PANTHEON

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A NEW HISTORY OF ROMAN RELIGION

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TRANSLATED BY
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CONTENTS

not know whether they, let alone their opulent contents, even remained visible after what must have been equally opulent funerary ceremonies.[97]

We know neither the extent nor the visibility of another social practice of this period. The consumption of wine, which began in the ninth century, developed during the "Orientalizing Period," into a banquet culture, with goblets and pitchers finding their way to cult sites and into tombs.[98] The enjoyment of wine remained a luxury activity, its regular use being confined to wealthy households. In the following period, it became associated with Dionysian imagery.[99] This may have been an ancient legacy, or perhaps an attempt to give legitimacy to a criticized lifestyle by giving it a religious patina. In any event, prominent depictions of banquets were avoided in Latium from the fifth century onward. In Veii and even Anagni, on the other hand, there were many who found fit to draw attention to their attachment to the culture of wine by displaying banqueting paraphernalia in cult sanctuaries.[100] At least when it comes to Latium, however, we may dismiss the notion that this particular brand of religious activity supported the establishment of sustained religious roles and forms of authority. It can be assumed, however, that drinkers (and in Latium this included females) continued undaunted to pursue this cultural ritual, which was surely conducive to the maintenance of their social networks.

Italian religion also deviated from the pattern set in the ancient Orient, in that it did not produce a religious literature; this although writing had been adopted, further developed, and disseminated by the second half of the eighth century. This was not due to any restrictions on written scholarship. More likely the literate and priestly *Etrusca disciplina* simply came late, as a reaction to Roman expansion rather than an original mark of a revealed religion. But that will be the subject of a later chapter.[101]

III

Religious Infrastructure

THE SEVENTH TO THE FIFTH CENTURIES BC

1. Houses for Gods

The settlement identified today with Satricum sits on a spur of a steep escarpment a good hundred meters to the west of the little river Astura, some fifteen meters above its bank and downstream from Campoverde (which featured in the previous chapter).[1] In the late ninth century BC, several small groups, probably families, came together at this spot and built huts around a small body of water formed by a spring. Within a hundred years, communal life had stabilized so that closer attention was paid to the position of the huts relative to one another, and common areas and access ways had been reserved and gradually paved. By the second half of the seventh century, the huts were not only of differing sizes, but now also had walls of wattle and plaster and were roofed with tiles.

The dead were buried in the near vicinity, and those who wished to converse with invisible named actors presumably also went to nearby locations. These remain unknown to us, but they were probably not as remote as Laghetto del Monsignore. A new possibility arose at some time around 600 BC. Over what was probably a rather long period of time, objects had been finding their way into a pit within the
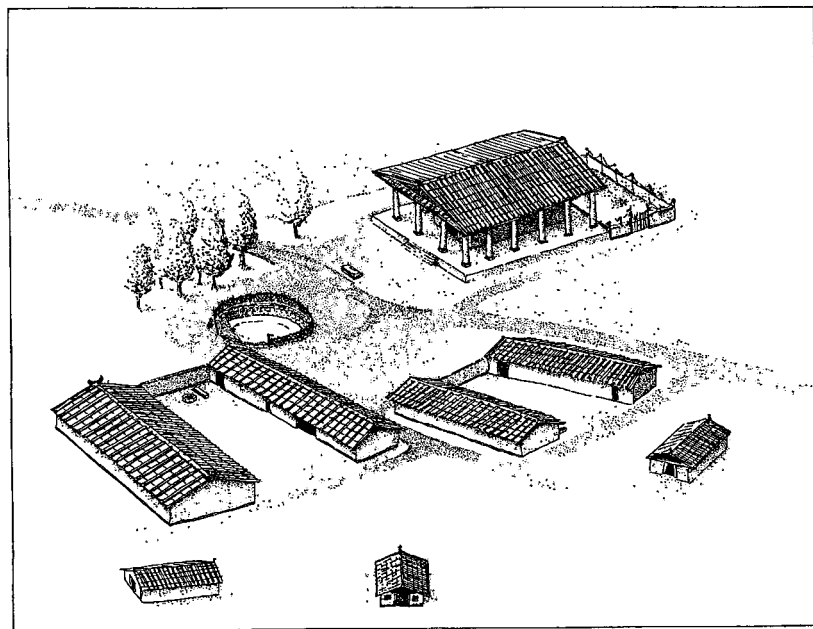
9. Plan of Satricum, the archaic phase of the acropolis. Reconstruction by Marianne Kleibrink, reproduced with her kind permission.

settlement, close to the main street, which had meanwhile been well paved. A rectangular house was now built in front of this pit (fig. 9). The house, with a solid roof and terracotta decoration, was of a type that was standard for only a few decades before larger houses of horseshoe design became the norm.

Who was responsible for this new building? What did it contain? As the answers to these questions lie beyond the scope of archaeology, the only tools that are left to hand are comparison and speculation. The structural finds indicate that Satricum was a community engaged intensively in communication, but not a community of equals. Economic inequality was not concealed; it was in fact given a kind of deliberate staging in the necropolis situated to the northwest of the settlement.[2] But this inequality did not prevent the development of an infrastructure from which all profited: the network of streets, and above all the road that enabled connections beyond the immediate

region. Enduring, visible religious activity, on the other hand, came late to the settlement, and developed during a phase of intense social differentiation.

Innovation

Those who erected this new building devoted to religious communication—and they may as well have been female as male—were clearly engaged in competition with other locales at the settlement's periphery. Theirs was not an action calculated to express a common identity. Their aim was to ensure that the building would be appealing, both by its proximity and, even more, by its architectural design. While space was still reserved within or outside the building for the traditional practice of deposition, the building itself offered something entirely new, an innovation that was at once architectural and religious. "Monumentalization"[3] lent an immediately perceptible aura of authority to the building as a religious structure, as did its optimal setting. The entrepreneur (or entrepreneurs) who, in about the year 600, undertook this project, was perhaps concerned less with sheltering an image of a god[4] than with providing a location where objects could be displayed that would then finally be deposited in the pit, in a gradual process or as need arose. We do not know, however, whether all objects reached the pit via the building.

Unfortunately, we cannot identify the builders of the new structure with any precision. The evidence provided by Satricum's dwellings and graves is insufficient to indicate either an acephalous or an autocratic regime. What we do know is that our first evidence of religion and religious innovation comes from the central core, the focal point of settlement, on the so-called acropolis. Did the initiative come from the richest family, or from the genius who saw to the paving of the streets? Was it perhaps a benefaction from the lady who owned the most beautiful house? Or maybe the act of some individual or some small group that feared losing its position in the community? We cannot know the answer. What *is* self-evident is the innovative spirit that this undertaking demonstrates, and the degree of risk involved.

