

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

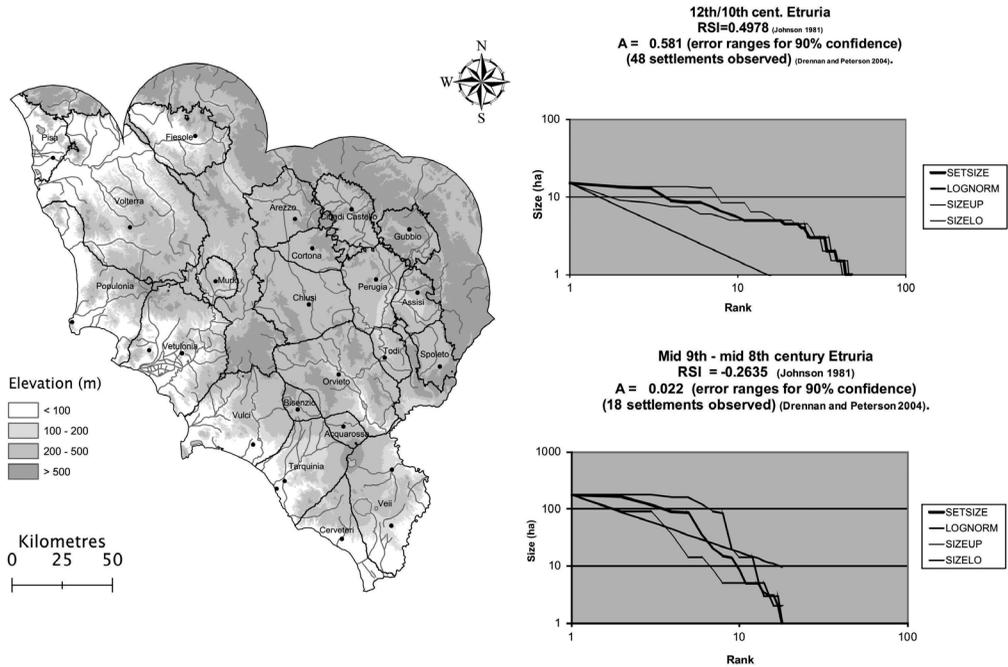
POWER AND PLACE IN ETRURIA

Simon Stoddart

INTRODUCTION

The political landscape of Etruria was driven by the process of demographic nucleation in the 10th century BC, running in parallel with a process of identity formation. This transformation of the distribution of the population was most marked in the South and on the coast and was less marked towards the North and inland (Figure 21.1). The process of identity formation ran very much in parallel to that of the new structuring of population. The most important focus of identity was the community, created by this very process of nucleation, and it became important to define varying levels of boundary formation at the limits of communities' territories, in response to the level of political power generated at the centre. However, counterweighing forces of identity construction were vested in the descent group, represented so forcefully in the cemeteries that surrounded the communities. The tension between the descent group and community, and rival nucleated community against rival nucleated community, provided the dynamic equilibrium that prevented the emergence of an Etruscan empire – namely, the dominance of one centre – and led to the eventual absorption of the Etruscan nucleated communities into the consequences of the different political strategies that emerged from south of the Tiber, authored by Rome.

At a very broad level this emergence of dynamic complexity is very similar to that shown in current work emerging north of the Alps (see Chapter 22, this volume). The concept of simple patterns of repetitive dominant primate places



21.1. Etruria and the rank-size transformation (author).

in Etruria (Renfrew 1975) has to be replaced by a more nuanced framework of multiple sizes and multiple political environments. Recent reanalysis of Manching that acknowledges the importance of the earlier unfortified phase reaches similar conclusions about variability (Wendling 2013), and work at Bibracte has shown the unaligned variability of urban development among the *oppida* of Western Europe (Moore et al. 2013). A similar reassessment is necessary of the Late Hallstatt urbanism that was once considered to be formed by a series of repeated nucleated modules (Kimmig 1969) and is now known to be highly variable over time and space (Brun/Chaume 2013; Fernández-Götz/Krause 2013; see Chapter 22, this volume). There is not the same level of variability in Etruria, because of a profound, politically motivated, construction of place over some 600 or even 700 years, but there is still some degree of variability that has not even been appreciated by recent scholars, who have tried to insert Etruscan urbanism into preconceived models of development (Hansen 2000).

