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► **To cite this version:**

| Patrice Montzimir. Romulus, Remus, Tarquinius Priscus and Servius Tullius. 2019. halshs-02275960

HAL Id: halshs-02275960

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02275960v1>

Preprint submitted on 2 Sep 2019

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to study the origins of Rome from its name. According to the ancient idea, Romulus can't have been the mythical founder of Rome, which was to be called Romus or Remus in another way. Several elements lead us to believe that Romulus was a name given to Servius Tullius, and the myth of Romulus and Remus could show the fight between Servius Tullius and Tarquinius. Other arguments used to question the tradition of the first kings of Rome, which all seem to be redundancies of struggle between Rome and Vulci, which appears not to locate in the sixth century B.C., but in the fourth.

Keywords: Rome, kings, Servius Tullius, Tarquinius, Vibenna, François Tomb.

As J. Poucet said during a lecture given in 2008, «tradition on the origins [of Rome], with the extraordinary variety of forms, subjects and content that characterizes it, is a bit like a supermarket, a bazaar where you can find anything. And it becomes sometimes a kind of self-service, in which - I hardly exaggerating - the researchers will walk and choosing in the shelves what interests them, hear what they need in their interpretation or their reconstructions. Everyone can do his market according to what has also in mind or what he wants to demonstrate¹». This summarizes the difficulties to treat Roman early times, and the relativity of the following reflections.

The bibliography on this subject is vast as well as the debates it has sparked. If some people wanted to find confirmation of literary tradition in archaeology, it must be admitted that the results of this latter are thin and can be open to various interpretations. We have chosen to approach the origins of Rome not as a city or town, but a name. The Vulgate of Roman origins is known, Rome takes its name from its first king, Romulus². Previously, Rome would have had another name which Pliny the Elder would echo: «[...] and finally Rome itself, whose mysterious rites, defends to utter the other name. An excellent and salutary silent was hiding it; but Valerius Soranus divulged this name, and he was soon to pay the penalty³».

In 1985, H. Zehnacker proposed to identify this hidden name to Volupia, goddess of pleasure⁴, whose sanctuary was near the porta Romulana, «kind of eponymous gate» of the city, and hosted the statue of Angerona, whose mouth is covered with a bandage, and Pliny links this statue to the story of Valerius Soranus. H. Zehnacker remark indeed that the list of cities in Lazio listed by Pliny is alphabetized and that Rome is mentioned after last names beginning with V⁵.

However, it should be noted that if the enumeration of Pliny is strictly alphabetical for the first letter of the

1 Poucet 2008, 12.

2 Liv., 1.6-7; Plut., *Romulus*, 3.22; D. H. 1.74, 2.50; Varr., *LL*, 5.33.

3 *NH*, 3.11.

4 Zehnacker 1985, 314-315.

5 *NH*, 3.11: «*In the interior, the colonies: Capua, so called from the word meaning countryside, Aquinum, Suessa, Venafrum, Sora, Teanum, nicknamed Sidicinum; Nola; Cities: Abellinum, Aricia, Alba Longa, Acerra, Allifa, Atina, Aletrina, Anagnia, Atella, Affile, Arpinum Auxima, Avella, Alfaterna (there are three, one Latin, one hernique a labicane) Boville, Calatiae, Casinum, Calenum, Capitulum Hernicum, the Cereatins, nicknamed Marians; Korans, descendants of the Trojan Dardanus; the Cubulterins the Castrimonienses the Cingulans the Fabienses on Mount Alba; the Foropopulienses, territory Falernian; the Frusinates the Ferentinates, the Freginates, Ies Fabraternes old, new Fabraternes, the Ficolenses, the Foroappiens, the Forebtans, the Gabiens, the Interamnates, Succasins, also called Lirinates; the Ilionenses Lavinians, the Norbans, the Nomentins. Praeneste formerly called Stephane, Privernum, Setia, Signia, Suessula; the Telins, nicknamed the Tribulans Balinienses; the Trebans, the Tusculanse the Verulans, the Veliternes, the Ulubrenses, the Ulvernates, and finally Rome itself, whose mysterious rites, defend to utter the other name».*

name, this is not the case for the second letter, and a city like Alba is cited after Aricia for example. Thus, if we accept the reasoning of H. Zehnacker on the alphabetical order of Pliny, we can only deduce that the hidden name of Rome should begin with a V, but without further details on the second letter. In fact, two ancient authors testify that Rome had a name beginning with the letter V. According to Servius, «Ateius Capito said that Rome had during long time the name of Valentia, before the arrival of Evander, and then the city took the name still exists⁶». Solinus also states that «the writers claim that Rome received this name of Evander, who found a oppidum called Valentia by the Latin youth, translated into Greek by the name Romè⁷». This hidden name of Rome would it not be simply Valentia?

Nevertheless, for many other authors, it is obviously Romulus who gave his name to the city he founded. But for modern etymologists, the name of Rome could have an Etruscan origin⁸. In fact, it is quite strange that the Romulean legend assigns him the name of Rome, because, according to the ancient idea, we would rather expect that its eponymous founder is called Romus. Thus, we can cite the example of the goddess Athena in Athens, of Pheres for the city of Pherae in Thessaly, Praeneste, son of Latinus and grand-son of Ulysses, founder of Praeneste⁹, Taras, founder of Taranto¹⁰, Phalantos founder of Phalanthos¹¹ or, to return to a Roman example, of Caelius Vibenna and Coelius hill.

