Satricum in the Post-Archaic Period. A Case study of the Interpretation of Archaeological Remains as Indicators of Ethno-Cultural Identity

Gnade, M.

Citation for published version (APA):
4 THE VOLSCIANS IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Introduction
To understand the historical context of the archaeological remains of Satricum in the fifth and fourth centuries, the literary sources for this period deserve to be taken into account. Indeed, the site provides rich opportunities to re-assess the value of seeking historical potential in archaeological remains (see below). Equally, it can be used to shed quite a different light on the one-sided picture presented by historical accounts written from a Roman viewpoint.

As shown in Ch. 3, the archaeological evidence at Satricum reveals an unmistakable continuity on most levels of society after the Archaic period. Archaeological research has also demonstrated that certain features, notably mortuary practices, differ fundamentally from earlier periods and as such reflect profound changes in the character of the settlement. Various ideas have been put forward to explain these changes. It has been suggested that they are to be read in the light of the general economic decline of the Latial region, itself the result of the instable political situation during the early Roman Republic and to the many wars which are reported by ancient historians.455 In the case of Satricum, this is said to have resulted in the abandonment of the settlement (see Introduction). Another view, similarly corresponding to the annalistic account, interprets the changes in terms of an etno-cultural transformation. The indigenous Volscians, well-known from the literary sources, are regarded as the most plausible candidates responsible for the changes in the archaeological record.456

According to the historiography, the area surrounding Satricum was in Volscian hands during the fifth and much of the fourth centuries. Indeed, in several references the name of the town is directly linked with a Volscian presence.

The arguments against the first view have been discussed at length in the previous chapter. The questions that immediately arise in relation to the second view are: Who were these Volscians? And is it possible to connect their alleged presence with the material remains discovered in Satricum? In my attempts to find an answer to these questions, I have encountered a number of methodological problems which are inherent to the use of historical sources. These involve, firstly, the credibility of the historical record and, secondly, the legitimacy of interpreting archaeological evidence in the light of literary sources.

The main literary sources for the Volscian presence in Latium are Livy and Dionysius, with Livy’s account covering the longer period. The two are surprisingly consistent in their reports of military confrontations between the Romans and the Volscians throughout the fifth century. Together with other Central-Italian peoples (notably the Aequians, who also feature frequently in the sources) the Volscians are regarded as a threat to Rome’s security and as a serious

455 See, for example, Attema 1993, 17-18, 212.
THE VOLSCIANS IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

obstacle in her efforts to establish supremacy in Latium. During the early years of the fifth century they occupy the cities of southern Latium, while the Aequians are a constant threat to the cities in the east. A Roman campaign against the Aequians and the Volscians is recorded for almost every year between c. 495 to c. 455, with their armies occasionally reported at the very gates of Rome. Only after the middle of the fifth century do Volscian attacks appear to become much less frequent.

The prominent role which the literary tradition accords to the Volsci in the early Republican period cannot be ignored. The reliability of the Roman sources, however, written as they were at a much later period, remains a matter of debate. Firstly, there are questions about the origin of the sources themselves: i.e. how did information about such a remote period survive and how was it elaborated? Secondly, there is the issue of the intrinsic credibility of the annalistic data: i.e. how far can we accept the bare facts concerning, for example, the number of military confrontations, victories, defeats etc. between Rome and her opponents. The discussion hovers between an hypercritical approach, which rejects most of the information about early Rome in the sources as sheer invention and considers other facts as untrue unless corroborated by independent evidence, and a less sceptical view, which assumes the basic authenticity of the annalists’ data but recognises that they are presented within an embellished narrative. In the view of those who favour the less sceptical approach, writing history in Roman times was primarily a matter of giving an entertaining account. To this end various techniques were adopted, such as the embellishing of facts, the use of rhetoric and the inclusion of speeches. Despite these distortions, the basic outline of events, i.e. the bare record of military campaigns, triumphs, defeats, peace treaties etc. are to be regarded as fundamentally sound. It is argued by Tim Cornell that the rejection of information as fiction or invention unless verified by a reliable independent source, would, a priori, rule out almost everything in the historical record. Instead, he prefers to take the inherent probability of the historical account for granted, arguing that "historians always work on the basis of probability" and suggesting that the burden of proof lies with those who refuse

457 The literary sources identify various peoples coming down from the Appenine hinterland to the coastal plains in the fifth century. They all pose a threat to the existence of Rome and constitute a serious obstacle to her expansion throughout the century. Among these are the Sabines, Aequians, Hericians and Volscians.
458 Cornell 1995, 307-9; cf. the list of wars between Romans and Volscians between 509-483 as recorded by the two ancient authors, in van Royen 1992a, 439; see also Cornell 1989, 290, for a list of Roman triumphs between the fall of the Kings and the Sack of Rome in 390.
460 See, for instance, Raaflaub 1986, 48.
461 For a total dismissal of the tradition which gives Rome substantial power before the end of the fifth century, see Alföldi 1965, 318-335. A. Drummond, JRS 72, 1982, 177-179, considers the historical account unreliable unless proven otherwise. See also Cornell and Raaflaub, esp. 22-23, 47-51, in Raaflaub (ed.) 1986 and Ogilvie and Drummond in CAH vii 2(2), 1989, for the presentation of opposing points of view; also, Cornell 1995, 16-18.
463 Cornell 1986, 62-65, esp. 63 where it is argued that "the traditional story represents the truth as the Romans themselves conceived it." Presuming that they did know their own history, Cornell finds it hard to imagine that the Romans were entirely mistaken on what for them were essential aspects of the story. He ends his paper, however, with the argument that the annalists of the final centuries of the Republic had no clear perception of the true political and social conditions of the Archaic period. There was therefore a great deal of misunderstanding and unconscious distortion. Although the result is that "we cannot rely on the sources for answers to even the most basic questions", a core of authentic data must form the basis of the historical accounts (73-76); see also Cornell 1995, 18 and 308, on the authenticity of recorded events, inferred from the marked difference in the numbers of triumphs noted between the fifth and the later centuries.
464 Cornell 1986, 64.
to accept such information.\(^{465}\) To interpret the annalistic tradition correctly, one should strive to distinguish between structural data - the 'hard core' on which the tradition is based - and the narrative superstructure.\(^{466}\) Unfortunately there seems to be no reliable way to separate truth from fiction, to identify with any certainty the distortions and literary elaborations which Livy and his annalistic predecessors must have superimposed on their material.\(^{467}\) Each case, it appears, should be judged on its own merits. However, there is an obvious difference in terms of detail between Livy’s account of the early history of Rome and his account of the later period\(^ {468}\) and there now seems to be a consensus that the former is generally less reliable than the latter.

Another problem which is much discussed by those dealing with the annalistic tradition, and one which again bears heavily upon its credibility, is the one-sided, subjective nature of the historical account. The annalists wrote not only at a much later period, but also from a standpoint likely to be coloured.\(^ {469}\) When consulting the literary sources, we read of many different Italic peoples, each with their own territory, cities, political structure, culture, social customs and language. But due to the limited range of evidence (which is largely confined to the annalists) it is virtually impossible to distinguish between genuine and fabricated elements, or even to establish clear distinctions between the identities of the various peoples. It is generally agreed that much of the information on the character of the Italic peoples is provided to assert the superiority of Rome over the rest of Italy. The result seems to be little more than a stereotype of 'otherness', in which typical barbarian characteristics such as bellicosity, disorganization and cruelty are emphasised.\(^ {470}\) Clear examples of stereotyping in Livy are his oft quoted characterisations of the more stubborn opponents of Rome, such as the Volsci in the fifth and early fourth centuries and the Samnites thereafter. In the first case we read of "Volsci, ferocior ad rebellandum quam ad bellandum gens" (Livy VII, 27,7); in the second there is a comparable phrase, the Samnites being described as "...montani atque agrestes..." (Livy IX, 13,7).\(^ {471}\)

Yet it would seem to be an over-simplification to regard Roman portrayals of these groups as pure invention. As Kathryn Lomas recently stated in her introduction to the volume of articles on Gender and Ethnicity in Ancient Italy, it would be an injustice to regard the Italic peoples "as the passive recipients of a cultural and ethnic agenda entirely defined by Rome", or to consider these images as simple products of a purely Roman imagination.\(^ {472}\) At the same time we may assume that Roman accounts contain a kernel of truth. Being a formidable enemy does not preclude a capacity for civilisation.

\(^{465}\) Cornell 1986, 64.