The common pattern of research in Etruria has dwelt on material culture and cemeteries. Key figures such as Pallottino, in a postfascist world, emphasized the independence of the cultural formation of the Etruscans, looking particularly at the continuities in material culture between the 2nd and 1st millennium BC and in settlement occupation between the turn of the 2nd millennium BC and the full 1st millennium BC (Pallottino 1947). The message was that the Etruscans were indigenous, albeit in strong interaction with the

Greek and Phoenician world. The question of language, both its formation and decline, was never fully resolved. This line of research was developed further by an interrogation of entanglement and difference, with the postwar discoveries at Murlo (Phillips 1993), Cortona (Bruschetti/Zamarchi Grassi 1999), and Casale Marittimo (Esposito 1999) playing a major role in demonstrating difference from the Greek world and continuities with the Bronze Age. Studies of fine ceramics have shown how even some Attic forms have drawn on the Bronze Age forms of Etruria as part of the process of entanglement between apparently well-defined cultural forms (Rasmussen 1985). Detailed analysis of this complex cultural issue is, however, not the purpose of this chapter.

The infrastructure underlying these developments has been relatively little researched. Trade has been studied as a by-product of material culture studies (e.g. Rizzo 1990), whereas metallurgy has been studied by a Siena team in the *Colline Metalifere* (Zifferero 2002). However, the key underlying elements of the lived experience of landscape – settlement and, most particularly, agriculture – have been relatively little investigated. The study of patterns of settlement is now enhanced by the opening of urban excavations (Bartoloni 2009; Bonghi Jovino 2010) and the publication of regional surveys (Enei 2001). The excavation of rural settlements accompanied by systematic scientific analysis is, however, very rare, and thus there are a limited number of faunal and floral samples with the ability to challenge the preconceptions of feasting formed by the art historical approach. The following synthesis draws on the major existing studies of the regional distribution of settlement and the evidence of subsistence that provided the essential but neglected modes of lived experience of what may have been the vast majority of inhabitants.

THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE LANDSCAPE

The focal feature of the political transformation of the Etruscan landscape was the move from a dispersed village life to a nucleated, potentially urban, life. Such a political transformation requires great persuasive power. How were relatively autonomous villages persuaded to gather together in larger communities? Did this process take place relatively rapidly in particular political and economic conditions? To what extent were there identifiable political agents who implemented this transformation, or was there a collective decision to group together? Once the transformation had taken place, to what extent was a common identity immediately forged? Did the power of descent groups (formed of kin and fictive kin) prevent this centralization of authority and permit the retention of sub-identities within the newly formed communities? Many of these issues can only be resolved by careful analysis of the dating of the transition, deploying Bayesian techniques in association with a major radiocarbon

sampling strategy, to bring dating closer to the generation-by-generation accuracy required for dissecting such political transformations as they were actually experienced by the communities themselves. For the present, it can only be posited that major changes of this type need to be rapid and couched in urgency to be implemented and then be followed by continued efforts to maintain and accept them.

The implications of the construction of these powerful places were enormous. Above all, this construction gave enormous stability to the settlement system until it was toppled by the rival Roman/Latin system from the South. The investment in these powerful places led to them becoming the foci of most political activity for at least 600 years. The degree of pooling of demography was critical. There has been some debate about how densely occupied were the internal areas of the topographically defined plateaus, but their sheer size makes a statement. The most powerful places that have been investigated have meaningful stratigraphic sequences: The most important is that of Tarquinia, a substantial centre of 150 ha, where some of the longest-standing, consistent, and published excavations by the University of Milan have uncovered a sequence from the Bronze Age to the Archaic period that is redolent with meaning (Bonghi Jovino/Chiaramonte Treré 1997). At the bottom of the sequence there are structured depositions of Bronze Age material cut into the bedrock. Above this emerged an increasingly organised ritual complex, arranged in a rectilinear manner and accompanied by human remains and material symbols of authority: axe, trumpet, and shield. The most powerful places also had substantial encircling city walls and, beyond them, cemeteries that formed significant nucleations themselves or, in some cases, linear features visible along the major routeways out of the city. These walls and cemeteries materially represented the twin identities of the community and the constituent descent groups that rivalled each other for political power. In the earlier periods, the genealogy of these descent groups can be seen in the successive insertions within tombs (Pareti 1947). In the later periods, this material form was paralleled by reconstructable family trees where names can be traced through generations, often with their key attributes of first name, second name, and even honours conferred during their political life (Marchesini 2007).

