

Alessandro Naso (ed.)  
**Etruscology**



# Etruscology

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Volume 1

Edited by  
Alessandro Naso

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## 19 Death and burial

**Abstract:** Cemeteries are our greatest source of knowledge of the Etruscans, because the Etruscan elite furnished their tombs very richly, a “barbarian” custom that they adopted throughout their civilization, from the second half of the eighth century BCE onward. The three major arts—sculpture, architecture, and painting—were developed mostly for use in burials. Although (or because) this constitutes a huge amount of information, a detailed study of death and burial in Etruria is still lacking; the various reviews of aspects of the whole subject, usually involving a single site or a particular period in history, show that the development of a funerary ideology is closely connected to contemporary religion and society. Funerary ideology is a traditional and conservative matter. Up-to-date analyses of single sites specifically concern the Iron Age and the Orientalizing period, while the more complex Archaic and Late Archaic periods are less well known. From the Classical period onward the emergence of a precise view of the underworld can be followed, influenced by Greek conceptions of its geography: the ferryman Charon, ferrying the dead across the river Acheron to the hereafter, was adopted as *Charun* in Etruscan culture, where further male and female demons of their own peopled the underworld.

**Keywords:** Funerary ideology, Etruscan graves, Etruscan Underworld, orphic religion, Dionysian cult

### Introduction

Cemeteries are our greatest source of knowledge of the Etruscans, because the Etruscan elite furnished their tombs very richly, a “barbarian” custom that they adopted throughout the civilization, from the second half of the eighth century BCE onward. The three major arts—sculpture, architecture, and painting—were developed mostly for use in burials. Although (or because) this constitutes a huge amount of information, a detailed study of death and burial in Etruria is still lacking; the various reviews of aspects of the whole subject, usually involving a single site or a particular period in history, show that the development of a funerary ideology is closely connected to contemporary religion and society. Funerary ideology is a traditional and conservative matter. Up-to-date analyses of single sites specifically concern the Iron Age and the Orientalizing period,<sup>1</sup> while the more complex Archaic and Late Archaic periods are less well known.<sup>2</sup> From the Classical period onward the emergence of a precise view of the underworld can be followed, influenced by Greek conceptions of its geography: the ferryman Charon, ferrying the dead across the river Acheron to the hereafter, was

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<sup>1</sup> Krauskopf 2006 and Prayon 2006 are the most recent general introductions to the subject. For recent reviews of individual cases see von Eles 2006 (Verucchio and Tarquinia) and Bonaudo, Cerchiai, and Pellegrino, eds. 2009 (several sites in Emilia-Romagna and Campania).

<sup>2</sup> Batino 1998 and Bonaudo, Cerchiai, and Pellegrino, eds. 2009.

adopted as *Charun* in Etruscan culture, where further male and female demons of their own peopled the underworld.<sup>3</sup>

## 1 Funerary ideology

The development of a funerary ideology is closely connected to the contemporary society, and the custom of burying an individual is a specific cultural choice, connecting the society of the living to the community of the dead, as Bruno d'Agostino has clarified on several occasions.<sup>4</sup> The furnishings are the material component of rituals and ceremonies, which otherwise often remain totally unknown. The burial and the furnishings reflect select aspects of the deceased—his or her position in the family, the society, political life, and religious life—which were highlighted by those who carried out the burial. To understand the meaning of the interments, one has to know the relevant society and its outlook, by collecting texts, rites, myths, iconography, and iconology (see chapter 6 Lubtchansky). Otherwise, as is the case for societies with as few written texts as the Etruscans, one has to work with the furnishings, their composition, and their relationships.

Several cemeteries in Etruria have been explored, but Etruscan tombs have often been looted of their treasures, their contents damaged or destroyed, so that they can no longer be interpreted for this purpose. Only a few tombs have been found as they were originally sealed, and it is impossible to know whether they can be taken as a typical or random sample. Between continuity and discontinuity, the concept of an underworld as a space geographically separate from the world, which has to be reached after death, is deeply rooted in Etruscan culture. The iconography of Etruscan burial monuments often includes horses, chariots, and ships, which are clear references to the journey of the dead to the underworld.<sup>5</sup>

## 2 Iron Age

Cremation, the prevalent burial custom in the Early Iron Age in Etruria, meant the physical destruction of the dead, and the collection of the remaining bones (Lat. *ossilegium*) in a cinerary urn, following a pattern already established in the *Bronzo*

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<sup>3</sup> Roncalli 1997, 40–43.

<sup>4</sup> For the development of funerary ideology in ancient societies see d'Agostino 2011a.

<sup>5</sup> See now Scarrone 2011.

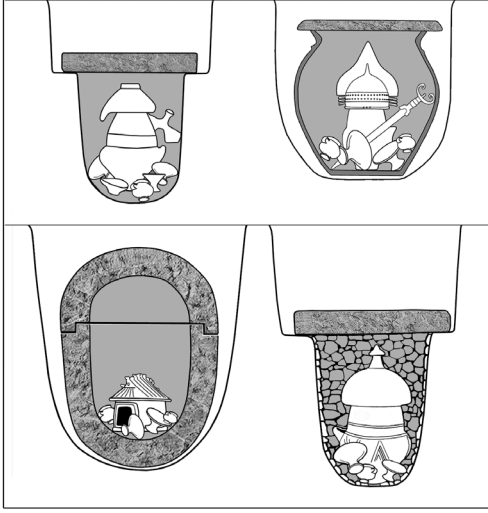


Fig. 19.1: Villanovan graves from Tarquinia

*finale*<sup>6</sup> (see chapter 42 Trocchi). This operation extended to the remains from the pyre, which contained charcoal, ashes, and cremation detritus. Some burials have two urns—one for the deceased and one for the pyre remains. In Etruria and the areas of the Italian peninsula connected to Etruscan expansion, including Emilia Romagna, the Marches, and northern and southern Campania, the cinerary urns usually have a biconical form with two handles, one of which was often intentionally broken during a ritual for the deposition of the urn in a pit grave (Fig. 19.1). With the same purpose of avoiding reuse of the urn, several urns have only one handle. Some details make it clear that the urns were viewed and handled as a reproduction of the human body that had been destroyed by the fire. Sometimes urns were put horizontally in *fossa* graves like a buried person; some have ornamental chains or clothing draped over them<sup>7</sup> The urn is closed by a lid, which may be a bowl or a sort of helmet, i.e. an overturned bowl with a knob in the center. Generally, bowls were limited to female and helmets to male depositions, but it is important to note local variations site by site.