\(^{466}\) Cornell 1995, 18 n. 4, with reference to Momigliano, Sesto contributo, 484, for the distinction between structural facts and narrative superstructure; also, Oakley 1997, viii, on the "hard core" of reliable material in Livy.

\(^{467}\) Oakley 1997, preface and 100-102; see also Cornell 1986, 63, who argues that though "the tradition is fundamentally sound in essentials, the case cannot be definitely proved".


\(^{469}\) Lomas in Cornell/Lomas 1997, 4-5.

\(^{470}\) Dench 1995, 72-80; cf. also Hall 1989, 102-113, 149, on ethnic stereotypes in Greek sources and on Greek views of the barbarian.

\(^{471}\) Cf. Oakley 1997, 264 for a survey of similar judgements on other 'nations'.

\(^{472}\) Lomas in Cornell/Lomas 1997, 5; see also, Dench 1995, 22-23, on selective ways of seeing 'the others'.
The annalistic account and the archaeological evidence

In the search for what constitutes the authentic factual substratum behind the ancient narrative, things seem to become easier from the sixth century onward since help is now offered by the archaeological record. A remarkable coincidence in main outline is noted, for instance, between the archaeological remains of sixth-century Rome and the literary account of this period.\(^473\) The two sets of evidence complement each other well and illuminate the subject to a greater extent than before. Yet despite the apparent coincidence between the two records, this approach holds the implicit danger of circular argumentation: \(i.e.\) that we are easily lured into finding within the archaeological record confirmation of that which the literary tradition has encouraged us to look for.\(^474\) The most notorious example in the early history of Rome is probably the connection once made between the historically reported Sabine presence in Rome and the inhumation burials in the Forum Romanum (see also Ch. 3.3).\(^475\) Another concerns the acceptance of Etruscan domination of Archaic Rome.\(^476\) On the other hand, it cannot be denied that historians and archaeologists are in pursuit of similar, if not identical, goals in their attempts to reconstruct the past. They merely make use of different bodies of material and apply different methods. Each discipline should therefore make use of the other, though not without exercising due caution, bearing in mind the disparate nature of the evidence they offer.

I happen to agree with Cornell that an historical backbone is present in all archaeological approaches and that attempts to reconstruct a "purely archaeological history" are misguided.\(^477\) The point is well illustrated by the debate surrounding the interpretation of the archaeological evidence of fifth- and fourth-century Satricum in relation to the town's settlement history. Both the economic explanation of changes observed in the archaeological record during the early Republican period and the view that links the archaeological evidence to the historical Volscians are based on the annalistic narrative. It is, however, in the elaboration of the details that divergent paths are taken, leading in the end to quite different conclusions.

The annalistic record for the fifth century is one of military confrontation, famine and pestilence, events that accord well with the general impression of economic decline. They provide a gloomy background to the social and political conflicts of the period. Some fifteen years ago, Cornell found a close correspondence between this account and the archaeological evidence, which was characterised by a notable lack of finds for this period.\(^478\) He did concede that fifth-century remains might still be awaiting discovery, and even that fifth-century material might not have been recognised, but did not seriously investigate these options. Cornell considered the coincidence between the two records as reflections of the same historical society, complementing and corroborating each another. Indeed, he accepted it as evidence of the reliability of the main outlines in the traditional account.

To date, the archaeological situation has not essentially changed either for Rome or for the

\(^473\) See Cornell 1995, 26-30, on the archaeological evidence from an historical perspective, esp. 28 on sixth-century Rome; also Smith 1996, 2-4; for a contrary view, see Ross Holloway 1994, 6-11, who in a short review of the most important monuments in Rome tries to show how difficult it is to cite archaeological evidence in support of the annalistic account.
\(^474\) Cornell 1995, 29.
\(^475\) See, for instance, Cornell in Cornell/Lomas 1997, 14.
\(^476\) For two contrary views in this matter, see Cornell and Rasmussen in Cornell/Lomas 1997; also Cornell 1995, 151-157, on the myth of "Etruscan Rome".
\(^477\) Cornell 1995, 29.
\(^478\) Cornell 1986, 68. This view is also taken by Attema 1993.

112
majority of other places in ancient Latium. However, a different picture has emerged for ancient Satricum. Continuous systematic archaeological research has yielded evidence that points unmistakably to the continuity of the settlement and even to a much more 'developed' society than has often been assumed. At first sight, the archaeological evidence seems not to support Cornell's main conclusion on the correspondence between the archaeological and historical records. Indeed, it seems to confirm his speculation regarding undiscovered material. Yet despite this, Cornell's view of the literary and archaeological records as complementary can still be of value. As has already been pointed out in Ch. 3.3, the new finds in Satricum not only accord with the historical account but may even corroborate it. As will be shown, the correspondence between the two records now appears to be even closer than before, making Satricum a valuable point of reference for the post-Archaic period.

That being said, it seems the right moment to take a closer look at the historical accounts for the sixth, fifth and fourth centuries, to give us an impression of the way the Volscians feature in the traditional narrative. Clearly, a close reading of the historical record, which has long been our prime source of information for this period, should not be lacking here. In the light of recent archaeological discoveries, this reading may lead us to the conclusion that a closer connection exists between the historical and archaeological sources than has been previously thought.

We will start our survey with an evaluation of the information available for the earlier period (which is less consistent) by reviewing the recent debate regarding its credibility. For the purpose of placing archaeological data within an historical context, we will attempt to establish a more precise chronological framework for the historically recorded Volscian presence in Latium.

There follows a detailed overview of the more consistent account for the fifth and fourth centuries. This covers the many military confrontations between Rome and the Volscians, but also takes in other political and military events which, directly or indirectly, can be linked to Volscian activity.

**The Volscian episode in Roman historiography**

The literary sources present a picture of political insecurity in fifth century Latium, with the Volscians given a major role. Their activities cover a period of almost two hundred years, starting somewhere in the last quarter of the sixth century and ending around 341. In the earlier years of their recorded presence they feature rather quietly in the background, but later become one of the main players in the drama of Rome's rise to supremacy. Their activities are mentioned on at least 53 occasions, either in brief remarks or in extensive accounts. At least 44 of these references are directly associated with military activity.

According to the modern interpretation, the numerous confrontations between Romans and Volscians are part of a wider context, namely that of a general movement of Apennine mountain tribes down to the fertile coastal plains along the Tyrrhenian Sea. Population pressure and poor natural resources are seen as the primary causes for their intrusion into the Latial area.\(^479\)

The conventional view, however, which is based upon their dramatic reappearance

\(^{479}\) Coarelli 1990, 140; Cornell 1995, 305.
in the literary sources, is that Volscian incursions were part of a sudden invasion in the first decade of the fifth century.\textsuperscript{480}

An important question which arises in tracing the history of the Volscians turns on their recorded presence in Latium already in the sixth century. Although often rejected as purely fictitious, some have argued that these early references should be afforded a certain degree of plausibility (see below).\textsuperscript{481} It is generally accepted, however, that there is no secure way of knowing precisely when the Volscians appeared in Latium. Intriguing questions, such as how they succeeded in occupying a large part of Latin territory, whether their first infiltration was gradual and peaceful rather than sudden, organized and aggressive, which route they took from their homeland and how and where they lived, are widely considered unanswerable. As a consequence, ignorance of the way in which the Volscians succeeded in occupying important towns like Antium and Pometia has become almost a tenet in itself.

The earliest references to Volscian activities
It is during the reign of Tarquinius Superbus that the Volscians start to appear regularly in the literary sources. On various occasions both Livy and Dionysius explicitly refer to a Volscian presence in Latium during this period, reporting either Volscian military actions or cities that are apparently in their hands. Their account can be supplemented by Strabo, who refers to the Pomptine plain and the town of Apiola (see below) as being Volscian during the Regal period. He locates the area on the borders of Latin territory, between the river Storas (Astura) and Circaeum.\textsuperscript{482} Among the towns associated with the Volscians at this early date are Velitrae, Ecetra, Antium and Pometia, the last two featuring quite prominently in accounts of the late sixth century and the first decade of the fifth.

It is Dionysius who refers to a Volscian presence during the earliest period. Already in the times of the fourth king of Rome, Ancus Martius, they are reported as raiding Roman territory.\textsuperscript{483} Velitrae is mentioned as one of their cities. After its capitulation, following a Roman siege, the inhabitants are offered peace and a friendship alliance.

