2 The Long-Term Context of Roman Expansion: Central Italian Society and Politics in the Early First Millennium BCE

Introduction

One of the patterns that stands out more evidently, once the historiography on Roman imperialism is comprehensively reviewed, is the limited amount of interest that the broader context of the expansion has attracted, chronologically as well as geographically. In particular, what had happened in the centuries preceding the conquest has not typically been deemed relevant to discussions of that great historical transition.[1] Etruscan kings and Carthaginian colonies may have their own intrinsic, albeit certainly not comparable, attraction, but they have been considered in narratives of the expansion when Roman armies approached them, thus positioning them firmly at the receiving end of the political action. This is not surprising, given the constant emphasis placed on Roman motivations, which was often underpinned by the assumption that the Roman superiority could easily explain their success. Ultimately, this made it appear useless to piece together from hopelessly fragmentary materials what had happened before the Romans arrived on each separate geographic scene. Rome's unique achievement acquired such a universal paradigmatic status that, in the dominant perception, it drifted irretrievably away from the temporal and geographic circumstances that in all likelihood had shaped it. As a result, the convention emerged that the real narrative of the conquest would not need to concern itself with what had happened before the early fourth century BCE, when Veii was captured and Rome was sacked by the Gauls. At any rate, Roman history prior to that moment was (and still is) largely considered fraught with uncertainties because of the poor quality of the available sources. For the rest of early Italy, there is much less information, and, in any case, it was never considered a significant variable in most explanations of the conquest.[2] Local histories were briefly introduced as a lead-in to the account of each stage of the conquest and were never

[1] And, similarly, what was happening elsewhere in the Mediterranean during the conquest; see Chapter 3.

[2] E.g., Salmon 1982; David 1994.

assembled together in organic diachronic narratives or in a general regional synthesis, of which Rome would be only a facet.[3] All this has only begun to change in some recent scholarship, which attempts to convey a more balanced and further-reaching analysis of the process.[4]

The profound interconnectedness of Mediterranean developments has been emphasized many times since the work of Ferdinand Braudel,[5] and yet in the case of Rome's ascent there has been a struggle to integrate it fully in the general flow of historiography. It should, instead, make good sense that the unification of Italy was only an episode in a complex, long-term global dynamic that affected an entire world. There are, for instance, macroscopic cultural and socioeconomic trends that take place on the scale of millennia and of thousands of kilometers, such as the spread of statehood, urbanism, coinage, or literacy, to name just a few of the most apparent. They began before the Roman conquest, continued during it, as well as after it, and were still in progress long after the Roman Empire collapsed. Such preexisting trends and structures in the Mediterranean must have conditioned and directed the expansion, and yet they have only occasionally and partially been brought to bear on the issue.[6] Not surprisingly, the only focus of attention in this sense has been early Rome, primarily thanks to the textual material that has survived, with all its problems, in the historical sources. It should be noted in passing that in some thematic areas, most notably in the study of ancient religion, there has been a remarkable tendency to approach the whole span of the phenomenon organically.[7] But in most other ways, there has always been a profound disconnect between the conquest and the phase that preceded it. This sharp boundary was traditionally blamed on the Gaulish sack of Rome in 390 BCE, during which most documents would have been destroyed, creating great uncertainty concerning the first few centuries of Rome's history. In this way, conveniently, the expansion would have begun just when better records become available to us, in contrast with the earlier period, which appears as a twilight zone

[3] Among the exceptions, Torelli 1981b; Pallottino 1985; Bourdin 2012; Farney and Bradley 2018.

[4] Works have appeared that take the Iron Age as their starting point, but they typically do not cover the entire conquest of Italy; Cornell 1995; Lomas 2018.

[5] Braudel 1949. For the classical period, the obvious work is Horden and Purcell 2000, which however does not attempt a reconsideration of the Roman expansion. See also van Dommelen and Knapp 2010; Broodbank 2013.

[6] An interesting attempt and a broad perspective for a later period, which however has had little or no impact on the classical scholarship, is Randsborg 1991.

[7] Archaic religion is perhaps the aspect of early Rome that is considered more knowable and that has the greatest impact on later periods, at least since Dumézil 1966; among the countless recent examples are Beard, North, and Price 1998; Rüpke 2001. An intriguing study of early mentality is MacMullen 2011.

shrouded in mystery and about which nothing could ever be positively established.[8] To aggressive imperialists, such a sharp separation presented the added attraction of diffusing the stark paradox that Rome did not significantly expand for the first three or four hundred years of its existence, despite the congenital propensity for war and conquest that they typically attributed to the Romans. More generally, scholars seem to find comfort in averting their gaze from the only major war utterly lost by the Romans and focusing instead on the unbroken streak of victories that followed it. More adventurous ancient historians did try to make some sense of the problematic earlier period, like explorers probing a mysterious continent, but they would naturally tend to develop a separate debate from the mainstream treatment of the conquest, so that there were rarely ever attempts at tracking connections and continuities that spanned the two periods.[9]

Aside from the exceptional case of Rome, the research on early first-millennium BCE Italy has been typically carried out by archeologists, who have created and pursued their own specialist discourse, more connected with the later prehistory of the peninsula than with ancient history. This is because for these areas (Greek colonies in southern Italy excepted) there is virtually no textual material, reliable or otherwise. Two steps removed (one disciplinary and one chronological) from the conquest, the study of pre-Roman Italy has so far played only a marginal role in most modern analyses of Roman imperialism. Despite these traditional divides, the pace of new archeological discoveries has increased so much in the last few years that some elements have begun to percolate slowly through to the historical literature.[10] And yet it seems hard to deny that the full potential of a long-term, multidisciplinary, geographically inclusive approach has not yet been exploited in full. Integrating archeological and textual information, placing Rome and the rest of Italy (as well as the Mediterranean) on the same plane, expanding our gaze to include at least the origins of those peer states that were the protagonists of the conquest may well open the road for a reconstruction of the overall process that is significantly different from those that have been predominant since Polybius and Cicero. Thanks to a holistic perspective of this kind, long-term patterns and recurrences may become visible across time and space, leading to a fruitful deconstruction of the axiom that Rome's expansion was unique and solely driven by Rome,

[8] Key in this school of thought, often referred to as hypercritical, are Alföldi 1963; Poucet 1985. An ample and perceptive review is in Grandazzi 1991.

[9] Only in some recent work is noticeable a more comprehensive and diachronic approach, Cornell 1995; Lomas 2018, although it is arguable that much remains to be done in this area.

[10] A classic synthesis was in Pallottino 1985. For the Etruscans in particular, Torelli 1981b.

and providing a rebalancing counterpoint to thousands of years of unidirectional narratives.

A General Review of Urbanization

Given the mass of new archeological data and the complex interpretive problems of the literary sources, it may seem like a desperate endeavor to synthesize the four or five hundred years that preceded the Roman conquest in central Italy. Despite several comprehensive book-length works that have appeared in recent years,[11] there is a lot that is still uncollected and only partially digested. In view of that, the only viable option for the purposes of this book is to focus on those thematic aspects that potentially have the greater relevance for the later conquest. Such are, for instance, the sociopolitical developments associated with the emergence of aristocracies and urban centers, the migration of individuals and groups, or the cultural connections across regions and ethnic boundaries that facilitated the spread of ideas, artifacts, and patterns of elite behavior. It has been convincingly argued that it is in these areas of institutional history, mentality, and culture that the best chances for solid reconstructions and inferences reside.[12] Attempts at creating a narrative of specific events and actions, on the other hand, are doomed to indemonstrability, if not outright failure. The textual data for foundations, reigns, wars, or laws essentially exists only for Rome and is indeed, to a very large extent, hopelessly confused and contradictory. A blow-by-blow account of what happened can only ever be extremely tentative and completely one-sided, and in any case it would not serve the purposes of a long-term, compendious investigation of how the Roman Empire came into being and thrived. It is true that a significant amount of good-quality archeological evidence is available for most of Italy by now, but it is not intrinsically suited to prove that individual events did (or did not) happen; rather, it can lend itself, when adequately handled, to the kind of broad structural treatments that can clarify important causal connections and deep interactions between the forces involved. It should also be clearly stated, however, that the choice of themes and the way in which they are treated is unashamedly in service of the overall argument about Roman imperialism propounded here and cannot presume to be an

[11] E.g., Smith 1996, which is a laudable example of an historian taking seriously the archeological sources; Forsythe 2005.

[12] Momigliano 1963; see also Wiseman 2008.

attempt at covering systematically the many threads that connect the first with the second half of the first millennium BCE in central Italy.

Historiography of the long-term must contend with the temptation to reach further and further back in time in the search for initial triggers, prime movers, and ultimate causes. In the case of urban central Italy, it is fairly customary at this point to take the beginning of the Iron Age as the starting point to describe the evolution of social and political complexity.[13] In this sense, the only preexisting element that is perhaps worth mentioning is the likely emergence of inherited rank already at some advanced stage of the Bronze Age, toward the end of the second half of the second millennium BCE. A sufficient archeological record seems to exist, mostly from burial sites, but also from some village settlements and bronze hoards, supporting the notion of some sort of lineage groups who manifested their status through the conspicuous display of metal, exotic, or otherwise prestigious items in their group tombs and above average houses.[14] The precise nature of these groups is of course hard to determine, even if there are articulated hypotheses in some of the scholarly literature.[15] Settlement data show that most of these elites resided in villages, often on a hilltop of about a hectare in size, suggesting a population of perhaps one or two hundred.[16] A certain proportion of these Late Bronze Age settlements appear to continue their life at least until the early Iron Age, and indeed quite a few of the later cities, Rome included, have produced traces of continuous Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age occupation beginning at least in the twelfth–eleventh century BCE.[17]

With the beginning of the Iron Age, a small subset of the existing villages showed clear signs of a radical reorganization that is generally accepted to be in connection with the process of urbanization and state formation. Together with the emergence of social stratification (whenever it may have happened), this is the other great transformation that will have a profound effect on the beginning of the conquest, five hundred years later, because it will be primarily small, city-based states originating in this period that will

[13] E.g., Lomas 2018.

[14] Bartoloni 1989: 81–2; Di Gennaro 1999.

[15] For an hypothesis of Bronze Age social development, Peroni 1996: 1–43; also Cardarelli 2011.

[16] Bietti Sestieri 2005; Di Gennaro and Barbaro 2008; Bietti Sestieri 2010.

[17] Materials dating to the Middle and Late Bronze Age were found out of context and, most notably in the case of Rome, used to conjecture an occupation sequence reaching back to the Middle Bronze Age, e.g., in Carandini 1997, which is however impossible to prove without stratified deposits. New C14 dates now in Brock and Terrenato 2016.

be aggregated in the budding empire.[18] While the few surviving narratives about this period mostly ramble about the foundation of Rome and the movements of largely fictitious ethnic groups, the archeological data, primarily from field surveys, show that from the ninth century there was an extremely sharp and rapid increase in the size of those existing villages that would later become cities.[19] Surface materials were found scattered across areas ranging from 50 to 150 hectares, typically very clearly clustered in discrete concentrations (see Figure 2.1).[20] The locations of these expanding settlements are either volcanic plateaus or broad hillsides that have a measure of natural defensibility, and are also beginning to be protected by artificial fortifications.[21] All the known cases are concentrated on the western side of central Italy and extend up to about 50 km inland. Those in southern Etruria, to the north of Rome, tend to be larger than those to the south, in Latium, which are however more tightly clustered together. There are virtually no excavated remains from these centers, aside from a few hut floors in Rome, Tarquinia, and, more recently, Gabii.[22] At Tarquinia, excavations revealed a sequence of cultic activities that could have its beginning in the early Iron Age.[23] We therefore cannot tell how well structured, nucleated, fortified, or monumentalized were those settlements, but their absolute distinctiveness from the rest of the human habitation of the region in this period cannot in any way be doubted. This is further supported by the burial record, which is one of the best known for Iron Age Europe. Graveyards are known from almost all of these sites, and some of them have yielded hundreds of rich tombs dating to the tenth, ninth, and early eighth centuries BCE, suggesting that in each of these emerging centers a number of elite groups were firmly established.[24] There are other elements from this dataset that may be relevant for later developments: for instance,

[18] While the concept of city-state has gained broad currency in the literature on premodern states, its precise definition is still controversial; Yoffee 1997; Hansen 1998; Hansen 2000. It will therefore be avoided in this book.

