

Three ladies from Crustumerium, ca 675-650 BC

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Abstract*

Since 2006, the Groningen Institute of Archaeology (GIA) has been involved in the excavation of the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis at Crustumerium. The investigation yielded tens of tombs dating to the 7th and 6th centuries.¹ The excavations took place in close collaboration with the SSBAR (Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma). The article discusses three female tombs that stand out when compared to other contemporary tombs at Crustumerium. In addition, these three tombs have much in common in content and location. This article contains a description of the funerary ritual of each tomb and subsequently will elaborate on the social status of the women, expressed in the artefacts with which they were interred. We will suggest identifying the women buried in tombs 71, 76 and 232, as mistresses of a main household in Crustumerium.

INTRODUCTION

Crustumerium is one of the northernmost settlements of *Latium Vetus*, located along the Via Salaria, on the eastern bank of the Tiber and at a distance of 15 km from the centre of Rome (fig. 1). The ancient town was positioned on the border of four culturally diverse regions, Latium Vetus, the Sabine area, Etruria and the Faliscan-Capenate region. As a result of this location, the material culture of Crustumerium shows signs of hybridity.² Its location, the surrounding fertile agricultural land, as well as the interregional road network that placed the site in close contact with the above-mentioned regions, contributed significantly to the development of the site from the 9th century onwards. By the 7th-6th centuries the settlement occupied an area of ca 60 hectares and had become the centre of a small city-state.³ Crustumerium flourished in the Orientalising and Archaic period, roughly from the second half of the 8th until the 6th century and must have housed a considerable population (see below). Ancient sources mention that Crustumerium and its hinterland were added in 495 to the rising Roman state as the first *tribus rustica* named after its territory, following an invasion of the Romans in 499.⁴

The SSBAR has investigated the site since the late 1980s, focussing mainly on the excavation of its burial grounds. So far, four necropolises have been identified around the settlement: Monte Del Bufalo (MDB), Sasso Bianco, Marcigliana and Cisterna Grande.⁵ Based on the surveys and excavations of the past decades, it can be assumed that thousands of tombs surrounded the settlement, dating predominantly to the period ca 800 to 500. This guesstimate is established on research

both in the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis and in the settlement.⁶

Up to now, around 400 tombs have been excavated by both the SSBAR and other partners involved in the Crustumerium project.⁷ The Monte Del Bufalo necropolis stretches along the south-eastern side of the settlement (fig. 2). Based on surveys of the SSBAR, we can assume that the density of tombs in this necropolis is uneven. The southern part of the Monte del Bufalo necropolis contains hundreds of tombs of which ca 250 were excavated, including the three tombs presented in this paper (fig. 2).⁸

With respect to the grave contents, we differentiate between the drinking and eating wares (often found next to the deceased or in a separate niche of the tomb) and the personal objects, deposited on top of or near the remains of the body. Almost all tombs contain artefacts that refer to a drinking and eating ritual associated with the burial. This coincides with data from other burial grounds in the vicinity of Rome, suggesting that this ritual constitutes the most traditional and characteristic aspect of the funerary ceremony during the period discussed.⁹ In addition to these eating and drinking wares, tombs assigned to roughly the period 800 to 650/600 contain a number of personal artefacts, some of them unparalleled. In the literature, a few artefacts are considered status symbols, providing a possibility to reconstruct the social persona of the deceased, a topic that will be discussed in the final part of this paper.¹⁰

Research of the burial grounds around Crustumerium is affected by two biases. The first concerns the considerable damage brought to the tombs by robbers. They are mainly interested in

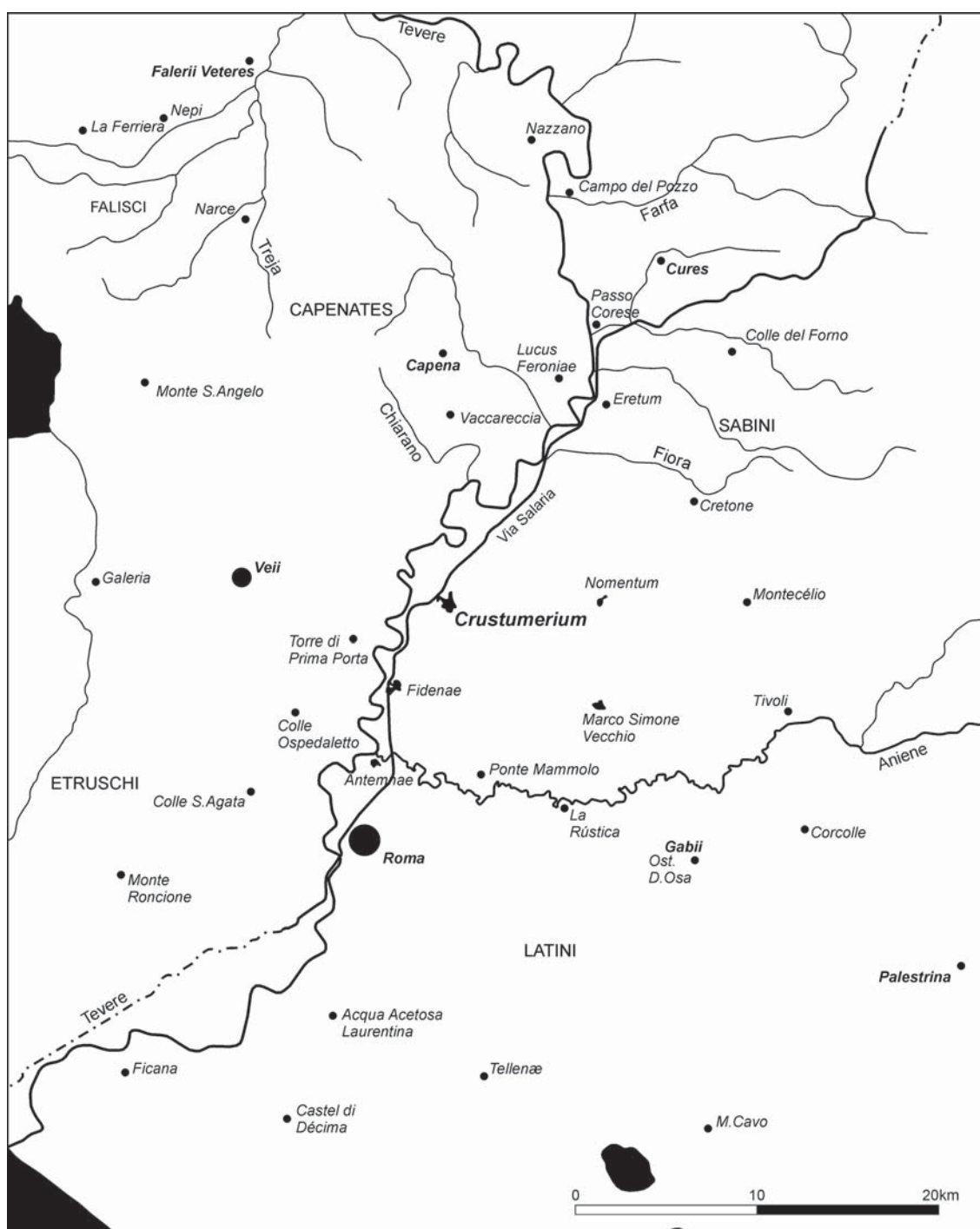


Fig. 1. Crustumerium and surrounding territories.

