

## TOPONOMY AND THE URBANIZATION OF ETRURIA\*

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### *Urbanization in Etruria*

The process of urbanization in the western Mediterranean region can be variously explained. In some cases cities were founded by Phoenician and Greek colonists from the east Mediterranean basin, where the urban life style has a much longer history. In other cases rural communities gradually developed into cities under the influence of economic and social changes triggered by the colonial foundations. Unfortunately, it is not always clear which model applies, so that the controversy of "Stadtgründung" versus "Stadtwerdung" may occasionally arise.<sup>1</sup>

This is especially the case for Etruria because of uncertainty about the background of Etruscan culture. With respect to this region, then, both explanatory models have at times been applied. Before the middle of this century it was commonly held that the Etruscan towns were deliberately planted by Lydian or Tyrrhenian colonists from the west coast of Asia Minor and the neighboring Aegean islands. After this date the balance was shifted to the diffusionist approach according to which the Etruscan towns developed without a break from the earlier Villanova villages under influence of Phoenician and Greek overseas commerce and colonization.

The situation here is further complicated by the fact that archaeological research has traditionally been focussed on the quick and easy gains from the necropoles and has neglected the arduous task of exploring the settlements. Consequently, archaeological data concern-

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Pallottino 1972 on the urbanization of Rome.

ing the problem of urbanization in Etruria are as yet insufficiently available to help us out.<sup>2</sup>

For the time being a much more rewarding category of evidence on the topic is formed by the literary sources. If these are taken at face value, it appears that the Etruscans themselves had a well-defined notion of the concept of a city. Our main source on the Etruscan concept of a city is Plutarch's version of the foundation myth of Rome, for which reason it seems worthwhile to cite the relevant passage here in extenso.

*"[When Romulus founded the city he had] men come from Tuscany who prescribed all the details in accordance with certain sacred ordinances and writings, and taught them to him as in a religious rite. A circular trench was dug around what is now the Comitium, and in this were deposited first-fruits of all things, the use of which was sanctioned by custom as good and by nature as necessary; and finally, every man brought a small portion of the soil of his native land and these were cast in among the first-fruits and mingled with them. They call this trench, as they do the heavens, by the name of "mundus". Then taking this as a centre, they marked out the city in a circle round it. And the founder, having shod a plough with a brazen ploughshare, and having yoked to it a bull and a cow, himself drove a deep furrow round the boundary lines, while those who followed after him had to turn the clods, which the plough threw up, inwards towards the city, and suffer no clod to lie turned outwards. With this line they mark out the course of the wall (...). And where they purposed to put a gate, there they took the share out of the ground, lifted the plough over, and left a vacant space. And this is the reason why they regard all the walls as sacred except the gates; but if they held the gates sacred, it would not be possible, without religious scruples, to bring into and send out of the city things which are necessary, and yet unclean."<sup>3</sup>*

This passage shows that within the Etruscan concept cities are founded in accordance with certain religious rites. These rites are executed by a single, no doubt highly respected, member of the community and seem to require a considerable amount of town-planning, because one needs to know exactly the direction of the main roads before the gates in the walls can be ritually secured.

Plutarch's picturing of the Etruscans as experienced founders of cities coincides remarkably with the fact that there are foundation myths for a large number of cities in Etruria itself. Moreover, many of these myths are likewise centered around a founding father or hero after whom the city is named. Thus Tarquinia is reported to have been

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<sup>2</sup>The important Etruscan towns Tarquinia and Caere are now being excavated, see Pallottino 1988: 489. Note that the very fact that a site is continuously occupied, as Pallottino 1988: 498 triumphantly stresses for Tarquinia, by no means implies "Stadtwerdung"; the site of Cumae, for example, has been occupied by Oscan tribes before the arrival of the Greek colonists who founded the city. For the excavations at Veii see now the contribution of Berardinetti Insam, de Santis & Drago to the aforementioned symposium.

