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Juin 2022

N° 6. *La mort et ses frontières*

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*Revue d'Archéologie, Histoire
& Histoire de l'Art*

Publiée avec le soutien
de Prairial, pôle éditorial Lyon Saint-Étienne

N° 6

La mort et ses frontières

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Frontière·s

MSH Lyon Saint-Étienne
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69363 LYON CEDEX 07

ISSN 2534-7535

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Photographie de couverture :

Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional, tombe d'Inès Rodríguez de Villalobos († 1301), provenant du monastère de Santa María la Real à Aguilar de Campoo (détail). Cliché : Haude Morvan

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The territory between Veii and Rome in the Archaic period: Rural structures as territorial markers of cultural frontiers

*Le territoire entre Veii et Rome à l'époque archaïque :
les structures rurales comme marqueurs territoriaux
des frontières culturelles*

DOI : 10.35562/frontieres.1297

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We would like to thank all those who have contributed, in various ways, to the different phases of excavation and research: C. Ariosto, L. Cianfriglia, A. De Santis and L. Paolini (SSBAR) for the information and support they have provided; D. Albertini, L. Conte and B. Pino (Tethys Srl) for their fieldwork; and G. Mantella and S. Guido for the restoration of the grave goods. The content of this paper was originally presented at the conference 'Frontiers of the European Iron Age', held in Cambridge (UK) in 2013 (https://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/iron_age/2013/index.html). The bibliography was updated in 2021.

This paper offers an examination of the territory between Veii and Rome in the 6th to 4th centuries BC, focusing on the north-western quadrant of the present-day suburb of the capital (fig. 1). The predilection of the Veians of the Archaic period for a particular and previously unseen type of funerary architecture (so-called 'a tramite' or 'a vestibolo' tombs¹) allows us to use evidence of these as cultural markers. However, alongside a census and study of these tombs, we wish to provide an analysis of habitation structures of the same period—such as those excavated in Via d'Avack²—which, with the research conducted in the last decade by the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma, represent a field of study worthy of attention.

¹ Arizza 2020a.

² Arizza *et al.* 2013, Arizza *et al.* 2015, Arizza 2020b.