[19] It should be noted that for the Iron Age of central Italy there are significant chronological differences between traditional dates and radiocarbon ones; for convenience's sake, traditional dates will be used here; Bettelli 1997; Bartoloni and Delpino 2005.

[20] Pacciarelli 1991; Rendeli 1993; Pacciarelli 2001; Pacciarelli 2017. It should be noted that, given the methodology of the surveys in question, it cannot be ruled out that at least part of the observed patchiness may be due to surface visibility issues. It is however unlikely for this recurring pattern to be entirely an artifact produced by differential surface coverage.

[21] Fontaine and Helas 2016a.

[22] Linington 1982; Mura Sommella 2003; Cazzella 2001; Cazzella, et al. 2007; Evans, et al. forthcoming; Mogetta and Cohen forthcoming; overview in Karlsson 2017.

[23] Bonghi Jovino, Chiaramonte Treré and Bedini 1997; Bonghi Jovino 2006.

[24] Among the many examples, Close-Brooks 1965; Acanfora 1976; Bartoloni 1989; Bietti Sestieri 1992a; Iaia 1999.

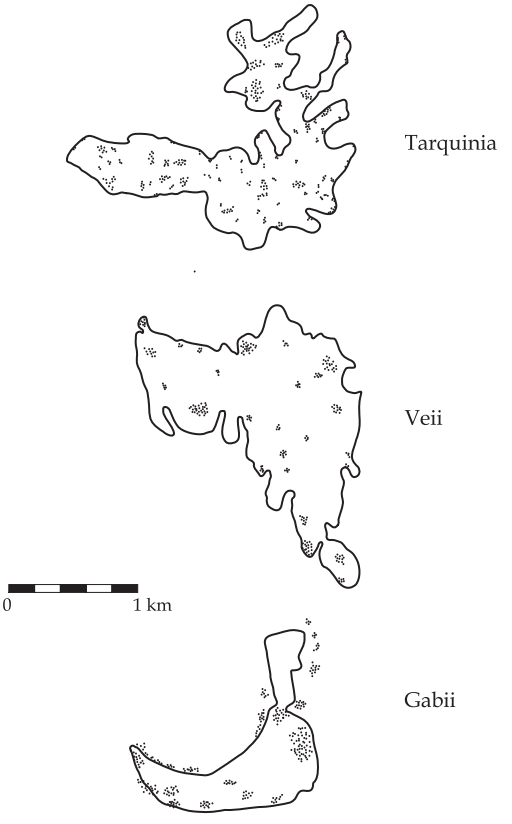

Figure 2.1 Maps of the urban sites of Veii, Tarquinia, and Gabii in the eighth century BCE. The shaded areas correspond to scatters of surface artifacts datable to this period. This evidence is based on systematic field surveys conducted by various scholars at different times (Pacciarelli 2017; illustration by D. Diffendale).

the ubiquitous presence of weapons, shields, helmets, and armor in the graves is a strong indicator that a warrior ethos was part of central Italian mentalities everywhere from the beginning (see Figure 2.2).[25] Also significant are the broad similarities in prestige material culture across the whole region, regardless of ethnic boundaries. Finally, the tombs sometimes appear clustered in groups with common traits, which could correspond to lineages of some kind.[26] Smaller sets of comparable tombs are also found far from the emerging centers, and they must indicate that there were aristocratic groups that were still located in the countryside, in those fortified villages that continued the traditional settlement style of the Bronze Age.[27]

[25] Stary 1981; Martinelli 2004.
[26] Bietti Sestieri 1992b; Pacciarelli 2010.
[27] Iaia and Pacciarelli 2012.

Figure 2.2 Bronze weapons recovered from Tomb AA1, at the Quattro Fontanili graveyard near Veii. It dates to the mid-eighth century BCE and has been interpreted by some as a royal burial (Boitani 2004). The grave goods also included a bronze ash urn, jewelry, an Egyptian ivory scarab, horse bits, parts of a chariot, and a set of ceramic vessels (image reprinted from Pacciarelli, Marco 2017. "Society, 10th cent.-730 BCE," in A. Naso (ed.), *Etruscology.* Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 759–78, courtesy of De Gruyter).

A transformation of great import appears to have happened toward the end of the ninth century, when adult burials stop being placed inside a perimeter that surrounds the entire settlement. From that point onward, graves will be relegated to the periphery of the emerging city, outside the line later marked by the city walls. This is particularly noticeable in Rome itself, where graveyards had previously existed on the slopes of the hills. From the eighth century onward, however, they are confined to the Esquiline, on the eastern side of the city, where a major burial ground will continue to exist down to historical times.[28] Given the predominant and long-maintained taboo against burying adults inside settled areas, this may be an indication that the notional boundaries of these centers were expanding, a process that would presuppose some measure of central authority, as well as some sort of conceptualization of a much larger urban space. For the rest, things do not change significantly in the course of the eighth century, despite claims that have been made about watershed events in the urbanization process in this period, mostly on the basis of later written sources.[29] The only changes that are visible in the archeological record are the appearance, in addition to hut floors similar to those already attested, of rudimentary fortifications, which do not necessarily form a complete circuit, and the establishment of a few more cult-places, whose precise nature cannot however be determined.[30] For both of these new features, it cannot yet be proven with certainty that they were created and belonged to the entire community, as in the case of the burial exclusion zone.

A much more marked change is perceivable in the seventh century. Many more (and more imposing) fortification circuits and cult-places are attested in a number of centers, and there seem to be indications of incontrovertibly public spaces, at least in Rome and Caere.[31] In most cases, religious activity is inferred on the strength of deposits containing votive materials, although in some cases structural remains have been interpreted as belonging to cult buildings.[32] In both sacred and domestic architecture there was a progressive transition over the course of this century from huts to rectangular houses with ashlar bases and fired roof tiles.[33] The change in the burial record is even more dramatic, as the amount of resources employed in

[28] Gjerstad 1953, with the chronological revision of Bettelli 1997.
[29] E.g., Carafa 1996; Carandini 2006.
[30] Brocato, Ricci, and Terrenato 1995; Smith 1996: 78; Fontaine and Helas 2016b.
[31] Ammerman 1996; Carafa 1998; Cristofani 2003.
[32] E.g., Rathje 2006; overview in Potts 2015: 13–30.
[33] A process that will only be completed in the sixth century, Brandt and Karlsson 2001.

elite burials increases exponentially. So-called princely tombs appear near major cities; they contain spectacular Orientalizing grave goods, including imported exotic gold, silver, ivory, and glass objects.[34] Tomb architecture is also revolutionized with the introduction, especially in Etruria, of large mounds covering extensive chamber tombs, cut in the bedrock or built in blocks and slabs, and often containing complex carvings and painted surfaces.[35] Each of the larger mounds can contain more than one multi-chamber tomb and be used for several dozen distinct adult burials over the course of a century or two, presumably by the same kin group.

By the sixth century, the process of urban formation is undoubtedly complete, especially after about 550 BCE. The most spectacular traces are offered by wood and wattle-and-daub temples on massive stone podiums and city walls in well-dressed ashlars, which are found at virtually all the emerging cities. These temples clearly result from major communal endeavors; they are typically positioned in the middle of the city and at the end of processional roads. The new cult-places represent a focus of aggregation for the entire settlement, while the fortifications materialize a boundary of the urbanized space that in most cases had been defined centuries before. Other significant new traits include the occasional orthogonal blocks, paved roads, open-air public spaces, shops, private houses with courtyards, richly molded and painted tile roofs (for temples and elite house alike), cisterns, drains, and public inscriptions on stone.[36] Majestic rural residences are also occasionally attested, as well as isolated smaller farms, extending the settlement typology well beyond the network of traditional Iron Age villages.[37] At this time, the burial evidence presents the first major local differentiation between the cities of Latium, where grave goods and tomb decoration decline very sharply, and the rest of central Italy, which continues to be characterized by prestigious burials.[38] Even there, the investment in each tomb is smaller than in the previous century and there are tangible signs of a standardization of elite funerary behaviors aimed at curbing the most extravagant displays.

In this way, cities in western central Italy came into being over a long period of about four hundred years and they radically and irrevocably changed the

[34] Fulminante 2003; Riva 2010b.
[35] Prayon 2000; Naso 2017b.
[36] For Rome and environs, Cristofani 1990; Cifani 2008; Della Fina 2010; Lulof and Smith 2017. For Etruria, Prayon 1975; Colonna 1986; Donati 2000; overview in Potts 2015: 31–61.
[37] Terrenato 2001b; Cifani 2002; Carandini, D'Alessio, and Di Giuseppe 2006.
[38] Colonna 1977; Bartoloni 2010.

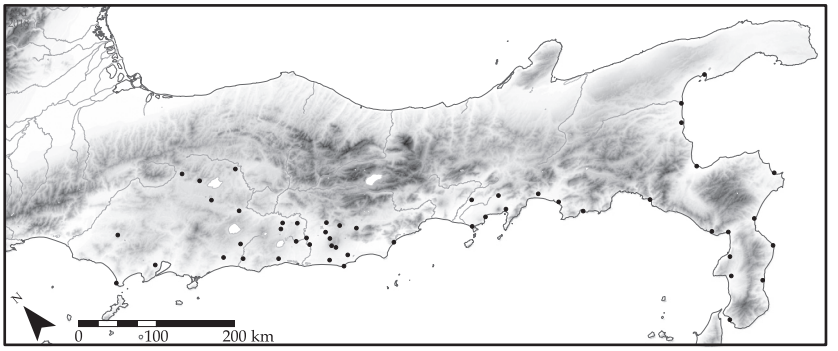

Figure 2.3 Map showing the diffusion of urban centers in peninsular Italy in the sixth century BCE. Regardless of their nature or origin, taken together they represent the result of a massive wave of urbanization that impacts the western and southern shores (illustration by D. Diffendale).

human landscape of the region. Similar processes were of course under way in comparable forms in a number of other neighboring areas, while along the eastern seaboard and in western Asia cities had existed long before. What can be defined as the first wave of central Mediterranean urbanism is distributed widely but irregularly, with an evident predilection for coastal locations with good harbors. Cities however are far from ubiquitous, since there are long stretches of the shoreline that are completely devoid of them. The obvious concentrations are in peninsular Greece and in western central and southern Italy, where they often have their nearest neighbor in the 15–30 km range. There is a more or less uninterrupted chain of them the length of the long Italian coastline, extending from Taranto to Populonia and ending abruptly at both ends (see Figure 2.3). Within this general pattern, western central Italy is highly distinctive because in it cities appear, with comparable densities, much further inland than anywhere else, up to 100 km from the sea. The only comparable area is the Peloponnese, where however most cities are within 30 km of the coast. Thus, the central Italian urban system is much more tightly clustered and inland-reaching than any other, with Rome located slightly to the southwest of its true geographic center.

While it is essential to frame the origins of Rome in its broader cultural and geographic context, it is also important to look closely at the ways in which this particular urban center, destined to play such an eminent role in later developments, may have differed from its peers at an early stage. In geographic terms, Rome is the only city in the region to be located right on

the banks of a major river, which created a high-energy natural environment.[39] No other site had even vaguely analogous issues with flooding and erosion of its lowlands, nor a similarly uneven morphology, with relatively small high hills separated by deep and wide valleys.[40] As a result, no comparable evidence of massive human impact to ameliorate and reclaim large portions of the settlement along the river banks and between the hills has been seen at any other urban center. The presence of the river, and especially of a harbor and a ford by the Tiberine Island, constituted a significant strategic advantage in terms of intersecting communication lines that did not exist elsewhere.[41] Early Rome was also considerably larger in surface than any other emerging city in the region. Its sixth-century walls probably encompassed an area of 250–280 hectares, while most Etruscan cities at the time were below 150 hectares and Latin ones below 80. A contributing factor must lie in the unsuitability for occupation of large tracts of flood lands and ravines that had to be included within the walls for strategic reasons. However, once these badlands had been reclaimed, the walled surface of the resulting city ended up being very large. It has also been remarked that the size of Rome's main archaic temple on the Capitoline hill was much bigger than any other known cult-place in the region.[42] Finally, Rome was arguably straddling a significant cultural boundary, as well as a geographic one, since the Tiber more or less neatly separated non-Indo-European Etruscan speakers to the north from Latin and other Indo-European speakers to the south. While ethnic differences in this period are difficult to assess and should not, in any case, be exaggerated, it is possible that a particularly hybrid and inclusive self-perception may have characterized the Romans from the beginning.[43] These peculiarities may well have had some kind of role in later developments, but they should not obscure the fact that for the first four or five hundred years of its history, Rome was in most respects one of a large group of peer cities in western central Italy that had similar evolution, magnitude, institutions, and mentality.[44]

[39] Corazza and Lombardi 1995; Heiken, Funiciello, and De Rita 2005. The closest parallel in terms of setting, Fiesole in northern Etruria, is about 5 km from the river Arno but is on a high hilltop overlooking the valley.