By analyzing the remains of bones from the cineraria found in the Early Iron Age cemetery of Villa Bruschi Falgari at Tarquinia, which has recently been explored, and comparing them with the archaeological finds, Flavia Trucco was able to distinguish differing customs for the cremations of children/young people versus adults by differ-

<sup>6</sup> The Italian phrase *Bronzo finale* would be translated “Final Bronze Age,” to avoid the expression “Late Bronze Age.”

<sup>7</sup> Delpino 2008.

ences in the placement of the bowl used as a lid. For younger people, the bowl is small and placed right side up, to hold remains of the pyre and food offerings such as meat or fruit. For men and women, the bowl is larger and placed upside down. There are some interesting exceptions: in some cineraria containing adult male cremations, the bowls face up, as in children's graves. Did these men, treated like children in death, have a low social position? This is a possibility.<sup>8</sup> In some cases in the same cemetery, the remaining bones were probably washed and placed in the urn wrapped in a cloth, as documented by the decorations that survive, such as sheet bronze ornaments stitched to the cloth, or fibula used to fasten it. The clay helmets may have on their knob an exact reproduction of a hut roof, a custom already documented in the *Bronzo Finale* in central Italy both in Etruria and in Latium Vetus.<sup>9</sup> This connection with the dwelling is repeated by the rare cinerary urns in shape of a hut, which were used occasionally in Etruria and often in Latium Vetus from the *Bronzo Finale* onward.<sup>10</sup> Some burials belonging to the last decades of the Iron Age, in the third quarter of the eighth century, already show some of the main characteristics of the subsequent Orientalizing period. These include luxury goods, which were directly imported from the Levant or Greece, or locally made but inspired by imports, and are identified in rich male and female burials in Tarquinia and Capua.<sup>11</sup>

### 3 Orientalizing period

The shift from the Iron Age to the Orientalizing period was marked both by continuity and discontinuity. Inhumation burial is now the most common funerary practice, but new forms of interments were introduced, including chamber tombs contained in huge tumuli. Some tumuli were used by the same family for several generations, but originally a tumulus was built for the burial of a single person. This practice can be closely connected to the cult of this person as ancestor (see chapter 48 Trocchi and Section 7, below). Huge tumuli, clearly inspired by Near Eastern models in Syria and Phrygia, created a new funerary landscape in Etruria, whether located in cemeteries around the cities or isolated in the countryside, with the function of marking land ownership by the elite.<sup>12</sup> In Etruria the tumulus developed as a new space

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<sup>8</sup> Trucco 2006, 96–97.

<sup>9</sup> Bietti Sestieri and De Santis 2004. Nizzo 2010 for further comparisons between Etruscan and Latian burials.

<sup>10</sup> Bartoloni 1998, with previous bibliography. See von Eles 2006, too.

<sup>11</sup> Babbi and Peltz 2013 for the Warrior Grave in Tarquinia; d'Agostino 2011b for Grave 722 in Capua.

<sup>12</sup> For Etruria see Zifferero 2011; knowledge of tumuli in the eastern Mediterranean have been enlarged by the proceedings of the Istanbul conference (Henry and Kelp 2016).



intended for funerary cults. Friedhelm Prayon notes, for instance, that in southern Etruria the entrance doors and the corridors of chamber tombs dating to the seventh century are often oriented in a northwest–southeast direction: this corresponds to the Etruscan conception of heaven, known from late descriptions by Roman authors, whose northwestern portion housed the gods of the underworld (Figs. 19.2–19.3).<sup>13</sup> The orientation of the Orientalizing chamber tombs seems to confirm that the idea of an underworld is an old tradition with deep roots in Etruscan culture, and the conservative character of Etruscan funerary culture begins to emerge. Pursuing the tendency already begun in the Iron Age, there is an effort to reproduce the body of the deceased in the burials. For instance, in interments in Vulci and Marsiliana, which date to the first half of the seventh century, some sheet-bronze busts consisting of a sphere for the head, a cylinder for the neck, and two conical elements for the arms, imitate the shape of a human body in geometric form.<sup>14</sup> In the same period, in Chiusi and the surrounding territory canopic urns with masks that reproduced human faces came into use.<sup>15</sup> The iconography of seventh-century burial monuments shows the journey of the dead to the underworld: horses, as in the wall painting of the Campana Tomb in Veii; two wheeled chariots, as in the Zannoni stela in Bologna; and ships, as in the vase painting on the jug from Tragliatella, are clear references to the modes of travel.<sup>16</sup>

The locations of cemeteries usually changed in the Orientalizing period. The areas reserved for cemeteries are usually around the cities or the settled land, following a pattern already established in the Iron Age. In most cases, however, the general topography of the cemeteries was deeply modified from the Orientalizing period onward, as shown by Caere in southern Etruria and Pontecagnano in southern Campania. In both cases, the Iron Age cemeteries—Sorbo at Caere and ECI at Pontecagnano—were partly or totally abandoned and new areas designated for burials, and they were used as cemeteries for many centuries: the Banditaccia at Caere and the Second Western cemetery at Pontecagnano.<sup>17</sup>

The lifestyle of the Etruscan elite and the composition of tomb goods were dramatically changed by the luxury items imported from Near Eastern regions to Etruria. Bronze cauldrons from northern Syria, silver ribbed bowls sometimes plated with gold, silver or bronze jugs from both Cyprus and the Levant, and Phoenician or Syrian glass bowls delighted the Etruscan elite, who placed them as furnishings in burials

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<sup>13</sup> Prayon 1975, 85–90, pl. 82. A new reconstruction of the Etruscan heaven has been recently suggested (Stevens 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Cristofani 1985, 288–89, nos. 107–9.