the ceramics representing the customary drinking and eating wares, often deposited at the head end of the tomb. The personal ornaments, frequently made of bronze, are apparently not as highly

wanted since their poor state of preservation would require a large investment in time and money for restoration. The depositions with the personal ornaments placed on top, have therefore



Fig. 2. The settlement of Crustumerium (in black outline) and the Monte Del Bufalo funerary area (in grey).

often remained undamaged and can still be excavated, whereas the ceramic assemblage in many cases has been largely robbed as in the three tombs presented here.

The second bias concerns the deep ploughing during the past century that altered the ancient landscape to some extent and destroyed and damaged a large amount of tombs.

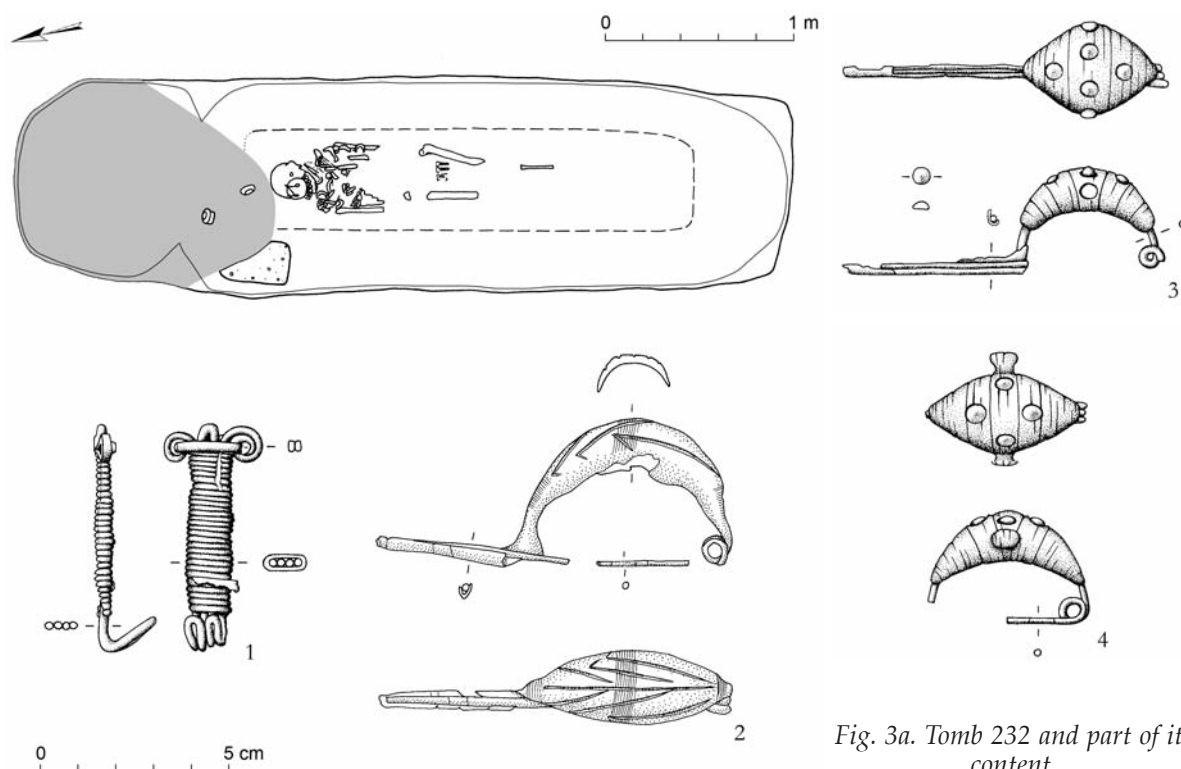


Fig. 3a. Tomb 232 and part of its content.

At present we describe three tombs, located close to each other, that, according to Crustumarium standards, contained a high number of personal objects. It concerns Monte Del Bufalo tombs 71, 76 and 232 dating to the period 675-650.¹¹

We start with a presentation of the three tombs followed by a discussion of the possibilities to reconstruct the social position of the women, buried in these tombs.

TOMB 232

Tomb 232 was excavated in July 2007. It is a rectangular *fossa* tomb with a niche at the head end (*fossa con loculo*). It contained the skeleton of a woman aged 40 to 50 years (fig. 3a).¹² The tomb had been severely abraded as the result of ploughing and damaged due to illicit excavation, leaving little of the original funerary assemblage in the head niche, which had probably been closed off with one or more, smaller and larger tuff blocks. In the eroded and pillaged *loculus* we excavated the lower part of a *holmos* (stand) and fragments of 5 small cups with high handles (*taz-zine-attingitoio*, fig. 3b; 8), which were used to ladle a drink, probably wine, from a larger container, often a bowl or jar.¹³ To date, the *holmos* of tomb 232 is the only one excavated at Crustumarium

(fig. 3b; 7). It was made of *impasto rosso* and embellished with decorations in white slip in white-on-red technique.¹⁴ In central Italy, comparable *holmoi* have been found in tombs with an elaborate furnishing and are considered to be indicative of high-status female burials.¹⁵

The social status of the woman is furthermore reflected in the personal gifts, which were intact and predominantly made of copper-alloy, being:

- a headress¹⁶ (fig. 3b; 5)
- a string of 39 miniature pendants (1.0 cm in height) with small cylinders (0.5 cm width) in between
- a clasp consisting of three elements (fig. 3a; 1)
- 6 fibulae a navicella (fig. 3a; 2)
- 1 fibula with bow adorned with ivory discs and circular, amber inlays (fig. 3a; 3)
- 1 fibula with bow adorned with ivory discs, lateral knobs and circular, amber inlays (fig. 3a; 4) and
- a bar with the schematic representation of a monkey on one side (fig. 3b; 6).

Since it is difficult to find an exact parallel for several of these artefacts, we think that this is an exceptional tomb.¹⁷ For example, the delicate string of small copper-alloy pendants and cylinders is about 26 cm long and weighs less than 16 to 17 grams. It was found underneath the mandible of



Fig. 3b. Part of the content of Tomb 232.

the deceased. Since we have no parallel for this string with pendants, we can only hypothesize upon its function. It might have been either a necklace, a string somehow associated with textiles, possibly a veil, or the string with pendants was worn from ear to ear for a decorative or yet unknown function.¹⁸

We could neither find an exact parallel for the fibulae consisting of ivory discs with small amber inlays. The form of one of them is comparable to two bronze fibulae also embellished with amber dots found at Osteria dell'Osa tombs 116 and 224, both elaborately furnished.¹⁹



Fig. 4. Tomb 76 and part of its content.