The example of Greece makes it clear that only local significance can be attached to the term "innovation." The number of locations recognizably designed to receive depositions increased markedly over the course of the eighth century BC. At the beginning of the century, these sites were normally open to the elements; by its close, approximately half were provided with structures of some kind.[5] Three types can be distinguished. First, in the region of the Cyclades, for example on Delos and on Crete, we typically find a rectangular dwelling furnished with a bench, probably intended to accommodate objects for use in communicating with superhuman agents possessing (ancient)[6] names but (as yet) no form. Such objects have frequently been found in the gap behind the bench in such dwellings. Common on the Greek mainland and in western Asia Minor is a second structural type: a long, narrow house with a rounded apse at one of the narrow ends. The interior was accessed via a vestibule or veranda that opened into a hall with a steep roof, and there is sometimes a separate room at the rearmost, rounded end. In these buildings too, users deposited objects for communicating with gods. A pitcher-sized clay model of such a building (fig. 10) was used at Perachora on Cape Melangavi in the Gulf of Corinth as a means of communicating with Hera. The third and most prestigious type of structure referred back to the hegemonic tradition of a long, rectangular building with a vestibule, central space, and rear room. Early Greek temples were built on this plan by about 800 BC; an example is the first Heraion on the island of Samos, which had a length of some 30 meters (100 feet), and was completely surrounded by a row of wooden columns.

In all these instances, and surely in many others independently of one another, innovators decided to use a dwelling layout as the model for a structure intended for religious communication. This was surely a masterstroke. It would be easier to attract the attention of superhuman addressees if they were regularly addressed at one specific location. Where, if not at such a site, could humans be sure of finding their faceless counterparts? The trick, perhaps, would lie in successfully tying the addressee to the location. Beautiful, attention-catching architecture might work, especially if it was of larger than normal size.
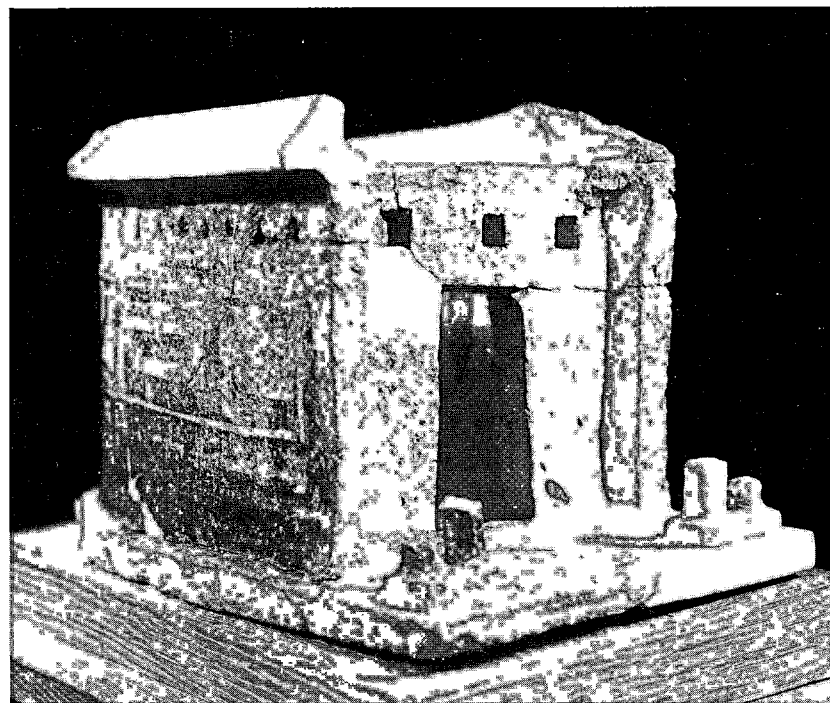
10. Terracotta model of an early Greek temple, ca. eighth century BC. From Perachora, Greece. Athens, National Museum of Archaeology, inv. 16684. akg-images / De Agostini Picture Lib. / G. Nimatallah.

Cult images would reinforce a sense of possession, and the right furnishings would suggest a home. Ever more lavish objects might in the long run have a part to play. Visitors would surely be prepared to invest in aesthetically appealing tokens liable to attract attention (and perhaps increase in value over time), because the spatial context offered a guarantee that the offering would have a prolonged presence and high visibility. Objects were displayed above ground and for long periods, while being protected from theft. However visible, though, objects could be recognized as the offerings of a particular actor only if that actor had succeeded in attracting a larger public to witness the process of communication in which he or she was engaged, thus anchoring the association between the person and object in the memories of third parties. In this way, the objects would constitute

memorials of a shared experience. And this would remain the case when donors began to render the context "visible" to non-participants as well by means of painted or engraved inscriptions (although these did not yet play a role in the eighth century).

In at least some places in Greece, on Samos and perhaps also Delos,[7] the practice of deposition progressed to such an extent that, as early as the end of the eighth century, treasuries enlarged their display areas. Visibility was an issue in relation not only to supernatural beings, but also fellow humans: an ancient religious practice provided a path to social prestige that was more direct now, no longer being merely a by-product of pious action. In a society that was still scarcely monetized, accumulated surpluses were increasingly[8] channeled toward religious practices, in the form of building projects as well as objects.[9]

Before returning to Satricum, we must again consider the question of innovation, a concept that does not fit comfortably with the traditional image of religion. A monumentalized cult site already existed on Kea in the second millennium, at the location now called Ayia Irini, and it continued in use, at least sporadically, despite the destruction of the associated settlement. When the head of a much older terracotta statue was found in the eighth century BC, someone positioned it in such a way as to make it serve as a divine counterpart.[10] In the present state of our knowledge, the use of one cult site over such a long span of time is highly unusual, and here we see not only the continuation of religious practices, but also traces of older practices being incorporated anew into later religious activity. Innovation was thus not some kind of counter-movement within a religious practice that was by its nature traditional, but the actual motor driving new practice.