Most scholars agree today to think the name of Romus preceded Romulus, thus resuming several ancient authors apparently witnesses of a tradition dating back to the fourth century B.C. attributing to Romos the founding of Rome¹², while another tradition possibly more ancient or contemporary evokes a woman named Romè¹³. In some of these authors, Romos founded Rome alone, when in others he's with two brothers. However, in the story given by Strabo for mythical origins of Rome, Remus is designated under the name of Romos¹⁴. The name of Remus is indeed much closer to Rome than Romulus. Some sources also show a kind of equivalence between Remus and Romulus, Remus tending to be a king of Rome. According to Virgil, «Quirinus and his brother Remus, have established laws¹⁵», while for Servius, «[...] many tend to the interpretation that, as we said above, following an epidemic, to appease the manes of his brother, Romulus used everything twice¹⁶»; « [...] for this reason, the curule chair with the scepter, crown and other regalia were always placed next to Romulus when he prescribed something, so they seemed to be able to exercise the titles equal¹⁷». In H. Strasburger and D. Briquel opinions the first known attestation of Romulus dates back of the end of the fourth

6 Serv., *Ad Aen.*, 1.273.

7 Solin., *Polyhistor*.

8 Ernout Meillet 1979, 748.

9 Zenod., *F. Gr. Hist.* 821 F1 ap. Solin., *Coll.* 2.9.

10 Strab. 6.3.2.

11 Paus. 8.35.7.

12 D. H. 1.72 quote Cephalon of Gergis, Démagos, Agathyllos, Xenagoras or Dionysius of Chalcis.

Tradition that we find in Serv., *Ad Aen.*, 1.273 «[...] this situation engendered a struggle in which Remus was killed; and the Romans took their name of Romus. If he was called Romulus instead of Romus, this is due to a sort of blarney, who loves the diminutive / [...] *quae res bellum creavit. In quo extinctus est Remus, et a Romi nomine Romani appellati. Ut autem pro Romo Romulus diceretur, blandimenti genere factum est, quod gaudet diminutione.*»

13 D. H. 1.72 quote Hellanicos Lesbos and Callias. Perhaps due to the possible etymology of Rome from *ruma*, which Festus and Plutarch (*Romulus*) gives the sense of udder.

14 Strab. 5.3.2: «Here the fable adds that the two children were son of Mars, and on the banks of the river where they were exposed a wolf was seen breastfeed them as she would have her young, and that someone called Faustule, one of many swineherds who were then graze their cattle along the river, collected them, made them eat with him, and called one Romulos and the other Romos (καλέσαι δὲ τὸν μὲν Ῥωμόλον τὸν δὲ Ῥόμον)».

15 Verg., *Aen.*, 1.292-293.

16 Serv., *Ad Aen.*, 1.292-293: «[...] *multi sic intellegere volunt, ut superius diximus, quia post pestilentiam ad placandos fratris manes geminis omnibus usus est Romulus [...]*».

17 Serv., *Ad Aen.*, 1, 276: «[...] *Ob quam rem sella curulis cum sceptro et corona et ceteris regni insignibus semper iuxta ancientem aliquid Romulum ponebatur, ut pariter imperare viderentur. [...]*».

or the third century B.C. with Alcimos¹⁸. And as M. Mirkovic wrote, «the story of the twins can be regarded as firmly established in Rome in the third century, when the statue of the twins was erected, 296 B.C. and when this statue group formed a reverse type on one of the earliest issues of silver coins to be minted in Rome, in 269 or 268 B.C.¹⁹».

A set of contradictions in the sources, albeit very late, about the mythical origins of Rome in fact leads to strongly doubt the tradition of Romulus and Remus. J. Poucet recalls thus the anachronisms of Romulean gesture that refer mainly to the beginnings of the Republic²⁰. F. Coarelli, G. Capdeville and D. Briquel also analyzed a kind of rewriting of the gesture of Servius Tullius from the one of Romulus²¹, where we find the active role of shepherds to oust the king in place, Tarquin the Elder in the case of Servius Tullius, Amulius to that of Romulus. But also that Romulus and Servius are generated both by a god (Mars for one, Vulcan for the other) or a maid fertilized by an igneous phallus, that both have divided the Roman nation (Romulus between tribes and curies, Servius between the classes and centuries) and the Roman space (thirty parts for Romulus, four for Servius). The mixing of the two stories was such that when Plutarch evokes the conception of Romulus by an igneous phallus, he places it in the court of a king called Tarchetius²², direct echo of Tarquinius. May be in fact Romulus was simply a nickname given to Servius Tullius at an indeterminate time? Tradition ascribes indeed Servius Tullius building the Servian wall, increasing the area of the City and moving pomerium. He could therefore be seen as a new founder of the city, that is to say a new Romus, so «Rom-ulus».

Finally, another argument supports the idea of a mythological built around the struggle between Vulcians and the king of Rome Tarquinius. Thus Varro discussing the etymology of Coelius hill says that Caelius Vibenna came to rescue Romulus against King Titus Tatius²³, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus²⁴. Varro demonstrating equivalence between Romulus and Servius Tullius, because François Tomb, Claudius²⁵ and Festus²⁶ attests that Caelius Vibenna was present in the battle against the King of Rome, Cnaeus Tarquinius, with Mastarna/Servius Tullius. In the writings of Arnobius, the patronyms of Servius and Romulus are even merged into Servulus²⁷. The murder of Remus by Romulus, if it contains obvious parallels with the Babylonian prototype of the Herculean myth where Gilgamesh kills his double Enkidu²⁸, could therefore also be read as the struggle between Servius Tullius and Tarquinius, in other words between the new Romus and the bloodline could have given an Etruscan name to Rome, the Tarquini. The myth of the fratricidal battle between Romulus and Remus would be therefore a later construction, pinning a very common myth in antiquity on a real historical context.

It is even possible that the episode of the struggle between Porsenna, Tarquinius Superbus and the Romans is only a repetition of the battle shown in the François Tomb: Tacitus can write, in opposition of the Vul-

18 Strasburger 1968, 17; Briquel 1984, 514, quote Fest. 326-8 L = *FGH* 560 F 4.

19 Mirkovic 2013, 10.

20 Poucet 2001.

21 Coarelli 1983, 197-199; Capdeville 1990, 45-74; Rebuffat 2002-2003, 123. Cf. also Allen 2005, 21-44.

22 Plut., *Romulus*.

23 Var., *LL*, 5, 46. Contra J. Poucet brings up this tradition to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Poucet 2000, 199).