[40] Ammerman, Miller, and Ramsay 2000; Aldrete 2007.

[41] Brock 2016; Marra, et al. 2018.

[42] Rendeli 1989. The reconstruction and the chronology of the temple at Rome are rather controversial, but it seems established that by the late sixth century there was a massive podium on the Capitoline hill, Ammerman and Terrenato 1996; Cifani 2008. The main cults in many of the other cities are, however, unknown so it cannot be ruled out that there were peers of the temple in Rome.

[43] Full argument in Dench 2005.

[44] Gildenhard 2003.

Defining the Social Actors: Elites and Others

In reconstructing the formation of the states in central Italy, it is important not to deal exclusively in political abstractions, thus losing sight of the actual players involved in the process. Much of the relevant scholarship so far has tended to downplay the importance of the social structures that were in place when the cities begun to emerge. For instance, it was often assumed that the lineages that clearly existed from the Late Bronze Age had become irrelevant once the urban governments had taken control of the fully fledged new polity. And yet, an argument could be made that certain traits of Italian social structures continued to play an important role for many centuries after states were firmly established.[45] It is therefore essential, in our effort to provide a broader context for Rome's expansion, to take into account the way in which the actual agents in the process were aggregated when the changes begun. This is not an easy task, considering the known uncertainties inherent in the written sources (which in any case exist only for Rome) and the difficulties of inferring social organization purely on the basis of archeological indicators. And yet a literature has developed in the last few decades, which has recruited a vast array of evidence, from legal sources to the history of religion, in an attempt to reconstruct some fundamental elements of the social organization prevailing in central Italy.

Prompted by frequent textual references, in historical times, to the *gens*, a kind of Roman extended lineage group, scholars since Vico, Niebuhr, and Morgan have theorized that it was a fundamental element of central Italian society from the very beginning of its political development. Indeed, in evolutionary frameworks such as those of Fustel de Coulanges or Engels, the *gens* was seen as a pre-state form of sociopolitical organization that might even have preceded private property. Such imaginative reconstructions ranged from a sort of primordial communism to group ownership regulated by custom.[46] Subsequent specialist scholarship, on the other hand, has successfully debunked the strong assumptions made in these reconstructions, but has on the whole given up hope of arriving at any firm conclusions.[47] It is of course very true that the evidence we have is contradictory and extremely incomplete, especially if one is looking for an ideal kin structure that existed in the same form regardless of time, space, rank, and individual group. Central Italian lineage groups probably varied regionally, by period

[45] Full argument in Terrenato 2007a.

[46] Fustel de Coulanges 1864; Engels 1884; Lomas 1996.

[47] A very extensive review of the literature is in Smith 2006.

and by social context. This is however particularly problematic for the kind of rigid classifications of social and familial relationships that characterized the descriptive approaches of classic ethnographical analyses. The terminology itself poses impossible problems, since the word *gens* was not always consistently used by Latin speakers (and other central Italians were of course using other terms), and modern terms like clan or descent group are not necessarily applicable. Moreover, the difference between the *gens* and the family (for which there was a corresponding Latin word) is also controversial. As in many other cases in this book, what is proposed here is an approximate approach to the problem, which involves trying to characterize the larger portion of the phenomenon with no claims to a complete coverage of all the possible variability. Leaving aside terminological debates, some key features of extended lineage groups, be they *gentes*, families, or anything else, will be highlighted, with specific reference to the aristocratic class of central Italy.[48]

The most salient feature of elite social organization in central Italy during the first half of the first millennium BCE is undoubtedly the presence of larger lineage groups than the nuclear family in the modern sense of the term. There was certainly a range of possible situations between what the Romans called a *familia*, which was composed of a few closely related and cohabitating individuals together with their dependents and slaves, and the *gens* in the sense of a larger collection of such families sharing the same name and often the same ancestry, be it divine, heroic, or otherwise.[49] So what is more essential for us is not to determine the precise nature of the Roman or Italian *gens*, which is in any case probably impossible, but rather to outline some essential common traits to the various kinds of extended lineages in question. As a point of departure, it can be reasonably conjectured that these groups included multiple generations of the same male descent line, as well as cadet brothers and wives coming from other peer groups.[50] Perhaps the most clearly attested trait of these groups is the

[48] An argument could be made for describing these units as "houses" in the sense defined by C. Lévi-Strauss (1975: 164–92). While conceptually attractive, however, the term house will not be used in this book to avoid confusion with architectural house remains; Naglak and Terrenato forthcoming.

[49] The literature on the Roman family is extensive, e.g., Gardner 1998; Rawson 2011; for the *gens*, Smith 2006, which makes a cogent argument for the variability of social forms that the term could cover.

[50] Patrilocality was clearly the predominant custom throughout the region. A synthesis on early Roman descent groups is in Linke 1995: 23–39; its essential traits were probably shared in the rest of central Italy.

existence of cults that were peculiar to its members.[51] There is also considerable indication that there was an internal hierarchy and that, within it, some relatives were in a subordinate position, while there might have been one or more senior males in a leadership role.[52] Some groups may also have had biologically unrelated people attached to them by links of debt, bondage, capture in war, or other social obligations.[53] Some sort of customary social control and internal regulation is likely to have existed, since later Roman legislation contained traces of it, such as the fact that unclaimed inheritance reverted to the *gens*, which also stepped in in cases of mental incompetence of one of its members.[54] Family leaders certainly had, even in later times, considerable powers over subordinate members, even to the point of life or death decisions (which, however, must have been the exception rather than the rule).[55] A certain amount of blurriness between the prerogatives of the family head and those of the leader of the broader group is to be expected given the range of lineage structures existing in central Italy in this period.

Another complex issue revolves around the definition of what constitutes a social elite and how that differs from the rest of the community. Any stringent statement in this sense would also have to be modulated across time and space. Rather than attempting that, elite and aristocracy are used here as interchangeable terms and, again, without claims to a clear-cut social differentiation. Recent works convincingly emphasize the fluidity of the definition, rejecting any idea of a closed and unchangeable caste.[56] For purposes of the argument presented in this book, it is enough to accept the existence of eminent lineages deriving their power and wealth from the control of land-based resources. In regions where arable land was very limited, other resources, such as animal husbandry, woodland products, or mining, would of course provide the access to surplus and leisure that characterized aristocrats.

The overall size of elite groups as well as their internal composition must have been very variable, and the tomb record can help determine it only very partially, especially since it appears that high-ranking members of the group were more likely to receive a proper burial than the rest.

[51] Fiorentini 1988; Rieger 2007: 431–43.

[52] For Rome, the evidence is collected in Romano 1984; Smith 2006: 34–35 denies that there was a hierarchy within the *gens*. New perspectives in Di Fazio and Paltineri 2019. On hierarchy within later incarnations of these groups, Martin 2002; Hölkeskamp 2010: 33.

[53] Torelli 1987: 87–95; Drummond 1989; Welwei 2001.

[54] Smith 2006: 51–55.

[55] The literature is vast, e.g., Lintott 1999: 25–29; Humbert 2005: 42–48.

[56] Hölkeskamp 2004; Bradley 2015.

At a minimum, however, some seventh-century mound tombs suggest the deposition of several dozen individuals in the course of two or three generations, implying that the parent population could not have been much smaller.[57] Later texts describe fifth-century top-level Roman *gentes* having hundreds of male members and even numbering in the thousands overall, but we cannot be sure that these figures are accurate.[58] What appears highly likely is that each group considered recourse to collective violence as an option that continued to be available to them even after the emergence of governments that would in theory have had a monopoly over these kinds of activities.[59] Telling in this sense is the finding of a group of identical bronze helmets all marked with the same family name at Vetulonia, which gives archeological substance to the narratives about "private wars" that were still occasionally waged in central Italy at least down to the fifth century. More evidence comes from the literary and epigraphic record, leading some scholars to see these groups as temporary warbands operating under the leadership of a lord (see Figure 2.4).[60] Summer raiding warfare must have played a significant role in the life cycle of these groups, allowing them to accumulate resources as well as negotiate internal hierarchies and reinforce the warrior ideology that is implied by the nature of many of their grave goods.

It is also possible that these groups had a role in the managing and distribution of resources, especially land-based ones. There is some textual evidence suggesting that elite lineages were rooted in particular areas of which they controlled, at least originally, the exploitation. This would be attested by the fact that the territorial tribes of Rome, probably established in the sixth or fifth century, were mostly named after important *gentes*.[61] Moreover, some legal sources imply, even at a later stage, that there was land owned collectively by the *gens*, while, as we have seen, unclaimed inheritances would revert to the same group. There is also some indication that its leadership could regulate access to some of these resources. Parcels of land could be temporarily or permanently apportioned to group members and nuclear families, while pasture, woods, and other nonarable

[57] Riva 2010b; Naso 2011. For earlier periods, the claim has been made that clusters of graves with similar traits belonged to the same lineage group, Bietti Sestieri 1992a: 199–220.

[58] Most notably, the story about the leader of the Claudii migrating to Rome in 504 BCE with 6,000 including lineage members and dependents; Wiseman 1979: 57–70.

[59] Timpe 1990; Welwei 1993; Rawlings 1999; Gabrielli 2003; Torelli 2011.

[60] For the helmets, Becker 2010; more generally, Armstrong 2016: 70–71; 87–88; Rich 2017; Maras 2018.

[61] Franciosi 1995; Rieger 2007: 345–464.

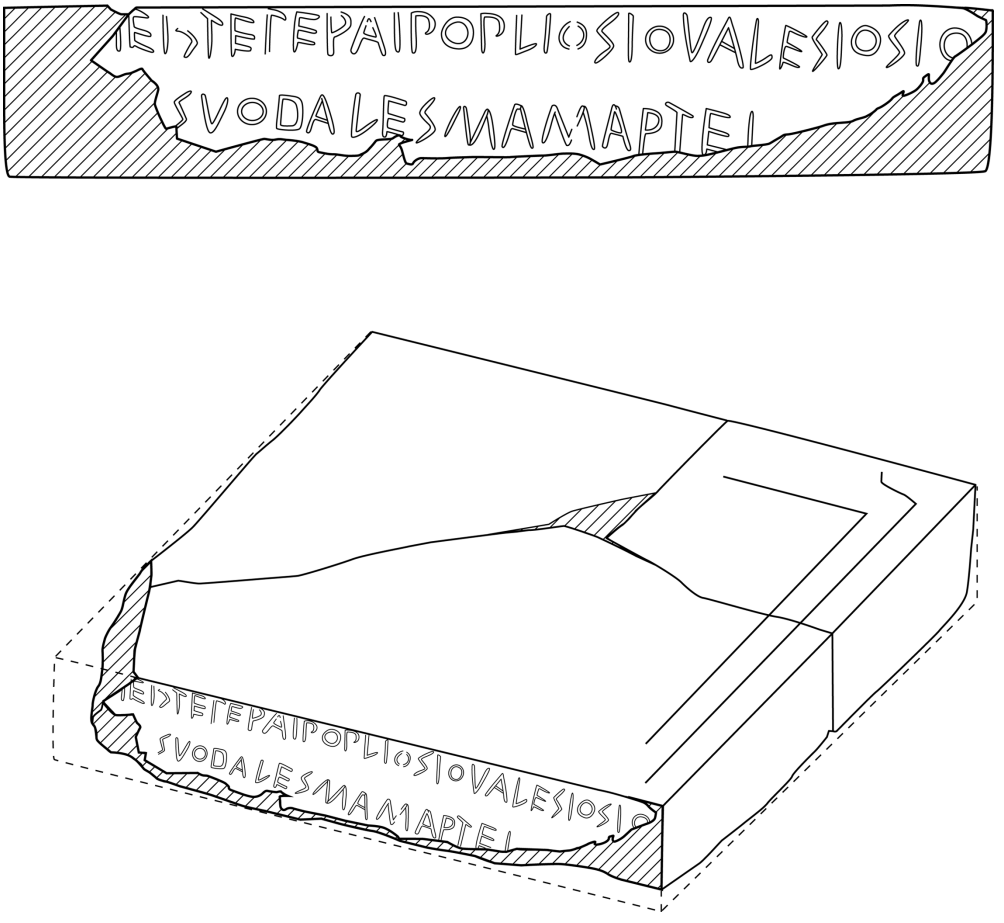

Figure 2.4 Drawing of a late sixth-century Latin inscription found in a temple context at Satricum. It records a dedication made by members of a warband (*suodales*), connected with the god Mars, to a Publius Valerius. The latter could possibly be identified with the very prominent Roman politician P. Valerius Poplicola, a factional leader who seems to have had ambitions of dominance (Versnel 1997; Di Fazio 2017). If the identification is correct, his case would exemplify how aristocrats could play the republican game while at the same time maintaining private armies and connections in other cities (image reprinted from Armstrong, Jeremy 2016. *War and Society in Early Rome: from Warlords to Generals*. Cambridge University Press, courtesy of J. Armstrong).

