Constructing the Etruscan Clan

Funerary Inscriptions and Familial Structures
at Archaic and Classical Tarquinia and Caere

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1 Introduction and background

The Etruscans, located in Italy north of Rome, commanded one of the largest trade networks of the Mediterranean and would become one of the most significant influences on the later Roman civilization to the south. In the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, the Etruscans along with the Phocaeans and Carthaginians were the dominant powers in the Tyrrhenian region, using their naval capabilities to achieve political dominance and control much of the trade in the western Mediterranean. Etruscans extensively colonized Italy beyond their traditional homeland of Etruria, pushing to the Po Valley and the Adriatic ports of Adria and Spina as well as to Campania in the south. Amid these major economic engines, Rome was merely a minor player, interacting with a minuscule portion of the capital controlled by the great Etruscan cities. But for all the wealth, power, and influence of Etruscan civilization, the study of Etruscan history is characterized by how much of their culture and of their social structures is unknown. This is due in a large part to the lack of a written record. No long Etruscan works have been preserved; there are no surviving Etruscan histories (or, for that matter, literary sources of any kind), and what accounts do survive in contemporary Greek and later Roman histories are insubstantial and dripping with exoticism. The written record that does survive exists in fragments and is entirely epigraphic, with the exception of the *Liber Linteus*, a longer, religious text written at the end of the Etruscan period. For this reason, Etruscan history is strongly informed by archaeology, and while there exists a significant material record rediscovered in Etruscan necropoleis in the nineteenth century, much is uncertain about the details of Etruscan society. It seems that religion was of central importance in Etruria, but what exactly that religion entailed is left to speculation; the names of some political and religious positions are known, but the specific roles and the way they related to each other are not; familial and lineage-based clan structures seem to have existed, but the details beyond their mere existence are unclear.

But although there is so much unknown about social structures in pre-Roman Etruria, the region and period presents one of the most compelling cases of social change amid rapid economic development in the ancient world. These periods evidence a new and widening social stratification, with the influx of huge quantities of material goods and the emergence of a wealthy elite. Central to this social change was the rise of the clan as the center of the Etruscan social fabric. But beyond a last name, what were these clans? This paper uses what exists of Etruscan inscription to examine the structure, the roles, and the extent of the clan in southern Etruria. From this study, we found that the clan played three intertwined but distinct roles in Etruscan society: as a central part of personal identity, as one of the primary means of social organization among the elite, and also as political and social networks that could be actively used by their members.
1.1 The cities of Caere and Tarquinia

Caere and Tarquinia constituted the bustling centers of Etruscan wealth. When in the Orientalizing period Etruscans came to be a dominant force in Mediterranean trade and manufacturing, the resulting influx of wealth to these centers made possible the lavish construction, art, and material culture that survives to this day in the archaeological record and in their famous chamber tombs. Caere and Tarquinia are similarly situated on the coastline in southern Etruria, and are located amid a number of other urban sites such as Veii and Vulci (Figure 1). Together these cities commanded much of the wealth and political capital available to pre-Roman Etruria. There were other cities and settlements located inland in more rural, mountainous areas; however, these areas seem to have been considerably smaller and generally have much less of an archaeological record from which to work.

Although by the Archaic period they were quite similar in geography, wealth, and perhaps culture, Caere and Tarquinia have significant differences in the chronology of their development. Tarquinia was one of the first major Etruscan sites, already flourishing and urbanized by the Villanovan period. Caere’s history seems to have begun somewhat later. Although there is evidence of Villanovan presence at the site, it is only in

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1. Camporeale 2015, 69, 81-82.
3. Pre-Roman Etruscan history is typically described in four periods: Villanovan (1100-700 BCE), Orientalizing (700-575 BCE), Archaic (575-480), and Classical (480-323).
5. Riva 2015, 97; Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 9-10.
the Orientalizing period, when trade with the Mediterranean reached massive proportions, that Caere truly emerged as a local power. Both cities were located a few miles from the coastline and maintained separate ports: the port of Gravisca near Tarquinia and the port of Pyrgi, home of the famous Pyrgi Tablets, near Caere. Both cities seem to have cultivated a significant presence of craftspeople and other skilled workers from around the Mediterranean and especially Greece, although it appears that Caere (being the slightly more southern city) had a somewhat larger presence internationally, with a treasury at Delphi.

1.2 Social stratification at the necropoleis

In addition to similarities in their urban areas, Caere and Tarquinia also exhibit similarities in their necropoleis: city-like networks of tombs built outside of the city limits. These necropoleis, with large, lavishly furnished chamber tombs, are the most significant pieces of evidence in Etruscan archaeology and are the sources of most artifacts and inscriptions that have survived to the present; the necropoleis at Caere and Tarquinia are especially notable for the number and richness of the chamber tombs that exist at each site (the Banditaccia necropolis at Caere contains thousands of tombs). These tombs, as implied by their name, consist of chambers cut from the local rock. On top of these chambers were placed either large mounds (tumuli) or, especially in the case of Caere, cube structures. These large, impressive exteriors, which were in many cases positioned in grids or along streets in a layout perhaps mimicking the cities, point to the tombs’ role as not merely a grave but a monument: a source of pride and of competition between the elite families of a city. The interiors of these tombs were lavishly furnished. The necropoleis at Tarquinia contain numerous examples of wall painting, whereas at Caere decorations tended to be carved; other items, such as sarcophagi and vases, have been found inside the structures. Of paramount importance to the modern historian are the inscriptions found in these tombs, described more fully in Section 2.

