TAM FIRMUM MUNICIPIUM: THE ROMANIZATION OF VOLATERRAE AND ITS CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present paper is to reassess the events connected with the Romanization of the Etruscan metropolis of Volaterrae in the light of recent archaeological findings. The results of the Cecina Valley survey and of other related fieldwork have prompted a full reconsideration of the issue: indeed, they show a very different picture when compared with some of the recent mainstream reconstructions of the making of central Roman Italy; in particular, they are in sharp contrast with what was found in other Tyrrhenian regions, such as Southern Etruria or Campania.[1] In line with these developments, recent local work in various parts of Italy now strongly suggests the need to consider each area, almost each *civitas*, individually, leaving aside for the moment overarching models based on insufficient data. This appears to resonate with a wider and growing realization that the process of Romanization, all over the Empire, exhibits a very heterogeneous and dialectic character, so much so that the appropriateness of the very term has often been put in question.[2] For this reason, Romanization will be used here only in its weakest sense, simply as a convenient term covering the events involved in the creation of a new and unified political entity, disclaiming any assumptions concerning the acculturation of non-Roman ethnic groups. What is clearly emerging is a need for a new generation of regional studies, with the aim of carefully charting the trajectory of each community towards incorporation in the Roman state and working towards the creation of far more robust and informed syntheses. The present paper strives to make a contribution in this direction.

To provide some background, it is perhaps appropriate to recapitulate briefly the few main historical events concerning Volaterrae of which we are aware. The area later occupied by the city was the site of a fairly large settlement dating from the tenth

The following abbreviations are used:

Atlante = M. Torelli (ed.), *Atlante dei siti archeologici della Toscana* (1992)

Curti = E. Curti, E. Dench and J. R. Patterson, 'The archaeology of Central and Southern Roman Italy: recent trends and approaches', *JRS* 86 (1996), 170–89

Munzi = M. Munzi and N. Terrenato, 'La colonia di Volterra', *Ostraka* 3.1 (1994), 31–42

Harris = W. V. Harris, *Rome in Etruria and Umbria* (1971)

SRPS = A. Giardina and A. Schiavone (eds), *Società romana e produzione schiavistica* (1981)

Torelli = M. Torelli, 'Senatori Etruschi della tarda Repubblica', *Dialoghi di Archeologia* 3.3 (1969), 284–363

[1] For Etruria: A. Carandini (ed.), *La romanizzazione dell'Etruria: il territorio di Vulci* (1985). For Campania: M. Frederiksen, 'I cambiamenti delle strutture agrarie nella tarda repubblica: la Campania', in *SRPS* I, 265–87, more clearly than in idem, *Campania* (1984); diversity within Etruria was already suggested in J. P. Vallat, 'Les structures agraires de l'Italie républicaine', *AnnESC* 42 (1987), 181–218; see also P. Van Dommelen, 'Roman peasants and rural organization in Central Italy: an archaeological perspective', in E. Scott (ed.), *Theoretical Roman Archaeology* (1993), 167–86.

[2] For an analogous terminological position, see Curti, 188. Recent literature on the issue, as far as the provinces are concerned, includes: D. J. Mattingly, *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism* (1997), esp. 51–64; G. Woolf, 'Beyond Romans and natives', *WA* 28.3 (1997), 339–50; J. Webster and N. Cooper (eds), *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives* (1996). For a fuller discussion of my views of this issue with reference to Italy, N. Terrenato, 'The Romanization of Italy: global acculturation or cultural bricolage?', in C. Forcey, J. Hawthorne and R. Witcher (eds), *TRAC 97* (1998), 20–7.

century B.C., when the earliest cremation burials were deposited in the necropoleis that surround the plateau. Very little is known about the archaic period (eighth–sixth century B.C.), a phase that witnessed major steps towards centralization and urbanization in most major Etruscan settlements.[3] A major expansion certainly took place in the Hellenistic period, as is well attested by archaeological finds both in the city and in its territory. Military contact with Rome also certainly occurred at this time: a war involving the Volaterrans is recorded for 298 B.C.[4] We can confidently assume that the city was a *civitas foederata* by 205 B.C., for it contributed to Scipio's African expedition with wheat and timber for ships. Roman citizenship was granted only with the Lex Julia (in 90 B.C.), but only ten years later the city was besieged and sacked by Sulla. This entailed a demotion from full Roman civic rights and confiscation of land. Volaterrae was somehow restored to its full rights during the Civil Wars and even acquired colonial status between the Triumvirate and the Julio-Claudian age.[5] Virtually no other specific event is known till the Gothic War, which apparently ravaged both the city and its territory.

II. THE RESULTS OF THE FIELD SURVEY

Recent archaeological work, some of which is still in progress, has provided major additions to this scanty picture. A wide-ranging programme of archaeological investigations concerning Volaterrae and its territory was launched in 1987. This included excavation in the city (and later at a farmstead site) and a large-scale survey in the countryside. The results obtained, especially in the field survey, called for a radical rethinking of several themes of local history, and in particular of the process of Romanization. The survey has covered some 100 sq. km in the valley of the Cecina, the river running from the city to the Tyrrhenian Sea.[6] For the question posed in this paper, the most essential issue is the comparison between the human landscapes of the pre- and post-conquest periods. Our knowledge of the pre-Roman period is based on the evidence for the Hellenistic period, when a massive increase in the number of archaeologically visible sites takes place (Fig. 1).[7] The vast majority of these are small scatters of artefacts in the 100–2,000 sq. m range, most of which are to be interpreted as small farms, as we shall see below. Larger settlements are much less frequent; a few among them are clearly characterized as having special residential status by the presence of materials such as mosaic tesserae, decorated plaster, marble fragments, architectonic terracottas, *suspensurae* or column bricks; on this basis, these sites have been termed villas. A few other large settlements completely lack artefacts of that quality (or even

[3] For Volaterrae, see G. Cateni and A. Maggiani, 'Volaterra dalla prima età del Ferro al V secolo a.c.', in *Aspetti della cultura di Volterra Etrusca* (1997), 43–92. In general on the process of urbanization in archaic Central Italy, see M. Pacciarelli, 'Ricerche topografiche a Vulci', *Studi Etruschi* 56 (1989–90), 11–48; M. Rendeli, *Città aperte* (1993).

[4] Liv. 10.12.

[5] For the history and sources on Volaterrae, Harris, *passim*; P. Hohti, 'Aulus Caecina the Volaterran', in *Studies in the Romanization of Etruria, AIRF* 5 (1975), 405–33.

[6] The Cecina Valley Survey, scheduled to be completed in 1999, is aimed at covering a representative sample of the Cecina basin. This is an area of about 800 sq. km, which represents more than a third of the entire territory of Volaterrae. For a full description of the methodology used, see N. Terrenato, 'La ricogni-

zione della Val di Cecina', in M. Bernardi (ed.), *Archeologia del Paesaggio* (1992), 561–96. Particular attention has been paid to the recording of the factors influencing the quality of the recovered data; N. Terrenato and A. J. Ammerman, 'Visibility and site recovery in the Cecina Valley Survey, Italy', *JFA* 23 (1996), 91–109. For a preliminary report, N. Terrenato and A. Saggin, 'Ricognizioni archeologiche nel territorio di Volterra', *Archeologia Classica* 46 (1994), 465–82.

[7] The scarcity of diagnostic pottery present in rural contexts before the Hellenistic period makes it very difficult to assess precisely the scale of the phenomenon: human occupation before the third century B.C. is very likely to be strongly under-represented in the results of most surveys in the region. A similar situation is described in G. Barker (ed.), *A Mediterranean Valley* (1995), 181 ff.

mortar) and have been interpreted here as villages, even if this concept still has only very vague archaeological correlates in Roman Italy.[8]

When described in these simple terms the results of the field survey show very marked and discernible trends. In almost all cases, villas are present only along the coastal plain, while farms and villages are distributed, in different densities, throughout the area surveyed. The comparison of this Hellenistic picture with the one dating to late Republic and early Empire (roughly 100 B.C.–A.D. 50) is something of an anticlimax (Fig. 2). The differences are far slighter than one might expect: a modest decline in the overall number of farms and an equally low number of new small sites replacing Hellenistic ones. This mild transformation is far more pronounced on the coastal plain (where a few more villas also make their appearance) and, to an extent, in the Sterza valley, when compared with the rest of the Cecina basin. On the whole, however, the impact of Romanization on the countryside of Volaterrae seems fairly moderate, and indeed almost imperceptible in the interior. It is also notable that in the following periods this picture keeps changing only very slowly, with a gentle decline in the numbers of all types of settlement till late Roman times.[9] All this is in sharp contrast with the results of similar large-scale projects carried out in neighbouring Southern Etruria, the results of which have often been taken as representative of the region as a whole.[10] Perhaps the most striking difference is the virtual absence of villas in a large proportion of the area covered. This may seem a conclusion based only on negative evidence, but it must be kept in mind that in the survey great care has been taken to enhance the quality of recovery, with the specific intention of obtaining a balanced sample of sites. Obviously, the claim cannot be made here that all the archaeological sites ever present have been located. Rather, our inference is based on the fact that over 150 sites of the Classical period have been found in the interior of the Cecina Valley and not one of them is characterized by the artefacts listed above as diagnostic. As there is no obvious reason why the large sample recovered should be biased against settlement types such as villas, which are usually particularly visible, our results strongly suggest that these sites were exceptionally rare. It is also worth recalling that similar criteria to identify villas have been adopted in most survey projects in Central Italy.[11]

Even on the coastal plain, where some villas are found, they appear in a radically different context from that of at least some areas of South Etruria. Not only are they less frequent here, but they coexist with large numbers of farms and villages, whose first occupation often pre-dates the villas by centuries. In other words, the pre-conquest traditional settlement system seems wholly unaffected by the addition of the new residential sites, instead of being disrupted by them. It must be recalled here that precisely the disappearance of pre-Roman farms has been widely interpreted as the

[8] Settlements with high residential status will be conventionally termed villas, without entering into the complex debate on the definition of Roman rural site types; cf. Van Dommelen, op. cit. (n. 1), 171; J. P. Vallat, 'De la prospection à la synthése d'histoire rural', in J. M. Pailler (ed.), *Actualité de l'Antiquité* (1989), 101–27. At Cecina, there are only a very few doubtful cases in this admittedly rough differentiation between villas and villages. For villages in Italy, M. Frederiksen, 'Changes in the pattern of settlement', in P. Zanker (ed.), *Hellenismus in Mittelitaliens* (1975), 341–55; J. R. Patterson, 'Village settlement in Italy', *RAC* 2, forthcoming.

[9] The most perceptible discontinuity in this rather uneventful landscape history is datable between the second half of the first century B.C. and the first decades of the first century A.D., when a significant number of new sites make their appearance, Munzi, esp. the graph on fig. 3; for the very slow decline in late Roman times, Terrenato and Saggin, op. cit. (n. 6), 475 ff.