The next Volscian appearance, this time in the accounts of both Dionysius and Livy, is about one hundred years later, during the reign of Tarquinius Superbus. Both writers refer to an actual Volscian presence in Latium. As part of Tarquinius' political and territorial expansion programme, the Volscians are invited to join the Roman-Latin alliance. The offer is accepted by only two of their cities, Ecetra and Antium.\textsuperscript{484} The next step is more aggressive and focusses on the important city of Suessa Pometia, which is taken by storm. With the proceeds of the booty Tarquinius starts building the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. Both Livy and Dionysius mention the capture of this city, but only Livy associates it with the Volscians. His description of events is rather casual, but he does cite the capture of Suessa

\textsuperscript{480} This idea was first proposed by B.G. Niebuhr, \textit{The History of Rome}, London 1837-42, and since that time frequently quoted. See, for instance, Devoto 1967.

\textsuperscript{481} For a survey of the differing opinions regarding the reliability of the early annalistic references, see Van Royen 1992a, 437-438; \textit{idem} 1992b, 33. For scholars who tend to support the idea of a Volscian presence in the plains before the end of the sixth century, see De Sanctis 1907, 104; Last 1928, 497-498; Ogilvie 1965, 204-205; Stibbe 1984, 9; \textit{idem} 1987, 10; Coarelli 1990, 139-140; Cristofani 1992, 13-24; Musti 1992, 25-31; Cornell 1995, 304.

\textsuperscript{482} Strabo 5, 3,2-4.

\textsuperscript{483} D.H. III, 41.5.

\textsuperscript{484} D.H. IV, 49,1.
Pometia as the starting point of a war with the Volscians which will last for more than two hundred years.\(^{485}\)

Suessa Pometia occupies an important position in the literary record. It is repeatedly referred to in terms of its size, the number of its inhabitants, its fame and great wealth.\(^{486}\) Both Livy and Strabo associate the city directly with the Volscians; Dionysius locates the city in their territory. After its capture by Tarquinius Superbus, the city reappears on three other occasions. In 503 it is mentioned as a Latin colony defecting, along with another Latin colony, Cora, to the Aurunci.\(^{487}\) The ensuing battle against the Aurunci is won by the Romans, who thereupon slaughter their prisoners and three hundred hostages.

In the following year, a second major battle is recorded, this time directly related to Suessa Pometia. After initially defeating the Roman army, the city surrenders without a fight when the Roman army returns with reinforcements.\(^{488}\) It is razed and its land sold. The final reference to the city is for the year 495, when it is reported as acting as a refuge for Volscian rebels. It is again besieged by the Roman army and sacked.\(^{489}\)

In the period immediately after the expulsion of the Tarquinians, the Volscians reappear in another context. Livy briefly refers to the Romans buying up grain from the Volscians (and Cumaeans) in 508, implying that they were already inhabiting the Pomptine plain at the end of the sixth century.\(^{490}\)

**Commentary on the earliest Volscian presence in Latium**

Considering the various references to these early Roman-Volscian encounters, it is difficult to escape the impression that the Volscians were more firmly established in southern Latium than is generally assumed. In fact, the sources offer little support for the 'sudden occupation' model that is often put forward. This view is shared by Domenico Musti, in his recent study of the image of the Volscians in the historiography.\(^{491}\) He argues that the presumed Volscian invasion in the early fifth century is no more than a modern invention which combines the sudden frequency of references to the Volscians with a *terminus post quern* interpretation of the Romano-Carthaginian treaty of 508.\(^{492}\) In Polybius' translation of this treaty – which guarantees the interests of both Rome and Carthage on the basis of mutual respect - the cities of Ardea, Antium, Lavinium(?), Circeii and Tarracina and the area between them are designated Latin.\(^{493}\) This explicit reference to the 'latinity' of the area is often taken as an important argument against the reliability of reports of an early Volscian presence in Latium.\(^{494}\) However, as Musti points out, the Latin status ascribed to the area is far more

\(^{485}\) Livy I, 53,2.  
\(^{487}\) Livy II, 16,8.  
\(^{488}\) Livy II, 17.  
\(^{489}\) Livy II, 24,8-25,1-6; D.H. VI, 29, 2-5.  
\(^{490}\) Livy II, 9,6.  
\(^{492}\) For this treaty and its exact date, see Cornell 1995, 210-214.  
\(^{493}\) Pol. III, 22,11-24,16.  
\(^{494}\) See Radke 1961, 807-808. For a recent reflection on this view, see Van Royen 1992a, 437-451; *idem* 1992b, 33-36.
likely to be geographical in nature, rather than political or ethnic. If he is right, the annalistic references need to be reconsidered.

Another interesting approach to the credibility of references to an early Volscian presence has been proposed by Filippo Coarelli. In his view, they may indeed refer to early Volscian migrations. Coming from their homeland - which Coarelli locates in the heart of Sabine territory, bordering on Umbria - the Volscians would have taken the natural route from the east, via Tivoli. At a later stage they took the more southerly route, along the valley of the Liris. Instead of believing in a sudden large-scale invasion of the Latial plain, Coarelli suggests a gradual process of infiltration by small groups of mountain peoples in search of new territory.

Inconsistencies in Livy and Dionysius regarding the Volscian intrusion into Latium during the Regal period are considered a strong argument for dismissing the information they give as altogether unreliable. A clear example is the siege and capture of Velitrae - described as a Volscian city - during the reign of Ancus Martius. Dionysius' account of the capture of the town is not confirmed by any other direct reference and the Volscians then disappear entirely from the record for the next hundred years. It is therefore likely that the Volscians, with their notorious reputation, have been inserted to enliven the story of Ancus Martius who - as the successor of Servius Tullius - is confronted with many external problems.

Similar inconsistencies are observed in reports of the Volscian presence during the reign of Tarquinius Superbus. One example is the apparent lack of agreement between Livy and Dionysius on the Volscian identity of the city of Suessa Pometia. Another is Dionysius' claim that, after their defeat by Tarquinius, the supposedly Volscian inhabitants of Suessa Pometia sought the protection of the Latin community of Gabii. This is regarded in some quarters as extremely unlikely, and even as evidence to support a Latin identity for the captured city.

I would again suggest, however, that a more flexible approach should prevail in such cases. Although it is true that Dionysius does not directly connect Suessa Pometia with the Volscians - he calls the inhabitants Pometini - he explicitly refers to their presence in the region. It is 'the country of the Volscians' that is repeatedly raided by Tarquinius' army after the capture of Suessa Pometia. On the second point (the unlikelihood of Volscians seeking shelter in the Latin town of Gabii) it should be noted that, at this early period, there are no hostilities reported between Latins and Volscians. The record rather implies that Latins and Volscians were living peacefully together. In fact, Gabii is the next target of Tarquinius' programme of conquest. Its capture is recorded by both Livy and Dionysius.

496 Coarelli 1990, 139. Coarelli suggests that the earliest recorded contacts of Volscians with Latium during the time of Ancus Martius and Tarquinius Superbus (which are generally rejected as fictitious) may have been memories of real infiltrations in this area.
497 Coarelli 1990, 140.
498 Van Royen 1992a, 438-441; idem 1992b, 34.
499 D.H. III, 41.5.
500 But cf. Coarelli 1990, 139 on this point.
502 D.H. IV, 50.2.
503 See Van Royen 1992a, n. 23.
504 D.H. IV, 52.3.
It is thus not unreasonable to suppose that the Volscians, until the moment Roman historians award them the role of official enemies of Rome, had been living peacefully in Latin communities amongst the Latin inhabitants. Their early presence may have been the result of a gradual process of infiltration, explicable in terms of transhumance contacts which seem to have been a regular phenomenon from the earliest times.  

Alternatively, one can equally imagine such early migrations as the result of a series of ‘sacred springs’ (veria sacra) - the ritual response to famine, overpopulation and need for larger territories. This custom may have allowed mountain peoples the chance, at a very early stage, to intermingle peacefully with the Latin population. It would also explain why, as early as the sixth century, some cities are identified as ‘Volscian’ without any reference to their seizure in a Volscian attack. In communities where Volscians had gradually come to outnumber their hosts, it would be fair to assume that they went on to obtain prominent or public positions. If so, cities like Antium, Ecestra and Pometia might well become labelled as ‘Volscian’.

A possible argument in favour of the peaceful co-habitation of Volscians and Latins is offered by a passage in Livy. It describes a similar situation, though admittedly a hundred years later. In 423, the Samnites, who later took over the city, were admitted to a share in Capua and her fields by their Etruscan rulers.

Such stories may add credibility to Strabo’s account of Volscians living autonomously in the various cities of Latium. They also accord with Livy’s remark about Romans buying up grain from the Volscians as early as 508. This suggests that they had established themselves in a plain renowned for its grain production. If the Volscians had still been living in the mountains, they would have been, as Ogilvie aptly put it “a surprising quarter to seek grain from”. Sixteen years later, in 492/491, a similar event is recorded. Rome is again in desperate need of grain. This time, however, they are officially at war with the whole Volscian "nation", and have to bypass enemy territory by importing their grain by sea from further south, from Cumae and Sicily.