24 D. H. 2.36.2.

25 *CIL* XIII 1668 = *ILS* 212.

26 Fest. 486L: «Regarding the Vicus Tuscus, several authors write that he owes his name to those of the Etruscans who, when King Porsenna raised the siege, remained in Rome and received the place to dwell. Or it is so called because it was occupied by the brothers of Vulci, Caele and Vibenna, which, is said, came to Rome with Maxtarna to the king Tarquinius. For M. Varro, because [Etruscans] were taken from Caelius in this place».

27 Arnob. 6.7.

28 For B. Sergent, the real founder of Rome would be merely Cacus, obscured by rewrites (Sergent 1999, 478).

gate, that Rome surrendered to Porsenna²⁹, and Festus gave two etymologies of Tuscus vicus, one linked to Porsenna, the other to Vibenna brothers. There has also been noted the inconsistency that there could be for Porsenna to come help Tarquinius while Tarquinius Superbus is supposed to find refuge at the end of his life among the tyrant Aristodemus of Cumae, an enemy of Porsenna³⁰. This duplication seems to respond to the desire to expunge the negative sides of Tarquinius and Servius Tullius. We find also on the François Tomb both characters could explain the insertion of Lars Porsenna in the Roman story. Thus, a LARTH ULTHES kills LARIS PAPATHNAS VELZNACH, in other words Lars Papatius of Volsinii. And Pliny the Elder made of Porsenna a king of Volsinii, who, calling lightning, delivers the city of Volta monster that had depopulated the countryside³¹. Volta seems to correspond to ULTHES of the François Tomb³². Lars Papatius was clearly on the side of Cnaeus Tarquinius while Lars Voltius was with Mastarna and Vibenna brothers. The fact that these two individuals have paenomen or titles very similar, or even identical, probably contributed to the duality of the character of Porsenna in tradition.

Similarly, strangely, the two Tarquinius, the Elder and Superbus, are named both Lucius, and some have suggested a duplication of the same figure³³. The names of Servius Tullius seem eerily familiar of Tullus Hostilius. As explained Macrobius, Hostilius could mean the enemy³⁴, and François Tomb show that Servius Tullius was enemy of roman king. Tullus Hostilius is a warrior king, as Servius Tullius. And, finally, how not to link MARCE CAMITLNAS, getting ready to kill CNEVE TARCHVNIES RVMACH on the François Tomb, with the son of Ancus Marcius murdering Tarquinius the Elder according to tradition³⁵? What is the connection between this MARCE CAMITLNAS and Marcus Camillus, whose names seems to be identical³⁶? Livy and Plutarch call Camillus «second founder of Rome³⁷», and Plutarch was surprised that Camillus, «which won so many brilliant successes at the head of armies, who was named five times dictator, who celebrated four triumphs, and was listed as the second founder of Rome, was not one time consul».

Although it is very difficult to unravel the tangled lines of myth and history, we believe that the François Tomb provides a credible witness, at a time when Vulci was still not under Roman rule - there is general agreement today for dating François Tomb of the fourth century B.C., possibly in the second half of this century³⁸ - and that it can help to illuminate the versions provided by tradition. It seems the whole tradition of the kings of Rome, and may be the early days of Republic, in fact refers to one or more episodes described by the frescoes in the François Tomb, that of the struggle between Vulci and Etruscan cities of a possible coalition involving Rome, Volsinii, and two others cities that could be Sovana and Falerii. What was the date of that or those wars?

We often link the AVLE VIPINAS of François Tomb with a bucchero found in the Portonaccio sanctuary of Veii, dated to the first half of the sixth century B.C., and marked AVILE VIPIIENNAS³⁹. Another inscription has been linked with Aulus Vibenna, the Rodin kylix marked AVLES V[I]PINAS / NAPLAN and dated to around 360 B.C.⁴⁰. The origin of this cup is unknown, but it seems to come from Vulci⁴¹. The chronological discrepancy between the inscription, apparently meaning «cup of Aulus Vibenna», and the supposed date of Aulus Vibenna according to tradition was a problem. J. Heurgon therefore believed that it was counterfeit of

29 Tac., *Hist.*, 3.72.1.

30 Ogilvie 1965, 255.

31 *NH*, 2.140.

32 Bonfante 1978, 140.

33 Heurgon 1993, 228.

34 Macrobius, *Saturn.*, 1.6.

35 Liv. 1.40; D. H. 3.72-73.

36 Holloway 1994, 6; Ridley 2014, 111.

37 Liv. 7.1; Plut., *Camillus*.

38 Cristofani 1967.

39 *TLE*, sec. ed., 35.

40 *TLE*, sec. ed., 942.

41 Lubtchansky 2013, 411.

an artist wanting to assign his cup to a famous name⁴². J. Poucet proposes for the Rodin cup a namesake of Aulus Vibenna, who was living in the fourth century B.C.⁴³. We could however overturn the idea of J. Poucet, especially as dating and origin assumed from the Rodin cup is consistent with the François Tomb. Besides, a mirror discovered in the Bolsena region, that is to say Volsinii, represent the two brothers, named by the inscriptions AVLE VIPINAS and CAILE VIPINAS⁴⁴ surrounding Cacus, mythological character eminently linked to the Roman origins⁴⁵. And this mirror is dated from the third century B.C. by J. Poucet⁴⁶, but the fourth century B.C. advanced by D. Briquel is more plausible⁴⁷. Thus, war or wars reproduced on the François Tomb and its protagonists could be contemporaries of the fourth century B.C.