<sup>15</sup> Paolucci 2010; 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Prayon 2006, 57–60.

<sup>17</sup> Prayon 1975 for Caere and Bonaudo et al. 2009, 170–75, for Pontecagnano.

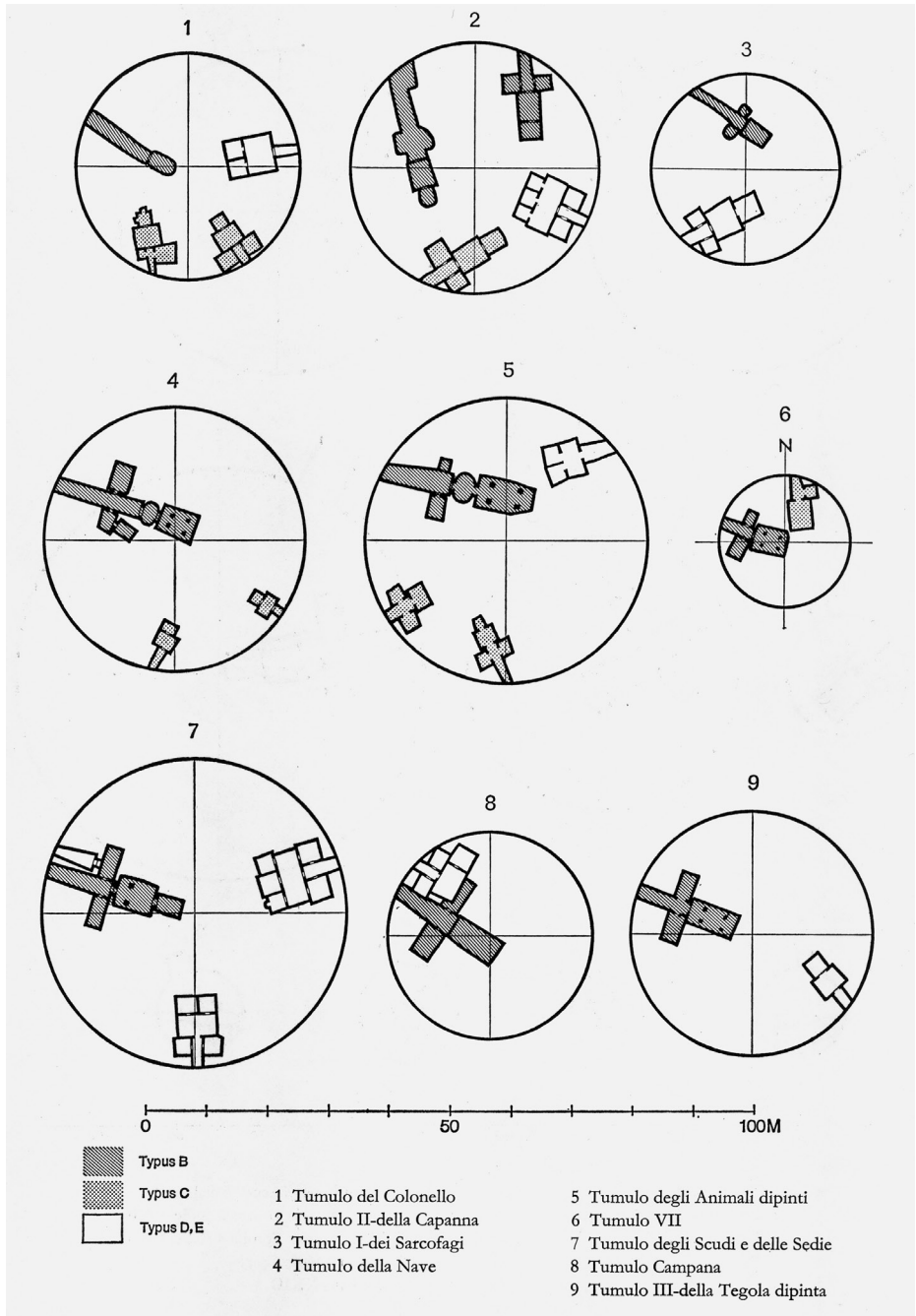


Fig. 19.2: Tumuli with several chamber tombs in the necropolis of Caere: the oldest tomb is always oriented northwest (after Prayon 1975, pl. 82)