The fifth century
The episode which is commonly considered the starting point for a sudden Volscian invasion of Latium is the epic battle between the Romans and the rebellious Latin cities, at Lake Regillus in 499/496. The Romans emerge victorious, but among the 29 rebel cities listed

---

505 On the phenomenon of transhumance in ancient Italy, see E. Skydsgaard, Analecta Danici VII, 1974, 7-31 (with literature).
507 For the scholars who assume a gradual and peaceful Volscian infiltration into the Latin communities before the end of the sixth century, see n. 481.
508 Livy IV, 37,1-2.
509 For this suggestion, see Stibbe 1987, 9.
510 Strabo V, 3,2.
511 Livy II, 9,6.
512 Cf. Coarelli 1990, 142-143.
513 Ogilvie 1965, 257. See also Garsey 1988, 167-181, who believes in the authenticity of reports of emergency food supplies, arguing that food shortages were publicly recorded in the annales maximi, as were some of the measures taken to alleviate them; also Cornell 1995, 268, and Oakley 1997, 569.
514 Livy II, 34, 1-4.
515 Livy II, 21,3-4. For a commentary on the battle, see Ogilvie 1978, 283-289; 281-282 and 286, for the discussion concerning the exact date of the battle.
by Dionysius, Satricum is mentioned for the first time (see below). In his detailed account of the battle, Dionysius describes the active but futile role played by the Volscians at some length. The Volscian garrison at Antium sends reinforcements, but the promised assistance of other Volscian forces arrives too late.

In the period which follows, Rome is confronted with what seems to be a first organized revolt by the Volscians, in company with Rome’s allies, the Hernicians and Sabines. The Volscians however, are betrayed by the Latins. They are defeated and lose two of their most important cities to the Romans: in 495, their leading city Suessa Pometia is captured and its name completely disappears from the historical record (see below), while in 494 the town of Velitri is seized and made a Roman colony. In 493, the peace treaty known as the Foedus Cassianum is made with the Latin peoples. In the same year other Volscian cities, such as Longula, Polusca and Corioli, fall to the Romans.

In the next episode, the Roman advance into Latium suffers a serious setback, when the Volscians - led by the Roman general, Gnaeus Marcius Coriolanus, and by the Volscian leader Attius Tullius of Antium - march on Rome, capturing many cities from the Romans on the way. Both Livy and Dionysius report the legendary march of Coriolanus and his Volscians - each embellishing it with romantic details - but Livy gives a shorter list of captured cities and refers to one campaign instead of the two reported by Dionysius. He also gives a different sequence of captured cities. According to Livy, Circeii, Satricum, Longula, Polusca, Corioli and Lavinium are taken and, in the Latin area, Corbio, Veteliat(?), Trebiurn, Labici and Pedum. In Dionysius’ account Circeii is again the first town to be taken. However, it is followed by Tolerium, Bola, Labici, Pedum, Corbio, Corioli (?) and Bovillae. In a second march the towns of Longula, Satricum, Setia, Pollusca, Lavinium (?), Mugilla (?) and Corioli (?) are seized.

The legend of Coriolanus ends with his withdrawal from Rome and her territory - persuaded by his wife and mother - after which he is tried for treason by the disappointed Volscians and, according to Dionysius, stoned to death.

The story of Coriolanus’ campaign is generally believed to contain a core of truth. Thereafter the accounts continue to present a pattern of almost annual raids on Latin territory,

---

516 D.H. V, 61,3. The reliability of the list is, however, generally disputed. See Alfoldi 1965, 13; Ogilvie 1965, 280-281; but also Stibbe 1987, 13 and Cornell 1995, 298. An important objection against the authenticity of the list is the appearance of the names of Norma and Setia (Sezze), cities which at that time did not yet exist, while important cities such as Pometia, Antium, Signia and Terracina are absent.

517 D.H. VI, 3,2.

518 Livy II, 22,3-5; D.H. VI, 25,3-4.


520 D.H. VI, 95,1-4; Livy II, 33, 3-4. See Ampolo 1990, 122-126 (with references), for an extensive discussion of the treaty. Cornell 1995, 299-301 argues that the treaty was a response to the external threat of invading Volscians and Aequians. In 486, a similar peace treaty was struck between the Romans and the Hernicians under the consul Purius Cassius, enhancing the position of Rome (D.H. VIII, 68,2).

521 Livy II, 33,4-9; D.H. VI, 91,2-94,3.

522 Livy II, 39,1-5; D.H. VIII, 14-36. See Ogilvie 1965, 331-332, who believes that Livy has conflated the two campaigns into one for dramatic reasons, reversing the sequence by narrating the second campaign before the first.

523 D.H. VIII, 59,1.

524 Alfoldi 1965, 371; Cornell 1995, 307. Cornell argues that though the chronology of the events may be insecure, the story probably reflects a genuine popular memory of events that took place in the early years of the fifth century.
either by Volscian or Aequian groups or by both, and of counter-raids by the Romans. The fighting seem to diminish only after the middle of the fifth century. In most cases victory goes to the Romans, but defeats are also recorded: in 484\(^{525}\), in 478\(^{526}\) and in 471\(^{527}\) at the hands of the Volscians; in 469\(^{528}\) at those of the Aequians and in 464\(^{529}\) against their combined forces.

In 467, Antium is made a Roman colony, after which the centre of the struggle seems to shift to a strategic point in the Alban Hills, a plateau called Mons Algidus or Algidum.\(^{530}\) This plateau controlled one of the most important Roman roads to the south, the Via Latina, as well as the east-west links between the Volscians and their allies, the Aequians. At the same time it represented the only possible route between the Romans and their allies, the Hernicians. For many years the Romans and the Aequians fought for control of the plateau. In 465, Mons Algidus enters the historical record for the first time with a military defeat of the Aequians.\(^{531}\) It then appears on eight other occasions, up until 418, all in connection with battles against the Aequians. For two of these, in 449 and 431, the active presence of Volscians is also reported. Only at the end of the fifth century do the Romans finally succeed in separating the Volscians from the Aequians and breaking through to the south. In 406 they conquer Terracina, thus isolating the Volscian towns in the plain.\(^{532}\) In 396, the Volscians sign a peace treaty with the Rome.\(^{533}\)

There seems to be general agreement on the reliability of the record as far as most of the campaigns in the fifth century are concerned. The frequent references to Roman defeats and indecisive battles are taken as evidence in its favour. Even Alföldi considered it highly unlikely that the annalists would invent such set-backs, and he therefore accepted the fact of annual Volscian raids as a given.\(^{534}\) A similar standpoint is taken by Cornell, who also notes a rather low percentage of Roman triumphs in the fifth century when compared to earlier and later periods.\(^{535}\) In his view, this is an unlikely pattern for an annalist to invent and implies that the dismal memory of the fifth century, as a black page in the heroic past, could not be erased.

The fourth century
The story of the Volscians would have ended with the treaty between the Romans and Volscians in 396, had it not been for the approaching army of Gauls and the sack of Rome in 390.

---

\(^{525}\) D.H. VIII, 84,1-86.2.
\(^{526}\) D.H. IX, 16,1.4.5; 17,4.5; 18,4.
\(^{527}\) Livy II, 58-60; D.H. IX 50,1-7; 53,5.
\(^{528}\) Livy II, 63, 3; D.H. IX, 56,6.
\(^{529}\) Livy III, 4,2-6; D.H. IX, 62,2-3.
\(^{531}\) Livy III, 2,12.
\(^{532}\) Livy IV, 59, 1-11.
\(^{533}\) Livy V, 23,12.
\(^{534}\) Alföldi 1965, 369.
\(^{535}\) Cornell 1995, 308.
In 389, the Volscians appear again when they begin a revolt together with the Latins and the Hernicians, who had been on friendly terms with the Romans since the battle at Lake Regillus in 496. They exploit the weakening grip of the Romans, who are preoccupied with the after-effects of the Gallic invasion. The centre of struggle again shifts to the Pomptine plain. The military tribune Marcus Furius Camillus is appointed to resolve the problems. He defeats the Volscians in their camp, not far from Lanuvium - *ad Maecium* - and lays waste all their territory, forcing them to surrender 'after seventy years of warfare'.

