Angelo Amoroso

**Crustumerium: Characteristics of a Frontier Settlement**

**Introduction**

I have defined *Crustumerium* as a ‘frontier’ settlement. This is an incorrect term if used in the modern meaning of «demarcation line, separation, obstacle, boundary». In fact, we must not consider an ancient ‘frontier’ – in our case the course of the Tiber – exclusively as a physical element which separated and distinguished those who lived on the opposite banks of the river. I would like to return to some aspects relating to the geographical position and characteristics of a Latin centre the study of which was published together with Francesco di Gennaro and Andrea Schiappelli, with reference to the Early Iron Age, in order to update the picture published at the time. Recent data has made it possible to ascertain how the Early Iron Age at *Crustumerium* is not just documented mainly by surface survey material. Excavations undertaken within the settlement and on the necropolis of Monte Del Bufalo, confirm that there are no known materials from the proto-urban centre that are earlier than sub-phase IIB2 of the Latium culture. To date there are no attestations of the

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1 COLONNA 1986; TORELLI 2003.
3 BARBARO ET ALI 2008.
4 BELELLI MARCHESENI 2008; DI GENNARO, BELELLI MARCHESENI, in these conference papers.
Final Bronze Age and the initial period of the Early Iron Age.

_Crustumerium_’s characteristics can be fully understood by placing it within the territorial context examined as a whole, where the main ethnic groups in the lower Tiber valley (Etruscans, Latins, Sabines and Capenites) faced each other.

On the right bank of the great river the ‘proto-Etruscan’ population was concentrated in the vast proto-urban centre of Veii from the beginning of the Early Iron Age onwards. By contrast the territorial organisation on the left bank only changed radically with respect to the settlement organisation in the Final Bronze Age during the course of the later part of the Early Iron Age (fig. 1)\(^5\). Moreover, on the left bank of the Tiber no less than eight centres of varying size (Crustumerium, Fidenae, Nomentum, Marco Simone Vecchio, Montecelio, Tibur, Cretone and Colle Lupo) are attested beginning in the IIB-III periods of the Latium culture. Amongst these the medium-large settlements (Crustumerium and Fidenae) (fig. 1) stand out. They are comparable to other proto-urban centres in ancient Latium (Gabii, Lavinium, Ardea and Antium) and in some ways with the larger centres of Rome and south Etruria (figs. 2-3)\(^6\).

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5. This article makes a particular analysis of the territory between the rivers Tiber and Aniene, the Fiora torrent (or della Bufala) and the slopes of the Monti Lucretii and Tiburtini, where the Latium Apennines begin.

Proto-urban development in South Etruria and Latium Vetus

In south Etruria and Latium Vetus the birth of proto-urban centres during the course of the Early Iron Age also determined a revolution in the territorial organisation. The ‘polycentric’ settlement system of the Bronze Age gave way to the ‘monocentric’ system typical of the Iron Age, when each territorial sphere was controlled by a dominant centre. This dynamic was probably the result both of a territorial division deriving from conflicts between earlier settlements of the Final Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, and from an ‘ethnic’ administration of the territory.

The proto-urban centres grew up out of a different need on the part of the community to control and manage the territory\textsuperscript{7}. The small parcels of land present within the proto-urban centres were not sufficient to satisfy the entire community’s needs (extensive cultivations and specialised stock-raising, hunting, availability of raw materials such as: water, wood, building materials etc.). Therefore, a proto-urban centre presupposes the existence of a corresponding ‘proto-ager’, the control of which was one of the fundamental elements of the proto-urban centre itself. It was the beginning of new modes of control, management and above all of exploitation of the territory based on a dual system: the large inhabited centre and the land surrounding it. The first existed in function of the second, within the sphere of a landscape that would lead to the \textit{urbs-ager} system which would fully mature in the late archaic period with the widespread occupation of the territory through farms and \textit{villae}\textsuperscript{8}.