Tomb architecture, furnishing, and inscriptions track social changes from the first appearance of tombs in the eighth century until the beginnings of the Roman period. The tombs at Caere and Tarquinia point to the relatively sudden emergence of a wealthy, ruling elite. Grave sites from the late Villanovan period exhibit some inequalities in wealth distribution, particularly in the distributions of weapons and armour, but there are no funerary displays so dramatic as the chamber tombs that appear c. 700 BCE. In addition to wealth and stratification, these tombs also point to the emergence of the “clan” as the center of the Etruscan social hierarchy. It is during this period that Etruscan names first pick up the patrilineal clan name (discussed more fully in Section 3.1). Spanning multiple generations, these chamber tombs served as a common funerary space for an entire family line, becoming centers and symbols of clan power and reinforcing clan social ties.

2 Etruscan language and inscriptions

The Etruscan written record is surprisingly minimal. There are a number of reasons for this: the reasonably short span of the use of writing, the ties between writing and religion that likely reduced the widespread use of writing due to ritual or ceremonial connotations, limited literacy outside of the elite, and extensive Romanization in the first and second centuries BCE that lead to the adoption of Latin and the disappearance of Etruscan identity. Nevertheless, the pieces of the Etruscan language that do survive are uniquely valuable as social and cultural evidence. Gleaning social and cultural information from the small corpus of Etruscan epigraphy remains one of the most interesting and most challenging problems of Etruscan historiography.

7. Camporeale 2015, 75-76.
8. Steingraber 2015, 147.
12. The Etruscan written language seems to have been in widespread use for a period of about five hundred years between approximately 600 and 100 BCE. Even during that period, it does not appear that it was used particularly extensively.
2.1 Introduction to the written language

The Etruscan language first appears in written form c. 700 BCE, using a modification of the Archaic Greek alphabet. Items with Greek inscription began to appear a few decades earlier, with the oldest dating to c. 770. The alphabet was one of the most important of cultural exchanges with Greece during the rise of trade at the end of the Villanovan and beginning of the Orientalizing period. Although the Greek alphabet first appeared as a decorative element on pottery and other luxury goods, it soon was slightly modified for use with the local language (Figure 2). The Etruscan alphabet maintained the use of the sibilant š that disappeared in later Greek alphabets and, most notably, introduced a character f (originally spelled out as vh) that would later appear in Latin.

The last surviving inscriptions in Etruscan appear in the first century BCE. Owing to extensive colonization and Romanization, Latin began to supersede Etruscan in the third and second centuries BCE. It appears, however, that the language persisted past this point in a liturgical sense. In addition to use for internal religious purposes, Etruscan seems to have been greatly valued by Romans for its religious and magical power. However, the use of Etruscan language for Roman and for late-Etruscan religious purposes was characterized by grammatical mistakes, suggesting that by this time the language had passed out of common use.

13. Wallace 2015, 204.
2.2 The state of Etruscan inscriptions

With the notable exception of the *Liber Linteus*, all examples of the Etruscan language are in the form of inscriptions. Inscriptions are commonly found on pottery, cippi, sarcophagi, and the walls of tombs. Almost all of these play either a votive or funerary role: it is estimated that funerary inscriptions account for about 60% of the 10,000 total surviving texts. Most texts are fragmentary in nature, and anything more than a few words is considered a “long” inscription. Because of these limited resources, only a few hundred words are understood with certainty, and only the basic elements of syntax well-accounted for. Nevertheless, the straightforward nature of most votive and funerary inscriptions means it is possible to understand and translate most cases.

This paper focuses exclusively on funerary inscriptions, which appear almost entirely in the form of epitaph. At their shortest, these inscriptions simply name the deceased. Slightly longer epitaphs will list the relatives of the deceased, typically naming one or both parents or their spouse. Long funerary inscriptions might extend to include accomplishments, children, and political offices held. These inscriptions quite often used abbreviations; much as at Rome, there was a very limited number of praenomina, so these often could be abbreviated. Two examples of inscription, one from a tomb at Caere and one from a tomb at Tarquinia, are provided below; each is representative of different styles of epitaph. In the first, extensive abbreviation is used, and the father is named. In the second, no abbreviation is used, and political office is mentioned.

**av tarxnas m c** (Cr. 1.20)
Aule Tarxnas, son of Marce

**velthur partunus larisalisa clan ramthas cuchnialzlx cexaneri tenthas avil svalthas LXXXII**
(Cr. 1.9)
Velthur Partunus, (son) of Laris, son of Ramtha Cuchnal, having held the governorship for Cexaneri,
having lived 82 years

2.3 Funerary inscription as cultural evidence

Despite the brief, repetitive, and syntactically simple nature of most tomb inscriptions, they nevertheless provide one of the best tools for studying social and familial structures. Inscriptions are well-suited for larger-scale study and comparison, being easy to compile and quantify. In this respect they have a significant advantage over other mediums such as wall painting or decorated pottery: although in each of those cases information about the materials may be compiled with some ease, it is difficult to represent the full meaning of the pieces in database form. Inscriptions can therefore play the role of the “archive” that is so often not available in ancient Italian historiography (see, for instance, the compilation of inscriptions in Appendix A). Inscriptions are a unique portrayal of how Etruscans – or at least the Etruscan elite – spoke about themselves, and can speak to individuals. This is particularly true of epitaphs and funerary inscriptions, which name the deceased individual and summarize aspects of their life.