The period covering the first half of the fourth century is relevant to the present study because of the frequent references made to Satricum, which features quite prominently in accounts of military actions in the Pomptine area. The town is repeatedly taken and retaken. In 386 it is captured by Marcus Furius Camillus (for the first time). In 384 it is made a colony and two thousand Roman citizens are dispatched to occupy it. In 381, the town is reconquered by the Volscians with the help of the Praenestines, after which it is probably retaken by Camillus, in a second major victory over the Volscians. In 377, a combined army of Latins and Volscians is defeated near Satricum. The survivors flee to Antium which, after several days, surrenders to the Romans. The Latins, furious at this surrender, utterly destroy Satricum except for the temple of Mater Matuta, from which they are kept away by an awesome voice - a *vox horrenda* - threatening them with disaster. Satricum reappears in 348, when Antium establishes a colony to rebuild the destroyed town. In 346 it is destroyed for a second time, this time by a Roman army sent to the area in reaction to the military activity of the Volscians of Antium, who had concentrated their forces around Satricum. Again, the temple of Mater Matuta is spared.

The Volscians reappear for the last time in 341, again on a massive scale. Privernum is reported to be in revolt, while a Volscian army led by the Antiates is said to have set up camp at Satricum. The Romans begin by capturing Privernum. The victorious army then moves on to Satricum where a heavy battle is recorded. This ends indecisively and the Volscians flee to Antium.

In his recently published commentary on Livy's book VI, Oakley admits that the various strands of Roman foreign policy in the period 389-367 are hard to understand, especially her relationship with the Volscians and Latins. The famous battle *ad Maecium*, where Camillus defeats the Volscians, is usually considered decisive for Roman penetration of the Pomptine area. However, there has been much discussion about the credibility that can be attached to reports of this battle and to the whole annalistic account for this period. According

---

536 Livy VI, 2.2-3.
537 Livy VI, 2.8-13.
538 Livy VI, 8.1-10.
539 Livy VI, 16.6-7.
540 Livy VI, 22.4.
541 Livy VI, 24.11. There is no direct mention of Satricum being captured, only of the Roman army heading for Satricum. After a heavy battle it succeeded in defeating the Volscians and capturing their camp.
542 Livy VI, 33.1-6.
543 Livy VII, 27.2.
544 Livy VII 27.5-9.
545 Livy VIII, 1.1-6.
to the extremely critical view put forward by Beloch and his followers, Rome had at that time achieved very little and the whole Volscian episode which begins with Camillus’ famous victory *ad Maecium* must have been invented. Others perceive a certain internal consistency in the narrative, which they see as confirming its basic credibility. An active Roman presence in the Pomptine area is thought to be plausible in view of the nature of Roman policy, which was aimed at obtaining new land on which to resettle impoverished Romans. Evidence in support of such a policy is provided by Livy’s references to disputes about land distribution in 388 and 387 and to Volscian attacks on settlers in 386.

With regard to the various battles reported around Satricum in this period, it is, as Oakley says, 'entirely plausible' that a city situated in an area disputed by Romans, Latins and Volscians would have changed hands many times. On the other hand, he considers it improbable that Satricum would have been deserted between 377 and 348. The two references to the destruction of the town - except for its main temple - in 377 and 346, he sees as an obvious doublet which is difficult to disentangle. The earlier account - in view of the bizarre anecdote of a *vox horrenda* - he considers less likely to be an invention.

The Volscians and their cities in the Pomptine plain

From their very first appearance in historiography, the Volscians are associated with specific cities, five of which feature prominently in the accounts. These are Velitrae, Antium, Ecetra, Pometia and Satricum. As we have seen, the references to these cities strongly suggest a Volscian presence in the Pomptine plain as early as the last quarter of the sixth century. The first three cities, Velitrae, Antium and Ecetra, appear with some regularity throughout the entire 'Volscian' period. However, the city of Pometia occupies an important position only during the earliest phase of Volscian history. As will be shown below, it appears to have been replaced by Satricum.

**Velitrae**

The town of Velitrae (modern Velletri) is situated on a mountain-ridge with natural defences, one of the southeastern spurs of the Alban Hills. It dominated the southern end of the pass between the Alban Hills and the Lepini Mountains and as such must have been of crucial strategic importance to both the Volscians and the Romans. Velitrae is the first town in Latium which is mentioned in relation to the Volscians. Dionysius

---

547 Beloch 1926, 314-320; Alföldi 1965, 371, 374.
548 Oakley 1997, 351. In his view, it assumes too complex a process of fabrication to regard all the recorded battles against the Volscians as doublets of previous battles (n. 73). See also Cornell 1989, 310 and *idem* 1995, 318-319, who takes a firm stand against the 'anti-Roman strain' in modern scholarship.
550 Livy VI, 5,1-5; 6,1.
551 Livy VI, 6,4-9,2.
553 Oakley 1997, 456.
554 Oakley 1997, 456-457; but cf. 352, n. 73, where he states that Satricum could well have been captured on both occasions.
555 Thus De Santis [1907-1960: ii.247-8].
556 On Velitrae, see Radke 1958, in *RE*, cc. 2406-2411.
TH E  V O L S C I A N S  I N  HISTORIOGRAPHY

reports how the town was captured from them as early as the reign of Ancus Martius.\textsuperscript{557} This account is generally regarded as unreliable (see above). It is not confirmed by any other reference and the Volscians disappear from the literary record for the next hundred years. Even so, it can be assumed that Volscians were living in Velitrae around the late sixth or early fifth centuries. In 494, having been defeated in a battle with the Romans, the Volscians flee to Velitrae, which is subsequently captured and made a Roman colony. The Volscians are deprived of their land.\textsuperscript{558} In 492/491 the colony of Velitrae is reportedly reinforced by more Roman colonists but Dionysius still refers to Velitrae as an important Volscian town.\textsuperscript{559} This reference may be indicative of the ambivalent nature of the town and the problematic nature of its relationship with Rome. In 401 Velitrae is colonized again,\textsuperscript{560} while later (in the first half of the fourth century) repeated defections from Rome are reported.\textsuperscript{561} In 385, for instance, the Roman settlers of Velitrae (and Circeii) send reinforcements to a combined army of Volscians, Latins and Hernicians.\textsuperscript{562} These accounts suggest that the Volscian presence remained strong, implying the peaceful co-habitation of Romans and Volscians in one town. It is even imaginable that native Volscians had seized power again.\textsuperscript{563} A more or less identical situation is recorded in the case of Antium (see below).

Evidence that may support this idea is further provided by the famous inscription on a bronze plate, known as the \textit{tabula Veliterna}. Although there is some discussion about its exact date, the inscription is generally accepted as Volscian. Of particular interest in relation to the suggested Volscian domination of the town, is the reference in the inscription to official magistrates - meddices - which are Oscan in origin.\textsuperscript{564}

So far there seems to be no further archaeological evidence in support of the presumed Volscian occupation of the town, although a link is suggested by the partial re-decoration of the temple of Stimmate in the first quarter of the fifth century.\textsuperscript{565}

\textbf{Antium}  
Antium may be regarded as the principal Volscian city.\textsuperscript{566} This is clearly stated by Dionysius on various occasions and is also evident from its frequent appearance in the literary sources. The town is referred to on 18 occasions, all directly associated with Volscians. It is one of the first cities to be described as Volscian and one of the last Volscian cities to bow to Rome (in 338, when it becomes a Roman colony).\textsuperscript{567} Antium can be considered the epicentre of Volscian revolt, most clearly during the preparations for the Volscian offensive of 489/488, but also in later uprisings. It is hardly surprising that the Romans focussed their

\textsuperscript{557} D.H. III, 41,5.  
\textsuperscript{558} Livy II, 30,14; 31,4; D.H. VI, 42,2; 43,1.  
\textsuperscript{559} Livy II, 34,6; D.H. VII, 12,5-13.  
\textsuperscript{560} This time the reference is found in D.S. XIV, 34; see also D.S XIV, 102,4 for the subsequent defection of Velitrae in 390.  
\textsuperscript{561} See Radke 1958, 2408; Ogilvie 1965, 508.  
\textsuperscript{562} Livy VI, 12,6; 13,8.  
\textsuperscript{563} Cf. Ogilvie 1965, 508.  
\textsuperscript{564} On the inscription, Radke 1961, 773-827. Most recently Rix 1992, 39-49, fig. 3 (proposing a date around 300 or slightly later, pp. 39-40).  
\textsuperscript{565} See Fortunati 1990, 199-206, esp. 200.  
\textsuperscript{567} Livy VIII, 14,8.
initial attention on the town, given its strategic position and its function as a seaport.