TOMB 76

Tomb 76 is a rectangular *fossa* tomb with a niche at the head end. The body of the deceased was probably placed in a wooden sarcophagus in a recess underneath a row of large, horizontal, cover slabs that rested on two lateral ridges (fig. 4).²⁰ The tomb contained the skeleton of a female, between 40 to 50 years old, with a height of ca 160 cm.

The head *loculus* of this tomb had been robbed but we were able to reconstruct an *impasto rosso* olla with stamped decoration (fig. 4; 1) and a carenated bowl (fig. 4; 2). Both objects refer to a drinking ritual. The tomb is closely correlated to tomb 232. This is mainly reflected in the intact personal *corredo* (predominantly made of copper-alloy) consisting of:

- an artefact similar to, though smaller than, the headdress of tomb 232 mentioned above (fig. 4; 5)
- 3 fibulae *a navicella* (fig. 4; 8, 9, 10)
- 4 fibulae *a sanguisuga* (fig. 4; 4, 11, 12)
- a small bronze ring
- a spindle whorl (fig. 4; 3)
- a clasp (one element) (fig. 4; 13)
- a ring of twisted rod with a diameter of 9 cm, found near the feet
- 2 bracelets and (fig. 4; 6, 14)
- a large suspension ring with a diameter of ca 28 cm (fig. 4; 7).

The artefact that is similar to the headdress of tomb 232 was not found on top of the head (as was the case in tomb 232) but on the breast of the deceased. The manufacture of both artefacts is identical and points to an originally, similar function. The lobes are pierced in the middle and must have fastened an organic material, probably some sort of textile, as was the case for the headdress of tomb 232.

Suspension rings have recently been studied in detail by Iaia. Rings comparable to the one in tomb 76, are typical for *Latium Vetus*, but have also been found in Capena, some Sabine sites and in Caere. Smaller suspension rings emerge during the 9th century while their typological evolution can be followed till the 7th century. The large, flat suspension rings with an elaborate incised and impressed decoration, such as the ones in tombs 76 and 71 (see below), pertain to Latial Period IVA. By that time, they occur mainly in 'rich female tombs in *Latium Vetus*'²¹ and are considered as markers of status for a ruling elite.²²

TOMB 71

Tomb 71 consists of a shaft with a separate lateral niche (*loculus*) at the bottom, containing the body of the deceased, closed off by a row of standing, closing stones and a head niche, containing part of the *corredo*, closed off with one slab.²³ The grave type is called *tomba a loculo tipo Narce*.²⁴ This tomb type emerges at Crustumerium around 700 and is also found at Veii.²⁵ Tomb 71 was heavily looted and even the personal ornaments, usually deposited on top of the deceased, were largely robbed. However, conscientious excavation, documentation and restoration, provided enough information to attribute a high importance to this tomb, comparable to that of the two presented above (fig. 5a).

The artefacts that pertain to the drinking and eating wares in this tomb are:

- an *impasto rosso olla a coppette* (jar with four bowls attached to the shoulder) (fig. 5b; 5)
- a bronze bowl with pearl rim, probably with tripod legs (fig. 5b; 4)²⁶
- a bronze kyathos (fig. 5a; 1)²⁷
- at least 13 *impasto tazzine-attingitoio* (small cups with a raised handle) (fig. 5a; 3)
- at least 5 *impasto tazze* (bowls) (fig. 5a; 2)
- three *impasto amphorae* and
- an oinochoe of depurated clay (fragmentary)

The personal objects that must originally have been related to the remains of the deceased, prior to the extensive robbing of tomb 71, are:

- fragments of an iron fibula
- an iron knife
- two small rings
- a glass bead
- fragments of a large suspension ring with an original diameter of ca 27 cm.²⁸

The large suspension ring indicates that we are dealing with a woman of some standing (see comments above on tomb 76). The iron knife might point to a woman as mistress of a household.²⁹ An elevated social position is also reflected in the *olla a coppette* and the two remaining bronze vessels. Based on the large number of preserved ceramic bowls, we assume that the tomb originally contained an elaborate banqueting set. The wealth of the *corredo* in the head niche might have inspired the tomb robbers to excavate not only the head niche, but also the lateral *loculus* with remains of the deceased, causing considerable damage to the deposition and its personal ornaments.