Such dating obviously calls into question the whole chronology rooted from the annalistic tradition. It would nevertheless be consistent with a dating advanced sometimes for the Servian wall⁴⁸. These fragments of walls scattered in Rome may not have evidentiary value and dating is discussed between the sixth and fourth century B.C. In both cases, this is unfortunately based on data from tradition. In 1924, T. Franck tried to argue his late dating with the use of anathyrosis on the tuff blocks⁴⁹. We must admit that the dating of this type of structure is problematic. However, the recent excavation of the walls of Vulci, similar to those of Rome, has allowed to date the construction in the second half of the fourth century B.C.⁵⁰. So, a dating from the fourth century for the Servian wall would be strongly considered. Similarly, M. Humm saw in the reforms attributed to Servius Tullius anachronisms in fact referring to the fourth century B.C., as the military lifted (*dilectus*) and the introduction of *tributum*, but especially the timocratic organization⁵¹. We could cite Timaeus via Pliny attributed to Servius Tullius introducing the *aes signatum*⁵², monetary system that we consider today to have appeared earlier at the end of the fourth century B.C.⁵³.

There is also the thorny issue of the dating of the cippus of the Lapis Niger, usually fixed to the middle of the sixth century B.C. As it's well known, the sector of the Lapis Niger in the Roman Forum was excavated in 1898 and 1899 by G. Boni⁵⁴. He discovered a black marble paving covering a sort of altar in the shape of U, a cippus with an inscription in Greek characters and a tapered base (Fig. 2A). The dating of the U-shaped altar and inscribed cippus were the subject of heated debate between the currents called «hypercritic» and «fideist» in the early twentieth century⁵⁵ - and still today. Stratigraphically, it is not possible from the data published by G. Boni, to precisely date the altar U-shaped and inscribed cippus (Fig. 1). We just know that the top of the altar and the cippus were included in that Boni described as a «votive deposit», containing animal bones but also fragments of weapons, ceramics, bronze statuettes and objects, fibulae and fragments of *aes rude*. Moreover, at the altar plinth level was found a bronze statuette identified as Vertumnus. Ceramics contained fragments of black bucchero datable between the seventh and fifth centuries, Etruscan vase in black figure, now generally dated from the fifth century, probably *presigillata* of the second or first century and finally a gray ceramic with green varnish. It can be *ceramica invetriata*, which may not be earlier than the first century

42 Heurgon 1966, 515-528.

43 Poucet 2000, 197.

44 CIE 10854.

45 We find the story of the capture of Caelius Vibenna figured on the Tomb François in a fragment of Aulus Gellius preserved by Solinus (*Polyhistor*): «In relation to Aulus Gellius, Cacus thrown into chains by Tarchon, King of the Tuscans, who had sent to him by the King Marsyas, and giving for companion the Phrygian Megale, escaped, returned to the places he lived first, and then, with a large force, seized the banks of the Volturno and Campania». Obviously Caelius Vibenna was mythologized in Cacus.

46 Poucet 2000, 195.

47 Briquel 1997, 69.

48 On the tradition attributing this wall to Servius Tullius, cf. Platner 1929, 350-355.

49 Franck 1924, 117.

50 Moretti Sgubini 2006, 339; Moretti Sgubini, 2008, 176-177.

51 Humm 2005, 255, 281-288.

52 NH, 23.13: «*Servius rex primus signavit aes; antea rudi usos Romae Timaeus tradit*».

53 Sutherland 1974, 17; Schmitt Prieur 2004, 38.

54 Boni 1899; Boni 1900; Boni 1913, 45-47.

55 Poretta 2005.

A.D., but can also refer to late antiquity or middle age⁵⁶. The graphy of an inscription on this pottery and the colour of the varnish describe more returns to the High Empire. A ceramic described by L. Savignoni as «*olla a doppio manico a nastro, portante in rilievo, sì nel diritto che nel rovescio, una faccia umana accennata in una maniera assai schematica e primitiva, che ricorda certi vasi di Troia*»⁵⁷ (Fig. 2C) is in fact an anthropomorphic vase, as drawing given by D. Vaglieri shows⁵⁸. This vase must be dated of the first half of the first century A.D.⁵⁹

Another object described by Boni as a «*borchie a disco concoideale forato*» (Fig. 2B) actually corresponds clearly to a mirror box of a type that appears in Greece until the end of the fifth century and is produced in Etruria until the late fourth century⁶⁰. Boni also gives a brief description and photographs of discovered fibulae. It contains simple bow fibulae, datable to the eighth or seventh century, fibulae *a navicella* (obviously without decoration), dated to the seventh century, and fibulae with buttons datable from the seventh or sixth century. As already fell L. Savignoni in 1900, the supposed «votive deposit» was made up of objects belonging to an extensive chronological period⁶¹, from the seventh or sixth century B.C. to the first or second century A.D. As, according to the stratigraphic sequence identified by Boni, this material was found in the layer including the top of the altar and inscribed cippus, and it is not credible to considering that a monument of the Forum is abandoned for more than seven centuries, this layer can be only reported embankment. It lets just say that earlier monuments Lapis Niger are also predate the first or second century A.D., the realization of the Lapis Niger pavement meanwhile be between the first and the late second century when Festus mentions. It seems logical to think that the earlier monuments of the Lapis Niger were destroyed in the great fire of Rome in 65, Tacitus indicating that the regia and the temple of Vesta were in flames⁶², explaining that the artefacts of the supposed «votive deposit» were mixed with ash.

To return to previous monuments of the Lapis Niger, only a comparative method can therefore help advance a date, even though we know from recent excavations, they are after the ninth-eighth centuries B.C. In 1899, inscribed cippus was dated by Gamurrini of the sixth century by comparison with the inscription of Formello⁶³. This dating was not accepted by all epigraphists, some attributing the inscription of the Lapis Niger between the sixth and the fifth centuries⁶⁴. But today we know that if the artefacts found in the tumulus of Formello date for most of the late seventh or early sixth, more recent objects, from the late fourth or early third century, were subsequently filed in the grave⁶⁵. Now, one of the two alphabets of the Formello vase has a nuwich graphy refers to neo-Etruscan⁶⁶, that is to say the period of the most recent objects. The write in «boustrophedon» is meanwhile not synonymous with a high dating since found shapes on inscriptions of the fourth century⁶⁷. If kappa largely disappears from the southern Etruscan inscriptions in the fourth century, it still in use on the margins of the area at that time, while the koppa remain in use in Latin. The paleography elements thus refer instead to the fourth century to the cippus of Lapis Niger (Fig. 3). A parallel between the inscription of the cippus of the Lapis Niger and the altar of Tibur or the dedication to Castor and Pollux of Lavinium is often made. At Tibur, for now, the oldest remains are dated to the fourth century⁶⁸. And for the dedication of Lavinium, it was dated of the sixth century compared with the cippus of Lapis Niger...