Investments

To return to central Italy: a religious undertaking may come with risks, but the initiative of the princely patrons in Satricum—and we must not forget that "princely tombs" were also built for women![11]—paid

off handsomely. The new site, or at least the enormously enhanced visibility afforded the old pit by the new structure, attracted many visitors. Why, people may have begun to ask, should we continue to invest substantial wealth in visible burials and tombs in the far-off northwestern necropolis?[12] Growing households (and we must remember that this does not include all households) were increasingly inviting one another to ceremonial banquets, and they recalled these occasions to mind with increasingly frequent deposits not only of drinking vessels and pitchers, but also of articles associated with personal grooming. Perhaps the vessels had last been used at a symposium where spouses and friends were present, which would have enhanced their significance. A second pit was opened on the other side of the street and used from the fifth century BC onward. Its contents suggest that people often celebrated together in the area and made contact with the gods. One analysis suggests that the pit's contents represent the remnants of sixty-seven such parties.[13] The participants, comprising both men and women, did not confine themselves to drinking on these occasions but partook also of the meat of domesticated animals: cattle, sheep, and pigs.[14] Perhaps the house beside the pit afforded them some protection from the elements, especially at cooler seasons of the year or in the event of rain. This may in fact have been the primary function of the structure, as also of the apsidal structures in Greece.[15]

The long-term success of the model combining a pit with a building was mirrored in other developments in Satricum. Some decades after the construction of the first structure, in the third quarter of the sixth century BC, it was replaced by the structure referred to as Temple 1. Those who undertook this new venture clearly intended to dazzle the onlooker, and it was the roof, they decided, that would be the foremost attraction; in Etruria too, roofs were designed to make a dramatic first impression. But it was not Etruria that provided the model for the first (or perhaps only the second) version of the structure in Satricum, as we will soon see. The terracotta tiles at the eaves and gable were provided with coping stones, or antefixes, representing palmettes, heads, and *gorgoneia* grimacing and displaying their tongues
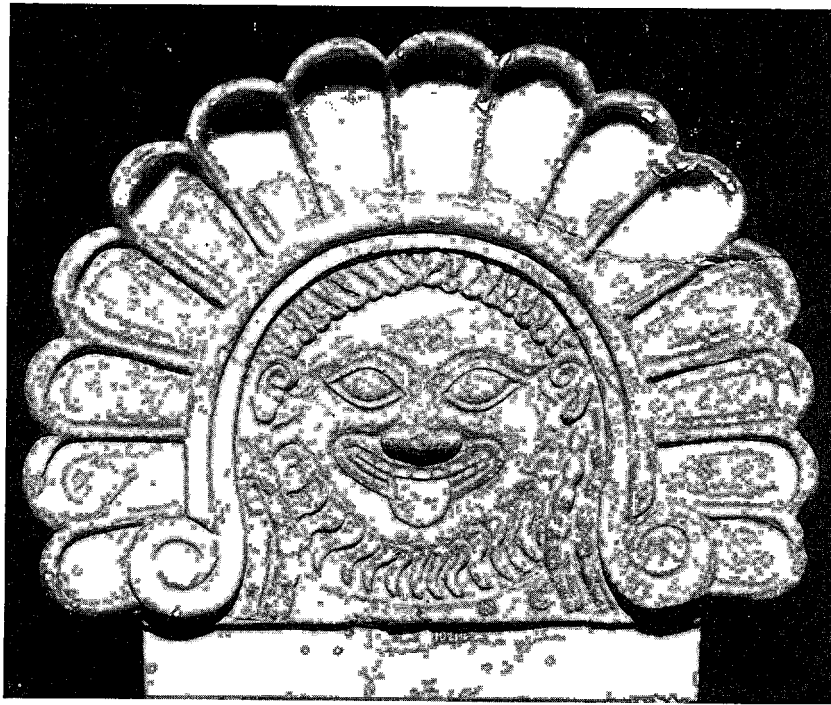
11. Terracotta from the Temple of Mater Matuta at Satricum, ca. 490 BC.
Rome, Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia. akg-images / Pirozzi.

(fig. 11). Among the decorative features on the ridge were predatory felines. At the base of the pediment were terracotta representations of cattle.

These embellishments to the roof followed a fashion recently developed in Campania, a district further to the south and more exposed to Greek design concepts. Craftsmen from Capua could perhaps have produced on-site in Satricum designs that their patrons had seen on trading journeys to the south. But it appears that those same patrons finally opted for a simpler but considerably more expensive procedure: they had the entire roof produced in Capua, and the consignment of some 2,500 tiles, weighing in total about forty tonnes, shipped to Satricum via the coastal searoute and the river Astura.[16] Such a radical course may have been motivated by the construction of a second temple at Satricum, probably about 550 BC, thus shortly before the

construction of Temple 1.[17] For this temple, a three-element *cella* was commissioned, proof that extra-regional fashions were sufficiently familiar to be employed in this building erected at Macchia Santa Lucia—and it was perhaps not the first temple at that location. That a number of people in Satricum had far-flung contacts is attested also by imported wares from Italy and Greece, based in part on Cypriot and Egyptian models. These were paraded at funerals before being deposited in rich seventh-century tombs.[18]

As we have already mentioned, reorientations could be quite rapid. Within a few generations, the collections of objects deposited in tombs and pits would change, and along with them the structural components of those same tombs and pits. In the fifth century BC, after the abandonment of the northwestern necropolis, burials were even carried out on the acropolis itself, at the center of the settlement. These perhaps represented ripostes to rivals, innovations in the competition for status, influence, marriage opportunities, and economic or even military alliances. And religious communication was one weapon in the arsenal available for such competitions.

2. Temples and Altars?

The entire eastern Mediterranean world, and especially ancient Greece—of which Ionia, the coast of Asia Minor, must always be counted a part—was fascinating to the Italian elites, and especially to the moving spirits of the Etruscan-Latin region and the southern Italians of the coastal zone, with its Greek colonies. Witness to this is the Orientalizing Period of the second half of the eighth and early seventh centuries BC, when those who had access to overseas imports by virtue of their economic status and contacts put such objects on show to enhance their social standing at home.

Our discussion of large-format images showed how complex such contacts and imports could be.[19] And this serves to remind us to take care when comparing Greek and Italian developments in religious buildings. I have on purpose largely avoided the term "temple," which carries with it a connotation based on Greek material: namely, that a

temple is the house of a deity, or, more precisely, of his or her statue, to which sacrificial activities at the altar, located in front of the temple, refer. Scholarship accordingly sees animal sacrifice as the quintessence of Greek religion, and this has broadly speaking also been the operative conception in respect of Italy and Rome.