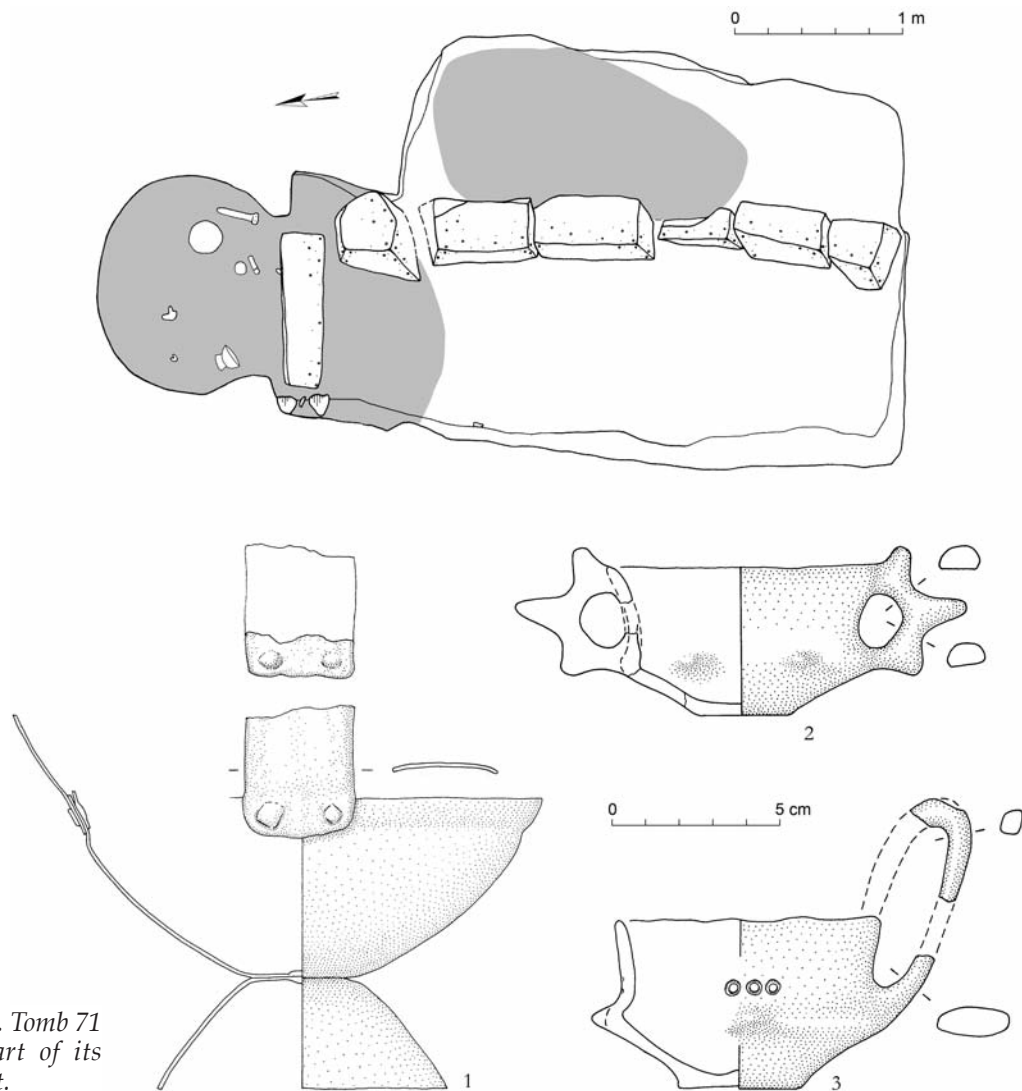


Fig. 5a. Tomb 71 and part of its content.

STATUS MARKERS AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

For a reconstruction of the social status of the three buried women presented above, it is essential to examine demographics as well as social ordering in the main centres of central Italy around 700-650.

We need to impart an idea on the whole population living at Crustumerium in order to come to some ideas regarding who had access to formal burial and who did not. Di Gennaro and Togni-nelli gave a rough estimate of 6000 inhabitants for the settlement during the 7th and 6th centuries resulting in an average of 100 people per hectare.³⁰ Although a population density at Crustumerium during the 7th and 6th century of 100 people per hectare might be too high for the predominantly

agricultural community at hand, it is safe to assume that thousands of people lived on the settlement plateau.³¹ This view is supported by results from systematic surveys of the settlement area demonstrating dense habitation.³² The infrastructure of roads, the monumental defence works, as well as the level of craft-specialisation achieved that documents the existence of several workshops at the site, also supports the statement that Crustumerium, as a centre, housed thousands of people. A mean of 50 inhabitants per hectare still provides us with an average of 3000 inhabitants for Crustumerium during the 7th and 6th centuries. If these were all interred in the various burial grounds surrounding the settlement, this would result in tens of thousands of tombs taking into account an average age of around 30.³³

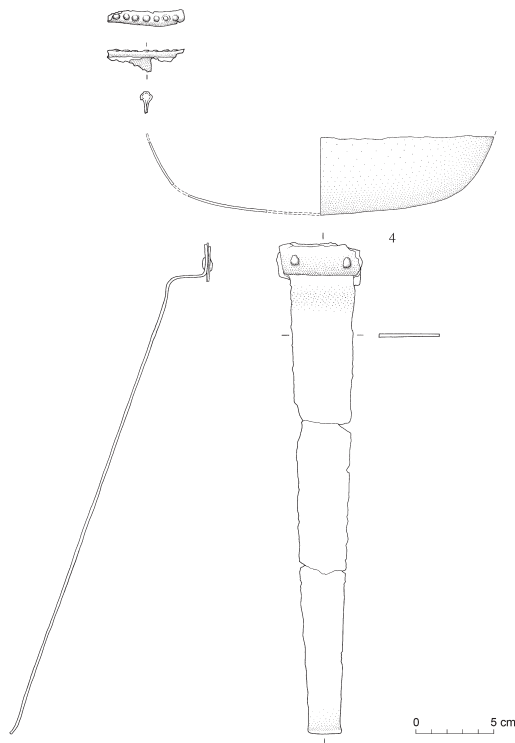


Fig. 5b. Part of the content of Tomb 71.

This massive number of tombs is unlikely. We estimate that thousands of tombs surrounded the settlement of Crustumerium but not tens of thousands. So far the excavations of the SSBAR and others have revealed hundreds of tombs, clus-

tered in several (distinct) groups. Surveys and trenches excavated by the SSBAR in the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis indicate that there are areas with a high concentration of tombs and areas that were less intensively used for interment. We know that the proportion of the population found in the burial grounds is not representative. Selection took place according to gender and age categories. Probably some status groups were excluded as well. For example, infants and children are largely missing in the burial record. Taking into account that up to 50% of all children did not reach the age of 5, child depositions would have constituted a considerable proportion of the tombs if they all received a funeral in tombs.³⁴ In addition, the quantity of early 8th century tombs at Crustumerium is so far limited, making it probable that only a very restricted group of people were buried. Moreover, during the period 700 to 650, male tombs are underrepresented considerably at Crustumerium.³⁵ Possibly between 50 to 75 percent of the population was not deposited in tombs throughout the 7th and 6th centuries.³⁶ This guesstimate takes into account that many children would have died in their infancy and the vast majority of them were not buried in tombs. Also the proportion of men is significantly less than expected. Moreover it seems that the lower classes were not fully represented in the burial record but this requires additional research. Other groups might have been excluded as well though it is evident from the funerary record of central Italy that the upper echelons of society, and those who strove to be, were formally interred. The above-mentioned demographic approximation demonstrates that only part of the population at Crustumerium is formally buried in tombs.

As has been described above, some of the artefacts found in Monte Del Bufalo tombs 71, 76 and 232, are typical for well-furnished tombs in the area surrounding Crustumerium. A social reconstruction of the roles assigned to these three women, requires a general introduction into the funerary record of central Italy. Since the 19th century AD, the affluent, so-called warrior tombs and the succeeding *tombe principesche* roused the imagination of many people.³⁷ There is a long tradition in Italian archaeology to assign a high status to those 8th and 7th century tombs that contain a 'rich' or elaborate *corredo*. We consider this tradition sound mainly on account of the symbolic value of some of the artefacts found in such tombs. Nonetheless we would like to stress that we consider status differentiation only possible for those tombs with a personal *corredo* or other fea-

tures that can tell us something about the person deposited in the grave. It might not be possible for most tombs to rank them according to status.

Some status markers were in use for centuries. We refer to artefacts like the *lituus*, double axe, sceptre, *bullae*, purple toga, *fascia*, throne, folding chair and golden diadem.³⁸ One can add a number of other status markers such as chariots, fans, footstools of Ceri type, silver/gold jewellery and silver/gold drinking vessels, which are occasionally found in the richest tombs pertaining to the 8th and 7th centuries. Thus we also consider this tradition sound based on the durability of some status markers kept in use for centuries. For example, the chariot and double shield can be traced back to the 10th century in the area around Rome.³⁹ So far, such status markers have not been recovered at Crustumerium.