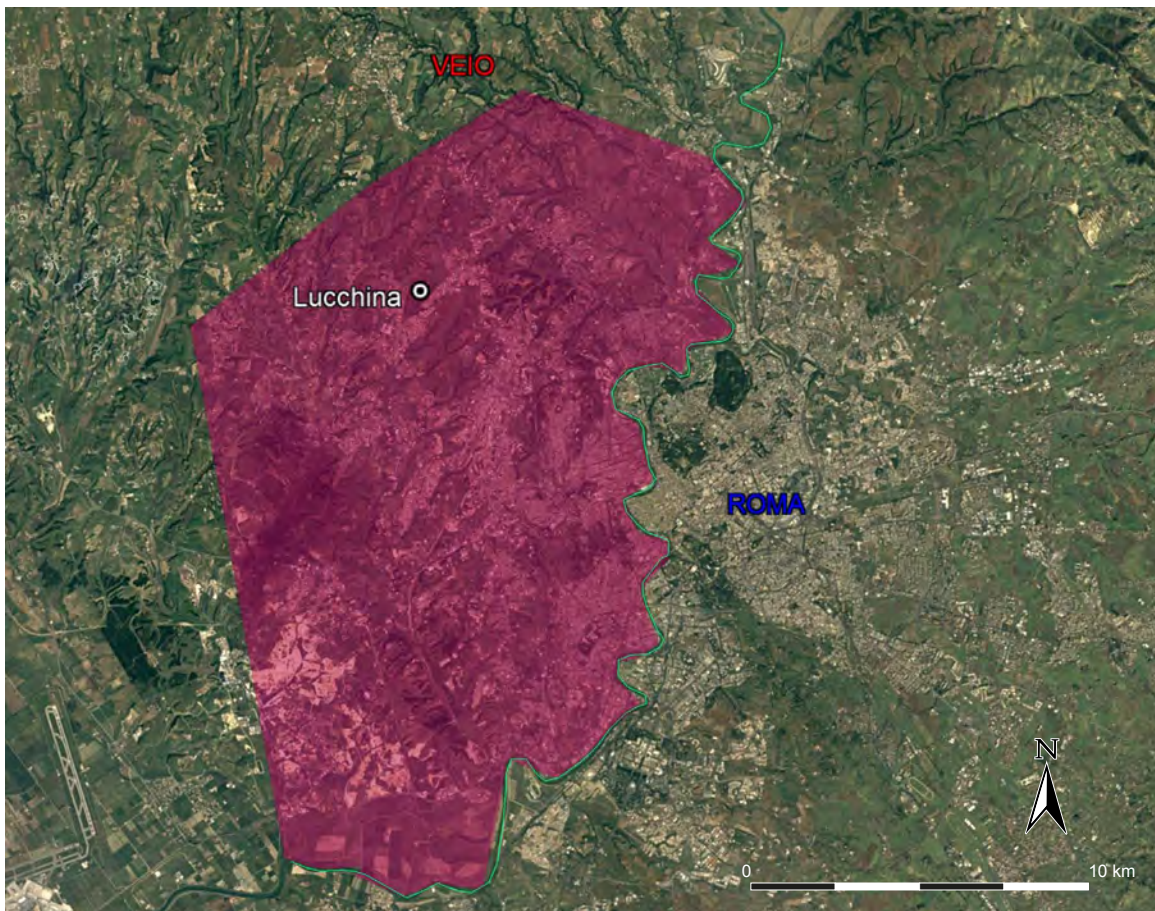


Figure 1. The north-western quadrant of Rome

Satellite photo: Google Earth

The most significant instance has emerged from the investigations undertaken near Tenuta della Lucchina³ along a side road forming part of the network of streets around Via Trionfale, at the top of the Grande Raccordo Anulare—which were started in summer 2012 and are still under way: a complex of evidence from the Orientalizing period until the late Roman Imperial period. In particular, for the period spanning the end of Orientalizing period and the Archaic age, there was a rare opportunity to excavate in parallel the remains of the structures of an inhabited area and the burial area pertaining to it. We are dealing here with a territory with a strong agricultural base, and unfortunately in the 1950s it was subjected to an enormous lowering of ground levels and heavy tillage, which profoundly altered its original morphology. Analysis of the historical cartography (fig. 2) (*Carta dell'Agro Romano*, 1904) shows that the site occupied a long tufa ridge of sub-triangular form, contained within the bifurcation of the Fosso di Palmarola, towards which it faced with very steep sides. The ground levels we find today are considerably lower, although we cannot measure the extent of these changes precisely. The investigative works have brought to light (fig. 3) a roadway carved directly into the tufa bank (4.20 m wide at the surface) and oriented north-east/south-west: at the bottom of the cut, two cart ruts were found 1.10 m apart. The stratigraphy shows that the roadway was used from the Orientalizing period until at least the Republican age, connecting the inhabited sector, the necropolis and a quarry of tufa blocks, and reconnecting the site with the main roadway (probably the Via Trionfale).

Three chamber tombs opened on to the roadside: Tombs 1, 4 and 5, spanning the early and late Orientalizing period. Here the grave goods were quite homogeneous and consistent in terms of quantity and were arranged as banquet services. Tomb 3, on the other hand, which has been dated to the very first years of the 6th century BC, presents a particular architecture: a long *dromos* (not aligned with the nearby Tombs 4 and 5), with a side *loculus* at the end, enclosed by tufa slabs. Inside, with the remains of the inhumed body there were only two items of grave goods: the lower part of a red ware jar or amphora and the upper part of a bucchero chalice, which originally must have had a high foot; on the outer surface of the chalice, there was an Etruscan inscription bearing the donor's (or the owner's) name. Tomb 3 differs slightly from the typical tombs that have