This view of the centrality of the sacrifice has opened numerous avenues for religious theorists to follow.[20] In their critique of the reductionist implications of this view, some researchers have concentrated on broadening their perspective on religion to include banquets, games, and trade. But they nonetheless do not question the temple-sacrifice-altar construct just outlined,[21] even though rich displays of "votive gifts" are found not only in temples, but as religious foci in their own right, a fact that might well have raised some doubts. The paradigm does not work at all in the case of Iron Age Italy, which also puts into question the utility of the concepts derived from it. The fact that *aedes*, the Latin equivalent of "temple," means "house" would seem to invite us to view a "temple" as the "residence of a deity," but in fact the word tells us little. Like the terms *ara* and *altaria* for "altar," *aedes* and its definitions derive from late Republican texts that attempted to systematize Italian religious practices under the influence of Greek discourses. We find no word in Latin texts for the pits that served as primary locations for the direct accommodation of objects within a process of ritual communication with the invisible world. *Favisae* and *stips*, often used in this sense in modern literature, did not have that meaning in antiquity.[22]

Religious Communication

We saw in the first chapter that human communication with actors whose existence was not beyond doubt was a widespread religious activity far beyond the bounds of ancient Italy. This choice of strategy affected the options available in respect of practices, social identities, and modes of communication, along with the choice of media employed for such communication. Religion is not an assemblage of practices based on conceptions of gods and notions concerning their

capacities for consuming food, receiving gifts, and revealing their presence. All these notions, practices, and media are variables within a range of human options that may or may not be activated in a specific situation. If they are so activated, they become embodied in successful, or relatively successful, processes of communication with the aforementioned special actors, be they the dead or gods. They are also variables in a form of competition that, in the event of success, may lead to their being temporarily consolidated into traditions, and, in the context of continuing competition, may in turn constitute a threat to those very traditions. Competition, however, is not the only valid perspective on a religion conceived in these terms. Resonance, the attempt to form successful, satisfying, and stable secular affiliations, and also to manage and restrict them, is scarcely less important.[23] This last perspective was important when it came to duplicating or extending the reach of an actor's own person by means of objects that would represent him or her in a lasting way before those special others (as we saw, for example, in Rhea's attempt to assure herself of her own being in a world that, although very small, contained risks that seemed to point to another realm). This perspective highlights the importance of statues and statuettes of patrons. It is when we seek a paradigm to explain the changes, the dynamic, and the rates of innovation displayed by ancient religion that competition comes to mind.[24] Thus the patrons who commissioned archaic statues such as Kouroi and Korai were entering into competition even with temples and altars.[25]

We must not forget that house-like structures were not the only sites designated for contact with the "gods." The mineral-rich water found in volcanic regions, with its unusual smell or high temperature, was a constant draw for humans. Springs and the pools fed by them, and locations by rivers and lakes, were also sought out as places for communicating with the divine, and this remained true throughout antiquity.[26] Here it was not merely a question of keeping up ancient cult sites, or extending monumentalized cult complexes by means of pools or cisterns.[27] Locations distinguished by their natural form could also be remodeled, as must have happened in the case of Pantanacci near Lavinium, where objects were deposited in the fourth and third centuries BC.[28]

And it was not only the natural setting that was critical. This is demonstrated by a well-excavated complex further to the south, the Torre di Satriano in Lucania. On the summit of a pass between Salerno and Potenza, at a height of some 950 meters, a complex ritual site was established in several stages over the course of the fourth and third centuries. Its inhabitants probably came from a distinctly older settlement, dating from at least the Early Iron Age. Three terraces were constructed parallel to the hillside. A small ditch was dug from the east, leading to the uppermost terrace from a spring about 100 meters away, along with a second channel from the west. As is so often the case, the archaeological remains provide no clue as to the actual function of these watercourses. In the process of a fundamental reconfiguration of the site, however, the western channel was simply filled with the resulting spoil, including objects that had been deposited. The closure of the stream from the east, on the other hand, was accompanied by intentional depositions, made in a ritual fashion.[29] As in the case of Satricum, the position of the complex on an interregionally significant road should be stressed. But yet another aspect may apply to southern Italian and central Italian sites alike: the choice of site provided the builders with a high degree of local visibility, and, by addressing the gods from such an elevated setting, they also provided the entire location with a face to the outside world. The local inhabitants were offered an enhanced collective religious identity, while travelers were invited to enter into contact with the place and its people, perhaps even to trade with them. On the basis of a religious identity, common ground was established that was accessible to and shared by both sides.[30]

This new common reference had little to do with the deity worshipped at the site. In fact, in the absence of images and written testimony, we have no idea what deity was worshipped at Satriano. In this we only share the situation of many people in many places in antiquity. The external aspect of a site, whether or not it took the form of a building, normally indicated only that this was a location for communication with superhuman actors. Neither the absence of images at natural locations altered only slightly by human agency, nor the

number and variety of such images in the case of cult structures, was an aid to reaching a more precise identification. But this was presumably not (yet) important. The deities invoked could remain nameless, or could be addressed by various names. Wherever invocatory traditions and names became stabilized and translated into plastic images, many people nevertheless felt free to use other names in their attempts at communication, to invoke other superhuman agents in other ways, even to the extent of giving them an enduring face in that same location. Minoan cult sites of the second millennium BC did not fundamentally differ in this sense from Italian sites of the first millennium BC.[31]

Locations for human communication with "not indisputably plausible actors" included cemeteries, where communication with the dead was beset with the same uncertainties and choices that we saw in respect of communication with "gods." The family groups involved with the necropolis at Cerveteri, or their representatives (or maybe the builders of the complex), provided the tops of their great tumulus graves with accessible surfaces. In the seventh century, these platforms took a carefully flattened form. Ramps were constructed to enable access to the platforms, while at the same time care was taken to emphasize the character of these ramps as bridges overleaping the boundary between the tombs and the network of paths.[32] Family members[33] did not use these ramps only during the burial ceremony.[34] The custodians of Tumulus 2 *della Capanna*, constructed at Cerveteri at the beginning of the seventh century BC, constructed a new ramp in the second half of the sixth. In later tomb structures, the ramp was replaced by a set of steps, as in the construction of the cuboid tombs of the fifth century. Tumulus graves in Tarquinia were also provided with steps. In the Monterozzi necropolis there, these did not lead onto the platform, but merely enabled it to be used as a gigantic tabletop by someone standing on the top step. These various configurations were used repeatedly in cemeteries over subsequent centuries, with many variations, and they are depicted in images of the period that record the actions of both men and women.[35]