[10] It is enough to compare the distribution maps produced by two main survey projects, the South Etruria and the Ager Cosanus; T. W. Potter, *The Changing Landscape of South Etruria* (1979); I. Attolini et al., 'Political geography and productive geography between the valleys of the Albegna and the Fiora in northern Etruria', in G. Barker and J. Lloyd (eds), *Roman Landscapes* (1991), 142–52, with bibl.

[11] cf. S. L. Dyson, 'Settlement patterns in the *Ager Cosanus*', *JFA* 5 (1978), 257. It must also be considered that the few sites which have a size compatible with that of a villa (and which have been interpreted as villages because of the absence of quality artefacts) often occupy strong defensible positions on steep hilltops, a locational choice hardly compatible with residential settlements; it seems in other words highly unlikely that the absence of villas could simply be put down to a hypothetical local scarcity of decorative elements. This interpretation has been confirmed by recent geophysical work carried out on several large sites in the middle Cecina Valley by S. Kay: the results show non-rectangular structures which are incompatible with villa architecture.
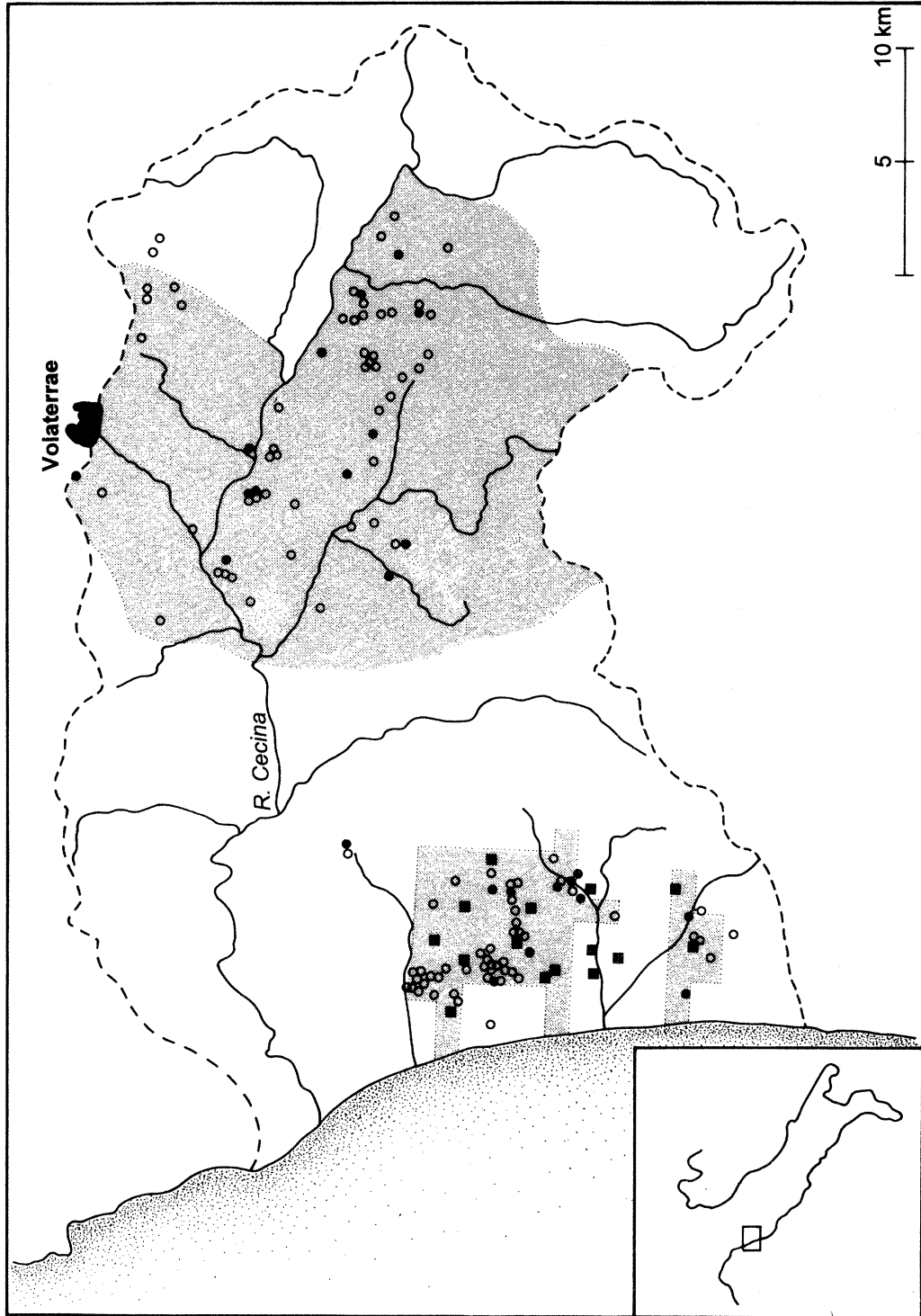
FIG. I. DISTRIBUTION MAP OF THE CECINA VALLEY SHOWING SITES OCCUPIED IN THE THIRD AND SECOND CENTURIES B.C. (◉ = FARMS, ● = VILLAGES, ■ = VILLAS). IN THE SHADED AREAS, ALL VISIBLE TRACTS HAVE BEEN SURVEYED. THE SITES ARE DATED BY THE PRESENCE OF MATERIALS SUCH AS BLACK-GLAZE WARES AND GRAECO-ITALIC AMPHORAE.
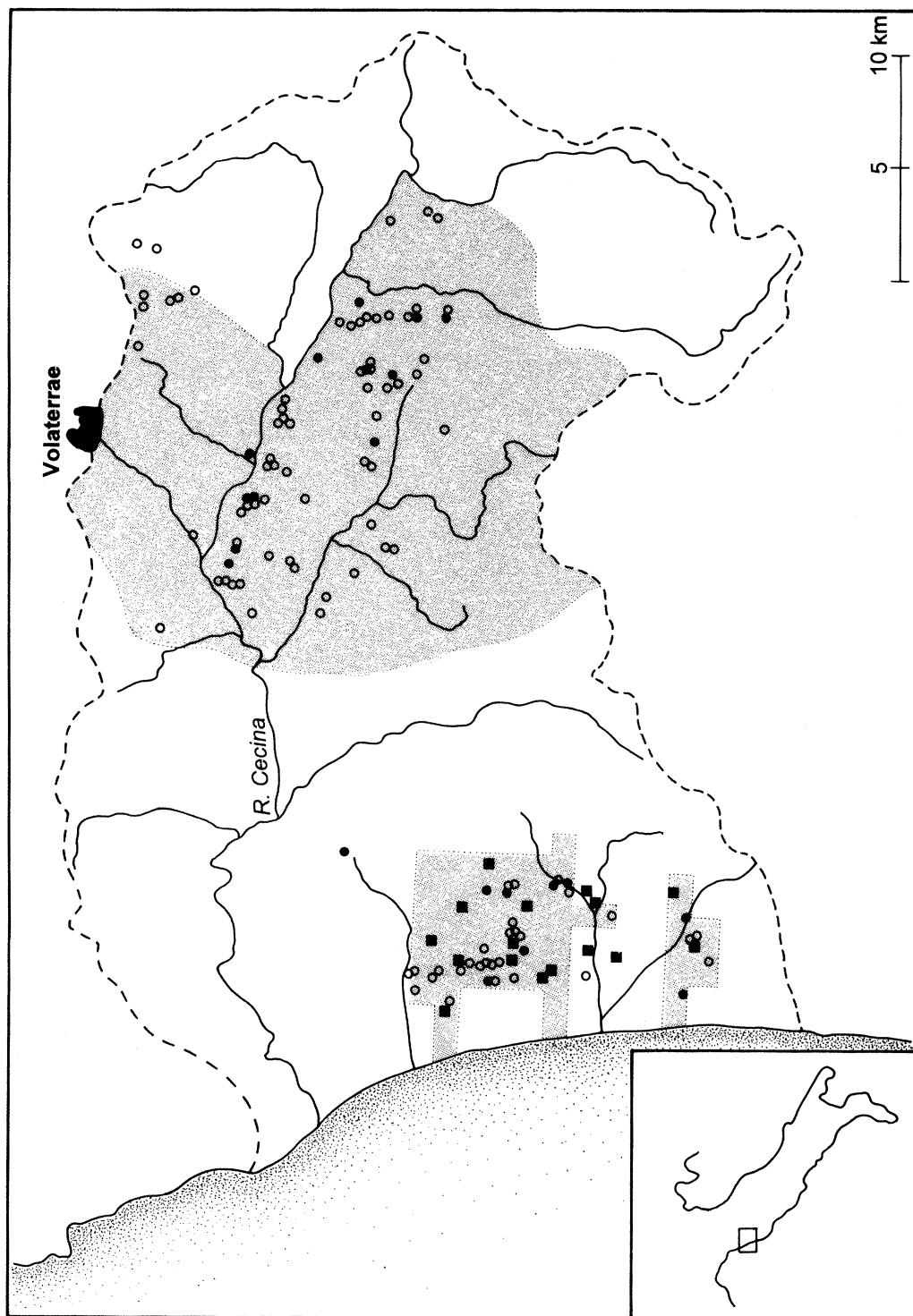
FIG. 2.   DISTRIBUTION MAP OF THE CECINA VALLEY SHOWING SITES OCCUPIED IN THE LATE FIRST CENTURY B.C. AND FIRST CENTURY A.D. (SYMBOLS AS IN FIG. 1). THE SITES ARE DATED BY THE PRESENCE OF MATERIALS SUCH AS ARRETINE RED SLIP WARES AND DRESSEL 2–4 AMPHORAE.

consequence of the introduction of intensive slave agriculture in Italy.[12] As we will try to demonstrate in the following paragraphs, the new archaeological evidence seems to show that the social and economic conditions in the countryside of Volaterrae changed only very slowly; and even when they did, it was by means of a piecemeal *bricolage* of new and traditional cultural elements, rather than in massive response to sudden Italy-wide developments. While the search for these broad trends has characterized most of the scholarship until the 1980s, recent work (and some field-survey projects in particular) has clearly exposed the shortcomings of most current generalizations. Human landscapes in the district of Rieti (and to some extent in parts of the Biferno valley), for instance, show elements of continuity between pre- and post-conquest periods similar to those described above.[13] At the same time, the Ager Lunensis appears to be much more heavily impacted by incorporation and colonization than the neighbouring Cecina valley.[14] As will be argued more extensively in the Conclusions, a careful reassessment of the effects of the conquest for each rural area appears to be a necessary step in order to obtain a more realistic picture of the Romanization of Italy. At the moment, the evidence suggests that the response to annexation was the result of many local factors, and was thus highly variable across space.