areas could remain communal and their use controlled by the leaders.[62] Individual private ownership of land probably replaced this traditional system over time, but customary prerogatives and obligations for those in

[62] The evidence is primarily linked to the concept of land belonging to the *gens*, Capogrossi Colognesi 1994: 1–13.

positions of power in extended families may have survived in some form. A high degree of local variability is to be expected, with possible gray areas between the attributions of the lineages and those of the nuclear families. For sure, down to historical times, heads of important houses would have an important redistributive role for their social dependents, providing a supply buffer during bad years and other exceptional circumstances. In a broader sense, the leader, significantly called "father" in Latin, was perceived to have a clear responsibility for the welfare of all those who were in a subordinate position. His power came with a responsibility to provide for their survival.[63] This obviously relied on his ability to extract surplus from the rest of the group on a regular basis, probably not in the form of tributes or taxes but rather as customary contributions and ad hoc requests, in the form of food, corvée labor, shares of the crops, political support, and much else.

Whether these extended lineages actually cohabitated is not easy to determine and may have depended on the circumstances, but what is far more important is that they cooperated toward common objectives, such as the creation of massive mound tombs or luxurious residences in the emerging city and in its hinterland. This profound loyalty to a larger group than just first-degree relatives is a key element in the predominant Italian mentality of the period.[64] Individual needs and priorities were routinely sacrificed for the greater good of the lineage group, its prestige and reputation trumping most other considerations. The individual members of course received a very significant material advantage from belonging to a highly respected group, but often the direct consequences of their actions would only benefit other members or even future generations, as happened in the case of elaborate burial preparations or of self-sacrificing actions that resulted in certain death on the battlefield. In this sense, it is important not to see the forces underpinning the cohesion of these lineages in purely functional terms. There was a deeply shared worldview, reinforced by religious beliefs and traditional cultural values, that kept the group members together and made sense of their everyday experience. There were cults in Rome that were only open to members of a specific lineage, and this strongly suggests that most of these groups had distinctive ritual practices, probably connected with ancestor worship, that played a big role in forging a group identity and in fostering a strong loyalty and

[63] E.g., Bettini 1991; Saller 1994.

[64] For Rome, e.g., Baroin 2010; Osgood 2011. It is worth pointing out that group identities of this kind are common in many preindustrial societies. They are connected with anthropological concepts like dividuality and familism; Silverman 1975; Strathern 1988; review in Viazzo 2003.

sense of belonging to it.[65] A further contribution to strong internal cohesion derived from claims of common descent, typically receding back into mythical times and interwoven with ritual practices.

Ethnographically, there might be similarities with the way in which clans functioned in a number of state and nonstate societies. From those better known examples, we see that these extended lineage groups were not necessarily perfectly harmonic entities. Their ranking members could be struggling and fighting for preeminence and these tensions could even lead to outbreaks of violence and to power abruptly switching from one noble line to another. The relationship between the leadership and the subordinates also could contain a strong dialectic element. Such tensions, however, were constrained by the boundaries of a hegemonic and paternalistic society, and as a result social mobility could exist in these groups, but there was also a very rigid code that established a range of acceptable behaviors for its members.[66] They all had well-defined expectations about each other's attitudes in the relationship. Violations of such customary norms, for example excessive requests by the leadership or disloyalty from the subordinate members, would produce hostile responses. The leader could easily mete out punishments ranging from restricting access to resource redistribution to expulsion and death.[67] But the rest of the group was not completely helpless either. They had recourse to a variety of unfriendly responses including various forms of resistance, feet dragging, and even the switch of allegiances. Moving from one group to another was probably unusual but not impossible, especially for clients, allowing them to "vote with their feet" and placing an implicit deterrent to immoderate exploitation from the elites.[68]

In conclusion, it seems clear from the archeological evidence that in each of the emerging cities there was a good number of these extended lineages coexisting within the same notional settlement boundaries and, later, city walls. A particularly well-preserved example now comes from the city of Gabii,

[65] Smith 2006: 44–50; Lipka 2009: 168–75.

[66] Hölkeskamp 2010: 33–36.

[67] The existence of conflict within a lineage is of course particularly difficult to detect without ethnographic observation. Some faint echoes are perceptible in the narratives about factionalism and even crime within royal families (like the Tarquins), about the fission of lineages, and the exile of individual members; Thomas 1981; Monaco 1988. A hypothesis in this sense in Meunier 2019. At the comparative level, such conflicts, defined as feuding, are reportedly endemic to social formations of this kind; Oakley 2014.

[68] Behaviors of this kind at the nonelite level are of course hard to detect in the archeological record. Again, comparative and theoretical models suggest that this must have been a widespread dynamics; e.g., Gürerk, Irlenbusch, and Rockenbach 2009; Armstrong 2016: 60.

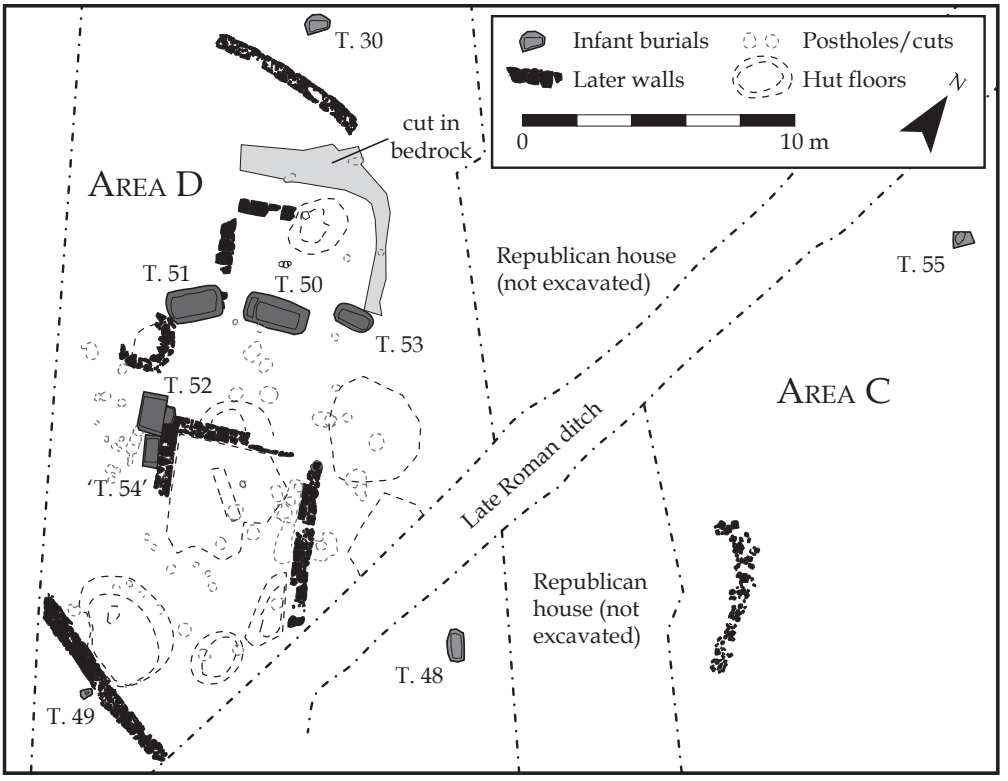

Figure 2.5 Plan of a cluster of huts dating from the eighth and seventh centuries from Gabii. They provide a sense of how one of the settled areas shaded in Figure 2.1 might have appeared. The presence of infant burials with very rich goods around the apse of the main hut indicated the presence of at least one major elite lineage (image reprinted from Mogetta, Marcello, and Cohen, Sheira forthcoming. "Infant and Child Burial Practices from an Élite Domestic Compound at Early Iron Age and Orientalising Gabii," in J. Tabolli (ed.), *From Invisible to Visible. New Data and Methods for the Archaeology of Infant and Child Burials in Pre-Roman Italy*. Uppsala: Åstrom, courtesy of M. Mogetta and S. Cohen).

where excavation has shown the persistence of a hut group inhabited by elites and nonelites and surrounded by rich infant burials (see Figure 2.5).[69] Despite the frequent claims made to the contrary, groups of this kind did not dissolve over time in an egalitarian citizenship body but instead continued to exist and to be highly relevant in the political dynamic of the city, since their presence is amply attested in later historical times. Similar groups, if one is to judge from the burial evidence, also existed in the countryside, away from urban centers,

[69] Evans, et al. forthcoming; Mogetta and Cohen forthcoming.

and in regions, like Samnium, that were not urbanized at all.[70] Apparently, some extended families had a lesser status and, for instance in Rome, could not describe themselves as *gentes*.[71] This, however, became less of a problem over time, and in any case, whatever their descriptor, even these "lesser" groups behaved in very similar ways to the main ones. There is also reason to suspect that there were substantial numbers of people who were not members of any of these lineage groups, nor of their social and economic subordinates. This appears especially true in those sectors of society that were not directly involved in agricultural and other land-based activities. A growing number of artisans, small traders, shop owners, performers, architects, artists, and other (often traveling) specialists gathered in the expanding urban centers and they seem to have enjoyed an increasing degree of freedom and independence from the power and influence of the landowning aristocracy.[72]

Whatever their precise character, name, or evolution over time, there seems to be enough evidence to conclude that in the period from the emergence of cities to the beginning of the conquest there were elite lineage groups larger than the nuclear family that characterized especially landed aristocracies throughout central Italy and played an important role as structuring elements within the emerging cities. Rooted in religious and ancestral beliefs, regulated by customary practices, and strengthened by reciprocal obligations between its members, these units represented important elements of continuity and were foci of fierce loyalty throughout the period in question.

Interactions and Integrations between Elite Groups

If we accept the idea that extended elite (or elite-led) lineage groups represented, in all their heterogeneity and variability, a foundational element that shaped early first millennium BCE society in central Italy, then it makes sense to consider how their mutual interactions evolved over time, so that we can understand their impact on broader political developments. There can be little doubt that these groups, from the very beginning, were keenly aware of the existence of peer entities distributed across their entire

[70] Cosentino, D'Ercole, and Mieli 2003; Prayon 2011.

[71] There is an enormous debate on the theory that plebeian families in Rome originally did not have a *gens* organization. This is probably linked to complex social stratifications and struggles but does not change the essential nature of central Italian structure; Richard 1978; Oakley 2005b: 112–16.