We differentiate between four levels of funerals for the period 700-650:

- the highest level associated with warrior tombs and *tombe principesche*,
- the second level is illustrated by the female depositions presented above,
- a third level consisting of tombs with a relatively modest funerary assemblage (see below),
- and a fourth level represented by those people that were not buried in tombs (see above); this level does not consist of one group per community but reflects local selections in gender, age groups and possibly in social standing.

The highest level during the 8th century, consisting of warrior tombs, is mainly found in Etruria, while in *Latium Vetus* during this period, status appears to be predominantly expressed in female tombs.⁴⁰ *Tombe principesche* (male and female) are rare and occur both in Etruria and *Latium Vetus* mainly during the period 725-650.⁴¹

To date none of the tombs at Crustumerium can be labelled a warrior tomb or a *tomba principesca* since the opulence associated with such tombs is lacking.⁴² Besides the two biases introduced above, this void at Crustumerium in the category of wealthiest tombs in central Italy, can be due to a number of other factors such as:

- the relatively small dataset, especially in comparison to other sites such as Veii, Caere and Tarquinia where thousands of tombs have been excavated,
- specific local conditions that prevented political centralisation and the rise of a '*Primus*' (see below),
- local ideological restrictions leading to a less elaborate *corredo* or to an under-representation of certain groups in the funerary record or

- a relative poverty of the site when compared to other sites in Etruria and *Latium Vetus* south of the Aniene.

Many of the above mentioned factors can only be studied when more tombs at Crustumerium have been published.⁴³

The rating of tombs in groups based on a weighing of their *corredo*, is common practice.⁴⁴ As mentioned above, the highest social level, the warrior tombs (male) and *tombe principesche* (male and female), has so far not been found at Crustumerium.

The subsequent level, consisting of tombs with a less costly but still extensive *corredo*, is well represented at the site. This is partially caused by temporal differences in the funerary ritual, resulting in growing numbers of 'wealthier' tombs during the period 725-650.

A third level of female tombs with a less elaborate *corredo* containing only a few personal ornaments, pertaining to the period 700-650, consists of tombs like Sasso Bianco tomb 34⁴⁵ and Monte Del Bufalo tomb 223.⁴⁶

Level four consists of population groups that are underrepresented in the tombs around Crustumerium. This refers to a proportion of men and the majority of infants and children.⁴⁷ The hypothesis that the 'lower' class might hardly have been buried in tombs, during the period 700 to 650, requires further elaboration and testing. It calls for a better perception of the funerary ritual of the 'lower' class, a topic that will be examined elsewhere.⁴⁸

In addition, a reconstruction of the social status of the women buried in the three tombs requires an understanding of all tombs so far excavated at Crustumerium and a clear notion of the social conditions at the site around 700-650. Social indexing needs large datasets of tombs that are presently not available for Crustumerium. Yet, we construe that the women buried in tombs 71, 76 and 232 will have formed part of the upper echelons of the community on account of the following, distinctive artefacts that accompanied their burial:

- a headdress (only two of this type are known; one functioning as a headdress in tomb 232 while the other was placed on the shoulder of the woman in tomb 76),
- a *holmos* (so far only one *holmos* has been recovered at Crustumerium in the tombs),
- suspension rings (in tombs 71 and 76),
- an *olla a coppette* of tomb 71 (similar jars occur occasionally in other tombs at Crustumerium as well),⁴⁹
- two bronze vessels of tomb 71, a tripod-bowl

and a rare bronze *kyathos*,

- the quantity of fibulae and other ornaments (tombs 76 and 232),
- the exceptional, ivory fibulae (tomb 232), and
- the unparalleled artefacts without an obvious function (in tomb 232 the string of tiny pendants and the bar with monkey finial).

These artefacts are unique or uncommon at Crustumerium and will obtain a high value in any social indexing method.⁵⁰

Regarding the social structure at Crustumerium around 700-650, we can look at nearby centres for which larger, funerary datasets are available, such as Osteria dell'Osa and Veii.⁵¹ From the study of these burial grounds, scholars have concluded that, from the 8th century onwards, communities were organised in clans, each dominated by a prominent family.⁵² This system can be labelled patrician.⁵³ The *patres*, presented here as the heads of the local clans, would have facilitated and controlled the activities of their dependants or clients to some extent. In a recent study, De Santis proposed the principle of *primus inter pares* for Veii, suggesting that political centralisation had led to a social structure in which the *patres* elected a figurehead, a *primus*, who himself did not have to be a patrician.⁵⁴ This procedure reflects some sort of political unification of the various factions living in the primary centres of Italy during the 8th and 7th centuries. At Veii, the tombs of the *primi* have been identified in four remarkable 8th century warrior tombs. It is uncertain to what extent this system of *primus inter pares* existed at Crustumerium, but the presence of a footstool of Ceri type covered in bronze-sheet in Monte Del Bufalo tomb 40, indicates that some of the symbols of power associated with a *primus*, were employed here as well.⁵⁵

On account of the *corredo*, Bartoloni differentiates between various female roles in Etruria and *Latium Vetus* during the 8th and 7th century.⁵⁶ She recognizes sometimes overlapping social positions such as 'women with power', weaver, mistress of a household and wife/mother. Women with power, for example, are buried with status indicators such as thrones, chariots and sceptres. Her group '*padrone di casa*' is characterized by bronze vessels, some other bronze artefacts and ornaments, knives, stands and elaborate drinking and eating wares related to a banqueting tradition. The three female tombs examined in this paper do not represent the highest social level of *tombe principesche* or Bartoloni's group 'women with power'. However they do pertain to the broader group of elite graves, Bartoloni's *padrone*

di casa. On account of the *corredo* and location of tombs 71, 76 and 232, we suggest identifying the women buried in them, as mistresses of a main household in Crustumerium.⁵⁷ As such they are considered the female counterparts of the male *padroni* or *patres*.⁵⁸