III. THE TERRITORY OF VOLATERRAE

To complement and contextualize the results of the Cecina Valley survey it is worth also taking into account the evidence of occasional finds and isolated excavations.[15] Even granted their unsystematic character, some useful observations can be made, for example, by looking at the distribution of villas across the whole of the territory of Volaterrae. Although there are only eight such settlements, not counting those located in our project, they seem to exhibit a very distinctive patterning, essentially compatible with the results of the field survey (Fig. 3). Villas have been discovered only in peripheral areas of the territory, more precisely along north–south communication lines: the Via Aurelia, along the coast, and the valley of the river Elsa. The core of the land controlled by Volaterrae seems to be completely devoid of such residential sites, while the traditional settlement system with farms and villages appears to maintain its fundamental structural role long after the Romanization of the city-state. If this conclusion is true, then what was the part played by villas in such a conservative human landscape?

Taking a closer look at these sites may help in defining their nature. Excavation data are available only for very few of them, and, as usual, the work has concentrated on the *partes urbanae*: large rooms with mosaic floors have been uncovered at San Vincenzino and La Pieve; other mosaics are preserved in the Museo Guarnacci at

[12] A. Carandini, 'Sviluppo e crisi delle manifatture rurali e urbane', in *SRPS* I, 253; idem, *Schiavi in Italia* (1988), 121–9, discussed in Van Dommelen, op. cit. (n. 1). The general validity of this simple economic model is being reassessed (cf. Section VII). In the 1980s it was often assumed to be dominant in most of arable peninsular Italy, but it had really been tested only in limited areas (mainly within Latium, Campania, and South Etruria). The areas not conforming to this model (such as some districts covered by the South Etruria Survey or parts of northern Etruria) were generally described as 'residual modes of production'; M. Torelli, 'Osservazioni conclusive su Lazio, Umbria ed Etruria', in *SRPS* I, 426; contrast the recent works cited at n. 13.

[13] Rieti appears as a clear instance of strong continuity, S. Coccia and D. Mattingly, 'Settlement history, environment and human exploitation of an intermontane basin in the central Apennines: the Rieti survey

1988–1991, Part I', *PBSR* 60 (1992), 271–4; eidem, 'Settlement history, environment and human exploitation of an intermontane basin in the central Apennines: the Rieti survey 1988–1991, Part II', *PBSR* 63 (1995), 115 ff. In the Biferno Valley, Romanization is seen as 'disastrous', but only 'in the long run', since, by the middle Empire, it results in the creation of *latifundia* and depopulation, Barker, op. cit. (n. 7), 217 ff.

[14] N. Mills, 'Luni: settlement and landscape in the Ager Lunensis', in G. Barker and R. Hodges (eds), *Archaeology and Italian Society* (1981), 261–8.

[15] These sites are not particularly abundant and they probably represent only a small fraction of the complete human landscape, and one that is biased towards large, monumental and particularly visible sites. The eight sites considered here are: *Atlante*, 178, 211, 218, 219, 277, 278, 280, 281 (Sites 112.29.1, 113.111, 113.169, 113.177.2, 119.4, 119.7, 119.26, 119.40).
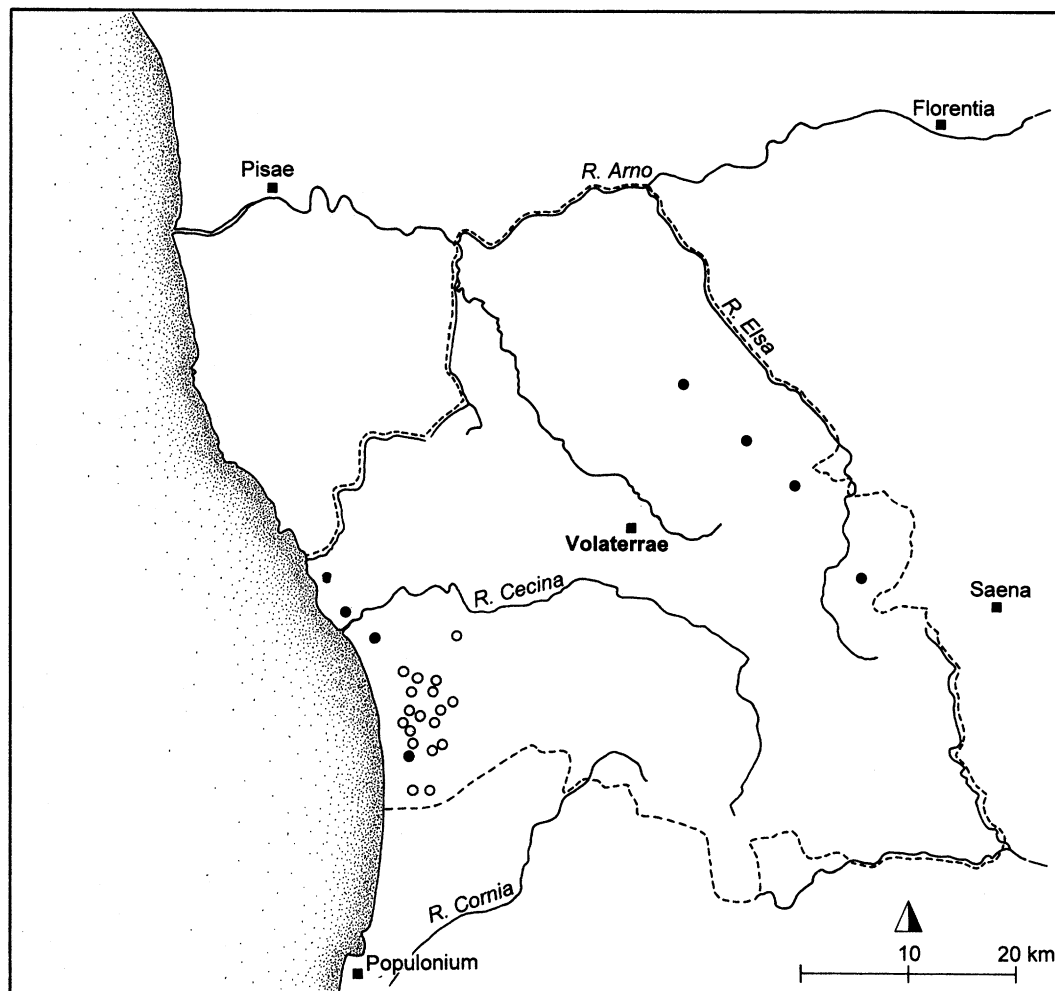
FIG. 3.   DISTRIBUTION MAP OF VILLA SITES IN THE TERRITORY OF VOLATERRAE (◐ = SITES FOUND BY THE CECINA SURVEY,
● = SITES KNOWN FROM THE LITERATURE).

Volterra, and are said to come from Torre Segalari.[16] In general, fashionable architec-
tural styles seem to have been introduced from the late second century B.C. (thus before
annexation by Rome), while the addition of mosaics and baths became widespread in
the centuries of the middle Empire, with a clear trend towards residentialization,
perhaps connected with a shift in élite priorities from the public and urban sphere to the
private and rural one.[17] While there is no question about their function as high-status
residences, the extent of their productive areas is still very dubious; no clear indication
of large-scale agricultural production exists, although this piece of negative evidence
would need to be tested further by the complete excavation of several such sites.

     All things considered, it seems prudent not to take it for granted that the economic
and social correlates of villas in the territory of Volaterrae were those so routinely

[16] F. Donati, L. Luschi, M. Paoletti and M. C. Parra,
'Lo scavo della villa romana di San Vincenzino presso
Cecina (Livorno)', *Rassegna di Archeologia* 8 (1989),
263–399; G. Ciampoltrini, 'Mosaici d'età giulio clau-
dia nell'Etruria settentrionale', *Prospettiva* 69 (1993),
52–65; E. Fiumi, *Volterra Etrusca e Romana* (1976),
52.

[17] There seems to be an interesting connection
between the decline of private munificence in urban
centres and a trend toward élite expenditure on villa
improvements between the late second and the third
century A.D.; Terrenato and Saggin, op. cit. (n. 6),
479.

connected with this settlement type.[18] A massive slave presence seems in any case unlikely, given the coexistence of farms and villages with the villa sites. An alternative model has recently been advanced, one centred on the distinction between central and peripheral villas.[19] The latter would be characterized by the prevalence of *coloni* over slaves, and by large estates not intensively cultivated. Most of northern Etruria would fall within this category, which supposedly includes less fertile regions, where intensive agriculture would not repay the investment. This basic distinction has had the ground-breaking merit of beginning to nuance a previously monolithic view of the villa system in Central Roman Italy; its strict application to our case-study, however, encounters several difficulties. To begin with, the very existence of large districts without villas (such as the interior of the Cecina Valley) constitutes a striking exception to the fundamental assumption that such sites everywhere represented the top rank of a centralized settlement hierarchy, always controlling, with larger or smaller estates, most of the land. Moreover, fertility seems here not to be a convincing agent causing regions to conform to one model or another, since the coasts of north Etruria are no less fertile then those farther south. A more complex explanation than simple environmental determinism is needed to account for the increasingly stark differences among the regions of Roman Italy.

The social status of the families living in the farmsteads probably represents the critical issue in understanding the structure of the human landscape at Cecina. This is obviously an elusive question, and one for which it is difficult to obtain direct evidence; some observations, nevertheless, may be brought to bear on the issue. It must be noted that these small settlements display the same characteristics both along the coast, where they mix with villas, and in the interior where villas are absent. This again suggests that the relationship that the farms had with villas was of a different nature than that of the colonate, which has been suggested as the basic model for these non-slave situations.[20] It could be argued, instead, that the much wider spacing of villas on the coastal plain may be seen as evidence for the economic autonomy of smaller farms, rather than their incorporation in *latifundia*—which, in any case, are not easy to imagine for a period as early as the second or first century B.C., when most of the villas were built. Indeed, it must be kept in mind that the dominant settlement system was largely created in early Hellenistic times, when the region was outside direct Roman jurisdiction, and its long continuity points more towards the survival of traditional and local forms of dependence, than towards the adoption of Roman ones.[21]

While this will be explored further in Section VI, there is another type of evidence that can throw further light on social relationships in the countryside of Volaterrae. Analysis of some élite burials connected with villa sites in the region offers some hints about the ethnic origins and the cultural heritage of the owners. Unfortunately, most of these tombs date to the second and third centuries A.D.[22] The only two in which the name of the deceased has survived are those at Scorgiano and Il Puntone. At the latter site an inscribed stone slab was found, reputedly belonging to a mausoleum. The deceased was a knight, a magistrate, and a priest in Volaterrae and both his name,

[18] A strong economic function common to most villas is implicit in many analyses of this settlement type, e.g. A. Carandini, 'La villa romana', in *Storia di Roma* 4 (1989), 101–30; X. Lafon, 'Les villas de l'Italie impériale', in *L'Italie de Auguste à Dioclétien* (1994), 219–26; Curti, 175–6.

[19] A. Carandini, 'I paesaggi agrari dell'Italia romana visti a partire dall'Etruria', in *L'Italie,* op. cit. (n. 18), 167–74, where the Ager Volaterranus is ascribed to a category characterized by the 'ville periferiche'. The latter would be those situated in the 'longinqua regio Italiae'.