On the altar U-shaped of the Lapis Niger, it was also found confirmation of dating from the sixth century

56 Guerini Mancini 2007, 210-211.

57 Savignoni 1900, 144.

58 Vaglieri 1903, 122.

59 Benedetti 2007; Guerini Mancini 2007, 210, 229; Schindler-Kaudelka 2012, 339-363.

60 Lightfoot De Puma 2013, 188-189; Anderson 1981.

61 Savignoni 1900, 145.

62 Tac., *Ann.*, 15, 61.

63 Gamurrini 1899, 162.

64 Thompson 1912, 5; Grenier 1924, 37.

65 Michetti Van Kampen 2014.

66 Haynes 2000, 66.

67 Emiliozzi 2008.

68 Rous 2010, 164.

with those of Lavinium, of similar shape and profile, where the oldest date back to that time. The chronology established in Lavinium is however questionable. For the altar XIII, considered the oldest, excavations have unearthed a little above the base an Attic vase fragment of black figure datable of 570-550 B.C.⁶⁹ But as in the case of the Lapis Niger, this element was in an embankment and lets just say that the layer covering the altar is later than mid-sixth century. Similarly, in the area of the altar VII-VIII-IX, the excavators discovered mixed objects dating differently, leaving puzzled R. Turcan on the chronological evolution pattern of thirteen altars⁷⁰. It is therefore impossible to establish a chronological comparison. The U-shaped altars discovered in 1937 in Sant' Omobono are traditionally awarded, following the 1974-1975 surveys⁷¹, in the fourth century, but the dedication of the circular support is dated by an inscription around 264 B.C.⁷² F. di Mario meanwhile offers to date the U-shaped altar of Ardea of the fourth-third centuries because of the tuff use⁷³. Today, it is indeed generally accepted that the construction of the altar of the Lapis Niger date from the second half of the fourth century B.C.⁷⁴

The Lapis Niger is mentioned under this name by Festus, who also says that this place is considered as the tomb of Romulus, sometimes as that of Faustulus or to Hostilius⁷⁵. According Porphyrion and Commentator Cruquianus, Varro wrote that the tomb of Romulus was behind the Rostra⁷⁶. Commentator Cruquianus and the Pseudo-Acron also mentions two lions above the tomb of Romulus⁷⁷. For Dionysius, there was a single stone lion on the Forum over the grave of Faustulus. He also write that «kings» (which should match Romulus and Numa) buried Hostilius on the Forum «and erected a pillar with an inscription.»⁷⁸ In an other hand, it was traditionally understood that Cicero spoke of a bronze column placed behind the Rostra on which was engraved the *foedus cassianum*⁷⁹. Some manuscripts, however, give a different lesson that it should understand by «the column of Æneas»⁸⁰, echoing Plutarch speaking Romulus dedicated a bronze chariot in the temple of Vulcan and «his own statue crowned by Victory»⁸¹ while Dionysius wrote that Romulus settled near the bronze chariot dedicated to Vulcan «his own statue with an inscription in Greek characters giving the list of

69 Dury 1981, 131.

70 Turcan 1983, 55-56.

71 Smith 2015, 74.

72 *CIL* VI 40895.

73 Di Mario 2007, 84-85.

74 Smith 2015, 76.

75 Fest. 12: «*Niger lapis in Comitio locum funestum significat, ut ali, Romuli morti destinatum sed non usu ob in [venisse ut ibi sepeliretur, sed Fau]stulum nutri[cium eius, ut ali, dicunt Hos]tilium avum Tu[lli Hostili]*».

76 Porphyrion: «*Hoc sic dicitur, quasi Romulus sepultus sit, non ad caelum raptus aut descryptus, nam Varro post Rostra fuisse sepultum Romulum dicit*»; Commentator Cruquianus: «*Varro pro rostris sepulcrum Romuli dixit; ubi etiam in huius rei memoriam duos leones erectos fuisse constat*».

77 Pseudo-Acron: «*plerique aiunt in Rostris Romulum sepultum esse et in memoriam huius rei leones duos ibi fuisse, sicut hodieque in sepulcris videmus, atque inde esse ut pro rostris mortui laudarentur*».

78 D. H. 3.1.2.: «*Οὗτος ὁ ἀνὴρ πολλοὺς συνδιενέγκας Ῥωμύλῳ πολέμους καὶ μεγάλα ἔργα ἀποδειξάμενος ἐν ταῖς πρὸς Σαβίνους μάχαις, ἀποθνήσκει καταλιπὼν παιδίον μονογενὲς καὶ θάπτεται πρὸς τῶν βασιλέων ἐν τῷ κρατίστῳ τῆς ἀγορᾶς τόπῳ στήλης ἐπιγραφῆ τὴν ἀρετὴν μαρτυρούσης ἀξιοθεῖς. Ἐκ δὲ τοῦ μονογενοῦς παιδὸς εἰς ἄνδρας ἀφικομένου καὶ γάμον ἐπιφανῆ λαβόντος υἱὸς γίνεται Τύλλος Ὀστίλιος ἀνὴρ δραστήριος, ὃς ἀπεδείχθη βασιλεὺς ψήφῳ τε πολιτικῇ διενεχθείσῃ περὶ αὐτοῦ κατὰ νόμους*».

79 Cic. *Pro Balbo* 53-54: «*Cum Latinis omnibus foedus esse ictum Sp. Cassio Postumo Cominio consulibus quis ignorat? Quod quidem nuper in columna Ænea meminimus post rostra incisum et perscriptum fuisse*».