3 Mentioned for the first time in Arizza, Rossi 2014; references in Arizza 2019.

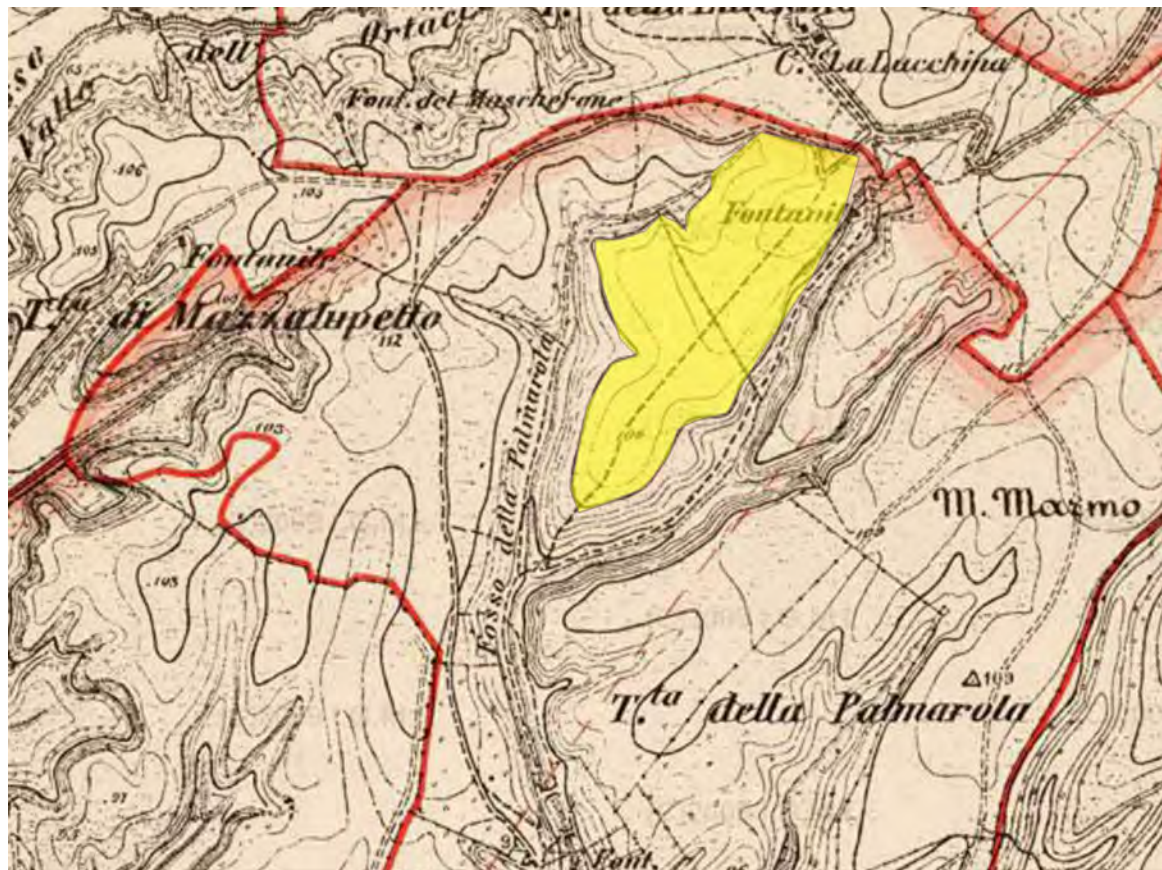


Figure 2. Tenuta della Lucchina. Historical cartograph

Carta dell'Agro Romano, 1904



Figure 3. Tenuta della Lucchina. Site map showing the chronological phases

Red: Orientalising period; white: Archaic period; green: Roman Imperial period

Photo satellite : Google Earth



Figure 4. Tenuta della Lucchina. Area L. Structure map
 CAD: Tethys Srl, re-elaborated by M. Arizza

a *dromos* and frontal chamber, probably indicating a shift towards new architectural formulas. Tomb 2 (an *atramite* tomb) and a nearby complex of rooms, which are the subject of this paper, date from only a few years later. The remains of the frequentation during the Republican period consist of traces of cultivation and a few burials in pits. By contrast, the settlement structures that have been identified to the north-west of Tomb 1 date back to the Imperial age. The structure has not yet been investigated and is composed of walls that define rooms; the nearby Lucchina Nymphaeum, found in 1990,⁴ is certainly linked to the villa. The frequentation of the area seems to have continued even after the villa was abandoned: indeed, a limekiln has been found, which was used to burn the marbles that once decorated the structures.

In this paper, we will examine the Archaic complex and the Archaic tomb. The removal of the ploughing layers in Area L (fig. 4), which extends across an area of about 600 m², revealed large quadrangular cuts (27.30 by 22.12 m approximately) made in the tufa bedrock and connected in some way with the remains of structures built in *opera quadrata* using blocks of local tufa, whose complex layout is yet to be clarified at the present stage of excavation. Indeed, it is yet to be determined whether we are in the presence of a single building comprising a series of non-communicating quadrangular rooms with different functions, or whether on the contrary we are dealing with a sort of small ‘quarter’ with cells for domestic habitation of limited size (two or three rooms at most, considering the internal partitions), placed one against another and separated, at times, by rainwater channels. The layout seems to form a horseshoe around an open area, which might be identified as a central courtyard; indeed, here we find extensive burnt areas, perhaps associated with open-air fireplaces, and this could amount to an area of collective domestic activity. There remain three rows of blocks reaching a maximum height of 1.1 m, while the absence of the higher levels means we cannot have a complete vision of the structure, particularly in some areas where only the corner sections of a few rooms survive.

On first analysis, the most striking comparisons—even if they are altogether premature—relate to Building C in the acropolis area F of the Etruscan inhabited area of Acquarossa,⁵ to the second ‘palace’ of Murlo,⁶ to the buildings of Lago dell’Accesa,⁷ and to the building of Veio-Macchia Grande.⁸ A recurring feature is the sequence of rooms, roughly quadrangular, lined up along a single long wall, with the possibility that they looked out on a ‘courtyard’ area. The construction method uses rows of tufa blocks, presumably extracted *in situ*, as demonstrated by the cuts and signs of excavation evident at the lowest level of the room on the tufa bedrock. This system, which is economically practical and highly logical, is found not only at Acquarossa⁹ but also in

4 Santolini Giordani 1991-1992, pp. 226-227.

5 Wikander 1985, pp. 46-47, fig. 8; Collective 1986, p. 49, fig. 20; Strandberg Olofsson 2013, p. 33, fig. 14.

6 Nielsen and Phillips 1985, pp. 65-67; Tuck and Wallace 2013, fig. 3.2; p. 217, fig. 5.

7 Camporeale 1985, p. 136.

8 Van Kampen 2003, p. 27, fig. 27.

9 Collective 1986, p. 50.



Figure 5. Tenuta della Lucchina. Area L. Room A. Plan and picture

CAD and picture : Tethys Srl, re-elaborated by M. Arizza

the dwellings in the Via Aurelia area, which will be briefly discussed later. Room A (fig. 5) has a rectangular layout (6 by 4.6 m) which abuts the cut face of the tufa bedrock facing south-east, with a probable entrance facing south-west, consisting of a narrow corridor between the cut face of the bedrock and the south-east wall of an adjacent room. The upper part of the walls must have been built with several main wooden posts, whose imprint can be made out in the ground, which supported a framework of smaller poles and branches, reinforced with a coating of clay, of which a few collapsed fragments remain in the fill; the roof was made of pan-and-cover tiles.