[72] Although of course some of these figures may have also been socially dependent on aristocratic groups. The narrative about the artists being in the retinue of the Tarquins is often discussed in this context; Nijboer 1997; Nijboer 1998; Smith 1998; Ammerman, et al. 2015.

region. Indeed, it has been accepted for a while that the burial record, at least since the Late Bronze Age, bears out an active competition between elite lineages for prestige expressed through luxury and exotic goods, as well as adherence to a warrior ideology.[73] Moreover, the similarities and recurrences in funerary practices and elite tastes strongly suggest that these groups were in contact with each other across considerable distances. In fact, it is likely that prestige and status were pursued, among other means, by developing a complex network of relationships with other groups of the upper crust. These interactions could of course take many different forms, depending on the context, the period, and the cultures involved, but, generally speaking, they constituted a dialectical space that had a great significance for its participants and was aimed at creating links that were beneficial to their prestige and influence.

A set of elite group behaviors were specifically aimed, from the earliest times, at fostering and regulating relationships between the lineages. Such was the case of gift exchange, which is attested by the funerary evidence and probably affected entire groups as well as prominent individuals within them. Reciprocal and escalating gift-giving is a classic way in which prestige is asserted, while at the same time establishing and maintaining friendly ties.[74] We know that, in later periods, friendship between entire lineages existed and took a highly ritualized form, regulated by the exchange of presents, visits, and obligations to hospitality. Depictions of aristocratic banqueting are ubiquitous from the very beginning of figurative art in the region (see Figure 2.6). Ceremonial drinking and communal libations thus contributed to seal these bonds, which were further reinforced by a firm belief in the sacredness of the guest and were guaranteed by divine sanction. Tokens could be formally exchanged to allow the identification of members of a friendly lineage not known personally, again suggesting that relatively large numbers of people composed each group (see Figure 2.7).[75] A well-developed network of links of this kind was essential to the good functioning of an aristocratic group, allowing safer travel, exchange of information, access to exotic items, practical assistance, and cooperation. In a pinch, one could find shelter from disgrace or exile with a friendly lineage. Such networks apparently included short- and long-distance ties and easily spanned ethnic boundaries and cultural and religious differences.

[73] Bietti Sestieri 1992a: 203–20; Bietti Sestieri 2011.

[74] The classic text is Mauss 1925. For its application to early central Italy, Cristofani 1975; Maras and Sciacca 2011 See also Riva 2010a.

[75] On banqueting, Zaccaria Ruggiu 2003; Colivicchi 2017. For token exchange, Colonna 1981; Poccetti 2011.

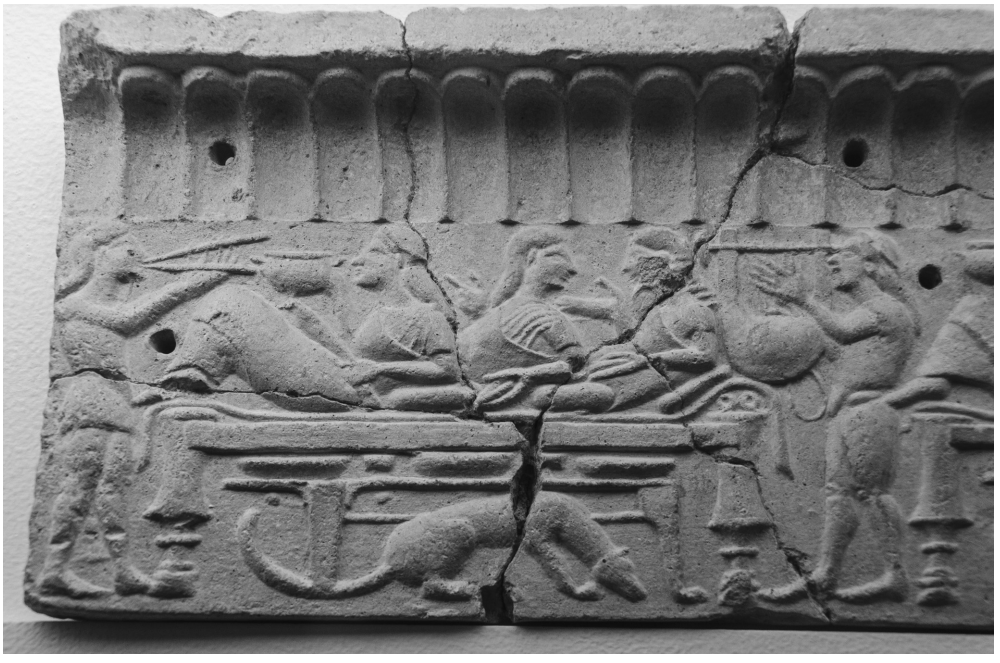

Figure 2.6 Architectural terracotta from an elite Etruscan residence at Acquarossa. Dated to the sixth century BCE, it is decorated with a banquet scene. Couples of male and female aristocrats recline on couches, with tables laden with food and hunting dogs crouching under them (Zaccaria Ruggiu 2003: 186–197; Fontaine 2016). Images of this kind are indicative of the lifestyle that characterized elite lineages in this period (photo by D. Diffendale).

It also is quite likely that from early on, intermarriage was actively used as a diplomatic tool, as indicated by a combination of epigraphic evidence and textual narratives. Again, later on it would certainly be one of the predominant strategies that lineages could use to forge wide-ranging horizontal ties that would last at least a generation. At that point, exogamy was not prescribed but it appears to have been very common.[76] Another way of obtaining a similar effect must have been adoption (most often of nonorphaned adults from peer families), a custom that was unusually common among elites in Roman historical times, and would have forged a blood link between the two lineages involved. Suggestively, in some unverifiable narratives about early Roman and Etruscan kings, a sort of occasional matrilinearity is implied, combining intermarriage and adoption: the king

[76] Franciosi 1988; Bartoloni and Pitzalis 2011. In later Roman society the marriages continued to be arranged with considerations of this kind in mind, Treggiari 1991.

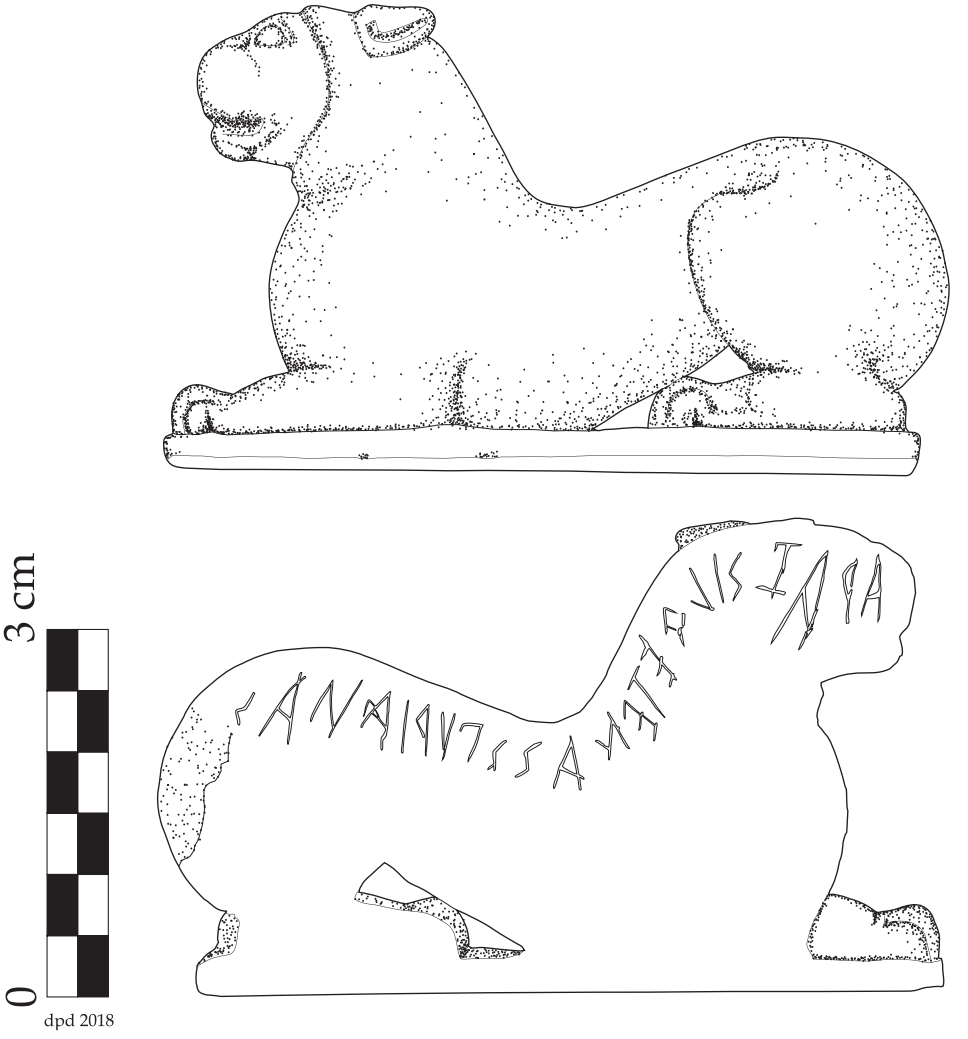

Figure 2.7 Ivory plaque in the shape of a lion from the harbor sanctuary of Sant'Omobono in Rome. Dated to the sixth century, it has an incised inscription with the name of an Etruscan man, Araz Silqetenas (perhaps from Sardinia?), who may have been the dedicant. These matching pieces are generally interpreted as tokens of family friendship (*tesserae hospitales*; Naso 2017a: 1541). They indicate alliances between groups of aristocrats large enough that forms of personal identification were required. The involvement of an Etruscan family in Rome is further proof that such factional friendships easily crossed ethnic lines (illustration by D. Diffendale).

is sometimes succeeded by his daughter's husband, who thus appears to have been adopted into the royal family.[77]

In light of what has been reconstructed so far, it would seem reasonable to assume that each elite lineage had an articulated system of relationships to a number of peer groups. With a select few there would have been an exchange of members through marriage or adoption (in addition to other links), while with all the others there would be friendly ties of mutual gift-giving, hospitality, productive and military assistance, communal feasting and hunting, and much else. Later on, there would be a clear sense that friends of friends were also friends, leading naturally to the emergence of sprawling (and potentially conflicting) networks of lineage friendship spanning over long distances. There are references to elites forging military alliances that were activated for coups and other political endeavors.[78] The fact that these bonds between groups were sacred was a powerful force, but it certainly would not have completely deterred unfriendly behaviors. Misunderstandings, tension, quarrels, and even outright betrayal would be a fact of life, leading to broken friendships, network fissions, and realignments that could radically change the landscape of elite interaction. Ties must have needed to be frequently renewed and reinforced with ethical and religious elements to last over several generations, but could easily turn into their exact opposites. Contrasts, enmities, and even bloody and drawn-out feuds and vendettas could not have been rare, being fueled by rigid honor codes and by warrior mentalities. At any given point in time, each lineage must have had some dear friends, some mortal enemies, and many other intermediate shades between the two extremes.[79]

Given the prevalence of raiding warfare over short distances, it can be expected that conflict could become particularly acute among local peer groups. In these contexts, over time, attempts to establish some sort of priority or paramountcy of one lineage over another by means of threat and actual violence are to be expected. The narratives recorded later refer to assassinations and even small wars between lineages, as well as to ritualized forms of conflict, such as military displays or champion's fights. Private wars between a lineage and an entire community apparently could be waged, if as

[77] See the contributions in Corbier 1999. For royal succession, Cantarella 1987: 100–05; Koptev 2005.

[78] Such is the predominant interpretation of the function of the attested war fellowships (*sodalitates*); Armstrong 2016: 51; see also p. 47.

[79] One of the best documents in this sense is represented by the paintings in the Francois tomb at Vulci, which depict aristocrats from various cities dueling each other; Buranelli 1987; historical interpretation in Maras 2010; Massa-Pairault 2014.

late as the fifth century the aristocratic Roman lineage of the Fabii marched out against Veii, when the rest of the Romans would not follow them in the endeavor.[80] It is not unusual to hear that some lineages, as late as the fifth century, would start a wholesale relocation to a different subregion because of local enmities or danger. Early Greek cities, about which we are much better informed historically, seem to have been affected by similar dynamics, if really an elite Corinthian family escaped to Etruria during the seventh century and was, two generations later, able to relocate again, this time to Rome. Such horizontal social mobility, in which groups move across space without losing any of their social status, is generally accepted as an important trait of the central Mediterranean aristocratic world.[81] What it highlights is the fact that there was, from the earliest times, an implicit elite solidarity that underlay all interactions between lineages. In a way, the customary code of behavior seems to have been that aristocrats could plot, ambush, and slaughter each other as much as they wanted, as long as they subscribed, at the same time, to a conservative view of social order in which vertical mobility was severely hampered and constrained. Access of new groups within the aristocracy was to be minimized. It did happen, but not frequently, at least until much later. Clients and lesser group members were expected to side with their leaders, perhaps participate in raids and violence, but were not to take advantage of any instability to try to improve their social standing. Indeed, there seems to have been an unspoken agreement between elite groups to support each other in case of internal unrest.[82] Later on, a solidarity of this kind between elites would be a powerful component of their ethos and would often come before any other ethnic, political, or religious consideration, representing a long-term trait of the central Italian world that is crucial to the overall argument presented here.