That said, there is certainly some danger in using inscriptions as evidence of social elements. It is not easy to distinguish social change from change in inscription practices, and although there is certainly strong correlation between the two, it is nevertheless somewhat imprecise to equate them. Further, we must constantly bear in mind that inscriptions are reflective of society at its wealthiest and most elite. Lastly, it is important to recognize the vast differences that can influence and bias the contemporary historian. This is especially true for the study of inscriptions, given that the use of writing in contemporary western societies is so completely different from the role writing played in Etruria. Writing in Etruria played a highly religious

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18. The *Liber Linteus Zagrabiensis* has perhaps the most interesting history of any Etruscan text. Originally written with black ink on linen in the second century BCE, the text eventually made its way to Egypt, where it was used to wrap a mummy. Thus it remained for nearly two millennia until its rediscovery in the nineteenth century. The text itself appears to be a ritual religious calendar (Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 58; Wallace 2008, 6).
21. All inscriptions are sourced from Meiser 2014 and use the associated notation.
and symbolic role that is difficult to understand given the utility and ubiquity of writing in the present day. It is important that we attempt to understand Etruscan writing within this somewhat alien context.

3 Names, burial practice, and notions of “family”

Clans – large familial groups based on patrilineal descent – are one of the most visible elements of Etruscan culture, at least among the elite. As discussed in Section 1.2, the importance of the clan is evident in necropoleis. Tombs were generations-long clan spaces. The lavish displays of wealth in tombs at Tarquinia and Caere are evidence both of the social and economic power of the clan and also of the clan as a source of pride and competition. However, the more detailed nature and mechanics of clan structure beyond this initial sketch is largely uncertain, and are an area in which epigraphy could provide substantial insight. This section will use epigraphy, and especially naming within funerary inscription, first to address questions of clan mechanics and structure and then to discuss the broader social roles of the clan.

3.1 Emergence of the clan name

The first major development in Etruscan family structure that finds evidence in inscription is the emergence of the clan name. Before this development, the personal name and the patronymic adjective were standard; the clan name represents a modification of this patronymic, and as such takes a genitive form. The clan name first appears in Southern Etruria c. 700 BCE, and likely was influenced by a similar change among the neighboring Faliscans. That said, this change comes at a critical moment in Etruscan history, coincident with the rapid rise of wealth and immediately preceding the first chamber tombs. It seems to represent not merely a change in nomenclature but rather the true rise of the clan as a powerful social entity.

Following its patronymic origins, clan names were patrilineal. Clan names had different male and female forms. The following are two examples from a tomb at Caere:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{l tarxnas (Cr 1.18)} & \\
\text{Larth/Laris Tarxnas} & \\
\text{larthi tarxnai (Cr 1.29)} & \\
\text{Larthi Tarxnai} & 
\end{align*}
\]

Both of the above inscriptions refer to members of the Tarxna clan. Cr 1.18 exhibits the male form of the clan name, Tarxnas; Cr 1.29 exhibits the female form Tarxnai. Much like the Roman naming system, there is a very small number of first names that appear with any frequency, and most have associated abbreviations. The abbreviation L that appears in Cr 1.18 can refer either to the name Larth or the name Laris. Clan names were strictly patriarchal, and there was no practice of changing one’s name due to marriage. The following inscriptions are examples from tombs at Caere and Tarquinia:

\[
\begin{align*}
laris tarnas velus clan ranthasc matunial herma (Cr. 1.2) & \\
\text{Laris Tarnas, son of Vel and Rantha Matunial Herma} & \\
larthi spantui larces spantus sex arnthal partunus puia (Ta 1.13) & \\
\text{Larthi Spantui, daughter of Larce Spantus, wife of Arnth Partunus} & 
\end{align*}
\]

In inscription Cr 1.2 from Caere, we observe that the entombed Laris Tarnas and his mother Rantha Matunial Herma do not share the same name. The father Vel (Tarnas) shares the same name, and so his name is omitted. Inscription Ta 1.13 from Tarquinia exhibits the same features, but the explicit clan name in the patronymic makes it slightly clearer. The entombed Larthi Spantui shares her family name with her father Larce Spantus. She does not share family name with her husband Arnth Partunus. These features are constant throughout Etruscan inscription, indicating a very standardized practice.

\[22. \text{Wallace 2008,79-80}\]
3.2 From clan names to clan structure

The naming patterns and mechanics described in Section 3.1 above might tentatively point to some features and roles of the clan. The fact that both spouses maintained their clan name might suggest the primacy of the clan (the multi-generational, lineage-based grouping) over the individual family (the unit typical in the modern US consisting of parents and children) as the dominant social structure. The primacy of the clan is also supported by the use of clan tombs. In inscription Ta.1.13 above, the father of Larthi Spantui is explicitly named, even though she is buried in the tomb of her husband’s clan (the Partunus tomb); we can determine that this is the Partunus clan tomb by the overwhelming number of inscriptions bearing the Partunus name. If tombs were merely a channel for competition between clans, there would be no reason for including Larthi Spantui’s lineage. The fact that Larthi Spantui’s lineage received explicit mention in inscription has implications for the role of the clan individually and societally. Lineage and clan affiliation seem to have been some of the most important elements of individual identity; there are certainly a number of tombs at Tarquinia that do not name parentage, but almost every single funerary inscription includes the clan name. The above analyses come with significant caveats; using inscription practice in an attempt to bootstrap towards social practice in this manner is highly speculative. A significantly more rigorous analysis can come from the application of inscription and naming practices as a tool to determine the identities of individuals and from there push towards social structures.