80 The traditional reading is «*in columna ahenea*» from the manuscripts *P1*, but the manuscripts *P2* *rell.* gives «*in columna aenea*». The traditional reading is not possible because the latin locution *in* is following by ablative. The ablative of *aena* is *aena* also, but the ablative of *Æneas* is *Ænea*. So *P2* *rell.* manuscripts must be following.

81 Plut. *Romulus*: «*Ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις λαφύροις καὶ χαλκοῦν ἐκόμισε τέθριππον ἐκ Καμερίας· τοῦτο δ' ἀνέστησεν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦ Ἡφαίστου, ποιησάμενος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὸ Νίκης στεφανούμενον*».

his achievements.»⁸² Plutarch evokes finally a version of the death of Romulus killed by senators in the temple of Vulcan⁸³. All texts are consistent with the discoveries of the Lapis Niger site and suggest that there was confusion between different mythical founders of Rome.

Finally, the name of the supposed deceased of the François Tomb, Vel Saties, is strongly similar to the legendary king Titus Tatius, supposed to have shared power with Romulus. We indicated above Varro's version that Caelius Vibenna would rescue Romulus against Titus Tatius. It's pretty obvious that Tatius replaced Tarchetius mentioned by Plutarch, in other words Tarquinius. The Romulean gesture also resonates at the frescoes in the François Tomb. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Romulus crushes initially Caenina soldiers⁸⁴, a name that seems to be the compression of Caelius Vibenna, while the frescoes in the François Tomb present Caelius Vibenna prisoner. Then, in the Romulean gesture, the Sabinian reach, thanks to the betrayal of Tarpeia, to seize Rome, as Vibenna brothers and Mastarna will clearly do.

In fact, we believe that Vel Saties, Mastarna, Rasce, Titus Tatius, Romulus, Servius Tullius, are only one individual. We developed the reasons that encouraged us to this conclusion for Servius Tullius and Romulus. The equivalence between Mastarna and Servius Tullius has long been established from the testimony of Claudius speech in Lyon. Regarding Vel Saties and Mastarna and Rasce, we believe that this identity can be deduced because of the lack of praenomen of the last two characters. It would therefore be more titles than names. Long time ago, it was thus suggested that MACSTRNA might be a title similar to that of *magister*⁸⁵. RASCE evokes archaic latin RECEI on the cippus of the Lapis Niger⁸⁶, which identifies the classic latin *rex*⁸⁷. It is generally accepted that the François Tomb is the tomb of the Saties family and that Vel Saties was its sponsor⁸⁸. Vel Saties could therefore have been at first a kind of supreme magistrate to Vulci⁸⁹ and then «king» of Rome after the victory, as suggested by literary sources.

Our analysis leads us to think that the whole tradition of the kings of Rome is a late construction built from a real episode in which a mythological construction was developed. Apparently, different versions have existed in this episode. Faced with these different versions, the first historians of Rome have attempted to give a consistency by providing a chronological narrative with dates which had maybe another meaning. François Tomb does not tell a different story in fact, because it already placed in parallel the exploits of Vel Saties with those of Achilles. This concept of mythologizing was not peculiar to Etruscans, since Greeks clearly did the same as some could analyze for sculptures of the Parthenon or the Pergamon Altar⁹⁰. We believe that the frescoes in the François Tomb depict the exploits of Vel Saties, probably a leading figure in Vulci, in his conquest of several Etruscan cities, including Rome, during the fourth century B.C. Echoed of these wars are visibly located in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, according to who Servius Tullius helped King Tarquinius to «completely subjugate the Etruscans⁹¹». This character of Vel Saties seems to have been the basis for the construction of several legendary kings of Rome afterwards. We are conscious to deliver a version profoundly changing the vision of the early days of Rome, with a very late chronology for historical figures, and that it should be discussed. We hope that this analysis and the conclusions will be viewed calmly and without a priori. The

82 D. H. 2,54,2: «Ἐκ ταύτης τῆς στρατείας καὶ δεύτερον θρίαμβον κατήγαγε καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν λαφύρων τέθριππον χαλκοῦν ἀνέθηκε τῷ Ἡφαίστῳ καὶ παρ' αὐτῷ τὴν ἰδίαν ἀνέστησεν εἰκόνα ἐπιγράψας Ἑλληνικοῖς γράμμασι τὰς ἑαυτοῦ πράξεις.»

83 Plut. *Romulus*: «Ἄλλ' οἱ μὲν εἵκαζον ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοῦ Ἡφαίστου τοὺς βουλευτὰς ἐπαναστάντας αὐτῷ καὶ διαφθείραντας, νείμαντας τὸ σῶμα καὶ μέρος ἕκαστον ἐνθήμενον εἰς τὸν κόλπον ἐξενεγκεῖν.»

84 D. H. 2.33.2.

85 Cuno 1873, 669; Cuno 1881, 854-855. Dionysius of Halicarnassus uses the term ἡγεμόν, which may designate a military leader but also a supreme magistrate (D. H. 4.1.4).

86 *ILS* 4913; *CIL* VI 36840.

87 Ernout 1916, 6.

88 Haumesser 2014.

89 According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Servius Tullius was of royal blood (D. H. 4.1.2).

90 Greco-Persian wars for the Amazonomachy of the Parthenon; Galatians and Macedonians for the Gigantomachy of the Pergamon Altar. On this subject, see for example Queyrel 2012, 79, 89.

91 D. H. 4.1.4.

assignment of a late chronology of events and historical characters doesn't deny early occupation of Rome attested by archaeology.