But what took place around and on these surfaces? The archaeological evidence is highly inconsistent. This is why I am very careful

not to use terms such as "altar" or "sacrifice" in evaluating such evidence, for applying these terms would preempt the question. Although well established and apparently neutral, they presuppose a particular interpretation. In Pisa, a bronze dagger and a trident were left behind on top of a tomb, after which the surface was covered over, having been used only once. The woman depicted on a stele at Marzabotto is smelling a flower (fig. 12). Common to both ritual configurations is a pronounced aesthetic dimension, whether open to conjecture or clearly depicted: the act involved its participants in intense processes of seeing and smelling. At the same time, the elevated location of the act made it visible to others. The actors also made evident the fact that they were communicating with special addressees here. Who these were, whether the dead or gods, the human actors may have learned by aural means, in spoken or sung texts; but it is hard to believe that the form given to the place itself would have revealed the identity of the addressees. The designers of the structures appear, in fact, to have consciously avoided any immediate optical perspective onto the entrance to the tomb; thus the ramp and the entrance to the chambers containing the bodies of the dead do not as a rule coincide.[36] In many cases, a person who wished to be on a level with the buried person, and desired a platform for such communication, could use small blocks placed at the entrance or in a vestibule for that purpose. A vertical relationship with "not indisputably plausible actors" (whether downwards in the direction of the dead or upwards and away from them) was occasionally evoked by a stele on the platform. However, the clearly demarcated upper surface of either a platform capable of accommodating religious actors or the smaller, "table-top" model, were clear markers that pointed to "special" addressees. In assembling or in presenting something on such a surface, actors clearly aligned themselves and their offerings with their communicative act.

Other sites confirm this conclusion. If Italic travelers to Greece had seen monumental ash altars heaped high with the remains of burnt animal sacrifices, such as might be viewed at Olympia, or long altar tables (like that at Isthmia near Corinth, which in the seventh century BC had already reached thirty meters in length),[37] or if Greek
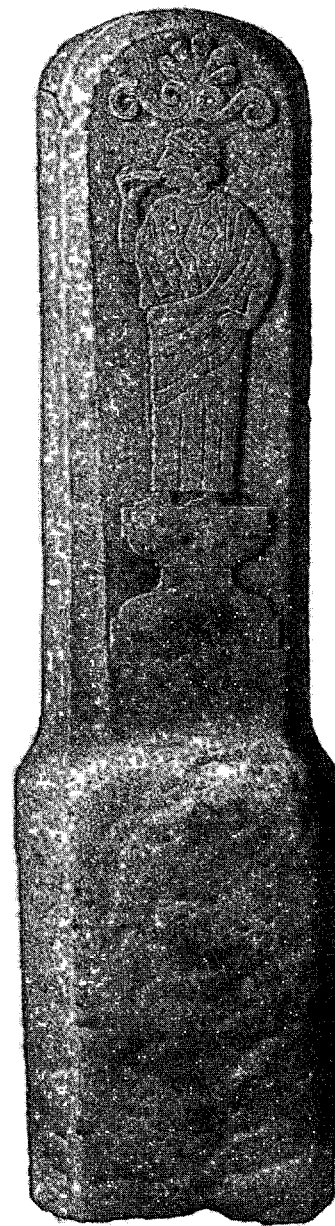
12. Stele with relief from Marzabotto. Original: Museo Nazionale Etrusco Pompeo Aria (Archaeological Museum). Drawing by Giovanni Gozzadini, 1870.

architects had recommended such altars to them, they had evidently not been moved to imitate them. Monumental surfaces of this kind appear to have exercised no attraction, even though it would perhaps have been possible to remodel tumuli along these lines. One of the few exceptions, although much smaller than the Greek examples, is the archaic feature within the podium of the later "Temple of the Winged Horses" in Tarquinia, probably erected in the seventh century BC.[38] As in the case of the later *Ara maxima* of Hercules in Rome, these altars took the form of large platforms (and the term *ara* was current, with this meaning, in the language of late Republican architects[39]). Otherwise, however, Italic peoples erected and used small-scale structures, capable of being configured both to drain away fluids used for libations and to accommodate a small fire. They came in both round and square variants, later frequently miniaturized, and often had a large base and top (fig. 13; see also the podest in fig. 12), and pedestals that were sometimes slightly concave, and in some cases extremely constricted, suggestive of an hourglass.[40]

These lavish installations were evidently employed in communicating with special actors when food or similar products were being used instead of durable objects: in other words, when it was contents and not receptacles that were in play. When the intervention of not indisputably plausible actors was invited by offerings of food, agricultural products were deemed to have enhanced value because they had been technologically processed, brewed or baked, or specially selected. The fragrant flower might stand for the latter category, and for the former not only cakes—a broad spectrum of terms for cakes is found much later in Latin sources and in the Oscan Iguvine Tablets—but also the bakeware discovered[41] by archaeologists in the House of the Vestals.

Those actively engaged in religious communication could use it to perpetuate both the mutual increase in agency signified by their attribution of power to superhuman addressees and the gain in power to themselves set in train by the agency of those same addressees. The human actors in the process would be drawn to the notion of compensating for the transitory nature of the foodstuffs used in sacrifices

13. Arula from Roselle, Etruria, fourth–second century BC. Museo archeologico e d'arte della Maremma. Photo: Sailko (CC-BY-SA 3.0).

by means of enduring structures that were built for the exchange. The term used for those structures—*āsa, āra*—had widespread currency in Italic languages. We have no testimony to inform us how contemporaries understood the term, but, etymologically, it belongs unambiguously to the sphere of ashes and fire, and may long have been understood in the sense of "hearth" (a fireplace used for processes of

drying).[42] A later concern to restrict the term to its religious connotation gave rise in Latin to the bold neologism *focus* for the domestic hearth.[43]

The linguistic background clarifies the extent to which the Greek focus on animal sacrifice—if a well-founded assumption[44]—represents a special case. Italic peoples occasionally killed animals in order to attract the attention of their gods. But disassociated bones in archaeological deposits do not prove that such instances of slaughter had central significance in religious communication. If such a communicative act was associated with a celebratory meal for the human participants, it was as appropriate for the bones to be left in place as for the crockery used in the preparation of the meal, for both were elements of special significance with respect to the overall event. This form of ritualization set off the addressing of special (superhuman) actors from the activities of the everyday.[45] The same conceptualization might apply not only to the terminology used—as already demonstrated in the case of the hearth—but also to the design of implements down to knives and ladles, not to mention the food itself that was consumed, whether it was a kind of porridge, meat, or drinks. Many banquets in such settings are thus associated with the ritualization of slaughter, a feature that can be traced into the Imperial Age.[46] But all acts of ritual slaughter were not followed by a banquet. Where wine was a luxury item, and milk a demonstration of successful dairy production, libations—both communicative and demonstrative for those present—could acquire a significance that has been obscured both by ancient polemic against animal sacrifice and by modern theories of sacrifice that react to that polemic.[47]