[20] The term *colonus* has a wide range of meanings and presents some ambiguities: P. W. De Neeve, *Colonus* (1984), esp. ch. 4; P. D. A. Garnsey, 'Non-slave labour in the Roman world', in P. D. A. Garnsey (ed.), *Non-slave Labour in the Graeco-Roman World* (1980), 34–47.

[21] Customary ethnic law could occasionally survive in rural areas, and be *de facto* enforced, long after the official imposition of Roman right; C. R. Whittaker, 'Rural labour in three Roman provinces', in Garnsey, op. cit. (n. 20), 73–99; with specific reference to Etruria, S. Mazzarino, 'Sociologia del mondo etrusco e problemi della tarda etruscità', *Historia* 6 (1957), 98–122.

[22] The sudden increase in the frequency of élite rural burials should probably be seen in connection with the shift in the centre of gravity of the aristocracies from the city to the countryside, described above (n. 17). Also, there might have been a degree of conscious revival of pre-Roman traits in the Middle Empire, similar to what happened in some Western provincial contexts.

Anaenius, and his cognomen, Pharianus, have been interpreted as of Etruscan origin, as noted by the first editor.[23] A very similar conclusion can be drawn in the other case, where a finely carved sarcophagus bears the name of the lady Pestinia Apricula.[24] The otherwise unknown family name of the *Pestina betrays its Etruscan origin from the termination -na, and could well be the Latinized version of an Etruscan family name perhaps connected with the attested Etruscan *pestiu*.[25] Even when the name of the owner of the villa is not known, other indicators may point in the same direction, such as the architecture of the tomb as an accessible underground chamber.[26] In conclusion, even if known cases are admittedly few, a very strong case can be made for suggesting that villa owners in the territory of Volaterrae were still largely of Etruscan descent centuries after the annexation. This reconstruction may find additional support in the description given by Rutilius Namatianus of the estate still owned on the coastal plain by a L. Caecina Albinus, a member of the best known Etruscan clan in Volaterrae.[27] Moreover, it is clear that, while the élites emulated Roman fashions in their outward manifestations, they clung strongly to their traditional cultural traits in some private spheres, such as burial practices.[28] On the basis of all this, it seems reasonable to conjecture that many Etruscan aristocratic families managed to maintain a position of eminence, especially in rural contexts, far into the centuries of the Empire.

An instructive and complementary piece of evidence is provided by the distribution in northern Etruria of funerary stelae dating to the imperial period. An independent study of this class of artefacts has shown that the territory of Volaterrae, when compared with other districts, such as the Valdarno or the Ager Lunensis, is notably devoid of these monuments (Fig. 4); perhaps significantly, the few examples tend to appear in the same areas where villas are present. The spread of this kind of grave-marker is generally seen as an indication of the presence of new middle-class settlers coming from outside and strongly acculturated, such as army veterans or 'enterprising freedmen'.[29] As an explanation for the absence of these stelae, it has been suggested that such sociological groups were particularly scarce in several north Etruscan cities, including Volaterrae and Arretium, because very few external elements had been incorporated into those communities.

IV. CONTRASTING SITES: THE FARM AND THE CITY

Notwithstanding the high frequency of small farms in northern Etruria, there are virtually no excavated examples in the literature. To begin filling in this gap in our knowledge, one of the farmsteads found in the survey (in 1989) was selected for closer investigation. The site at San Mario was a 500 sq. m scatter of artefacts dating from the late fourth century B.C. to the fifth century A.D., lying along the older fluvial terraces of the Cecina. San Mario was an absolutely typical example of the most common settlement type in the valley, and was chosen simply on the grounds of its promising stratigraphic potential, as assessed with a series of test augerings carried out there and on a selection of sites of similar appearance. Its excavation brought to light a simple structure

[23] E. Pack, 'M' Anaenius Pharianus', ZPE 43 (1981), 249–70, Van Dommelen, op. cit. (n. 1), 181 ff.
[24] Atlante, 218 (Site 113.169); N. Casini, 'Il sarcofago di Apricula', Archeologia Classica 9 (1957), 76–87. The burial of Pestinia is not clearly associated with a villa structure, but is probably to be interpreted as such. For the termination -na see J. Kaimio, 'The ousting of Etruscan by Latin in Etruria', in Studies in the Romanization of Etruria, AIRF 5 (1975), 146ff.
[25] H. Rix, Etruskische Texte (1991), Cl.1.1407; idem, Das Etruskische Cognomen (1961), 96, 157, 186 for the relationship between terminations -u and -na.
[26] The best example is represented by the tomb at Cassia; G. De Marinis, Topografia storica della Val d'Elsa in periodo etrusco (1977), 64; Atlante, 219 (Site

113.177.2). Moreover, the presence of an iron hatchet among the grave-goods at this site would deserve fuller consideration.
[27] See Section v.
[28] A very similar situation, supported by crystal clear epigraphic evidence, in S. Fontana, 'Romanization and Punic persistencies in Tripolitania: the funerary evidence', in S. Keay and N. Terrenato (eds), Italy and the West. Comparative Issues in Romanization, forthcoming.
[29] G. Ciampoltrini, 'Le stele funerarie d'età imperiale dell'Etruria settentrionale', Prospettiva 30 (1982), 2–12; a re-examination of the problem has recently been carried out by L. Camin.
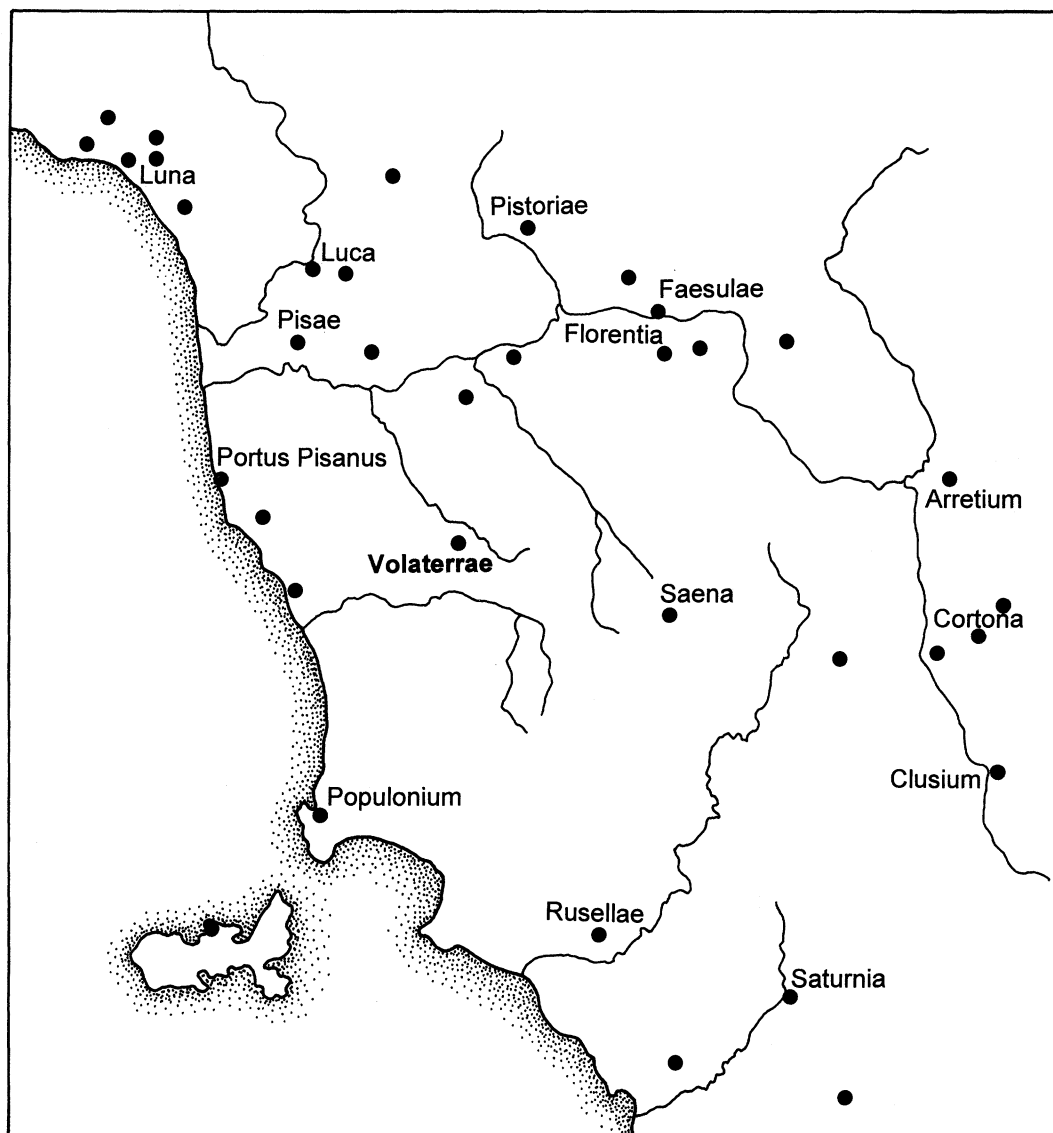
FIG. 4.   DISTRIBUTION OF STELAE FINDSPOTS IN NORTHERN ETRURIA (COURTESY OF L. CAMIN).

composed of two rooms with sunken floors and a yard with a cistern (Fig. 5).[30] The drystone walls were built with large pebbles collected in the river and bound with clay, the sunken floors were made of beaten earth, and there was no trace of wall-facings or pavings, such as plaster or *opus signinum*, anywhere on the site. No bricks were found, while tiles were only employed for the cistern and the roof. This building seems to have been used, with very few alterations, throughout the period of occupation at San Mario, i.e. for about eight centuries from the Hellenistic through to the Late Roman period. Some aspects of the farm building appear absolutely peculiar: sunken floors are not elsewhere attested in Roman Italy and the complete absence of mortar is very unusual after the third century B.C.
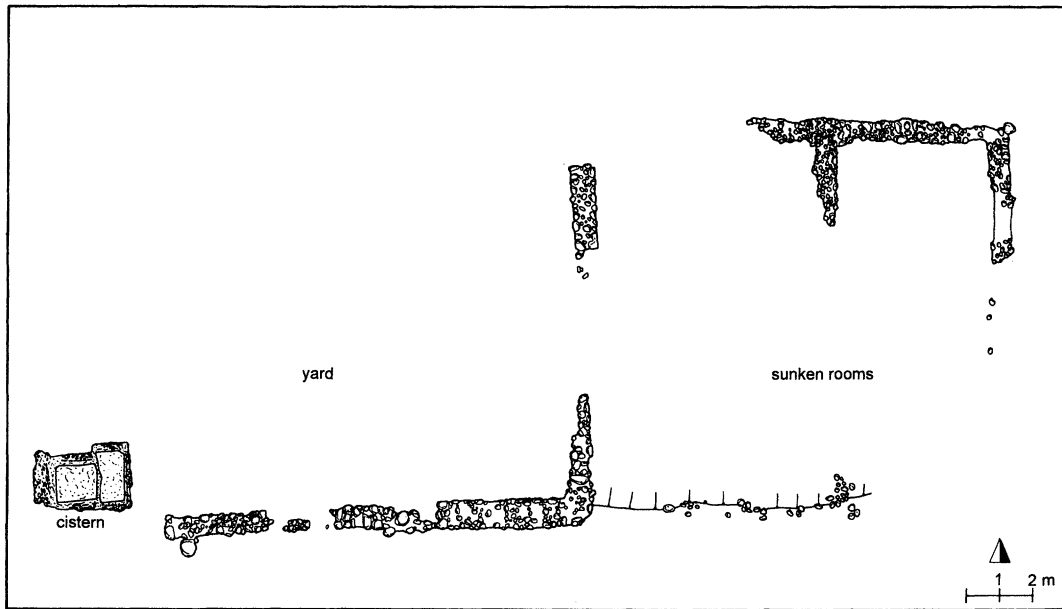
FIG. 5.   THE MAIN STRUCTURES AT SAN MARIO.