A final topic addressed, is the location of tombs 71, 76 and 232. As has been stated above, the three tombs are found quite near each other, in the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis. This necropolis occupies an area of about 1.5 hectares and consists of a few hundred tombs of which ca 250 tombs were excavated covering the period 800 to 550. A formal, spatial analysis of the MDB necropolis at Crustumerium can only be executed in collaboration with the SSBAR and is scheduled for the near future. It is likely that this large group of hundreds of tombs can be divided into smaller clusters but this cannot be examined in detail at this stage.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, some preliminary remarks can be made. The necropolis appears to miss a clear chronological ordering, meaning that the location of the tombs is apparently not dictated by time or generation.⁶⁰ For example, just to the South of tomb 232, dating around 675-650, we excavated an intact chamber tomb dating around 600 that contained the remains of 5 burials.⁶¹ Thus the neighbouring tombs 232 and 222 are separated in time by two to three generations. It seems that over a period of 250 years, tombs have been dug in the tuff creating a close packing of graves in this part of the necropolis. Clustering within the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis does not seem to be similar to that of other burial grounds in central Italy where younger tombs concentrate around a few older tombs.⁶² In the MDB necropolis, most of the oldest tombs, dating around 800, are closely grouped. The location and contents of the various tombs within this necropolis, including the tombs 71, 76 and 232, suggests that this part of the necropolis was used as a burial ground for generations by people that were socially and/or genetically related. Probably we are dealing with the necropolis of an important, extended family or clan at Crustumerium who used it over a period of 250 years. Members of this group were consciously interred in the vicinity of their ancestors.⁶³ Somewhat comparable clusters of tombs were identified in the necropolis of Osteria dell'Osa: for example group 230-293 and its predecessor, group 1-60 (Bietti Sestieri 1992a, 194-204).⁶⁴ Both groups of tombs, however, do not continue as long in time and are smaller than the Monte Del Buffalo necropolis at Crustumerium. Group 1-60 is a spatially isolated cluster of tombs

that were dug over a period of ca 100-150 years. It is furthermore characterized by a relatively high proportion of female tombs with a special *corredo*. Group 230-293 was also in use as the burial ground of a specific group for several generations. The two lineages, buried at Osteria dell'Osa in separate clusters for several generations, reflect conditions expressed also in the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis at Crustumerium. These burial groups are characterised by continuity and some opulence, as illustrated in the three female tombs presented above. It is probable that the women buried at Crustumerium in tombs 71, 76 and 232, besides being mistresses of a main household, might have shared other social/religious tasks that were transmitted from generation to generation.⁶⁵ However we prefer not to over-interpret the personal *corredo* in these three tombs.

CONCLUSION

The presentation of the Monte Del Bufalo tombs 71, 76 and 232 indicates that according to Crustumerium standards we are dealing with some remarkable female burials. The three tombs have much in common, not just in date but also in content and location. Colleagues generally assign a high rank to comparable female tombs in the vicinity of Crustumerium. As an archaeological phenomenon such female tombs are recognised almost all over Italy for the period 800 to 650.⁶⁶ Thus they are not unique but still refer to a high social stratum.

A look at demographics implies that at least half of the population at Crustumerium was not formally buried in tombs. Selection took place. Most children and a proportion of men were for various reasons excluded. Moreover, a reconstruction of the social stratification in the main centres of central Italy indicates that communities were organised in clans and that only two social strata emerged; patricians and those who were not (a group that would later be called *plebs*). Competition between the various groups and main families that lived at Crustumerium during the period 800 to 650/625 will have been considerable, resulting in a relatively large number of tombs with an elaborate furnishing. We would like to stress that status differentiations are only possible for those tombs with a personal *corredo* or other features that are indicative. For most other tombs it might not be possible to reconstruct a specific level of social standing. As elsewhere, there existed several, contemporaneous burial grounds around Crustumerium. These large

groups of tombs indicate continuity of use by a specific group in the community. The Monte Del Bufalo necropolis is the only site in *Latium Vetus* with a considerable number of 6th-century tombs. The funerary area was in use for ca 250 years, longer than most other burial grounds known in *Latium Vetus*. As such the burials of the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis reflect an aspect of the social conditions during a period of time that covers the regal stage of nearby Rome. Within the larger Monte Del Bufalo necropolis, tombs 71, 76 and 232 characterize one phase of use and burial ritual, around 675-650. Looking at similar tombs in the vicinity, we suggest identifying these women as mistresses of a main household at Crustumerium. Their personal *corredo* marks them as women of standing, as ladies or *matronae*.

NOTES

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¹ All dates are BC. The three ladies from Crustumerium, presented in this article, would form a suitable addition to the fine publication of Pitzalis (2010). She catalogued and interpreted quite a number of comparable and contemporaneous female tombs in South Etruria, Latium Vetus and the Faliscan area. We wrote this article before the book by Pitzalis was published and therefore could not consider it in detail. We recommend it to those who are interested in this kind of female tombs.

² Cf. di Gennaro 2007; Nijboer/Attema 2011. In 2008, di Gennaro organized a session for the XVII Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Classica; Incontri tra Culture nel Mondo Mediterraneo Antico. The title of the session was 'Crustumerium: i Latini tra Etruschi e Sabini'. Various colleagues presented papers during this session that discussed cultural identity at Crustumerium; http://151.12.58.75/archeologia/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=60&Itemid=60.

³ Cf. Amoroso 2008; Guidi 1998. The development of Crustumerium into, what appears to be, a small city state, is a main topic of research of the NWO-funded project 'The people and the state. Material culture, social structure and political centralization in central Italy (800-450): the case of Crustumerium'; <http://www.rug.nl/let/onderzoek/onderzoekinstutenten/gia/CurrentResearch/ironagetombs?lang=en>.

⁴ Cornell 1995, 174-175.

⁵ These four burial grounds have been partially excavated. Other tombs around Crustumerium were iden-