The nucleation of the population also had implications beyond the immediate confines of the urban centre, extending into the territory beyond. Large centres seem to be found in larger territories, provided that their limits of power were not balanced by equally large, opposing centres. The presence of larger centres also seems to have led to the development of more formally defined boundaries to territories, as a consequence of greater demographically fuelled pressures and higher levels of economic activity and intensification.

This process of nucleation was highly dynamic both over time, as demographic and economic levels increased and fluctuated, and over space, given

that the pressures of political nucleation varied considerably. Models that have been presented to define these processes, taken from Renfrew's (1975) early state module and Hansen's (2000) territorial and city-state model, have proved to be too simple to encompass the variation. At one level there was a dynamic equilibrium between urban centres roughly equal in size, at least by comparison with the rural populations. At another level, there were important differences in the implementation of the political geography, because each city had its own political environment and history. Sizes of territory, settlements ranks within these territories, and frontier formation varied across the areas defined as Etruria and Umbria.

GENERAL TRENDS

The most detailed analysis of general trends has been achieved for South Etruria where the constraints of the topographically defined powerful place were most marked, research has been concentrated, and the interaction with the Mediterranean world was most developed. Final Bronze Age society in the 12th to 10th centuries BC consisted of a village society that was concentrated on naturally defined tuff outcrops between 1 and 15 ha in size (see Figure 21.1). A broad rank-size analysis of these sites grouped together without further attempts at chronological distinction produces a convex curve that shows no clearly defined or emerging dominance of one site over another. However, scholars have more recently attempted to investigate this broad pattern in more detail. Firstly, all future powerful places of the Etruscan period have at least some indication of a first presence during this Bronze Age phase and thus may have been emerging as more prominent villages within the system, hidden in the stratigraphy of the later cities. Secondly, scholars have begun to differentiate the chronology, suggesting a process of increasing coalescence of population before the major nucleation of the 10th century BC (Barbaro 2010). Furthermore, some have noted that smaller sites may have coalesced around larger sites in a preliminary intermediate stage in the full-scale nucleation occurring in the 10th century BC. That these patterns were most evident in South Etruria is partly an issue of relative levels of research, because where evidence is present from North Etruria and Umbria, systems of grouped-together Late Bronze Age sites and cemeteries have been discovered in locations such as Chiusi (Zanini 1994), Monte Cetona (Cipolloni 1971), and Gubbio (Stoddart 2010). These seem to be cooperating systems of sites, a polyfocal system working together without highly defined nucleation.

The political landscape changed radically in South Etruria in the mid-9th to the mid-8th centuries BC. The vast majority of the small villages were abandoned, and the population had coalesced into the long-standing political nucleations that were to be Etruscan cities for the next 600 years. The