Analysis of naming patterns can thus be pushed one step further, beyond the implications of the naming practices themselves: the names on tombs can inform us about the identities of those individuals in addition to the information already provided by the inscription. In particular, burial placement can be used in concert with the observed patterns of clan naming to elucidate the roles that clan affiliation played in burial practice. In inscription Ta.1.13 above, Larthi Spantui is buried in the tomb of her husband’s clan. However, a great number of inscriptions at Caere and Tarquinia suggest that the practice of women being buried in their husband’s tomb was by no means universal and in fact might have been unusual. The Tarxna tomb at Caere is perhaps the most striking example of this. Colloquially referred to as the “Tomb of the Inscriptions,” this tomb contains 52 individual inscriptions. Of these, 16 have definite female names, and there are 9 inscriptions including the female form of the clan’s last name Tarxnai. Two such examples are provided below:

- **ramtha tarxnai larisalisa** (Cr 1.7)
  Ramtha Tarxnai, (daughter) of Laris

- **rantula tarxnai aules tarxnas** (Cr 1.8)
  Rantula Tarxnai, (daughter) of Aule Tarxnas

Given the strictly patrilineal naming system, these are all female members of the Tarxnas clan and not spouses of male members. It seems unlikely that such a large number of members of the clan would be unmarried; of all the inscriptions with recorded ages in this paper’s dataset, the youngest age observed was eighteen in inscription Ta.1.165. Given the likelihood that these were thus adults at the time of their death, it would thus seem highly unusual that so many members of the clan would be unmarried. The implications are significant: instead of being buried in the tombs of their husbands, a large number of female members of the Tarxnas clan were buried in their own clan’s tomb. Perhaps the husbands of these women did not have clan tombs; perhaps they had clan tombs that were less impressive than the Tarxnas tomb. Either way points again to the clan as the dominant social force, more important than the individual “nuclear” families that form the basis of contemporary western family structures.

So far, examples have been given of women who were buried in the tombs of their husband’s clan; this begs the question of whether there any similar examples of men buried in the tombs in other clans. There is at least one example, from the same Partunus tomb at Tarquinia; again, we are aware that this was the Partunus tomb because the majority of inscriptions in the tomb bear the Partunus clan name. This inscription, however, has greatly different implications than the cases at Caere above and is one of the most interesting inscriptions at either of these sites:

- **spurinas arnth velus clan cuclnial thanxvilus** (Ta 1.16)
  Arnth Spurinas, son of Vel and Thanxvil Cuclnial
It should be noted that this inscription places the clan name before the personal name; this was common practice in the classical period in southern Etruria. Although buried in the Partunus clan tomb and possessing a male name, Arnth Spurinas is clearly not a member of the clan. It is unclear, however, whether he was married to a female clan member or perhaps was the son of a female clan member married to a member of the Spurinas clan. The Spurinas family is well-known and considered one of the most powerful at Caere.²³ His family's status might have affected Arnth Spurinas' inclusion in the tomb, as his high status could have helped to elevate the Partunus family. If Arnth Spurinas lived and died at Tarquinia, when his family was from Caere, inclusion in the Partunus tomb might have been a diplomatic gesture between the Partunus and Spurinas clans. Interestingly, the name Thanxvil Cuchrial appears in another inscription in the same tomb:

velthur larisal clan cuchnial thanxvilus lupu avilis XXV (Ta 1.14)
Velthur, son of Laris and Thanxvil Cuchrial, dead at 25 years

Presumably, being in the Partunus tomb, the Velthur and Laris of inscription Ta 1.14 are Velthur and Laris Partunus. Perhaps Arnth Spurinas was the half-brother of Velthur? If so, it is incredible that he would be buried in the Partunus tomb, and also would point to remarriage or multiple marriages as a real possibility. It is also entirely possible that these were two different people both named Thanxvil Cuchrial, given the paucity of distinct personal names.

There is one more item of note from these inscriptions at the Partunus tomb. In addition to inscriptions Ta 1.14 and 1.16 above, there is one other inscription with the clan name Cuchrial:

velthur partunus larisalis clan ramthas cuchnial zilx cexaneri tenthas avil svalthas LXXXII
(Ta 1.9)
Velthur Partunus (son) of Laris, son of Ramtha Cuchrial having held the governorship for [Cexaneri], having lived 82 years

The three inscriptions in this tomb with the clan name Cuchrial – out of a total 8 inscriptions in the tomb and only one other mentioned woman – suggest an extended relationship between the Partunus and Cuchrial clans maintained by repeated intermarriage. Similar relationships seem to have existed in Caere, where two different women with the Matuna clan name (which also had its own tomb, notably containing more women than men) have inscriptions in the tombs of the Maclae family (see inscriptions Cr 1.61 and Cr 1.72). Such arrangements – intentional or not – again point to the role of clans as social networks and political structures. Marriage in this sense, especially if announced on the walls of a tomb, was a political tool. Together, these various pieces of evidence that can be pulled from funerary inscription point to an active, political, and formative role of clans at Caere and Tarquinia. The clan formed the basis for alliances and social interaction and served as the core of personal identity.

3.3 Social mobility amid the clan structure

A number of the most interesting inscriptions at Caere and Tarquinia include the names of clans that do not appear elsewhere in Etruscan inscription. These isolated instances of clan names hint at a more complex social fabric than the simple dichotomy of the “princely” elite with a significantly less wealthy lower class. Instead, they suggest the existence of a group that was somewhat elite and perhaps somewhat wealthy, but perhaps did not possess their own tombs and was not as much a part of the top tier. Additionally, these and other inscriptions suggest a relatively large amount social mobility that could be fueled by marriage.

Inscription Ta 1.13 of Larthi Spantui in the Partunus tomb was discussed in Section 3.2 above as an example of the mentioning of lineage outside of the clan who owned the tomb. However, also of note about the inscription is the fact that the Spantu clan name does not appear in any other Etruscan inscriptions. It thus seems likely that Larthi Spantui came from a clan somewhat less elite than the Partunus clan. In this context, the mentioning of Larthi Spantui’s father Larce Spantus takes on a different role: it is an elevation of the Spantus clan by association with the Partunus clan, and it is an attempt (either by Larthi Spantui

²³. Torelli 2016
or perhaps by the Partunus family) to use the language of the elite to elevate the status of Larthi Spantui herself.