The most important objective for those who organized such ceremonial banquets was to underscore, through every aspect of the proceedings, the differences between such meals and domestic banquets. While asserting the importance of the superhuman actors and their particular significance with respect to the situation at hand, and perhaps also to the social dimension of the event, the human actors also remained aware of the otherness, the alterity of their supernatural counterparts: they ate for them, but not with them.[48] Only when

representational images became widespread did the idea of actually feeding the gods emerge. In the fifth century BC in the city of Rome we see magistrates, eager to gain attention, assembling onto couches portable busts from various cult sites, placing food before them, and holding ceremonies of *lectisternium,* "the draping of a couch."[49] Methods used for communicating with not indisputably plausible actors thus assumed disparate forms. The act itself, and the fact of its visibility, gave added credibility to the proceedings.

3. Dynamics of the Sixth and Fifth Centuries

The sixth century BC was the decisive period for the monumentalizing of sites of religious communication in the emerging cities and beyond. The dynamics of the process can be witnessed at some locations in central Italy and Campania. Monumentalization had not been important in the previous century, even in Greek-oriented Sicily.[50] Greek colonists constructing the colony of Poseidonia (Paestum) in southern Campania in the early sixth century first built an ash altar nine kilometers away, then complemented it in mid-century with a stone cult structure, built on the initiative of the same city. There were parallel developments at Metapontum in southern Italy and at Kroton (Crotone),[51] although at Poseidonia, unlike the other two locations, a second, smaller platform was added. Was this perhaps a distinctly Italic feature? Another structure arose at about the same time within the city of Poseidonia. Greek temples might be built at a nodal point in the hinterland, at a territorial frontier, or in the middle of a city itself. The position of the cult site at the mouth of the Sele north of Paestum belongs to the first-named category.

The images of the goddess Hera produced by craftsmen at the latter location, which include the characteristic feature of a pomegranate, seem to us to be hybrids of Corinthian types. However, this representation of the goddess, which shows her wearing a head-covering (*polos*) and veil, and seated on a throne with winged sphinxes, did not become her standard iconography until the beginning of the fifth century BC. The same process of figurative standardization had parallels

in other places such as Argos, Tiryns, Corinth, and Samos.[52] As this stabilization of identity proceeded at a gradual pace, it is difficult to establish the specific form of "special" agency to which a cult site referred at its founding. At Punta della Campanella on the Sorrento peninsula, the religious use of images certainly began as early as the third quarter of the sixth century BC, but there is no evidence that images in the form of statuettes were produced until the end of the fifth, perhaps by craftsmen from the Greek colony of Naples.[53] By this time, an Athena is clearly identifiable as the main addressee.

The inhabitants of Etruscan Veii were making strides toward urbanization as early as the first half of the eighth century BC.[54] A first rectangular building with walls of tufa, presumed to have served cult purposes, was erected in the decades immediately before or after 600 BC, on an important street in the extreme south of the settlement. The area of 15×8 meters contained by the walls was extended to 20×10 meters by a roof supported on columns. Its builder or builders protected the wooden structure with terracotta plaques, which, at the beginning of the second half of the sixth century, acquired images of a procession involving a leading political figure. The whole assemblage became paradigmatic in both Etruria and Latium. Much later Latin sources relate that the terracotta sculptor Vulca was called from Veii to Rome, where he created the cult statue for the Temple of Capitoline Jupiter and a statue of Hercules.[55] A building that may have served for banquets was added at this period in the vicinity of the Piazza d'Armi on the heights of Veii.

A site already existed in the seventh century BC at Portonaccio, about two kilometers up the Piordo at the western foot of the plateau on which the city of Veii stood. Contemporaries must have felt that the location favored successful religious communication. Many objects were deposited here, some of them manufactured locally, some outside the region, coming from as far away as the eastern Mediterranean. People from Caere, Tarquinia, Falerii, and perhaps also Cortona left objects along with their own names: Vestricina and Teiθurna, Velkasnas, Hvuluves, Qurtiniie.[56] Aulus Vibenna deposited an incense burner here. He was from Veii, but by the time in question may

already have moved to Rome. The great attraction of the place region-wide may have rested on oracular sanction.

It was the final third of the sixth century BC before persons unknown ventured to make a monumental contribution to the site. This involved cutting a watercourse through a platform and erecting a small building dedicated to Minerva, as well as a monumental structure that featured iconography familiar from Rome and Velletri, namely a representation of the account from Greek mythology of the deified Hercules' introduction into the circle of the Olympian gods.[57]

Subsequent developments reveal the extent to which the location became a setting for various activities and rivalries, and the degree to which this in turn attracted region-wide attention. At the end of the sixth century BC, the large structure was replaced by a building that would become the prototype for the "typical" Etruscan temple: a high podium with three *cellae*, friezes that were ornamental in nature rather than narrative, and a deeply recessed gable end,[58] the whole constituting a stone stage that offered a totally new context for ritual actors.[59] The so-called Temple B from the cult complex at Pyrgi, likewise located outside a city, was built on the same principles.

Producers of terracottas and roof tiles evidently responded rapidly to the new demands. The enormous scale on which the agricultural surplus was diverted into cult architecture opened up opportunities for such entrepreneurs to go into commercial production. This applied equally to manufacturers of small-scale objects for use in the cult (perhaps occasionally originating in neighboring settlements),[60] including those that might be inscribed to order. The particular style of script that was used at Veii, with marks separating the syllables, became widespread.[61] On the site itself, a large water tank was constructed that fed from the little river. It is possible that this was associated with a healing facility for physical disabilities.[62] Changes in structures were not always major or strategic in nature; it may, for example, have been the destruction of statues by a lightning strike that led someone to carry out alterations to the temple in the course of repairs.[63] A location outside the walled areas of a settlement, and thus beyond the strict social control typical of small communities, appears to have

favored religious innovations. These might prove successful, but they equally well might not—or, at least, not in the long term: by the beginning of the third century BC, we find Veii's water tank filled with objects, and the temple's decorative features buried.[64] Other cult sites had long been established within the city bounds of Veii, for example at Macchiagrande to the northeast, and above Portonaccio in the area of Campetti: shrines that drew thousands of people who deposited objects over the years. Sites within the city also competed with one another.[65]

Even in Rome, however, the most innovative decorative programs for religious structures are found at peripheral sites. It is at the Forum Boarium marketplace,[66] at the bend in the Tiber, that we first see a decorative program that could also be found at the same period in Veii and Velletri. The complex in question was discovered adjacent to and beneath Sant'Omobono. In a phase of construction dated prior to the mid-sixth century, the wooden roof and gable end of the complex had already been protected with terracotta plaques depicting lions, perhaps descended from Assyrian motifs.[67] A thorough remodeling of the decorative scheme was carried out in about 530 BC.[68] It was probably a workshop in the city of Rome that received the commission to provide new decorative features for the roof.