<sup>3</sup>Vacano 1960: 24; Pffiffig 1975: 59.

founded by a certain Tarkon, who is credited with the foundation of the other cities of the Etruscan twelve-city league in Tuscany as well.<sup>4</sup> For Mantua, the foremost member of the Etruscan twelve-city league in the Po-valley, no less than four different versions of its foundation myth have been preserved, some of which consider Manto, the daughter of the Theban seer Teiresias, as the heroine after whom the town is named.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Capua and the other members of the Etruscan twelve-city league in Campania are also explicitly stated to have been founded.<sup>6</sup>

The literary evidence on Etruscan urbanization, then, strongly favors the model of "Stadtgründung". Incidentally, cities may have invented foundation myths at a later time in order to enhance their status and modelled these on the current mythical concept of the colonial founding father.<sup>7</sup> But only if there has been a widespread conspiracy among classical authors to fool later historians, which in my opinion is a very unlikely option, all these foundation myths can be dismissed. Therefore it seems permissible to conclude that there may very well be some truth in the ancient traditions about the origins of the Etruscan cities.

### *Toponymy*

Today the study of place names is not exactly a highly respected line of research. Just recently an American scholar described toponyms as "a favorite hunting ground when all else has failed", in short the last resort of the desperate.<sup>8</sup> This losers image is symptomatic for the position of toponymy in the field of Etruscology as well. Massimo Pallottino still puts it politely: "Trotz der reichen Materialsammlungen (...) erlauben uns die Probleme bezüglich der etruskischen Toponomastik in Mittel- und Oberitalien noch lange nicht, systematische Daten zu

<sup>4</sup> Strabo V, 2, 2 (translation of the Loeb edition): "And when Tyrrhenus came, he not only called the country Tyrrhenia after himself, but also put Tarco in charge as "coloniser", and founded twelve cities; Tarco, I say, after whom the city of Tarquinia is named (...)."; cf. Steph. Byz. s.v. *Ταρχάνιον*.

<sup>5</sup> Servius ad *Aen.* X, 198: foundation by either Ocnus or his brother Aulestis; as an alternative their mother Manto is also considered to be the daughter of Herakles; according to the fourth version the town is founded by Tarkon, again, and named after the god Mantus. Cf. Pfiffig 1975: 320; de Simone 1993: 200 (prefers the last mentioned option).

<sup>6</sup> Strabo V, 4, 3 (translation of the Loeb edition): "(...) and the Tyrrheni founded twelve cities in the country [= Campania] and named their capital city "Capua". Note that Volturnum is the epichoric Etruscan name for Capua and that therefore the myth about the eponymous hero Capys is likely to be a later invention.

<sup>7</sup> As Pallottino 1972: 33 believes to be the case with the Roman foundation myth; cf. also the remark on Capua in the previous note.

<sup>8</sup> Drews 1993: 57.

gewinnen und sichere Schlüsse zu ziehen."<sup>9</sup> However, a glance at the references may suffice to show that very few studies indeed have been devoted to the subject, and most of these are heavily outdated—an ever going classic being Gustav Herbig's *Kleinasiatisch-etruskische Namensgleichungen* published in 1914!<sup>10</sup>

Yet, there can be no doubt whatsoever that place names may function as significant indicators of a specific cultural background. This is true especially for places of which the name results from a deliberate choice instead of subconscious common usage. Such toponyms, namely, are often purposely selected to convey a sense of ethnic identity. Thus a scholar of the late 19th century AD aptly remarked: "As the Phoenicians occupied headlands and islands from which they withdrew before the Greeks, nothing more likely than that some Phoenician names should cleave to those headlands and islands. That it should be so is no more wonderful than when we find at New York that *Harlem* and *Staten Island* keep up the memory of a time when the land was New Netherlands."<sup>11</sup> Toponyms like Phoenician *Qarth Ḥadasa* (= Carthage) and Greek *Νεάπολις* (= Napels), both meaning "New Town", are clear instances of this latter type of conscious naming.<sup>12</sup>

Etruscan cities which have been founded in like manner as described by Plutarch for Rome may well have received their names, just like Rome, in the course of the foundation rites.<sup>13</sup> This would imply that these names probably are purposely selected for their ethnic connotations. Therefore it may be worthwhile to have a closer look at this particular group of Etruscan toponyms and try to determine its cultural background.

Among this group of place names, then, there can be distinguished two different categories of root types: (1) divine or heroic names, and (2) vocabulary words. To the first category belong Vulci (Etr. *velc-*), Tarquinia (Etr. *tarχνα-*), and Mantua (Etr. *manθua-*), which are related with or derived from the divine name Velchans,<sup>14</sup> the heroic name

<sup>9</sup> Pallottino 1988: 403.

