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Late Etruscan tripod thymiateria

Abstract

This article is a further development of questions raised in my review of Laura Ambrosini's magisterial *Thymiateria etruschi in bronzo* (2002), and it is mainly based upon material gathered by her. Whereas I mostly agree with Ambrosini's conclusions, the discussion includes some dissent concerning production centres (Chiusi and Tarquinia in particular), chronology (beginning and end-date of production), and the function of the censers. Otherwise, a series of case studies clearly confirms the basic correctness of Ambrosini's division of the thymiateria by different production centres. The article also expands my earlier views on the varying modes of production and the possible importance of Roman *leges sumptuariae* for the southern limit of thymiateria diffusion. Except for that, the investigation reveals no traces of influence from the Roman wars and the contemporaneous romanization, but perhaps of the importance of the stands for family status and cultural identity.*

Keywords: Etruscan, Etruria, thymiaterion, production centre, Late Classical, Hellenistic

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For almost half a millennium, bronze thymiateria (censers, stands) were used in Etruria for the burning of incense, in both sacred and secular contexts. They can be divided into three main groups: the Archaic types (6th–5th centuries BC), the Late Classical and Hellenistic ones (late 5th–3rd centuries BC), and the Curunas type (3rd–2nd centuries BC). A rough description of the middle group—the subject of this article—may be given as follows: a base of three legs of animal or human shape; a vertical shaft normally furnished with spiral grooves, sometimes resting on a human statuette but more often decorated with animal figurines; a circular, shallow bowl, framed by a mostly square platform.

Confusion had long reigned concerning the function and precise date of the groups as well as their mutual connections but, within a period of no more than 20 years (1983–2002), the study of “Hellenistic” tripod thymiateria developed from comparative chaos to a well-organized field of research.¹ In my review of Laura Ambrosini's concluding *magnum opus*, I emphasized that the author not only brought the work of several scholars to fruition but also had laid “the first firm basis for future studies of the subject”. I also defined ten groups of lingering problems which still trouble our studies.²

* I have had much benefit from discussions with other members of the project concerning “life patterns and social change in Central Italy” mentioned below: Daniel Fuglesang (pottery), Ulf Hansson (engraved gems), Marjatta Nielsen (sarcophagi and cinerary urns), and Eva Rystedt (head and driving force of the project). My thanks are also due to my late wife Charlotte, and Laura Ambrosini, both of whom read and commented upon the first draft of my text. Marjatta Nielsen kindly scrutinized its final version. Julia Habetzeder (editor) and Rebecca Montague (corrector of my English) have also made important suggestions concerning the factual contents of the article. Rebecca Bugge has, as usual, been of invaluable assistance to me, concerning both text and illustrations. This article is dedicated to the memory of Daniel Fuglesang.

¹ Wikander 1983; Testa 1989; Buccioli 1995; Ambrosini 2002. Even though Archaic censers, too, rested on three feet, I prefer Ambrosini's term tripod thymiaterion (“*thymiaterion con treppiede*”) to the more common, but not entirely accurate, “Hellenistic thymiaterion”.

² Wikander 2005, 127–131. Perhaps the most fundamental problem (even though of less practical importance) concerns the very definition of the class (ibid., 127, item 1). Ambrosini, in her “*Definizione della classe e sua funzione*” (2002, 101) is extremely brief, only mentioning the three constituent parts of the type. But see also her discussion concerning some borderline cases (2002, 326–333). Though unable myself to provide a more adequate definition than the one presented in Wikander 1983, 49 (reproduced in Ambrosini 2002, 50, and above), I would instinctively discard her nos. 4, 48, 120, 362?, and 364. This, however, is not to say that Ambrosini should have excluded them. They may be useful for future discussions concerning proper definitions.

At the time, I was already tackling some of these problems as a part of a research project funded by The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and devoted to “life patterns and social change in Central Italy from the 4th to the 1st century BC”.³ For various reasons (including the untimely death of one participant), the results of this project could not be published, but this article is a thoroughly rewritten and updated version of my original manuscript. Ambrosini’s book, and particularly her catalogues, have constituted the main point of departure for my own studies and, with few exceptions, I here accept her statements—including dates, attributions to various production centres, etc. The numbers representing the censers also refer to her catalogues.⁴ To a large extent, this article constitutes an expanded discussion of issues touched upon only in passing in my 2005 review.⁵

Ambrosini’s book does not seem easy to grasp at first sight but, for those who get better acquainted with her classification system, it offers immense possibilities for penetrating deeper into questions only briefly touched by her. The three main parts of the stands (base/*treppiede*, shaft/*fusto*, bowl/*vaschetta*) are denoted by four symbols each: capital letter, Roman numeral, small letter, and Arabic numeral. For instance, a shaft described as EIIb1 is spiral-grooved (E), resting on a male caryatid (II), and decorated with a snake (b), while number 1 makes it the first example of its group.⁶ Apart from providing an excellent survey of all known variants, this system saves much printing space in the catalogue.

Ambrosini also tried to create a general typology by grouping the thymiateria into eleven main types, based upon the shape of the bases, with further subdivision according to that of the shafts.⁷ Animals and other decorative additions to the shafts, as well as the shape of the bowls, are supposed to be of little or no diagnostic value. As will become evident from my paper, I do not entirely share Ambrosini’s opinion on this issue.

I. Quantity and geographical distribution

The first attempt to present a complete list of this class of Etruscan bronzes was published by Antonella Testa in 1989.⁸ Her total number of 178 specimens has already been more than trebled: by extremely careful scrutiny of both modern literature and museum storerooms, Ambrosini has managed to compile a catalogue of no fewer than 365 tripod stands and a list of 220 additional items “*noti dalla bibliografia archeologica*”—the large majority of which are undoubtedly to be assigned to the same group of thymiateria.⁹ The corresponding figures for a later kind of censer, the “*piattello-thymiaterion*” (Sandra Buccioli) or “*tipo Curunas*” (Ambrosini), are 128 and 84, respectively.¹⁰

The tripod stands constitute a rather small class of bronzes, but they presumably represent a quite extensive original output. Whereas Etruscan mirrors have been preserved in thousands,¹¹ the known thymiateria are counted in hundreds. The reason for this seems obvious: while mirrors were private, individual belongings and naturally followed their female owners into the tomb, the incense burners were—in my opinion (see below, pp. 141f.)—immediately connected with the family’s social life and, thus, normally continued as part of the household equipment until being buried with an individual family member.

Of the 100 thymiateria I presented in 1983, we know the find-sites of 59, distributed between 21 sites scattered over large parts of Central Italy.¹² Of these 59 find-sites, exactly two-thirds fall within a circle with a radius of 42 km, with its centre c. 9 km north of Viterbo. If one looks, instead, at the number of censers found, the places in the circle represent an even greater share.

This general picture does not change, but is rather corroborated, when the same method is applied to Ambrosini’s lists of about 580 stands, 207 of which have known provenance (Fig. 1).¹³ Of 45 sites, 23 fall within the circle. As the majority of the 22 sites outside the circle yielded only occasional finds, as many as 166 thymiateria out of 207, or 80%, were found within.

³ For a short presentation of the project and its aims, see D. Fuglesang & Ö. Wikander, in Söderlind 2002–2003, 245f.

⁴ Considering the large number of stands published in Ambrosini’s corpus, I have not found it worthwhile to include the few items added later. But some of them are mentioned below, nn. 43, and 197.

⁵ Because of the arrangement of the text, some discussions are perhaps not to be found where expected, but they are easily located from references in the *Summary and conclusions* and in *Indices 1* and *3*.

⁶ Ambrosini 2002, 116–168.

⁷ Ambrosini 2002, 169–192. A brief key to Ambrosini’s typological symbols is to be found in my Selected subjects index (*Index 3*).

⁸ Testa 1989, 205–208 (“*Appendice A*”), 225–229 (“*Appendice B*”).

⁹ Ambrosini 2002, 201–292 and 293–312, respectively.

¹⁰ Ambrosini 2002, 381–402 and 403–408.

¹¹ Within the *Corpus Speculorum Etruscorum* project, their number is estimated as at least 3,000.

¹² Wikander 1983, 57.

¹³ I here include all 365 tripod thymiateria in Ambrosini’s catalogue (even though the assignment of some specimens to this class may well be questioned)—with two obvious exceptions: Altenburg, Cologne (no. 170) and Edfu, Egypt (no. 172). From her list of stands known from the “*bibliografia archeologica*”, however, I have excluded those of uncertain classification as well as those tentatively identified with provenanced stands in the catalogue.

Within the circle:¹⁴

Acquapendente (1)	1	BA 21
Bolsena (2)	2	313?, BA 26
Bomarzo (3)	4	28, 302–303, BA 33
Canino (4)	2	226, BA 202
Castel d'Asso (5)	3	283, 285, BA 57?
Civita Castellana (6)	17+	185–192, 193–195 (parts of the same stand?), 196–197, 202, 234, BA 23, BA 110, BA 139–140
Corchiano (7)	20	198–200, 209, 237–239, 293?, BA 109, BA 141–151
Ferento (8)	3	291, 337, BA 27
Gallese (9)	1	289
Montefiascone (10)	6	BA 5, BA 59–63
Musarna (11)	3	282 (? cf. BA 57), 284, 290
Narce (12)	3	201, 220, BA 158?
Norcia (13)	1	208
Orte (14)	1	180
Orvieto (15)	6	224 (<i>area di</i>), 322, 325–326, BA 47, BA 52
Poggio Sommavilla (16)	1	265
Porano (Orvieto) (17)	1	321
Tarquinia (18)	22	107, 110, 114, 118–119, 134?, 139, 144–147, 278–279, 335?, BA 8–10, BA 17–19, BA 32, BA 58
Todi (19)	12+	328, 340–347 (341 part of 344?), BA 13–14, BA 64–65
Tuscania (20)	2	150, BA 201
Vignanello (21)	6	203–206, BA 31, BA 210
Viterbo (22)	7	171 (<i>dintorni</i>), 288, BA 2–4, BA 11, BA 16
Vulci (23)	42	19–22, 23?, 25?–26?, 27, 29?–30?, 31, 38?, 62, 88, 98?, BA 34–43, BA 121–123, BA 125–126, BA 128–137, BA 164, BA 190

Outside the circle:

Buccino (-)	1	365
Carrara (-)	1	58
Cerveteri (24)	3	17, 83?–84? ¹⁵
Chieti (-)	1	BA 20
Chiusi (25)	4	59, 311, BA 67–68 (<i>agro</i>)
Civitella S. Paolo (26)	1	304
Corfinio (-)	1	173
Cortona (27)	1	309?
Medma-Rosarno (-)	1	364
Montecchio (Cortona) (28)	1	362
Montefortino d'Arcevia (29)	2	298, 338
Nazzano (30)	1	BA 54
Nemi (31)	1	240?
Orbetello (32)	4	41, 219, BA 45, BA 48
Perugia (33)	3	24, 29?, 176?
Pietragalla (-)	1	363
Populonia (34)	4	1–4
Servigliano (35)	1	BA 24
Spello (36)	1	355
Talamone (37)	6	43–46, BA 6–7
Vetulonia (38)	1	39?
Volterra (39)	1	217

Outside the circle, there are 22 find-sites. It is remarkable that southernmost Etruria is represented by Cerveteri alone. The relatively careful documentation of finds from that area gives us reason to believe that this is no coincidence. Apparently, tripod thymiateria were not spread much in Etruria south of a line from Tarquinia to Civita Castellana—an impression further enhanced by their almost total absence in northern Latium (the only possible exception being Nemi), whose artistic manifestations are mostly very close to those of southern Etruria. Civitella S. Paolo and Nazzano are situated in the Faliscan country, immediately outside the circle.

Northern Etruria is represented by 25 specimens from nine sites: Chiusi, Cortona, Montecchio, Orbetello, Perugia, Populonia, Talamone, Vetulonia, and Volterra. Even though this area is less archaeologically explored, it is obvious that it cannot in any way compare with the area within the circle.

Outside Etruria proper, the finds are extremely few: eleven specimens from ten sites, disregarding two sites inside the circle (Poggio Sommavilla and Todi) which are, strictly speaking, located in Umbria and Lazio, just on the

¹⁴ In the left column numbers placed within brackets are used to denote the find-sites in *Figs. 1, 9, 13, 15, and 19*. The ordinary numbers in the right column refer to Ambrosini's catalogue, those preceded by "BA" to her list derived from the "*bibliografia archeologica*". Question-marks are used when the alleged provenance cannot be considered certain.

¹⁵ Briquel's suggestion (2016, 124) concerning the provenance of no. 79 ("*vraisemblablement Cerveteri*") probably results from the fact that the censer once belonged to the Campana collection, and should be treated with some caution. The shape of the initial *ś* supports the idea, but *śudina* inscriptions from Cerveteri belong mainly to the 5th century BC (*ibid.*, 117).

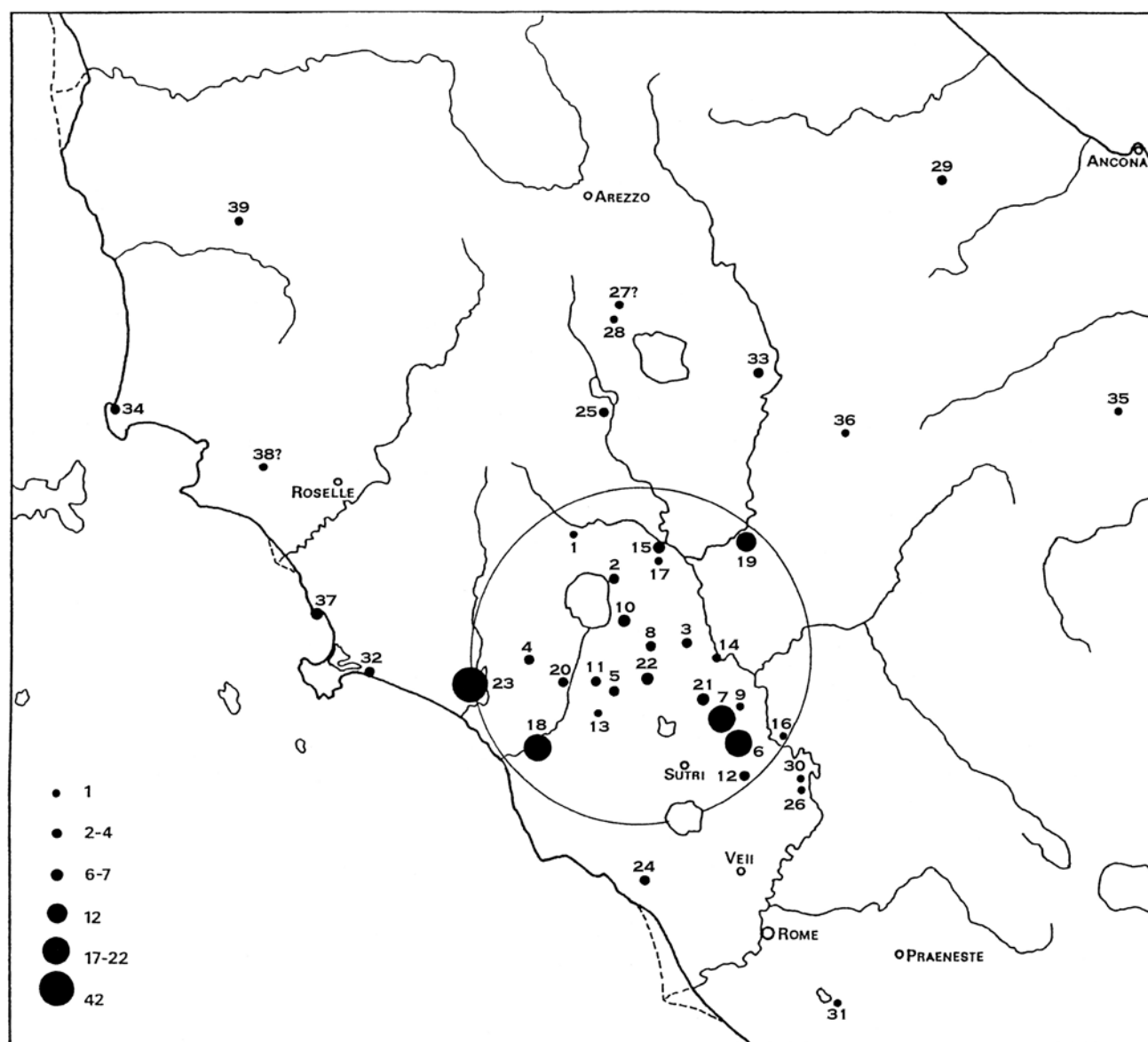


Fig. 1. Distribution map of the 207 provenanced tripod thymiateria listed in p. 107. Six find-sites fall outside the map: Buccino, Carrara, Chieti, Corfinio, Medma-Rosarno, and Pietragalla. The circle encloses the main distribution area, with 80% of the finds. Illustration by Örjan Wikander.

other side of the Tiber—but both displaying strong Etruscan cultural traits. North of the Arno, only one find is registered (Carrara), while there are as many as four from three sites in Picenum, near the Adriatic coast: Servigliano, Montefortino, and Chieti.¹⁶ The mountainous inland is represented

by Spello and Corfinio, whereas three sites in southern Italy fall far outside the map: Buccino, Pietragalla, and Medma. The last two finds differ palpably from the ordinary Etruscan specimens, and it may be questioned whether they should be treated here at all.

The absence of tripod stands at Marzabotto can be easily explained on chronological grounds; presumably the produc-

¹⁶ No. 305, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell'Abruzzo at Chieti, was also assumed by Testa and Buccioli to derive from Picenum. However, even though this seems a reasonable suggestion, Ambrosini points out that the private collection that it once belonged to contained

various objects of different origin. On the finds from the "area adriatica (Ager Gallicus)" in general, see Ambrosini 2002, 369f.

tion of those had just begun when Marzabotto was abandoned. Likewise, at Spina, the custom of including banquet services in tombs ended before 350 BC.¹⁷

2. Production centres and workshops

PRODUCTION CENTRES

Earlier literature occasionally intimates that all tripod thymiateria should be assigned to one and the same workshop¹⁸ or at least to the same production centre. We often find routine references to Vulci,¹⁹ but in 1982 Benedetta Adembri proposed the possibility of “other production centres, scattered to cover the demand of various interested areas.”²⁰ Considering the number of preserved thymiateria, their wide variation and distribution, this seems a reasonable assumption. Today, a more scattered production seems generally accepted, but much work remains to be done before the precise locations of the workshops are definitely established. Testa defined one Vulcentian and one Faliscan group of stands on the basis of both stylistic criteria and provenance. Concerning her Tarquinian and Umbrian workshops, however, she perhaps too-willingly believed that the find-site was also the site of production.²¹

Ambrosini accepted Testa’s division as a basis for further study,²² herself assigning the material to seven production centres: Populonia (nos. 1–5), Vulci (nos. 6–160), Falerii Veteres (nos. 161–295), Volsinii (nos. 296–337), Todi (nos. 338–358), Chiusi (nos. 359–361), and Cortona (no. 362).²³ The basis of this division is obviously stylistic, and characteristics common for each group are discussed in detail in the introductions of the respective sections. Even though I am prepared, in the main, to accept Ambrosini’s division of the material, it remains in various ways debatable. Like Testa (1989) and

Sandra Buccioli (1995), she abstains from clearly defining the principles behind her choices—even though these principles are at least partly intimated in their works. One of the main aims of my own study has been to put Ambrosini’s proposed production centres to the test.

As no workshop has been excavated or even discovered, our point of departure must necessarily be the distribution of the find-sites—in combination with stylistic considerations. In the future, chemical analyses of the bronze alloys may provide further information, but for the time being the extant material is much too small in number.²⁴ It seems a reasonable (but far from certain) assumption that the finds should be particularly frequent in and in the immediate vicinity of a production centre, and the number of provenanced thymiateria is doubtless sufficient to permit us to consider the distribution map representative enough for arguments of this nature.

All in all, we have 207 tripod thymiateria with known provenance from 45 find-sites, but most of these sites have yielded only stray finds: one or two from 25 sites, three or four from ten more. The remaining ten sites yielded so many finds that they could with good reason be suspected as possible production centres. Six or seven thymiateria each come from Montefiascone, Orvieto, Talamone, Vignanello, and Viterbo. Only five sites show significantly higher figures: Civita Castellana 17, Corchiano 20, Tarquinia 22, Todi 12, and Vulci 42. Together, these five sites yielded 113 finds—55% of all provenanced finds.

It is interesting to note that Testa (in spite of the considerably smaller group of material at her disposal) decided on precisely the last group for alleged workshops in the Faliscan territory (Civita Castellana/Corchiano), Tarquinia, Umbria (Todi), and Vulci.²⁵ But it is slightly odd that these five find-sites are all located close to the periphery of the circle. Ambrosini, however, argues strongly against the notion of Tarquinia as an independent production centre, maintaining that the provenance of the alleged Tarquinia stands is in many cases uncertain. She accordingly assigns the Tarquinia group of Testa (and Buccioli) to Vulci.²⁶ On the other hand, Ambrosini, too, reckons (beside Vulci) with a Faliscan production centre (probably at Civita Castellana) and one in Umbria (Todi).²⁷

Besides these three centres (corresponding, thus, to Testa’s four), Ambrosini suggests four additional ones: Populonia, Orvieto, Chiusi, and Cortona. Orvieto was already separated by Buccioli from Testa’s Umbrian group, and its inclusion by Ambrosini seems convincingly justified.²⁸ The Populonia

¹⁷ Hostetter 1998, 77f. On the absence of tripod thymiateria “nella regione circumpadana” and at Marzabotto, cf. Brizio 1899, 780.

¹⁸ For instance, Fiumi 1957, 486: “*Questi candelabri [...] dovevano uscire da una bottega che sparse per tutta la regione i prodotti della sua industria.*” (Even though various scholars, at least from 1871 [Friederichs 1871, 164f.] onwards, have stated the reasons why these stands cannot possibly have been intended for illumination, the misunderstanding has continued to crop up for a remarkably long time.)

¹⁹ So also Brendel 1978, 333.

²⁰ Adembri, in Feruglio *et al.* 1982, 103: “*Si può pertanto pensare, come del resto è stato già proposto per una classe affine, quella dei candelabri, verosimilmente eseguiti negli stessi ateliers [...], anche ad altri centri di produzione, dislocati in modo da coprire la richiesta delle diverse aree interessate.*” Cf. Martelli 1981, 181 no. 129 (candelabra); Adam 1984, 49.

²¹ Testa 1989, 196–198, with my comments in Wikander 1996, 285.

²² Ambrosini 2002, 51.

²³ Ambrosini 2002, 201–290. To these centres, some “*Produzioni eccezionali*” (nos. 363–365) are added.

²⁴ See below, n. 77. Cf. Ambrosini 2002, 110.

²⁵ Testa 1989, 196–198.

²⁶ Ambrosini 2002, 205–209. Cf. Buccioli 1995, 328. But see below, n. 166.

²⁷ Ambrosini 2002, 240–242, 280–282.

²⁸ Buccioli 1995, 390; Ambrosini 2002, 267–269.

group is small (only five specimens) but differs markedly from the others.²⁹ I feel more doubtful about the alleged production at Chiusi (three specimens)³⁰ and Cortona (only one). The former site seems weakly argued; the Cortona stand is, admittedly, quite unique but can hardly, by itself, prove the existence of a specific production centre.³¹ So odd a specimen would stand out, wherever it happened to be found.

In my 1983 article I tried to trace groups of censers which combine similar details, in order to lay the foundation for a division into various production centres and even workshops, but the results were mostly discouraging. It would, for instance, be desirable to find clear connections or differences in the use of climbing animals and humans on the shaft between proposed centres, but this is not easily done. Of eleven climbers, seven are to be found on stands from three to five centres, and three of these (Vulci, Civita Castellana and Orvieto) display no fewer than nine different climbers. Ambrosini devoted little interest to this question. In all probability, bronze-workers often moved from one production centre to another, and novelties easily spread to other workshops.³²

Of a total of 258 shafts published by Ambrosini, 58% are decorated with one, two or three climbers, but the frequency varies markedly between different production centres: Vulci 49%, Faliscan 72%, Orvieto 71%, Todi 29%, Other 14%. Only four censers have three climbers (nos. 21, 50, 62, 68). No. 164, with five, is presumably a 19th-century pastiche; cf. also p. 114 regarding no. BA 190. I have studied one of the ascending animal types in greater detail—one of the less common ones and perhaps the most intriguing, the serpent (see below, *Figs. 6*, no. 306, and *10*, nos. 21–22). Snakes winding one to

four times around the shaft³³ are found on 20 Vulcentian thymiateria, six Faliscan, and five Volsinian. The remaining production centres have contributed none.

The most conspicuous phenomenon is chronological. Like most Vulcentian stands, this group is considered quite early, whereas none of the other groups with serpents are dated before 325 BC. But 17 of those from Vulci are—that is, no less than 85%. Moreover, 74% of the serpent-stands belong to the general type GU1 (one of the variants with human legs) vs. 36% of all preserved Vulcentian tripods.