Such a striking continuity in terms of locational choices and vernacular architecture seems to suggest an unbroken line of tenants with similar ideas of what their dwelling should look like. At the same time the excavation has recovered a considerable quantity of imported fine wares, as well as a surprising range of small finds, including the bronze figurine of a god, a fine Etruscan bronze clasp, a cameo gem, many coins, and other fairly expensive items. In other words, the stable character of the site cannot simply be explained in terms of the constraints of a basic subsistence economy; the occupants had access to some surplus, but this was not directed towards improving the building in which they lived. They obviously had different priorities, especially when compared with the farms of southern Etruria, which were probably built according to Roman standards.[31] Productive facilities also seem to have left little trace and were probably of an ephemeral kind, one not compatible with intensive agriculture. The ecological assemblages point towards a mixed economy, with a not insignificant role played by hunting, gathering, and logging in the nearby woods (as is shown by the presence of animal bones of species such as deer, turtle, dormouse, hare, and fox together with cornel, Juneberry and strawberry-tree in the palaeobotanical remains), as well as fishing and collecting molluscs in the river. This small-scale, long-term, sustainable ecological balance seems to be totally contrary to the concept of an intensive and exploitative agricultural regime.

Being the only excavated example, we cannot be absolutely certain that San Mario was a typical farmstead in the Cecina Valley. For this reason, geophysical surveys have been carried out by us at other similar sites in the area, and have produced comparable results. On the whole, there seems to be a marked convergence between the results of the field survey (long-lived farms with no mortar or plaster), those of the on-site work (small structures with very simple plans), and those of the excavation. This evidence appears strong enough to advance the hypothesis that the elements of continuity

[31] As shown by the example at Giardino, in the Ager Cosanus, M. G. Celuzza, 'Un insediamento di contadini: la fattoria di Giardino', in Carandini, op. cit. (n. 1), 106–7, or that of Monte Forco, in the Ager Veientanus, G. B. D. Jones, 'Capena and the *Ager Capenas*', *PBSR* 31 (1963), 147–58; such sites are seen as 'too grand' for the poorest peasants in L. Foxhall, 'The dependent tenant: landholding and labour in Italy and Greece', *JRS* 80 (1990), 97–114, but their difference with San Mario may perhaps be explained also in cultural terms. An analysis of the settlement type in J. P. Vallat, 'Survey archaeology and rural history—a difficult but productive relationship', in Barker and Lloyd, op. cit. (n. 10), 11–12. See also P. D. A. Garnsey, 'Where did Italian peasants live?', *PCPhS* 205 (1979), 1–25.

displayed by this rural landscape for almost a millennium are an indication of the survival of a community still sharing a set of traditional cultural traits.

In most reconstructions of the Romanization of Italy a predominant amount of attention has normally been paid to urban centres, and to public spaces in particular. This approach may have resulted in a perceptible bias in the phenomenon's analysis, extrapolating, from the change noted in one sphere, similar effects for the remainder of the community.[32] If one looks at the city of Volaterrae, for example, Romanization seems to have had a fairly major impact. Funerary inscriptions were almost exclusively in Latin by the end of the first century B.C., *IVviri* are attested from 70–60 B.C., and Latin cults appeared alongside Etruscan ones.[33] With the Augustan age, even if the environmentally constrained layout of the city was maintained, a grand theatre, to which a monumental *porticus pone scaenam* was added later on, was built on the southern edge of the city.[34] Great urban reservoirs were also added, helping to relieve long-term problems with water-supply.[35] This building programme, mostly Julio-Claudian, marks the second great expansion of Volaterrae after the Hellenistic one (when new and much wider walls were built and two main temples were erected on the acropolis).[36] In the private sector, remains of élite houses have been uncovered, although the adoption of the domus building type may have preceded the conquest.[37] Besides these traits of Roman urban culture, which have long been over-stressed, there are other indicators that make the picture more complex. For example, Etruscan élite funerary rituals, involving cremation and elaborately carved alabaster urns deposited in underground rock-cut chambers, persisted till the early Empire, sometimes with the use of bilingual inscriptions, which underline the ambivalent character of the local Etrusco-Roman aristocracy. The prosopography shows a massive presence of Latinized Etruscan names, and some family lines can be reconstructed.[38] Two members of the noblest Volaterran clan, the Caecinae, were the benefactors who dedicated the theatre, complete with an imposing inscription.[39] The low impact of this new large public space on the already cramped city is likely to have been designed to minimize disruption of previous residents.[40] In conclusion, the much stronger influence of Roman culture in the city, in comparison to the conservatism characterizing the countryside, is more than clear. At the same time, it is essential to appreciate that even within the urban context, emulation is mostly confined to public aspects of élite behaviour. The outcome of this articulated process is a new and composite cultural entity which must be analysed in its own terms.[41]

[32] N. Terrenato, 'A tale of three cities. The Romanization of northern coastal Etruria', in Keay and Terrenato, op. cit. (n. 28).

[33] Munzi, 34.

[34] G. Cateni (ed.), *Il teatro romano di Volterra* (1993). Recent excavations within the area of the *porticus pone scaenam* have revealed that space for the grand complex was made by means of a massive land reclamation project involving the levelling of a deep and otherwise uninhabitable ravine on the periphery of the city; E. Regoli and N. Terrenato (eds), *Il Museo Civico Archeologico di Rosignano Marittimo* (1998), V.4.

[35] Munzi, 35–6; A. Furiesi, *L'acqua a Volterra* (forthcoming).

[36] M. Cristofani, 'Volterra', *NS* 1973, Suppl. 1; Fiumi, op. cit. (n. 16); Regoli and Terrenato, op. cit. (n. 34).

[37] *Atlante*, 189, 194 (Sites n. 12.2, 12.3, 41); E. Fiumi, 'Volterra', *NS* (1955), 114.

[38] Munzi, 40; E. Benelli, *Le iscrizioni bilingui etrusco-latine* (1994). A massacre of Volaterran aristocrats after 80 B.C. is suggested on the basis of very questionable calculations by F. Coarelli and O. Luchi, in M. Cristofani (ed.), *Caratteri dell'Ellenismo nelle urne etrusche* (1977), 142–4; but cf. the much more convin-

cing position of M. Cristofani, ibid., 80, 144, and the recent critique in C. Smith, 'Etruria and the Romans: cultural and material transformations in the Republican period', *RAC* 2, forthcoming. The use of urns at Volaterrae is attested at least until the first century A.D.; M. Nielsen, 'The lid sculptures of Volaterran cinerary urns', in *Studies in the Romanization of Etruria, AIRF* 5 (1975), 387–9.

[39] Cateni, op. cit. (n. 34), with the new interpretation in M. Munzi, 'Due bolli dei *Caecinae* dal teatro di Volterra', in *Epigrafia della produzione e della distribuzione. Actes de la VIIe rencontre sur l'épigraphie* (1994), 385–95 (=*AE* 1994, 610).

[40] The huge connected reclamation of uninhabited land is clearly meant to make room for the theatre complex with no destruction of existing buildings, see n. 34.

[41] A convincing refutation of the false dichotomy Roman/native in Woolf, op. cit. (n. 2); also idem, 'The formation of Roman provincial cultures', in J. Metzler, M. Millett, N. Roymans and J. Slofstra (eds), *Integration in the Early Roman West* (1995), 9–18; for the composite and highly heterogeneous character of the resulting cultural set, Terrenato, op. cit. (n. 2).

V. THE LOCAL ÉLITES

Building on the review of the most relevant archaeological data concerning the Romanization of Volaterrae, both urban and rural, it is now time to discuss their implications for our understanding of the processes involved, at the political, cultural, and social level. When considered in its entirety, the evidence definitely calls for a broader historical reassessment of this transition. The process appears a very complex and tangled one, accordingly demanding a sensitive explanation, one also paying more attention to local variables. In this respect, the case of Volaterrae is an exceptionally favourable one, having a wealth of relevant textual and epigraphic information which has not yet been fully exploited to illuminate this complex transition. As we have seen, a key role was played by local aristocracies, and they may provide a convenient lead to begin unravelling the intricacies of this historical process.

Élite families resided in the city and in the territory at least from the archaic period, as the tumuli and other conspicuous burials show. A few names are known, although the mass of Etruscan funerary inscriptions only dates to the Hellenistic period.[42] Unfortunately no documents survive to testify to their attitudes during the period of the treaty with Rome. It seems likely that at this early stage they considered themselves only as allies, with no desire for further integration: indeed, even later some of them still regarded the offer of Roman senatorial rank as a step downward in social terms and Roman titles appear in their funerary inscriptions much later that in the corresponding case of their peers in south Etruria.[43]

A dramatic increase in our knowledge of local history takes place in the first century B.C. During the Social War much of north Etruria remained neutral, but soon after Volaterrae, together with many other cities in the region, sided with Marius, thus incurring the wrath of Sulla after his final assession to power.[44] A siege in 80 B.C. and the following defeat led to the stripping of citizenship rights (with the reduction to *ius Ariminensium*) and the confiscation of a large portion of the territory. The event is generally interpreted as having marked the end of the Etruscan city-state of *velathri*, and of any cultural specificity it might have had.[45] However, the confiscated lands were somehow still not assigned (although some form of rent or tribute is very likely to have been exacted) in 63 B.C., when the tribunes proposed their actual distribution to colonists. No less a political figure than Cicero stood up to defeat the bill, which was reintroduced and blackballed again in 60 B.C.[46] We owe our unique knowledge of the official and backstage proceedings to the accident that the patron of the Volaterrans was an author whose speeches, literary work, and private correspondence were so generously handed down to posterity. The threat to the city seems to have been overcome, and the orator, with distinctive emphasis on his own achievements, claimed to have freed his clients 'from every danger'.[47]

However, new clouds gathered shortly afterwards: in 45 B.C. Caesar, saddled with a huge number of veterans to settle, resorted to the deduction of a colony at Volaterrae,

[42] For the archaic burials in the countryside, P. Carafa, 'Organizzazione territoriale e sfruttamento delle risorse economiche nell'agro volterrano tra l'Orientalizzante e l'età ellenistica', *Studi Etruschi* 59 (1994), 109–21. Some of those very well known later, such as the Caecinae (Latinization of the Etruscan *ceicna*), are sometimes attested in early inscriptions elsewhere, Hohti, op. cit. (n. 5), 414 ff.