A first analysis of the few ceramics and building materials discovered in the layers of fill allows us to establish an approximate chronology of the building's life—between the 6th and 5th centuries BC (bucchero cups and bowls, fine creamware bowls and large *chiaro-sabbioso* basins). Regarding the typology of the

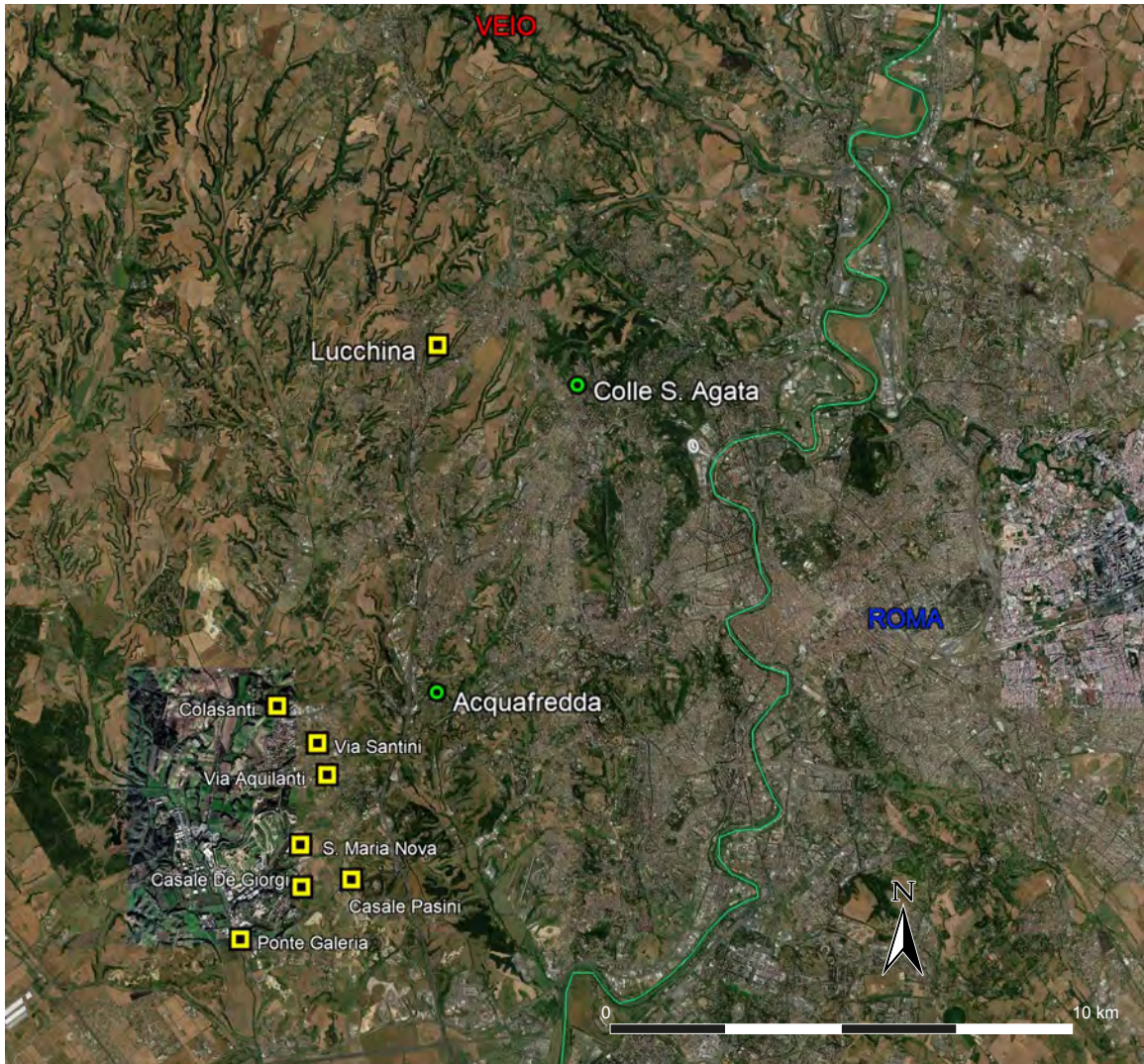


Figure 6. Map of the ‘farms’ and fortified sites in the Veii territory

Photo satellite : Google Earth

settlement, it seems that here we have not identified the defensive features found at other sites of the period, such as the site of Colle S. Agata¹⁰ not far away (fig. 6). In this period there is the spread of so-called ‘farms’ which, between the end of the 7th and start of the 5th century BC, are found across a wide band of territory stretching from the centre of Veii almost to the sea; it is based on the establishment of a system of small—in our case, we might say medium-sized—units of habitation, distributed across the countryside, with predominantly productive characteristics.¹¹ Discoveries of dwellings are generally scarce, especially ones from this period, and they are typologically very diverse and ‘inferior’ from the size point of view; however, we can refer to the six dwellings discovered in the Massimina area around Via Aurelia, which can be placed in the same chronological range¹² (fig. 6). This territorial context, particularly favourable to transit, transportation and trade due to its proximity to both the ancient roadway and the river Galeria, which ran from the territory of Veii to the Tiber, was unfortunately subjected in the modern age to large-scale quarrying and haphazard urbanisation. The characteristics of these buildings, shown only by those semi-subterranean parts that survived the quarrying and farming processes, are fairly common: set into the tufa bedrock at various depths (from 0.5 to 1.6 m), occasionally with an oval layout but more often sub-rectangular, of limited size (from 12 to 50 m² approximately), with one or two rooms and peripheral walls made from local stone (*macco*) or square tufa blocks, and with roofing of pan-and-cover tiles made from *impasto rosso-bruno* or *chiaro-sabbioso*. In terms of chronology, the material found inside can be placed between the late 7th and 5th centuries BC. As in the