Antium is repeatedly referred to as being too strong to be captured in an assault. This is archaeologically confirmed by its fortifications, which consist of an *agger-vallum* (see Ch. 3.2). It took at least 18 years for the Romans to take the town, but even then it remained true to its Volscian heritage. In fact Antium might even serve as an *exemplum* for the peaceful co-habitation of different ethnic groups. Both Livy and Dionysius describe how the Roman colonists of 469 are supplemented by others, among whom are Latins, Hemicians and, most importantly, native Antiates or Volscians. The Volscians, however, seem to have preserved their majority or at least their powerful positions, since in 459 the whole population, Roman colonists included, defect to the Volscian army. Although Rome succeeds in defeating the Volscians in the vicinity of the town, Antium can not yet be considered secure and will reappear as the centre of trouble.

During the final decade of the fifth century Volscian pressure on southern Latium is again mounting. After the defeat of the Aequians and the loss of the Algidus pass, the Volscians try to force their way into the area from the south.

The last flourish of Volscian resistance is once more centred in and around Antium. The town is apparently Volscian again, as may be deduced from Livy’s reference to Antium as 'the capital of the Volscians'. The history of Antium in the fourth century is closely related to that of Satricum. The cities are repeatedly mentioned in one breath and it seems that Satricum functioned as an outpost of Antium.

**Ecetra**

Even though the city of Ecetra occurs only five times in the accounts of Livy and Dionysius, it seems to have been a place of considerable importance. It must have existed for a long time, no doubt due to its impregnable position. Dionysius describes how the Roman army try to provoke the Volscians of Ecetra into a fight in 459. The place is referred to as 'the most important city of the Volscians at that time and the most strongly situated'. Tarquinius Superbus himself seems to have been willing to make a peace treaty with the town, rather than fight a battle. In fact there is no record of Ecetra being captured by the Romans, nor even of a military attack. Though considered troublesome, it was probably not seen as worth the effort of a long siege nor of an attack which would have certainly resulted in heavy losses. As far as we know, Ecetra was not of direct strategic importance to the Romans.

The recorded importance of the city was therefore probably based on its impregnability and on the security it could thus provide. In 489, for example, it is chosen to host the general assembly of all Volscian cities, which decides to wage war on the Romans. On another occasion, during the campaign of Coriolanus, the collected booty from Satricum and Longula is carried away to Ecetra. After 378, the city disappears from the record without ever having become a Roman colony.

---

568 Livy III, 1,7; D.H. IX, 59.2. Cf. the commentary by Ogilvy 1965, 393-394, who considers the reference to Volscian colonists a mistake by Livy. However, a similar situation is recorded in 338, when Antium is made a Roman colony for the second time and the Antiates are themselves permitted to enrol as colonists (Livy VIII, 14,8).

569 Livy II, 23, 1-7.

570 Livy VI, 9,1: *caput Volscorum*.

571 D.H. X, 21, 3.

572 D.H. VIII, 4,4.

573 D.H. VIII, 36, 2.
There is much discussion about the location of Ecetra.\textsuperscript{574} Despite various suggestions, no consensus has yet been reached.

The annalistic references give the impression that Ecetra was a stronghold, situated on the edge of mountains (probably the Alban Hills) close to Algidus.\textsuperscript{575} In 378, for example, the Romans send out two armies, one towards these mountains and the other towards Antium on the coast.\textsuperscript{576} It is also likely that the city lay somewhere in the vicinity of Suessa Pometia/Satricum (see below). After the capture of Suessa Pometia in 495, the inhabitants of Ecetra, alarmed for their own prospects, ask the Romans for a peace treaty.\textsuperscript{577} This would seem to imply that the city was not far away. A comparable interpretation can be attached to the removal of the booty from Satricum and Longula to Ecetra; this would make little sense if it were not near at hand.

On only one other occasion does Livy offer more specific information on the location of the city. This is when he reports a battle between the Volscians and the Romans fought in 404/5 in the area between Ferentium and Ecetra. Based on this reference, Coarelli proposes the area of the lower Sacco, in the neighbourhood of Supino and Morolo, as the location of Ecetra.\textsuperscript{578} In the same passage, Livy describes the siege, capture and destruction of the Volscian city of Artena. This site, upon which the medieval town of Montefortino may have been built, has often been proposed as a candidate for ancient Ecetra.\textsuperscript{579} Although its position as an invincible stronghold more or less corresponds to the image of Ecetra, the proposal nevertheless seems untenable, since Ecetra is still in existence in 378 when the Roman army is sent there to provoke the Volscians to a fight.\textsuperscript{580}

**Pometia**

The city of Pometia occupies an important position only during the earliest phase of Volscian history. There is no disagreement about the existence of the town, which is variously referred to as Suessa, Pometia or Suessa Pometia, nor is there any doubt about its importance to Rome. Both Livy and Dionysios mention it in relation to Rome's foreign policy during the reign of Tarquinius Superbus, as well as during the early Republic. One can therefore assume that the town occupied a strategic position in the centre of the Pomptine district.\textsuperscript{581} Indeed, it probably provided the Pomptine region with its name: \textit{ager Pomptinus}.\textsuperscript{582} It must have been fundamental to Tarquinius' policy to gain control of this powerful city and its legendary riches. The prestige he would have obtained from its capture would have greatly enhanced his position in Rome.

As recorded above, Pometia reappears three times after its capture by Tarquinius, in 503,
in 502 and in 495. The account of the events of 503 is, however, disputed and often regarded as a doublet of the 495 story.

A surprising element in the passage for 503, which may be evidence of its unreliability, is the key-role given to the Aurunci (see above). It is considered highly unlikely that the Aurunci, who occupied the region between the Liris and the Voltumnus, would have interfered in the affairs of Cora and Pometia. Their presence in this area at such an early date seems improbable, whereas in 495 it would be much more plausible. As a possible substitute for the Aurunci, the Volscians have been suggested. The hatred of the Aurunci for the Romans, as described by Livy, becomes easier to understand if we see them as Volscians, whose city Pometia had been recently captured by Tarquinius Superbus.

The mention of the Aurunci, however, is considered by Coarelli as evidence in support of the view that the Volscians were not yet present in southern Latium, at least not in large numbers. The double name of Suessa Pometia, consisting as it does of a Latin element - Pometia - and a probable Aurunic name - Suessa - would thus indicate an Auruncian identity for the town.

On the other hand, it is only Livy who describes the war of 503. In Dionysius' account no mention is made of a war against either Pometia or the Aurunci. Instead, he refers to military activity under the same consuls, but in the Sabine area and against the Sabines.

In order to explain the doublet in Livy, it has been suggested that something may have occurred with regard to the city of Pometia which Livy has interpreted as negative for the Romans, a change of government for example. Pometia is certainly described as Volscian again in 495. The town, most probably, had opened its doors somewhere at the end of the sixth century to the surrounding peoples, among whom were the Volscians. It is quite possible that the Romans did take the field against Pometia in 502, as Livy reports, but that the Volscians retained control of the city after the Roman defeat.

---

583 Livy II, 16,8; II, 17.
584 Cf. Loeb commentary; Ogilvie 1965, 276; Salmon 1967, 29, n. 3; Stibbe 1987, 11-12. The discussion surrounding the reliability of these accounts centres, amongst other things, on the consignment of three hundred hostages to the Romans, referred to in identical terms in both 503 and 495. The event has no coherent place in the earlier episode, whereas in 495 it stands in the logical context of a successful surprise attack by the Romans. In 495, the taking of hostages is followed by the political act of their public execution (D.H. VI, 30,1).
585 See Ogilvie 1965, 276.
586 See Stibbe 1987, 12 and n. 37. The Aurunci, feeling threatened after the defeat of the Volscians and the sack of Pometia in 495, advance with an army as far as Aricia, where they are defeated by the Romans, see Livy II, 26,4-6; D.H. VI, 32,1.
587 Livy II, 17,2: Aurunci ......inexpiable odio.
588 Ogilvie 1965, 276; see also Stibbe 1985, 14.
589 Coarelli 1990, 141. See also Ogilvie 1965, 164. He considers the double name an error of the part of the annalists.
590 D.H. 5, 49.
591 See Stibbe 1987, 12.
592 Stibbe 1987, 12.
593 Livy II, 17.