[43] The anecdote is quoted in E. Rawson, 'Caesar, Etruria and the Disciplina Etrusca', *JRS* 68 (1978), 132–52. The known families are attested as knights only from the late first century B.C. and as senators in the Augustan period, Torelli, 295–8, 331–2; idem, 'Ascesa al Senato e rapporti con i territori d'origine. Italia: Regio VII (Etruria)', *Tituli* 5 (1982), 283–4, 290.

[44] The attitude of the Etruscans during the Social War is analysed in E. Gabba, 'Le origini della Guerra Sociale e la vita politica romana dopo l'89 a.C.', *Athenaeum* 32 (1954), 46 ff.; their position appears mostly conservative from the times of the Gracchan reforms and was even more clearly shown when Etruscans and Umbrians came to Rome to oppose Drusus' reform; Torelli 313 ff.; Harris, 212 ff.; Rawson, op. cit. (n. 43).

[45] e.g. in Harris, 266; O. Luchi, 'I territori di Volterra e di Chiusi', in *SRPS* I, 413–20. Torelli, op. cit. (n. 12), 424.

[46] Harris, 264.

[47] 'omni periculo', Cic., *Fam.* 13.4.2.

appointing for the purpose a commission chaired by a L. Valerius Orca. This would seem to have involved a radical economic and social reorganization of the territory, even if the actual colonial status of the city has long been questioned in modern scholarship. An inscription recently found now proves beyond all doubt that the city was certainly a *colonia Augusta* by the Julio-Claudian period at the latest.[48] The archaeological record, however, bears only very localized traces of this transformation, as we have seen. Where are the farms of the veterans, and their funerary inscriptions? Where is the centuriation and, above all, where are the villas which are widely assumed to replace small farms all over Italy, especially after distribution of land to veterans has taken place? It would seem that the bulk of the Volaterrans found some loophole that allowed the conservation of the essential character of their rural organization.

A role for local aristocracies in negotiating with the central power has been recognized, in particular for some western provincial situations.[49] In the Italian case of Volaterrae we have the privilege of observing the details of such a process at work. Two letters from Cicero to Orca survive, both entreating him to be mild in his treatment of the client city. The longer and more important one addresses the general issue of land distribution (while the other deals with the individual situation of a certain Curtius, *Fam.* 13.5). Here Cicero earnestly pleads in favour of Volaterrae with his long-time acquaintance.[50] There are several key points in this letter which cast unexpected light on the social and ideological discourse involved in the situation. Cicero stresses several long-term aspects of the situation: his lasting reciprocal relationship with the city ('never once have they failed me, either in my triumphs or in my troubles', *Fam.* 13.4.1) and above all the century-old, almost sacred, continuity in their land-holding practices ('Their domiciles and abodes, their property and estates, preserved to them by the immortal gods and by the most eminent citizens of our republic, all these I commend to your honesty, justice and goodness of heart', 13.4.3). The text emphasizes as positive qualities both long duration in time and probity ('tam grave, tam firmum, tam honestum municipium', 13.4.2), which should earn the Volaterrans a moral right not to be disrupted. The coalescence of the two concepts is subsumed in the adjective 'firmum', with its double meaning of 'steadfast' and 'stable, unmovable'.[51]

As a counterpoint to the exaltation of the virtues of all the parties involved, Cicero is also, between the lines, explicitly pointing out to his friend the material and political benefits that may come to him through the patronage of the *municipium* ('they have proved their gratitude in overflowing measure', 13.4.1); he appears to be endorsing, on the basis of personal experience, as it were, the tangible worthiness of having the Volaterrans as clients and of their gratitude. An heterogeneous set of considerations, besides strategic ones (whose importance has probably been long overemphasized), seems to be inextricably involved in decision making about how to deal with conquered peoples at the Roman end. Attention is paid to official regulations, public morality, the existing status quo, religious taboos, individual connections, and opportunities for personal advantage, or downright graft (the ingredients of a typically Italian recipe!).

But let us return for a while to consider the natives' end of the transaction. What is clearly emerging is that incorporation into the Roman Empire involved complex and, at least in this case, decades-long negotiation. Obviously only the élites had the resources, in the broader sense of the term, needed to undertake such transactions. Indeed, we can be sure that in our case an essential role was played by the Caecinae family. Privately,

[48] Munzi (=*AE* 1994, 612).

[49] J. Slofstra, 'An anthropological approach to the study of Romanization processes', in R. Brandt and J. Slofstra (eds), *Roman and Native in the Low Countries* (1983), 71–104; M. Millett, *The Romanization of Britain* (1990), 66 ff.

[50] The wider historical value of this document has hardly ever been considered, on the strong assumption that the reorganization of the territory of Volaterrae could not be stopped. Consequently, the letter has mainly been seen simply as an example of rhetorical ability; e.g. E. Deniaux, 'Les recommandations de Ciceron et la colonisation césarienne: le terres de

Volterra', *Cahiers du Centre G. Glotz* 2 (1991), 215–28. See also, eadem, *Clientèles et pouvoir à l'époque de Cicéron* (1993), 333–58. The acquaintance between Cicero and Orca is attested by earlier correspondence (*Fam.* 13.6A-B).

[51] The mention of immortal gods will be discussed in Section VI, while the transparent reference to Caesar is probably connected with guidelines about land distribution to veterans emanating from the dictator himself (App., *BC* 2.13.94; Suet., *Jul.* 38); P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower* (1971), 320; De Neeve, op. cit. (n. 20), 131.

they were clients of Cicero's at least from the time of the Caecina versus Aebutius inheritance case.[52] It is more than likely that his distinguished patronage was obtained for the city through the action of its noblest clan. Moreover, it is now clear from the archaeological findings summarized above that Cicero's lobbying had a remarkably positive effect for the whole community, not only maintaining the estates and reinforcing the social position of his aristocratic clients but also allowing small farmers, who probably knew very little of what was happening at the world-scale, to go about their everyday life pretty much undisturbed. In this sense the élites were acting as brokers for the whole community in the dealings with Roman central power. The Caecinae and other Etruscan families were the real spokesmen for the whole *civitas* even if they held no official role in the municipal hierarchy. They were clearly pulling what strings they could to preserve the whole social order, at the apex of which they sat. This global negotiation has broader implications than the simple survival of some élite pre-Roman families, and might hold a decisive clue as to the long-term nature of north Etruscan society.[53] Before exploring this avenue, however, it is worth following up the lead of our local history.

In the aftermath of the death of Caesar the political misjudgement made in the times of Marius and Sulla was not repeated. North Etruria now strongly supported the triumvir Octavian, who repaired to 'the colonies founded and benefited there by his father', as we know again from the words of Cicero.[54] These towns may well have included, besides neighbouring Arretium (of which we are certain[55]), Volaterrae, whose colonization had been under-way since the time of Orca, and which is listed in the Liber Coloniarum as a triumviral deduction.[56] Cicero, in touch with Octavian through yet another Caecina,[57] was again a crucial figure and probably helped Volaterrae and the Caecinae in obtaining the patronage of Caesar's heir. Once this was achieved, things begun to look up again for the city after a terrible half century. Indeed the reign of Augustus marks a high point of co-operation between north Etruscan aristocracies and Rome, personified by the Arretine Maecenas.[58] The city acquired the title of Colonia [Julia?] Augusta, a clear token of imperial pleasure, and the Caecinae shared its destiny: they were consuls several times in the first half of the first century A.D., and were by now entirely at home in the metropolitan noble circles. While they lived in a fabulously expensive *domus* on the northern slope of the Palatine, they did not forget their home town. The grand new theatre in Volaterrae was dedicated by them, and a monumental inscription and many brick-stamps recorded their munificence.[59] After having steered their community through the dangerous straits of the Civil War into the quiet harbour of the Golden Age, the Caecinae left the limelight of history. In the centuries of the Empire they appeared locally and were perhaps again consuls a few times.[60] In the first half of the fifth century, however, they are known again as *praefecti praetorio* and they still owned, along the coastal plain of the homonymous river Cecina, a thriving estate, which stood out amid the desolation of the surrounding region—once more underlining the long-term links between villas and Etruscan owners.[61]

The millenary run of the Caecinae at the top of Volaterran society seems to epitomize the role of indigenous aristocracies in leading their communities both in easy and in difficult times. They were key 'interface' figures in the negotiation between their

[52] Which took place around 69 B.C., Harris, 281; it is interesting to note the celebrated oration includes a general political statement on the legitimacy of the punishment suffered by the Volaterrans in terms of civil rights; Hohti, op. cit. (n. 5), 421–7. On its wider political significance, B. W. Frier, *The Rise of the Roman Jurists* (1985), 97–104.
[53] The material survival of some aristocratic families is a well-known phenomenon, already in Torelli or Harris, 114 ff.; what has not been explored enough is its connection with other aspects of social continuity.
[54] Cic., *Phil.* 8.23.
[55] App., *BC* 3.6.42.
[56] Lib. Col. 214.10 L.
[57] Cic., *Att.* 16.8.2.

[58] Torelli, 336 ff.
[59] Munzi; for the brick stamps: Munzi, op. cit. (n. 39); for an hypothesis on the location of the house of the Caecinae on the Palatine and the millionaire prices paid for it, Carandini, op. cit. (n. 12, 1988), 363, 369 ff.; E. Papi in *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae, s.v.* Domus: L. Licinius Crassus.
[60] Torelli, 297.
[61] Rut. Nam., *de red.* 1.452 ff.; on their political role, A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 229. For the attractive conjecture that these families were still protecting dependent small farmers in late Roman times, L. Motta, 'I paesaggi di Volterra nel tardoan-tico', *Archeologia Medievale* 25 (1997), 245–68.

city-state and Rome and their ambivalent character is clearly shown by their behaviour. On the one hand is their massive adoption of Roman culture, especially in the sphere of prestige goods. Urban and rural residences, language, artistic tastes were modelled on the prevailing fashions in the Roman world. On the other, funerary customs, and probably some private religious practices, retained strong Etruscan elements, as we have seen. If nothing else, this traditional heritage was essential in keeping open a communication channel with the lower rural classes. Thanks to the field survey, we can now get beyond the level of the élites and start exploring the very little known everyday life and culture of the rural commoners.