During the later part of the Early Iron Age there was also a radical reorganisation of the territory on the left bank of the lower Tiber. The Latins reacted to the ‘Villanovan revolution’ which saw the birth of the first proto-urban centres on the Tiber’s right bank. The Latins took up position on the left bank and occupied \textit{ex novo} or considerably reinforced strategic sites. Latin centres such as Rome, \textit{Fidenae} and \textit{Crustumerium}, became proto-urban centres with the function of controlling crossing points on the Tiber. These centres intercepted ‘inter-regional’ traffic and exploited the advantages deriving from it.

Thus the Latins, with a targeted project, controlled strategic points and concentrated the majority of their population in proto-urban centres, «veri e propri ‘motori’ della produzione e della distribuzione delle merci»\textsuperscript{9}.

In the Early Iron Age the Tiber constituted a physical element that should not be considered as a demarcation line between opposing blocks. Furthermore, whilst the ‘proto Etruschi’ perceived the Tiber as a border, on the contrary the Latins, who «conservano un concetto assai fluido della propria territorialità»\textsuperscript{10}, living in a densely populated area, seemed to exercise an erosion of the territory occupied by the inhabitants of the opposite bank. In particular \textit{Fidenae} faced the territory of \textit{Veii} (at the height of the fosso della Valchetta) and controlled part of the course of the river Aniene, which formed another strong physical boundary. \textit{Fidenae} off set the presence of \textit{Antemnae}, a secondary centre situated on the opposite bank which was soon to come under the influence of Rome\textsuperscript{11}. \textit{Crustumerium} also faced \textit{Veii}'s territory, but from the Early Iron Age was intent on the control of the alluvial plain below. The territory of \textit{Crustumerium} reached as far as the area under the influence of the enclave of \textit{Capena}, where the Tiber could be easily crossed at the height of Ponte del Grillo\textsuperscript{12}. \textit{Crustumerium} constituted the northern bastion of the Latins and bridgehead in the direction of the Sabine and Faliscan territory, across the territory of \textit{Capena}\textsuperscript{13}.

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{PERONI1988} \textsc{Peroni} 1988; 2000.
\bibitem{CARAFA2004} \textsc{Carafa} 2004; \textsc{Carandini et alii} 2007.
\bibitem{GUIDI2003} \textsc{Guidi} 2003, 46.
\bibitem{COLONNA1986} \textsc{Colonna} 1986, 94.
\bibitem{PACCIARELLI2001} \textsc{Pacciarelli} 2001, 124.
\bibitem{DIGENNARO2007} \textsc{Di Gennaro et alii} 2007, 135–144.
\bibitem{CIFANI2003} \textsc{Cifani} 2003, 180–182 with bibliography.
\end{thebibliography}
The situation outlined for the Early Iron Age was soon to be shattered by the voracious expansionism of Rome — intent on enlarging its own territory, which was initially limited with respect to the area occupied by the vast proto-urban centre (over 200 hectares)\textsuperscript{14} — and by the successive incursions of the Sabines. Only in the historic period did the latter react to Latin pressure, exercised in the area under examination during the course of the Early Iron Age, creating on the right bank of the Tiber the territorial ‘wedge’ which made the Faliscans the ‘fratelli separati’ dei Latini’\textsuperscript{15}.

**Crustumerium: the characteristics**

This section will highlight the characteristics shared by *Crustumerium* with the main Latin centres and the characteristics distinguishing it from the centres along the course of the lower Tiber, including *Crustumerium*, which have been defined as ‘frontier’ settlements.

**Common characteristics: Morphological characteristics**

The uplands of *Crustumerium*, which are part of the system of the Sabine volcanic zone\textsuperscript{16}, have suffered heavy erosion effecting the vertical stratification of the ancient deposits and the lines and profiles of the hills (fig. 4). Landslides have occurred on the north-western and north-eastern slopes of the settlement, where the original morphology appears greatly altered. This is a range of rolling hills with an irregular profile that is well provided with natural defences.