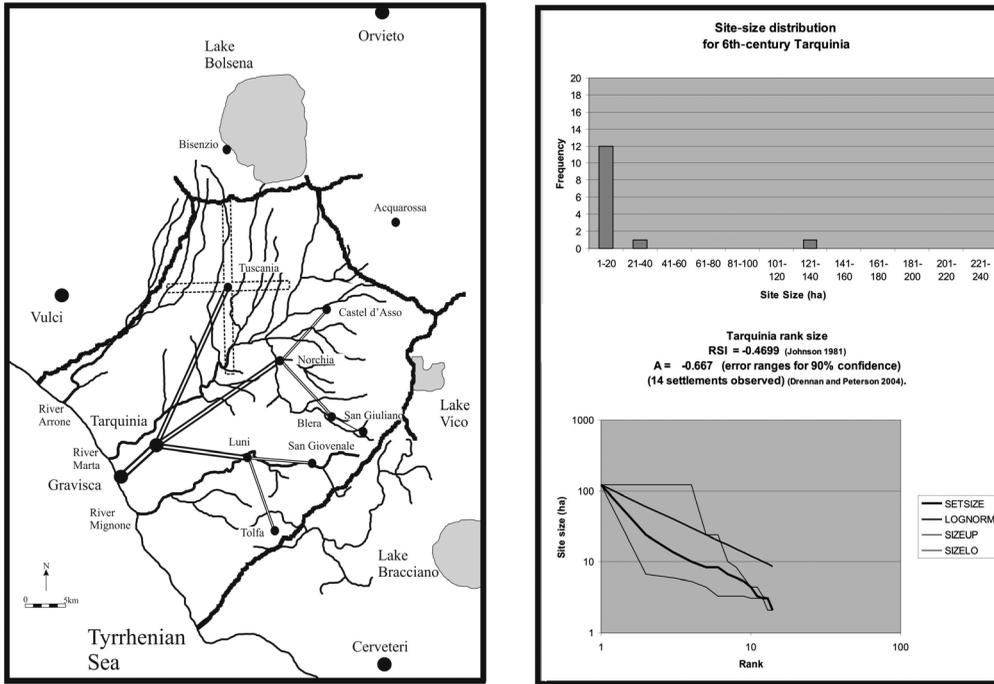
rank-size measurement of the collective landscape changed radically to one that was strongly primate (if the whole system is measured) or one that was very close to lognormal if only the larger sites are measured. Over the course of 200 years this collective system matured as the powerful places recolonized the surrounding landscape, leading to a trend towards lognormal, if the whole settlement system is considered, or enduring primacy if only the upper part of the settlement system is considered. Initially the population was largely contained within the nucleated limits of the centres, but cycles of colonization, retraction, and then renewed colonization successively took place within the countryside over the course of the following 600 years, where the powerful place remained the pivot of political stability.

The powerful place changed in character over the course of this period. At first it was simply a concentration of population that retained many of the characteristics of the contributing Bronze Age villages. After a hundred years, the continued presence of increasingly large numbers of people in one nucleated area led to a reorganization of the settlement, in which, most notably, ovoid structures were replaced by rectilinear ones to achieve greater investment in the permanence of local place and the required efficiency of internal urban space. Enhanced constructional techniques, working in tandem with the social needs of flexibly expanding descent groups, led to this more adaptable approach to the built environment. After another hundred years, the mortuary structures – the loci of temporally situated legitimation, and thus conservative – were also reformulated to allow the flexible incorporation of larger and greater numbers of descent groups striving to participate in the economic flourishing of the cities. Thus the dead were then buried in the organized serried rows that were already part of the internal organization of the cities.

VARIABILITY IN IMPLEMENTATION

These broad trends concealed a considerable degree of variation that was linked to the identity of individual communities. Seven case studies are provided here to show how each powerful place had a different historical development and identity that were strongly linked to their varying roles within the political and economic infrastructure of Etruria: expansive Veii, interactive Tarquinia, constrained but powerful Cerveteri, the unstable margins of the Albegna Valley, and the Chianti, decentralized Chiusi, and the late frontier of Perugia.

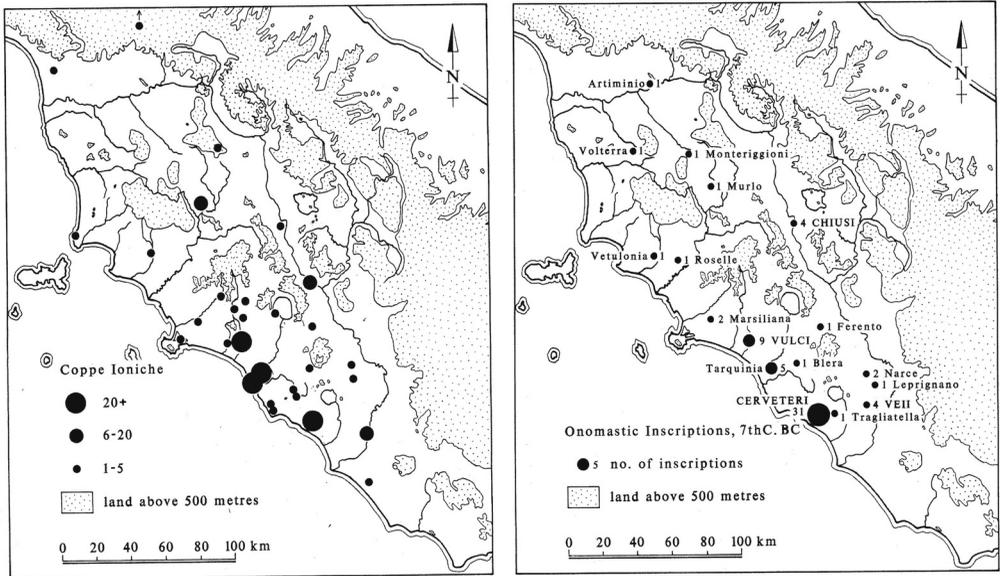
The power place of Veii was located in immediate proximity to Rome, potentially cut off from the mouth of the Tiber by Latin power, but offered the opportunity of expansion into the so-called Faliscan territory. If we accept the opinion of some scholars that Veii incorporated politically different communities with culturally distinct backgrounds, this city provides a unique case of Etruscan expansion and tolerance (Ceccarelli/Stoddart 2007). In terms of