10 Caprino 1954.

11 Carandini *et al.* 2006; Cifani 2002; Di Giuseppe 2005.

12 Rossi Diana 2008, pp. 59-72.

case of Tenuta Lucchina, in all the areas adjacent to the structures there are signs that the tufa bedrock has been worked for farming purposes: levelling of the land, channels, silos and drainage systems, and water capture by means of ditches, tunnels and wells. The semi-subterranean construction method and the organisation of the farming areas are in common with coeval evidence found in the suburbs of Rome, also outside the territory of Veii.¹³ There is no trace, however, of defensive apparatus; but here too we must remember that there was a fortified site on the main road, Via Aurelia, not far away—that of Acquafredda.¹⁴

We can therefore imagine that, with the development of an agriculture of structured production in the countryside of Veii in this period, a reasonably tranquil life was guaranteed,¹⁵ thanks to an organised system of fortified sites on the major roads. Furthermore, the establishment of these sites, certainly planned centrally, occurs at the same time as the birth of the farms. Colle S. Agata and Acquafredda both have strategic positions, standing dominant on high ground, protected by watercourses and linked to important roads. They also both have a large, circular, defensive moat created to protect the *arce*, a complex network of various smaller ditches, burnt areas present inside some ditches, and a system of water drainage and collection. These are small agglomerations, then, created for the purposes of control and defence, able to support themselves and to hold out militarily.¹⁶

D.R.

As already mentioned, the investigations near Tenuta della Lucchina have yielded, among other things, tombs of the so-called *a tramite* or *a vestibolo* type: an uncovered quadrangular room dug out of the tufa which, in many cases, is accessed via steps, with niches and *loculi* in the walls.¹⁷ In the present case, Tomb 2 (fig. 7) has two niches for cremations and a *loculus* for inhumation, all covered with red tiles. Burial number 1 is a cremation: the bones, which are burnt, were probably kept in a wooden or fabric container and were found together at the back of the niche. The grave goods (fig. 8) consisted of gold earrings (*a tubo* type) with cluster decorations,¹⁸ an undecorated bronze mirror, small depurated-ware plates¹⁹ and one glass container;²⁰ some items among the grave goods were near to or touching the body of the deceased at the time of cremation, as shown by clear signs of deformation due to the heat. Burial number 2, on the other hand, is an inhumation: the deceased was buried supine, and arranged around the body were small depurated-ware plates, an attic red-figure cup-*skyphos* ('bolsal' type) with a depiction of an owl among olive branches,²¹ an *oinochos* of the *a cartoccio* type,²² and numerous miniature pots (*anforetta a fasce*,²³ *pelike* in *vernice nera sovradipinta*, bucchero-ware *olla*, fine creamware jug²⁴), as well as a small, very fragmentary glass ornament and a bronze object, perhaps an *aes rude*.²⁵ The third and final burial is another cremation: inside the niche a cinerary urn (*olla*) was present, containing the burnt bones of the deceased, another similar *olla*,²⁶ small depurated-ware plates, a miniature bucchero-ware cup²⁷, a small, fine creamware jug and a bucchero-ware *kylix*.²⁸ The chronology of this tomb can be fixed to between the second half of the 5th and the 4th century BC,²⁹ perhaps after the final Roman conquest, demonstrating that it is not possible, at least based on an examination of these archaeological traces in the territory, to identify a clear break in 396 BC.

This tomb therefore falls within a type of architecture already well delineated by Luciano Drago in the 1990s,³⁰ taken up again by Alessandro Palmieri,³¹ and recently studied and published by the author.³² In our attempt to investigate the characteristic Veian funerary practices between the 6th and 4th centuries BC, the information generated by new discoveries enables us to pose specific questions and to examine in depth some

13 For example, in Fidene, Centocelle, Casal Brunori and Torrino. See Cifani 2008 pp. 174-218.

14 Rossi and Chianello 1986; Rossi Diana 1988; Rossi Diana 1990; Damiani and Pacciarelli 2006.

15 Bartoloni 2003 p. 21.

16 Arizza and Rossi in press.

17 Arizza 2019, p. 37ff.; Arizza 2020a, pp. 113-139.

18 Ambrosini 1996, pp. 42-43.

19 Murray Threipland and Torelli 1970, pp. 75-76.

20 Grose 1989, p. 139 n. 83.

21 Massoul 1935, pp. 69-70, pls 32, 22/24; similar decoration on a *skyphos* from the territory of Veii – Loc. Muratella: Cianfrigia and Moffa 2008, pp. 408-409.