<sup>10</sup> Pallottino 1988: 473, note 47 ("dem fundamentalen Werk").

<sup>11</sup> Freeman 1891: 559.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Eisler 1939: 449.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *Rom.* 1-2. Being a Latin city, the case of Rome falls outside the scope of this paper. It is interesting to note, however, that the place name *Roma* (Etr. *ruma-*) has been suggested to be of Etruscan origin (see *Pauly-Wissowa Realencyclopädie*, s.v. *Etrusker*) and, since the times of Herbig, connected with the name of a Lycian hero, *Romos* (see Herbig 1914: 28)—a derivation of the Luwian divine name *Rum/nt-* (see Houwink ten Cate 1961, s.v.).

<sup>14</sup> Pfiffig 1975, s.v. *Velchans*. Other examples of toponyms based on the root of a divine name are Populonia, Volsinii and Volturnus, cf. Pfiffig 1975, s.v. *Fufluns*,

Tarkon, and either the heroic name Manto or the divine name Mantu, respectively.<sup>15</sup> The second category includes Clusium (Etr. *clevsins-*), Pyrgi, Alsium (both without epichoric Etruscan attestation), and Cortona (Etr. *curtun-*), related with or derived from the vocabulary words *cleva-* "sanctuary",<sup>16</sup> *parxis* "high", *als-* "salt, sea",<sup>17</sup> and a widely dispersed root for "citadel" without epichoric Etruscan attestation, respectively.<sup>18</sup>

From a comparative point of view, it has been suggested since the times of Herbig that Tarquinia may very well be related to the Luwian (= one of the Indo-European languages of Anatolia closely related to Hittite) divine name *Tarḫunt-*.<sup>19</sup> In a recent contribution, Carlo de Simone has scrutinized this correspondence and reached the verdict that it must be regarded as highly questionable, mainly for the fact that it remains fully isolated.<sup>20</sup> The latter statement, however, disregards other relationships with the languages of western Asia Minor which have been noted in the relevant literature. Thus Cortona has convincingly been compared to a series of related place names in the Aegean region and ultimately traced back to the same Indo-European root as Hittite *gurta-* "citadel".<sup>21</sup> Next, Pyrgi likewise has been connected with

and *Veltune/Vertumnus*, respectively. Note that this category may be compared to Greek colonial names like Posidonia, Apollonia and Herakleia.

<sup>15</sup> See notes 4 and 5 above.

<sup>16</sup> Woudhuizen 1992, s.v. Note that Clusium is the seat of the "national" sanctuary where the Etruscan league used to assemble.

<sup>17</sup> Woudhuizen 1992, s.v.; *parxis* is used in TLE 169 as the opposite of *eterav* "low". Pyrgi and Alsium are not independent towns, but harbors of Caere.

<sup>18</sup> Note the close correspondence of this type of naming to Phoenician *Gadir*, which is likewise based on a word for "fortress, bastion", see Harrison 1988: 96.

<sup>19</sup> Herbig 1914: 20-21. For the use of this divine name in the realm of Anatolian toponymy, cf. the important Hittite province *Tarḫuntašša-*. In Luwian hieroglyphic the latter province occurs as *Tarḫumina-* (lit. "Tarḫunt town"), from which the Etruscan family name *Tarḫumenaia-* (TLE 480) is derived by means of adjectival *-ia-*.

<sup>20</sup> De Simone 1982: 406. The author further expresses (p. 405) his doubts about the phonetic development of Indo-European \*[h<sub>2</sub>] and common Anatolian [h] into Etruscan [χ] implied by the given correspondence. This phonetic development, however, also applies to the correspondence of Etruscan forms like *canθ-* (honorific title), *casθia-* "mausoleum" and *ceχα-* "Senate" to, respectively, Anatolian *ḫanta-* "in front of" (< PIE \**h<sub>2</sub>enti*), *É ḫaštiya-* "bone house" (< PIE \**h<sub>2</sub>ost-*) and *ḫuḫḫa-* "grandfather" (< PIE \**h<sub>2</sub>euḫ<sub>2</sub>-*). It should be noted in this connection that the development of PIE \*[h<sub>2</sub>] into velar [k], [g], [q], [χ] is a typical feature of the later Luwian dialects Lycian (*Trqqñt-*, *ḫñtawata-* "king", *ḫuga-* "grandfather") and Lydian (Zeus *Targuēnos*, *Kandaules*, *Gyges*).