21.2. Territory of Tarquinia (author).

rank size, its index was less primate than other Etruscan cities such as Cerveteri, which were more spatially constrained. The reanalysis of the South Etruria survey of the British School at Rome (Potter 1979) also permits the observation that rural settlement was initially clustered around the primate centre in the 7th century BC, but then became more evenly distributed in the immediate 10-km territory of the site in the 5th century BC, a period when the communities with different identities in the Faliscan area also appear to be within the political territory of the Etruscan city. Study of the small boundary centre of Nepi has shown that the centre was deprived of population at the time of the major nucleation of Veii in the 9th century BC and was only recolonized in the 8th century BC, with further development of a local rural population in subsequent centuries (Di Gennaro et al. 2008). The effect of Veii was thus very profound on the neighbouring communities, even if they did not share the same cultural identity.

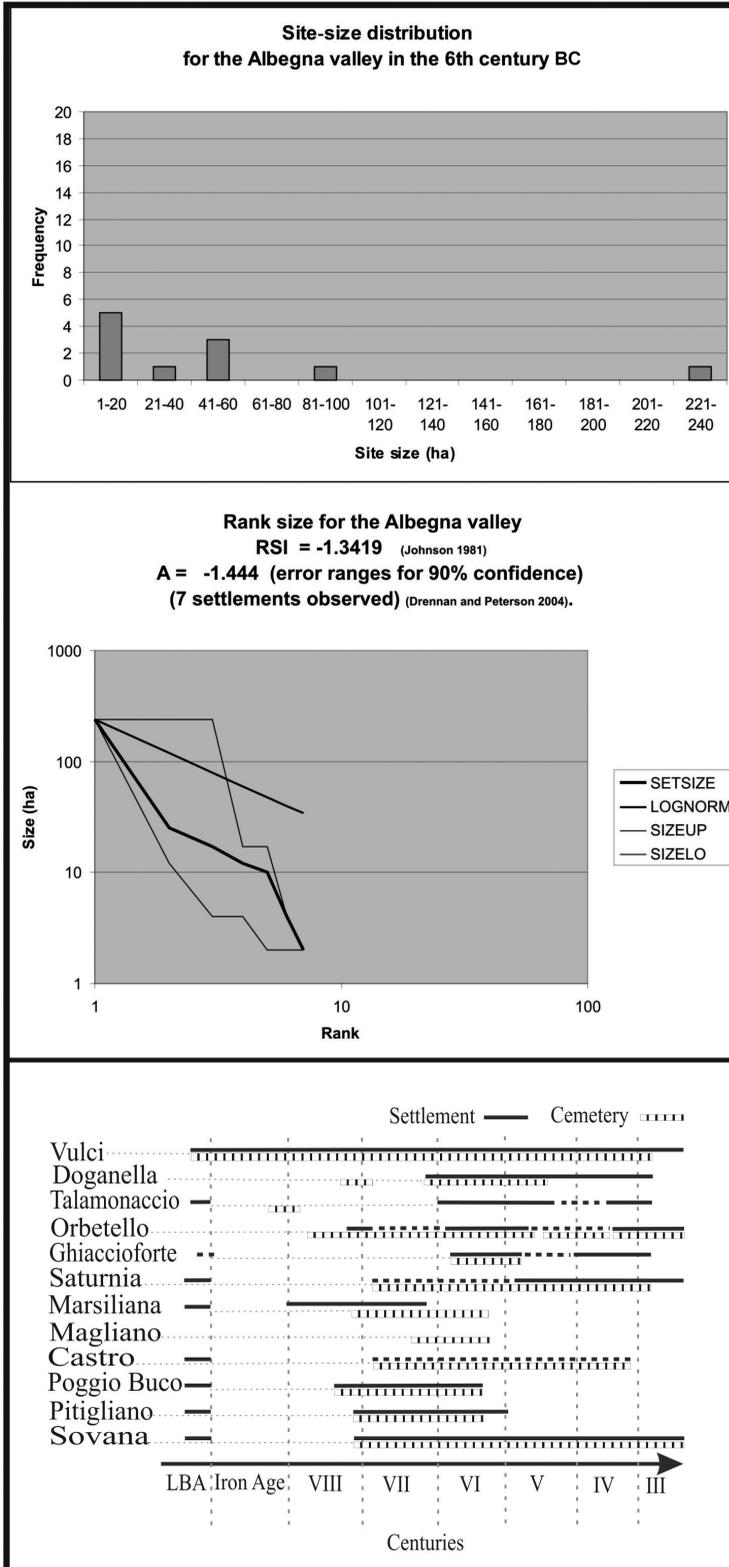
By contrast, the nearby city of Tarquinia (Figure 21.2), although similarly expansive into its hinterland and with a broadly similar degree of dominance measured in rank-size terms, developed a series of satellite centres that were part of its own cultural identity. This city also differed in that it had direct access to maritime connectivity. The result was that its settlement structure formed a dendritic pattern, in which Mediterranean products entered through the port of trade of Gravisca into the primate city and were, in turn, off-loaded into