Regardless of what the exact intent or impact of the inclusion of Larthi Spantui’s parentage in inscription Ta 1.13, the appearance of an otherwise unrecorded clan name is evidence of significant social mobility. Inscription Ta 1.13 is by no means an isolated instance; the following are three examples of other inscriptions from Tarquinia in which spouses with unrecognized clan names are mentioned:

**puslinei vela larthal sex apunalc larthial aninas velthurus velthurusla puia avils XXXVIII lupu** *(Ta 1.84)*

Vela Pusilinei, daughter of Larth and of Larthi Apuna, wife of Velthur Aninas son of Velthur, dead (having lived) 38 years

**catni sethra puia amce spitus larthal svalce avil XXXI** *(Ta 1.166)*

Sethra Catni was the wife of Larth Spitus, having lived 31 years

**metli arnthi puia amce spitus larthal svalce avil LXIII ci clenar acnanas arce** *(Ta 1.167)*

Arnthi Metli was the wife of Larth Spitus, lived 64 years, having made three sons, made (this tomb?)

Although there are some other names similar to Metli in Ta 1.167 and to Catni in Ta 1.166 that could be related (these are discussed in Section 3.4 below), each of these inscriptions is the only recorded instance of the specific clan name (either in male or female form). Although it is certainly likely that a number of elite families would not have surviving tombs or inscriptions, it would be surprising to see so many examples of unrecorded clan names purely from the elite. Most names that appear in clan tombs at Caere and Tarquinia also appear elsewhere on pottery or other mediums; for instance, the Matuna clan, which has a few instances of inscription in their own tomb at Caere and also in the Maclae tomb, appears on pottery in inscriptions Cr 2.132 and on a cippus Cr 5.3. These isolated inscriptions thus represent lower levels of the elite or perhaps some form of merchant class. However, the fact that these clan names still represent some sort of lower elite as opposed to lower classes is evidenced by the fact that they have a clan name at all: it is unlikely that the lower tiers of Etruscan society would have had clan names. There is one unique inscription from Volsinii that includes evidence of marriage between a member of the elite and a freedwoman that both reveals the significant social mobility that existed in Etruria and backs up the idea that clan names were specific to the elite:

**kanuta larecenas laute/nitha aranthia pinies puia turuce tluxval marvethul faliath/ere** *(Vs 3.12)*

Kanuta, freedwoman of the Larecenas clan, wife of Aranth Pinies, offered...

It is of note that the Larecenas functions both as a simple genitive – Kanuta, freedwoman of the Larecena family – and as a functional last name – Kanuta Larecenas. The appropriation of her former owner’s name would suggest that slaves and servants likely did not have clan names of their own, and that perhaps Kanuta’s promotion of her former owner’s clan name to her own last name is an attempt to best approximate elite customs. Also of note in this extraordinary inscription is the fact that Aranth Pinies married not merely a freedwoman but a freedwoman owned by a clan different from his own. There are a number of instances in ancient Italy, most notably in the Roman period, of wealthy slave-owners freeing and marrying their own slaves. If this marriage occurred outside of the slave structure – as in, if Kanuta was not offered as a gift or sold to Aranth by the Larecena clan, and was freed before he married her – that would suggest a far greater level of social mobility than is generally accepted.

Although there are a number of instances mentioned above of marriage between members of the elite and members of unknown or lower-status clans, there are fewer instances found at Caere or Tarquinia of marriage between two clans which both possessed inscribed tombs. The decoration of tombs, the large surface-level structures at Caere, and the eagerness with which political office is mentioned in inscription have been cited as evidence of extreme competition between clans. Perhaps, then, marriage between clans was considered something of a taboo. The apparently frequent intermarriage between minor clans and major clans would then not merely be common but rather necessary.
3.4 Comparing clan names and geographic mobility

In addition to social mobility, Etruscan inscriptions also reveal a significant amount of geographic mobility among the Etruscan elite. Such patterns can similarly be extracted from names and tomb inscriptions; in fact, many of the same inscriptions used in the sections above provide evidence of geographic movement and connections. Inscriptions show evidence of clans living at and marrying between different cities. The Tarnas clan, which had a tomb at Caere (known as the Tomb of the Alcoves) and was mentioned in inscription Cr 1.2 above, also appears in nine inscriptions at Vulci. An example from each site is given below:

\[ \text{tarnas larthalisa} \quad (Cr \, 1.3) \\
\text{Tarnas, (son) of Larth} \]

\[ \text{tarnas vel velus} \quad (Vc \, 1.36) \\
\text{Vel Tarnas, (son) of Vel} \]

Given the large number of tomb inscriptions at each location, the Tarnas clan appears to have maintained a significant presence at both Caere and Vulci; this presence does not appear to have been merely intermarriage between clans. Of note is the fact that they are tomb inscriptions, as opposed to votives, pottery, or similar. The fact that large numbers of the clan were buried at both location requires the Tarnas clan to have maintained a significant presence at each site as opposed to merely having visited. Although most clans seem to have been based solely in one city, the Tarnas clan’s presence in both Caere and Vulci suggests a potential role of clans as inter-city political networks.