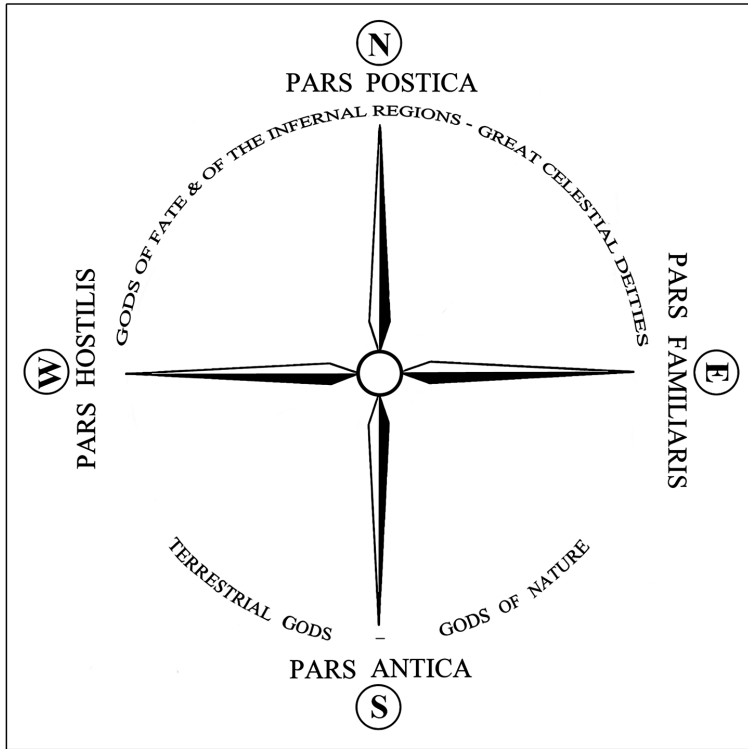
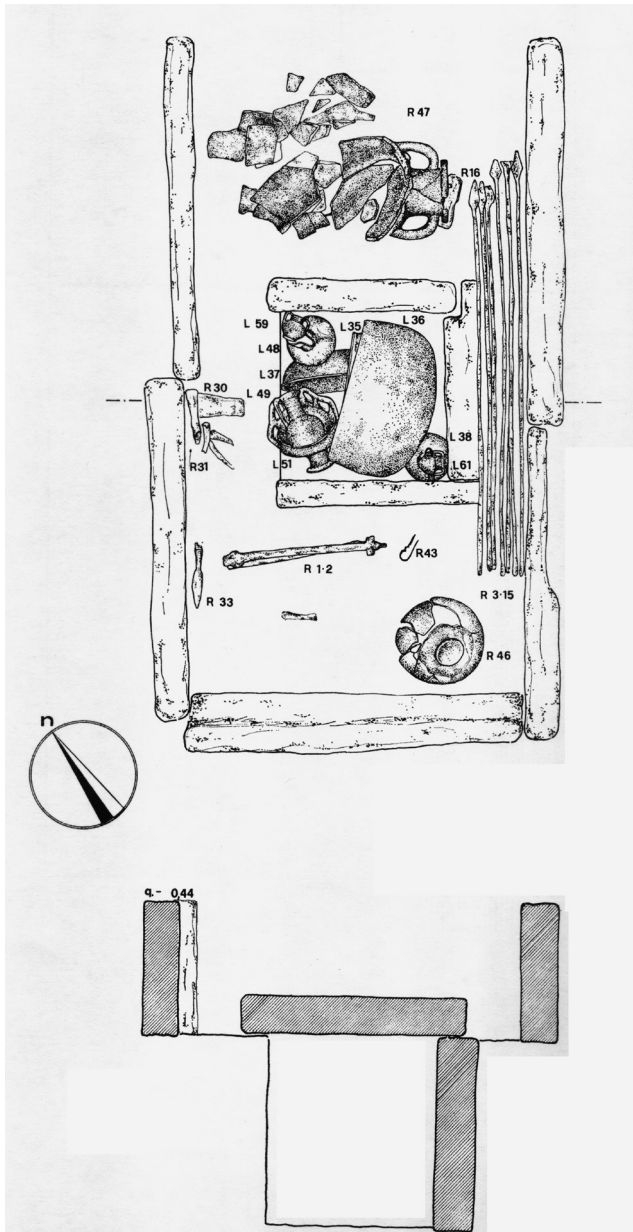


Fig. 19.3: Etruscan conception of the heaven

at several cities, including Vetulonia, Marsiliana, Caere, and Pontecagnano. Some imports were adjusted for sepulchral purposes, as is shown for instance by the snake heads on the—likely—Cypriot silver cauldron plated with gold from the Bernardini Tomb in Praeneste.<sup>18</sup>

Two warrior burials from Pontecagnano in southern Campania, dating to the second quarter of the seventh century, are particularly important, because they were found intact. *Fossa* graves 926 and 928 have similar plans. Both are bordered by stone slabs, and both include a recess in the ground containing bronze cauldrons; in both recesses one cauldron was used as a funerary urn (Figs. 19.4–19.5). The cauldrons were probably wrapped in cloth fastened with silver fibulae. Precious silver and bronze jugs and bowls were found in the recesses. In the *fossa* lay iron tools like spearheads, axes, spits, and andirons, as well as animal bones and clay vases of various origins. In both graves, the difference is clear between objects relating to

<sup>18</sup> Canciani and von Hase 1981, 36–37, no. 16.