21.3. Settlement and material culture in Etruria (author).

subsidiary centres in the hinterland (Stoddart 1987). The quantitative effects of this pattern can be seen from the analysis of some typical imports such as *coppe ioniche* (ionic cups) (Figure 21.3), which were prominent finds in the port of trade and in the primate centre, but substantially less so in the satellite centres (Spivey/Stoddart 1990). The territory of Tarquinia also mapped very exactly onto the basin of the Marta River, flanked to the south by the Tolfa Mountains, to the north by the Arrene River and in the hinterland by the lakes of Bolsena and Vico. In this classic case of an Etruscan primate city, which had the necessary political space to develop its power, cultural boundaries mapped onto physical boundaries.

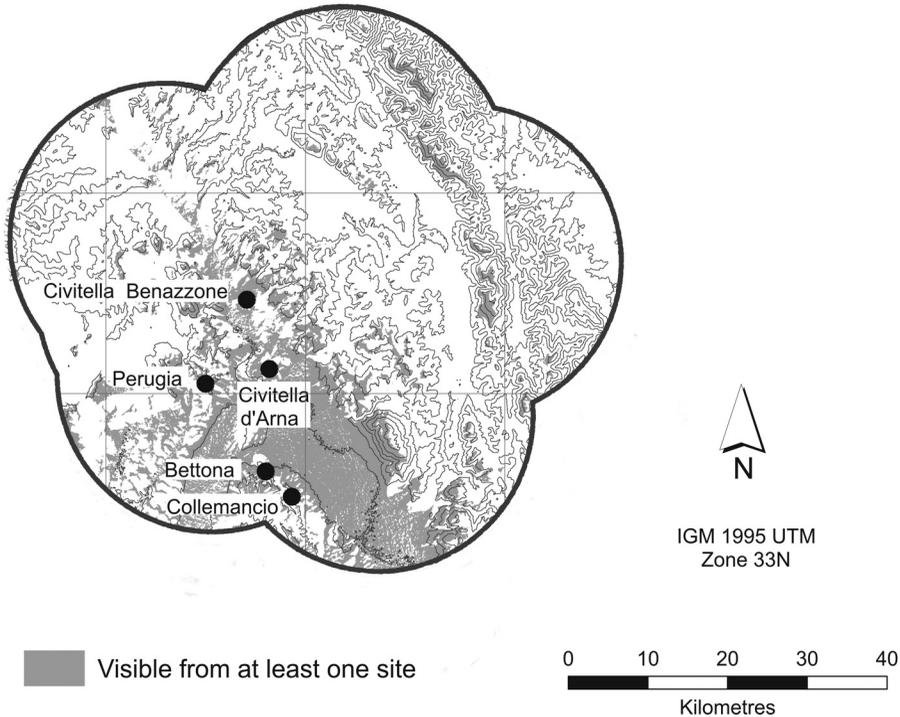
Cerveteri, on the southern border of Tarquinia, was, by contrast, very tightly constrained by the contiguous Etruscan cities of Veii and Tarquinia. This led to a very primate organization with high values on the rank-size index. There was very little tolerance of smaller centres, and recent surveys show that a substantial rural population was placed between 4 and 8 km from the city to enable the direct exploitation of agricultural resources. This city had relatively little political space, except through the development of maritime connectivity in its port of trade of Pyrgi, and had to organize an intensive extraction of subsistence procurement as well as maritime contacts. This city was also a driver of innovation, one of the earliest to develop elite literacy (see Figure 21.3) and the distinctive bucchero pottery of the Etruscans; it had at least one powerful port of trade at Pyrgi on the coast, as well as important contacts with the Eastern Mediterranean, including Delphi.