It is possible that the craftsmen in this workshop came from Veii; they were at least familiar with the Etruscan themes of chariot processions and races, riders, and banquets that were to be seen there, which perhaps corresponded to narratives about the heroic past. During the next two decades, these craftsmen worked in a highly organized manner to produce high-quality terracotta plaques that adorned the eaves of all the prominent buildings, palaces, and cult structures. Their repertoire also included terracotta statues for the roof ridges and crowns; by degrees, from about 500 BC onwards, this type of decoration came to be reserved solely for cult structures.[69] Here too, we see a process by which particular media became so closely associated with religious communication that traditions developed, limiting the options of subsequent actors. Only an overview encompassing fragments from Veii and Rome, and especially from Velletri and the neighboring Cisterna di Latina (more precisely Caprifico di Torrecchia, probably

the Volscian city of Suessa Pometia) in northern Latium, would reveal the full range of the imagery. Also common to all these sites is a program of statuary depicting Minerva (Athena in Greek myth) leading Hercules to his place among the gods. It follows that the choice of motif must have lain with the craftsmen, which precludes our analyzing the iconography as reflecting in any way the different ethnic and political circumstances in the various towns involved. Patrons were dependent on the patterns offered by their suppliers. This also applied when, as in the case of the Sant'Omobono temple, the patron is said to have been the Etruscan Servius Tullius, king of Rome, who according to Roman tradition dedicated the temple to Mater Matuta and Fortuna.[70]

This temple was completely destroyed shortly before 500 BC, and replaced on the same site by a complex of two temples on a substantially higher platform: the one on the left to Fortuna, the other on the right to Mater Matuta. We do not know the reasons for this change.[71] Rapid successions of structures can be observed at other locations too. All over western central Italy, actors with the means and/or the power[72] grew accustomed to this new medium of religious communication, and further developed it in a spirit of keen competition. As a rule, they associated themselves with already-existing sites of religious activity, both centrally located and at the peripheries of settlements. Reference to a particular deity[73] facilitated a new form of dynamic continuity: so long as the deity remained the same, a previous building or its decor could be replaced after only a short time. Bigger, higher, more impressive: whatever the nature of the enhancement, it could be justified, and a spiral was set in motion that quickly led to enormous temple structures, and then, in Rome already by the early fifth century BC, to a collapse of the competitive spirit. Sixth-century patrons, both male and female, had presumably financed their projects from surpluses previously sunk in luxurious tombs and burials. These rich farmers (for that is how the group must be characterized)[74] then gave up almost entirely on flamboyant funerals and the marked invisibility of wealth concealed in graves.[75] Following on the collapse of extensive Etruscan rule in the aftermath of defeat to a Greek fleet at Cumae

(494 BC), and pressure from groups from the Abruzzo, this class could no longer muster a level of surplus adequate for construction projects.

A multiplicity of cult sites existed in Rome at the end of the sixth century BC.[76] Many of these remained without recognizable monumental structures, but they did boast rich deposits.[77] Others were in the process of being provided with open hearths, as was the case at the deposit site on the Clivus Capitolinus with its sixth-century tufa platform (the Ara Saturni),[78] or were furnished with built structures, such as the mid-sixth-century building on the northeastern slope of the Palatine,[79] and the early-fifth-century construction in the southeastern sector of the Palatine.[80] Many of these were local initiatives undertaken by small neighborhoods. They were used largely by locals,[81] and not infrequently only for short periods of time. Some never breached the horizon of the historiographical tradition.

None of this applies to the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter. Here, the Etruscan princes of the Tarquinii family, described in Latin as *reges* (kings), appear to have seized the initiative in monumentalizing a site that had been distinguished by cult depositions since the early sixth century BC.[82] The family's involvement in religious projects promised to broaden the base of their political dominion, which was above all of a military nature. Accordingly, they were said to have financed the gigantic project over its long period of construction mainly from the proceeds of plundering expeditions. The foundation itself, on the peak of the hill, was a mighty structure, fifty-four meters wide by a length of sixty-two meters, all of it covered by a superstructure.[83] The building itself combined many Italic developments, and so became a rich source, if not necessarily a model, for later temple architects.[84] Its terracotta revetments were in the main executed by craftsmen from Veii using materials from Veii. The major concern, above and beyond the aesthetic, was with religious definition. There is not the slightest room for doubt that the deity addressed by the structure was identified as Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, "the best and greatest Jupiter." This name was given a face by means of a great clay statue by the Veiian coroplast Vulca.

The complex was not destined to remain isolated. A rival group of rich farmers, who called themselves "plebeians," built a structure

dedicated to Ceres, Liber, and Libera on the Aventine and entrusted its decoration to the Greeks Damophilos and Gorgasos.[85] More than a decade later, in reaction to Rome's victory over a menacing Latin alliance at *lacus Regillus*, a "house" (*aedes*) was built for Castor and Pollux, the sons of Zeus (*dioscuri*), now conceived as cavalrymen. The main instigator of the construction, dated to 484 BC, was the son of the Aulus Postumius who had won the battle as dictator, and who was said to have promised not only booty to the soldiers, but also a reward to the gods for their help.[86] Despite a lengthy construction period, the project remained a family affair, winning the family the nickname *Regillensis*. In the end, the temple measured more than twenty-seven meters in width by a length of almost forty meters, a scale comparable to that of Temple A at Pyrgi. The podium was designed to equalize the slope of the terrain, and so stood between one and a half and five meters above the level of the Forum. The rear section of the building was laid out as three *cellae*, in this too following a tradition developed elsewhere, and also followed at Pyrgi.[87]

What the Postumii were embarking on here was an entirely Etruscan structure. The architecture presented them as the military saviors of the city and recipients of divine support, a position further secured by the temple's position on the Forum Romanum, long since configured as the city's central square. It was the first time (in a tradition that is perhaps reliable) that a monumental structure was founded on a successful religious communication, one that had led to victory in an actual military conflict. This would become the norm one and a half centuries later. But most of the few fifth- and early-fourth-century construction projects in Rome that are mentioned in Augustan-period histories and the narrative traditions connected with them arose from different circumstances.