However, the majority of instances of inter-city clan connections appear to have rather been based on intermarriage, gift exchange, or votive offerings, and represent individuals as opposed to whole clans moving between cities, both temporarily and permanently. The example of Arnth Spurinas, whose family from Caere is of some renown, and who was quite perplexingly buried in the Partunus Tomb Tarquinia, could be one such example of individual movement between cities. There are a number of other less confusing and less ambiguous examples. The Velxa clan, with a large tomb at Tarquinia, has a female form of the clan name Ramtha Velxai appear in inscription Cr 1.163 at the Greppe de Sant’Angelo necropolis area in Caere. It is important that this inscription appears in the necropolis area: given that Ramtha Velxai likely died in Caere, it points to marriage as opposed to merely travel, gift exchange, or votive inscription. An example of a Velxas inscription from Tarquinia and inscription Cr 1.163 are given below:

\[ \text{raunthu velxai velthurusa sex larthalisa} \quad (Ta \, 1.59) \\
\text{Raunthu Velxai, daughter of Velthur (and) Larthi.} \]

\[ \text{ramtha velxai} \quad (Cr \, 1.163) \\
\text{Ramtha Velxai} \]

In addition to these likely examples of intermarriage, there are also a number of examples of more temporary exchange and travel in the form of votive offerings and gift exchange. The Pinies clan appear in cities around Etruria: inscription Vs 3.12 in Volsinii, discussed above for its mention of a freedwoman, mentions an Aranth Pinies; inscription Vc 1.101 in Vulci makes mention of a Pumpus Pinies. These two examples appear to have been more temporary; inscription Vs 3.12 is a votive offering at a temple, and inscription Vc 1.101 is of uncertain origin. The clan Zertna, which has female members found in a tomb at Tarquinia, also names a male member on inscription Vs 1.205 on a cippus at Volsinii. The clan Huzcna, with female members in the same tomb in Tarquinia as the Zertna clan, appears as Huzecenas on inscription Cr 2.74, a piece of pottery in Caere. It should be noted here the Etruscan pronunciation placed a strong accent on the first syllable, to the extent that vowels in later syllables were often dropped; in this sense, the two spellings Huzcenas and Huzecenas are equivalent. As with the Pinies clan inscriptions, these appear to be more temporary and indicative of gift exchange or votive offering but likely not intermarriage.

The clan name Metli, one of the isolated clan names referred to in Section 3.3, has possible modified versions that appear in other cities. The clan name Meteli appears on inscription Pe 1.288 in Perusia;
because of the same pronunciation effect in which vowels can be dropped, these might be equivalent names. Other forms of the name appear in various inscriptions in Perusia. It is possible that the Metli clan was not a lower-level elite clan from Tarquinia, but rather an upper or mid-level clan from the more distant city of Perusia. There still appears to be no centralized Metli tomb, so it is difficult to state with certainty their level of power or wealth.

Although trade between Etruscan cities is well-attested, and travel was certainly not difficult given the relatively near distances between them, the presence of inscriptions of different clan names points to clan networks, structures, and behaviors relatively intertwined. Certain clans, such as the Tarnas clan, appear to have had a significant presence in multiple cities. Other clans, such as the Velxas clan, had a single primary residence in one city but married with the elite in other cities. Lastly, an abundance of inscriptions point to frequent travel, votive offerings, and exchange between elite clans in different cities. Together, these different types of interaction and exchange suggest that, while clans still focused primarily on intra-city power, they also operated in a political sphere that extended between cities and used inter-city relationships as a key political tool.

4 Conclusion

Among the Etruscan elite, clan structures formed the basis of civic and social identity. The Etruscan clan seems to have superseded the “nuclear family” as the dominant form of familial structure, with names and burial practice indicating that clans and lineage were more significant forms of affiliation than spousal relations. Despite these relatively rigid constructions, there nevertheless seems to have been a significant degree of social mobility. Further, it appears that clan relations often extended between cities, whether in terms of a real clan presence, intermarriage, or mere exchange. While clans may have played a diverse and extensive set of roles in Etruscan society, it is important to recognize that these roles are distinct. The analysis in this paper points to three primary roles of the clan: as a part of a person’s identity, as one of the primary forms of social organization and social grouping among the Etruscan elite, and as a political, social network that could be used as a tool for personal and collective gain. Together, these varied aspects point to the clan as a flexible yet powerful center to the Etruscan personal, social, and political spheres.

References

Meiser, Gerhard, ed. 2014. Etruskiche Texte.
A Selected Inscriptions

The following is the set of inscriptions used for this study, encompassing most tomb inscriptions from Caere and Tarquinia. Tomb inscriptions are clearly representative of people who died at each site; other sources of inscription, most notably on pottery, would include possible gift exchange or votive offerings quite likely from other cities or regions. The inscriptions are presented by the name of the tomb in which they are found and labelled with their number in the notation of Etruskische Texte.

T d Alcova

(Cr 1.1) tarnas a[: c]
(Cr 1.2) laris tarnas velus clan ranthasc matunial herma
(Cr 1.3) tarnas larthalisa
(Cr 1.4) nulathe