The only connection I have found between the output from all three production centres is that 25 of the 31 serpent-stands have shafts of either Type A (*“Fusto liscio semplice”*) or Type D (*“Fusto tortile semplice”*), whereas most other types display other climbers on the shaft. Characteristic of the Faliscan and Volsinian serpent-stands (but rare at Vulci) is a bowl of Type C, surrounded by a square platform with animals in the corners (88% vs. only 25% of the censers from Vulci). This fact is no surprise as far as the Faliscan production is concerned (Type C bowls predominate almost completely there) but may be of interest concerning Orvieto, where they amount to only 36%.

Speaking about snakes, one should not totally disregard the predominant decoration of the thymiaterion shaft, the spiral grooving or fluting which (without other decorations) is found on 27 tripod stands.³⁴ Four are dated as early as c. 350 BC (nos. 10, 20 [see below, *Fig. 10*], 35, 115), four to 350/325 BC (nos. 24, 106 [see below, *Fig. 11*], 108–109). Four even earlier spiral-grooved shafts dated to 375/350 BC (nos. 14, 38, 114, 118) are all resting on caryatids.³⁵

In 1984 I published a Roman Early Imperial bronze candelabrum, the shaft of which is shaped as three intertwining snakes, resting on their tails and with their heads protruding over the top. As a possible inspiration, I suggested, “a bit removed, but perhaps not totally irrelevant—the Delphian snake column”.³⁶ The similarity is striking and, considering the enthusiastic revival in Imperial Rome of *Tyrrhena sigilla*, it seems inevitable to take the spiral-grooved Etruscan thymiate-

²⁹ Ambrosini 2002, 201f., *tavv.* I:1–5. They preserve traits from their Archaic predecessors and are connected with one another mainly by their find-site (Populonia). Ambrosini (*ibid.*, 201, fig. 1) assigns them to five different types. Only no. 5, of unknown provenance (and possibly no. 2 from Populonia), belongs unambiguously to the class under study here. Cf. Wikander 2005, 127.

³⁰ Ambrosini 2002, 287–289. None of the Chiusine stands have known provenance, but they are all kept in northern Etruscan museums: Chiusi (no. 359) and Siena (nos. 360–361). For my own views concerning Chiusi as a production centre, see below p. 127.

³¹ No. 362 is certainly connected to Cortona, both by its find-site and by the *gentilicium* of its owner, Cusu, “*tipicamente Cortonese*” (Ambrosini 2002, 289, 428)—of a family known, particularly, from the *Tabula Cortonensis*. If it was actually produced there, its extremely odd shape may be due to the complete isolation of the workshop, without contacts with other thymiaterion producers.

³² Cf., concerning the production of cinerary urns at Volterra, Nielsen 1985, 52 (*“Collegamenti tra le botteghe”*). Immigrating craftsmen brought new ideas, which contributed to increasingly similar production over the entire area, but eventually adapted themselves to local conditions. For travelling workshops (*“artigiano vagante”*)—a different, but at least partly related phenomenon—see Bonghi Jovino 1990, 48–53; Söderlind 2002, 311–314.

³³ Two or three times predominate almost completely. One (or one and a half) round is found on five censers (nos. 71, 92, 100, 104, 111, all Vulcentian), four on no more than two (nos. 16, 312).

³⁴ Interestingly, almost all these censers are grooved (upwards) from right to left—perhaps reflecting the easiest position for a right-handed bronze-smith working from the bottom towards the top. The exceptions are no. 35 and a few specimens with shafts decorated with climbing animals. The same, right-to-left, direction of the grooves is to be found on all objects mentioned in nn. 40 and 41.

³⁵ Like Ambrosini, I use this term for all 46 figurines between base and shaft, irrespective of sex. The same applies to the eight statuettes between shaft and bowl (nos. 8, 19, 38, 44, 63, 152, 157, 353) and two others mounted slightly above the middle of the shaft (nos. 328, 336).

³⁶ Wikander 1984, 80. I have also (1983, 55) drawn attention to the parallels between nos. 338 and 346 and the Delphic acanthus column.

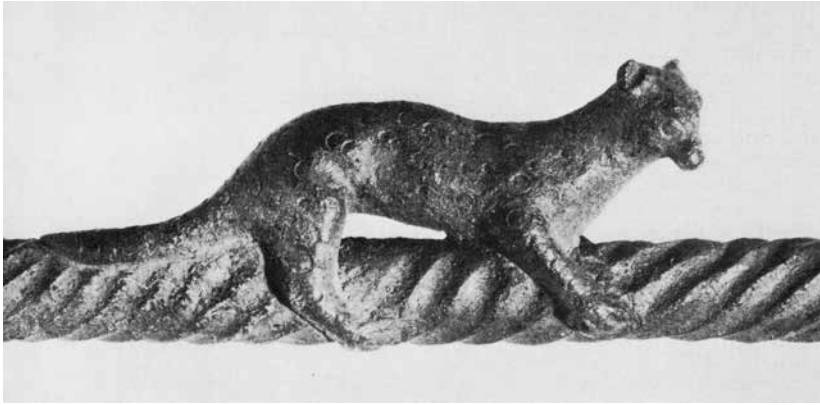


Fig. 2. Climbing feline of the shaft of no. 105 in Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm. Photograph: Museum.



Fig. 3. Climbing cock on the shaft of no. 105 in Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm. Photograph: Museum.

ria as the original prototype. That the Etruscan bronze-smiths also intended intertwined snakes with their spiral-grooved shafts is, of course, no necessary inference.

I have earlier asserted that these censers have no prototypes among Archaic thymiateria or Classical candelabra and suggested, instead, an *ad hoc* innovation.³⁷ Ambrosini points out that even a few Archaic thymiateria are decorated with spiral grooves, “*limitata ad una porzione non troppo estesa*”.³⁸ But this is only part of the truth. Aesthetically, it seems reasonable to assume an influence from the coiled bronze wires in use for both jewellery and utilitarian purposes from the later Bronze Age onwards.³⁹ Transferred to a spiral-grooved bronze staff, the motif is, however, extremely rare.

Besides the tripod thymiateria themselves, there are nevertheless a few categories dated even earlier. Such grooves are to be found on a group of grappling-hooks presumably intended for the roasting of meat (*harpagones*),⁴⁰ but even more interesting in this connection is a bronze poker, the shaft of which is finished off at both ends by a snake-head.⁴¹ The identification of the spiral-grooved shaft with coiling snakes seems, thus, hard to avoid. The provenance of this piece is unknown,

but similar pokers have allegedly been found at Vulci,⁴² where this decoration was first applied to tripod thymiateria.

So much about the snakes, but the climbing animals are worthy of deeper studies. They are seldom reproduced at a scale that makes it possible to appreciate their often quite careful modelling, remarkable considering their small size.⁴³ Here I publish once more photographs of the feline and the cock represented on the shaft of the Stockholm stand no. 105 (Figs. 2–3). “The length of the feline is 6.8 cm. The eyes are marked by punched circles, and a number of similar circles all over the body show the animal to be a panther. Four claws are clearly indicated on all paws. The length of the cock is only 3.0 cm, but the execution is still detailed: crest, claw and bill, seemingly divided horizontally by an incised line. The wing quills, like the tail feathers, are indicated by a few lines only.”⁴⁴

But other details may be even more rewarding. I have also studied the 25 thymiateria where the bowl is decorated with pendants hanging in chains attached to the corners of the platform (see below, Fig. 14, no. 302). We first encounter this kind of decoration at Vulci about 350 BC, but such chains were already widely diffused in Italy, from the Po valley to Sicily, in the Iron Age.⁴⁵ Only eleven specimens preserve these pendants; others have lost their chains, too, but they can be identified from the devices for their attachment (see below, Fig. 16, no. 318). When only drill-holes are found, it can be

³⁷ Wikander 1983, 60.

³⁸ Ambrosini 2002, 99f., with references in n. 16.

³⁹ See, particularly, the discussion in Macnamara 1976, 137–142, fig. 45 (“Rings and spirals of wire”), with ample references.

⁴⁰ *Bildertafeln NCG* 1928, 103 no. H. 234; Magi 1941, *tav.* 63 nos. 79a, 86–88. Of particular interest in this connection is such a grappling-hook (“*graffione*”) with twisted shaft (Milani 1905, 69 item *f.* fig. 9 left; Romualdi 2000, 367, fig. 21) discovered in the Tomba delle hydrie di Faone e Adone at Populonia together with one of the earliest, not fully developed, tripod thymiateria (no. 3). The tomb is dated to the end of the 5th century BC, that is, a generation before the first example of such censers with spiral-grooved shaft. For a specimen from Civita Castellana, the spiral-grooved shaft of which ends in the mouth of a snake, see De Lucia Brolli 1991, 52, fig. 27.

⁴¹ Kunze & Kästner 1988, 195f. no. B 7.49.

⁴² *Ars Antiqua AG* 1959, 33 no. 80, *Taf.* 40 (*non vidi*); Whitehead 1996, 17, fig. 9 (identified as back scratcher).

⁴³ Among the few exceptions can be mentioned Haynes 1967, pl. XXXIX (feline on base of no. 63), Hayes 1984, 36, with details of nos. 148 (snake, feline, bird) and 285 (monkey), and Ambrosini 2006, fig. 10 (bird, not in the corpus).

⁴⁴ Wikander 1983, 45.

⁴⁵ Randall-MacIver 1927, pls. 7 no. 6, 15 nos. 2 and 4, 18 no. 11, 25 nos. 6 and 9, 28, figs. 49, 51.

impossible to decide if these were intended for corner doves or chains (“*vaschetta priva delle colombe o catenelle*”). I have left these items out of account. The 26 unambiguous specimens are the following:⁴⁶

Vulci

Of 91 authentic bowls, six (7%) have chains.

No.	Type	Pendants	Date (BC)
18	CIe1	acorns	325/300
26	CVb1	?	325/300
42	CIg1	acorns	325/300
53	BIIa1	?	c. 350
62	CId1	acorns	325/300
77	CIe1	acorns	c. 350

Faliscan (Civita Castellana?)

Of 93 authentic bowls, one (1%) has chains.

No.	Type	Pendants	Date (BC)
217	CId2	acorns	325/250

Orvieto (Volsinii)

Of 30 authentic bowls, ten (33%) have chains.

No.	Type	Pendants	Date (BC)
297	GIIIa1	?	325/250
302	GIa3	acorns	325/250
307	GIa1	?	325/250
311 ⁴⁷	GIVa1	?	325/250
313	GIIIa1	?	325/290
318	GIa2	?	325/290
319	GIVb1	?	325/290
328	CIIBb1	?	325/290
333	FIa1	?	325/290
336	GIVb2	doves	325/290

⁴⁶ Some further examples are to be found in Ambrosini's “*bibliografia archeologica*”: nos. BA 13–14 (with acorn pendants), BA 24, and BA 27 (with acorn pendants). Three detached doves with suspension device (nos. 308, 317, 330, none with known provenance) were attributed by Ambrosini to Volsinian workshops.

⁴⁷ No. 311 has, closer to the corners than the larger rivet holes for the doves, very small holes which presumably carried chains (pers. obs., 29 June 1984).

Todi

Of 15 authentic bowls, eight (53%) have chains.

No.	Type	Pendants	Date (BC)
339	GIIa3	doves	300/250
340	GIVa3	pyramidal	300/250
344	EIVa1	?	300/250
345	GIIa4	pyramidal	300/250
346	EIIIa2	?	300/250
351	GIIa5	pyramidal	300/250
352	GIIa2	?	300/250
356	GIIa5	?	300/250

“*Produzioni eccentriche(?)*”

The only authentic bowl has chains.

No.	Type	Pendants	Date (BC)
365	AIe1	doves	325/250

I am not going to discuss no. 365, found at Buccino in South Italy, and not easily assignable to any of the regular production centres.⁴⁸ If anything, Ambrosini seems most inclined to refer it to a Faliscan workshop, but I doubt it. Otherwise, only one bowl with chains has been attributed to the *ager Faliscus* (no. 217), and there are reasons to question that attribution. The censer was found at Volterra (the only tripod thymiatrion from that site), far from all production centres apart from Populonia. Ambrosini does not seem totally convinced of the attribution and admits that Testa has referred the piece to an Umbrian workshop and Bucciolini to Orvieto.⁴⁹ More reasonable, perhaps, is the sea-route from Vulci and up the river Cecina. It is also worthy of note that the bowl of this censer belongs to Ambrosini's Type C, typical of the chained bowls from Vulci.

When looking at the three remaining centres, it is immediately apparent that Bowl C (“*Vaschetta emisferica entro placchetta quadrangolare con fori*”) is overwhelmingly predominant within the Vulcentian production, Bowl G (“*Vaschetta emisferica inserita entro placchetta con lati mistilinei, con fori*”) in the Volsinian and Tudertinian. Among the few exceptions, no. 53 belongs to Bowl B, which differs from C only by the use of devices under the platform instead of holes to attach the chains. No. 328 is a unique specimen, with five “human” figurines, and swans on top of the platform, and no. 333 is the only example existing of Bowl F. They would stand out, whatever production centre they were assigned to. Bowl E

⁴⁸ Ambrosini 2002, 391f.

⁴⁹ Ambrosini 2002, 254.

(nos. 344, 346), finally, diverges from G only by having a very slightly different form of the concave sides of the platform.

In other words, we can perceive distinct differences between the bowls from Vulci (7%, Bowl C, acorns) and those from Orvieto (33%, Bowl G, acorns and doves), and Todi (53%, Bowl G, doves and pyramidal pendants). But what does this imply? If we accept Ambrosini's dates, the answer is quite easy. The idea of decorating the thymiateria with pendants hanging on chains from the corners of the platforms was first conceived at Vulci around the mid-4th century BC. It remained in use for the rest of the century but was never common there. About 325 BC, the use spread to Orvieto and became quite popular, with another kind of bowl. About 300 BC, it continued upcountry to the workshops at Todi, the taste for eccentricities of which was naturally attracted by this new oddity: more than half the number of its bowls were decorated in this way.

A similar development can be followed in the use of bird figurines in the corners of the platform—to be found on c. 53% of the preserved bowls (but cf. below, nn. 69 and 237). There is a marked difference between their frequency among Populonian and Vulcentian censers, on one hand, and that among the rest, on the other:

Populonia	25%
Vulci	30%
Faliscan	73%
Orvieto	50%
Todi	52%

The clear facts revealed above concerning the chained bowls and platform birds constitute, in my opinion, strong support for the fundamental correctness of Ambrosini's distribution of the material. More such investigations will hopefully contribute to refine her results, and owing to her meticulously produced catalogue and typology, such case studies are quite easily effected. Here, I shall restrict myself to only one further inquiry, in order to present "hard facts" to complement the basic work accomplished from the study of find-sites and style.

In 1983, I published a diagram based upon the 83 complete height measurements known to me at the time.⁵⁰ The result was, hardly surprising, a histogram shaped as a rough version of a Gaussian bell-curve, with 73.5% of the censers concentrated between 37 and 45 cm and its peak at 41 cm. Ambrosini's corpus now offers a much greater sample, even though I discarded all specimens which lack some part or had it replaced, or whose authenticity has been questioned.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Wikander 1983, 52.

⁵¹ For that reason, I have not included any of the thymiateria presented in Ambrosini's "*bibliografia archeologica*".

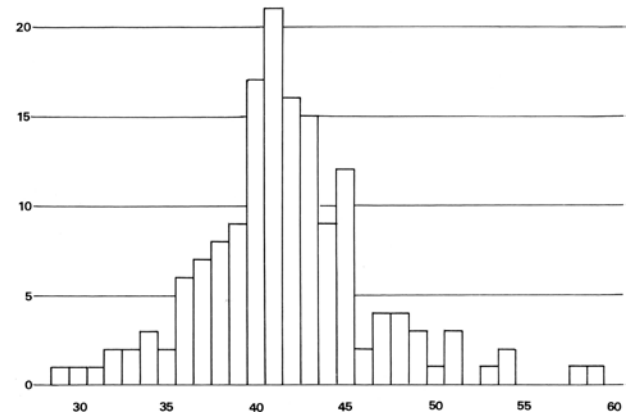


Fig. 4. Complete heights (29–60 cm) of 156 tripod thymiateria. Two censers fall outside the diagram: nos. 4 (11 cm) and 298 (70.3 cm). Median value 41 cm. Illustration by Örjan Wikander.

All measurements have been rounded to the nearest integer. As many entries do not state if the reported height includes the doves around the bowl or not,⁵² I have always chosen the greatest measurement—the difference is presumably of little consequence. Under these conditions, 156 thymiateria out of Ambrosini's 365 could be used.

The general picture (Fig. 4) differs only little from the one presented in 1983. The amount of censers with heights between 37 and 45 cm is almost identical (73.1%), and its peak is still 41 cm (which is also the median value).⁵³ But the importance of the investigation consists in the difference between material assigned to different production centres. Populonia yielded only three serviceable stands, all extremely low and with very different heights (11, 28.6 and 37.8 cm, respectively)—typical, perhaps, for an industry in its experimental stage. Chiusi yielded (possibly) two, 36.7 and 40.1 cm high, Cortona none. The remaining centres, with between eleven and 67 stands, make statistical treatment meaningful:

	Mean value	Median value
Vulci	42.9 cm	42 cm
Faliscan	40.9 cm	40 cm
Orvieto	46.4 cm	47.1 cm
Todi	41 cm	41.3 cm

⁵² "l'altezza non è sempre un dato rilevante, dal momento che spesso viene misurata in punti diversi (alle, colombe, alla vascetta, ecc...)" (Ambrosini 2002, 348).

⁵³ Höckmann (1982, 71) states that the height of Archaic thymiateria varies between 46 and 78 cm, but this information is obviously not based upon an extensive examination of the material. See, for instance, *Münzen und Medaillen* 1961, 38 no. 70 (H. 25.5 cm); 1967, 15 no. 22 (H. 29.3 cm).

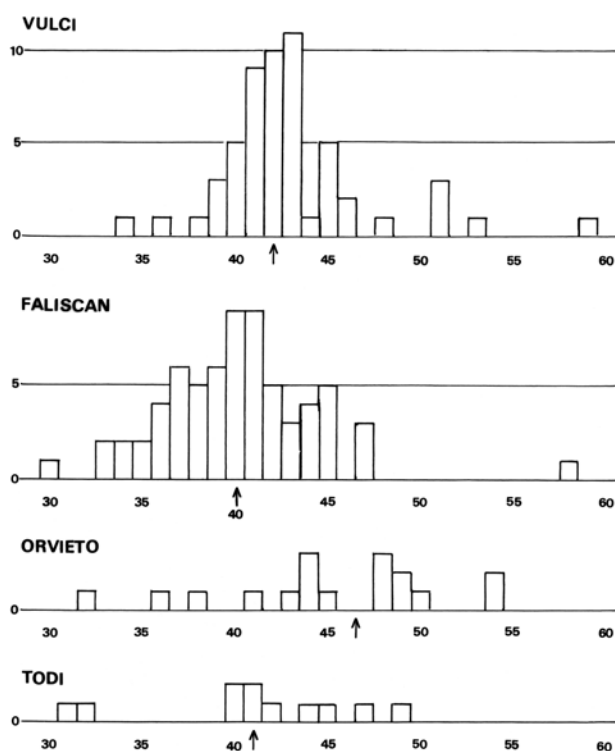


Fig. 5. Complete heights (29–60 cm) of 150 tripod thymiateria, distributed by four presumed production centres. One censer falls outside the diagrams: no. 298 (70.3 cm) from Orvieto. Median values are indicated with arrows. Illustration by Örjan Wikander.

Orvieto alone stands out, but very clearly so. Even if we discard the extreme measurement of no. 298 (70.3 cm), the new figures, 45/45.1 cm, would differ markedly from those of the other centres. Vulci comes closest, but even in that case the divergence is obvious. But conditions become even more interesting when we look at the distribution of heights within the separate centres (Fig. 5).

In these diagrams, we can clearly discern two groups: on one hand, Vulci and the Faliscan workshops, which are more or less similar to the general, bell-shaped Fig. 4 and, on the other, Orvieto and Todi where a limited number of thymiateria (18 and eleven, respectively) are dispersed over the range of heights—Orvieto from 32 to 70 (or at least 54) cm, Todi from 31 to 49 cm. The explanation closest at hand would be that the Vulcentian (particularly) and Faliscan bronze-workers at least strove for a tolerably uniform height of their products, whereas those at Orvieto and Todi had no such ambitions.

Anyhow, without definitely proving anything, the figures presented here seem to me a further confirmation that the stylistic/topographic distribution of tripod thymiateria by different production centres is not without foundation. They may also become a tool for classification, at least when extreme measurements are involved.

As an example, one may wonder if no. 164, with a height of 58.1 cm, should really be assigned to Faliscan workshops, whose products otherwise have no demonstrated height greater than 47 cm. Ambrosini assigns it to the Faliscan Type ZE12—but why not rather to the almost identical ZE14, produced at Orvieto where higher measurements are common? Of the 18 stands assigned to that town, no fewer than nine are higher than 47 cm. The provenance of no. 164 is not known but, as it is kept in a museum at Ascoli Piceno, it may be worth mentioning that two other stands, certainly deriving from Picenum (Montefortino d'Arcevia: nos. 298, 338), have been assigned by Ambrosini to Orvieto and Todi, respectively—two more probable starting-points for trade with Picenum than the *ager Faliscus*.⁵⁴

Ambrosini's list of thymiateria known from the "*bibliografia archeologica*" includes four further stands allegedly taller than 59 cm: nos. BA 53 (66 cm), BA 191 (79.5 cm), BA 178 (92.5 cm) and BA 190 (95.8 cm). Ambrosini tends to dismiss BA 178 as "*un pastiche realizzato con un candelabro e parti di incensieri ellenistici*". In fact, only one of the four derives from organized excavations; they have all turned up in a museum or in private collections. BA 190 was, admittedly, found at Vulci in 1829 during excavations instigated by the Princess of Canino, but even that may be the result of manipulations by 19th-century art dealers. This seems almost certain, as its shaft is decorated with "*quattro animali fantastici*"—a number unknown on genuine censers (p. 110).

Eight thymiateria in Ambrosini's "*bibliografia archeologica*" are lower than 29 cm: nos. BA 13, (22 cm), BA 166 (23 cm), BA 67, BA 152, BA 156, BA 169, BA 170 (25 cm), and BA 119 (27 cm). Six of them come from private collections and must be treated with caution. But two cannot be dismissed so easily: BA 13 was found in excavations at Todi in 1879 and published immediately (including information on height) in the *Notizie degli Scavi*. BA 67 was excavated at Chiusi in 1846 and published (ditto) in the *Bullettino dell'Istituto*. The descriptions clearly show that both were ordinary tripod thymiateria. The one from Todi may have lacked its tripod base, but the one from Chiusi was apparently complete. We can, thus, not totally exclude the existence of extremely low tripod stands.

The time has now come to inquire whether the classification tools suggested above can help to answer the question of a possible Tarquinian production. Both Testa and Bucciolini believed in such a workshop—using rather weak stylistic arguments, which were fiercely criticized by Ambrosini. The latter,

⁵⁴ But this entire discussion is superfluous, if Ambrosini is right in her suspicion concerning the authenticity of the piece. "*L'oggetto sembra essere un 'pasticcio' realizzato con elementi diversi. [...] con ogni probabilità qui sono stati uniti due fusti diversi (cioè spiegherebbe l'eccessiva altezza del fusto).*"

too, based her discussion almost entirely on style but concluded that “*i nostri elementi per definire la produzione tarquiniese siano, tuttavia, ancora insufficienti.*” She, accordingly, assigned the thymiateria found at Tarquinia to Vulci (and in two cases to Faliscan workshops).⁵⁵

The height of the Tarquinian censors⁵⁶ agrees well with that of the Vulcentian production in general (34.2–50.5 cm, average 42/40.2 cm), but the types reported for the three main parts of the stands do not. The frequencies of the censors in the Tarquinia museum differ markedly from those of the other Vulcentian material, and these differences become even more pronounced for the censors certainly discovered at Tarquinia:

	Vulci	Museum Tarquinia	Provenance Tarquinia
Base A	45%	59%	83%
Shaft A+D	78%	73%	63%
Shaft E	2%	14%	25%
Bowl A	29%	47%	83%

The differences are striking—perhaps not enough to prove a local production at Tarquinia, but certainly enough to make it a serious proposal. While even the figures for the museum group differ markedly from those concerning other Vulcentian censors (except for shafts A+D), the differences are immense among those with explicit provenance from Tarquinia. This might indicate that only part of the museum material does actually derive from there. The figures cast doubt upon Ambrosini’s statement that “*i thymiateria di sicura provenienza tarquiniese [...] non presentano caratteristiche tecniche o stilistiche tali da giustificare l’esistenza di un’officina locale, contemporanea, od anche posteriore [...] a quella vulcente.*”⁵⁷

For the time being, our knowledge of the production centres of tripod thymiateria remains in many ways uncertain but, as a working hypothesis, it seems reasonable to reckon with the following: Populonia, Vulci, Tarquinia?, Civita Castellana (and/or Corchiano?), Orvieto, Chiusi?, and Todi.