The Nature of Early States in Central Italy

It is useful to consider the emergence of cities and states in central Italy against the background provided by the social landscape of lineages as it has been described so far. Until recently, this was a fairly unexplored area, as most published work tended to concentrate on the chronology of the

[80] See pp. 112–13.

[81] On the movement of the Tarquins, Ampolo 1976–77. On the migration of the Claudii, Wiseman 1979: 57–75. On mobility in general, Cornell 2003; Bourdin 2012: 521–50.

[82] Drummond 1989; Armstrong 2016: 70. This is a trait that is very common to many forms of landed aristocracy across different contexts; Black 2004.

formation process (and on its temporal relationship with the creation of the earliest Greek colonies), as well as on the archeologically visible features and traits that would characterize the new political entities. For the purposes of this book, however, it is not essential to determine what the signature indicator of statehood was, nor whether it first appeared in the eighth or, say, the sixth century. It can be safely taken for granted that states associated with urbanism came into being over the course of this period, and that they were firmly in place by the time the expansion began. The real question, for anyone interested in the decision-making process behind Roman imperialism, is instead how power and collective action were transacted in these states, especially with regard to the existing lineage-based social hierarchies and control structures. In other words, once states are formed we see the same kind of landed aristocratic lineages in leadership positions as there were before, so it might be instructive to examine how these social actors became a part of the new developments and, judging from the results, apparently managed to steer them in a direction that was favorable for them. At the same time, we must also reject the teleology that naturally comes from enjoying the hindsight of three millennia of state evolution and wonder instead with fresh eyes at what motivated these agents to go in the directions they did, analogously to what we intend to do for the empire-building of the second half of the millennium. Instead of simply assuming, as is often done in the literature, that there was an inherent need for states and cities to emerge (and later on to expand), it is essential to determine why did central Italian elites decide to create or participate in a radically different new system, and even more importantly, how did they reconcile it with their established sociocultural structures.[83]

Without a doubt, the first important decision that broke with past lifeways and started the new course must have been taken as early as the ninth century, when a number of elite lineages, together with other people, resettled to the plateaus that would become the new cities. Needless to say, in terms of human ecology, this was a counterproductive move that would automatically reduce considerably per capita access to agricultural resources.[84] It can be hypothesized, in light of what has been argued so far, that they did so with a view to improve their interactions through increased proximity, cohabitation in the same geographic setting, and communal defense. Although the later narratives invariably center on founding heroes who

[83] The argument summarized in this section can be found in full in Terrenato and Motta 2006; Terrenato 2011.

[84] E.g., Norton 1979.

become rulers of the new city, it is highly unlikely that the existing social units simply and immediately dissolved into the homogenous citizenship of a kingdom. The patchy occupation of the sites suggests instead that deep internal divisions remained within the new communities. The tomb clusters and the burial mounds speak eloquently of proud lineage groups, whose prestigious display of prominence was evidently a much higher priority than their loyalty to the new polity. It is clear that these component units approached the coalescence of the state gingerly, maintaining a strong sense of group identity.[85] An obvious advantage that the new development would have afforded is mutual protection. With the possible exception of Rome, all the sites chosen for aggregation are naturally fortified. Having a sizable population (including many heavily armored warriors) living there would be a powerful deterrent against raids from outside. It might even be conjectured that, at least in part, the new community could be formed by one or more networks of friendly lineage groups that used to live further apart and decided to tighten their ties by coming to live on the same plateau. This would also of course make their other elite-bonding activities, like feasting or hunting together, much easier.

As time went on, the benefits that the new sites offered must have grown in the eyes of the inhabitants. This is reflected in the increasing investment made in the eighth and seventh centuries on communal projects like artificial fortifications, public cults, and meeting spaces. In order for these endeavors to be possible, some sort of ground rules must have been necessarily agreed on. For instance, it appears fairly certain in the case of Rome that from an early stage a prohibition against bearing weapons inside the city was put in place.[86] The affected area corresponded to that of burial exclusion, around which the new fortifications were being created. The validity of military commands also expired once inside the walls. In this way, a shared spatial notion was established, differentiating in protolegal form the behaviors that were acceptable outside and inside the city. In warrior societies of this kind, the demilitarization of the settlement cannot have been an obvious innovation, but it was probably a necessary one to mitigate violence between lineages belonging to the same city. It may well have developed as a permanent form of the temporary truces that were

[85] Pacciarelli 2010.

[86] This is better attested in the case of Rome, where from very early times there was an urban boundary within which it was forbidden, indeed sacrilegious, to bear arms and to bury adults, and which also had a religious significance in the taking of the omens; Liou-Gille 1997; Simonelli 2001; Drogula 2007. Similar limits would have existed in other central Italian cities, as the distribution of burials and epigraphic texts suggest; Prosdocimi 2004: 1722.

declared on the occasion of religious festivals or athletic games.[87] The very existence of a provision of this kind (together with the countless instances during the first millennium BCE that the rule was broken all over Italy), however, is a proof that the new states only had a very imperfect monopoly over armed violence and that their internal conflicts could never be completely mitigated, much less resolved. When things worked as planned, cities could serve as neutral arenas for interactions between neighboring elite groups, allowing them to regiment their dialectics and cooperate in projects that were beyond the scope of each individual group. Throughout their life, however, these states remained congenitally prone to periods of instability. For this reason they could be characterized as weak, since their long-term history shows that the powers that created them always retained the option of temporarily revoking the rules they were based on, thus reverting to the kind of free-for-all conflict that existed before the process of urbanization.[88]

Emulation and peer-polity interaction are other factors that may have convinced some elites to find state governments acceptable, if not desirable. The parallel and synchronic developments in many central Italian cities can only be explained if they were keeping careful track of what was happening in other communities. More generally, we must remember that large swaths of the central Mediterranean coast were turning, at the same time, into a system of interconnected small states, each containing one city, whose interaction presented participating elites with opportunities that did not exist before. As trade and interstate politics intensified over time, it became more effective to negotiate spheres of influence at the level of diplomacy between cities, even over long distances, as attested by the existence of a treaty between Rome and Carthage as early as the late sixth century.[89] More generally, whole urban aggregates began to engage in the same kind of competition for prestige that the elite groups had been involved in for centuries, only on a much greater scale. The luster that came from having a particularly magnificent fortification wall or a beautifully decorated temple was a positive reflection on all the member lineages of the successful city. Major sanctuaries in cities, near harbors, at road intersections, and in other strategic locations were popping up all over central Italy and acquiring a very important role as political arenas where elites could enhance their visibility, exchange information, create and maintain alliances, and much

[87] Orlin 2010: 49–50.

[88] Views of the early state in these terms are implicit in Brandt 1985; Rawlings 1999; Hölkeskamp 2010.

[89] Nörr 2005; Colonna 2010; Scardigli 2011; Wiater 2018.

else.[90] While some of these cult-places do emerge in nonurbanized areas, the vast majority of them are clearly supported by at least one urban center, offering another example of the rewards that the new polities could offer. Analogously, access to the great Mediterranean-wide religious hubs, like the oracle at Delphi, could be facilitated through membership in a recognized state.

To ambitious kin groups, the processes reviewed so far must have appeared as good reasons to help put together a city or to join an existing one. Indeed, for some it may have been an indispensable move to keep up with their elite peers. At the same time, if this radical transformation had resulted in a massive social revolution toward a de-feudalized society, it would have defeated the original purposes of the aristocracies that had promoted it. Since the original power base of these groups was rooted in their control over resources and groups of social dependents, they should be expected to want to retain their traditional areas of influence. While the evidence is of course scanty, there is in fact very little sign of a significant change in the social structure, at least until the advanced sixth century, when the cities had been firmly established. The burial and settlement records remain structurally unaltered and the dominant position of these groups was still unchallenged when the historical records become more reliable.[91] It can therefore be hypothesized that central Italian state formation involved a compromise that combined lineages together in larger entities without too much disruption to their traditional functions and prerogatives.

It may be useful to reflect, albeit tentatively, on how this compromise between Bronze Age social structures and early Iron Age state formation worked in practice. A basic observation that can be made is that, in essence, the social dominance as well as the internal arrangements of each lineage group were the least impacted, while what was transformed was the relationship between these groups, which became more regulated and cooperative. It is very clear from the later legal literature that the leadership of these lineages continued to resolve internal controversies and administer punishments to group members down to historical times.[92] At another level, however, and in matters pertaining to the interaction between lineages belonging to the same state, the power of the leader was suspended and transferred to an overarching political structure. This involved accepting that one or more of the other peer aristocrats had temporary jurisdiction

[90] Rendeli 1989; Marroni 2012; Potts 2015.
[91] Smith 1996: 185–223.
[92] Gardner 1998; Frier and McGinn 2004: 193–235.

over interlineage affairs in their capacity as kings, tyrants, magistrates, or high priests. Even more importantly, the all-in code of confrontation was suspended at specific times and places, to allow dialogue without the constant risk of deadly violence. A council of leaders and notables may have been created to resolve conflicts and to guide the federated aristocratic groups. The evidence for the early presence of state-level personal leadership is not very strong, unless some credence is lent to the narratives about the kings of Rome and their interactions with those of other cities. Kings, however, are certainly mentioned in inscriptions and graffiti from the sixth century, and historians of religion appear confident that some priesthoods in Rome date back to the archaic period.[93]

There is a question that needs to be discussed at this point, concerning political changes that would take place in the late sixth–early fifth century and would lead to a broader participation in government in some central Italian states. Scholars have posited a connection between the narratives about the establishment of the Roman Republic, the standardization and leveling of burial display in some Etruscan graveyards, and the supposed introduction of regular spear line infantry (as well as some possible epigraphic data) to conclude that state power was now shared among a much larger proportion of its participants.[94] These claims are difficult to prove or disprove, but it seems hard to believe that whatever change may have happened, it would have radically transformed the basic social structure of these polities, since we see landed lineages still firmly dominating the republican political process in later periods, for which we are better informed. It is far more likely that the number of elite lineages that had access to the highest levels of government was somewhat increased and that their interactions were more tightly regulated.[95] The long-term persistence of traditional social building blocks in these states does not mean that these polities would not have their own complex internal dynamics, as a result of which changes in the balance among elites could take place. The narratives about early constitutional reforms (like the one credited to

[93] The debate on the historical status of the kings of Rome (and of the few other kings of other states that are mentioned in the textual sources) has been raging for centuries. For recent examples, Cornell 1995; Poucet 2000; Martínez-Pinna 2009; Walter 2017. For the priesthoods, overview in Smith 2007.

[94] Besides the cited literature on the transition to a republican system in Rome, similar arguments have been made for Etruscan states as well, e.g., Cifani 2003; Torelli 2016b; Tagliamonte 2017.

[95] Processes of this kind have been conceptualized in the Greek world using the notion of isonomy; e.g., Hoepfner and Schwandner 1986; Colivicchi 2014.

the king Servius Tullius) probably need to be understood in this sense.[96] Precisely the weakness and fragility of the truce imposed by the state to the elite groups always left open the door to renegotiations of the agreements between them, both in pacific and in violent ways. Just as there could be disagreement within the lineages, so there could be conflict among them.