125
Pometia identical with Satricum?

A question which has long preoccupied many scholars is that of the original location of Pometia. Various suggestions have been made, among which are sites near modern Cisterna di Latina\textsuperscript{594}, Caracupa\textsuperscript{595} and Casale di Sessano\textsuperscript{596}. The most recent and perhaps the most plausible theory identifies Pometia with the ancient city of Satricum (modern Borgo Le Ferriere).\textsuperscript{597} Stibbe suggests that Pometia, which appears for the last time in the literary sources in 495 when it is sacked by the Romans, was renamed Satricum, probably by the Volscians who recaptured the town in 488.\textsuperscript{598} In Stibbe's view, it is highly unlikely that a city as important as the Pometia described by Dionysius on the occasion of its capture in 495\textsuperscript{599}, could disappear from the scene with no reference in the sources to its final destruction.\textsuperscript{600} Neither Livy nor Dionysius mention any such thing, recounting only the capture of Pometia and the subsequent collection of booty. We should therefore assume that the town continued to exist.\textsuperscript{601}

The theory of a change of name accords well with the absence of any reference to Satricum in the historical account of the regal period. The omission is highly surprising in the light of the rich archaeological record documented for Satricum. This reflects a rich and well-organized city that can certainly withstand comparison with descriptions of Pometia.\textsuperscript{602} A town with such a high degree of urban development as that discovered in Satricum, obviously the result of its central and strategic position, must have been important enough to be remembered by later annalists.

The renaming of a town is not an unusual event in the context of captured towns or founding colonies. On such occasions both established and new towns are given names which echo places in the home territory. A Volscian example of the process is the renaming of the city of Tarracina, which becomes Anxur. As far as the name of Satricum is concerned, there is evidence to suggest the existence of another Satricum, situated in the Volscian homeland.\textsuperscript{603}

This theory has many adherents and can almost claim general acceptance.\textsuperscript{604} Some scholars dispute it, however. Their objections are mainly based on two separate references to the name of Satricum before 495. In the first, Satricum is mentioned together with Pometia in Pliny's list of the 30 communities participating in the Feriae Latinae on the Alban Mount.\textsuperscript{605} In the second, the name of Satricum appears in Dionysius' list of the League of Aricia. This list contains the names of the 29 cities which revolt against Rome in 499, several

\textsuperscript{594} F. Melis/St. Quilici Gigli, \textit{AC} 24, 1972, 219-247.
\textsuperscript{595} Ogilvie 1965, 164.
\textsuperscript{596} G. De Santis, \textit{Storia di Roma} I, 1907, 172 n. 2.
\textsuperscript{597} Stibbe 1985, 22-35; \textit{idem} 1987, 7-16.
\textsuperscript{598} Stibbe 1987, 13-14. On the Volscian character of the name Satricum and other toponymes, like Polusca, Mutesca, Arpinum and Arpi, see Coarelli 1990, 138-139.
\textsuperscript{599} See D.H. VI, 29,4: "the leader of the nation, far surpassing any city in the region in size, number of inhabitants, fame and riches" (Loeb transl.).
\textsuperscript{600} Stibbe 1987, 13.
\textsuperscript{601} Livy II, 25,5; D.H. VI, 29,5.
\textsuperscript{602} Cf. for instance the description of Dionysius of Pometia (D.H. VI, 29,4).
\textsuperscript{603} See Livy IX, 12,5; XXVI, 33, 10, for the town of Satricum situated in the middle Liris valley; also, Cic. \textit{Q.fr.} III, 1,4. Cf. Coarelli 1990, 149.
\textsuperscript{604} For a reaction on the identification, see Coarelli 1990, 149; Cornell 1995, 210; also, Waarsenburg 1995a, 100-101 with n. 101.
\textsuperscript{605} Pliny, \textit{Nat.Hist.} III, 68-70.
years before the attack on Pometia. These arguments are not regarded as very convincing, however, since the reliability of both lists is generally disputed. For example, as mentioned above, Dionysius' list of the Latin League contains the names of cities (Norma and Setia (Sezze)) which did not yet exist at that time, while important cities (such as Pometia, Antium and Terracina) are missing. Moreover, on the much shorter and earlier list of Cato, which also records the members of the Latin League and is regarded as much more reliable, other names occur, including that of Pometia. The name of Satricum is absent.

Entering the written history, however, did not mean that the town (under its new name of Satricum) was destined to play a prominent role in general or in even Volscian history, at least not in the fifth century. As we have seen, the name of the town occurs only three times in the record for this period and of these only the last, during the campaign of Coriolanus, is considered reliable. Satricum then disappears once more from the stage. Having been 'hidden' during its early existence under another name, it will now remain in the background for quite other reasons. Yet, as has been shown, its continuity is archaeologically demonstrated and confirmed beyond doubt by its reappearance in the historiography of the fourth century.

The continued existence of Satricum in the 5th and 4th centuries

The fact that Satricum is mentioned only once during the fifth century provides an argument for those who doubt the continuity of the town. The general view is that it was unable to recover from the Volscian assault which led to its capture in 488. In a period of widespread political unrest Satricum/Pometia seems to have lost its former glory and status almost overnight.

An explanation for the remarkable absence of the city's name in the fifth century narrative is not too difficult to give. Without doubt the town still existed, as has been demonstrated above, while the evidence of the written sources is equally conclusive about its existence in the fourth century (see below). Why then only the single reference, in 488?

As was made clear in the introduction to this chapter, the Roman annalists were often writing from a purely Roman point of view. Settlements and peoples were only mentioned when they were relevant to Rome's struggle for hegemony. During the fifth century, therefore, and in marked contrast to the preceding 'Pometia' period, Satricum may simply have lost its relevance to Rome. After the legendary campaign of Coriolanus, the centre of the struggle shifted towards the Aequians, who threatened Rome from the north, and to another crucial strategic point, the Algidus pass (see above).

It is only at the beginning of the fourth century, during the final mass revolt against Roman expansion, that the city of Satricum reappears. Its name occurs eight times in the fourth century accounts and always in direct connection with Volscian military activity. Its history is closely linked to that of the city of Antium. Indeed, it has been suggested that the town had become little more than a fortified outpost of Antium, but there are good reasons to doubt
this. Livy clearly implies that Satricum was a town on several occasions. He speaks, for example, of the walls, the *moenia*, of Satricum which were scaled with ladders during the siege of 386, and referred to again, as a temporary protection for fleeing Volscians, in 346. When the Latins destroy Satricum in 377, Livy is quite specific in his reference to sacred and secular buildings surrounding the old temple of Mater Matuta. And, in 348, the town is apparently important enough to be rebuilt by the Volscians of Antium.

Despite this, we may safely assume that Satricum was much smaller and less strongly fortified than Antium. This distinction probably holds for the entire existence of the two towns. The difference between the fortifications of Antium and Satricum in 386 is explicitly referred to by Livy. While the walls of Satricum are quite easily taken with scaling-ladders (see above), those of Antium are regarded as virtually impregnable. Livy states that the city could only be taken with help of artillery and siege-engines.

**Satricum: a Volscian or a Latin town?**

If we accept the theory that Pometia and Satricum are one and the same place, then Satricum must have already been Volscian during the late Regal period or, at least, have had a mixed population of Latins and Volscians. The accounts of the Volscian advance in the area, and more specifically of the capture of Satricum, appear to confirm the town's Volscian identity. It is, for example, striking to note that while both Livy and Dionysius mention the capture of Satricum in 488, neither refer to the town being razed or to the population being killed or sold into slavery. This is in itself surprising, given the outcome of comparable situations (see below), and may be understood in terms of an existing, structural, Volscian presence in the town. Situated in the heart of Volscian territory, between the Volscian cities of Antium and Ecetra, and (if identified with Pometia) with a long history of Volscian involvement, Satricum was probably considered a Volscian town. Since, as we have seen, Pometia had been captured from the Volscians in 495, it is fair to assume that Satricum/Pometia simply changed hands in 488.