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Boni's pit IXa

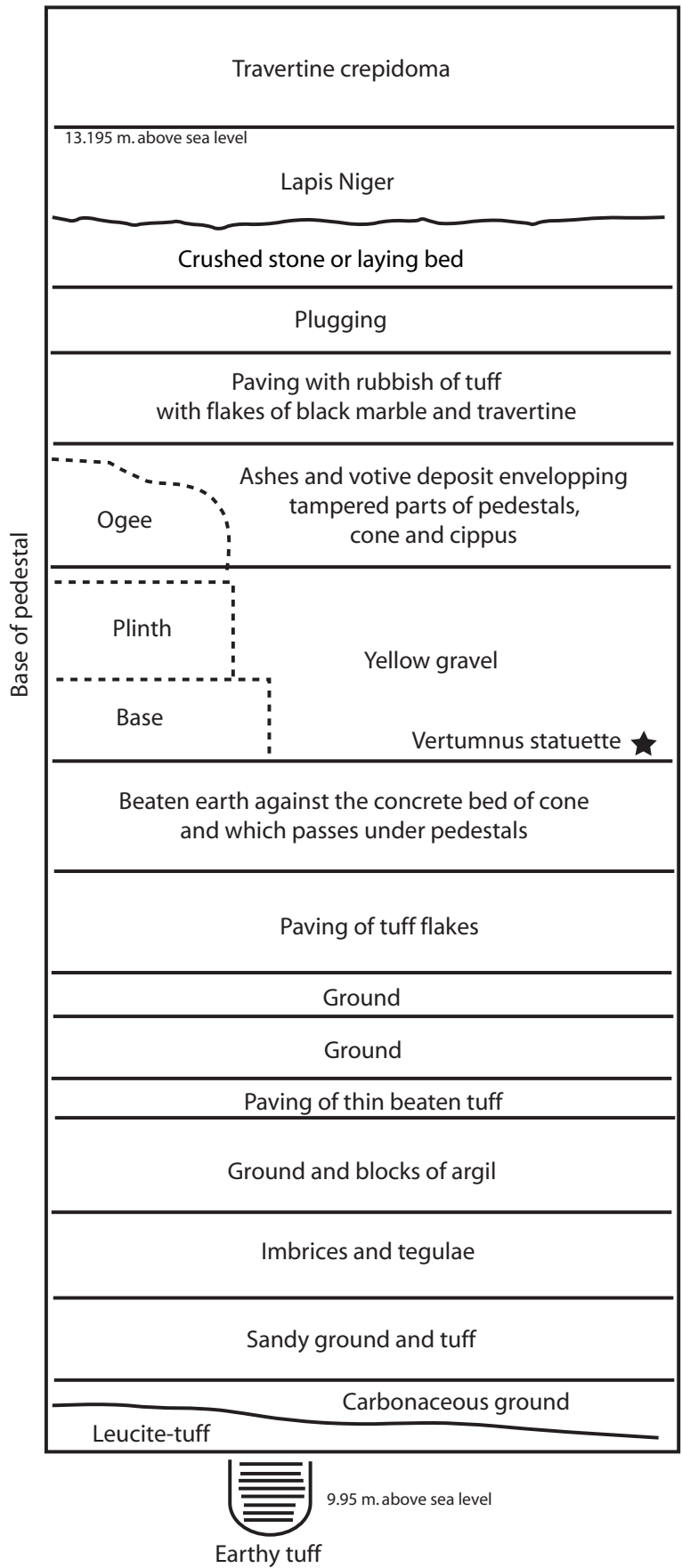
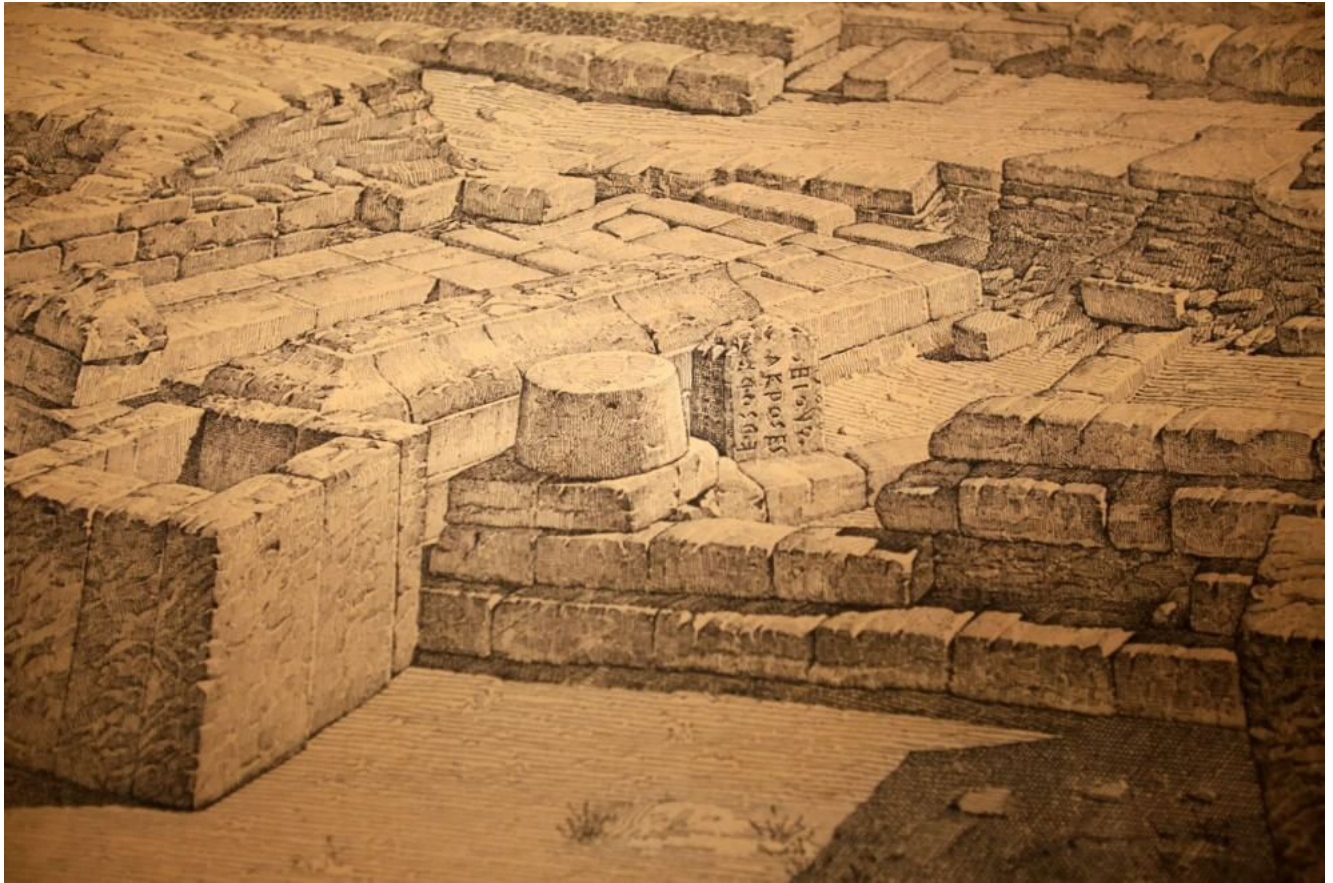
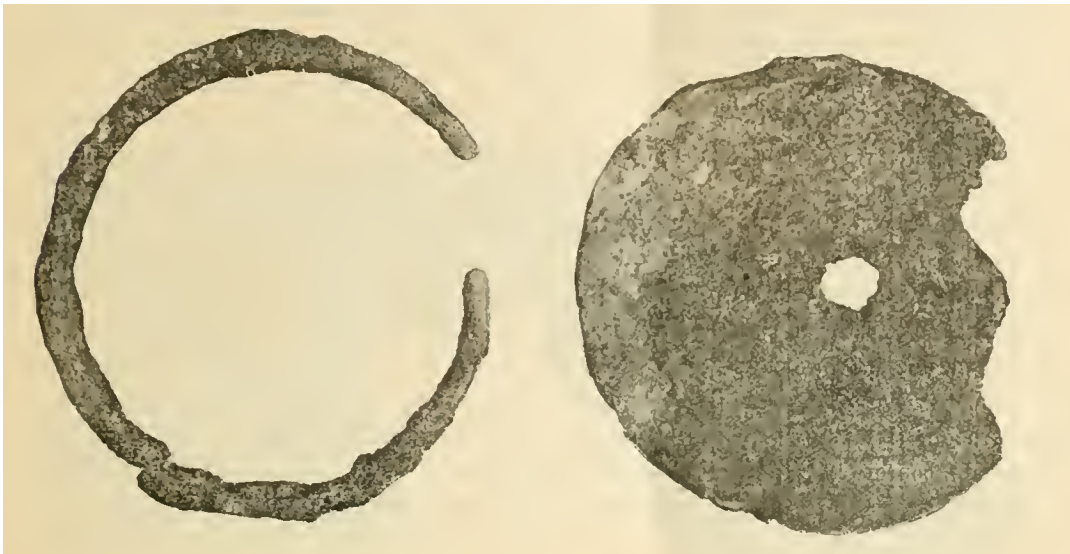