21.4. The unstable frontier between North and South Etruria (author).

Another situation developed on the political margins of the Etruscan city of Vulci farther to the north (Figure 21.4), where analysis can benefit from some of the most intensive surface surveys within Etruria (Perkins 1999). In this region of the extensive Albegna Valley in the interstices between the cities of Vulci to the south and the twin cities of Roselle and Vetulonia to the north, there was considerable political instability, conveying a pattern of settlement continuity perhaps most similar to that seen north of the Alps. The communities in nucleated settlements of this area had very great difficulty in maintaining continuity, and consequently there were never the fossilized literary records of the era that gave them acceptance as one of the great Etruscan primate cities, unlike in Roselle/Vetulonia to the north or Vulci to the south, which apparently controlled these portals of memory into the later periods. In the early period of the 8th to 6th centuries BC, the prominent centre of the region was Marsiliana d'Albegna, originally considered merely a conspicuous display of funerary opulence, but now also known to be a middle-ranking settlement of some 45 ha (Zifferero 2010). In the later period, from the 6th to the 3rd centuries BC, a site, which had been suspected only relatively recently, of larger than 200 ha at Doganella emerged, a veritable Manching of the Mediterranean that engaged in production and exchange (Perkins/Walker 1990). At the same time, the valley likely contained a number of independent smaller nucleated centres of varied periodicity, particularly from the 7th century BC. This frontier area was a zone of considerable political uncertainty in comparison with the stability provided by the powerful places elsewhere in Etruria. In some respects this uncertainty is reflected in the considerable fluctuation in the size of the rural population over the course of the 1st millennium BC, which started as relatively insubstantial (although these data may not acknowledge the newly discovered role of Marsiliana), declined considerably as the role of Doganella gained prominence and then increased considerably at the end of the Etruscan period in the 2nd century BC once the area began to experience the effect of Roman imperialism (even if it was still notionally a republic in name).

The Albegna Valley was, in fact, the maritime end of a corridor of instability hedged between powerful political places throughout the course of the 1st millennium BC. In the more mountainous Chianti region, this instability is demonstrated by developments around the much smaller extended residences of Castelnuovo di Berardenga (Goggioli et al. 2005) and Murlo (Phillips 1993). The first of these residences to the north was poorly preserved, but the second has been very extensively, albeit selectively, excavated and has more recently been accompanied by a surface survey (Campana 2001). Much has been written about Poggio Civitate di Murlo, but in summary this site represents a highly unstable, conspicuous ritualized residential enclosure that lived and died, and once again lived and died with its accompanying rural settlement in the course of the late 7th and early 6th centuries BC, until the surrounding cities of Chiusi



21.5. The northern frontier of Perugia (author).

and Volterra expanded their political power to exclude independent activity on their political boundaries. At this stage, a number of sites comparable to Murlo such as Poggio Civitella (Donati/Cappuccini 2008) became fortified to permit control of the frontier between the powerful places such as Chiusi and Volterra.