WORKSHOPS AND PRODUCERS

The discussions have so far concentrated on production centres rather than workshops. The difficulties of separating a general

tradition from a specific workshop or even an individual craftsman seem, for the time being, insurmountable.⁵⁸ A production centre is not the same as a workshop. Each centre could accommodate several. “What exactly is a ‘workshop’ (‘bottega’)? Which criteria should constitute a ‘workshop’, which a more general tradition, which the peculiarities of a separate craftsman?”⁵⁹ No craftsman has put his name on a thymiaterion. Moreover, to my knowledge, there are no signatures preserved of Etruscan bronze-workers of any kind,⁶⁰ but some Latin ones are known from the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC.⁶¹ Judging from their names, at least two of them may have been free-born, one a slave and one a freedman.⁶² Three of the inscriptions use very general words about the production process (*fecid, finxit, feced*), but one (on a mirror) includes the word *cailavit* (“engraved”), perhaps indicating a specialization within the workshop—a solution that seems reasonable *per se*.⁶³ Comparisons with the better-known ceramic and terracotta workshops suggest rather small production units—an extended family working for a market. But Ambrosini rightly emphasizes that the bronze industry, with its more complex work operations, presumably

⁵⁸ After the Second World War del Chiaro (1981, 24f., nos. 20–21) is, to my knowledge, the only scholar who has ventured to assign various thymiateria to one and the same workshop.

⁵⁹ Wikander 1996, 285. Bonghi Jovino (1990, 44–54) presents a thought-provoking discussion concerning master craftsmen, their assistants, and working conditions in pre-Roman, Italic workshops.

⁶⁰ With the possible exception of the stamp *Serturries* (retrograde) on a bronze strigil from Praeneste (Coarelli, in Coarelli & Gatti Lo Guzzo 1973, 284 no. 423:10; Morel 1991, 141)—if he was not of Sabellic origin. Cf. Colonna 1975, who knows of no Etruscan bronze-worker signature from the Archaic period. de Grummond (1982, 73) states explicitly that “Signatures [...] are nonexistent on Etruscan mirrors”, and Coarelli (supra) points out that the inscription of Vifis Pilipus (n. 61) is the only one known on a Praenestine mirror.

⁶¹ *CIL* I², 552: *Vifis [Vibis?] Pilipus cailavit* (mirror from Praeneste, 250/225 BC); 561: *Novios Plautius med Romai fecid* (cista from Praeneste, 350/325 BC); 2375: *C. Rufius s(igillator?) finxit* (figurine of unknown provenance); 2437: *Med Loucilios feced* (strigil from Corchiano). I deliberately disregard *CIL* I², 2497, read by Matthies (1912, 48) as *Noci opus L. Valerii*. Coarelli interprets this inscription as referring to a Nocus, slave of L. Valerius (s.v. ‘Nocus Valerius’, *EAA* V [1963], 537), but see the doubts expressed by Krummrey, in the third addendum to *CIL* I² (1986), p. 904. For some further, possibly Latin, inscriptions of craftsmen on Praenestine strigils, see Tagliamonte 1993, 190–194, 197, 200–202. Coarelli speaks of “*altri [...] forse oschi [...] ed etruschi*” (Coarelli & Gatti Lo Guzzo 1973, 285 no. 423). Cristofani (1978, 166) suggests that these signatures may indicate a higher status for the Praenestine artists than that of their Etruscan colleagues. I have excluded a few manufacturers of bronze statuettes.

⁶² In a dedicatory inscription by the *conlegia aerariorum* in Rome, dated c. 100 BC, both *magistri* were freedmen (*CIL* I² 977), and the same is true of the quite large number of bronze-workers known from Roman Imperial inscriptions (Kornemann 1909, 1900f.). Speaking about the early Republic, Dionysios (IX 25.2) stated that no Roman citizen was allowed to support himself as a tradesman or artisan (*χειροτέχνης*).

⁶³ Cf. Brendel 1978, 362: “Cross-connections between mirrors and other crafts are rare”.

⁵⁵ Ambrosini 2002, 206–209.

⁵⁶ That is, all thymiateria in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale at Tarquinia. Of the nine examples with certain provenance from Tarquinia, only four preserve complete height, varying greatly: 50.5 cm (no. 107), 48.1 cm (no. 114), 39 cm (no. 139), and 34.2 cm (no. 144). They, thus, include the two extreme measurements in the entire museum group. None fall in the range 40–46 cm, where 78% of the censors attributed to Vulci are to be found (*Fig. 5*).

⁵⁷ Ambrosini 2002, 207f.

demanded more far-reaching specialization and, thus, larger workshops⁶⁴—perhaps ten or even more workmen.

I would instinctively visualize a system like that proposed by Andrea Carandini for Italic workshops up to the third quarter of the 3rd century BC: “*Si tratta [...] di piccole botteghe a conduzione familiare, che producono quantità limitate di oggetti destinati a mercati locali, regionali o interregionali. [...] In questo sistema i produttori si comportano da artigiani (liberi o schiavi che siano), non ancora espropriati degli strumenti della produzione e della maestria professionale. L’abilità dell’artigiano arriva ancora a realizzarsi nella qualità del prodotto: che è innanzi tutto un ‘valore d’uso’, destinato ad una domanda limitata e prestabilita.*”⁶⁵ Though not referring at all to bronze industry, the description accords well with what we actually know about the manufacture and diffusion of tripod thymiateria.

From the end of the 3rd century BC, this mode of production had to compete with others that were more or less dependent on slave labour. But Carandini’s “*sistema del piccolo artigianato*” survived, clearly illustrated by Marjatta Nielsen’s studies of the cinerary urns from Volterra, where similar (and larger) workshop arrangements were apparently retained from the early 3rd century BC to the end of production around the birth of Christ.⁶⁶ We have, thus, no obvious reason to blame the cessation of tripod thymiateria production on changing organization of labour or workshops.

MODE OF PRODUCTION

With very few exceptions, tripod thymiateria constitute no true objects of art. The stands are composed from a large number of separately cast pieces—a procedure that easily promotes serial production of the individual parts. But no moulds have, so far, been discovered.⁶⁷ I have devoted particular attention to the various methods used to put the detached pieces together. Normally, the base was fixed to the shaft with a 1-cm-thick rivet⁶⁸ and the shaft soldered to the bowl with tin or lead⁶⁹ (today often replaced by a modern screw). But there are

exceptions such as no. 78, the shaft and bowl of which were “*apparentemente*” cast in one piece.⁷⁰

Of greater interest, however, is the combined casting of base and shaft. There are no fewer than 19 censers manufactured in this way and, when placed together, they show some interesting connections.⁷¹ The most obvious one is the predominant plain shaft (“*fusto liscio*”), completely (AI) or partly (AIII) smooth. Five specimens have spiral fluting or incisions (AII). Climbing animals are found on nos. 92, 176, 189, 198, 200, 202, 221, 237–238, 282, and 320.

Prod. centre	No.	Provenance	Type	Shaft
Populonia	4	Populonia	S1	PIa1
Vulci	36	?	ZE10	AIa12
	70	?	GS1	AIa3
	76	?	GU1/GS1	AIa1
	92	?	ZE10	AIh1
	176	Perugia?	ZE12	AIIf3
Faliscan	188	Civ. Castellana	ZE12	AIa4
	189	Civ. Castellana	ZE12	AIIf2
	198	Corchiano	ZE12	AIIf2
	200	Corchiano	ZE5	AIh3
	202	Civ. Castellana	ZE12	AIIf1
	205	Vignanello	ZE12	AIIf2
	221	?	GU4	DIIf1
	237	Corchiano	GU4	AIIf1
	238	Corchiano	A5	AIh2
	244	?	GU4	AIIf2
	250	?	GU4	AIIf1
	282	Musarna	GU4	AIIf1
Orvieto	320	?	GU6	AIc1

were occasionally cast in one piece with the shaft, but more often soldered onto it (ibid., 109). As the soldering and even rivets could easily break, the thymiateria were often found in many pieces. 60% of the platforms with birds in the corners have lost at least one bird. The amount of remaining birds is: four, 40%; three, 25%; two, 13%; one, 8%; none, 14%. This calculation does not take into consideration the possibility that some platforms without holes (Bowl B) may once have carried birds only soldered to the corners. Cf. below, n. 237.

⁷⁰ Tobias Dohrn (in Helbig 1963, 546 no. 730) stated that the shaft and bowl of no. 19 (see below, Fig. 10) “*von der Basis bis zur krönenden Schale aus einem Guss zu sein scheint*”. But Ambrosini states explicitly that “*Il treppiede e la vaschetta [siano] aggiunti in seguito al fusto*” and, considering the complex composition of the censer, Dohrn’s suggestion seems hard to believe.

⁷¹ Ambrosini does not mention the Musarna stand (no. 282), but Hayes (1984, 37 no. 44) states: “Cast: tripod base and stem in one piece, bowl separate”. I have excluded nos. 48 and 120, which do not really belong to this class of thymiateria, and 180, regarding which Ambrosini’s description is ambiguous. Ambrosini (2002, 110 n. 17) also mentions “*probabilmente*” no. 144, but its relevance in this connection does not emerge from the catalogue entry.

⁶⁴ Ambrosini 2002, 465. Imperial inscriptions distinguish between *fabri aenarii statuarii* and *vascularii*, but mention also *candelabriarii*, *sacomarii*, etc.

⁶⁵ Carandini 1981, 255—a summary based on ten articles illustrating the development of various Italic products from the 3rd century BC to the 2nd century AD. This system would correspond, more or less, to the first of the five production forms outlined by Bonghi Jovino (1990, 53): “*L’artigiano che, in ambito urbano, era dotato di una bottega ‘monofunzionale’, di maggiore o minore entità, che produceva un unico tipo di oggetti ed era connotato, sempre con le debite eccezioni, da uno specifico tipo di attività*”.

⁶⁶ Nielsen 1985, 52f.

⁶⁷ The situation is the same concerning Etruscan mirrors (P. Rowe, in de Grummond 1982, 49), but fragments of Roman stone moulds for bronze vessels are known: Brown 1976, 33f.

⁶⁸ Ambrosini (2002, 111 n. 22) enumerated 74 examples “*di sicura antichità*”.

⁶⁹ But no fewer than 36 examples fixed with an ancient rivet are enumerated in Ambrosini 2002, 112 n. 26. The climbing animals and humans

While most of the Faliscan censers have known provenance, it is remarkable that only one of the others has (no. 4). The four stands assigned to Vulci and the one assigned to Orvieto have obviously been attributed from stylistic consideration only. In no more than one of these five cases does Ambrosini state her reasons for the attribution (no. 70), but these (the shape of legs and shaft) seem little convincing to me. Nor do the general descriptions of the characteristics that distinguish the production centres in question agree too well with the five stands under discussion. Good parallels to these are otherwise quite rare in the Vulcentian group. But similar thymiateria, with plain shaft (AI) and often roughly shaped base, are common within the Faliscan output.⁷²

I would, accordingly, suggest that the entire group of censers with base and shaft cast in one piece should perhaps be assigned to Faliscan workshops—except, of course, for the Populonian no. 4 (and perhaps no. 70), which may possibly give us a hint of where this rare technique was first practised. What may speak against this hypothesis is the fact that the bowls of nos. 176–244 all belong to Type C (platform with holes), whereas this is the case with none of the others. The Populonian no. 4 has a bowl of the unique Type AVIIa4, and only one of the four Vulcentian stands preserves its bowl: Type AIa5, otherwise known only from five additional Vulcentian stands. The bases are of no assistance in this connection: out of 18 classified tripods, six have human legs and nine equine—evenly distributed among the proposed production centres.

I have earlier pointed out the underemployed potential for classifying thymiateria inherent in technical features, as a complement to the common use of provenance and style. Ambrosini devotes a short but comprehensive chapter to a detailed account of the successive stages in the manufacture of a tripod thymiaterion.⁷³ It is firmly based upon her minute studies of the separate objects, and it is thoroughly convincing. But she does not enter into questions concerning the chemical composition of the bronzes.

In 1983 I emphasized what to me seems obvious: “the composition of the alloys may at least be suspected to differ more as between different workshops and different periods than within one and same workshop or period.”⁷⁴ Some scholars have cautioned against the use of composition of the alloys as an instrument for classification but, in 1990, Ingela Wiman presented a comprehensive study of the possibilities offered by this method for grouping Etruscan bronze mirrors. The pitfalls are many,⁷⁵ and the results of her investigation were not

altogether encouraging. But she could convincingly conclude that she had found “clustering tendencies that seem to relate to certain iconographic and stylistic characteristics.”⁷⁶

As for the tripod thymiateria, our studies are restricted by the few chemical analyses that have so far been carried out—of two thymiateria in Stockholm and three in London.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, a comparison of the ranges of the three predominant metals in the alloys of Etruscan thymiateria and mirrors gives a slightly surprising result:

Thymiateria: Copper 63–80% Tin 4.7–17.9% Lead 12–32.7%
Mirrors:⁷⁸ Copper 83–93% Tin 4–16% Lead 0–7%

The high percentage of lead in thymiateria can probably be explained by the fact that this metal was more easily accessible (and thus much cheaper) than tin.⁷⁹ A greater weight of the alloy was obviously not desirable *per se*, as the underside of the base was normally hollowed out.⁸⁰

A high percentage of tin in mirrors is often explained as endeavours to make their surface lighter and smoother, but as presented here it is almost identical with that found in tripod thymiateria. Accordingly, whereas the latter display a

ferent parts of the object, caused, not least, by the solidification process (ibid., 37). On the other hand, the results achieved from different analysing methods seem almost identical (ibid., 27).

⁷² Wiman 1990, 89. A complementary study led her to the conclusion that “The Archaic I[vy] L[eaf] W[reath] mirror makers obviously tended to produce their cast mirrors with a highly controlled bronze formula. Possibly they aimed at a composition of 89% copper and 11% tin” (Wiman 1998, 119f., 124, 126, tables 1, 4).

⁷³ Törnblom, in Wikander 1983, 67 (nos. 105–106); Macnamara 1986, 88–90 (no. 62); Haynes 1985, 309, 315 (nos. 63, 313). The latter three specimens are the only ones included in Craddock 1984, 257f., table 16. Some analyses may have been added later, but these five are still the only ones known to me.

⁷⁴ These figures were presented by Rowe, in de Grummond 1982, 52–54, based on a sample of 75 specimens. Wiman (1990, tables 1:1–6) based her investigation on 201 mirrors, the figures of which differ much more: copper 70–95.5%, tin 4.1–15.9%, and lead 0–25.1%. But she points out (p. 26) that the great majority fall within the range of 83–93% (copper) and 7–16% (tin), quite in accordance with the figures of Rowe. As for lead, her tables show that as many as 88% of the mirrors have only 1% or less. Only three specimens pass 5%, with the extreme figures of 7.4, 16, and 25.1%, respectively. I here leave out of account a number of elements, the share of which seldom surpasses 0.3% (Wiman 1990, 31).

⁷⁵ In the 70s AD, the ratio of the price of tin to lead was 80 to 7: Plin. *HN* XXXIV 48.161 (but the figure 7 should perhaps rather be 17, as written in most manuscripts). Lead is to be found at a number of places along the Tyrrhenian coast. For the possibility that tin was extracted in the Colline metallifere (Campiglia), see Craddock 1984, 218f. Cf. Buchholz 1980, 142f., with n. 14; Formigli 1985, 44. The six 5th- and 4th-century BC candelabra examined by Craddock (1984, 257f., table 16) contain less lead than do the thymiateria and more copper. The composition of their alloys is more reminiscent of that of the mirrors—a fact not commented upon by Craddock.

⁸⁰ Ambrosini 2002, 108.

⁷² See, particularly, nos. 187, 219–220, 242–243, and 280. Moreover, Ambrosini herself points out the similarity of no. 70 to the Populonian no. 2.

⁷³ Ambrosini 2002, 107–112 (ch. 8).

⁷⁴ Wikander 1983, 57. Cf. Wikander 1996, 285; 2005, 124.

⁷⁵ Wiman 1990, 57–75 (ch. 7: “Chemical composition—a classification tool?”). A major problem is the varying composition of the alloy in dif-

very high percentage of lead,⁸¹ copper is strongly predominant in the mirrors. The use of tin had, however, to be restricted, as too high amounts made the mirror brittle and did not allow the necessary hammering of the disc.⁸² Nevertheless, Roman mirrors could contain 19–32% tin, “*dazu wesentliche Bleibestandteile*”.⁸³

The analyses of the Stockholm stands suggest two fundamentally different modes of production. In the first case, samples from the bowl and base showed an almost identical chemical composition, “so similar that they may be regarded as the same alloy”. In the other, samples from the bowl, the equine legs, and the angle leaves of the base differ noticeably.⁸⁴ If the differences had been restricted to the base in comparison to the bowl, we would have had reason to suspect that those parts did not originally belong together but were joined by some 19th-century antique dealer—even though there is nothing at all in the appearance of the stand to suggest such a forgery. The decisive factor, however, is the difference of the alloys of various parts of the base itself, which could not possibly have been joined after the modern discovery. We are, thus, obviously dealing with two fundamentally different production methods: one in which the entire stand was made at one single occasion, while in the other previously produced parts were joined later on.

The latter possibility has been discussed, particularly, by Bucciolli, who maintained that different workshops and even production centres specialized in the manufacture of particular parts, which could then be joined somewhere else.⁸⁵ The theory has been strongly criticized, and even though it cannot

be unequivocally refuted, there are good reasons to remain doubtful.⁸⁶

A more reasonable explanation would be that each workshop produced complete thymiateria, but that the manufacture of various parts was entrusted to specialized craftsmen—whose individual products could easily be cast from different alloys. Such division of labour would have increased both quality and efficiency. Manufacture in separate parts may have been of benefit to the customers, too. They were perhaps in a position to influence directly the product they intended to buy by being able to choose the decorative details they preferred to see on their particular incense stand. Such a procedure would help to explain the extreme variation in combining parts to complete stands—not *per se* a necessary consequence of the production of separate parts.⁸⁷ Considering this mode of production, one could have expected identical details to turn up on other bronze objects, but Ambrosini’s studies of the problem gives little hope: parallels are frequent but identical parts seemingly non-existent.⁸⁸

This fact weakens somewhat Ambrosini’s suggestion (based precisely on “*rapporti strutturali e stilistici*” with other bronzes) that the tripod thymiateria were not produced in specialized workshops but by bronze-workers used to making various kinds of objects.⁸⁹ Larissa Bonfante and Nancy de Grummond, on the other hand, believe that “Mirrors, strigils and cistae may have been made in specialized workshops”.⁹⁰ No convincing answer seems possible for the moment—the crucial question being, of course, whether the amount of censors was great enough to keep, by themselves, several workshops busy at the same time.

The first Stockholm thymiaterion—no. 105 (see below, Fig. 11), with homogenous alloy in all three parts—could be

⁸¹ Ambrosini (2002, 245) suggests that the peeling of the patina on no. 175 (and “*moltissimi incensieri falisci*”) may be caused by superabundance of lead in the alloy.

⁸² Wiman 1990, 32. The amount of tin is only slightly less in Hellenistic Greek mirrors (4.3–12.4%) and that of lead identical (0–7.7%), but still many of them have been tinned to procure the desired reflective qualities (Craddock 1977, 108, fig. 8 [n = 28]).

⁸³ Blümner 1899, 897. Extreme quantities of lead (21.5 and 46.2% respectively) have been found in two Etruscan mirrors: “Plainly, they were useless as mirrors, and one can only surmise that they were intended as non-functional tomb furniture” (Craddock 1984, 229f.).

⁸⁴ Törnblom, in Wikander 1983, 67. Differences of a similar kind can be observed between no. 63 (same alloy: Haynes 1985, 309 no. 170) and no. 313 (varying: Haynes 1985, 315 no. 184). Craddock (1984, 234) suspected modern additions, when different components were distinguished in various parts of Etruscan candelabra, but he made no such suggestions (by underlining) concerning the three thymiateria included in his investigations (ibid., table 16). I do not know the factual grounds for Ambrosini’s (2002, 213) comment on no. 26: “*La diversa patina dei pezzi è dovuta probabilmente soltanto alla differente lega utilizzata per le varie parti.*”

⁸⁵ Bucciolli 1995, 445—basing herself on Plin., *HN*. XXXIV 6.11, concerning specialized production of upper parts and shafts of candelabra at Aegina and Tarentum.

⁸⁶ Serra Ridgway 1998; Ambrosini 2002, 54–57, 463–465. Cf. Craddock 1984, 234. The same combining of separately manufactured bronze details has been suggested by Verzar, because of the inscription *Maquoul-na(?)* on one of the legs of the Cista Ficoroni, “*nome dell’acquirente, inciso per il montaggio delle parti, evidentemente acquistate in officine diverse*” (Verzar in Coarelli & Gatti Lo Guzzo 1973, 265 no. 413). But this conclusion seems far from obvious to me.

⁸⁷ Ambrosini 2002, 115: “*L’analisi autoptica [...] ha posto in evidenza come ciascun thymiaterion, al di là delle generiche somiglianze con altri esemplari sia, spesso e volentieri, un unicum; pertanto come ha giustamente sottolineato J.G. Szilágyi, la tipologia dei thymiateria può procedere senza limiti.*” Cf. also MacIntosh Turfa 1982, 176 (concerning no. 229): “Due to the process of manufacture, there may be no exact parallels for this particular combination of elements.”

⁸⁸ Ambrosini 2002, 335–342. But she defines three groups of thymiateria, in which the caryatid “*è stata realizzata dallo stesso prototipo*”: nos. 171, 180, and 210; nos. 311 and 336; nos. 352 and 355 (ibid., 109 [353 is a misprint for 355], 247, 286f.).

⁸⁹ Ambrosini 2002, 115. Adembri (in Feruglio et al. 1982, 103 no. 20) suggests that candelabra were “*verosimilmente eseguiti negli stessi ateliers*”; cf. Testa 1989, 89.

⁹⁰ de Grummond 1982, 74.

the perfect point of departure for testing the possibilities of chemical analyses as a classification tool. In 1983, I pointed out three more or less identical censers; in 2002, Ambrosini indicated four other very similar ones; and today, I would add at least two more. The basic data for the nine almost-identical censers, including no. 105, are the following:

No.	Provenance	Height (cm)	Differences
7	?	44.8	Lotus leaves in base angles, legs resting on plinths
10	?	43.4	Lotus leaves, no animals on shaft, no birds around bowl
12	?	41	Ivy leaves, legs resting on plinths, no birds around bowl
26	Vulci?	45.6	Palmettes, no birds on base
27	Vulci	41.8	Ivy leaves, no birds around bowl (see below, <i>Fig. 10</i>)
45	Talamone	40	Lotus leaves, legs resting on plinths
51	?	40.6	Lotus leaves
55	?	39.5	Lotus leaves, no animals on shaft
105	?	43	Ivy leaves

Apart from the minor differences listed above, these nine thymiateria are almost identical. They all belong to Ambrosini's Type ZE1, and they are all assigned to Vulcentian workshops. They differ little in height (39.5–45.6 cm). It would be difficult to produce a group of censers that could with higher probability be attributed to one and the same workshop. In other words, if analyses of these stands do not show chemical compositions in accordance with that of the already analysed Stockholm stand no. 105, we may perhaps have to acknowledge that such investigations are of little value for the classification of tripod thymiateria. If, on the other hand, the results are encouraging, such analyses can undoubtedly provide a new tool for the difficult task of suggesting convincing origins for the many unprovenanced stands.

While mass production was never an option in the ancient bronze industry, we enter—with the repeated manufacture of separate parts—into what may with good reason be labelled serial production. This occurred at about the same time as simplified and more efficient manufacture processes were introduced in Central Italy for products such as pottery, engraved gems,⁹¹ etc. The reason was a heavily increased demand for everyday commodities of reasonably high quality.

⁹¹ Pottery: Pianu 1985. Gems: Hansson 2005, 35–42. From c. 320 BC onwards, the Late Classical glyptic style developed towards greater simplification, occasionally with larger empty areas around the figures. Some gems are characterized by rougher drilling, which gives the impression that the products are not finished. The *a globulo* gems have “an intaglio

Within certain scholarly traditions, particularly one with its intellectual centre at Cambridge, the concept of “middle class” has been almost taboo as far as Antiquity is concerned,⁹² but why deny the obvious: at least from the 4th and 3rd centuries BC onwards, an increasing amount of people in the Mediterranean world reached a reasonable level of prosperity—so high, at least, that they began to demand a standard of living far above the basic necessities of life.

On the negative side, this increasing demand led to deterioration of artistic quality, as witnessed most palpably in bronze mirrors and red-figure pottery, but also, in the early 3rd century BC, within various groups of tripod thymiateria—particularly those deriving from Faliscan workshops (see below, p. 135).⁹³ A further reason could have been the emigration of skilled craftsmen to north Etruria, southern Italy and not least Rome. Such migrations have been suggested as an explanation for deterioration of the production of stone sarcophagi and the disappearance of *a globulo* gems towards the middle of the 3rd century BC. As for the bronze industry, it may not be without significance that silver tended to replace bronze in prestige articles. Production of bronze utensils seems to cease almost completely in South Etruria after the middle of the 2nd century BC, but continues in the north.

3. Distribution, trade, and their limitations

The distribution map (*Fig. 1*) clearly shows the importance of the waterways for trade. The Tiber and Chiana valleys play a central part; most find-sites in the eastern part of the central distribution area are situated there, and they also explain the spread of both consumption and production northwards to Orvieto, Chiusi, Todi and Perugia. In a similar way, the Tyrrhene coast connects the western part of the central area with Orbetello, Talamone, Populonia, Volterra, and even Carrara. A few thymiateria have crossed the Apennines almost to the Adriatic coast.