<sup>21</sup> Furnée 1972: 65 (Gortys); cf. also Fick 1905: 19 ff. (Gortynia, Gyrtion, Kroton, etc.) and Kannengiesser 1911: 30. Hittite *gurta-* originates from PIE \**g<sup>h</sup>ord<sup>h</sup>-*, see Tischler 1983, s.v.; for Phoenician *qarth* "town" as a loanword from this PIE root, see Eisler 1939: 449.

numerous equivalents in the Aegean and derived from an Indo-European root which is duly represented in Hittite (*parku-* "high") and Luwian (TN *Parka-* as in the ethnic *Párkawaná-* [no. 29, phrase 3]).<sup>22</sup> Finally, Ambros Pfiffig has shown that comparative data for Mantua and Vulci also point in the general direction of the east Mediterranean region, where the stories about *Manto*, the mythical prophetess of Thebes, are situated<sup>23</sup> and the cult name *Velchanos* (= epiklesis of Zeus at Paistos) or *Bilkonios* (= epiklesis of Apollo in the region of the Meander) can be found.<sup>24</sup>

To these correlations noted in the literature two others may be added. First, the Etruscan vocabulary word *cleva-* "sanctuary", from which Clusium is derived, corresponds to Lycian (= a Luwian dialect in southwest Asia Minor) *qla-* of the same meaning.<sup>25</sup> Second, Alsium is difficult to separate from *Halesium* in the east-Greek province of Aeolia, which, in view of its similar location near natural salt deposits, likewise originates from the root of Greek *ἄλς* "salt, sea" (see tables 1-2).<sup>26</sup>

TOPONYM	COMPARISON
<i>Tarquīnia</i> (tarχna-)	<i>Tarhunt-</i> (Luw.)
<i>Vulci</i> (velc-)	<i>Velchanos/Bilkonios</i> (unspec.)
<i>Mantua</i> (manθua-)	<i>Manto</i> (Gr.)

Table 1. Toponyms based on divine or heroic names.

TOPONYM	WORD	COMPARISON
<i>Clusium</i> (clevsins-)	<i>cleva-</i>	<i>qla-</i> "sanctuary" (Lyc.)
<i>Cortona</i> (curtun-)		<i>gurtu-</i> "citadel" (Hit.)
<i>Pyrgi</i>	<i>parχis</i>	<i>parku-</i> "high" (Hit.)
<i>Alsium</i>	<i>als-</i>	<i>ἄλς</i> "salt, sea" (Gr.)

Table 2. Toponyms based on vocabulary words.

<sup>22</sup>Furnée 1972: 64; cf. Fick 1905: 16 (Pergamon). Hittite *parku-* and Luwian *Parka-* originate from PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>rg<sup>h</sup>(i)-*; note, however, that in Luwian voiced velars in initial or intervocalic position are lost, see Melchert 1987: 184 ff. and Tischler 1992: 258 f.

<sup>23</sup>Only one of the various options, see note 5 above.

<sup>24</sup>Pfiffig 1975, s.v. *Velchans*. Note that the root of this divine name probably corresponds to Hittite *walḫ-* "to strike, hit, smite" (< PIE *\*wélh<sub>2</sub>-*), thus showing yet another instance of the development PIE *\*[h<sub>2</sub>] > IE Anatolian [b] > Etruscan [χ]* referred to in note 20 above.

<sup>25</sup>Woudhuizen 1992, s.v.

<sup>26</sup>Woudhuizen 1992, s.v. Note that there is a considerable overlap in vocabulary between Etruscan and (pre-)Greek, most familiar being the correspondence of Etruscan *purθ* (magistracy), *puia* "wife", *huθ* "4", *netśvis* "haruspex", and *farθne* "girl" to, respectively, Greek *πρύτανις*, *ὄπιω*, *Ἰγτηνία*, *νηδύς* and *παρθένος*.

On the basis of the given examples, then, it may safely be concluded that Etruscan toponyms are rooted in the cultural environment of the eastern Mediterranean basin, especially that of the Luwian regions of southwest Asia Minor. This being the case, the people responsible for the foundation of these cities are likely to be identified as colonial settlers originating from the regions in question.

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