22 Vighi 1935, p. 67, fig. 11.

23 Ambrosini 2009, pp. 181-182, fig. 5A.

24 Murray Threipland and Torelli 1970, p. 76.

25 Cianfrigia and Moffa 2008, pp. 408-409.

26 Carbonara, Messineo and Pellegrino 1996, pp. 78-79.

27 Murray Threipland and Torelli 1970, pp. 73, 90, I.

28 Murray Threipland and Torelli 1970, pp. 73, 90, H.

29 For the analysis of the bones: Arizza 2020a, pp. 113-139.

30 Drago 1997, pp. 239-280.

31 Palmieri 2009, pp. 371-396.

32 Arizza 2020a.



Figure 7. Tenuta della Lucchina. Tomb 2

Picture: Thetys Srl

subjects of which, for the sake of brevity, we will only cite examples, but which the author is in the process of exploring. The first subject concerns the presence, inside the same tomb, of burials using different rites (cremations and inhumations), as observed not only in Lucchina but also in Casalaccio,³³ in Monte Oliviero³⁴ and in the tomb in the Muratella locality.³⁵ The architectural characteristics of the *a tramite* tombs show, in comparison with previous chamber tombs, an enlargement of the access area (from the *dromos* to the vestibule) to the detriment of the areas dedicated to the deceased (from the chamber to the niches). Therefore, it seems justified imagining a family unit which builds a tomb for its members with a ‘communal’ space where they can gather, and which creates new niches or *loculi* when other family members die. From this perspective, the presence of several burials might indicate that the tomb was used over an extended period, and so the presence also of mixed rites might seem to further strengthen this hypothesis. The analysis of the grave goods, when compared to those of coeval Veian structures, may allow us to identify an evolution over time in the ways these tombs were used.³⁶ A further path of research to explore is the presence of imported vases in the grave goods of the *a tramite* tombs of this period. For example, among the grave goods of Tomb 2 (Burial 2) there is a red-figure Attic vase, as there is in Tomb 6 in Valle Santa,³⁷ and also in the tomb in the Muratella locality.³⁸ At a time, now well documented, in which we observe a general impoverishment in the richness and number of objects in the grave goods in Veii, Rome and Latium,³⁹ what are we to make of the presence of these vases? A similar question arises concerning the objects of particular value, such as the gold earrings: for example, a coeval tomb in the Pantanaccio locality,⁴⁰ also in the territory of Veii, includes numerous items of gold jewellery and ornaments.

A final subject we wish to mention is the rarity among the grave goods of bronze items which might be interpreted as an *aes rude*. Apart from the grave goods of the inhumation in Lucchina, we find such an object—again in the territory of Veii—in the tomb at Muratella, and in Fidene in the well known ‘*Tomba della Fanciulla*’