Furthermore, Livy explicitly states that Satricum, Longula, Polusca and Corioli, towns which the Romans had recently acquired from the Volscians - "novella haec Romanis oppida" -, are similarly threatened. He is obviously referring here to the Roman victories of 493. It may be noted, however, that two years earlier, in 495, Livy reports the capture of

---

609 For this suggestion, see Stibbe in Gnade 1992a, 452.
610 Livy VI, 8,10: *... ingenti militum alacritate moenia undique adgressus scalis oppidum cepit.*
611 Livy VII, 27,7: *Volsci, ferocior ad rebellandum quam ad bellandum gens, certamine victi fuga effusa Satrici moenia petunt.*
612 Livy VI, 33, 4-5: *nec aliiud tectum eius superfuit urbis, cum facet pariter sacris profanisque inicerent, quam Matris Matutae templum.*
613 Livy VII, 27,2.
614 Livy VI, 8,1-10; and again in 346, Livy VII, 27, 6-9.
615 Livy VI, 9,1-3: *Sed quia misi magna apparatu, tormentis machinisque, tam valida urbs capi non poterat, ...*
616 A similar situation concerns the capture of Circeii in 488. In Livy the Roman colonists are simply driven out, after which the 'liberated' town is handed over to the Volscians (Livy II, 39,2). In the slightly different version of events related by Dionysius, the Romans colonists, who are said to have intermingled with the native inhabitants, surrender the town to the Volscians and are allowed to stay (D.H. VIII, 14, 1-2).
617 Livy II, 39,3.
Pometia, not Satricum. He thereby reveals his own confusion with regard to the name of the town.\footnote{618} It seems that Volscian policy was significantly less harsh inside their 'homeland' than outside it, a point which supports assumptions of an earlier Volscian 'identity' for some of the captured towns.\footnote{619} Places like Tolerium, Labici, Pedum and Corbio, which were located outside Volscian territory in the eastern part of Latium, were completely destroyed upon capture by the Volscians and their inhabitants either killed or sold as slaves.\footnote{620} The same fate was shared by Bola and Bovillae.\footnote{621}

With regard to the composition of the population of Satricum during the fifth and fourth centuries, we may safely assume that it consisted predominantly of Volscians, despite the fact that the annalists nowhere refer to the inhabitants as Volscians nor to Satricum as a Volscian city. It is true that in the account of its capture by Coriolanus in 488 there is no mention of Volscians being settled in the town. But if Volscians were already an established part of the scene, as suggested above, that would clearly not have been necessary.

Further support for the early Volscian identity of Satricum is offered by its close relationship with the Volscian city of Antium, which was situated no more than 5 miles away. The combined ager of the two towns undeniably acts as the stage for various confrontations between Volscians and Romans during the fourth century. And finally, as conclusive evidence, there are the events of 377. In that year, according to Livy, the Latin allies of the Volscians destroy Satricum in a punitive strike against those Volscians whom they consider traitors.\footnote{622}

**Conclusions on the Volscian episode in the sources**

This excursion into the Volscian role in the historiography, especially as regards Volscian cities, has hopefully provided a useful background to the archaeological remains in Satricum. As was mentioned at the start of this chapter, recent debate on the Volscians has focussed primarily on the exact moment of their arrival in the coastal plain and on the nature of their presence there. The idea of individual groups of immigrants, separately penetrating and settling the various Latin communities is, in my opinion, the most plausible. Moreover, it accords neatly with the recorded presence of Volscians in the towns listed above. These are consistently reported as in Volscian hands, long before the alleged mass invasion of the plains.

This first generation of Volscians might be best understood as mountain peoples of indistinct ethnic background. By peacefully living among the Latins they would have unwittingly prepared the way for the much larger scale incursions of the fifth century. With Rome itself submerged in social 'unrest, famines and pestilences', this later 'invasion' would have been seen as a threat to the privileged position of Rome within the Latial area. As such, the newcomers would have very likely been made the 'enemies' and endowed with their specific image.\footnote{623} Indeed, as the 'others' living amongst the Latin kin of the Romans, it would be

\footnote{618} See Stibbe 1987, 13-14. \footnote{619} Cf. van Royen 1992a, 450. \footnote{620} D.H. VIII, 17,4-7; 19,1-4. \footnote{621} D.H. VIII 18,1-4; 20,1-2. \footnote{622} Livy VI, 33, 1-6. \footnote{623} Cf. Dench 1995, 22-23, on the creation of stereotypes of one group by another in tension or conflict situations.
surprising if Rome had not projected upon them the role of active aggressors.

Land and the grain it produced were clearly the main reason for military conflict. This is illustrated by the many references to pillage (by both Romans and Volscians) on Volscian and Latin fields. It is also implicit in the report of the whole public grain supply being stored for safety in the *arx* of the Volscian town of Artena.\(^\text{624}\) The Pomptine district, or *ager Pomptinus*, was of primary importance for the *frumentationes*.\(^\text{625}\)

From the Roman point of view, the Volscian presence constituted a great danger to their own grain supplies from this area.\(^\text{626}\) Given the enormous numbers of Volscians, about which the annalists are quite explicit, the Roman reaction seems quite a logical one. In some battles, such as the encounter between the Romans and a combined force of Volscians and Aequians in the year 462, many thousands of Volscians participate.\(^\text{627}\) Similar numbers are recorded on other occasions. Though undoubtedly exaggerated to enliven the accounts, these numbers serve to illustrate the Roman perception of the Pomptine plain as crowded with Volscians.

Perhaps in order to lend credibility to their portrayal of Rome's opponents, Roman writers often include characteristics which give the impression of fear or even of barely suppressed admiration on their part. In the case of the Volscians, it is their ability to repeatedly mobilize new manpower to resist Rome, in spite of many defeats, which particularly impresses Livy.\(^\text{628}\) However, since this convention is an intrinsic part of the literature of the ultimately victorious side, such elaborations should probably be seen as literary embellishments.

It is not too far-fetched to imagine a process whereby the formidable reputation imposed on the Volscians (and other enemies of Rome) may have provoked the development of a stronger identity which could be appealed to in times of war. Such a background is conceivable for the organized revolt led by the Roman Coriolanus. Comparable uprisings, albeit internally generated and obviously less successful, are scattered through the narratives of the fifth and early fourth centuries.

Apart from these war-like manifestations, the growing self-awareness which is suggested here would be likely to generate other expressions of group-identity which would crop up in the field of material remains.

The Samnites - perhaps the most vigorous Italian opponents of Rome and the subject of a case-study by Emma Dench - provide a good illustration of growing cultural and ethnic identity in reaction to Roman influence.\(^\text{629}\) From the large body of material remains associated with their culture, we sense a close link between the reawakening of a distinct identity and an involvement in the Social War.\(^\text{630}\) Although this case is from a much later

---

\(^{624}\) Livy IV, 61,7.

\(^{625}\) Livy II, 9,6; II, 34,4; IV, 25,2. Cf. also Coarelli 1990, 135-154, esp. 148. On the grain supplies from this area, see Garsey 1988.

\(^{626}\) Cf. Ampolo 1990, 120-121, on the assumed privileged relationship between Rome and the Latial area.

\(^{627}\) Livy III, 8,3-5. Livy mentions 13,470 of the enemy killed and 1,750 taken prisoner.

\(^{628}\) Livy VI, 12,2-3.

\(^{629}\) Dench 1995; *eadem* 1997, 43-51.

\(^{630}\) Lomas in Cornell/Lomas 1997, 5; Dench 1997, 49.
date, an hypothetical parallel could be drawn with the Volscians, who may have only become aware of their distinct identity under the threat of the Roman advance.

Regrettably, the hypothesis as applied to the Volscians cannot be tested in the same way as it can for the Samnites. Although attempts have been made to do so (via the assignment of the Late-Archaic temple (Temple II) to the Volscians and via a 'Volscian-oriented' interpretation of the iconography of the terracotta decoration of this temple) I regard them as rather speculative and perhaps premature.631

On the other hand, I believe that Satricum is the source most likely to provide a conclusive answer in the 'Volscian debate', since it offers an archaeological record covering a long and continuous period against which the proposed process of growing self-awareness may be studied. If we accept that the cities of Suessa Pometia and Satricum are one and the same, then evidence of an early indigenous presence should be present in the archaeological record. To date this has been only been attested sporadically; *i.e.* by the presence of pottery with a typical 'Apennine' decoration scheme in some graves of the Northwest Necropolis, by the find of a small, coherent group of similar sherds dispersed in the toplayer of the Santarelli area (see Ch. 3.2), and by the occurrence of a specific category of fibulae with an indigenous origin in Votive Deposit I.632 These finds have been interpreted in the light of early transhumance contacts (see above). However, more consistent evidence of a sixth-century Volscian presence can be expected from the excavations of the east part of the acropolis.633 The story seems to end with the Volscian assertion of themselves as a distinct cultural group via the selection of their own burial ground; namely, that of the Southwest Necropolis.


632 See Waarsenburg 1995a, 228-231, for the finds in the Northwest Necropolis, with many parallels. See Cristofani 1992, 13-24, on the diffusion of the type of fibula called *fibula a tre bozze*. The latter are also present in Votive Deposit I (*CatLazioPrimitivo* 1976, 328-329, cat. 108, 44-46, pl. LXXXVIII).

633 I refer here to the discovery in 1995 of a small concentration of ceramics of a non-Latial character in a presumably votive context, Gnade 1997, 47, fig. 9.