VI. IDEOLOGY AND SOCIETY IN THE ETRUSCAN RURAL COMMUNITY

The rural evidence, both from the farmstead at San Mario and the Cecina Valley, emphasizes long-term continuity of a set of essential elements of non-élite behaviour. The location of sites, their vernacular architecture, and the associated productive activities seem to have been defined in the early Hellenistic period and to have remained largely unchanged in the following seven or eight centuries. This exceptional stability clearly calls for some explanation of what made it possible. Environmental constraints and Roman *laissez-faire* attitudes may be obvious and immediate options. Taken in isolation, however, both these arguments show some weaknesses. First, the productive potential of the Cecina Valley was not significantly lower or more difficult to exploit than that of other regions that were radically transformed in the late republican expansion phase. Second, Roman tolerance, although clearly a factor, as we have seen, could not be taken for granted; it had to be carefully (and sometimes painfully) negotiated by the élites.

External stimuli for change had limited effects on the Volaterrans probably because of what could be described as an exceptional viscosity, characterizing their entire social structure; within their tightly-knit community, cultural transformations could and did take place, but they were slowed down and minimized as far as possible. In this perspective, a crucial diagnostic indicator hitherto disregarded may be picked up in the parallel and almost symbiotic path of self-preservation and conservatism followed by the élites and by the lower-status farmers through the Roman conquest and into the centuries of the Empire. As we have seen above, the survival of both social groups appears to be largely a result of the political action carried out by the nobility of Volaterrae. The question that probably has not been asked sufficiently is why did those aristocrats take on themselves the task (or should we say the burden?) of engaging in a sophisticated lobbying action in very high places for ignorant farmers. Their action only makes sense if somehow the same farmers were essential to maintain their own power base. If, in other words, there was a tight and long-standing mutual link between the two groups. But what kind of link? As we have seen, the range of subordinate roles contemplated by Roman law, such as *servus* or *colonus*, seems to fit badly with the evidence at our disposal: the farmers cannot be slaves, and it is very doubtful that they could have been *coloni*. Why then should the élites be busy working to preserve their cultural character and their social position? A Roman tenant would have served their purposes just as well as an Etruscan one. Moreover, the standard envisioned structure, whereby a villa received rents and shares of the crops from surrounding farms, certainly cannot be applied to the situation in the interior of the territory, for there no villas existed. It thus seems likely that the colonate accounted only for, at most, a minor part of the land organization. Can we instead imagine a rural society still regulated by traditional, pre-Roman relationships?[62]

[62] This is a possibility which has occasionally been suggested in the literature, but never explored in any depth; e.g. P. D. A. Garnsey, 'Introduction', in Garnsey, op. cit. (n. 20); D. W. Rathbone, 'The slave mode of production in Italy', *JRS* 73 (1983), 160–8; P. D. A. Garnsey and G. Woolf, 'Patronage of the rural poor in the Roman world', in A. Wallace-Hadrill (ed.), *Patronage in Ancient Society* (1989), 153–70.

Current analyses of Etruscan society are still largely conjectural and highly controversial, given the obscurity of the few possibly relevant texts and, above all, the scarcity of excavated urban and rural settlements. The existence of an aristocracy and a dependent class—the latter tentatively identified with the term *lautni*—seems to be discernible.[63] Their obligations toward their masters were permanent and probably heavy, including regular contributions in kind and corvée labour as well as assistance in politics and war. They had wide economic independence and it is possible that they shared some kind of ownership of the land they cultivated, although it seems very unlikely that they had the right to sell it and resettle elsewhere.[64] If we accept that a similar social arrangement was still prevalent in the aftermath of the defeat of 80 B.C., then the rationale in aristocratic strategy suddenly becomes clearer. Since their prominence was based on an unwritten set of obligations accepted by the Etruscan farmers, they would be greatly affected by any replacement with Roman colonists. Only the global preservation of the social order in all its components would ensure the maintenance of their dominant positions in the hierarchy. In view of these observations, the idea of an aristocracy protecting its subordinate classes can be taken into consideration, even if it may not be in line with current perceptions of élite behaviour in Roman Italy. Traditional loyalties and interdependencies have indeed been suggested as the key to understanding the long duration of conservative landscapes.[65]

Conservatism was not, however, the only path open to the Etruscan aristocracies, as other examples of élites dealing with the intrusion of Roman power demonstrate. It is not inconceivable that they might have chosen to pursue a transformation aimed at bringing the organization (in terms of economy and modes of production) of the land they controlled closer to the one prevailing in areas directly administered by Rome. They may well have come through it undiminished in prestige and indeed richer and completely assimilated to their Roman counterparts, the senatorial land-holding families. Rationality and optimization, however, probably played only a part in their political choice. They shared with the *lautni* an entire cultural and religious patrimony, perceiving the preservation of the traditional social equilibrium as a very high priority in absolute terms. The reassuring effect of belonging to a uniform collective cultural and ethnic identity should not be too easily discounted in comparison with our own 'heterogeneous civilisation' (to quote the words of Margaret Mead).[66] The internally consistent, compact character of conservative, slowly-moving cultures may help those participating in them to minimize the stresses inherent in a constantly changing external world. We can picture the élites and the client classes involved in a system of reciprocal obligation: one group felt it was their ancestral duty to preserve the community in its entirety, the other, even if they had no means of knowing what went on far above their heads, stuck to their custom of supporting their masters both tangibly and ideologically.

The reconstruction carried out thus far of a self-replicating rural society is admittedly based only on circumstantial evidence. However, it seems to explain the

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[63] Harris, 114–29; M. Torelli, *La società etrusca* (1987); in some reconstructions, the status of the dependent class is thought to have improved between the archaic period, when they were little more than serfs, and the Hellenistic one, when they acquired some rights. The massive spread of farms characterizing the third to second century B.C. in Etruria has been connected with this emancipation, which would have been brought about by a period of unrest and riots; M. Torelli, *Storia degli Etruschi* (1984), 257–8. They have been assimilated to the Thessalian *penestai*, whose condition (also debated) was however much closer to serfdom; J. Heurgon, 'Les pénestes étrusques chez Denys d'Halicarnasse (IX, 5, 4)', *Latomus* 18 (1959), 713–23. A full reconsideration now in E. Benelli, 'Sui cosiddetti penesti etruschi', *Par. Pass.* 51 (1996), forthcoming, where, within a comprehensive critique of the current wisdom, the existence of strong social dependence in Etruscan society is still maintained.

[64] Harris, 202 ff.; their position could perhaps be seen as similar to the clients in archaic Rome, cf. A. Drummond, 'Early Roman *clientes*', in Wallace-Hadrill, op. cit. (n. 62), 89–115; De Neeve, op. cit. (n. 20), 187–92; T. J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome* (1995), 289–92.

[65] S. Alcock, 'Greece: a landscape of resistance?', in Mattingly, op. cit. (n. 2), 103–15. The fact that the Roman Empire could accommodate strongly conservative communities with little apparent friction should probably be seen as an indication of its flexible and heterogeneous nature.

[66] M. Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1948), 154–62; the slow-moving character of Volatérran society (which would be labelled 'cold' in structuralist terminology) should not, however, be exaggerated into complete 'timelessness'.

behaviour of the élites and the stability of the landscape without difficulty. While alternative interpretations of the same evidence are undoubtedly possible, further support for our hypothesis can perhaps be found in some north Etruscan cultural traits. Contextualized within the overall picture, they can be seen as reinforcing a strongly conservative ideology. The most eloquent is certainly the text known as the prophecy of the nymph Vegoia. Included in the corpus of the *gromatici*, it is generally interpreted as a Latin translation of an original north Etruscan religious text.[67] It is basically an elaborate curse on whoever dares to move land boundaries, introduced by a cosmogonic paragraph that establishes their supernatural origin: 'Juppiter, when he claimed the land of Etruria for himself, deliberated and ordered the fields to be measured and marked. Knowing the greed and the desire of men for land, he wanted all the boundaries to be known.' The divine, and thus immutable, character of traditional land divisions and allotments is more than clear here. The two social groups addressed are the 'domini' and the 'servi', and a different punishment is announced for each, were they to meddle with the boundaries: 'if the *servi* do it, they will be affected by change of domination for the worse. But if it happens with the knowledge of the *domini*, their line will be quickly uprooted and their whole family will perish.' It is fairly easy to identify the Etruscan aristocrats with the 'domini'; the 'servi', although they have sometimes been translated literally as slaves, are far more likely to be identified with the Etruscan dependent class.[68] Indeed, as it is clear from the text, they have some degree of ownership of the land, but they are under a *dominium*: this should be compatible with what we know of the *lautni*. Accepting this interpretation, the prophecy becomes a very illuminating document, giving us a glimpse of the beliefs deeply underpinning Etruscan rural communities and shared by both groups composing it. The permanence of the human landscape and the stability of the society inhabiting it seem to have been perceived as reflecting and reinforcing each other. Moving the boundaries, disturbing the divine and ancestral equilibrium will cause the extinction of aristocratic linkages and a worsening of the lot of their clients.[69] These threats are not entirely far-fetched, if one thinks of the consequences of Romanization in neighbouring south Etruria. In this context, Cicero's reference—quoted above—to the *dii immortales* preserving the estates of the Volaterrans is probably reminiscent of the religious literature of his clients.

With the impact of the conquest, and the dramatic half century following it, traditional Etruscan ideology seems to be called to a new task, that of reinforcing native society in a common stand when confronted with the new tensions shaking Italy during the Civil Wars. A reference in Vegoia's prophecy to the end of the eighth *saeculum* (the Etruscan cycle) has suggested a date around 91–88 B.C., in connection with the agrarian bill of Drusus. On that occasion indeed 'Etruscan and Umbrians' had come to Rome to influence the vote.[70] Exactly when the version fortuitously handed down to us was actually put together is probably not the crucial point. It could only hope to be effective (and we now know that to an extent it was) if it was a manifestation of a dominant system of beliefs, rather than the swan song of a dying world. This powerful and deep-rooted ideology, interweaving cosmogonic myths, religious taboos, social order, and land-holding practices probably assumed new importance when exceptional crises made it particularly relevant.[71] The very inclusion of a strictly religious text of late republican age in a late Roman technical compendium of the *gromatici* (a peculiarity seldom commented on) may imply that, centuries after the time when it was written out, it was

[67] Lachmann, 348–50; Harris 31–40, with bibl.; for its north Etruscan context, G. Colonna, 'Società e cultura a Volsinii', *Ann. Fond. Museo Faina* 2 (1985), 101–31. See also A. Valvo, *La Profezia di Vegoia* (1988).

[68] Harris, 119 ff., rightly points out that *servi* is simply the closest Latin term. On a different position Benelli, op. cit. (n. 63). See also Colonna, op. cit. (n. 67), where their presence is used to date the origin of the text before the Hellenistic reforms.

[69] The emphasis placed on the avoidance of the moving of boundaries by the text should be inter-

preted in a wider sense than just a reminder against illegal, stealthy tampering with markers, which was a crime in Roman eyes as well (cf. RE, s. v. *termini moti*). The text was clearly meant to resist major land reorganization, such as would have been caused by agrarian reforms, Harris, 39 ff.