33 Tombs 19 and 20: Vighi 1935, pp. 66-68.

34 Tomb 4: Stefani 1928, pp. 104-105.

35 Cianfrigia and Moffa 2008, pp. 406-412.

36 Arizza 2020a, pp. 415-423.

37 De Cristofaro *et al.* 2015, pp. 133-144.

38 Cianfrigia and Moffa 2008, pp. 408-409.

39 Colonna 1977, pp. 131-165; Arizza 2020c; Arizza 2020d.

40 Rizzo 1983, pp. 287-288.

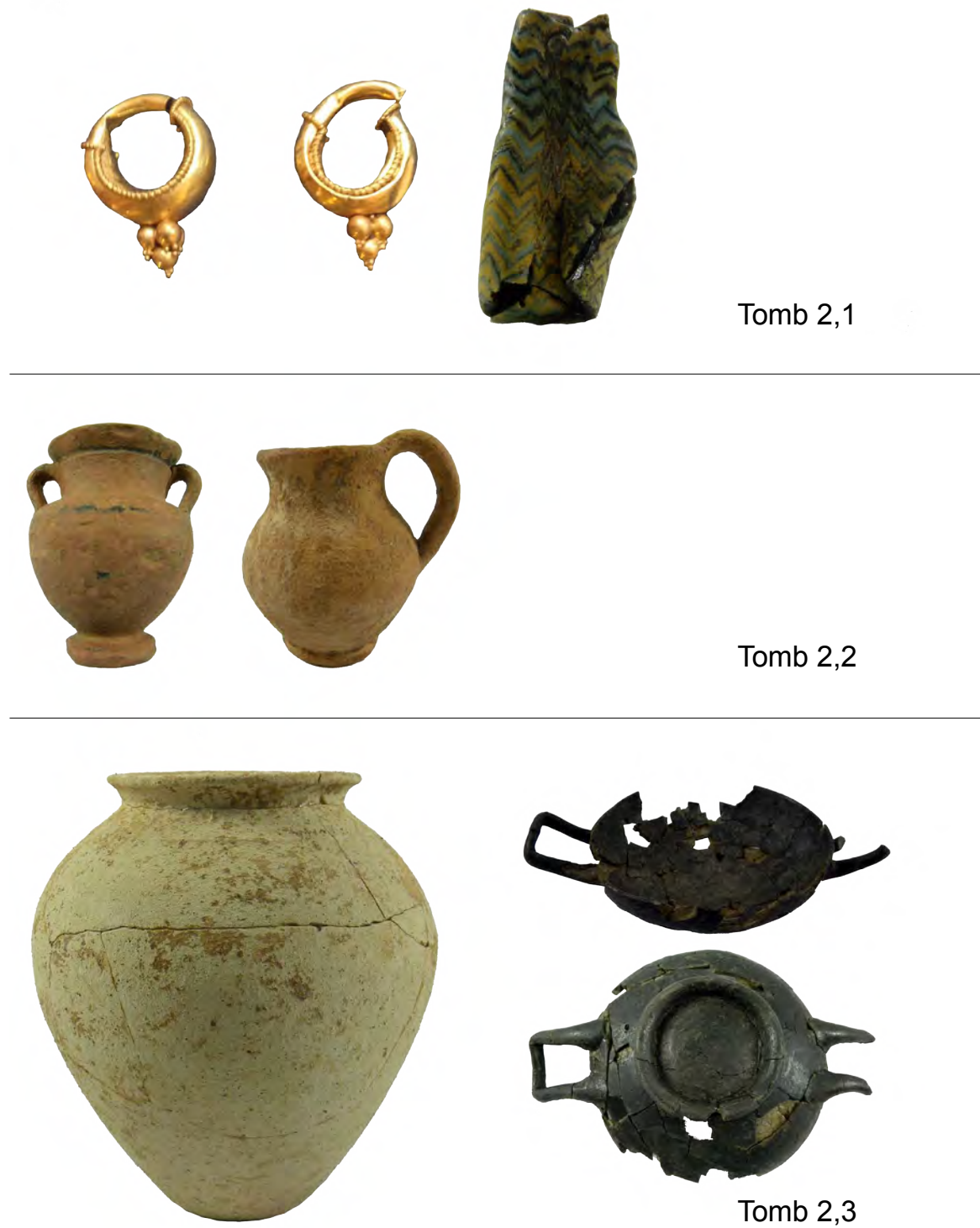


Figure 8. Tenuta della Lucchina. Tomb 2. Selection of the grave goods

Pictures: M. Arizza

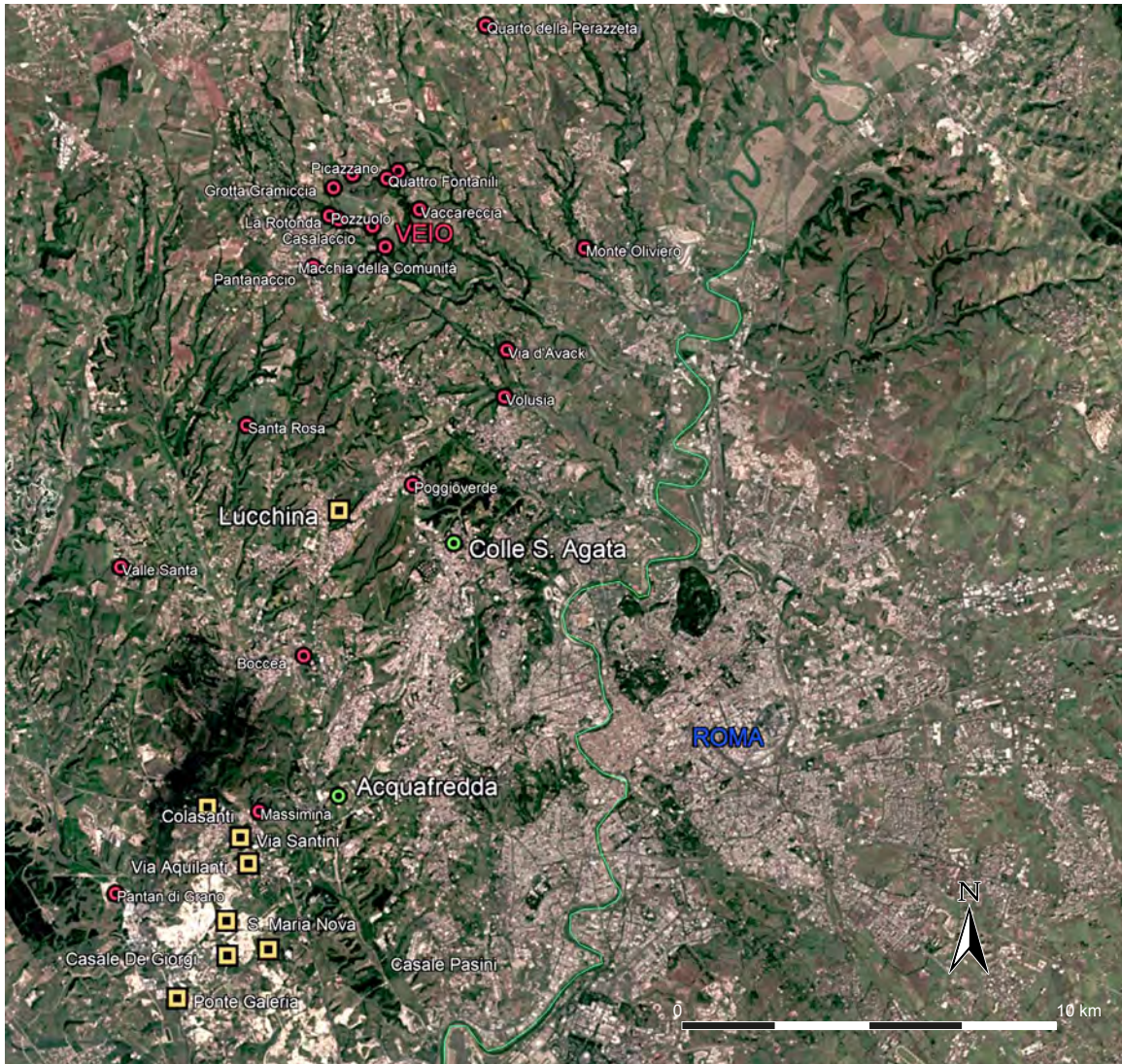


Figure 9. Veii territory. Map of the “farms”, fortified sites and “a vestibolo” tombs

Photo satellite : Google Earth

of the Archaic period.⁴¹ In the two Veian examples, the item was in the hand of the deceased or alongside it, while in the tomb in Fidene, post-burial factors have altered the original position. Since the 19th century, one line of interpretation has tried to equate, in terms of their symbolic dimension within the burials, the presence of these items with that of later coins: Charon’s obols. This perhaps too obvious association was debated again in the late 1980s, leaving the definitive interpretation once more in doubt.⁴²

