

New Studies on Etruscan Personal Names: *Gentium Mobilitas*

Simona Marchesini

I am pleased to announce to the readers of *ENews Online* the imminent publication of a book that I am writing for l'Erma di Bretschneider (to be published in 2007). The title is *Prosopographia Etrusca, II, 1, Studia. Gentium Mobilitas*. The aim of this work is to sketch a picture of ethnic movements and the consequent admixture of people (*gentes*) in archaic Etruria, especially in the southern part of this territory. Geographical limits are imposed by editorial considerations: My study is based on the names collected in the first volume of *Prosopografia Etrusca I, 1, Corpus*, edited by Massimo Morandi Tarabella in 2004. The chronological limits are a matter of historical interest. I distinguish the mobility of individuals during the archaic period from the mobility of individuals during the Neo-Etruscan period because of the different social and political implications. The mobility of Neo-Etruscan period, which took place both vertically (socially) and horizontally (among similar groups), has been thoroughly investigated. Our knowledge comes not only from hundreds of inscriptions, but also from parallel situations in the Roman and Italic world. The mobility of people in archaic Etruscan society is more difficult to assess. Research of the last 40 years has stressed the fact that it is a feature of the aristocratic class, but only horizontally, that is to say, in terms of movement from one group (*gens*) to another. I argue that beneath the conventions of hospitality among *principes*, which we have come to detect by means of archaeological documents such as groups of bowls with the same inscriptions and by means of *tesserae hospitales* bearing the name of the host/guest, it is possible to reconstruct a situation of multiform ethnic interchange.

The archaic system of Etruscan name system reveals evidence of this mobility through changes and adaptations of personal names. We know that when different peoples are in contact, they borrow aspects of culture, traditions, and religion from one another; they also borrow elements of language, such as words, personal names, and suffixes. As in other parts of the lexicon, when personal names are borrowed from one language into another they may be altered in different ways depending on the intensity of the contacts and on the chronological period at which they were borrowed. The longer a word is in the borrowing language, the more difficult it is for speakers to ascertain whether that word is a native item or a borrowing. Over time borrowed words undergo 'nativization', that is to say, they are

made to conform to the phonological and morphological rules of the borrowing language. This is the case for many Etruscan names that we consider loanwords from other Italic populations but whose ultimate origin we cannot identify without reference to the borrowing language (names such as the Etruscan *praenomina* *Aciie*, *Αηχε*, *Ate*, *Caisie/Kaisie*).

The name of an Etruscan aristocrat had two constituents during the archaic period: an individual or personal name (*praenomen*) and a second or family name (*gentilicium/gentile name*). One of the most interesting indicators of the mobility of Etruscan *gentes* is the *Individualnamengentilicium*. This term refers to a *nomen gentile* that is derived from an individual name. For example, if an aristocrat, who came from territory outside of Etruria and had only a individual name, wished to be fully integrated into Etruscan aristocratic society, then that person needed to have a *praenomen* and most importantly a *nomen gentile*. In such cases, the foreigner converted his personal name into a *nomen* and took another first name, one adopted from Etruscan or from the inventory of his own language.

The situation in the Neo-Etruscan period (from the 4th century B.C.) is not analogous. The term *Vornamengentilicium*, which was coined in 1948 by Emil Vetter and then appropriated by Helmut Rix in 1963 for the archaic period, identifies the bearer of the *nomen* as originally a member of the lower class who was elevated to a higher social standing. In such situations individuals changed their names to conform to the more prestigious onomastic formula by using their first name as a *nomen*. Scholars from different disciplines have investigated both archaic and recent name change, e.g., the linguists Carlo de Simone (de Simone 1989a; 1989b; 1990) and Helmut Rix (Rix 1963:342; 1972), the archaeologists Giovanni Colonna (Colonna 1970; 1977) and Mauro Cristofani (Cristofani 1974), and the historian Carmine Ampolo (Ampolo 1975; 1976–1977).

Gentium Mobilitas begins with a summary of the literature on the mobility of peoples and on the name exchange in ancient Italy. The mobility of the aristocracy is investigated via the Etruscan onomastic system, particularly through the phenomenon of the *Individualnamengentilicia*. I gather together the data on names that function syntactically as *gentile*, but which are not formed with the typical gentilicial suffixes such as *-na* and *-ra* and *-θe/-te* and *-ane*. These names are arranged by geography and chronology (from the 7th c. B.C. the end of the 5th c. B.C.). An initial examination of the data suggests that social vertical mobility exists also for the archaic period. Some *Individualnamengentilicia*, in particular those that are etymologically Etruscan and appear together with a native Etruscan *praenomen*, support this conclusion. It is possible then that these individuals do not come from

territories outside of Etruria, from other Italic peoples, but from other layers of Etruscan social strata. This idea will be examined in detail in the next stage of my research.

Another chapter examines the suffixes found in *nomina*. Following the most recent theory of word-formation (for ex. like in Booij 2004), I create a synoptic table of the suffixes in the archaic Etruscan name system. The table displays the different degrees of integration in the adaptation of borrowed names. For example the suffix *-na-ie*, which is composed of a native Etruscan suffix *-na* plus an Italic-based suffix *-ie*, must represent a deeper level of linguistic integration of a foreign name when compared, for example, to a *nomen* ending in the Italic-based suffix *-ie*, which shows only phonological adaptation.

An interdisciplinary aspect of my work is a discussion of the social, anthropological, and ethnic considerations emerging from the study of the system of Etruscan names. I hope that my remarks will lead to a debate in other disciplines about these issues within the history of Ancient Italy. In a recent book entitled “The Invention of Races” (“*L’invenzione delle razze*”), Guido Barbujani (Barbujani 2006), a geneticist of populations, pointed out that the isolation and mobility of population groups are two factors responsible for the creation of different races among the same species, though with opposite effects. Population groups may be isolated by geographical, climatic, or historical constraints, while mobility may depend upon the inherent characteristics of the species and upon the lack of barriers in the territory where they live. Isolation leads to different species, while mobility and genetic exchange among populations lead to the leveling of [diversity among human species](#) and therefore to a more undifferentiated population. These observations from the biological and genetic perspective (probably banal for a geneticist) appear to be relevant when considering the movements of people in Ancient Italy. Barriers, both political and ethnic (Etruscans were non-Indo-Europeans living among Indo-European peoples), must have been very subtle in archaic Italy. Being a member of the aristocracy must have been more important than belonging to a specific ethnic group (Marchesini 2007 (in press)). Ethnic identity, as American anthropologists have been teaching us (see, for example, Brown 2004), can be negotiated around a table; it is not so deeply embedded in ancestry, language or religion. The Etruscan world seems to present us with a similar situation.

Author’s address:

Dr. Simona Marchesini

Dip.to di Linguistica, Letteratura e
 Scienze della Comunicazione
 Viale dell'Università, 4
 37129 VERONA
 simona.marchesini@lettere.univr.it

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