But these examples of long-distance trade are exceptional—so exceptional, indeed, that they should hardly be

where all or most of the hollowed-out forms have been made by applying a limited number of spherical drill-heads of varying size.”

⁹² See, particularly, Garnsey & Saller 1987, 45, 116, who even present “middle class, lack of” as an entry in their index (p. 229). The same development, from aristocratic customers to a wider clientele, has been observed in the production of bronze mirrors (Serra Ridgway 2000, 417) and cinerary urns (Nielsen 1985, 52f.: “*ceti 'medio-bassi'*”).

⁹³ But Ambrosini (2002, 313) thinks that a “new” production, “*destinata ad un ceto medio-alto della società*”, was already introduced at Vulci around the middle of the 4th century BC—a time when the Vulcentian output had its qualitative peak.

labelled “trade” at all. If we accept, in the main, Ambrosini’s division of the censers by production centres, the great majority of the finds were actually discovered in their immediate vicinity. Of the provenanced finds attributed to the four most important centres (here defined as those with more than five specimens each assigned by Ambrosini), as many as between 64 and 78% were discovered within a radius of 30 km from the alleged production site⁹⁴—proportions so reasonable that they may corroborate the basic correctness of Ambrosini’s division (if we are not dealing here with a case of circular reasoning). As for the methods applied for the local spread of the product, we can but speculate: itinerant salesmen, mobile customers, or both?⁹⁵

In fact, the great majority of the finds of tripod thymiateria derive from a very small area: the northern part of South Etruria and the southernmost part of north Etruria. The northern border of the area runs from Vulci, over Orvieto, to Todi. Further north, only occasional finds have been made, spread along the coast or river valleys.

The southern border is a curving line from Tarquinia up to Lago di Vico and then towards the south-east to enclose the *ager Faliscus*. Further south, there are, apart from a few stands from southern Italy, only one certain and two possible finds from Cerveteri—a surprisingly small number, considering the general abundance of finds from that site. The reason for the lack of bronze stands (of both the tripod and the Curunas variety) could, of course, be topographic: south and east of the river Mignone, communications were restricted by the Tolfa Mountains, the Ciminian forest and the rocky, wild, landscape between them—made easier to access after the Roman conquest by Via Clodia and Via Cassia. But the importance of the Roman road network should not be overestimated. The area was not otherwise devoid of contacts with the surrounding Etruscan culture.

In Latium, there is one possible find from Nemi, but not even Praeneste—so rich in bronzes at the time—has yielded one single example. Ambrosini does not discuss this problem. She asserts, instead, that the use of tripod thymiateria is “well-known in all southern Etruria”. But she does incidentally mention “the almost complete absence of Hellenistic incense burners at Cerveteri”, suggesting that the early incorporation of that city in the Roman sphere of influence may have made it the subject of “the well-known Roman limitations of luxury in private life”.⁹⁶

The Roman *leges sumptuariae* are a later phenomenon (beginning with *Lex Oppia* of 215 BC),⁹⁷ but Ambrosini’s general idea may still be correct. Examples of opposition to luxury are to be found already in the *Leges XII tabularum*, but there is no indication that the possession of metal objects of this kind would have been prohibited by law.⁹⁸ Even when the tenth table forbids the deposition of metal objects in tombs, it speaks exclusively of gold.⁹⁹ Apparently the metal of the thymiateria was *per se* of no consequence in this connection—but their function may have been.

The tenth table also forbids excessive ceremonies at the funeral, for instance, the anointing of the corpse, the use of more than ten flute-players, the sprinkling of the funeral pyre with wine, and the *acerrae*¹⁰⁰—small, portable altars, upon which incense was burnt at the funeral.¹⁰¹ As the other restrictions refer, not to objects, but to actions (anointing, performance of music, sprinkling), it seems a reasonable assumption that the prohibition aimed precisely at the *burning* of incense, and consequently the very reason to put incense stands in tombs ceased to exist.¹⁰² In light of this, it is interesting to note that

bita romana, abbia recepito le ben note limitazioni romane al lusso attuato nella sfera privata.” (Ambrosini 2002, 466).

⁹⁷ For a summary of the laws and the ancient testimonies, see Kübler 1932. See also Clemente 1981, who particularly emphasizes the importance of the Second Punic War for the discussions that led to the passing of *Lex Oppia* (ibid., 4f.). For a thorough, recent discussion, with ample bibliographical references, see Webb 2019, 8–19.

⁹⁸ When P. Cornelius Rufinus (*RE* s.v. ‘Cornelius’, no. 302) was expelled from the senate in 275 BC on the charge of extravagance (see, for instance, Gell. *NA* IV 8.7), it was because he possessed a dinner set of more than ten pounds’ weight of worked silver—but not one of the ancient sources indicates that his possession would have been contrary to law. But cf. Plin., *HN* XXXIV 7.13: *Camillo inter crimina obiecit Spurius Carvilius quaestor, ostia quod aerata haberet in domo* (391 BC). According to Plutarchos (*Vit. Cam.* 12), the reason for the accusation was rather that the bronze door was embezzled from booty from the capture of Veii. Later, in 161 BC, *Lex Fannia* allowed up to 100 pounds of silverware at dinner parties (Gell. *NA* II 24.2). See also Plin., *HN* XXXIII 50.141–143, and the slightly exaggerated account ibid., XXXIII 54.153: *Fabricius, qui bellicosos imperatores plus quam pateram et salinum habere ex argento vetabat*.

⁹⁹ Cic., *Leg.* II 24.60 (Tabula X 8): *neve aurum addito*. But some tripod thymiateria preserve traces of gilding, for instance no. 180 (Nardi 1980, 276 no. 9). For gilding on an Archaic thymiaterion, see Friederichs 1871, 166 no. 687. Anyhow, the many Etruscan tombs with golden gifts (p. 142) prove that no similar prohibitions were in force in Etruria.

¹⁰⁰ Cic., *Leg.* II 23–24.59–60 (Tabula X 3, 6a).

¹⁰¹ “Diese Räucheraltäre scheinen den turibula (θυμιατήρια), kandelaberartigen Opferbecken, ähnlich gewesen zu sein. Valer. Max. III 3, 1 gebraucht turibulum als gleichbedeutend mit acerra.” (Habel 1894, 154). This interpretation is close to that of Festus (p. 18 Müll., s.v. ‘Acerra’): *Acerra, ara quae ante mortuum poni solebat, in qua odores incendebant*. Lewis & Short (p. 21, s.v. ‘Acerra’) suggest “a casket in which was kept the incense used in sacrifices, esp. in burning the dead, an incense-box”. But the remaining testimonia hardly support this view. Cf. also the prohibition of putting myrrh in the tomb (Tabula X 6b).

¹⁰² On the use of incense by the Etruscans and, particularly, the contradictory statements of Isidorus and Arnobius, see the discussion regarding Briquel 1991 in Ambrosini 2002, 67f.

⁹⁴ Vulci 28 of 40 (70%), Civita Castellana 34 of 50 (68%), Orvieto 9 of 14 (64%), Todi 7 of 9 (78%).

⁹⁵ Nielsen shrewdly adds “brides coming from elsewhere” (pers. comm.). On the issue in general, see Nielsen 2022.

⁹⁶ “Cerveteri appare una sorta di isola che non sembra accogliere volentieri l’uso, ben attestato in tutta l’Etruria meridionale, di deporre incensieri nei corredi femminili: è probabile che Cerveteri, precocemente assorbita nell’or-

the strangely-shaped southern border of the tripod thymiateria distribution is almost identical with the northern border of Roman power in the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BC—precisely the time when these thymiateria had their heyday.¹⁰³ The 6th- to 3rd-century BC terracotta *arule*, found in great numbers in the Esquiline necropolis,¹⁰⁴ may well have been used for burning incense¹⁰⁵—but, if so, in apparent opposition to the regulations of the *Leges XII tabularum*. It is interesting to note that such *arule* were used from Sicily and Magna Graecia up to Cerveteri and Civita Castellana, but not farther north (where bronze thymiateria were common).

Admittedly, our knowledge of Roman sumptuary legislation before 215 BC is not sufficient to prove this theory, nor that the bronze as such played no part. There are at least two circumstances which indicate that it in fact did: the almost complete absence of all kinds of bronze utensils in Middle Republican Rome,¹⁰⁶ and the fact that the tripod thymiateria were replaced by a simpler variant, the Curunas type, when their central distribution area was occupied by the Romans before the middle of the 3rd century BC (see below *Figs. 15 and 17*).

4. Chronology

The tripod thymiateria have for long been assigned, without much justification, to the 4th or early 3rd century BC. When arguments have been presented, they are mostly of a stylistic nature, based primarily upon a study of the human statuettes often inserted between base and shaft. Some of these have occasionally been referred to the 5th century BC, while one was dated as late as the latter half of the 2nd century BC. There are

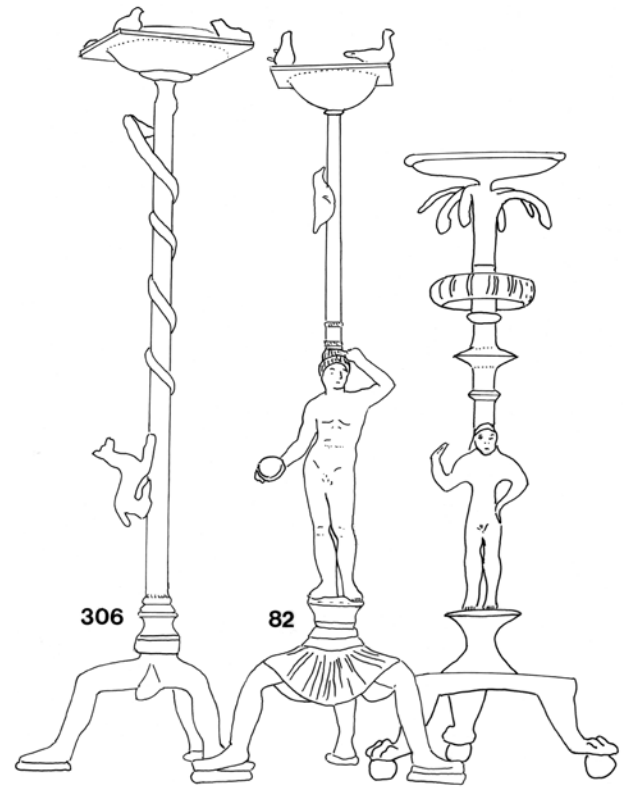


Fig. 6. Two tripod thymiateria (nos. 82 and 306) and one Archaic censer in the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, Rome. Simplified drawing after Moretti et al. 1970, 238. Illustration by Örjan Wikander.

reasons, though, to doubt whether Central Italic bronze figurines from Classical and Early Hellenistic times can actually be used for such precise, stylistic dating of utility objects. A comparison between various scholars' different datings of the same objects does not enhance confidence in this method.¹⁰⁷

In 1983, I tentatively suggested that the main period of the class should be defined as c. 350–250 BC, with a few finds possibly going back as far as c. 400 BC.¹⁰⁸ But I also pointed out the existence of some “intermediary forms”—tripod stands which retain some features characteristic of the Archaic type of thymiateria (*Fig. 6*, right). Ambrosini rightly emphasized that there is more than one such type and she also questioned my suggestion of a parallel production of “Archaic” and “Hel-

¹⁰³ There is, in fact, a possible parallel to the southern border of the distribution of the thymiateria, the significance of which is difficult to assess. I have been informed by Ulf Hansson that almost the same line, from Tarquinia to Civita Castellana, delimits the diffusion of Etruscan engraved gems. A higher number have been found at Cerveteri and a few in northern Latium—but none in Rome.

¹⁰⁴ Ricciotti, in Coarelli & Gatti Lo Guzzo 1973, 72–96 nos. 47–88.

¹⁰⁵ Contra: Ricciotti 1978, 14. I owe this reference to Laurent Haumesser.

¹⁰⁶ As witnessed, for instance, in the exhibition catalogue *Roma medio repubblicana* (Coarelli & Gatti Lo Guzzo 1973). Of the extensive tomb material presented there from 4th- and 3rd-century BC Rome, only two objects are of metal: two almost undecorated bronze mirrors (*ibid.*, 210 no. 289, 249 no. 379)—a situation in glaring contrast to the rich finds of bronzes in contemporary tombs at Praeneste, a city that remained independent from Rome up to the conquest of Sulla in 82 BC. In a section of the same catalogue, devoted to finds from Praenestine tombs, no fewer than 31 bronze objects of varying nature are presented (*ibid.*, 264–290). It may be significant that the Cista Ficoroni, explicitly manufactured in Rome, was discovered at Praeneste in a tomb belonging to a well-known local family. Its inscription “is usually taken to mean that Novius Plautius had set up a workshop at Rome, but it need not; [...] Perhaps the original was in Rome itself, and this is why Novius Plautius went to Rome to make the cista” (Richardson 1964, 140f.). Cf. Brendel 1978, 355.

¹⁰⁷ For examples, see Wikander 1983, 66 n. 111. It is even more difficult to understand why Dohrn (in Helbig 1963, 546 no. 730) thought that some censers without caryatid as, for instance, no. 26 (convincingly dated by Ambrosini to the end of the 4th century BC), “mögen sich noch aus spätarchaischer Tradition herleiten und im Anfang des 5. Jhs. vor Chr. entstanden sein.” For similar problems of using purely stylistic dating for Etruscan mirrors, see Bonfante, in de Grummond 1982, 157f.

¹⁰⁸ Wikander 1983, 58—based upon a rather cursory study of find circumstances of 21 stands.

lenistic" censers.¹⁰⁹ I would like here to draw attention to a thymiaterion not known to me at the time, Ambrosini's no. 269, not published until 1983. It has equine legs and a plain, undecorated shaft resting on an obviously Archaic kourous,¹¹⁰ whereas the bowl is missing.

Ambrosini tried to solve the problem by stating that the original shaft is missing: "*Il fusto, con cariatide virile, è pertinente ad un incensiere tardo arcaico*". She may well be right, but the problem remains. Her illustration is reproduced from Sotheby's catalogue, where the upper half of the shaft is cut off. In the two-years-older catalogue of Münzen und Medaillen AG in Basel, it is, however, depicted complete (about 45 cm high, measured from the photograph), including the swelling on top intended to attach the bowl. As far as I know, there is no Archaic thymiaterion, with so high a shaft, looking like this.¹¹¹ Do we, in fact, have a late 6th-century BC forerunner of the tripod type, or has a much later bronze-worker used (or revived) an Archaic figurine?

Nor am I totally convinced that Ambrosini is right when excluding the stand published by Mauro Cristofani in 1979.¹¹² It has a tripod on lion's feet, a shaft with vertical grooves like those on contemporary candelabra, and a series of discs on top. Ambrosini is certainly right in rejecting the bowl. Because of its height (only 44 cm), Ambrosini suggests that the stand is "*un candelabro da tavolo*", but accepts Cristofani's date towards the end of the 5th century BC. I would, however, rather see the piece as an early, intermediary kind of thymiaterion, retaining the discs on the shaft from its Archaic forerunners.¹¹³

Testa and Bucciolli based most of their datings on rather uncritical discussions of stylistic parallels with other artefacts, such as mirrors, cistae, votive figurines, etc., but arrived at more or less the same chronological span.¹¹⁴ Ambrosini, too, used stylistic datings, but her chronological framework is firmly based upon a careful study of all known, closed grave groups with more easily datable artefacts associated with tripod thymiateria.¹¹⁵ Interestingly, her results differ only marginally from the dates suggested by Testa, Bucciolli and me but

offer, for the first time, a fundamentally reliable chronology for this class of incense stands.¹¹⁶

After a very limited production between c. 410 and 350 BC,¹¹⁷ Ambrosini assigns the great majority of the stands to the following one hundred years. She finds no reason to date any specimen later than around the mid-3rd century, that is, hardly later than 240 BC. This view gets at least some support from the complete absence of tripod thymiateria at Falerii Novi (founded after 241 BC). There, on the other hand, one specimen of the Curunas type has been discovered¹¹⁸—a later class of incense burner, dated by Ambrosini from the beginning of the 3rd to the first half of the 2nd centuries BC (below, p. 136).

DURATION OF PRODUCTION IN VARIOUS CENTRES

The chronological framework presented above is based on the study of datable tomb groups and shows, accordingly, the final dates of *use*, not production, of the thymiateria—but there is reason to believe that the difference in time was often quite small. Ambrosini discusses 54 such tomb groups which include 60 tripod thymiateria and, as the dates suggested for them constitute our sole, reasonably firm basis for the chronology, a detailed summary of her results—divided according to her proposed production centres—seems well justified:¹¹⁹

Production centre	Years BC	No. of censers
Populonia (nos. 1–5)	410–400	(2)
	310–250	(1) ¹²⁰
Vulci (nos. 6–160)	375–350	(2)
	360–340	(2)
	350–325	(2)
	350–290	(1)
	310–300	(2)
	310–290	(2)
Civita Castellana (nos. 161–295)	325–250	(34)
Orvieto (nos. 296–337)	325–290	(3)
	325–250	(1)
	300–250	(1)
Todi (nos. 338–358)	300–250	(6)
Cortona (no. 362)	300–250	(1)

¹⁰⁹ Wikander 1983, 59; Ambrosini 2002, 99f. Ambrosini 2011, 82, for the main types of Archaic thymiateria.

¹¹⁰ Dated "*Ende 6. Jahrhundert v.C.*" (Münzen und Medaillen 1983, 36 no. 85) and "circa 520 B.C." (Sotheby & Co. 1985, no. 241).

¹¹¹ For a related, but much lower, specimen, see Münzen und Medaillen 1961, 38 no. 70, dated c. 500 BC.

¹¹² Cristofani 1979, 159–161, *tav. XLI*; Ambrosini 2002, 325f., 420 n. 5. Adembri (in Feruglio *et al.* 1982, 103 no. 20) accepts the piece as a thymiaterion, but Ambrosini's arguments against Cristofani's identification are, admittedly, quite weighty.

¹¹³ Cf. Adam 1984, 47 no. 47, concerning surviving Archaic traits in nos. 3 and 77.

¹¹⁴ Testa 1989. Cf. Wikander 1996, 285; Bucciolli 1995, 445.

¹¹⁵ Ambrosini 2002, 343–370.

¹¹⁶ Summarized in Ambrosini 2002, 371.

¹¹⁷ Ambrosini (2002) dates only 13 thymiateria earlier than c. 350 BC, all of them belonging to her Populonian and Vulcentian groups: nos. 1, 3, 5, 14, 19, 38, 48, 63, 103, 114, 118, 120, and 137 (but no fewer than 37 are dated c. 350 BC). Cf. Bucciolli 1995, 445.

¹¹⁸ Ambrosini 2002, 385 no. 379.

¹¹⁹ Ambrosini 2002, 343–365. I have "translated" Ambrosini's dates to years: "*Fine V sec.*" = 410–400 BC, "*Fine IV–prima metà del III sec.*" = 310–250 BC, "*Ultimo quarto del IV–inizi del III sec.*" = 325–290 BC, etc. None of the Chiusine stands (nos. 359–361) has a known provenance.

¹²⁰ This stand (no. 4) is unique (Ambrosini 2002, 177, *Tipo S*), and it is a matter of doubt if it should be included among this class of thymiateria.

If we accept Ambrosini's attributions and dates, the conclusion will be the following: the production of tripod thymiateria was initiated at Populonia in the very end of the 5th century BC. Vulcentian workshops took it up around 375 BC, with extensive production c. 350–290 BC. Towards the end of the 4th century BC, new workshops were added at Civita Castellana, Orvieto and Todi, which continued to work until the mid-3rd century BC. But it should also be emphasized that the generally accepted end-date for the production of tripod thymiateria is based on very tenuous grounds. A study of the dates of the tomb groups involved shows that not one single censer must necessarily be later than 290 BC; 35 items are dated 325–250 BC, one 310–250 BC, and eight 300–250 BC. We must also consider the possible consequences for thymiatrion chronology, if I am right in my belief that the censers were used among the living and not intended exclusively for the tombs. For a bronze mirror, Ambrosini herself reckons with a use of at least 50 years before its being buried.¹²¹ Even though 50 years may seem too much, we cannot even feel certain that the production of thymiateria continued after 300 BC. At least, we may very well date the end of production, for instance, after the destruction of Vulci in 280 BC or that of Orvieto in 264 BC.

It remains uncertain what happened then. The existence of Early Imperial thymiateria, candelabra and lamp-stands of very similar shapes (p. 139) suggests that the production never ceased entirely but, for the time being, few certain finds have been presented to fill the chronological gap.¹²² Considering the fact that almost all tripod thymiateria derive from tombs, one possible explanation would be that they remained in ordinary use but, for some reason, were no longer deposited in tombs. Against this explanation, however, speaks the fact that simpler incense stands (the Curunas type) were used in approximately the same area at least to the beginning of the 2nd century BC (see below, *Figs. 15 and 17*).¹²³ The problem of the possible Roman survival is discussed by Ambrosini, who

suggests that these artefacts should be considered deliberately archaizing objects of art.¹²⁴

DURATION OF USE

The presumed active life of the tripod thymiateria depends entirely upon what function we prefer to assign to them (cf. below, pp. 139–143). If they were manufactured directly for the tomb (or votive purposes), their lifetime must have been extremely short—restricted, in fact, to one single occasion. But if they were, as I find more reasonable to believe, first used as household utensils at private sacrifices and banquets, we may reckon with an active life of one or two generations, let us say, 10–50 years, or even more.

Unfortunately, the study of tomb groups that include thymiateria mostly results in dates too vague to be of much assistance here. Ambrosini (who does not believe in any manufacture of tripod thymiateria after the mid-3rd century BC) admits to their presence in two tombs dated much later: one at Spello from the early 2nd century BC and one at Ferento from the end of the 1st century BC. At least the former one was apparently an heirloom. It had lost its bowl and the upper part of the shaft and had had it restored in Antiquity with a thymiatrion of Curunas type.¹²⁵ This, admittedly, could be taken as an indication that tripod thymiateria were at the time so rare that they were considered particularly valuable. I also take it as an important (though abstruse) testimony that a wall-painting in Tomba Golini I at Orvieto (generally dated around or after the middle of the 4th century BC) depicts a banquet celebrated with fragrance deriving, not from a contemporary tripod thymiatrion, but from an Archaic one of a type apparently long out of fashion (*Fig. 7*). This preservation of old censers implies their importance as treasured heirlooms kept in the family for generations.

But the problem is more complex than that. Ambrosini's diligent survey of representations in various artistic media of Etruscan thymiateria shows that the Archaic type dominated overwhelmingly from Late Archaic down to Middle Hellenistic times.¹²⁶ She also notes that the scenes that include

¹²¹ Ambrosini 1996, 87; cf. the comments by Serra Ridgway 2000, 416. A tomb at Perugia yielded "an unusually large and fine Etruscan bronze mirror, which was at least one hundred years older than the oldest urns" (Nielsen 2002, 105).

¹²² See below, concerning the finds from Spello and Ferento. Cf. Wikander 1983, 61; 1996, 286. It must, however, be emphasized that, of Ambrosini's 580 thymiateria, only 207 have known provenance, and fewer than 50 can be dated from their tomb groups. With reference to the finds from the tomb, Emiliozzi (1974, 48–54) dated a thymiatrion from Musarna (no. 290) to the end of the 3rd century BC, or even later—a fact not even mentioned by Ambrosini (2002, 359 with n. 137), who suggests a date between 325 and 250 BC, without stating her reasons. But, admittedly, Emiliozzi's date has been criticized by others.

¹²³ Ambrosini 2002, 417.

¹²⁴ Ambrosini 2002, 459–462: "*Candelabri di tipo etrusco, imitazioni o pezzi autentici, sono stati rinvenuti in ambiente vesuviano e sembra che fossero oggetti d'antiquariato già in età romana.*" With some hesitation, I have accepted her arguments (Wikander 2005, 131).

¹²⁵ Ambrosini 2002, 287, 364f. no. 355 (Spello), 360 no. 291 (Ferento). Even Etruscan mirrors "show ancient repairs, witnesses of prolonged practical use" (Serra Ridgway 2000, 418; cf. below n. 220). Cristofani (1979, 159f.) thinks that a Volsinian stand (candelabrum or thymiatrion?) from the late 5th century BC was buried in a tomb dated 330/300 BC: "*lunga conservazione come 'bene di famiglia'*".