To summarise, the data revealed so far seem to offer the possibility of contributing important information to our picture of the settlement and culture of the territory and of the inhabitants of the Veian area nearest to Rome between the 6th and 4th centuries BC. Matching the arrangement of the dwelling structures (showing the characteristics mentioned above) with the arrangement of the *a vestibolo* tombs, which as we have seen can certainly be attributed to Veian culture (fig. 9), there emerges a ‘boundary’ which, though blurred geographically, is nevertheless quite recognisable in terms of cultural affinity. It was a territory of clear significance to the Veians and one that, in the 6th to 4th centuries BC, managed its interests in the salt flats and the sea on the right bank of the Tiber.⁴³ Certainly, the progress of systematic excavation and the retrieval of archive data will continue to provide information that is useful in defining the issue more fully, and so although the proposed map may undergo some changes, the trend that emerges from it seems clear and rich in meanings to be interpreted.

41 Di Gennaro 1990, pp. 65-68.

42 Bergonzi and Piana Agostinetti 1987, pp. 217-220.

43 De Cristofaro and Piergrossi 2016; Arizza 2020b.

So, in conclusion, we would like to repeat a quote from the anthropologist Ugo Fabietti: *‘i contenuti culturali non determinano il confine ma possono servire, in alcune circostanze, a crearlo’*.⁴⁴ With this we mean to propose an approach which considers the identification of the boundaries between Veii and Rome by means of analysis of the material culture, funerary customs and settlement methods of two social groups, rather than research motivated by a focus on the geographical demarcation of a territorial line.

M.A.

Abstract. *The recent archaeological discoveries made in the north-western quadrant of Rome, within the ambit of so-called ‘emergency archaeology’, make it possible to put knowledge into practice in a subject area which stimulates intense academic debate: the territory between Veii and Rome, in the period between the Archaism and the final conquest of the Etruscan city. The data available until now that have been employed in the reconstruction of settlement dynamics come almost exclusively from funerary contexts. The archaeological evidences—pertaining to residential structures—are rare and sporadic, although gradually increasing. The case illustrated here of the excavation in the Lucchina area (Via Trionfale, Ottavia) represents a rare opportunity to examine a ‘border’ culture in depth through information provided by investigations—still under way—into a complex of Etruscan-Veian dwellings: houses with a tripartite layout of which there remain the bases in tufa blocks and collapsed tiles. In the necropolis, on the other hand, a tomb is being investigated of the Veian type a vestibolo or a tramite, with access steps and three loculi (two for cremations and one for inhumation) which have yielded a rich funerary equipment. A Veian community, then, providing evidence of the phenomenon of ‘internal colonisation’ of the suburb of the city so close to the border with Rome.*

Résumé. *Les récentes découvertes archéologiques faites dans le quadrant nord-ouest de Rome, dans le cadre de ce que l’on appelle « l’archéologie préventive », permettent de mettre en pratique les connaissances dans un domaine qui suscite d’intenses débats académiques : le territoire entre Véies et Rome, dans la période entre l’archaïsme et la conquête de la ville étrusque. Les données disponibles jusqu’à présent et employées dans la reconstruction des dynamiques de peuplement, proviennent presque exclusivement de contextes funéraires. Les témoignages archéologiques – relatifs aux structures résidentielles – sont rares et sporadiques, bien qu’ils augmentent progressivement. Le cas de la fouille dans la région de Lucchina (Via Trionfale, Ottavia) illustré ici représente une occasion rare d’approfondir une culture « frontalière » à travers les informations fournies par les investigations – toujours en cours – sur un complexe d’habitations étrusco-véiennes : les maisons avec une disposition tripartite dont il reste les bases en blocs de tuf et tuiles effondrées. Dans la nécropole, en revanche, est à l’étude un tombeau de type véien a vestibolo ou a tramite, avec des marches d’accès et trois loculi (deux pour les crémations et un pour l’inhumation) qui ont livré un riche équipement funéraire. Une communauté véienne, donc, témoignant du phénomène de « colonisation interne » de la banlieue de la ville si proche de la frontière avec Rome.*

44 Fabietti 2005, p. 183.

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Dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Âge, la mort biologique et la mort sociale, tout comme la façon dont les vivants envisagent leurs rapports aux morts (aux corps morts d'une part et aux morts comme êtres de mémoire d'autre part), ou encore l'inscription des défunts dans un espace, plus ou moins séparé de celui des vivants, sont autant de phénomènes qui mettent en jeu la notion de frontière de manière plurielle. C'est de ce constat qu'est née la proposition de ce numéro thématique, consacré à « la mort et ses frontières », que nous souhaitons ici questionner. Dans ce sixième numéro, les auteur·rices abordent la question des frontières de la mort selon divers prismes : la question de la séparation entre lieux de sépulture et des lieux de vie, ainsi qu'entre les espaces funéraires, la distinction culturelle par la configuration des tombes ou la nature de leur mobilier, mais aussi la question du passage de la frontière entre la vie et la mort.

N° 6 : La mort et ses frontières

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Frontière·s. Revue d'archéologie, histoire et histoire de l'art est éditée par l'Université Lumière Lyon 2 et hébergée par la plateforme de revues en accès ouvert Prairial. Elle est librement consultable et téléchargeable à l'adresse : <https://publications-prairial.fr/frontiere-s>.