**Fig. 19.4:** Plan of grave 926 at Pontecagnano (after d'Agostino 1977, fig. 2)

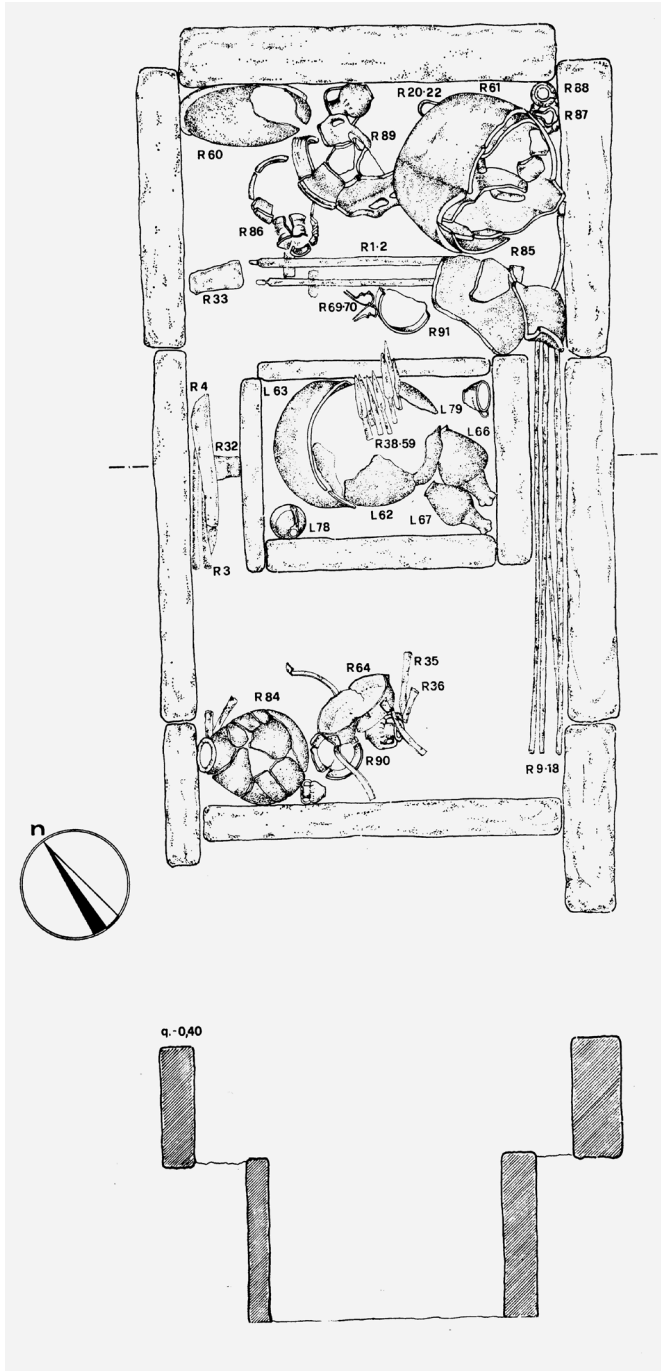


Fig. 19.5: Plan of grave 928 at Pontecagnano (after d'Agostino 1977, fig. 13)

the sacrifice, including tools and portions of animal flesh, placed in the *fossa*, and the most valuable items, which belonged to the deceased warriors and which were concentrated in the niche with the bones. Bruno d'Agostino compares both niches to the *thalamos*, a room in ancient Greek houses that contained the most valuable possessions (Gk. *agalmata*) of the hero, revealing his social status (Gk. *ktemata*). In both graves, the adoption of the cremation ritual, reserved in Homeric Greece for heroes, has been seen as a Greek influence; on the other hand, at Pontecagnano inhumation predominated.<sup>19</sup>

The two categories of items that are so clearly distinguished in the two warrior graves at Pontecagnano—the personal property of the dead and the objects used in the funeral—are distinguished in most Etruscan interments. A third category is evident, too: objects belonging to the tomb furnishings that were not personal property or related to the cult. As is usual for funerary practices, which were very conservative, the use of three categories of funerary furnishings continued throughout Etruscan civilization.

In the well-known Regolini-Galassi Tomb at Caere, dating to the second quarter of the seventh century, the furnishings were displayed in spaces comparable in function to the two graves of Pontecagnano and included all three categories. This tuff-block tomb, consisting of one long corridor and two small side chambers, held two deceased persons, a woman buried with an exceptional *parure* of gold jewelry in the corridor, and a man whose bones were placed in an urn in the right chamber. A buried woman and a cremated man in the same interment are widely attested in Orientalizing Etruria.<sup>20</sup> The high status of the female, probably a queen (see chapter 47 Naso), is further emphasized by bronze items, including eight shields, some of them still hanging on the walls, which were placed in the innermost part of the chamber, corresponding to the *thalamos*. The front portion of the corridor held bronze objects belonging to the cultic sphere, which include not only a ritual cart, cauldrons with their related stands, spits, and andirons, but also a bed and a four-wheeled wagon. The bed and wagon were used respectively for viewing the body at home (Gk. *prothesis*) and bringing it to the tomb (Gk. *ekphora*). In the tomb, about forty bucchero statuettes of women were placed around the bed, to recall the women weeping for the dead during the funeral (Lat. *praeficae*). The left side chamber was devoted to the sumptuous life of the queen, containing, among other things, a silver wine service, including twelve bowls of various forms, a little amphora, and two jugs. Some of these vessels, used for drinking wine mixed with water, bear the same Etruscan inscription, *mi larthia*, “I am (property) of Larth.” Since Larth is a male personal name, the wine service was a gift from Larth to the deceased woman, probably his daughter or

<sup>19</sup> D'Agostino 1977, 54–61.

<sup>20</sup> List of examples in Palmieri 2004, 21–22.

wife. Additional metal vases, including twelve ribbed bowls, one of silver and eleven bronze, still hung on the walls of that chamber.<sup>21</sup>

Near the exceptionally rich tombs just mentioned, several interments, dating from the second half of the seventh century onward, have a great quantity of clay vases instead of metal furnishings. Like the metal vessels, the clay vases were imported from Greek manufacturing centers such as Corinth, East Greece, Sparta, and Athens, or produced in Etruria. The vases produced in Etruria include coarse ware (It. *impasto*), several types of painted pottery, and bucchero. The various vases were arranged in sets, each one with a specific function. It has been noted that *impasto* services, including plates, were mostly intended for food, while bucchero, in a large variety of jugs and chalices, was mostly used for drinking wine.<sup>22</sup> Trade amphorae imported from several Greek cities, including Corinth, Athens, Chios, and Samos, have been found in Etruscan tombs from the first half of the seventh century onward. The amphorae, developed mostly for trading wine and oil, found their final use in funeral contexts as wine containers. This hypothesis needs to be confirmed by analysis of the organic remains in the amphorae.<sup>23</sup> From the Orientalizing period onward, the custom spread of placing a variety of food (meat, fish, eggs, fruit) in the tombs as offerings to the dead (Ger. *Totenmahl*). The chamber tombs were conducive to good preservation of organic remains, which improves our knowledge not only of funerary ideology, but also of agriculture.<sup>24</sup>

## 4 Archaic and Classical periods

Around the year 580, the development of the city as an institution and changes in Etruscan society are reflected in the interments. The elite, now more numerous, invested the surplus not only in funerary accommodations, but also in the construction of sanctuaries and public structures. The newly established settlement pattern included an increasing occupation of the countryside in order to produce more food. City and countryside must now be distinguished in every aspect of Etruscan civilization. From the early sixth century onward, the historical development of Etruscan civilization reveals the major importance achieved by individual cities and great districts, each one having its own characteristics. For instance, the custom of putting

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**21** Colonna and Di Paolo 1997, 154–72. Further evidence in Buranelli and Sannibale 2005.