¹²⁶ Ambrosini 2002, 69–96, summarized in fig. 32. One representation should perhaps be treated with caution: a bronze mirror in the Louvre (Ambrosini 2002, 82f., fig. 14). The doubts about the authenticity of the

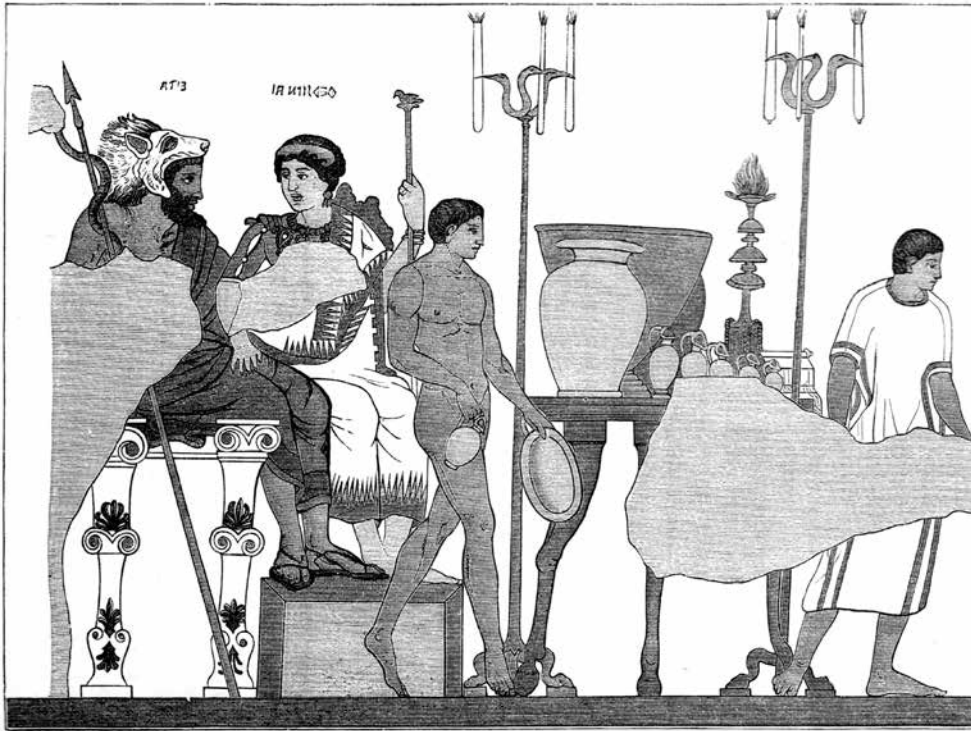


Fig. 7. Wall-painting representing an underworld banquet in Tomba Golini I at Orvieto (350/325 BC), including two candelabra with lit candles and an Archaic thymiaterion with burning incense on top. From Dennis 1883, vol. 2, 58.

censers change: from worldly banquets in the Archaic period to banquets in the afterlife in the Classical to religious scenes in the Hellenistic.¹²⁷ This, however, does not *per se* explain the persistent adherence to the Archaic stands. There are, of course, only two possible interpretations: the Archaic stands were either still produced or they were not. I once argued for a parallel production of the types, at least during the 4th century BC.¹²⁸ If so, the Archaic types remained in use at worldly banquets, and Ambrosini must be right when referring the use of tripod thymiateria almost exclusively to female funerals. The other possibility is that the retained representations of Archaic stands are simply an artistic convention, due to the fact that tripod thymiateria would be less easily identified as such, particularly when reproduced in a small scale.¹²⁹

There are, in fact, only two specimens among the Hellenistic representations discussed by Ambrosini that may *possibly* be identified as tripod thymiateria: the Praenestine cista “del Trionfatore” (late 4th century BC) and the sarcophagus

called “*cassa Casuccini*” (3rd century BC).¹³⁰ They both lack the details characteristic of Archaic censers, and it is only the burning fire on top of the former and the position on an altar of the latter that make it possible to identify their function. If they are really of the tripod type, they show the use of that type in other religious contexts than funerals, but they would still not explain the predominance of Archaic thymiateria in Hellenistic representations. The use of the tripod type in such connections is already attested by five finds from sanctuaries (below, p. 139).

Out of 32 pictures, at least 14 show—like the painting in Tomba Golini I—one of the most characteristic details of Archaic incense burners: the flat, horizontally placed discs (or small bowls turned upside down, “resembling umbrellas” [Otto Brendel]), which divide the shaft into several parts. On the “typical”, post-Archaic censers, these are almost non-existent: only three stands, assigned to Vulcentian workshops and dated 325–290 BC, have one or two discs each (nos. 8, 18, 62).¹³¹

There are, however, a number of less “typical” tripod thymiateria decorated with such discs or bowls. Among the 5th-century BC precursors (“*I precedenti*”), Ambrosini presents

engraving expressed by some 19th-century scholars have been revived by Briquel (2016, 336–339 no. 125), who emphatically dismisses it as a forgery.

¹²⁷ Ambrosini 2002, 78, 95f. But this is a general phenomenon, not restricted to scenes including censers.

¹²⁸ Wikander 1983, 59. *Contra*: Ambrosini 2002, 99f.

¹²⁹ Or perhaps the artist considered archaizing objects better suited to the solemn representations of afterlife banquets?

¹³⁰ Ambrosini 2002, 86f., 89, figs. 20, 24.

¹³¹ Ambrosini (2002, 142) assigns the shafts of these stands to her group “*BIII espansione discoidale*”, together with no. 2 and two specimens which I exclude from my discussion: nos. 121 (with a slight swelling rather than a disc) and 364 (the “eccentric” Medma stand).

Fig. 8. Diagram showing tripod thymiateria dated by tomb groups, distributed on proposed production centres and (as far as possible) on half-centuries. Figures within parentheses denote finds not unequivocally assignable to such periods.

	Populonia	Vulci	Faliscan	Orvieto	Todi	Uncertain	Total
450–400 BC	2	2					4
400–350 BC	1 (+1)	5 (+20)				(+1)	6 (+22) = 28
350–300 BC		53 (+56)	1 (+44)	(+17)		(+2)	54 (+119) = 173
300–250 BC	(+1)	(+16)	2 (+88)	3 (+21)	19 (+1)	1 (+3)	25 (+130) = 155
250–200 BC				(+1)	(+1)		(+2)

six such stands, with between two and six discs/bowls each, only one, unfortunately with known provenance (Chiusi).¹³² But also among her catalogued censers, there are three more or less atypical specimens with one, two, or three discs:

- No. 2 Populonia, San Cerbone c. 350 BC
 No. 360 Provenance unknown 310–290 BC
 (assigned to Chiusi)
 No. 362 Montecchio (Cortona) 300–250 BC?

Concerning the last one, Ambrosini herself points out that its shaft “è, a tutt’oggi, il più simile a quello dell’incensiere raffigurato nella Tomba Golini I”. It is also worthy of note that five out of six “discoïd” thymiateria are dated as late as between 325 and 250 BC.

It is hardly by chance that the three sites of origin (find-sites or production centres) are all situated in northern Etruria: Populonia, Chiusi, and Cortona—towns that played a very small part (or none) in the history of the fully developed tripod thymiaterion. Remaining outside the creative area of South Etruria, they may have preserved decorative traits that were already abandoned farther south.

Two of the Populonia stands (nos. 1, 3) also retain the flat, triangular base plaque on equine legs (Ambrosini’s types TZ2 and TZ3), while the one from Cortona is one of the no more than five stands with circular base plaque (Ambrosini’s type CZ2). The remaining four lack known provenance, but are assigned to workshops at Todi (nos. 348, 350) and Vulci (nos. 48, 120). The remaining five stands with triangular base plaque are all assigned to Vulci (nos. 37, probably false, 38, 77, 113, 157), but only no. 38 was with some certainty found there. Anyhow, its importance in this connection is dubious, as the base may not originally belong to the stand.

The “atypical” bases corroborate the idea of artistic retardation in northern Etruria, perhaps adding the production centres at Todi and Vulci, on the very periphery of the main distribution area. Within the central circle, there are no examples of such archaisms. The shape of the painted or carved representations may, thus, reflect reality, if it is not simply

an artistic convention. But it could perhaps also be used to support Ambrosini’s view: no “typical” tripod thymiateria at post-Archaic banquets.

5. The chronological periods

Chronology is a recurrent theme in Ambrosini’s work—mostly, however, concentrated on the different production centres. The general development is summarized in less than one page¹³³ but worthy of more detailed discussion. In order to form a clearer opinion on the history of post-Archaic thymiateria, I have tried to divide them into chronological groups of equal duration: half-centuries, as shorter periods would be completely impossible to achieve. But whereas the general tendencies seem clear, only 89 of the 362 specimens dated by Ambrosini¹³⁴ (that is, less than 25%) may easily be assigned to half-century periods.

In the diagram (Fig. 8), which divides the tripod stands according to both half-century periods and presumed production centres, the basic figures refer to the 89 more closely dated specimens. The rest have been divided proportionally¹³⁵ and are presented within parentheses. Obviously, these figures must be treated with great caution. But since the general tendencies of the entire material agree well with that of the more precisely dated stands, they probably offer a reasonably correct picture of the development: a slow beginning at the end of the 5th century BC, a slight increase in the early 4th, a substantial progress towards the end of that century, a slight decline in the first half of the 3rd century BC, and almost complete extinction around (or before? See p. 123) its middle.

This strict division of the thymiateria by even half-centuries does, however, not tally too well with the dates suggested by

¹³³ Ambrosini 2002, 371, ch. 18 (tripod stands), 417, ch. 24 (Curunas stands).

¹³⁴ I here follow the dates proposed by Ambrosini (2002), even though there may be reason to question some of them. Her nos. 37, 39 and 102 are not included, as the first is “di sospetta autenticità” and the others are dated only to “IV–III sec. a.C.”.

¹³⁵ For instance, of stands dated to c. 325/250 BC, one third have been assigned to the period 325–300 BC, two thirds to 300–250 BC.

¹³² Ambrosini 2002, 193–200, figs. 1 (Chiusi), 2, 5–6, 9, 12.

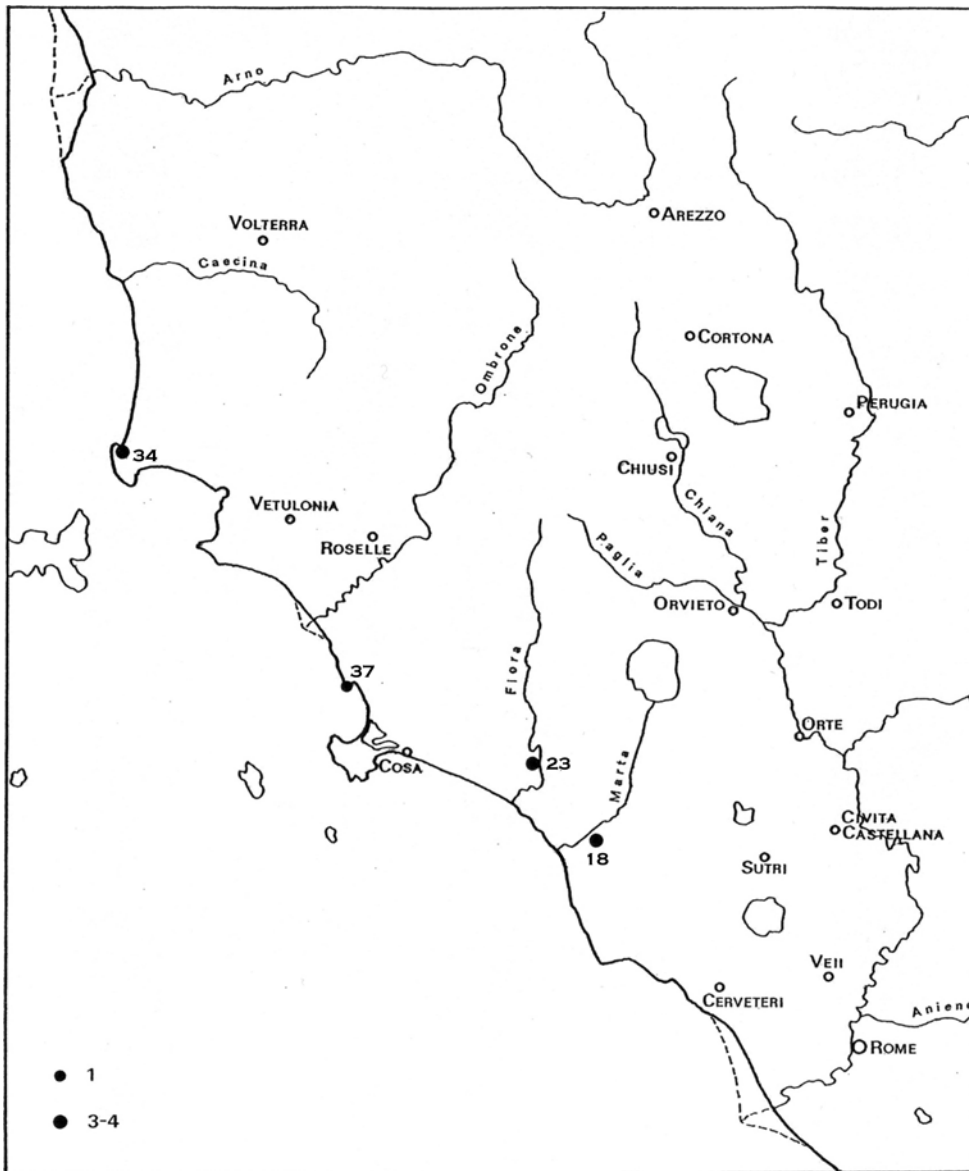


Fig. 9. Distribution map of tripod thymiateria dated between c. 410 and 360/340 BC. Medma-Rosarno falls outside the map. A number of sites without finds of thymiateria are indicated with open circles. Illustration by Örjan Wikander.

Ambrosini. In order to give at least some credibility to distribution maps for various periods, these periods must be slightly adjusted to the extant datings and, thus, partly overlap. I have chosen the following: 410–360/340 BC, 350–325/290 BC, and 325/290–240 BC, assigning each censer to the most suitable “half-century” period.¹³⁶ Even though occasional thymiateria attributed to a later period may possibly be older than some registered in the preceding one, the maps should give a basically reliable presentation of the development.

¹³⁶ For instance, a specimen dated to 325/290 BC is assigned to the second period, one dated 325/250 BC to the third.

PERIOD I: 410–360/340 BC (FIG. 9)

The tripod thymiaterion was the result of 5th-century BC experimentation to replace the Late Archaic types with new and more attractive ones.¹³⁷ The early attempts show consider-

¹³⁷ This is not the place to discuss more closely the question of extraneous influences on the tripod thymiateria. In general, Etruscan bronze-work was strongly swayed by Greek artefacts (see e.g. Cianferoni 1985, 148), but I once concluded that the thymiateria were almost entirely “the result of local, Etruscan, innovative development” (Wikander 1983, 61). Ambrosini (2002, 97–100) pursued that view even more vigorously. Like some other scholars, I drew attention to the bronze stand of Rusa of Urartu (Hoffman 1961, 4f., *Taf.* 16f.) but, considering “the distance

able creativity, but perhaps also a certain lack of clear aims. Ambrosini discusses (and illustrates) 15 stands which combine, in various ways, older traits with new ones. Unfortunately, only three of them have a known provenance; they all derive from Chiusi or its vicinity.¹³⁸ Another, the “*thymiaterion della Boncia*” (dated by Riccardo Zandrino 1952 as early as the first half of the 5th century BC), has much in common with Ambrosini’s Chiusine group (nos. 359–361): the bowl without surrounding platform, the disc/bowls or swellings on the shaft—but no climbing animals. As none of them can be dated by archaeology, I fail to understand Ambrosini’s dating of this group as late as c. 300 BC (“*Fine IV–inizi III sec. a.C.*”),¹³⁹ and prefer to see it as a natural continuation of the Late Archaic production at Chiusi—datable, let us say, to 375/350 BC. Other thymiateria from Chiusi, likewise dated to the late 4th or early 3rd century BC (nos. 59 and 311), accord well with the more “normal” shape and are attributed by Ambrosini to Vulci and Orvieto (the same is probably true regarding no. BA 68). It may well be that the Chiusine workshops closed down after the mid-4th century BC.

Towards the end of the 5th century BC, a new-fashioned production started on the Tyrrhenian coast, first at Populonia, later (c. 375 BC) at Vulci (Figs. 10–11).¹⁴⁰ Some Populonian stands have only little in common with the mature production, but it is interesting to note that no. 3 (dated to the end of the 5th century BC) was found in a tomb in the San Cerbone necropolis, which also included two candelabra with tripod base of the same type that was soon to become predominant among thymiateria.¹⁴¹ It seems reasonable to assume that such

candelabra, whether manufactured at Populonia or not, were before long to influence the production of censers. Such “ordinary” bases are to be found on two later censers from the same site (nos. 2, 5).¹⁴²

Another detail which was apparently derived from the candelabra is the vertical fluting, almost totally predominant among the latter¹⁴³ and presumably intended to represent the stand as an Ionic column (Fig. 10, nos. 19, 21, 28). Ambrosini’s catalogue includes 23 such thymiateria, 16 fluted in their entirety (nos. 19, 21, 28, 44, 53, 63, 173, 186, 213, 217, 233, 268, 276, 285, 363, 365),¹⁴⁴ four fluted only partly (nos. 69, 98, 307, 318), and three vertically faceted like a Doric column (nos. 178, 278, 346). They amount to 9.1% of all preserved shafts.¹⁴⁵ Concerning the shape of tripod and bowl as well as the general appearance of the stands, the types vary completely, and I have found little to connect them to each other. But some features are more encouraging. Among the specimens entirely fluted assigned to Vulci, all but one (no. 21) rest on a caryatid, whereas such are otherwise to be found only on three of the partly fluted censers. The Vulcentian thymiateria differ also by their presumed dates: two have been dated 375/350 BC (nos. 19, 63), three c. 350 BC (nos. 21, 44, 53), whereas all the others are late, 325/250 BC.

Apart from no. 19 with a tripod consisting of three male figurines and no. 63 with lion’s feet protruding from griffin protomes (“*Zoomorphe Junktur*”¹⁴⁶), all the Vulcentian speci-

in time and space”, found it “unwise to suggest a closer connection with Etruscan thymiateria”. There is, however, at least one other, allegedly eastern censer remarkably similar to the Etruscan ones, which is much closer in both time and space: a 38.5-cm-high thymiaterion with three lion legs and palmettes between them, a shaft with a winged statuette, and the remains of a bowl, dated to the second half of the 6th century BC (Hornbostel 1980, no. 17).

¹³⁸ Ambrosini 2002, ch. 11, “*I precedenti*”, 193–200, with the Chiusine stands in figs. 1, 7, and 8. Cf. also Ambrosini 2011, 82f. She also discusses the continuity of various details from Archaic to tripod stands (2002, 97–100).

¹³⁹ Even more so, as she states herself (Ambrosini 2002, 288): “*La produzione [...] piuttosto tradizionalista, appare ancora collegata, sia nella scelta del treppiede che in quella del fusto, agli incensieri dei primi decenni del V sec. a.C.*”

¹⁴⁰ We may have an earlier (late 5th century BC?) Volsinian censer in a stand published by Cristofani (1979, 159–161), if he was right in identifying it as a thymiaterion and interpreting the inscription *velsenalʒi* as the place of manufacture. But Colonna (1999, 11–13) rather thinks that Orvieto/Volsinii should refer to the site where the censer was dedicated to Tina/Velthuna.

¹⁴¹ Tomba delle hydrie di Faone e Adone: Milani 1905, 68f., fig. 9; Romualdi 2000, 364–366, figs. 16–20. Cf. Ambrosini 2002, 344. It is, thus, tempting to assume that thymiateria and candelabra were produced in the same workshops (as did Adembri, quoted above n. 20), but the different alloys used for the two categories (n. 79) may be an argument against

that theory. Moreover, it should be noted that the Populonia tomb is the only one which demonstrably yielded both tripod thymiateria and bronze candelabra (the candelabrum found at Vignanello together with thymiaterion no. 206 was made of iron, “*sormontata da una statuetta femminile di bronzo*”, Ambrosini 2002, 354). In other words, we should rather suspect that, for some reason, some manufacturer(s) of candelabra transferred their production to incense burners. This must have seemed a reasonable change-over to Ducati and Giglioli (1927, 91), who believed that candelabra and thymiateria (“*porta-lampade*”) had the same, illuminating function. It is more difficult to understand why Testa (1989, 89) suggested that the production, “*ormai vecchia e stanca*”, of candelabra was replaced by thymiateria—well aware that the function of the two were completely different (Wikander 1996, 286). The transition, in the early 4th century BC, from production of candelabra to censers seems obvious but remains difficult to explain. Cf. the discussion in Ambrosini 2002, 323–329.

¹⁴² Ambrosini (2002, 329) states, with good reasons, that stylistic and technical similarities “*inducono a credere che la produzione degli incensieri sia sorta a Vulci nell’ambito della o delle officine che realizzavano i candelabri*”.

¹⁴³ See, for instance, the 20 specimens published in Museo Gregoriano Etrusco 1842, *tavv.* LXXVII–LXXXII.

¹⁴⁴ I exclude no. 37, which is presumably a forgery.

¹⁴⁵ More examples are to be found in Ambrosini’s “*bibliografia archeologica*”: nos. BA 33, BA 34–43 (“*Il fusto per lo più scannellato*”), BA 130, and BA 135.

¹⁴⁶ A term coined by C.F. Lehmann-Haupt and used by Ambrosini. Similar feet are to be found on a bronze brazier from Vulci (Museo Gregoriano Etrusco 1842, *tav.* LXIII:2). Haynes (1967, 118 = 1970, 183; 1985, 309 no. 170) suggested that all thymiateria with such legs were manufactured at Vulci, but Ambrosini divided them into four different

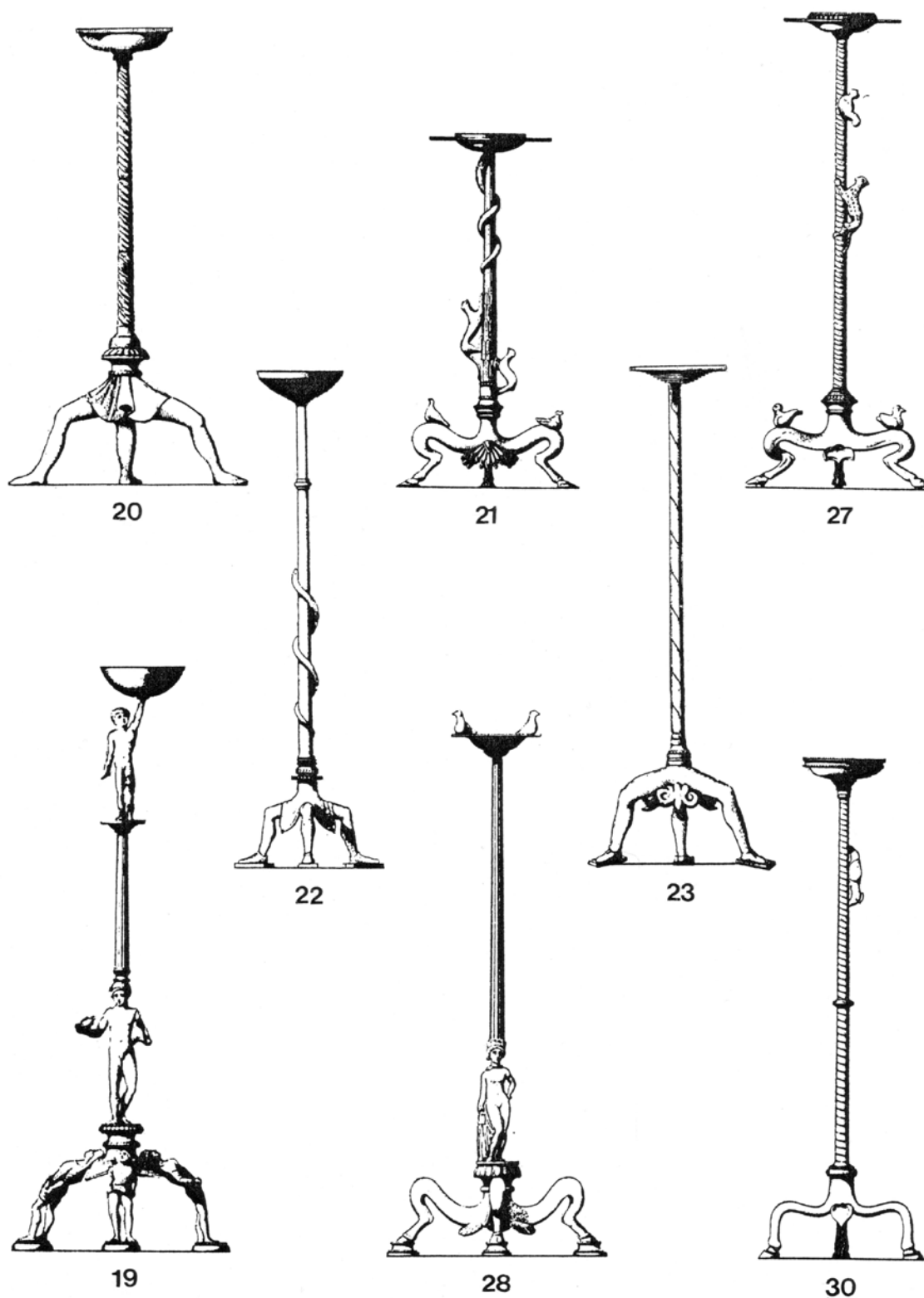


Fig. 10. Eight tripod thymiateria assigned to Vulcentian workshops, now in the Vatican Museum. Dated 375/350 BC (no. 19), c. 350 BC (nos. 20, 21, 27), 350/325 BC (nos. 22, 23), 325/300 BC (no. 30), 325/290 BC (no. 28). From Museo Gregoriano Etrusco 1842, tavv. LXXV:1, 3, LXXVI:4–5, LXXVII:1, LXXX:2, LXXXII:1, 7.

mens have bases shaped as equine legs. Like the contemporary candelabra, none are equipped with human feet—otherwise the predominant tripod shape among Vulcentian thymiateria (almost 45%). In the material under discussion here, human feet are found on two censers only: nos. 217 (Faliscan) and 346 (Todi).