The main Latin centres (for example: Rome, *Lavinium*, *Ardea*, *Satricum*, *Fidenae*) had good natural defences on all sides with the exception of the side linking them to the hinterland\textsuperscript{17}.

\textsuperscript{14} CARANDINI 2007, 22, fig. 8.
\textsuperscript{15} COLONNA 1988, 522.
\textsuperscript{16} VENTRIGLIA 2002.
\textsuperscript{17} GUAITOLI 1984.
Common characteristics: Artificial defences

Crustumerium had defensive structures in correspondence with the sectors that were not naturally protected by the site’s morphology. Of these structures a ditch (at least 9 m wide and over 3 m deep), partially excavated in 2007 is known, as well as terracing structures comprising parallel walls in tufa opus quadratum, probably datable to the archaic period, known from excavations undertaken in 199918. Similar defensive structures are attested in other Latin centres (in particular Lavinium, Ardea, Castel di Decima, Acqua Acetosa Laurentina, Ficana19 and Rome20), in correspondence with the least naturally defended side of each settlement.

It is known that defensive structures, in particular the earliest known to date in Latium Vetus, did not necessarily comprise a ditch with embankment and associated walls in ashlar blocks21. The structures found on the northern slopes of the Palatine22 and on the southern side of Fidenae23, attest the existence, beginning in the later part of the Early Iron Age, of walled structures with ritual and/or defensive functions. Clearly the ancient murus Terreus of the Carine at Rome, known from literary sources (Varro, ling. 5, 48), is not just a scholarly memory.

Common characteristics: The road cutting

The hypothesis formulated by Francesco di Gennaro, according to which the settlement of Crustumerium was crossed in the centre by a monumental road cutting24, has been confirmed by the results of the excavation undertaken with the University of Oulu25. Roads, with the appearance of ‘tagliate’ (cuttings) connected to settlement entrances, are attested in many Latin centres (for example the ‘tagliate’ known at Fidenae26, Antemnae27, Castel di Decima, Laurentina Acqua Acetosa28, Satricum29).

Future investigations will clarify whether the niche tomb dating to the orientalising period, found immediately to the west of the southern cutting30, was part of a vast necropolis (indication of the southern limit of the settlement in the 7th century B.C.), was an isolated tomb or was part of a small nucleus of burials within the settlement. In this case we are faced with one of those anomalies which document how there are exceptions to the usual procedure (codified in Rome, in the early Republican period in the laws of the Twelve tables), which imposed the burial of dead adults outside the inhabited area: «Hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito neve urito»31. Archaeological research, in terms of ancient topography, should not consider the position of burials exclusively as a marker distinguishing between the ‘city of the living’ and the ‘city of the dead’32.

19 CIFANI 2003, with preceding bibliography.
20 BARBERA ET ALII 2008, with preceding bibliography.
23 AMOROSO ET ALII 2005.
24 DI GENNARO 1988, 113. This interpretation, as is known, has important implications for the understanding of the extension of the settlement area.
25 JARVA ET ALII 2008; JARVA in these conference papers. I would like to thank Eero Jarva who kindly welcomed me to his site each year and illustrated the results of his research.
27 QUILICI GIULI 1990.
28 BEDINI 2003, 270.
30 JARVA ET ALII 2008; JARVA in these conference papers.
31 Cf. HUMBERT 2005 on the contents of the Twelve Tables with ample bibliography.
Distinguishing characteristics: Geographical position