**22** Batino 1998, 23–24.

**23** On Greek trade amphorae see Naso 2005, with previous literature; on Greek imported amphorae in Etruria see Rizzo 2007, 43–47, nos. 74–76. Modern analyses of the contents of trade amphorae, such as has been done on samples from Sardinia (Botto, Bordignon, and Positano 2005), are still lacking for Etruria.

**24** Bertani 1995 for Bologna and its surroundings, with literature.

stone stelae and markers (Gk. *semata*) outside tombs spread all over Etruria, but the forms exhibit considerable local variation (see Section 8 below). This detail and the absence of specific research on the subject make it difficult to follow general lines of development throughout Etruria. As influence grew from both Athens and Rome, where sumptuary laws against the high cost of burials were promulgated, in Etruscan Veii and its countryside only a few objects were entrusted to the tombs.<sup>25</sup>

The deceased could be buried, as was usual in southern Etruria, or cremated, as was usual in northern Etruria,<sup>26</sup> but there are many exceptions. Cremations in Attic and Etruscan figured vases are known in southern Etruria during the sixth and fifth centuries, as earlier. In Tarquinia, cremation is not limited to a single age, given that the cremated persons are identified as youths, most not more than twenty years of age, or as people older than sixty, but the age of the deceased is not always clear.<sup>27</sup> The existence of familial traditions—at least for the elite—is assumed, possibly followed for several centuries.

In Campania there was a long tradition of cremation as a funerary ritual: the oldest interment at Cumae dates to the end of the eighth century and shows Euboean influence. Regarding the seventh century, we reviewed the graves at Pontecagnano in section 3 above. During the sixth century, both male and female aristocrats in Capua were cremated in rich tombs, such as the Quattordici Ponti Tomb, in the specific form of the cube tomb. In the Late Archaic (510–470 BCE), local Capuan aristocrats adopted distinctive bronze urns as containers for the ashes (Fig. 74.8). The lids of these urns are decorated with human statuettes reproducing subjects related to the ideals of the aristocracy such as athletic games.<sup>28</sup> The images painted on the Attic red-figured *stamnoi*, which were probably used in Capua as cinerary urns in the fifth century, reproduce Dionysian motifs and death scenes, which clarify the funerary ideology of the Capuan elite.<sup>29</sup>

The painted tombs of Tarquinia, which from 530 onward show various moments of the funeral rituals, have a special role in our understanding of funerary rituals. Some tombs reproduce the structure of wood and textile tents, in which the viewing (Gk. *prothesis*) of the deceased took place. The scenes painted on the walls of these small chamber tombs reproduce several activities, such as symposia and athletic games that took place during the funerals and that included fighters, boxers, and

<sup>25</sup> Bartoloni, Nizzo, and Taloni 2009, 65–66, with references.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance the cemeteries of Chiusi and its countryside (Paolucci and Rastrelli 1999, 96–97).

<sup>27</sup> For southern Etruria, Palmieri 2011; for Tarquinia, Palmieri 2005; for a case at Caere, Michetti 2004.

<sup>28</sup> Cerchiai 1999 reviews the interments in Capua; Bellelli 2006 published the Quattordici Ponti Tomb. Benassai 1995 and Cammarota 2011 on Capuan bronze urns (Gk. *dinoi*), which have also been found in northern Campania at Suessula, Oplontis, Cumae, and Calatia (Laforgia 2009, 109–11, fig. 11), and in Etruria at Perugia (Benassai 2002). An isolated statuette belonging to a Capuan *dinos* reached modern-day Ehringen in southern Germany (Guggisberg 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Rendeli 1993.



two-wheeled chariot races. Stressing the function of the tomb as the place of transition between life and death, Mario Torelli argues that the games belonged to the living, while the symposia belonged to the dead.<sup>30</sup> Francesco Roncalli notes that in the painted tombs at Tarquinia the usual absence of decoration on the side walls closest to the entrance door, versus the presence of paintings in the interior part of the chambers. This was reserved for the deposition true and proper, as we have seen in older tombs such as the Regolini-Galassi Tomb at Caere.<sup>31</sup> It may also be added that from the fourth century onward, the Etruscans used the term *cela* (Lat. *cella*) for the interior chamber, which was the funerary one.<sup>32</sup>

The furnishings of this period show new forms, but the same functions already noted in the Orientalizing period.<sup>33</sup> Specific investigation has been carried out on Attic vases found in Etruscan cemeteries,<sup>34</sup> cities and settlements,<sup>35</sup> and sanctuaries,<sup>36</sup> producing an impressive amount of information. The choice of the subjects painted on Attic vases for Etruscan customers' tombs to form more or less homogeneous sets has not yet been the object of systematic research, probably because of the huge quantity of pottery. Single cases, such as the Brygos Tomb at Capua and Tomb 128 in Valle Trebba at Spina, show how careful and consistent such selection could be.<sup>37</sup> From the second quarter of the fifth century onward, the Attic red-figured vases show a growing number of scenes derived from the imagery of Dionysios, the Greek god of wine. The ceramics from Bologna and Spina show the high popularity of this Greek divinity in Etruria, probably because of the eschatological teachings of the Dionysiac cult.<sup>38</sup> The provenance from these cities of such important evidence regarding the Greek cults is no accident. From the fifth century onward, the role of the Etruscan cities of the Po Valley increases in the general development of Etruscan funerary culture, because Greek commerce was localized in the Adriatic ports, and that brought the possibility of contact with new ideas.<sup>39</sup>

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**30** Torelli 1997, 122–48.