- tified through robbers' pits.
- ⁶ Data on the settlement of Crustumerium derive mainly from surveys (Quilici/Quilici Gigli 1980; Amoroso 2002). Some excavations in the settlement took place (cf. Jarva et al. 2008; Barbaro/Barbina/Borzetti 2008). http://www.irfrome.org/ei/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=13&Itemid=64&lang=en.
 - ⁷ The lion's share of the tombs has been excavated by the SSBAR. Other groups that were active at Crustumerium included teams of the universities of Oulu (under the direction of E. Jarva), Cambridge (led by U. Rajala), Iowa (under the supervision of R. De Puma) and Leipzig (directed by W.R. Teegeen).
 - ⁸ From 2006 onwards, the GIA joined the SSBAR investigations of the necropolis and excavated so far ca 40 tombs (cf. Nijboer et al. 2008).
 - ⁹ For example, a 6th-century tomb we have excavated, contained several depositions and merely one plate and one jar that, judging by their function, still refer to drinking and eating (MDB tomb 32). Meals were also later associated with the funerary ritual of Republican Rome, a period for which there are hardly any tombs in Latium Vetus. For an introduction on burials in Republican Rome, see Brill's New Pauly online; under burial D. Italy and Rome. Two funeral meals were customary, the *silicernium* on the day of the burial (frequently at the tomb: Non. 48,3) and the *cena novemdialis* (after the sacrifices for the dead on the ninth day), delineating the period for the family purification rites.
 - ¹⁰ The symbolism of some artefacts, given to the deceased, is discussed below. Tombs pertaining to the 6th century contain hardly any artefacts. At Crustumerium, the decrease in funerary wealth appears to have taken place during the period 650-600. By 600 social status was no longer expressed in the *corredo* (furnishing) of tombs. This development will be dealt with in detail in forthcoming publications.
 - ¹¹ The absolute dates are preliminary. On account of their *corredo*, tombs 76 and 232 seem to be almost contemporaneous. Tomb 71 appears to be the youngest of the three and might even date slightly later than 650.
 - ¹² The tomb measured: L: 4.10, W: 1.15, D max.: 0.30 and has a NNE/SSW orientation. The minute artefacts on top of the skeleton called for a block lift of the upper half of the skeleton. This block was later transported to Groningen, where it was excavated and the associated artefacts restored in 2007-2008 at the Laboratory for Conservation and Material studies (LCM; www.lcm.rug.nl).
 - ¹³ It is suggested that the ritual performed was a *circum-potatio* meaning that cups were passed around within a reserved group of participants who could have been of the same sex; di Gennaro 1990, 70; Beilelli Marchesini 2006, 223.
 - ¹⁴ Micozzi 1994.
 - ¹⁵ Beijer 1991, 22; Bartoloni 2003, 127-128. However, at Satricum and elsewhere, *holmoi* are also associated with male depositions (judging from the weaponry placed inside the tomb; Waarsenburg 1995, 91-95; Bartoloni 2003, 127-128).
 - ¹⁶ We suggest that the headdress can be interpreted as some sort of diadem (Nijboer/Attema 2011). It finds a parallel in the headdress on a statue from the Pedata necropolis at Chianciano dated to the late 5th century, which clearly depicts a twisted rod, and some kind of corona adorning the forehead (Torelli 2000, 379).
 - ¹⁷ Nijboer/Attema 2011.
 - ¹⁸ We suggest that the woman buried in tomb 232 was veiled (Nijboer/Attema 2011). Decorating textiles with bronze ornaments was quite common for ceremonial dresses in Italy during this period (cf. Negroni Catacchio 2007). Comparable pendants are reconstructed as hanging from a belt in tomb 85 of the Servici necropolis at Novilara (Bergonzi 2007, 91). We would like to thank P. von Eles who made the suggestion of a string worn from ear to ear in July 2009, on account of the X-ray photograph made of the block-lift, which shows the pendants in their original position. A string with pendants from ear to ear around a headscarf is depicted in an archaic relief from Chiusi (Torelli 1997, 70).
 - ¹⁹ Bietti Sestieri 1992, 835-836, 856-858.
 - ²⁰ Traces of black organic sediments, around and beneath the deceased, indicate a burial in a tree trunk or coffin. Remains of tree-trunks and coffins are frequently found in the tombs at Crustumerium. The tomb measured L: 3.36, W: 1.06, D: 0.96 and had a NNW/SSE orientation.
 - ²¹ Iaia 2007, 523.
 - ²² Bartoloni 2006.
 - ²³ The tomb measured L: 4.80, W: 2.45, D: 1.00 and has a NNE/SSW orientation. Due to the illicit excavations, only a few objects could be retrieved from the head and side *loculus*, most of them fragmentary.
 - ²⁴ It is named after the site where it has been most frequently identified. Paolini 1990, 470-471; di Gennaro 2007.
 - ²⁵ Beilelli Marchesini 2008.
 - ²⁶ This bronze bowl was filled with a whitish paste, possibly some kind of porridge. The contents will be analysed in the near future. A parallel for this bronze tripod bowl and the suspension ring can be found in tomb 133 at Laurentina Acqua Acetosa. This tomb was labelled as '*principesca*' and dates to 675-650 (Bedini 2006, 467). At Crustumerium we have so far no *tombe principesche*.
 - ²⁷ Since there is no indication of a second handle on the bowl, we believe that we are dealing with a kyathos, instead of a kantharos. Bronze *kyathoi* are very rare. The form of the bronze *kyathos* in Tomb 71 resembles those in fine bucchero (Torelli 2000, 483; Camporeale 1967, 115-116; Minto 1943, tavv. XXIII 3, 4, 5; XXXIX 9; XXXVIII 6, 8; Rasmussen 1979, 110-116, pl. 36). Bronze bowls with one high handle occur from the 8th century onwards (Iaia 2005, 188-207).
 - ²⁸ Some shards and bronze remains were too small to identify the original objects. In addition, the tomb yielded a number of fragmentary, small, iron nails possibly used to fasten a wooden chest. Another detail regarding tomb 71 concerns the covering of some artefacts in the head *loculus* with oak-bark, a material that has also been recorded in some tombs at Castel di Decima (Zevi 1975, 239).
 - ²⁹ Bartoloni 2003, 123-129.
 - ³⁰ A mean population density of ca 100 people per hectare would coincide with estimations given for more urban sites such as Middle Republican Cosa or for various cities in Northern Italy during the 14th century AD (De Ligt 2008, 147-54). di Gennaro 1999, 5; Togninelli 2006, 36.
 - ³¹ The 7th and 6th centuries at Crustumerium are also accompanied by the transition from huts to houses. In some settlements in central Italy, groups of huts dating to the 7th century were excavated and so far they never reveal a close packing of structures, as is characteristic for towns. Huts are usually surrounded by open spaces, a fact that