Left bank of the Tiber:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Distance from river (km)</th>
<th>Extension (hectares)</th>
<th>Foundation date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cures Sabini</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,5</td>
<td>PF2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eretum</td>
<td>0,2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>PF2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Momentum</td>
<td>7,8</td>
<td>11,3</td>
<td>PF2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crustumerium</td>
<td>1,4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>PF1 late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidenae</td>
<td>0,2</td>
<td>40,7</td>
<td>PF1 late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antemnae</td>
<td>0,2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>PF2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>0,3</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>PF1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acqua Acetosa</td>
<td>3,0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>PF2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurentina</td>
<td>0,1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Right bank of the Tiber:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Distance from river (km)</th>
<th>Extension (hectares)</th>
<th>Foundation date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nazzano Romano</td>
<td>0,4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>PF2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capena</td>
<td>6,0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>PF2 (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veii</td>
<td>9,0</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>PF1 early</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows how the centres that grew up on the left bank of the Tiber (Ficana, Acqua Acetosa, Rome, Antemnae, Fidenae, Crustumerium, Eretum in Sabina) were situated next to the river or close to it. These centres controlled a tract of the Tiber valley, in contrast to the known centres on the right bank where the ‘second line’ position of the dominant centre of Veii stands out.

Crustumerium incorporated a tract of the ‘international’ route between Etruria and Campania which passed through the settlement in the monumental ‘tagliata’ mentioned above.33

The ‘frontier’ settlements frequently intercepted international routes, in fact their presence is one of the factors contributing to the success of these centres. In particular, roads passed through Ficana, Fidenae and Crustumerium which made it possible to cross the ancient region of Latium Vetus in a transverse direction at docking/crossing points on the river. Rome, a frontier settlement par excellence, also grew up on a site where it could control the crossing point which, via several routes, connected the coast and the right bank of the Tiber to the hinterland, in the direction of the Sabina, the Alban hills and Campania.34

33 AMOROSO 2002a.
Distinguishing characteristics: The material culture

The presence in burial contexts at Crustumerium of red impasto jars and cups used in ritual banqueting is significant\(^{25}\). These pottery forms were produced in Latium and had painted white-on-red decoration. This decorative technique was widespread in southern Etruria (especially in the ancient Etruscan towns of Caere and Veii) and in the Faliscan-Capenate territory\(^{36}\).

The presence of two large red impasto cistae is exceptional. Decorated with white painted geometric and vegetal motifs on the bodies and procession of fantastic animals on the handled lids, they were among the grave goods in tomb 111 of Monte Del Bufalo\(^{37}\). These artefacts, if imported, attest the level of wealth reached by Crustumerium in the orientalising period thanks to contacts gained via the ‘international’ route. If of ‘crustumina’ production they document the high level of skill attained by local craftsmen thanks to contacts with the artisans of Veii, Falerii and Capena. It cannot be excluded that these artefacts are indirect evidence for the arrival at Crustumerium of foreign artisans, specialised in refined decoration. It may also be the case that the tomb belonged to an individual whose origins lay on the right bank of the Tiber\(^{38}\).

There were products specific to Crustumerium which are also attested outside of the Latin centre: the ‘crustumine bowl’ was present amongst the tomb groups in the necropolis of Pizzo Piede at Narce\(^{39}\). The small Latium amphora with the very pronounced spikes, widely documented in the tomb groups at Crustumerium - characteristic of the Latin territory north of the river Aniene - is also present in Rome\(^{40}\) and in the territory of Capena (Monto Tufello di Vacchereccia)\(^{41}\).

The material culture is distinguished by the co-existence of local and non-native elements, the latter documenting contacts with the areas of Veii, Falerii and Capena. By contrast, to date the material culture has not provided evidence regarding the relationship between Crustumerium and Sabine centres, which must also have existed, as the literary sources attest. The latter mostly allude to episodes of conflict with the Sabines, in particular at the beginning of the 5th century B.C.\(^{42}\).

Distinguishing characteristics: Funerary architecture

Burial types which were not characteristic of the Latin area were predominant at Crustumerium in the orientalising period. These are the numerous trapdoor tombs with lateral niche (Narce and Montarano types), also attested in one of the eastern cemeteries at Fidenae\(^{43}\), that were particularly widespread in the territories of Veii, Falerii and Capena\(^{44}\).