T d Iscrizioni

(Cr 1.5) av tarxnas av c crucials
(Cr 1.6) li tarxnas crucials
(Cr 1.7) rantha tarxna larisalisa
(Cr 1.8) rantula tarxna aules tarxnas
(Cr 1.9) ranthu ma[
(Cr 1.10) aule tarxnas larthal clan
(Cr 1.11) tha artinal v s
(Cr 1.12) laris tarxnas larthalisa
(Cr 1.13) rantha anini m sex
(Cr 1.14) thanxvil paci av[
(Cr 1.15) rantha suplnai
(Cr 1.16) ma tarxnas 1 clan
(Cr 1.17) marce tarxnas larth cl
(Cr 1.18) l tarxnas
(Cr 1.19) l tarxnas aul c
(Cr 1.20) av tarxnas m c
(Cr 1.21) av tarxnas pacials
(Cr 1.22) rantha tarxna veltharusa
(Cr 1.23) av tarxnas av c
(Cr 1.24) ] tarxnas m cl
(Cr 1.25) velthur tarxnas marce [s c]
(Cr 1.26) tarxna
(Cr 1.27) li tarxnas 1 c
(Cr 1.28) rantha nai
(Cr 1.29) larthi tarxna
(Cr 1.30) larth tarxnas a[
(Cr 1.31) tarxnas av c
(Cr 1.32) tarxna l s
(Cr 1.33) tarxnas li cl
(Cr 1.34) tarxnai
(Cr 1.35) than tarxnas li clan
(Cr 1.36) laris tarxnas li clan
(Cr 1.37) li tarxnas
(Cr 1.38) tarxnaiv sex
(Cr 1.39) li tarxnas s clan
(Cr 1.40) l tarxnas
(Cr 1.41) li tarxnas m c
(Cr 1.42) velthur tarxnas
(Cr 1.43) laris tarxnas aules
(Cr 1.44) velthur tarxnas
(Cr 1.45) tarxnas velthurusa
(Cr 1.46) thanxvil tarxnai
(Cr 1.47) aul tarxnas li c
(Cr 1.48) rantha crucrai
(Cr 1.49) puthnices
(Cr 1.50) m tarxnas av clan
(Cr 1.51) m tarxnas m c
(Cr 1.52) tarxnas
(Cr 1.53) l tarxnas l c
(Cr 1.54) laris tarxnas velthurusa
(Cr 1.55) v tarxnas larisal clan
(Cr 1.56) av tarxnas c
(Cr 1.57) larth lausn

T d Maclaie I

(Cr 1.58) aruth maclaie puiac
(Cr 1.59) thanxvil panci
(Cr 1.60) marce maclaie
(Cr 1.61) rantha matunai
(Cr 1.62) ranth
(Cr 1.63) avule maclaie
(Cr 1.64) thanxvil panci
(Cr 1.65) ranthu s vatena l
(Cr 1.66) pances li c

T d Maclaie II

(Cr 1.67) larth maclaie
(Cr 1.68) aule maclai
(Cr 1.69) thanxvil ceinai
(Cr 1.70) marce maclaie
(Cr 1.71) aule maclaie
(Cr 1.72) ranthu matunai

T d Sarcofagi
T d Triclinio

(Cr 1.76) punctes
(Cr 1.77) velthurus papals
(Cr 1.78) li sethurna

T d Althra

(Cr 1.105) althras marcesa
(Cr 1.106) m althras
(Cr 1.107) althras m c
(Cr 1.108) althras v c
(Cr 1.109) althras
(Cr 1.110) althras m c

T d Rilievi

(Cr 1.130) m matunas clate
(Cr 1.131) la matunai a s
(Cr 1.132) ranthu plauti v s
(Cr 1.133) ranthu ranazuia
(Cr 1.134) v matunas a c
(Cr 1.135) a matunas canatnes v c
(Cr 1.136) ranza matunai v s
(Cr 1.137) m matunas m c
(Cr 1.138) r matunai canatnei
(Cr 1.139) larthi matunai larthalisa

T d Tamsnie

(Cr 1.161) venel tamsnies an zile municlet —rial arusance huzrnethi caisriva[-] an larisal tam-
snies arusmnal thanxvilusc clan amce

Tumulo Senza Nome, T d Inscrizioni Graffite

(Cr 1.197) ramtha spesias sxanice thui stalthi ix laris armasiinas putusa zix ipa veliinaisi uthrice
laricesi zuxuna
(Cr 1.198) velxa sitaras ses ipei arce
(Cr 1.200) thesanthe
(Cr 1.201) mama
(Cr 1.202) rusi venthinas u-th
(Cr 1.203) [naiie
(Cr 1.204) [lia]
T d Partunu

(Ta 1.9) velthur partunus larisalisa clan ramthas cuchnial zilx cexaneri tenthas avil svalthas LXXXII
(Ta 1.10) laris partunus
(Ta 1.11) laris partunus
(Ta 1.12) laris partunus
(Ta 1.13) larthi spantui larces spantus sex arnthal partunus puia
(Ta 1.14) velthur larisal clan cuchnial thanxvilus lupu avils XXV
(Ta 1.15) partunus vel velthurus satlnalc ramthas clan avils XXIIX lupu
(Ta 1.16) spurinas arnth velus clan cuchnial thanxvilus ma[-zil]ath lupuce IIIIL avils -puri-s

T d Pulena

(Ta 1.17) laris pulenas larces clan larthal papacs velthurus nefts prums pules larisal creices ancn zix nethsrac acasce creals tarxnalth spurem lucairce ipa ruthcua cathas hermeri slicaxem aprinthuale luthcua cathas paxanac alumnathe hermumele crapiscs puts xim culsl leprnal rsil varxli cerine pul alumnath pul hermu huzevntre psl tenin[e -5-]ci methlumt pul hermu thutu-ithi mlusna ranvis mlamna [-10/12-] mnathuras parnix amce lese hermerier
(Ta 1.18) pulenas velthur larisal acnatrualc avils LXXV
(Ta 1.19) pulenas vel larisal acnatrualc thanxvilus LXXV

T Giglioli

(Ta 1.20) pinies laris larthal apunalc avils XIX
(Ta 1.21) pinies — lartha
(Ta 1.22) pinies vel larthal apunal thanxvilus clan avils XXX
(Ta 1.23) larth pinies vel [-23/25-]nal avils ciem ceaixls zilx marunuxua cepen tenu lupuce
(Ta 1.24) ramtha — einel velus pinies puia
(Ta 1.25) vel pinies [-11/13-]x tenu
(Ta 1.26) laris pinies [-?] ramthasc ..... tenu