- greatly affects the population density feasible in such settlements (cf. Maaskant-Kleibrink 1991; Gnade 2008, 20-8). Cf. Amoroso 2002.
- ³² Cf. Morris 1989, 74. This would amount to ca 20.000 tombs. In case we include the whole 8th century, this figure might rise to 25.000 tombs. An average life expectancy at birth of around 30 in antiquity is debated. Scheidel thinks that the life expectancy of the Roman elite was around twenty to thirty years and that this figure is comparable to that of the whole population (Scheidel 1999, 263, 280). An average life expectancy of 25 would raise the above given figure of depositions at Crustumium considerably. In the case of Crustumium, we need to account for the fact that in some 6th century chamber tombs, goods and corpses had been removed to create space for a subsequent deposition. The above exercise on demographics reveals merely an order of magnitude. Density of population in the rising urban centres of central Italy requires a more detailed discussion that would stretch the purpose of this paper. For example, density of population increases substantially with the emergence of two-storey buildings or parcelling of house plots along streets and alleys. In addition, one could include a discussion on average agricultural yield to sustain a certain number of people or an analysis of the few settlement excavations in central Italy that revealed more than just one hut or house (cf. Osborne 2005, 8; Rasmussen 2005, 86-88; Nijboer 1998, 42-44).
- ³⁴ Scheidel 1999, 266. Scheidel writes that precise figures on infant and child mortality cannot be given but that they must have been very high. This is confirmed by historical accounts on surviving children of some Roman rulers and aristocrats (Scheidel 1999, 266-272).
- ³⁵ It has been pointed out that in several burial grounds in southern Etruria and *Latium Vetus*, female tombs seem to outnumber male tombs during the 8th and 7th centuries (cf. Bartoloni 1997, 100-101).
- ³⁶ We consider this a low estimate since the population at Crustumium may well have been over 3000 inhabitants or 50 persons/ha. The percentage of the population not buried at Crustumium, might be higher than 50 to 75%. A comparable exercise by Morris for Athens yielded much lower percentages of the population represented in graves (Morris 1989, 100-101).
- ³⁷ On warrior tombs and *tombe principesche* see, for example, De Santis 2005.
- ³⁸ Aigner-Foresti 2000. These conventional status markers have been recorded in ancient literature. Quite a number of these symbols are, for example, depicted on a terracotta plaque from Poggio Civitate, representing an elite assembly and dating to the early 6th century (cf. Rathje 1993).
- ³⁹ Colonna 1991; De Santis 2009, 362, 365. In Latial tombs of the 10th century there are miniature, replica versions of *scudi bilobati* and chariots that by the 8th century are found in full scale in tombs. In his article Colonna relates the *scudi bilobati*, to the dance of the Salii (Colonna 1991). Recently, De Santis has excavated a number of tombs at some sites in the area around Rome, dating to the 10th century containing double shields and a complete miniature panoplia (De Santis 2006). A fine, bronze miniature replica of a chariot was excavated at S. Palomba Tombs 1 and 2 Rome, (De Santis 2009, 362, 365). I thank her once more for having shown me this miniature bronze replica of a chariot and discussing it with me.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. Bartoloni 2003, 115-144; De Santis 2007; Iaia 2007.
- ⁴¹ They are also found in the burial grounds of smaller Latial settlements than Crustumium, such as the *tombe principesche* at Castel di Decima, Acqua Acetosa Laurentina, La Rustica and Satricum.
- ⁴² MDB tomb 40, excavated by the SSBAR, contained a footstool of Ceri type, covered with decorated bronze sheet (di Gennaro 1999, 10). This tomb is located in the Southern group of the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis, just like the three female tombs presented here. MDB tomb 40 can neither be classified as a warrior tomb or *tomba principesca*.
- ⁴³ This is one of the aims of the NWO-funded project 'The people and the state. Material culture, social structure and political centralization in central Italy (800-450): the case of Crustumium'; <http://www.rug.nl/let/onderzoek/onderzoekinstututen/gia/CurrentResearch/ironagetombs?lang=en>.
- ⁴⁴ Cf. Pacciarelli 2000, 217-76.
- ⁴⁵ Belelli Marchesini 2006.
- ⁴⁶ Nijboer et al. 2008. We refrain from assigning a status level to these tombs at this stage since the *corredi* are clearly not complete.
- ⁴⁷ In *Latium Vetus* some children were buried underneath or near the family home or hut. These burials represent however only a small portion of all the children that died. In general children do not seem to have been buried in tombs. E. Jarva has recently excavated a few interesting children tombs along the edge of the road trench of Crustumium, possibly pointing in the direction of infant burials within the settlement proper.
- ⁴⁸ This is one of the research questions posed in the NWO-funded project. Here it suffices to mention that in nearby Gabii, the group of tombs without a *corredo*, that some believe to represent the lowest social stratum of a settlement during the 8th and 7th centuries, is limited (Bietti Sestieri 1992).
- ⁴⁹ Cf. di Gennaro 2006, 228-229.
- ⁵⁰ Cf. Rebay 2006, 199-240. This might be considered a bias of this method as well. Once we have been able to elaborate our dataset regarding the tombs of the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis, we will try social indexing methods. We intend to work with periods of 50 years since the funerary ritual at Crustumium changed considerably from 800 to 500. The main aim will be to recognise/describe burials of the lower social class.
- ⁵¹ Cf. Bietti Sestieri 1992; Guidi 1993; Bartoloni 1997.
- ⁵² In 2006 Smith published a book on the concept *Gens* (Smith 2006). This publication stresses that the concept changes through time and is somewhat ambiguous. It can be defined in historical but also in anthropological terms. For this article and the period discussed we use the word clan and not *gens*. It refers to a collection of families that were genetically and/or socially related. As such they formed a social unit, several of which formed a community.
- ⁵³ The division into two social strata took place during the 8th and 7th centuries. Some prefer a 10th-9th century origin of this social stratification in basically two tiers. Later both strata are documented as patricians and *plebs*. According to the Law of the Twelve Tables, marriages between patricians and plebeians were forbidden. On patricians, see, for example: Cornell 1995, 84, 115-6, 142-3, 242-56; Smith 1996, 189-202; 2006, 251-80, 302-35. The words patricians and aristocrats are used in most textbooks as synonyms (cf. Bartoloni 2003). We prefer the term patrician because in history patrician systems tend to develop into oligarchies and this happened in central Italy during the 6th and 5th centuries in the primary centres.
- ⁵⁴ De Santis 2005; Nijboer 2008, 440-444; Cornell 1995, 142.

- ⁵⁵ On footstools of Ceri type see Jurgeit 2000; Aigner Foresti 2000, 276-277; Strøm 1997, 247.
- ⁵⁶ Barloni 2003, 115-157.
- ⁵⁷ Cf. Bartoloni 2003, 123-129.
- ⁵⁸ These women may have performed certain tasks, such as spinning/weaving (see the spindle whorl in tomb 76) or they may have sacrificed (one of the functions attributed to a knife such as the one found in tomb 71). One could label the three women in tombs 71, 76 and 232 *matronae*. For an introduction on *matrona* see Brill's New Pauly s.v. *matrona*. *Matronae* were members of the wealthy upper class and were marked by clothing, having a *stola* and *vittae* (hairbands). In the early Republic and later they were given honours and privileges.
- ⁵⁹ February 10th, 2011, B. Belelli Marchesini presented during a workshop in Groningen, a cluster of 91 tombs covering an area of 2,000 square meters in this necropolis.
- ⁶⁰ For some hypotheses concerning this area of the necropolis at Monte Del Bufalo, see Belelli Marchesini 2008.
- ⁶¹ Tomb 222, introduced in Nijboer et al. 2008.
- ⁶² Cf. Bietti Sestieri 1992, 49-52; Pacciarelli 2000, 217-276; Belelli Marchesini 2008.
- ⁶³ Later tombs were cut out in the bedrock hardly ever disturbing older tombs in this part of the necropolis. The present SSBAR-GIA research project is addressed to outline clusters through full analysis of the necropolis.
- ⁶⁴ Bietti Sestieri 1992a, 194-204.
- ⁶⁵ We like to thank Barbara Belelli Marchesini for this suggestion. The *corredo* of the three tombs does not allow us to elaborate much on these other tasks. The spindle whorl in tomb 76 indicates an activity as spinning/weaving while the iron knife in tomb 71 might point to sacrifices (cf. Bartoloni 2003, 123-129). The headdress in tomb 232 could imply a religious role but since it is a unique context, this remains hypothetical (Nijboer/Attema 2011).
- ⁶⁶ Cf. Nijboer (2006) for three early examples of such female tombs.
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