The presence of non-native funerary architecture has often been noted at Tibur, also a Latin ‘frontier’ settlement, although it had a material culture typical of Latium\(^{45}\). The known ‘a circolo’ burials found at the cemetery of Rocca Pia of this Tiburline settlement have similar characteristics to the earth-dug graves with ‘a tumulo’ covering that were particularly widespread in the Early Iron Age in Umbrian territory (Terni, the Acciaie-
Crustumerium, ‘port’ of the Latins

Its position as a ‘frontier’ settlement represented an element of strength from which *Crustumerium* gained undeniable advantages and was perhaps also the reason for its foundation, as a proto-urban centre which in the beginning acted as bastion against possible Villanovan expansion on the left bank of the river, an expansion which never took place. This frontier, ably exploited, constituted an enriching factor which made *Crustumerium* the Latins’ ‘port’, especially in the direction of the territories of *Veii*, *Falerii* and *Capena*.

The inhabitants of *Crustumerium* appear to have been inclined to: 1) intercept experiences, materials, products elaborated elsewhere and to re-elaborate them according to their own usage and tastes; 2) distribute their own products (for example the “crustumine bowl” from Pizzo Piede); 3) welcome people from other centres and ethnic spheres; 4) look for fortune beyond the river, forming relationships of mutual exchange and reciprocal convenience.

In this light it may be possible to justify the fact that the literary sources allude, as also in the case of *Fidenae*, to the ‘Etruscan’ town of *Crustumerium* (Paul, Fest. 55, 12) and to the existence of an ager *Crustumerium* in Etruria (Plin. *NH* 3, 68). Just as unusual, and not perhaps without significance, is the attestation of the river *Clustumium* in Umbria between Rimini and Pesaro (Plin. *NH* 3, 111-112, 115; Lucan 2, 406, Vibius Seq. p. 10).48

Elements of «ipseità»49 (strictly correlated to the need for autonomy and territorial defence) co-habited with the need for contact with bordering settlements. These were relationships and alliances, where ethnic distinction between Latins, Etruscans, Sabines, Faliscans and Capenates even if present - one thinks of the significant linguistic differences50 - seems to have gradually disappeared. For the inhabitants of *Crustumerium* relations with the inhabitants of *Veii* and other Faliscan and Capenate centres could have been more advantageous than ‘neighbourly’ relations, not always peaceful, with the other Latins. Rome conquered *Crustumerium* three times51; *Fidenae*, for its position and morphology, constituted an alternative settlement reality with respect to that of *Crustumerium*.

The archaeological data highlights the existence of a horizontal mobility between southern Etruria and *Latium Vetus* from the Early Iron Age onwards.52 This horizontal mobility increased in the orientalising and archaic periods and persisted until the beginning of the 5th century B.C. *Attius Clausus* moved with his 5,000 clients from the Sabina into the territory of *Fidenae*, which had been recently conquered by Rome53.

The known archaeological picture of ancient Latium together with what is known from the literary sources makes it possible to appreciate how *Crustumerium* was well integrated into this dense network of contacts. Matrimonial alliances between members of different gentes from bordering settlements and agri played an important role. The presence of bronze suspension rings, of Latin production, in Early Iron Age burials attested in the territory of *Capena* may be interpreted as evidence of this54. The well known episode of the rape of the Sabines and of the women of *Crustumerium*, *Caenina* and *Antemnae* by *Romulus*, the first

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46 LEONELLI 2003.
48 cf. COLONNA 1986, 94, on this subject.
49 CRISTOFANI 1999.
50 COLONNA 1988.
51 QUILICI ET ALII 1980, 18–20 for an analysis of the literary sources.
52 DE SANTIS 1995.
53 AMOROSO ET ALII 2003.
king of Rome, can probably also be interpreted in this light (Liv. 1, 9, 8-9; 1, 10, 1-3; 1, 11, 3-4; Dion. Hal. 2, 32, 2; 2, 36, 1-2; Plut., Rom, 17, 1).

The archaeological evidence described here shows how the inhabitants of Crustumerium also used knowledge of, and comparison with the ‘non-Latins’ to construct their own identity.

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Bibliography