T d Cardinale

(Ta 1.49) ramtha velus vestrecnia puia amce larthal larthalisla a scalce XIX

T d Amazzoni

(Ta 1.50) ramtha huzevntai thui ati nacnuar larthial apaiatrus zil eteraiais
(Ta 1.51) ramtha huzcnai thui cesu ati nacna larthial apaiatrus zil eterais
(Ta 1.52) ramtha zertnai thui cesu
(Ta 1.53) ramtha zertnai thui cesu

T d Scudi

(Ta 1.54) larth velxas velthurus clan larthialisla
(Ta 1.55) arnth velxas larisal clan velusla
(Ta 1.56) velthur velxas larthal seiti thialc clan
(Ta 1.57) larthi velthurus sex velusla
(Ta 1.58) velthur velxas zilaxnthas velusa anaica
(Ta 1.59) raunthu velxai velthurusa sex larthialisla
(Ta 1.60) arnth velxas velusa
(Ta 1.61) ramtha camnai larisal velusla
(Ta 1.62) laris velxas velusa clan
(Ta 1.63) velx sethra v ril XXXIV

T d Tifone

(Ta 1.64) pumpui [-?->] ve aisinal ril [ ]
(Ta 1.65) hercnai v lr ril XXX

T d Atie

(Ta 1.66) vel aties velthurus lemnisa celati cesu
(Ta 1.67) velthur ezpus la[-?-] ucrinic puiac at[-?[-]
(Ta 1.68) vel arnthal curunas [-9-]nal clan teucem [-9-]-pa teuce ix an [-9-]

T Bruschi

(Ta 1.81) thui clthi mutnaithi vel velusa avils cis zathrmisc seithialisa
(Ta 1.82) arnth apunas velus max cezpalx avil svalce
(Ta 1.83) calthi mutnethi vel apnas larthial clan avils cezpalxls

T 5512

(Ta 1.84) puslinei vela larthal sex apunalc larthial aninas velthurus velthurusla puia avils XXXVIII lupu

T d Anina

(Ta 1.151) aninas arnth velus thanxvilus atial avils XXXIX
(Ta 1.152) aninas larth velus atialc avils XXXXV
(Ta 1.153) aninas larth velus arzanal apanes surnus scunsi cates an vacl lavun [[e travzi sam suthi cerixun[ce] thui[i]] zivas avils LXXVI
(Ta 1.154) vela lethi larthal aninas canthus puia avils LVIII
(Ta 1.155) vela lethi aninas larthal canthus puia avils LIIX
(Ta 1.156) vel aninas velus clan atialc avils lupu XXII
(Ta 1.157) velus atialc avils XXII
(Ta 1.158) aninus vel velus apanes surnus travzi scunsi cates zev tha– avils XXXXIII

T Carsui

(Ta 1.132) carsui ramtha avils XXX lupu []nicam lu-venas zili uzarale zivas erce
(Ta 1.133) larth lumpiastes
(Ta 1.134) nastes larth
(Ta 1.135) arnth

T 5035

(Ta 1.136) a v sefrial [–] ril XXIX
(Ta 1.137) sethra pap[sinei]
(Ta 1.138) pap[sinei] thana v svalce avil LIII
(Ta 1.140) avnsis s s ril XXXIIX
(Ta 1.141) paparsi nas v

T Alvethna

(Ta 1.142) larth alvethnas
(Ta 1.143) alvethnas vel arnth
(Ta 1.144) alvethnas arnth capis

T d Festoni

(Ta 1.145) vel arnthal

Tombe Querciola

(Ta 1.146) ceicnas arnth
(Ta 1.147) ceicnas arnth arnthal
(Ta 1.148) ramthas larval
(Ta 1.149) luvcia thancial
(Ta 1.150) anes arnth velthurus clan lupu avils L

T d Spitu

(Ta 1.164) spitus larth larthal svalce LXIII husur max acnanas arce maniiim mlace farthne fuluthras
(Ta 1.165) spitus vel larthal svalce avil XVIII
(Ta 1.166) catni sethra puia amce spitus larthal svalce avil XXXI
(Ta 1.167) metli arnhi puia amce spitus larthal svalce avil LXIII ci clenar acnanas arce
(Ta 1.168) semni ramtha spitus larthal puia amce lupu avils -XII husur ci acnanas
T d Camna

(Ta 1.182) camnas larth larthal satnalc clan an suthi lavtni zivas cerixu tesamsa suthith atrsrce
scuna calti suthiti munth zivas mursl XX
(Ta 1.183) larth anthal plecus clan ramthasc apatrual elsz zilaxnthis avils thunem muvalxls
(Ta 1.184) larisal crespe thanxvilus pumpanal clan zilath rasnas marunux crepen zilc thufi tenthas
marunux paxanati ril LXIII
(Ta 1.185) ramtha apatru larthal sex larithiac alethnal camnas arnthal larthalisa puia apatruis
pepnesc huzcncsc veiznalsc ati nacna pures nesithvas avils cis muvalxls

T Alsina

(Ta 1.186) pumpui larthi puia larthal clevsinas avlesla sex sentinel thanxvilus
(Ta 1.187) XXXIII
(Ta 1.188) ulznei ramtha arthal aletnal thanas ...
(Ta 1.191) velthur larthal clan pumful clan larthial avils cealxls lupu
(Ta 1.192) larth avles clan avils huths muvalxls lupu