Fig. 1: Stratigraphy of the Lapis Niger according G. Boni (Boni 1900, 338)



A



B



C

A: View of the Boni's excavation on Lapis Niger (G. Cirilli 1900 - Arch. Sopr. Arch. Roma).

B: Metal disk and ring discovered in 1899 (Boni 1899, 165).

C: Anthropomorphic vase from the «votive deposit» (Vaglieri 1903, 122).

Fig. 2

Name of inscription	Language	Writing direction	Graphy of inscription
Passerini Cippus (Cortona) - 2nd c. BCE	E	←	A C I O J H Z V
Campaccio Cippus (Cortona) - 2nd c. BCE	E	←	A J H M Q T V
Este ceramic urn Es 79 (Este) - 3rd-2nd c. BCE	V	←	A E F I J O X A Y
Selvans Cippus (Bolsena) - 3rd-2nd c. BCE	E	←	AA C E E F J H H P } } I V J
Trasacco Cippus (Trasacco) - 3rd c. BCE	M	→	A C D E F C I L M N O P Q R S T V
Lanuvium Brocca (Lanuvio) - 3rd c. BCE	L	→	A B C D E F I L M N O Q R T
Monteroni di Palo Abecedarium (Cerveteri) - 3rd c. BCE	L	→	A R C D E F I I K H L M N O P Q R S T V +
Sword of San Vittore (San Vittore) - end of 4th-3rd c. BCE	L	→	A C E F M N O P R T
Bruxelles Cista (Palestrina) - 4th-3rd c. BCE	L	← →	A C D E F I J M N O P Q R Z V
Ficoroni Cista (Palestrina) - 4th-3rd c. BCE	L	→	A D E F I L M N O P R S T V
Monte Porte Stele (Livinallongo) - 4th-3rd c. BCE ?	V	↶	A A A C H E F I K J M N O P Q R S X
Este Stele Es 2 (Este) - 4th c. BCE	V	↶	A E F I K H J M N O P Q X V Y
Este Stele Es 13 (Este) - 4th c. BCE	V	↷	E F I K H L M N O P X
Roncoferraro Abecedarium (Mantova) - 4th c. BCE	E	←	A E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Akrathos and Minerva Mirror (Perugia) - 4th c. BCE	E	← →	A C K O M H Q Q J
François Tomb (Vulci) - 4th c. BCE	E	←	A C E F I H J M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Golini tomb I (Orvieto) - 4th c. BCE	E	←	A E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Dioscuri Mirror (Firenze) - 4th c. BCE	E	←	A E K L M N O P Q R S T U V
Lapis Niger Cippus (Roma)	L	← →	A C D E F I K K H J M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y
13 altars inscription (Lavinium)	L	↷	A C D E F I J O P Q R S T V
Tibur Altar (Tivoli)	L	↷	A D E F G H I K H M N O P Q R S T
Duenos Vase (Roma)	L	←	AA C D E F G H I J M N O P Q R S T U V

Fig. 3: Comparison between inscription of Lapis Niger cippus and other archaic Italian inscriptions