It seems clear that political strife, in the form of violations of the rules, bloodshed, assassinations, coups, and even full-blown military clashes, was not an infrequent occurrence within (as well as among) central Italian early states. Again, it should not be forgotten that these behaviors had been typical of elite interactions before the regulatory framework that was introduced by the new cities. In a way, these outbreaks of private violence were equivalent to a temporary abrogation of the state by those elites that had exhausted or had become frustrated with the options offered by it. This kind of instability could result in rewritings of the rules after they had proven unable to regulate and mitigate the conflict. Indeed, early cities tended to be frequently reorganized by means of political reforms, of new constitutions, and of codes that were often promulgated by charismatic lawgivers or by committees of sages. Interestingly, there is a definite sense that these arbiters of the conflict ideally should be placed above or outside its fray, by virtue of their social standing, high learning, holiness, or even foreignness. Such an acute need for a neutral mediator is a further confirmation of the strain and diffidence that characterized the interactions between aristocrats belonging to the same state.[97]

In many ways, the emerging state can be seen to occupy an interstitial, nonaligned position among the jurisdictions of the lineages, primarily regulating those areas, like their interactions, that were not otherwise covered by the preexisting power structure. This takes an evident material form in the spatial choices made in the creation of central public spaces in the cities. A very good example is provided by the square of the Forum in Rome, which was placed in a previously uninhabited, flood-prone lowland between the hills, on which most of the settlement evidence was found. After an extremely laborious communal reclamation project, this area became the premier public space of the city, with the explicit symbolic significance of a truce space that was free from existing aristocratic encroachments in the form of houses, cults, or even recent burials.[98] Paramount public cults, like that of Juno Regina in Veii, also played a conspicuous role

[96] Smith 1997; Vernole 2002.

[97] Koptev 2005; Lewis 2007.

[98] Ammerman 1990; Ammerman 1996; Ammerman 2011; Hopkins 2014.

in providing an appropriate focus for the new urban identity. Significantly, however, the new public sanctuaries by themselves did not completely eliminate or homogenize existing private cults, underscoring once more the ambivalence of aristocratic behavior. Depending on the context, elite individuals could be high priests of the entire city, negotiating the favor of the gods for some communal action, or they could be doing that only for their lineage, or for another subset of the community, like the army in the field.[99]

Even when the political contract did not break down altogether, there was always a deep tension between the traditional power structure of the lineages and the new level of interaction created by the state. This would have forced the aristocrats to adopt different patterns of behavior depending on the circumstances. Absolute rulers at home and constrained citizens in council, these men had to juggle the two roles as well as they could to further both their cities and their lineages through a combination of strategies. Although in theory defined by the implicit social contract underpinning the state, the boundaries between the power domain pertaining to the elite lineages and what had been transferred to the broader community were open to different interpretations. Consequently, they were contested and renegotiated at each step, leaving room for major clashes of contrasting viewpoints. The tension between private rule and public compliance would go on to constitute a long-term element of central Italian society. It will continue to be interpreted in different forms, and its presence will shape the very nature of the Roman territorial empire.

Long-Distance Interactions

While the process of state formation in central Italy has necessarily drawn attention to the interactions happening at the local level in each emerging center, it should not be forgotten that long-distance elite relationships had existed and had played an important role since the Bronze Age. Judging from the increased evidence for gift exchange and intermarriage (as well as from elements that can be evinced from the written narratives), these interactions increased further once the cities were in place.[100] It is essential to deconstruct the assumption of nineteenth-century nationalist historians that the rise of states would automatically segregate urban elites by tying

[99] Beard, North, and Price 1998: 1–30. The presence of huts underneath some temples, for instance at Satricum, illustrates how some private cults became public; De Waele 1997. See also Torelli 2017.

[100] E.g., Gras 1985; overview now in Cangemi 2016.

their loyalty, friendship, and cooperation exclusively to the cities and to the ethnic groups to which they belonged. It is true that neighboring lineages were now clustered together in new political entities, which came with their own additional layer of ties and constraints. In many areas, beginning with interstate diplomacy, elites would often be represented by their city's government and they could benefit from alliances and friendships existing between entire cities. But it would not have been in their best interest to abandon completely the private networks that they had painstakingly created and maintained, sometimes over many centuries. The resulting interplay between the contacts at the state and the lineage level evidently had the potential of generating a great amount of complexity in central Italian politics of this period. This area is worth investigating in some detail, since it is arguable that it had a considerable impact in shaping the unification process later on.

At a basic level, having elite connections outside the city was of course useful for the same reasons it was before the advent of states: it created a network of mutual support and it facilitated the circulation of gifts and information, the travel of lineage members, and the arrangement of their marriages. The new arenas offered by cities and large sanctuaries, however, opened vast and unprecedented scope for elite interaction over long distances. Large extra-urban cult-places, for instance, would hold periodic festivals that attracted elites from far and wide, across political and ethnic boundaries (see Figure 2.8). They would have clear ground rules forbidding violence and they would allow even enemy lineages to keep a line of communication open. While civic cults had a largely synergistic role with the other urban institutions, in that they reinforced citizen identity, legitimized rulers, guaranteed oaths, and much else, some cult-places of the same magnitude outside the cities could serve very different and sometimes even contrasting purposes.[101] They would often have the function of consolidating political links between entire communities, as was the case of the so-called federal sanctuaries, such as that of the Latins on the Mons Albanus or of the Etruscans at the Fanum Voltumnae.[102] There, at regular intervals, all the elites belonging to a group of cities or to a certain ethnic denomination would gather to celebrate rituals that inevitably created another layer of relationships besides those that they enjoyed in their communities of residence. The fact that quite a few of these large sanctuaries emphasized

[101] De Grummond and Edlund-Berry 2011; Marroni 2012.

[102] Mons Albanus, Afzelius 1942: 517–729; Ampolo 1993; Marroni 2012; for the Fanum Voltumnae, Stopponi 2011; Massa-Pairault 2016; overview in Bourdin 2012: 322–60.

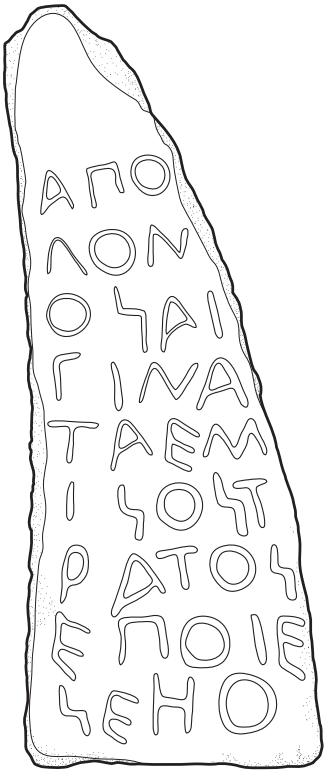

Figure 2.8 Stone anchor found at the sanctuary of Gravisca, a harbor site near Tarquinia. It bears a Greek inscription with the name of Sostratos as the dedicant. This is generally identified with the prominent sixth-century Greek merchant and traveler Sostratos of Aegina, whose successes were celebrated in Herodotus (Demetriou 2012: 65–67; Torelli 1971). Cases such as this exemplify the role that major cult-places, especially in commercial contexts, could play in creating political interaction across the entire Mediterranean (illustration by D. Diffendale).

ethnic cohesion, presumably building upon the similarities that existed between rituals performed in the same language, should not lead us to overestimate the importance of those identities in determining alliances and loyalty.[103] There were many other networks that connected elites across intersecting lines.

Some other sanctuaries, especially the extra-urban ones, often attracted elites as well as official delegations from far and wide, as is attested occasionally by signed dedications.[104] At one level, these cult-places would

[103] As has been done in a lot of the scholarship; e.g., Holloway 1994. Critique in Farney 2007; Warden 2013; Benelli 2018b.

[104] Demetriou 2012.

allow entire states to have diplomatic relations (both within and beyond their ethnic group), but, at another, they would offer opportunities for individual foreign lineages to create bonds with local ones. Thus sanctuaries could have considerable political significance, effectively becoming the physical space for friendship networks spanning across different states. A special category in this sense is represented by those cults connected with long-distance trading, which often had temples in harbor and market areas. Often dedicated to gods with a broad interethnic appeal, such as Hercules (equated with Phoenician Melkart), they facilitated the exchange of goods between merchants coming from different backgrounds but also the establishment of complex links between powerful clans and priestly groups belonging to communities halfway across the Mediterranean (see Figure 2.9).[105] What should be kept in mind is that this layer of interaction would allow, at least in theory, individual elite groups to build friendships and connections freely with outsiders, and even with enemies of their state of residence. Thus individual lineages and elite networks could weave in and out of their state-level system of treaties and alliances, according to the convenience of the moment, potentially creating an extremely complicated and heterogeneous web of ties at different tiers.

Connections of the kind described here were in all likelihood at work (and thus became visible for later historiography) when conflict flared up within individual cities. At those times, factions and lineages fighting each other and struggling for political dominance would naturally appeal to their friends in other states for that decisive support that could tilt the balance in their favor. In case of defeat or exile, on the other hand, friends outside the city could provide the losing faction with a refuge where they could repair and regroup. The paintings of a fourth-century BCE Etruscan tomb depict single combats (which probably took place two centuries before) between elite warriors from different cities.[106] These depictions certainly do not show a state-level war between two cities but rather episodes of the kind of coups, countercoups, conspiracies, and assassinations that had been a primary form of elite interaction for a long time (see Figure 2.10). In other words, it seems as if the ongoing instability and convulsions that characterized early urban political life were articulated along the lines of prevailing elite networks. Such factions in all likelihood shifted, split, and recombined all the time, as a result of the waxing and waning power of prominent elite networks.

[105] Rawlings and Bowden 2005; Malkin 2011.
[106] Buranelli 1987; Maras 2010; Massa-Pairault 2014.

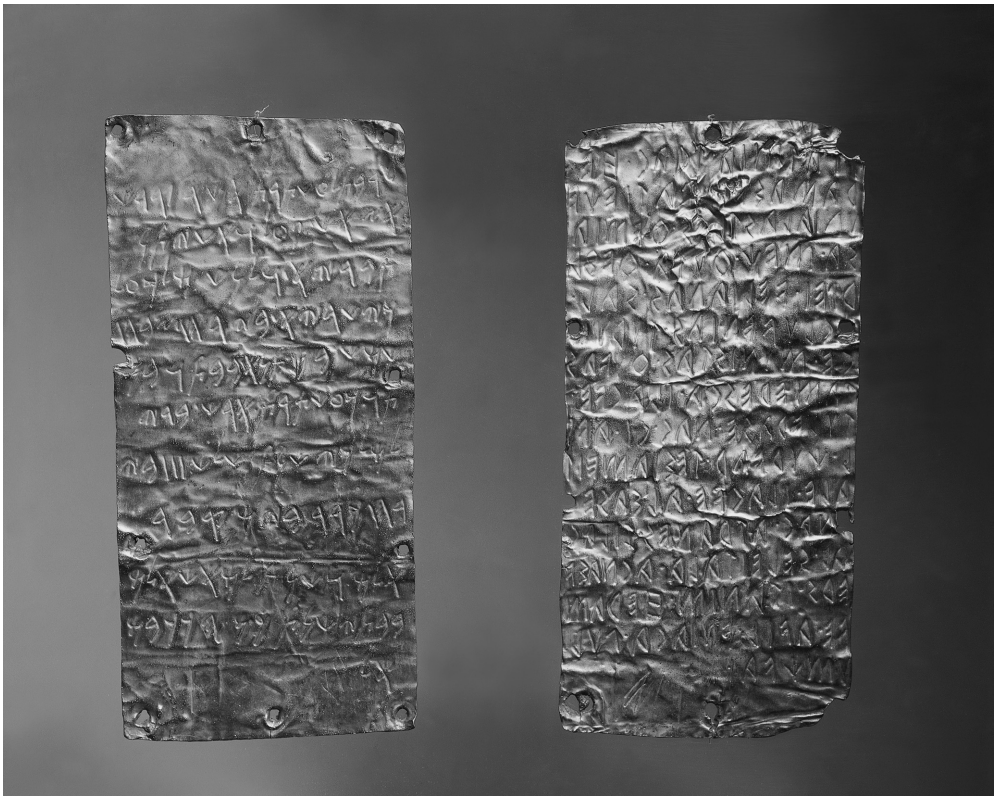

Figure 2.9 Inscriptions on gold leaf from the harbor sanctuary at Pyrgi, near Caere. One of the texts is in Etruscan (right) and one in Phoenician (left). Dated to the late sixth century BCE, they both record a dedication made by a ruler of Caere, Thefarie Velianas, to a local goddess (Bellelli and Xella 2016). The presence of a Phoenician version of the text is indicative of the long-distance connections that elites could have in this period (image courtesy of DeAgostini/Getty Images).