**31** Roncalli 2003.

**32** Colonna and von Hase 1984, 24 n. 15.

**33** Batino 1998.

**34** Reusser 2002.

**35** Bentz and Reusser 2004; Spivey 2006.

**36** Fortunelli and Masseria 2009.

**37** For Capua: Williams 1992. I cannot accept the final conclusion of this brilliant study that identifies the Capuan deceased person as Greek, which was inspired by criteria that are widely followed in Classical archaeology (Izzet 2007). For Spina: Isler-Kerényi 2003.

**38** Govi 2009, 34–35 for Bologna and Pizzirani 2009 for Spina, both with literature.

**39** The funeral stela from Bologna reproducing demons of Greek origin, studied by Cerchiai 1995, may be a direct consequence of this relationship.

## 5 Late Classical and Hellenistic periods

The ships painted around the middle of the fifth century on the walls of the Tomb of the Ship at Tarquinia show that the journey to the underworld was thought to be by sea.<sup>40</sup> This is confirmed by other painted tombs in Tarquinia, such as the tomb of the Blue Demons, which dates to the second half of the fifth century. Francesco Roncalli notes that the paintings in this tomb mark the shift to a new age, because for the first time a precise view of the underworld can be seen, which is influenced by Greek ideas about its geography. The Greek ferryman Charon (Etr. *Charun*), ferrying the dead across the river Acheron to the hereafter, was adopted in Etruria, where male and female demons of their own populated the underworld. In the Tomb of the Blue Demons, two horrible male demons are seated on a large rock on a side wall near the entrance door. They are in sharp contrast with the opposite side wall, which is dominated by the quiet scene of musicians playing for the symposium depicted on the chamber's front wall. The position of the demons near the entrance door marks the access to the underworld and shows how terrible the hereafter was thought to be. The rock is the symbol of the death in other fifth- and fourth-century Etruscan artifacts as well, as Roncalli originally pointed out.<sup>41</sup> Other scholars interpret the paintings of the Tomb of the Blue Demons differently.<sup>42</sup> Direct influence of Greek funerary ideology, particularly the Orphic doctrine further developed by Pythagoras of Samos (ca. 570–495) when the philosopher moved to southern Italy, is visible in the wall paintings of the Tomb of the Orcus II at Tarquinia, which dates to the end of the fourth century. The small human figures are the *animulae* of Orphic religion; the souls in the underworld are looking for safety or their metempsychosis (Fig. 19.6).<sup>43</sup>

During the fourth century, the use of stone coffins or sarcophagi to contain single burials and related furnishings increased in the chamber tombs.<sup>44</sup> The sarcophagus of the founder of the family and of the tomb (Lat. *pater familias*) was emphasized through its central position in the chamber and often through an inscription. The friezes sculpted or—rarely—painted on the long sides of the chest reproduce scenes inspired by the daily life of the dead, adapted to the funerary destination by the insertion of demons or other details of the underworld. A constant reference to an underworld is seen in the presence of sea creatures, both real, like dolphins, or fantastic, like seahorses and sirens. They always function as an allusion to the body of water that needed to be crossed to reach the hereafter.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Colonna 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Roncalli 1997.

<sup>42</sup> An overview has been offered by Adinolfi, Carmagnola, and Cataldi 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Bottini 1992, 16, for Etruscan tomb paintings related to Orphic doctrine.

<sup>44</sup> Etruscan stone sarcophagi are collected by Herbig 1952, supplemented by the critical observations of G. Colonna (1993). In southern Etruria clay sarcophagi were popular (Gentili 1994).

<sup>45</sup> Boosen 1986.



Fig. 19.6: Tarquinia, Tomb of the Orcus II: Agamemnon and Tiresias in the Netherworld; on the tree, *animulae* (after Steingraber 2006, 189)

## 6 Late Hellenistic and Republican periods

From the second half of the fourth century, and with particular intensity during the third and second centuries, Etruscan handicrafts were characterized by a degree of standardization, which is visible in the stone reliefs as well as in the pottery and bronze work.<sup>46</sup> This tendency was particularly strong in southern Etruria after the years of the Second Punic War (or Hannibal's War, 218–202) and emerged later in northern Etruria (see chapter 64 de Angelis). In both districts it is reflected in the repetitive composition of the funerary furnishings, which still include several types of clay vases, usually grouped in drinking and eating services. Regarding funerary ideology, two phenomena emerged in this period. The first is the presence of low-value coins in the grave goods, following a practice long documented in Greece and Italy. The coins in the interments have traditionally been interpreted as Charon's obol—the fare for transport to the underworld—but this simplistic statement needs to be verified. It should be compared with important information, such as the position of the

<sup>46</sup> Pianu 1985, 326–37, revised by Ambrosini 2011.



**Fig. 19.7:** Cinerary urn from Chiusi with Orestes killing his mother Clytemnestra (Chiusi, Nat. Mus. 234) (after Steuernagel 1998, 197 no. 75)

coin in the burial, the rank, sex, and age of the deceased, and so on, as has recently been stressed by Renata Cantilena for ancient Campania.<sup>47</sup> The situation in Etruria is not clear, because specific research has yet to be done.

The second new phenomenon is the widespread adoption of Greek myths focusing on death. The friezes on the cinerary urns adopted in several cities in northern Etruria offer a wide selection of Greek myths relating to the death of legendary figures, as celebrated in the Greek tragedies devoted to the Homeric and Theban cycles (Fig. 19.7).<sup>48</sup> The probable aim is the self-identification of the Etruscan deceased with these heroes. The characteristic standardization of Etruscan handicrafts in this period forbids us to compare the repetitive friezes of the urns with the few exceptional cases that pursued

<sup>47</sup> Cantilena 1995a, 1995b.