The conclusions seem obvious. Even though Populonia and Chiusi had produced early, intermediary forms clearly developed from their Archaic forerunners, it was the workshops at Vulci that effected the adaption of details from the candelabra to the new artefact. Only after c. 325 BC did the novelties spread to the *ager Faliscus* and more distant centres (nos. 346, Todi; 363, Pietragalla; 365, Buccino). But Orvieto produced only two, partly fluted, stands (nos. 307, 318). It may be more than a coincidence that the five earliest fluted censers (nos. 21, 44, 53 and, particularly, 19, 63) are among the most exquisite exponents of their class.

A further confirmation of the early importance of Vulci is found in the bird figurines not seldom decorating the legs of the tripod (Figs. 10, nos. 21, 27, 11 no. 105). These figurines were obviously taken over from the Archaic thymiateria, the base plaques of which were often furnished with such. Two Populonian stands have such figurines (nos. 1, 3) and no fewer than 15 Vulcentian (out of 100 preserved tripods). But, for some reason, this use went out of fashion, and the other (mostly later) production centres can present only two, nos. 164 and 182—of which the former is one of the very few Faliscan specimens unambiguously assigned to the 4th century (325/300 BC).

Otherwise, I have only one observation worthy of note. Of the 15 censers not assigned to Vulci with completely fluted or faceted shafts, no fewer than five have bases presented by Ambrosini in her Type EVII (nos. 178, 186, 213, 278, 365)—characterized by lion's paws protruding from *panther* protomes. The type is extremely rare comprising, in fact, only the five specimens just mentioned.¹⁴⁷ Four of them belong to the Faliscan group, while the fifth (no. 365) was found at Buccino and is assigned by Ambrosini to her "*Produzioni eccentriche(?)*". But due to its fluted shaft, she argues tentatively for a connection with Faliscan workshops,¹⁴⁸ and the panther protomes strongly support her suggestion. It is also interest-

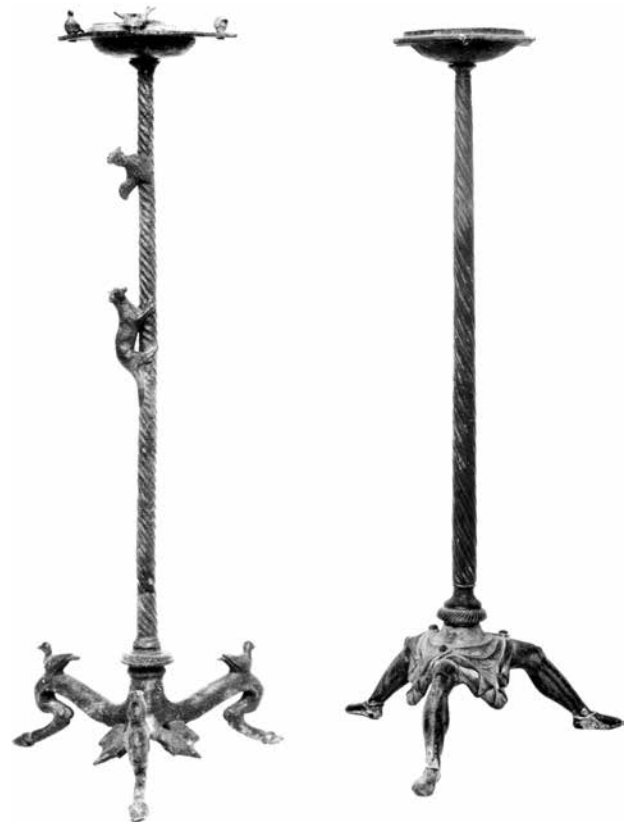


Fig. 11. Two Vulcentian tripod thymiateria (nos. 105 left, 106 right) in the Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm. Dated c. 350 BC and 350/325 BC respectively. Photograph: Museum.

ing to note that, of the four EVII-base tripods which preserve the bowl, three have one of the same, far from common, type: AVI, "*Vaschetta emisferica semplice, labbro pendente decorato con ovoli e lancette*". As for the fourth stand, Ambrosini suspects that its original bowl may have been replaced in Antiquity, perhaps as a result of some damage.

If we accept the notion of the vertically fluted or faceted shaft as the representation of a Greek column, it is no surprise that a great number of censers accentuate the transition from base to shaft with protruding tori, which are often reminiscent of Ionic column bases. Furthermore, we should logically expect the shaft to be crowned by a capital (under the bowl), but such are rare. There are, in fact, only one Doric (no. 363)¹⁴⁹ and four volute (nos. 173, 178, 323, 332) capitals preserved, and the two last-mentioned have smooth and spiral-grooved shaft, respectively. It is probably symptomatic that not one of these capitals belongs to a Vulcentian stand. They were not

production centres: Orvieto (12), Faliscan (7), Vulci (3), and Todi (2). Her decision seems justified, not least considering the wide distribution of the seven known find-sites: Vulci (no. 62), Civita Castellana (no. 186), Tarquinia (no. 278), Castel d'Asso (no. 285), Bomarzo (no. 302), Chiusi (no. 311), and Spello (no. 355). It seems strange, however, that Ambrosini dated the Vulcentian no. 62 to 375/350 BC, but all the other specimens after 325 BC.

¹⁴⁷ Ambrosini 2002, 130f. She actually presents one more (no. 297), but describes it explicitly as having "*Zampe di leone [...] che fuoriescono dalle fauci di protomi di grifo*" (my emphasis).

¹⁴⁸ Ambrosini 2002, 291f.

¹⁴⁹ But we should perhaps not leave out of the account here the similarity of the shallow bowl and its mostly square platform to a Doric capital.

connected with the columnar shaft from the beginning, but became a later reinforcement of the architectural metaphor.¹⁵⁰

Up to the mid-4th century BC, the distribution remained limited to the production centres themselves and two additional towns along the coast-line, Talamone and Tarquinia, both with stands presumably imported from Vulci.¹⁵¹ The particular importance of Chiusi and Populonia at this preliminary stage is explained by their position in the 5th century BC, but is still remarkable, as these towns played a very restricted part in the later history of the tripod thymiateria.

Some Populonian and Vulcentian censers preserve earlier traits such as, for instance, the triangular plaque of the base (nos. 1, 3), while others represent an artistic dead end (nos. 48, 120, with a circular base plaque). Of the specimens already adhering to the “canonical” tripod type, most have human legs. Many shafts are decorated with human statuettes, and the circular bowl has no surrounding platform. Only towards the middle of the 4th century BC do we encounter the later, typical, abundant decoration of running and climbing animals along the shaft (nos. 25, 38, 43, 63, 103), square platforms with or without birds in the corners (nos. 20, 43, 63), etc.¹⁵² On the other hand, on nos. 1, 3, and 63 we still meet the animal figurines on the base, taken over from the triangular base plaques of the Archaic stands. This early trait is found on 15 tripod thymiateria assigned to Vulci, and no fewer than eight are dated as early as c. 350 BC (nos. 7, 10, 12, 21, 27, 35, 51, 105; *Figs. 10*, nos. 21, 27, and *11*, no. 105). It is remarkable that these tripod animals were almost never applied in any other production centre,¹⁵³ while the number of animal figurines on shaft and bowl tended to increase.

It seems a reasonable assumption that the earliest Vulcentian thymiateria should differ in various respects—not only from their forerunners from Chiusi and Populonia, but also from the fully developed censers from the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BC.¹⁵⁴ A closer study of the stands dated 375/350 BC, c. 350 BC and later shows that this is indeed the case. The first group contains only seven censers, and they differ markedly among themselves.

¹⁵⁰ The capital of no. 173 has close parallels in real architecture (and on Chiusine cinerary urns). See Bianchi Bandinelli *et al.* 1963, 31f., fig. 40; Cavoli 1980, 61 (both from Vulci).

¹⁵¹ I here deliberately ignore the Medma stand (no. 364, dated by Ambrosini to “*Fine V–inizi IV sec. a.C?*”), the relation of which to the Etruscan production remains a matter of doubt. Cf. Wikander 1983, 61. Concerning the finds from Tarquinia, cf. above p. 115).

¹⁵² No. 5, dated to the beginning of the 4th century BC, is seemingly an exception, but: “*I volatili sulla vaschetta, e probabilmente quello del fusto, potrebbero essere stati aggiunti in età moderna*” (Ambrosini 2002, 203).

¹⁵³ The Faliscan no. 164 is no true exception, as it is apparently a “*pasticcio*”, combined from elements of different origins (Ambrosini 2002, 244).

¹⁵⁴ Ambrosini (2002, 203–209) presents in some detail the features that she considers typical for the Vulcentian production in general, but she only occasionally draws attention to chronological variations.

No.	Type	Base	Shaft	Bowl
14	-	-	Fla1	-
19	C1	IIIa1	IIIc1	Ala5
38	TZ7	-	EIIc1	-
63	ZL8	EVIa3	IIIb1	C
103	GU1	Ala5	AIm1	-
114	GU2	AIVb2	EIIa1	AVa1
118	GU2	AIIf/AVIf?	EIc1	A?

Three out of six of the earliest Vulcentian thymiateria have human legs (GU, base A), whereas the others belong to totally different types. All shafts except no. 103 rest on a caryatid. Nos. 38 and 63 have “a naked female figure whose twisted legs end in two snakes’ heads” (Sybille Haynes’ mermaid = Ambrosini’s “*essere anguiforme*”) lifting the bowl—a feature met with on only three more stands: nos. 44, 152, 157, all Vulcentian. One shaft is plain (A), four spiral-grooved (E, F), and two vertically fluted (I [*Fig. 10*, no. 19]). Nos. 38, 63, and 103 have climbing animals, including humans. Of the four known bowls, three lack platforms (A).

The technical and artistic quality is generally high (particularly nos. 19, 38, 63), and—as could be expected—the group displays a number of early traits: the many caryatids, the felines on the base of no. 63, the plain bowl (all taken over from Archaic thymiateria), and the vertical fluting of the shaft (drawn from contemporaneous candelabra). On the other hand, there are traits pointing ahead: the human-legged base, the “*zoomorphe Junktur*” of no. 63, the spiral-grooved shaft with climbers, and (also on no. 63) the platform surrounding the bowl, already decorated with the later canonical four doves.

The 35 censers dated by Ambrosini to the mid-4th century BC and the 113 later ones offer a much better basis for statistics.

Date\Type	GU1	ZE1	ZE3	TZ6	Other
c. 350 BC (n = 28)	61%	32%	3.5%	3.5%	-
later (n = 58)	34%	16%	2%	-	48%

Date\Base	A	C	E	N	Other
c. 350 BC (n = 28)	61%	32%	3.5%	3.5%	-
later (n = 68)	40%	45%	4%	4%	7%

Date\Shaft	A	C	DI	H	I	Other
c. 350 BC (n = 29)	10%	3.5%	76%	3.5%	7%	-
later (n = 72)	29%	1%	42%	-	3%	25%

Date\Bowl	AI	B	C	Other
c. 350 BC (n = 28)	29%	50%	21%	-
later (n = 71)	14%	21%	42%	23%

According to Ambrosini’s general classification, two subtypes (GU1 with human legs and ZE1 with equine) overwhelm-

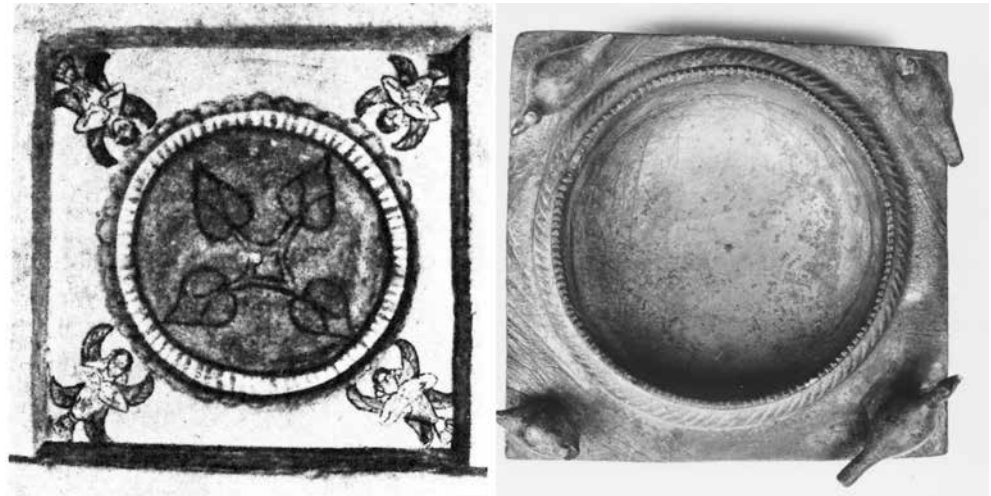


Fig. 12. Painting in the ceiling of Tomba della Scimmia at Chiusi (left, from Bianchi Bandinelli 1939, fig. 8) and the bowl and platform of no. 105 (right, photograph: Museum).

ingly predominate among the thymiateria dated *c.* 350 BC. Almost half the number of later stands belong to types not even existent in *c.* 350 BC. In the survey of the bases, Type A includes all variants of human legs, Types C and E all with equine; the figures clearly bring out the gradually increasing number of equine legs. No less than 76% of the earlier stands have simple, spiral-grooved shafts (DI with or without climbers) vs. only 42% of the later ones. The plain shaft A is almost trebled among the later stands. Every second early censer has a bowl of Type B (with platform without holes for corner doves), whereas those of Type C (with such holes) are still quite rare (only one out of five), but their number doubles in the later group.¹⁵⁵

To sum up, the comparison between three periods of Vulcentian production (375/350 BC, *c.* 350 BC and 350/280 BC) shows precisely the development we had reason to expect: many lingering traits in the first, combined with occasional examples of innovation (as most clearly displayed by no. 63); strong penetration of novelties during the second, and even stronger during the third. At the same time, the early traits gradually disappear.

The statistics presented above prompt a number of interesting questions. Here, I shall treat only one: why was the circular bowl provided with a surrounding, square platform of no obvious function?¹⁵⁶ Even though platforms with holes were less common in the mid-4th century BC than those without, it should be noted that the earliest example (no. 63) is already decorated with corner doves. The answer could be (as has also

been suggested) a wish to represent the top of the stand as a bird's nest, but I would like to propose another possible model, to my knowledge never presented before. In the ceiling of the Tomba della Scimmia at Chiusi (dated to *c.* 480/470 BC), there is a curious painting (Fig. 12, left): "Within the square frame a red rosette encloses a diagonally placed cross of four pointed leaves, green in colour. Two narrow decorated zones surrounded this disc; the inner zone is filled with short rays, the outer is shaped as a scalloped band. Outside the rosette four sirens of the Ionic-Etruscan four-winged type rise from the four corners, again arranged diagonally."¹⁵⁷

The similarity between the tomb painting and a platformed bowl of a tripod thymiaterion is striking, even embracing the decoration of the bowl's rim (Fig. 12, right). Whereas the painted sirens are directed towards the centre, the orientation of the thymiateria doves varies—perhaps not always preserving the original one. Nonetheless, at least 16 censers have doves directed towards the centre of the bowl. It is also interesting to note that the simple, heart-shaped leaves on the tomb painting recur in the corners of the horizontal plaque of three Vulcentian thymiateria (nos. 23, 31, 74; all dated 350/325 BC), in the places normally occupied by the doves. They are also to be found between the legs of four Vulcentian stands, the earliest dated to *c.* 350 BC (nos. 30 [Fig. 10], 32, 34, 64). If there is indeed a connection, Brendel's comment that "Sirens are rapers of souls, and air is their element" may give us reason to treat more seriously Karl Wigand's interpretation of the censers' corner doves as "*Seelenvögel*".¹⁵⁸ If so, the

¹⁵⁵ These statistics do not take into consideration that some plain platforms may have carried birds only soldered to the corners. Cf. n. 237.

¹⁵⁶ There is one Archaic thymiaterion (now in Copenhagen), seemingly crowned by a bowl with platform (Riis 1941, 79f. no. A.8, pl. 15.4), but Ambrosini (2002, 99, 310 no. BA 211) doubts that it originally belonged to the censer.

¹⁵⁷ Brendel 1978, 276, fig. 192. Quoted *in extenso* in order to avoid a prejudiced description.

¹⁵⁸ Wigand 1912, 36. The Tomba della Scimmia motif remained in use in early Christian art, for instance in a ceiling mosaic in Santa Prassede (Rome), where the "*Seelenvögel*" / doves have been replaced by the four archangels.

use of doves on the thymiateria could be easily explained by the obvious difficulty of casting such small siren effigies in bronze. This, of course, would be a strong point in support of Ambrosini's endeavours to connect tripod thymiateria with funerals and death.¹⁵⁹

The launching of a new production centre at Vulci apparently became of crucial importance for the further development and wider diffusion of tripod thymiateria. The high technical and artistic competence accumulated at the well-established bronze workshops of Vulci¹⁶⁰ contributed to putting the type in demand, and the leading political and military position of nearby Tarquinia opened up the hinterland of South Etruria for extensive exportation. The Tarquinian élite apparently upheld the leading part played by the landed aristocracy in the area,¹⁶¹ and tripod thymiateria were soon to make their appearance at aristocratic banquets.

PERIOD 2: 350–325/290 BC (FIG. 13)

While the tripod thymiaterion had its origin in north Etruria (Chiusi, Populonia), its real breakthrough was confined to an area south and east of Lake Bolsena. The second period both starts and ends with great wars between Tarquinia and Rome, but it is first of all characterized by the 40-years' truce of 351–311 BC (if there actually was one¹⁶²), and the position of supreme political power exercised by Tarquinia in the

area south of that lake. On the cultural level, this position is reflected in a strong Tarquinian influence in the hinterland, in the form of tufa sarcophagi, gems and various ceramic and bronze utensils, among which we also find incense stands.¹⁶³ It was apparently the heyday of tripod thymiateria, from both a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. Half the number of finds have been dated to this period, and the decorative variation is rich, within the now well-established frames. At least three centres (Vulci, Civita Castellana and Orvieto) produced censers for a rapidly expanding market.

In the second half of the 4th century BC, the new type of censer spread, on one hand, along the coast from Talamone to Cerveteri, on the other hand, from Vulci/Tarquinia inland, over Tuscania, Bomarzo and Bolsena, to the area of Orvieto (Porano). The importance of Orvieto was fundamental: apparently, a local production started there towards the end of the period (Figs. 14, and below 16). Moreover, Orvieto, by its geographical location, played a decisive role for the diffusion of art and handicraft to the inland of north Etruria¹⁶⁴ by the river valleys of the Tiber and the Chiana—as witnessed also by the finds of thymiateria at Todi and Perugia.

PERIOD 3: 325/290–250 BC (FIG. 15)

The following period is characterized by a series of wars between Etruscan city states and Rome, particularly between 311 and 280 BC. Nor did the Roman interest any longer remain confined to the area south of Lake Bolsena. From 310 BC onwards, Roman annals (now basically reliable) preserve information on repeated encounters with armies from Vulci, Orvieto, Roselle, Arezzo, Cortona, and Perugia. We find the most obvious, cultural reflection of the political history in the decreasing importance of Vulci, particularly after the Roman conquest in 280 BC. The fact is that not one single thymiaterion assigned to the 3rd century BC derives from Vulci itself.¹⁶⁵ Instead, the importance of Civita Castellana was rapidly increasing as far as the production of handicraft is concerned, red-figured pottery in particular, but also various bronze utensils.

Shortly before 300 BC, tripod thymiateria achieved a new distribution area by the establishment of production at Civita Castellana, with manifestations at a number of sites in the *ager Faliscus*, from Vignanello and Orte in the north-west to Narce and Civitella S. Paolo in the south-east (Fig. 14). It is only be-

¹⁵⁹ The connection suggested here between the tomb painting and the bowl/platform of the thymiateria is, of course, no more than a hypothesis. Though admitting the close similarities, both peer reviewers of this article have expressed their doubts. For various reasons, I refrain from discussing the occasionally asserted connection of doves with Turan/Aphrodite—particularly, as the species of the birds commonly referred to as “doves” may well be another. Moreover, they are sometimes replaced by swans, frogs, etc.

¹⁶⁰ See, for instance, Neugebauer 1943; Brendel 1978, 214–226. But: “La funzione delle botteghe di Vulci è stata probabilmente sopravvalutata” (Cristofani 1985, 32). In fact, both quantity and quality of the Vulcentian bronze production after the second quarter of the 5th century BC are debatable.

¹⁶¹ As witnessed by the intervention of the Tarquinian leader Aulus Spurrinna at Arezzo, perhaps in the 350s BC: [A]rretium bello servili v[exatum liberavit(?)]. Cf. Torelli 1975, 39, 41, 80, 89f.; Nielsen 1989, 70f. See also, in general, Torelli 1981, 218f., 222–225, 234–243. Various scholars have pointed out recently that the Etruscan aristocracy tended (understandably) to maintain local traditions and cultural manifestations, whereas the lower classes were apparently more open for assimilation with the conquerors. See the summarizing discussion in Olsson 2021, 182–184.

¹⁶² This truce may very well be a construction of late annalists, based on a casual gap (because of Etruscan victories?) in the transmitted lists of warfare. A thought-provoking parallel is to be found in the gap between AD 514 and 552 in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's list of Saxon victories—not even mentioning the British triumph at Mons Badonicus (reported already by Gildas and dated c. AD 517 by the *Annales Cambriae*). It may be more than coincidence that this is precisely the period when later annals date the twelve victories of Arthur.

¹⁶³ An influence observable far into the *ager Faliscus*. See, for instance, Michetti, in Ambrosini *et al.* 1996, 65f.

¹⁶⁴ Cristofani 1989, 606f.; Mangani 1992, 116f. Emphasized also by Ambrosini 2002, 267f.

¹⁶⁵ Some examples, of course, are possibly to be found among the stands assigned to the preceding period, ending 325/290 BC. For similar conditions concerning Vulcentian bronze mirrors, see Fischer-Graf 1981, 174.

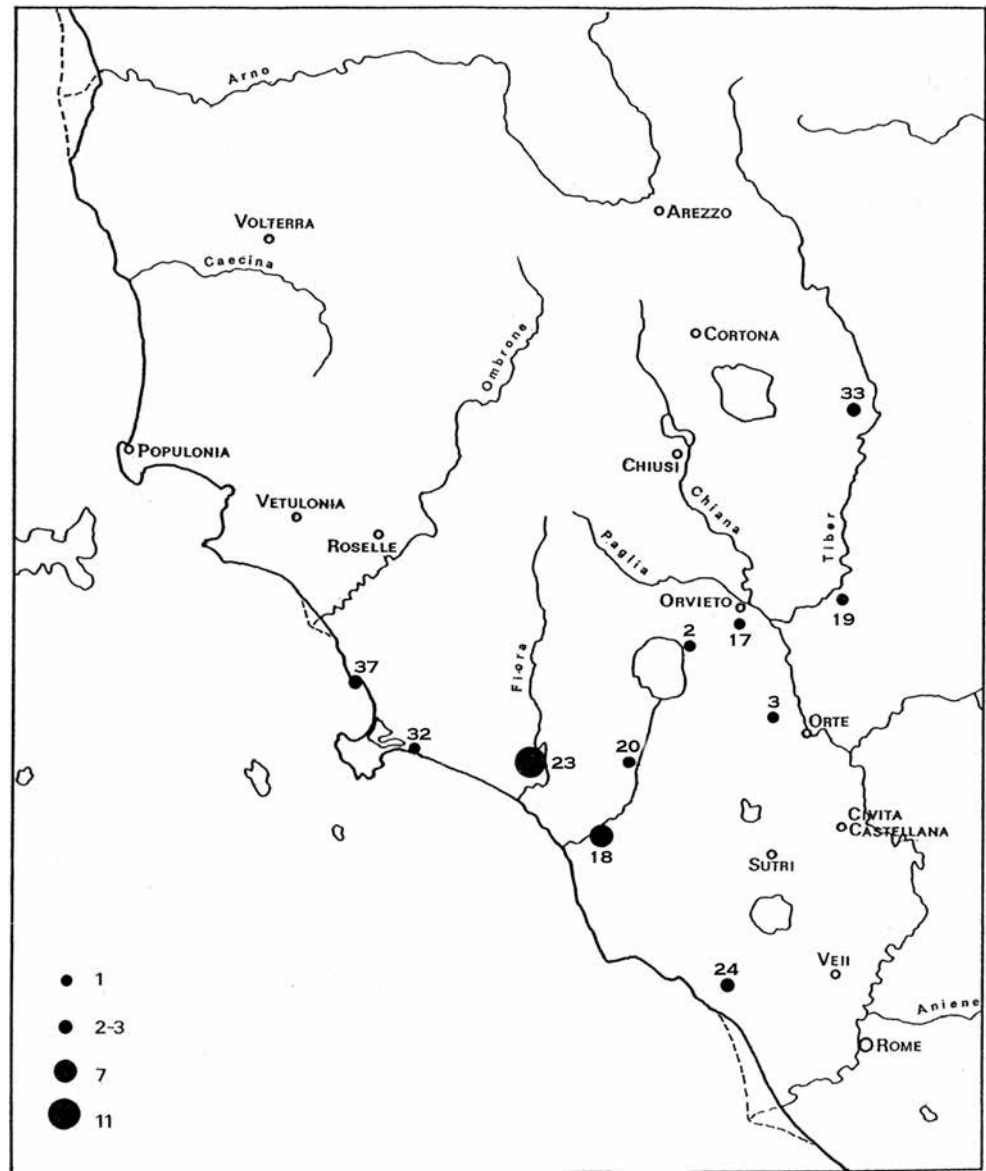


Fig. 13. Distribution map of tripod thymiateria dated between c. 350 and 325/290 BC. Illustration by Örjan Wikander.

cause of the Faliscan workshops that the output of this period remained almost as large as that of the preceding. Moreover, we witness a further spread from Orvieto northwards along the Chiana valley to Chiusi and Cortona, and from the upper Tiber valley (Todi and Perugia) over the mountains to Spello and Montefortino d'Arcevia. Typical of this period are also the stray finds encountered as far as Volterra in the north-west and to Buccino (Salerno) and Pietragalla (Potenza) in the south. This is, in fact, the period when the tripod thymiateria reached their most extensive distribution. But almost two thirds of the provenanced finds are concentrated in a small, crescent-shaped area from Tarquinia in the west to Civitella S. Paolo in the east.