Power dynamics like these also allowed city rulers to interfere in the internal affairs of other cities, supporting a friendly faction there. This could extend the influence of the successful meddlers. There are various stories, supposedly relating events of the sixth century, that describe strategies of this kind being deployed. Examples include Porsenna, a king of Chiusi, who attempted unsuccessfully to exert control over Rome, or the Tarquin kings of Rome, who for a while managed to place one of theirs as a ruler in nearby Gabii.[107] While these stories cannot be taken at face value, they may well contain a glimpse of the political atmosphere that existed in

[107] Di Fazio 2000.

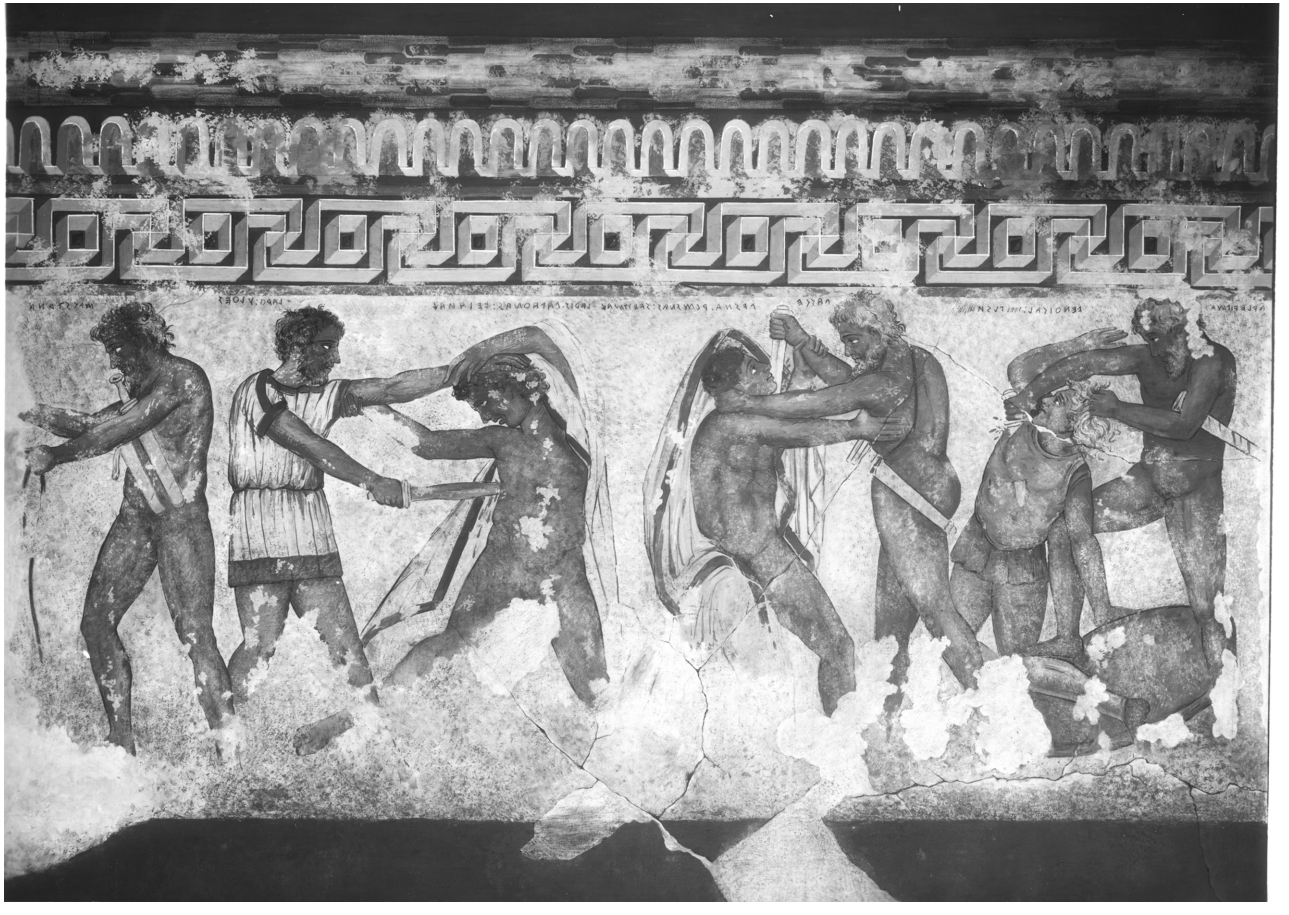

Figure 2.10 Wall paintings from the François tomb at Vulci. Created in the fourth century BCE, they portray, among other subjects, a series of combats or murders involving characters that are identifiable with sixth-century historical figures from various Etruscan cities and from Rome (Buranelli 1987; Massa-Pairault 2014). While the precise interpretation of the scenes is debated, they evoke a world of coups, political assassinations, and private wars (image courtesy of Bridgeman Images).

interstate politics at the time. An independent confirmation comes from recent archeological discoveries, which show that the early sixth-century royal imagery at Rome and Gabii was identical, strongly suggesting that related families were in power in the two cities.[108] Central Italian states were also frequently involved in open wars with each other. These conflicts were probably rooted in the traditional seasonal raiding warfare that had been going on since the Bronze Age. In the spring, after the ritual cleaning of the weapons, bands of young nonprofessional warriors led by aristocrats would set out in search for booty and adventure and return at the end of the summer, in time for the agricultural works of the fall. While undoubtedly significant clashes could occur as a result of these raids, they would not typically lead to the permanent subjection of one community to another.[109] Some land and other resources may have changed hands, possibly boundaries may have been moved slightly, but the basic constellation of small states was not affected in any serious way. The literary sources record the conquest and destruction by Rome of smaller nearby centers in the sixth century, like Crustumerium or Antemnae, but there is little firm evidence of what this would have involved for their occupants.[110] In any case, there can be no doubt that none of the major central Italian cities lost their independence or ceased to exist until much later, after the beginning of the Roman conquest in the fourth century.

A possible consequence of early wars was that peripheral areas between two states sharing a boundary could be transferred from one to the other, as a result of open conflict or any other form of city interaction. Such was the case of Fidenae, for instance, a secondary urban center that went back and forth between Rome and Veii several times.[111] It should be remembered, however, that elite groups similar to those residing in the cities were in control in the countryside and that there is very little trace of a structural change as a result of warfare. It is quite likely that some local rural lineages could simply shift their loyalty from one center of power to another, without other major alterations of their arrangements. Alternatively, the elite group in charge could be replaced or otherwise tampered with, depending on how it stood with regard to the new central authority. It is in any case unlikely that before the conquest period there was any substantial change to the way in which these lands were controlled or that new administrative tools had been introduced by successful states.

[108] Fabbri 2017.
[109] Raaflaub 1996.
[110] Quilici and Quilici Gigli 1980.
[111] See pp. 114–15.

Conclusions

When contemplating the sociopolitical landscape of central Italy between the ninth and the fifth centuries BCE, a tangled web of ties at different levels between lineages, factions, elite networks, and polities is visible. Given the scarcity of reliable evidence, one can only hope to delineate some of the essential traits of this world, taking the lineages as the main thread to follow through the evolution of the system. A key trait of the new urban entities is that they function as a new and more intensive arena for the kind of elite interaction that had been in place long before their coalescence. In this sense, they are weaker than the sum of their component parts. At the same time, however, the cities also progressively acquired a political agency of their own, but only inasmuch as they effectively represented the common interests of the groups they contained. When circumstances made it desirable, the members of the community could act in a coherent way and with a single purpose. An important example is provided by raiding warfare, where the spatial contiguity of the resources to be defended made natural allies of those who inhabited and exploited the same area. In the case of more politically significant conflicts, on the other hand, for instance over the control of a whole city, local factions may have found it expedient to activate their long-distance relationships to obtain aid for their struggle, thus effectively putting the loyalty to their social group ahead of that to the state in which they belonged. In a system of values of this kind, it would of course be preferable for a faction to be dominant in their community, even at the cost of a reduction of its autonomy or its resources, rather than being in a subordinate position in a more powerful state.

In archaic central Italian political interactions, the agency of states was always inextricably intertwined with that of factions and lineage groups. This is archeologically reflected in the tension between communal projects and private ones, which are constantly in competition over the same resources and spaces. Obviously, at any point in time, the action of the state as a whole resulted from the combination of the interests of the groups that composed it, but very often the dissenting minority would not abide by the majority's decision and would engage in their own policies, with little consideration of the state as an abstract object of loyalty. Starkly divergent elite priorities could paralyze cities for considerable lengths of time. On the whole, occurrences of pure civic politics, in which a state was at one with itself, must have been rare and would have coexisted side by side with private agendas. Those instances of single-mindedness can be explained as fortunate cases in which the elites sharing a city could agree on a strategy

that, in one way or another, benefited (or at least did not harm) a majority of them.

It should also be remembered that these early states were not composed exclusively of elite lineages and their dependents. There was a significant sector of the population that remained outside the traditional social system, such as long-distance traders, traveling craftsmen, nonelite refugees, and other itinerant characters.[112] In fact, it is arguable that, as a result of the emergence of states, the fraction of the people who were not tightly linked to the fortunes of an elite lineage continued to increase. This can be seen as an unintended consequence of the process, determined simply by the socioeconomic machinery set in motion by the new political entities. To those groups, one should add low-level government administrators and bureaucrats, temple dependents, and other urban specialists not directly relying on access to agricultural resources for their everyday subsistence. Inasmuch as it really was introduced, the rank-and-file army structure would have tended to join together horizontally individuals from different lineages but of similar rank, slowly eroding their traditional loyalties.[113] These processes created a new and growing challenge for landed elites, but one that would not become unmanageable until much later.[114]

Even when interaction involved particularly cohesive states, it often tended to replicate elite lineage interaction in an expanded form. Gifts and embassies were exchanged, leading to the creation and reinforcement of alliances, which were extending the function of the reciprocal hospitality ties that had existed for centuries between lineages. Cities too negotiated issues of supremacy and hierarchy through influence, intimidation, and warfare, but the consequence of all this posturing and conflict typically resulted in increased influence rather than stable institutional control. There was never any attempt at incorporating another major polity, a notion which was just as foreign as that of merging two lineages together. Dominance was temporary and its impositions were limited to the seizing of resources, the exaction of tribute, the demand for hostages, and especially the placing of a friendly elite group in power. This last outcome was the only one that could have a significant long-term effect. It was, however, probably more frequently and easily achieved by means of influence and conspiracies rather than through military imposition, falling again essentially within the domain of elite lineage interaction.

[112] Bourdin 2012: 552–60.

[113] Overview of the debate now in Armstrong 2016: 111–26; a comparable debate is also developing on the Greek side, e.g., Van Wees 2000; review in Kagan and Viggiano 2013.

[114] See pp. 123, 246–47.

In conclusion, a reconsideration of central Italy before the Roman expansion from a forward-looking point of view seems to show very interesting elements, which tend to be lost when the later developments are taken for granted. The structures, processes, and tensions outlined here for the early part of the first millennium constitute a background against which the new developments needed to operate. Some cities, and Rome in particular, will often appear to be moving coherently in a given direction, but close observation will reveal similar levels of multitiered priorities and loyalties as had existed before the conquest. Public and private interests will often diverge, with the old world of competing factional lineages showing through. At the same time, building on such a long tradition of elite interaction, the expansionists will often be able to bring local aristocrats over to their side precisely by appealing to their private priorities, over ethnic and civic ones. Thus many of the elements that are often perceived by modern historians to be radical innovations of the age of conquest can instead be seen as refunctionalizations of cultural and behavioral material that had been around for centuries.[115] In bringing the Roman Empire into existence, the inhabitants of central Italy (and later those of other coastal Mediterranean regions) were able to draw on a millennium-long experience of interaction and negotiation. The end product was something that had never been seen before, but many of the tools used to build it had been tested on a smaller scale for a very long time.

[115] For the concept of refunctionalization, see Terrenato 1998a, with references.