<sup>48</sup> Steuernagel 1998 examines the friezes including altars, de Angelis 2015 the urns from Chiusi.

this aim in earlier centuries. Around 490, the suicide of Croesus on the pyre has been reproduced on an Attic red-figured amphora from Vulci painted by Myson in Athens. This is the only depiction of the myth and was probably painted in Athens as a special commission intended for the ashes of a sophisticated Etruscan gentleman.<sup>49</sup> The friezes on the urns include Etruscan demons, which may be inspired by Greek culture, such as the ferryman Charun, or Etruscan culture, such as the female Vanth (with torch and scrolls), the female Culsu, and the male Tuchulcha. Such demons, which are more or less horrible, were not necessarily an invention of this period, but were reproduced during this period with special frequency.<sup>50</sup>

## 7 Cults in Etruscan cemeteries

The remains of buildings consisting of foundation walls, altars, and architectural terra-cotta that were originally part of roof decorations have been found in several Etruscan cemeteries, and prove the existence of structures presumably reserved for burial cults, at least from the Archaic period onward. A well-known case is the building identified on top of Tumulo II del Sodo near Cortona.<sup>51</sup> Although inscriptions are still lacking, the ancestor cult, which is documented in many ancient societies, has also been observed in Etruria.<sup>52</sup> A particular case has been explored at Populonia in the cemetery on the Gulf of Baratti, where about 250 pieces of spearheads and spearbutts have been found near a small stone tumulus (diam. 5 m), in which interments have not been found. One can imagine that the spears marked the presence of the stone monument, which dates to the late seventh century and was worshiped in the following centuries.<sup>53</sup>

## 8 Statues, stelae, and *semata*

According to Etruscan ritual, stone and probably wooden artifacts of various forms were placed in cemeteries as markers (Gk. *semata*) near the tombs, particularly on top of the mounds, if there were any, and in front of the entrance doors.<sup>54</sup> The form

<sup>49</sup> Paris, Louvre inv. no. G 197, recently published by Denoyelle 1994, 120–21; Torelli 1987, 399 stresses its probable use as a funerary urn.

<sup>50</sup> Krauskopf 1987, 11–18, 72–94 and now Klinger 2013, with further literature.

<sup>51</sup> Overview of such cults in Colonna 1985, 116–26. On the finds of Tumulo II del Sodo of Cortona see Zifferero 2011, 81–82, with literature.

<sup>52</sup> Colonna and von Hase 1984, 81–82; Prayon 2006, 45–56.

<sup>53</sup> First notices in Camilli 2005, 248; Camilli 2016, 104–105.

<sup>54</sup> See van Kampen 2009.

of the artifacts relates strictly to their function. At least from the late Orientalizing period onward, statues of animals such as lions or fantastic creatures like sphinxes were adopted to mark the imaginary border of the afterworld on the ground.<sup>55</sup> Stelae otherwise emphasized the position or the entrance of the tomb. In the Late Orientalizing period, stone pillars with figured decoration in bas-relief were introduced in the cemeteries of Vulci, where in the Archaic period some workshops producing lion and sphinx statues have been identified.<sup>56</sup> The great local variability of tomb markers in the various cities of Etruria must be stressed. Stelae were introduced at Bologna already in the seventh century,<sup>57</sup> and they flourished in several forms, particularly from the late sixth to the early fourth century.<sup>58</sup> Stelae are particularly widespread in northern Etruria. Single items dating to the late seventh century have been found at Vetulonia<sup>59</sup> and Monte Gualandro near Perugia,<sup>60</sup> and dating to the sixth century at San Casciano.<sup>61</sup> In the sixth century, local workshops flourished because each city had its own form, as was usually the case in Etruria: several items are known at Faesulae,<sup>62</sup> Volterra,<sup>63</sup> Populonia,<sup>64</sup> and Rosellae.<sup>65</sup>

In southern Etruria, several forms of stone *cippi* were exclusive to female and male burials, following local variants. Regarding female burials, *cippi* reproducing houses and recalling burial ideology were especially widespread. Although one example in the form of a hut roof from the cemetery of Poggio Selciatello di Sopra at Tarquinia dates to the Iron Age, such *cippi* are particularly widespread at Caere and its surroundings in the late seventh to the sixth century and again from the fourth century onward.<sup>66</sup> Three warrior-head *cippi* have been found in male graves of the second half of the sixth century at Orvieto, which have been interpreted not only as funerary markers, but also as signs of resurrection.<sup>67</sup> Marble *cippi* in the form of a club, although of earlier origin, were popular during the fifth century in northern Etruria, especially in the Pisa and Volterra districts, where other forms developed.<sup>68</sup> From the fourth century onward, *cippi* of cylindrical form were used at Caere to mark

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55 Spivey 1988, 15–16.

56 Bruni 1988 (stone pillars); Martelli 2001, 2004, 2005 (statues).

57 Approximately 40 are known: Marchesi 2011.

58 Approximately 200 horseshoe stelae (*stela a ferro di cavallo*): Sassatelli and Govi 2007, 2010.

59 The well-known stela with the Etruscan inscription of Avle Feluske: Maggiani 2007, with previous literature.

60 Magi 1964; Maggiani 2007, 70.

61 Maggiani 2007, 70.

62 Magi 1932.

63 Minto 1937; Maggiani 2007, 70.

64 Martelli 1979.

65 Maggiani 2007, 70–71, with literature.

66 Scala 2003.

67 Maggiani 2005. On later *cippi* in Orvieto and its countryside: Tamburini 1987.

68 Bonamici 2007, with literature; overview of marble *cippi* in northern Etruria: Bonamici 1991.

male depositions. The exemplars found at Aleria in Corsica and at Carthage in North Africa can be connected with people from Caere and are considered signs of geographic mobility.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Blumhofer 1993 on the *cippi* from Caere; Naso 1993 adds some exemplars from Carthage and Aleria.

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