sculptor’s attempt to bridge the space between the headdress and the pediment (Marijatta Nielsen, “Sacerdotesse e associazioni culturali femminili in Etruria: testimonianze epigrafiche ed iconografiche,” *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 19 [1990]: 59).

⁷⁷ Vincenti, *Tomba Bruschi*: 80, 83–84, 93.

⁷⁸ inv. 137299; inv. 137303.

⁷⁹ Valentina Vincenti, “La Tomba Bruschi di Tarquinia: recupero di un contesto,” in *Scavo nello scavo: gli Etruschi non visti: ricerche e riscoperte nei depositi dei musei archeologici dell’Etruria meridionale: catalogo della mostra, 5 marzo–30 giugno 2004*, ed. Anna Maria Sgubini Moretti (Rome: Ministero per i

of the lids are at 2.33 m,⁸⁰ a measurement that even exceeds the average length of male sarcophagi.⁸¹ Only one sarcophagus with a lying female lid figure from Tarquinia reaches comparable monumental dimensions.⁸²

Complementary to these observations, reference must be made to the gender ratio in the grave. Of the burials, five can be identified as female and four as male. The remaining four sarcophagi must be considered neutral due to the lack of inscriptions and meaningful iconography. Still, even if these contained exclusively male burials, there is a relatively high proportion of women documented here.

This is a situation remotely reminiscent of the Tomba delle Iscrizioni in Vulci, which also recorded a large percentage of female burials. The women from that tomb were partially related to each other by the designation *hatrencu*. Marjatta Nielsen assumes it to be the title of a female office, which, until now, is known exclusively through funerary inscriptions from Vulci.⁸³ She speculates that the *hatrencu*, whose inscriptions were found on the walls of the individual chambers, could be a cultic collective.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, with the exception of only one without a lid, no sarcophagi or urns survived from the tomb, which has already been looted, and so an iconographic analysis is not possible.

To consider the women from the Tomba Bruschi also as a kind of cultic collective may seem too daring at this stage of the research. But that it is exclusively in the style of a workshop is something I would like to question, particularly with regard to the listed aspects and peculiarities that isolate these five lids in a unique way from the rest of the burials. Perhaps we are dealing with a socially higher-ranking group here, or at least a group with a different social status that allowed for the burials to stand out from the other members of the same family through their iconography and size.

7 Conclusion

This brief and first overview of selected contexts containing sarcophagus burials does not yet allow us to formulate an overarching and generally valid answer to the question of visible hierarchies and social differences among the collectively buried mem-

Beni e le Attività Culturali, Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici per l'Etruria Meridionale, 2004): 194–98 no. 2–6: 2.33 m; 2.33 m; 2.10 m; 2.18 m; 1.80 m. Lid no. 6 is broken, but the original length of this piece would also have been over 2 meters.

⁸⁰ Inv. 137299; inv. 137300.

⁸¹ Among the sarcophagi with lying male lid figures, there is only one that comes close to the two largest Bruschi examples: Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: no. 100 (2.22 m).

For the dimensions of the sarcophagi, see: van der Meer, *Myths and More*: 27–28.

⁸² Herbig, *Steinsarkophage*: no. 64 (2.21 m).

⁸³ Nielsen: "Sacerdotesse": 45.

⁸⁴ Nielsen, "Sacerdotesse": 45.

bers of a gens. The problem, which involves numerous decontextualized sarcophagi and barely documented contexts, complicates this area of research to a large extent and does not enable a comprehensive analysis. Nevertheless, a reprocessing of some extant excavation documentation has led to several observations in this field.

In accordance with the assumption that the status and standing of individuals are reflected in the tomb, the thesis that the particular position of the tomb builder or head of the family is at the back wall or in the centre of the chamber has manifested itself. Exemplary of this is the tomb of the gens Pinie in Tarquinia. The arrangement of the pseudo-sarcophagi, which can be assigned to the individual family members thanks to the preserved inscriptions, points to a clearly hierarchical structure: Vel Pinie is represented by his large and isolated sarcophagus on the back wall, while the others buried in the tomb follow on the side walls, depending on their status within the family. However, the fact that this pattern cannot be applied as a fixed rule to all tombs is illustrated by numerous contexts in which, for example, the sarcophagi of women are positioned in the supposed place of the paterfamilias, as is the case with the sarcophagus of Ravnthu Vetanei in Chiusi. Also, the rectification of the contexts of the gentes Alvethna in Tarquinia and the Vipinana in Tuscania has shown that one cannot assume the sarcophagus placement in the centre of the burial chamber to be representative. Rather, it must be taken into account that the notion of a central burial arose from erroneously interpreted documentation or incorrectly reconstructed contexts and should not be given any further weight in research. Furthermore, the assumption that sarcophagi decorated on all sides were intended for such a central position is obsolete. It is possible that a representative placement of the main burial was irrelevant in many cases since tombs were not public but rather private structures. Only members of the family had access to the chambers during (re)burials, up until they were full and closed. The only public presentation was through the funeral ceremonies, during which the individual sarcophagi may have been on public view, as well as through the above-ground architectural development of the tombs. Any highlighting of the burials in the tomb would have been made in reference to the members of the gens, who would also have been the only ones capable of perceiving this.⁸⁵

It has become much clearer that status differences among the members of a gens were conveyed by means of the sarcophagi. These differed in the type of stone used and/or in their workmanship. In the case of the context of the gens Alvethna, a hierarchization of individuals can be seen in a stylistic way. Larth Alvethna, a haruspex during his lifetime, was buried in a sarcophagus with a figural lid and relief decoration as well as with paintings of the highest quality. Meanwhile, the other members of the family were buried in sarcophagi ranging from lesser sculptural work to simple and

85 Marjatta Nielsen, “‘. . . stemmate quod Tusco ramum millesime ducis . . .’ (Persius Sat. 3.28): Family Tombs and Genealogical Memory among the Etruscans,” in *Images of Ancestors*, ed. Jakob Munk Højte, Aarhus Studies in Mediterranean Antiquity 5 (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2002): 91.

nameless stone chests. A comparable situation is evident in several other tombs in Tarquinia, where high-quality sarcophagi of women were associated with only one to three others, less elaborate or entirely unworked examples.

In addition to the visibility of social differences, these contexts raise the question of why those women, who obviously came from wealthy families, were not buried together with their relatives in the large hypogea. Perhaps, based on these isolated burials, their socially conditioned difference from the members of the nuclear family can be discerned, the reasons for which are still uncertain for us.

A clear divergence from this heterogeneity is represented by the five lids from the Tomba Bruschi. Their uniformity has made them stand out, together as a group, from the rest of the burials. That the reasons for this are chronological or due to the style of the workshop seems unlikely, given the singularity of this phenomenon. At this stage, there is no sufficient explanation for this homogeneous group and for its social and societal significance. However, the context testifies that, in addition to differences in the funerary field, there were also intentionally chosen uniformities, whose meaning and significance regarding social structures, differences as well as dependencies, still need to be explained.

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List of Figures

- Fig. 1** Helbig, "Scavi di Corneto": 70
- Fig. 2, 4, 6–10** Photo Laura Nazim – per gentile concessione del Parco Archeologico di Cerveteri e Tarquinia – Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Tarquinia
- Fig. 3** Romanelli, "Tarquinia": 226 fig. 10 a
- Fig. 5** Romanelli, "Tarquinia": 227 fig. 10 b