In spite of repeated military setbacks, Tarquinia retained its formal freedom. When, after the conquest of Vulci, the Romans divided large parts of its territory among Roman settlers, they also took possession of the coastal strip between Tarquinia and the sea, but the city itself remained free. It now becomes obvious how closely the southern limit of the diffusion area of tripod thymiateria corresponds to the northern border of direct Roman power—including the Sutri area, under Latin rights after 383 BC. I have earlier suggested the Roman *leges sumptuariae* as a possible explanation (above, pp. 120f.).

The extensive production, soon concentrated to the workshops at Orvieto, Todi, Civita Castellana and perhaps

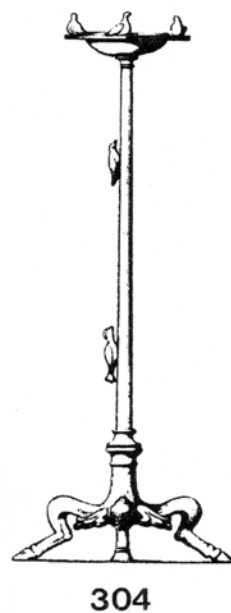
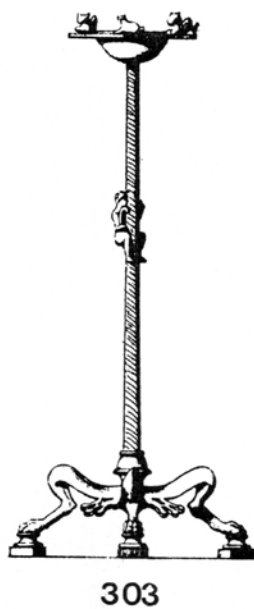
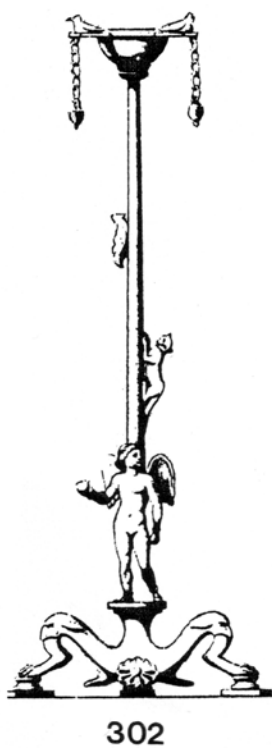
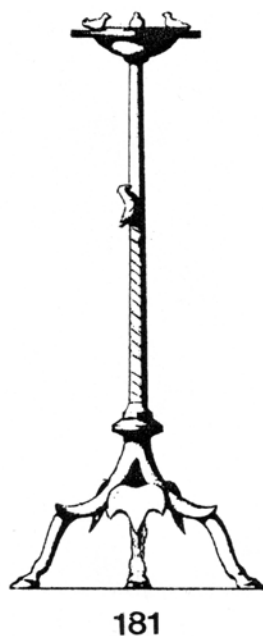


Fig. 14. Five tripod thymiateria assigned to Faliscan (above) and Volsinian (below) workshops, now in the Vatican Museum. All dated 325/250 BC. From Museo Gregoriano Etrusco 1842, tavv. LXXVI:1, LXXVIII:1-2, LXXXII:2, 5.

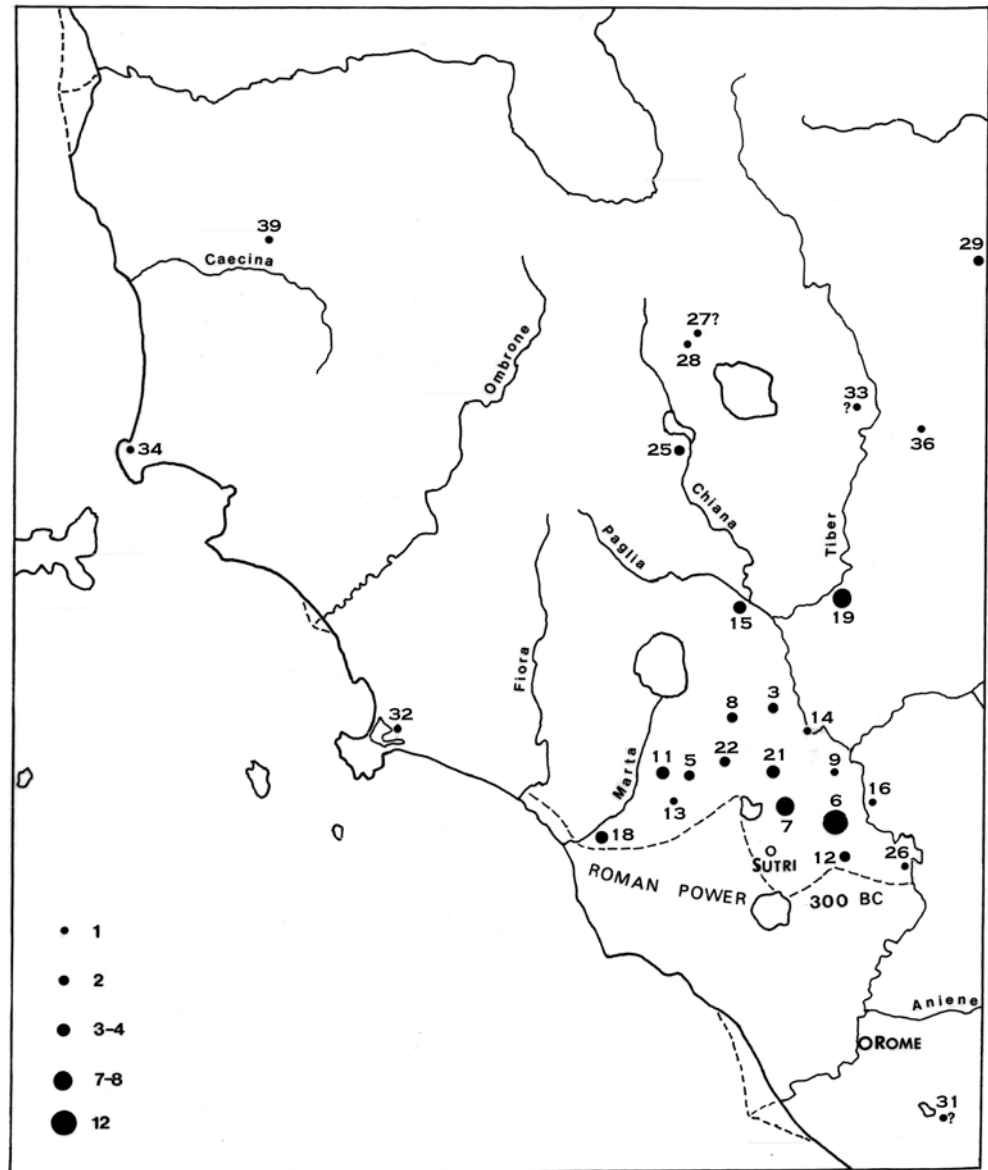


Fig. 15. Distribution map of tripod thymiateria dated between 325/290 and c. 250 BC. Buccino, Corfinio, and Pietragalla fall outside the map. Illustration by Örjan Wikander.

Tarquiniā,¹⁶⁶ includes several thymiateria of high technical and artistic quality, but in general the output (the Faliscan one in particular) is characterized by the standardization, simplification and lack of creativity that is to be found within vari-

ous arts and crafts from the late 4th century BC onwards.¹⁶⁷ Animal and human legs become stylized, sprawling and less naturalistic, the deep spiral fluting of the shaft is replaced by simple, more or less sparsely incised lines, even alternating with horizontal and intersecting grooves or plain surfaces, etc. (Figs. 14, nos. 180–181, 16).¹⁶⁸

Towards the mid-3rd century BC (or even before), production ceased completely. However hazardous it may be to

¹⁶⁶ From the end of the 4th century BC onwards, Ambrosini does not exclude the existence at Tarquinia of “una produzione locale così fortemente influenzata da quella vulcente da risultare, al momento, ancora non ben distinguibile” (2002, 371; cf. 209 and 2011, 83 n. 75). Cf. p. 115 and below, n. 169. For the possible establishment of branch workshops by a larger enterprise, see the discussion in Söderlind 2002, 315, 337–339, 342f. (concerning 3rd- and 2nd-century BC anatomical votive terracottas).

¹⁶⁷ Pianu 1989.

¹⁶⁸ See, for instance, nos. 187–190, 201, 206, 219–221, 231, 235–237, and 239.

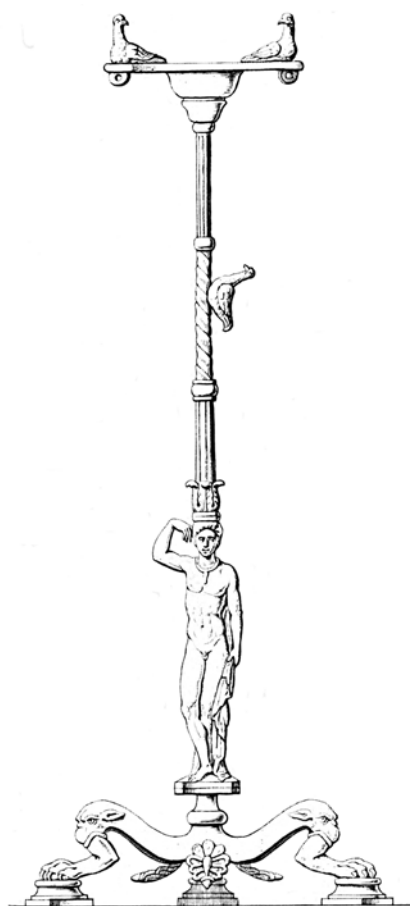


Fig. 16. Volsinian tripod thymiaterion (no. 318), in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. Dated 325/290 BC. From Real Museo 1863, tav. XIII.

explain changes in art and crafts as resulting from political events, it seems difficult not to connect the extinction of the production of tripod thymiateria with the contemporaneous Roman wars in the area. Two of the three remaining production centres were completely destroyed and abandoned, Orvieto in 264 BC and Civita Castellana in 241 BC, and the same may be true of the third: we have no historical records of how Todi came under Roman supremacy (it is, in fact, not mentioned until 103 BC).

CURUNAS STANDS: 300–150 BC (FIG. 17)

The function of the tripod thymiateria was taken over by censers of the Curunas type (consisting of a bowl only), which first appear at Tarquinia in the first half of the 3rd century BC¹⁶⁹

and then gradually replaced the tripod stands over most of their distribution area.¹⁷⁰ A comparison between Figs. 15 and 17 shows the striking similarity between the distribution of Curunas stands and that of their immediate predecessors. There can hardly be any doubt that we are dealing with two types with identical functions.

My distribution map of the Curunas stands differs in some respects from that of Ambrosini. Her map¹⁷¹ does not include the relevant find-sites presented in her “*bibliografia archeologica*”.¹⁷² Moreover, Ferento and Todi lack clear markings, and the uncertain find from Cerveteri is not indicated at all. My own map comprises 23 sites, 14 within the circle that indicates the main distribution area of tripod censers (p. 106, Fig. 1) and nine outside. As only one of the outside sites yielded more than one Curunas stand (Talamone, with seven), no less than 82% were found within the circle—almost exactly the same figure as for the tripod thymiateria (80%).

Within the circle:

Bolsena	8	371–372, 416, BA 13–18 (two of which identified), BA 20
Bommarzo	1	BA 71
Castel d'Asso	1	471
Civita Castellana	2	377–378
Falerii Novi	1	379
Ferento	3	484–485, 487
Grotte di Castro	1	373
Montefiascone	1	486
Musarna	3	428–429, BA 12
Orvieto	7	426, BA 2–6, BA 8
Tarquinia	32	467–470, BA 1, BA 7, BA 19, BA 21–22, BA 41–61, BA 83–84
Todi	1	391
Tuscania	8	393, 474–480
Viterbo	1	488

of specimens deriving from that city: out of 85 provenanced finds from 24 sites, no fewer than 32 (38%) come from the necropoleis of Tarquinia. No other town can count more than eight (Bolsena and Tuscania).

¹⁷⁰ Ambrosini (2002, 226 no. 86) even traces a transitional stage in a bowl, in many respects looking like a Curunas stand, but presumably being the bowl of a tripod thymiaterion (dated 310–250 BC). See also the bowls of tripod thymiateria nos. 114, 173, 178, 186, and 278, “*sicuramente ad essi pertinenti*” (ibid., 101). An interesting parallel is the gradual transition to box mirrors at Volterra during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC (de Grummond 1982, 23).

¹⁷¹ Ambrosini 2002, 383, fig. 1.

¹⁷² Ambrosini 2002, 403–408. I include all these entries (among them, Bommarzo, Campiglia Maritima, Civitella S. Paolo, and Poggio Buco), except for those without provenance or certain typological classification (BA 9, BA 23–34, BA 36–40, BA 62–70, BA 73–82).

¹⁶⁹ Ambrosini 2002, 381–383, 417. The importance of Tarquinia for the production of the Curunas stands is clearly shown by the great number

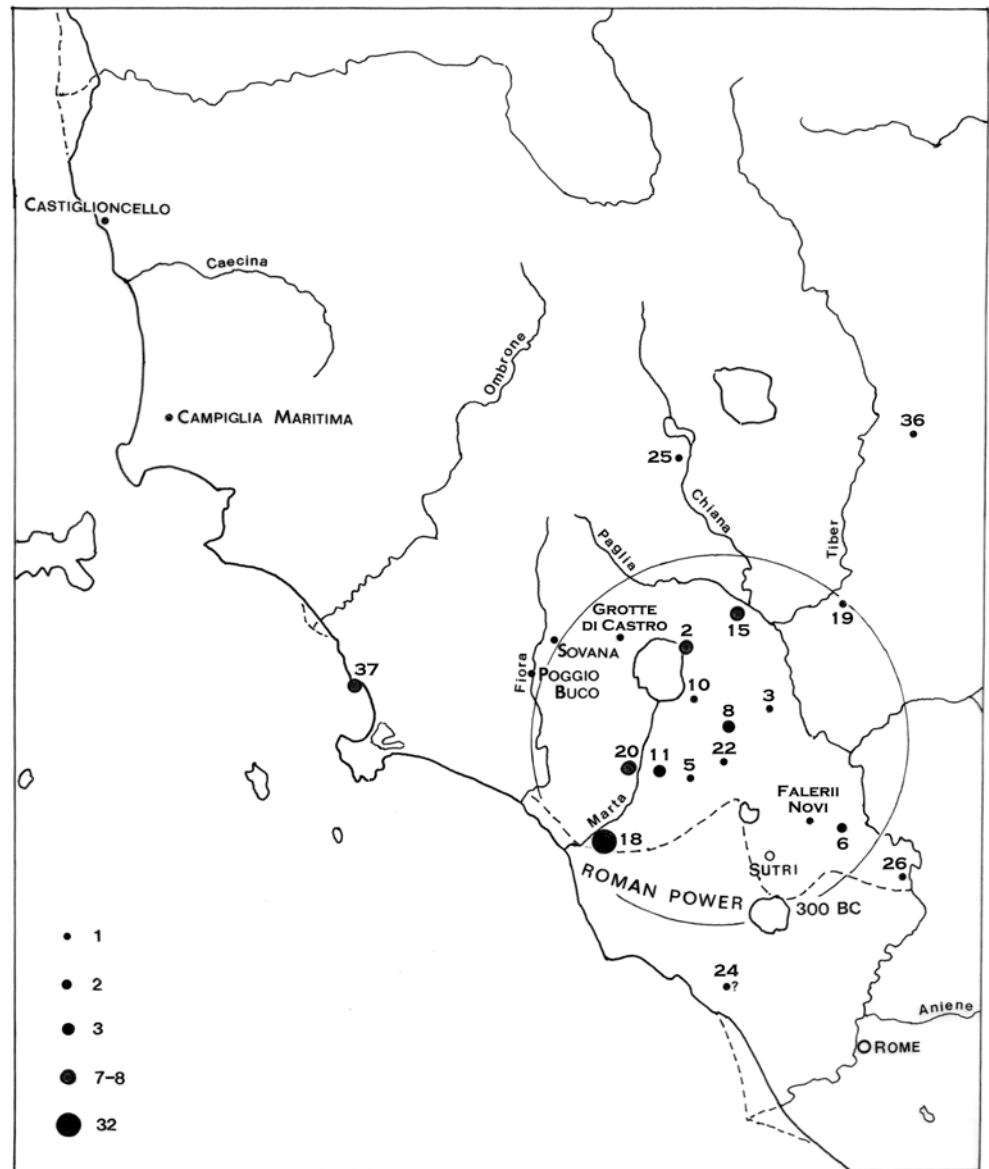


Fig. 17. Distribution map of thymiateria of Curunas type, dated between c. 300 and c. 150 BC. Illustration by Örjan Wikander.

Outside the circle:

Campiglia Marittima	1	BA 10
Castiglioncello	1	395
Cerveteri	1?	436?
Chiusi	1	392
Civitella S. Paolo	1	BA 11
Poggio Buco	1	BA 35
Sovana	1	394
Spello	1	425
Talamone	7	384–390

Only six of the 23 find-sites have not yielded any tripod thymiateria at all—within the circle, Falerii Novi and Grotte di Castro; outside, Campiglia Marittima, Castiglioncello, Poggio Buco, and Sovana. It is interesting to note that, except for Falerii Novi (which did not exist at the time of the tripod stands), all these sites are located north-west of the central distribution area. The diffusion into the Apennines is now even more restricted than for the tripod censers, to Todi and Spello.

The stray finds outside the main distribution area become less frequent. Only in one case do we encounter an obviously wider spread: up the Fiora valley (or possibly from Orvieto and Bolsena over Castro) to Poggio Buco and Sovana. The southern

border remains completely unchanged. Apart from one dubious Curunas stand from Cerveteri, there are no bronze thymiateria to be found in Etruria or Latium south of a curving line running from Tarquinia north of the Lago di Vico down to Civitella S. Paolo by the Tiber.¹⁷³ It was also precisely when Rome took control of the area north of this border that tripod thymiateria were replaced by the Curunas stands.

ROMANIZATION

Writing about Etruria in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC can hardly be accomplished without touching upon the question of romanization—particularly, after the intense discussions regarding that concept during the last decades. It is always a risky undertaking trying to connect cultural development with political and military operations but, particularly concerning one issue, I have already done so—that is, the possible importance of Roman *leges sumptuariae* for the restricted diffusion and eventual extinction of the tripod thymiateria (above, pp. 120f.).

But, apart from this negative impact, traces of romanization are difficult to find as far as bronze censers are concerned. Wars between Rome and Tarquinia are reported repeatedly during the 4th century BC: in 397, 388, 359–351 (followed by the alleged 40-years' truce), and 311–308. In spite of these wars, the Tarquinian territory apparently prospered both economically and culturally. Monumental buildings and town walls were erected, tomb painting flourished, and a number of artefacts were refreshed by new, creative ideas.¹⁷⁴ Tripod thymiateria were not alone.

Bronze mirrors received cast handles and new motifs,¹⁷⁵ stone sarcophagi became common, black-gloss superseded fine creamware as the preferred high-class tableware. And in no case can these novelties be connected with Roman influence.¹⁷⁶ There is, in fact, nothing to imply that this influence aimed at cultural pressure—at least not until after the Punic Wars.¹⁷⁷ Likewise, when tripod thymiateria disappeared in the first half of the 3rd century BC, we find no similar tenden-

cies in other crafts. Cheaper sarcophagi were manufactured in terracotta, but the production of stone sarcophagi continued—and so did the carved gems, bronze mirrors and various kinds of pottery. Even the seemingly rapid decline of Cerveteri after 273 BC has been questioned recently.¹⁷⁸ An apparently increasing population with denser settlements may have contributed to economic growth; the Hellenistic find-sites more than doubled compared to those of the Late Archaic and Classical periods.¹⁷⁹

But once again, the rapid and almost total change-over to Curunas stands cannot reasonably be explained by “natural” causes alone. It is reasonable to suspect a very palpable, external influence. Various circumstances, the shape and diffusion of the stands in particular, show that their function was the same as that of their forerunners. The fact that some tombs, but *no* tomb groups, include both types of stand speaks against a long, drawn-out transitional period.¹⁸⁰ A formal command from conquering Romans would seem a possible explanation but, if so, its reasons are difficult to understand. A minor decrease in the bronze volume can hardly have been enough to satisfy the anti-luxury laws—if such were ever in force in Etruria.

THE AFTERMATH

In spite of the almost total cessation of bronze production in South Etruria after the 2nd century BC,¹⁸¹ the use of thymiateria did not cease completely during the Late Hellenistic period. The finds of heirlooms in 2nd- and 1st-century BC tombs are proof enough (above, p. 123), as well as the existence of bronze thymiateria in the early Empire.¹⁸² Nonetheless, a considerable hiatus remains after the end of the production in the early 2nd century BC. We may again be witnessing the results of Roman anti-luxury legislation. A series of *leges*

¹⁷³ I, accordingly, do not share the opinion of Ambrosini (2011, 91): “la produzione tarquiniese, attraverso la direttrice imperniata sull’asse costituito dal fiume Marta, si diffonde in tutta l’Etruria, soprattutto meridionale.”

¹⁷⁴ Torelli 1981, 225–237.

¹⁷⁵ de Grummond 1982, 12; Wiman 1990, 243f.

¹⁷⁶ With the possible exception of black-gloss. Some workshops, the *Atelier des petites estampilles* in particular, have often been assigned to Rome, but their products were hardly the first black-gloss that reached Etruria, as early as around the mid-4th century BC.

¹⁷⁷ When Roman influence is already observed in the 3rd century BC, this is presumably only the consequence of a changing clientele, an increasing number of Roman colonists. See Söderlind 2002, 369–381 (concerning, particularly, the *velum* on terracotta votive heads). Likewise, changing burial strategies (including fewer female tombs) in 3rd-

century BC Caere reflect the influx of Roman immigrants (Nielsen 1989, 58f., table 1:5.).

¹⁷⁸ Colivicchi 2015, 178f. I owe this reference to Hampus Olsson.

¹⁷⁹ Olsson 2021, 104–113. But cf. Terrenato 2001, 2f. for a more sceptical discussion of the real implication of the increasing number of settlements in rural areas.

¹⁸⁰ Tomb IX (3–4) at Civita Castellana, Penna, contained nos. 190–191 and Curunas type no. 378 (Ambrosini 2002, 352, 409), Tomb Curunas II at Tuscania no. 150 and Curunas type nos. 474–480 (*ibid.*, 238, 414). However, both tombs comprised several burials of varying date. The Curunas censer from Spello no. 425 was not found *together with* no. 355, but was used as a replacement for its original bowl (*ibid.*, 103, 365). Bucciolini (1995, 436) maintains that 15 Curunas censers were found together with tripod stands, but see the discussion in Ambrosini 2002, 102–104. Tomb 21 (I) at Todi, S. Stefano, may possibly constitute an exception, if the “piccolo patera senza manico”, found together with thymiaterion no. 347, is in fact a Curunas-type censer (Ambrosini 2002, 364).

¹⁸¹ Haynes 1985, 36.

¹⁸² See, for instance, Testa 1989, 120 n. 58. But cf. Ambrosini 2002, 459–462.

sumptuariae were instituted from the *Lex Orchia de cenis* of 182 BC onwards.¹⁸³ They were mostly aimed at excessive luxury at dinner parties, but at least the *Lex Cornelia sumptuaria* of Sulla (Plut., *Vit. Sull.* 35) was partly directed against luxury at funerals, and it may well have had predecessors unknown to us.