[70] Much ink has been spilt on the chronology of the text, J. Heurgon, 'The date of Vegoia's prophecy', *JRS* 49 (1959), 41–5; Torelli, 335; Harris, 35–40; R. Turcan, 'Encore la prophetie de Végoia', in *Mélanges offerts à J. Heurgon* (1976), 1009–19.

[71] Torelli, 335, and on prodigies esp. n. 183.

still relevant knowledge for people whose business was precisely to go about moving boundary markers.[72]

Evidence of this kind, even if not conclusive, strongly suggests the existence of rural areas where Etruscan traditional social order was still the norm in late Roman times; even more importantly, it implies that widespread perceptions of how the landscape should be organized, underpinned by deep religious beliefs, played an important role in bringing about the stability that characterizes these areas.[73] Indeed, in explaining such phenomena of continuity, considerations involving local cultures, ethnic identities, or traditional social systems seem to be more relevant than the long-overplayed economic or military variables.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Romanization of Volaterrae, with its peculiar wealth of detail and diverse documentary sources, seems to provide a remarkable and instructive case-study, adding depth and complexity to our perception of the processes attending the integration of Italy. As we have seen, the narrative that can be built on the available evidence, in resonance with other recent local work in the central and southern part of the peninsula, seems to be outlining a new and richer historical picture.[74] Indeed, not only between regions, but even between neighbouring cities, radical differences can be observed in the way local communities were incorporated within the new federation, in terms of the nature, impact, timing, and, in general, outcome of the event. Such diversity is conspicuous when a wide range of issues are looked at, from economic and political transformations to the degree of persistence displayed by social and cultural patterns. At the present state of knowledge, it seems a very hard task to reduce these heterogeneous threads to uniform trends, without leaving out essential points of difference and failing to account for the richness of the variability encountered.[75] On the positive side, admitting the existence of a multiplicity of individual trajectories leading from independence to integration may have ground-breaking implication, for example for a new understanding of the connected political and economic developments. The heated debate between scholars discussing the economy of ancient Italy that has characterized the last decades may perhaps be defused by the realization that disparate situations may coexist very close to each other in time and space, making it possible to pick up archaeological and historical indicators pointing in diametrically opposite directions within the same region or period. False dichotomies (such as those featuring primitivist versus modernist analyses of the economy or conscious imperialism versus self-defence motivations for expansion) might be laid to rest if it is finally accepted that elements of support for one or the other position could always be accumulated without any real furthering of the debate.[76]

If we look, in the light of this approach, at the political processes involved in the unification of Italy, the example of Volaterrae seems to be representative of a number of situations where negotiation seems to have been the key resource to which Roman and

[72] The bold suggestion that in the imperial period land systems were still influenced by Etruscan traditions in several areas of central and northern Italy was advanced by Santo Mazzarino, op. cit. (n. 21). Analysing the documents concerning the pagus Arusnatium (a village in the Venetiae) he argued that the coexistence of fixed boundaries of divine origin and communal land (mainly pasture; *pascua pro indiviso*) was a signature feature of Etruscan culture, brought so far north at the time of Etruscan expansion into the Po plain.

[73] In contrast, a radical extinction of pre-Roman cultures is envisaged in Curti, 185.

[74] cf. n. 13. A general overview in Curti. Cf. also the papers on Italy in Keay and Terrenato, op. cit. (n. 28).

[75] The great heterogeneity of Italy was already pointed out, when discussing the second century A.D., by J. R. Patterson, 'Crisis: what crisis?', *PBSR* 55 (1987), 115–46; this makes syntheses more difficult, but not altogether impossible, T. Potter, *Roman Italy* (2nd edn, 1992), 98; Terrenato, op. cit. (n. 2).

[76] A very clear synthesis of the debate on Roman imperialism in G. Woolf, 'European social development and Roman imperialism', in *Frontières d'empire* (1993), 13–20, with bibl. The wide variety of views held on the subject is perhaps best exemplified by the papers and discussion in W. V. Harris (ed.), *The Imperialism of Mid-Republican Rome* (1984). My own position is spelled out in N. Terrenato, 'Introduction', in Keay and Terrenato, op. cit. (n. 28).

local élites recurred. Besides the obvious cases of diplomacy in action,[77] the events reconstructed in this paper show that even where substantial military clashes have taken place, in the long term a region's basic cultural and social structure may have remained largely unaffected. When the entire picture is looked at, traits such as the appearance of large-scale urban architecture or the diffusion of imported fine wares—too often uncritically equated with massive acculturation—coexisted with continuities displayed in other essential components, from the settlement system and the social structure to non-élite culture and religion. The result was thus a new composite entity, within which the origin of constituent parts can often be clearly identified. On the other hand, occasionally incorporation might result in radical political and social reorganization. In these instances, aristocratic families could be wiped out, the status of most commoners could be changed for the worse and new power networks and new rules could take over (as in the prophecy of Vegoia quoted above). This alternative mode of conquest seems on the whole less frequent than the other, and when it occurs, it can often be explained with reference to specific political or strategic considerations.[78] Mutually satisfactory (if often renegotiated) compromises seem to have been what kept together many of the pieces of which Roman Italy was made. At the base of this process of sometimes spontaneous convergence (a full analysis of which would go beyond the scope of this paper) there were a host of factors, including the widespread and massive cultural and material evolution characterizing the Hellenistic phase in urban and rural contexts, as well as the propensity to interaction, exchange, and horizontal mobility shown by élites all over the peninsula ever since archaic times.[79]

Moving on to the economic sphere, a framework based on heterogeneity is better able to accommodate the contradictory evidence at our disposal than most normative ones.[80] While large areas witness only modest transformation in their long-standing modes of production, a strong market-driven intensification does take place in other circumscribed parts of Italy.[81] These hyperactive pockets of profit-generating agricultural and manufacturing activities, often centred on specialized sites, show a considerable degree of reciprocal integration, spreading a 'thin network' across the conservative and self-replicating bulk of the economy of Italy. The subdivision of the system into these two thickly intertwined sectors may also help to disentangle the controversial issue of the second-century A.D. economic crisis: in most cases, a negative conjuncture is taking place where intensification, two or three centuries before, had been stronger, while other areas are only marginally affected by the boom and bust of wine, oil, and other intensive productions.[82] One of the major implications of this view is that sites defined as villas across the peninsula are probably playing a wide variety of different roles, in keeping with local prevailing conditions; they can range from country residences for local élites with architectonic tastes influenced by Rome (as we see in the territory of Volaterrae) to establishments involved in capital-intensive exploitation of the most diverse neighbouring resources.[83] In a complementary way, sites low in the settlement hierarchy can have very different social correlates, showing an interesting spatial association with the variability shown by villas. They may be occupied by people of

[77] For instance that of Camerinum, Harris, *passim*.

[78] As in the complex case of Capua, for instance; Frederiksen, *Campania*, op. cit. (n. 1), but see Garnsey, op. cit. (n. 31). In contrast, massive disruption as a result of Romanization is maintained in Curti, 186.

[79] For Hellenization within the sphere of élite fashions, Zanker, op. cit. (n. 8); J.-P. Morel, 'The transformation of Italy, 300–133 B.C.: the evidence of archaeology', *CAH* 8 (1989), 477–516; Curti, 181–5. For archaic horizontal social mobility, C. Ampolo, 'Demarato. Osservazioni sulla mobilità sociale arcaica', *DdA* 9–10 (1976–77), 333–45.

[80] As already argued in A. Schiavone, 'La struttura nascosta. Una grammatica dell'economia romana', in *Storia di Roma* 4 (1989), 7–69 (esp. 28–32); also Vallat, op. cit. (n. 31), 14–15.

[81] For attempts at avoiding the dichotomy (but

centred on gradualism rather than heterogeneity), D. W. Rathbone, 'The development of agriculture in the *Ager Cosanus* during the Roman Republic', *JRS* 71 (1981), 10–23; Vallat, op. cit. (n. 1). New perspectives in G. Woolf, 'Imperialism, empire and the integration of the Roman economy', *WA* 23.3 (1992), 283–93.

[82] For a summary of the debate, with bibl., Patterson, op. cit. (n. 75), Carandini, op. cit. (n. 12, 1981); new perspectives in D. Foraboschi, 'Economie plurali e interdipendenze', in *L'Italie*, op. cit. (n. 8), 215–18.

[83] See above, n. 18; in an innovative perspective for the Western provinces, Millett, op. cit. (n. 49), 91–9; cf. the Conclusions in A. Carandini, G. Ricci, M. T. D'Alessio, C. De Davide and N. Terrenato, 'La villa dell'Auditorium dall'età arcaica all'età imperiale', *Römische Mitteilungen*, 104 (1997), 117–48.

various social status, ranging from indigenous farmers bound to their lords by customary obligations, but often able to withhold some surplus (like those living at San Mario) all the way to impoverished transplanted coloni saddled with rents and debts or to landless free labourers surviving miserably on seasonal hire. In this light, the common assumption of the Roman rural population barely managing to achieve subsistence may need to be reassessed.[84]

All the economic, political, and social oppositions mentioned above are consciously presented in this synthesis in a very schematic and ideal-typical way. Each of the actual local instances, when examined closely, would probably reveal a distinctive mix of nuanced characters. However, there is a marked feeling, at present, that items such as negotiated incorporation, economic stability, residential villas, farmers with surplus, cultural and social continuity tend to be associated; they certainly seem so in the case of Volaterrae. By carefully monitoring these and other parameters, the complex mosaic of differences constituting Roman Italy could begin to be traced. What can currently be said, stretching the metaphor, is that the tesserae can be small in size, that they make use of a broad palette of colours and that they are distributed in a complex and not yet clearly patterned way. The stark contrast marking towns such as Volaterrae, Pisae, and Populoniae, which are all located in a small region of north-west Etruria, clearly illustrates the risk run by careless generalizations, even at the regional level.[85]

Building on these considerations a contribution can be made to the agenda for further research into the Romanization of Italy. Two apparently diverging avenues look promising at the moment. First, interesting results could be obtained by mapping local and regional variability and keeping well in mind a set of diagnostic indicators and crucial issues, as argued above. At the same time, the theoretical tools for a new analysis should be fashioned within a framework of comparison with other regions of the Empire. Considerable mutual advantage can come from an enhanced interaction between the work on Italy and that on the provinces. Especially as far as the Western ones are concerned, the lively debate developed in the last few years contains many relevant stimuli for rethinking the Italian situation; indeed, an attempt at that lies behind some of the insights in the present paper. An item of common interest is now high on the list of priorities for both provincial and general Roman archaeologists: a redefinition of the nature of the Roman Empire based both on a broader body of archaeological data of better quality and on innovative historiographical perspectives.

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[84] As already in Foxhall, op. cit. (n. 31); for the conventional view, P. D. A. Garnsey and R. Saller, *The Roman Empire* (1987), 43–63.

[85] Terrenato, op. cit. (n. 32).