Chiusi to the east was one of the most important early Etruscan cities of the region. Its role has recently been substantially reassessed (Cappuccini 2010), and based on this reassessment I consider the site to be a polyfocal settlement, and not a more tightly topographically defined powerful place of coastal and South Etruria. The political development of this northeastern region permitted more devolution of power into smaller political centres, which can be particularly seen in the distribution of early inscriptions. In the south of Etruria, literacy was tightly controlled by the major powerful places, whereas in Northern Etruria the use of writing was much more widely distributed into the smaller centres.

At the northeastern limits of Etruria, in the territory of Perugia (Figure 21.5), there is further evidence of variability. Etruscan power was pushed across the Tiber through the presence of small nucleated centres, such as Civitella d'Arna and Civitella Benazzone, and the small village of Col di Marzo currently under excavation (Stoddart et al. 2012). By absolute contrast with the more distant Etruscan territories such as Cerveteri, there was no role for the farmstead in

this political operation. The political geography of the territory of Perugia was radically different from that of the coastal cities. Furthermore, the precise definition of its political boundaries is difficult to determine. The boundary between Etruscan Perugia and Umbrian Gubbio was strongly marked by topography. However, the boundary between Etruscan Perugia and Umbrian Assisi was very much more fuzzy. Indeed, we find that at the margins of Etruscan political control, issues of identity become very much more vague, perhaps relayed to the modern world by the absence of dispersed settlement in this less confident political environment.

The approach taken in this chapter has been an explicitly top-down strategy, granting power to the size of the centre and the community that orchestrated its political processes. This raises the question of what was the role of the underlying economy and particularly of the rural population that lived beyond the urban centres. Iron production, trade, and agriculture underwrote the political power that enabled the concentration of populations in urban centres. The preoccupation with fine material culture has led to many studies of trade, and there is now a fairly full understanding of the main distributions of fine products both in Italy and overseas. Metal production has received greater attention in recent times as more interdisciplinary approaches have been applied, particularly in the Colline Metalifere and Populonia. The study of agriculture, necessitating the repeated sampling of sediments, and the detection of deposits friendly to bones and carbonized seeds have, however, been more problematic. The study of Col di Marzo, which is perhaps not a typical example of a rural site because it represents a small village, has, however, provided some insights. In this location on the edge of Etruria, the rural population seems to have subsisted on wheat and wine, supplemented by meat soups and the opportunistic eating of venison and prematurely dead piglets – most probably sending the finer cuts to the elite in Perugia together with cloth and cheese, the secondary products of their animals. This image, if indeed a complete picture, explains how these powerful places were sustained, supported by invisible communities unseen in the fine art methodologies fuelled by a *feticismo degli oggetti* (fetichism of objects).

CONCLUSION

This chapter emphasizes the importance of the powerful place in the Etruscan political environment. The continuity and deep-seated construction of the political place, most visible in the coastal and southern areas, profoundly affected the development of the political landscape, and indeed of the whole lived experience of the Etruscans. However, this essential facet of Etruscan urbanism conceals considerable variation: The relationship between the powerful place and its territory varied very considerably. In the case of Cerveteri,

the relationship was directly between an urban centre, a port of trade, and a rural settlement made up of farmsteads. In Tarquinia, its neighbour to the north, the relationship was between an urban centre, a port of trade, a suite of smaller nucleated centres, and a rural settlement of farmsteads. In the far northeast, the relationship in Perugia was between an urban centre and a suite of nucleated centres, where the uncertainty of the political framework and the lower level of agricultural investment afforded no role to rural settlement until the Roman period of control. The power of the powerful place played itself out in multiple ways that simple models of urbanism conceal.

NOTE

Two mathematical techniques have been employed to generate generalizations about settlement systems in Etruria in this chapter. The first is XTENT (Renfrew/Level 1979), which produces working hypotheses of territorial size based on the power of place measured in settlement size. The second is the rank-size rule, which produces three empirical outcomes (convex, primate, and lognormal) that can be measured in both the upper nucleated part and the whole settlement system using two indices devised by Johnson (1981) (for the whole) and Drennan/Peterson (2004) (for the upper). It is, in effect, a measure of centralization. More details of these techniques can be found elsewhere (Redhouse/Stoddart 2011). The data for the figures are drawn from the following sources: Redhouse/Stoddart 2011; Perkins 1999; Mansuelli 1985; Cifani 2003; Barbaro 2010; Guidi 1985; Judson/Hemphill 1981; Stoddart et al 2012; Spive and Stoddart 1990).

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