Investment in Religion

It must have required courage and strong convictions to found a site where objects could be deposited for the sake of invisible agents. One imagines that the requisite degree of administrative ability and

financial means was not in over-abundant supply, so it is probable that only prominent and well-to-do families could afford such ventures. Those who then undertook the monumentalization of such a site, augmenting its capacity for religious communication in a highly public manner and with significant outlay of funds, were in effect appropriating it. It was the kind of project that only rich farmers could manage, and it allowed them, perhaps for the first time, to make use of wealth that would otherwise have disappeared into graves or hoards. The local markets offered only a very restricted range of possibilities for exchange, but commissioning substantial buildings over a wide geographic area opened plentiful avenues for investment.[88] Various practices overlapped, and often persisted in parallel. We know nothing of the discussions that must have gone on about the character and boundaries of such sites; but the strategies of the actors themselves suggest that all participants profited from a certain fluidity, as when areas of convergence predominated over clearly drawn boundaries.

Using the various means at their disposal, those who initiated such processes of appropriation engaged in frequently furious rivalries to develop distinctive and effectual "religious" sites and signs. In many places in the sixth century BC, the competition amounted to a stampede. There was plenty of room here for innovation. However, competition between farmers who wished by their religious undertakings to enhance their social reputation, perhaps even their political standing, or to gain a reputation as good trading partners, could not rely solely on ingenuity. They had to employ what was ready to hand in the way of methods and symbolism: architectural elements, such as terracotta roofs that were also used for dwellings, and decorative motifs that were familiar from tombs, or from settings where self-promotion was a motivating factor.

Characteristic were the motifs of the terracotta plaques that protected the timber components of these new cult structures. These plaques show a very narrow section of social reality. The rich farmers (for the economic base of these people must be sought in agriculture) became charioteers; no longer landlords, they were depicted as aristocrats and nobles (fig. 14). And frequent reference was made to the
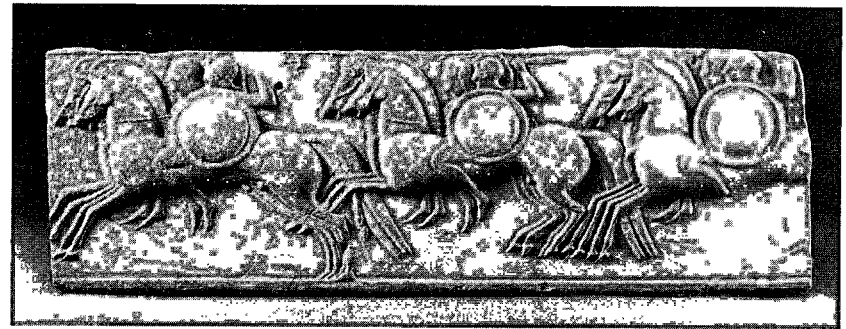
14. Terracotta plaque showing galloping horsemen; 21.5×64×4 cm, ca. 530 BC. Borgia-Velletri collection. akg-images / De Agostini Picture Lib. / L. Pedicini.

imagery of the eastern Mediterranean monarchies. It was not a question of championing a pan-Mediterranean "sacred kingship," but simply one of borrowing images, frequently taken out of context and misunderstood. The plaques, with their potential to refer to heroic legends, also positioned these religious buildings erected by prosperous farmers as the property of "aristocrats." Many of the same motifs either already decorated or soon would decorate their manor houses (more accurately, farmhouses).[89]

Practical necessity and the interest of patrons in promoting these ennobling associations led to numerous hybrid forms, and not only in the area of decoration. The Regia, the "royal house" on the Roman Forum, evidently belonged to this eclectic breed of architecture. The builder of the "third Regia," in the mid-sixth century, gave the "house" a very early terracotta roof with decorative features of the same material, thus positioning it in a group that includes not only palaces such as the one at Murlo, but also the contemporaneous cult building at Sant'Omobono. The "fourth Regia," in the third quarter of the same century, was decorated after the style of Veii, Velletri, and Rome, also found in the subsequent phase of the Sant'Omobono building.[90] Its plan was so configured as to accommodate cult functions (subsequently taken over by new priests) in a residential complex.[91] This brings to mind the link mentioned previously between political and religious roles in Archaic Greece.[92] Evidently, prior to the banishment

of burials to sites outside the city, the foundation of this same building, in its earliest phase at the end of the seventh century, had rested on an infant burial.[93]

Against a background of parallel attempts in Etruria to differentiate the religious from the elite political sphere, [94] it comes as no surprise that, after banishing political rulers bearing the title *rex*, Rome marked that separation by anointing a *rex sacrorum*, a "king of religious acts," whose role, as the title implies, would be confined to the religious sphere. It was a radical move about which we know nothing further.[95] Perhaps the sequence of thirteen or even fourteen altars at Lavinium should also be understood against such a background. Whatever the aim behind this particular gradual accretion, it is plain that those who organized it carefully avoided giving the religious space any hint of aristocratic coloration; which would seem to support the notion that, in their own peculiar way, these "hearths" paid homage to a communal project: the foundation of Latin colonies.[96]

IV

Religious Practices

THE SIXTH TO THIRD CENTURIES BC

1. The Use of Bodies

Most of what constituted ritual during the mid-first millennium BC, especially in the realm of religious practice, lies beyond any possibility of reconstruction. This applies to words, and more so to words formulated rhythmically, and most of all to melodic formulations; that is to say, songs and music.[1] Occasionally, a wind instrument deposited in a grave points to the element of sound. The same strictures apply to smell, which is only rarely hinted at in imagery (we have already seen the example of the figure smelling a flower). Special forms of movement, such as dancing or stamping, aimed at attracting the attention of the supernatural agents being addressed, while at the same time representing the special form taken by communication with them. But they are documented only in late, ritual-related references and images.[2] The central role played by the body in religious activity is again shown by those objects brought to a site by human actors, objects they had interacted with and finally left at a religious site.

Whose Head Is That?

As early as the beginning of the seventh century BC, some inhabitants of Trestina on the upper reaches of the Tiber threw bronze figurines