It is reasonable to suspect an inverted connection between the Etruscan use of tripod thymiateria and the Roman military and cultural expansion. Whatever the reason for this connection, the censers were apparently strong carriers of Etruscan identity—by their function and not least by their extensive, applied decoration. The probable use of bronze thymiateria at magnificent banquets as well as most of their decorative details show an unbroken history among the Etruscan élite, from the 6th century BC onwards. But, like funerary sculpture, they have few counterparts in Rome, and it is no surprise that they continued in use up to the Roman conquest and (as far as the Curunas stands are concerned) even longer. Like sculptured sarcophagi, the use of bronze thymiateria can perhaps be interpreted as conscious or unconscious resistance to romanization.

It is tempting here to seize upon Ambrosini's suggestion that similar thymiateria and candelabra from the early Empire, whether imitations or authentic pieces, should be seen as "*oggetti d'antiquariato*".¹⁸⁴ If she is correct, they are perhaps, by their rather eccentric shape, to be taken as deliberate examples of the current *etruscheria*?¹⁸⁵

A further illustration of the prevailing conditions is provided by the (rather infrequent) finds of terracotta censers from 5th- to 3rd-century BC Central Italy. Whereas the chronological range of these cheaper variants is more or less the same, their function differed markedly from that of the bronze thymiateria, as they apparently all (at least those found in South Etruria) derive from sanctuaries.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, their distribution is almost the opposite to that of the bronze stands, that is, southernmost Etruria and Latium: Gravisca, Civita Castellana, Narce, Mazzano Romano, Veii, Rome, Lavinium, Artena, Trevi, Anagni, Segni, and Minturnae.¹⁸⁷ Terracotta

thymiateria are to be found in both fine and coarse wares, including bucchero pesante and creamware. Painted decoration is mostly restricted to simple, horizontal bands. As small fragments are difficult to separate from ordinary pottery, the true number of these censers may have been much greater than it appears now, and their real importance remains, for the time being, hard to ascertain.

6. Function

AREAS OF USE

Why, then, the obvious importance of the tripod thymiateria in 4th- and 3rd-century BC Etruria? Why so many production centres, why this quite extensive output, why so long duration of production? Leaving aside totally misguided identifications of the stands as, for instance, candelabra and *kottaboi* (utensils used at a banquet game), there are basically two different explanations of their function to consider: their use exclusively as parts of the rituals involved at female burials, as maintained by Ambrosini, and their use also at domestic sacrifices and for embellishments of magnificent banquets, which remains my own belief.

It remains a fact that, apart from half a dozen stands from votive deposits at various sanctuaries, all provenanced tripod thymiateria have been found in tombs. The dedications come from Populonia (no. 4), Tarquinia (no. 119), Nemi? (no. 240), Montecchio (no. 362), and Medma-Rosarno (no. 364). In addition, there is an unprovenanced stand which can be shown to be a dedication by its inscription (no. 48).¹⁸⁸

As for the sepulchral finds, Ambrosini's arguments are based, on one hand, on the possible symbolic messages transmitted by the many images of animals, human beings and plants that adorn the stands and, on the other, on their obvious connection with *female* tombs. Earlier literature includes few attempts to discuss symbolic meaning and, when done, it is mostly a matter of superficial observations concerning various parts of the stands: the base consisting of three human legs has been combined with the symbolism-laden Sicilian *triskelion*,¹⁸⁹ the animals climbing on the shaft are supposed to allude to domestic animals present at the banquets in which the thymiateria were used,¹⁹⁰ the bowl with doves(?) in the

¹⁸³ Concerning *Lex Orchia* and the better-known *Lex Fannia* of 161 BC, see Clemente 1981, 6. The same intention is reflected in the regulation of 189 BC, *ne quis venderet unguenta exotica* (Plin., *HN* XIII 5.24). Fragrant unguents were used (like incense) at funerals to check the smell of death. Cf. *Leges XII tabularum* X 6a: *servilis unctura tollitur* (Cic., *Leg.* II 24.60).

¹⁸⁴ Ambrosini 2002, 462. Cf. Testa 1989, 143.

¹⁸⁵ As perhaps best exemplified by the often-quoted *Tyrrhena sigilla* of Horatius (*Epist.* II 2.180). Cf. also Plin., *HN* XXXIV 16.34: *signa quoque Tuscanica per terras dispersa, quae quin in Etruria factitata sint non est dubium* (referring to bronze statues). In general: Haynes 2000, 386–389.

¹⁸⁶ This is the case of only five tripod thymiateria, and not a single Curunas stand.

¹⁸⁷ Ambrosini 2002, particularly 456f., and 2011, 92f., with detailed references. Add: Gori & Pierini 2001, vol. 1, 83–85, *tavv.* 17f.; vol. 2, 286,

tav. 58bis (Gravisca). Ambrosini also mentions occasional finds from Campania, Basilicata, and Puglia.

¹⁸⁸ Ambrosini 2002, 366f.

¹⁸⁹ Pernice 1925, 20f.

¹⁹⁰ Buccioli 1995, 405.

platform corners is combined with a motif common in later Hellenistic and Roman art,¹⁹¹ etc.

The first attempt to present a comprehensive view of the problem was made by Ambrosini, who devotes an entire chapter to “*Il significato simbolico dei thymiateria con treppiede*”.¹⁹² Ambrosini starts her argument from “*una felice intuizione*” of George Dennis: “The shafts [...] are often [...] knotted like the stem of a tree [...] It was a favourite conceit to introduce a cat or squirrel chasing a bird up the shaft, and the bowl above has often little birds around it, as though it were a nest, so that the whole is then intended to represent a tree.”¹⁹³

Ambrosini expands the metaphor, pointing out the presence of decorative leaves between the legs of the base, occasionally even on the shaft. If the bowl is an image of the bird’s nest, the incense in it was a symbol of the eggs.¹⁹⁴ She goes on to argue that the decoration of the tripod thymiateria should be understood as a comprehensive symbol of the passing of the deceased to Hades. Snakes have chthonic connotations, equine legs allude to psychopompic infernal deities, groups of three dogs to Kerberos. Marine animals such as dolphins and hippocamps refer to the voyage to the Island of the Blessed. Closely connected with the funerary sphere are the dionysiac and orphic/pythagorean ones, with satyr legs, protomes and figurines, as well as the ivy leaves on the base.¹⁹⁵

Ambrosini, accordingly, suggests that the thymiateria were not deposited in the tomb after ordinary use among the living, but were manufactured directly for funerary purposes.¹⁹⁶ Her argumentation is skilful and seductive, but she honestly admits that it is difficult to decide “*se i thymiateria fossero utilizzati nella vita quotidiana o se fossero realizzati esclusivamente per entrare a far parte del corredo funebre della defunta*”. The most serious problem is obviously the difficulty to explain away the inscription *śudina* on twelve¹⁹⁷ tripod thymiateria and thirteen of Curunas type,¹⁹⁸ if they had not been in non-

funerary use before. But a series of further objections can easily be raised.

The fundamental identification of the shaft with a tree may seem credible enough, but it is worthy of note that Dennis counted censers among candelabra. Among tripod thymiateria, the interpretation of the shaft as a tree is very seldom implied, and in only one case emphasized. Apart from the tree-trunk of no. 353, I have found only nine distantly related examples: incised palm leaves (no. 163), protruding acanthus leaves (nos. 338, 354), and the shaft transformed into a floral scroll (nos. 329, 339, 347, 351–352, 355).¹⁹⁹ Moreover, they are all presumably to be dated to the 3rd century BC (except for nos. 163 and 329, which may belong to the end of the 4th century BC), and with the same exceptions they are all assigned to Todi—none to Vulci.²⁰⁰ This may well be an indication that the tree metaphor was not intended from the beginning, but a second thought added only at a late date and at a distance from the earliest production centres.²⁰¹ It should be noted that Ambrosini herself²⁰² points out that no. 353—the *only* censer undoubtedly represented as a tree—is closely related to *kottaboi* and “*del tutto isolato*”.

Nor does Ambrosini mention the 23 shafts distinctly shaped like Greek columns and two additional capitals (above, pp. 127, 129f.), a group for which parts of her symbolic interpretation have no meaning at all. But, for the few stands with shafts that could represent a tree, the identification of the bowl and its surrounding doves with a bird’s nest seems more convincing than does that of a water-basin²⁰³—and far more so than the suggestion that the doves “probably allude to the birds used in augury and the haruspices, rituals of divination in which incense would also have been used.”²⁰⁴

Concerning the winding serpents (above, p. 110), Ambrosini suggests that they may lie in wait for the human climbers, who are ascending the tree in order to carve its bark and

¹⁹¹ Fiumi 1957, 486; Testa 1989, 119.

¹⁹² Ambrosini 2002, 313–322, ch. 14.

¹⁹³ Dennis 1883, vol. 2, 478 n. 4.

¹⁹⁴ Ambrosini 2002, 313–315; 2011, 84–86.

¹⁹⁵ Ambrosini 2002, 316f. She expounds her thoughts further in Ambrosini 2011, 84–90, with particular regard to arboreal symbolism and the domestic environment.

¹⁹⁶ Ambrosini 2002, 320f., 367.

¹⁹⁷ Beside the nine *śudina* inscriptions listed by Ambrosini (2002, 430–440 nos. 7–15), there is one on the bowl of the British Museum thymiaterion no. 59 (Wikander 2005, 125). But Ambrosini is not convinced that the bowl belongs to the stand. Moreover, Briquel has drawn attention to two more: Briquel 2016, 124–126 (no. 79; inscription not mentioned by Ambrosini); Briquel & Haumesser 2009, 258f. (three *śudina* inscriptions on the same stand).

¹⁹⁸ Ambrosini 2002, 430–447. But Ambrosini (2011, 89) admits that “*l’iscrizione śuthina [...] potrebbe forse indicare che, prima della loro deposizione nella tomba, tali oggetti erano stati utilizzati durante la vita terrena*”.

¹⁹⁹ I here disregard a group of censers the shafts of which grow up from a bunch of acanthus leaves (nos. 178, 278, 311, 313, 318, 323, 336, 346). These would rather represent the shaft as a plant than a tree, and the fact that three of them are vertically fluted, as a column, is in clear opposition to the tree parallel. It is a curious coincidence(?) that six out of eight belong to Types ZL9 or ZL11, both with “*zoomorphe Junktur*”.

²⁰⁰ The Vulcentian no. 66 could possibly be included in the group, but even that is dated late (310/290 BC). From the photograph, it seems to have a few tiny leaves on the shaft, but Ambrosini (2002, 156) describes it as a “*canna semplice, senza altri elementi decorativi*”. Nos. 340 and 356 have slightly winding shafts, reminiscent of the floral scrolls, but no distinct leaves.

²⁰¹ Other, more ordinary, tripod thymiateria give no such impression at all. For instance, in museum and auction catalogues, the shaft is mostly described as “stem” (German “*Schaft*”), but occasionally as “columnar shaft”, “*colonne torse*”, or “*Spiralsäule*”—that is, a column rather than a tree.

²⁰² Ambrosini 2002, 281, 333.

²⁰³ But no. 44, with frogs around the bowl, supports such an interpretation.

²⁰⁴ Reeder Williams 1984, 63 no. 47. But see above p. 131 for an additional explanation.

collect incense (with a sagacious reference to Herodotos III 107.2). The argument is weakened, however, by the fact that only eight of the 31 serpent-stands display a climbing human figure.²⁰⁵ Even more, twelve censers show the snake alone on the shaft, thus weakening the most widespread interpretation, too, viz. that it is chasing other animals.

Ambrosini correctly emphasizes the serpent's chthonic nature, strongly associated with the "*demoni dell'oltretomba*". This, of course, cannot be refuted, but the snake also symbolized something else that might be important in this connection:²⁰⁶ the protection of house and household, as personified by the *Genius* of the family father and the *Lares familiares*. Each *pater familias* was expected daily (and monthly) to burn incense to the family Lar. Many Roman lararia were decorated with dancing *lares* and a snake, and "The one or two snakes associated with the *Genius*, or shown below the Lares [...] appear to be the guardians of the place as well as an expression of the vital, if not genetic, force of the family."²⁰⁷ What decoration could be more appropriate than a snake, if the thymiaterion was intended for domestic sacrifices and banquets?²⁰⁸

At Aeneas' sacrifice to his dead father, Vergilius hesitates whether a snake, *inter pateras et leviam pocula serpens*, was the *genius loci* or his father's servant (*famulus*).²⁰⁹ We know that similar conceptions were abroad among the Etruscans in the mid-2nd century BC from a story told by C. Gracchus about his parents. When two snakes were found in their home (or even bed), the summoned haruspices explained that they symbolized his father and mother and, in fact, decided upon their life and death.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ Ambrosini affords another interpretation, too, for the human figures: the orphic/pythagorean conception of "*animulae vaganti nell'Ade in attesa della reincarnazione*" (Ambrosini 2002, 317; cf. 2011, 88).

²⁰⁶ There are, of course, a number of other qualities associated with snakes: "Few creatures are so rich in iconographical symbolism as the serpent" (Hostetler 2004, 203).

²⁰⁷ Turcan 2000, 16. On the burning of incense for the Lar, see for instance Tib. I 3.34 (*reddereque antiquo menstrua tura Lari*) and Ov., *Fast.* II 631 (*dis generis date tura*). The importance of daily sacrifices of incense and wine to the family Lar was emphasized as early as c. 200 BC, in Plaut., *Aulularia* 24–25.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Reeder Williams (1984, 63) concerning no. 165: "This thymiaterion [...] was used in a domestic shrine to burn incense." A similar aim to protect the house and the household can be suspected from burning of incense in *turibula* outside the front doors at the introduction of the sacred stone of Magna Mater into Rome in 204 BC: *turibulis ante ianuas posititis [...], atque accenso ture, precantes ut volens propitiique urbem Romanam iniret* (Livius XXIX 14.13). On the importance of burning incense at divination, see Ambrosini 2002, 67f.

²⁰⁹ Verg., *Aen.* V 90–96. Cf. Isid., *Origines* XII 4: *Angues apud gentiles pro genitiis locorum erant habitus semper*.

²¹⁰ Cic., *Div.* I 18.36: *duobus anguibus domi comprehensis haruspices convocavit. Qui cum respondissent, si marem emisset, uxori brevi tempore esse moriendum, si feminam, ipsi*. The same story is told in Plut., *Vit. Ti. Gracch.* 1. According to the *disciplina Etrusca*, one snake seems to have

Equine legs could, admittedly, allude to the psychopompic infernal deities, but there are a number of more immediate explanations—why not the horse-races so obviously popular at least among the aristocracy's Archaic ancestors?²¹¹ Three dogs could allude to Kerberos (nos. 42, 173, 209, 238), hippocamps and dolphins to the Island of the Blessed. Whereas hippocamps are significant (but in evidence on only three stands, nos. 210, 224, 303), hunting dogs were a regular occurrence in aristocratic households, and dolphins had been a popular decorative element—not necessarily associated with death—at least from Minoan art onwards.²¹²

Ambrosini devotes little interest to the human and mythological caryatids. Female statuettes, including those holding a mirror (nos. 44, 171, 180 [Fig. 14]), apparently refer to the *mundus muliebris*, but one may quite as well maintain that the male ones belong to the *mundus virilis*. Particularly interesting are the representations of athletes, holding dumbbells (nos. 77, 114, 305) or a discus (nos. 82 [Fig. 6], 224²¹³). Ambrosini admits that it would be hazardous to refer them unambiguously to the funerary spectacles—much more plausible, then, to think of competitions among the living, just like the horse races. She also seems dubious about the interpretation of the dancers (nos. 14,²¹⁴ 118).

But interpretation lies in the eyes of the observer. To Ambrosini, the tripod thymiateria bring an impression of funeral and death, while Brendel thought that "All in all one receives the impression of a light-hearted imagery, standardized

portended good luck, and two snakes bad luck. See the ancient sources gathered in Thulin 1912, 2465.

²¹¹ Cf. Serv., *ad Aen.* III 537: *in libris Etruscis invenitur etiam equos bona auspica dare*.

²¹² For a survey (with ample references) of symbolic meanings of the dolphin, see Kane 2006, 178, who mentions, among other things, its association with fertility—appropriate, if Nielsen is right in her suggestion (pers. comm.) that thymiateria, together with mirrors, cistae etc., belonged to the ordinary wedding gifts for elite women (cf. no. 107, with a woman feeding her child). Ambrosini (2011, 89) interprets the tree, too, as a fertility symbol. A high candelabrum with dolphin feet is exhibited in the Museo di Villa Giulia.

²¹³ Hess & Schab (1957, 23 no. 54) identify the discus on no. 224 as a "*Spendeschale*", maintaining that "*einst war sie waagrecht gehalten*". The youth keeps his right arm in the same position as another Etruscan bronze figurine obviously holding a sacrificial bowl (Münzen und Medaillen 1983, 35–37 no. 87). Cf. also Cristofani 1985, 108f., 257 no. 5.1, 181 no. 76. In fact, many Etruscan offerers hold the *phiale* vertically; see, for instance, Warden 1998, fig. 5. The decision is not easy to make. See Ambrosini's (2002, 225 with n. 37) argumentation against Bucciolini, who saw a *patera* in the hand of the youth on no. 82.

²¹⁴ Friederichs (1871, 166–168), who emphasized dancers and jesters as a particularly important category, described the odd no. 14 (his No. 693^b) as "*Nackte weibliche Figur mit Bulla und etruscischen Armbändern, in den Händen Castagnetten*". Ambrosini (2002, 150), on the other hand, identifies the figurine as "*atleta con halteres*", and I would not venture a guess myself. Friederich was not wrong in his asserting a great frequency of dancers, but the majority are to be found on *Archaic* thymiateria.

though variable”.²¹⁵ In 1970, when Haynes listed examples of possible chthonic and funerary significance for a series of thymiaterion figurines, she concluded her discussion as follows: “But this is all conjecture; it may well be that the censer was made for use in everyday life and that the motifs incorporated in it have no funerary significance at all.”²¹⁶

Whereas Ambrosini enumerates a number of details that undoubtedly *may* be connected with the funeral sphere, it is striking that none refer to the Underworld itself. Nor do we encounter the most obvious figures or phenomena discussed by Ingrid Krauskopf (who does not mention thymiateria) concerning the deceased’s journey to Hades: death demons, the ship for the voyage, stylized waves, sea monsters, the infernal gate, or the helping gods—the Dioskouroi, Apollon and Dionysos (if not alluded to by the few depictions of satyrs).²¹⁷

To sum up and expand my views on this complex problem: I do not at all exclude that some (perhaps even many) tripod thymiateria were manufactured and acquired precisely for the use at female funerals. Ambrosini’s proposition, though not conclusive, is interesting and well argued, and it should not be rejected without further discussion. But, if her identification of references to Hades and the *mundus muliebris* can be substantiated, this does not necessarily mean that such censers were not used at worldly banquets, too. Most thymiateria would still have no disturbingly explicit funerary associations and may easily have been part of festivities among the living before following a female family member into her grave.²¹⁸

An interesting parallel is to be found in Etruscan bronze mirrors which (contrary to their Greek counterparts) are often reported to have been discovered *exclusively* in tombs.²¹⁹ Nevertheless, it has been shown beyond doubt that such mirrors were used in their owner’s lifetime, too.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Brendel 1978, 334. Whitehead (1996, 18) thinks that these thymiateria “tend to convey a quality of whimsical surprise”.

²¹⁶ Haynes 1970, 184. Even Dennis (1883, vol. 1, 324) asked himself, concerning some Tarquinian tomb paintings: “why seek a symbolic interpretation in the cat and domestic fowls gleaning the crumbs of the feast, or in the cats and birds among the trees, or in the hare and fox at their feet?”. Serra Ridgway (2000, 417) points out that “death symbolisms” are to be found on Etruscan mirrors, too, and emphasizes their “notorious overlapping” with those of wedding symbolism.

²¹⁷ Krauskopf 2006, 67–69, 74–77.

²¹⁸ It would not *per se* be remarkable if thymiateria were included among the grave gifts after use among the living. This was almost certainly the case with bronze mirrors, and both Greek and Italic tombs include pottery and metal vessels belonging to the table service (Salskov Roberts 2002, 9, 21, 27f.). Even the roof-tiles met with in many burials could be reused (Wikander 2017, 164 with n. 289).

²¹⁹ de Grummond 1982, 172f. But Serra Ridgway (2000, 417 n. 50) states that “there are exceptions to the rule” (occasional finds in sanctuaries).

²²⁰ Because of ancient repairs: Melander 1979, 163; De Puma 1998, 38, fig. 4. de Grummond (1982, 183–186) suggests that the late, soporifically repetitive Lasa and Dioskouroi mirrors may have been produced directly for funerary purposes but, apparently, not even that holds true:

THE CONSUMERS

Find contexts of tombs do not always provide clear indications of sex. When they do, Ambrosini points out that it is always a question of female burials. Her arguments seem convincing—at least, tripod thymiateria have apparently not been found in one single tomb that is undoubtedly male. This, however, does not necessarily mean that such thymiateria were exclusively individual, female belongings.

Tripod thymiateria are mostly discovered together with mirrors, often in rich tombs containing large numbers of bronze vessels and not seldom personal ornaments in gold and silver. Of the 54 tomb groups discussed by Ambrosini,²²¹ many cannot be assigned with certainty to the same burials as the thymiateria; others are ambiguous in other ways. All in all, I have found 31 groups useful for this purpose.²²² Bronze vessels and bronze mirrors have been discovered in more than two thirds of these (at least 21 and 24 tombs, respectively). Gold (occasionally in great quantities) comes from twelve tombs, silver from five; as no more than two of these are identical, almost every second tomb contained gold and/or silver. Moreover, bronze cistae were found in seven tombs, scarabs in four or five. In all these cases, it seems clear that the owners were members of the élite.

But there are also some tombs with much poorer gifts. Whereas most tombs with mirrors contained no thymiateria, the opposite is rare. Only seven out of 31 tombs with censers lacked mirrors, and these seven tombs contained no gold objects or bronze vessels either. Some tombs yielded very little metal, four contained none at all; apart from the stands, they contained only ordinary, domestic pottery.²²³ This could indicate that such thymiateria were in use also among a reasonably well-to-do middle class—a class that played an increasingly important part in Etruria from the late 4th century BC onwards.

Eighteen tripod stands present epigraphical messages.²²⁴ Eight of them give the name of the owner, three or four are dedications to a god. It is worthy of note that all these inscriptions are to be found on the base or the shaft, whereas all twelve inscriptions stating the object’s belonging to a tomb (three also including the name of the owner) are written on either the bowl or the body of the human figurine that carries

“The later handle-mirrors [...] are composed of very high-tin alloys. This fact contradicts the supposition that these mirrors were intended primarily as tomb furniture” (Wiman 1990, 244).

²²¹ Ambrosini 2002, 343–366. Together with bronze mirrors: *ibid.*, 319f.

²²² Nos. 1, 3, 27, 88, 107+110, 114, 118, 139, 144, 145, 173, 185, 186–189, 198, 203–204, 205, 206, 217, 265, 278, 298, 313, 321, 328, 338, 344, 346, 347, 355, 365, and BA 58.

²²³ It is worthy of note that these four tombs are all late: nos. 145 (Tarquinia, 310/290 BC), 173 (Corfinio, 325/250 BC), 185 (Civita Castellana, 325/250 BC), and 205 (Vignanello, 325/250 BC).

²²⁴ Ambrosini 2002, 421–440 nos. 1–15, plus the inscriptions mentioned in n. 197.

the shaft. Of the eight owners, four are known by both names, four by their *gentilicium* only. Four are presumably female, at least three are male.²²⁵ Some uncertainties remain, but it is interesting to note that one undoubtedly male name and one uncertain derive from votive deposits in sanctuaries; a third, possibly male name is written on a stand without known provenance. The inscriptions, thus, do not contradict Ambrosini's hypothesis: no thymiaterion certainly deriving from a tomb carries a male name. Perhaps tripod thymiateria were deposited only in female tombs, even if they were used by men as well in their lifetime.²²⁶

In three more cases can the female owner of a thymiaterion be identified by inscriptions written on the sarcophagus or the tile closing the *loculus*.²²⁷ At least one of these inscriptions, from the tomb of the Salvii at Ferento, assigns the owner to the local élite. On the other hand, one of the names inscribed on the censers may be taken as a warning against taking it for granted that all owners belonged to the upper classes: the votive gift discovered at Tarquinia (no. 119) was dedicated by one *murila hercnas*, probably a Greek-born female slave of the aristocratic Hercnas family.²²⁸

7. Material and social value

When assessing the value of the tripod thymiateria, it is important to consider not only the cost of the metal and the bronze-smith's contribution. We must also include what, with Pierre Bourdieu's terminology, could be labelled social and cultural capital.

The material value can be estimated rather accurately. Bronze was a fairly common metal, but still not cheap. It never became an everyday commodity among ordinary people, but the output increased to fill the demands of both the small élite and the growing upper middle class. A piece of information generally omitted in the publications of thymiateria is their weight. I have found only one exception: John W. Hayes' publication of five censers in the Royal Ontario Museum in

Toronto.²²⁹ Unfortunately, three of these cannot be used in this connection,²³⁰ but together with data concerning the Stockholm stands,²³¹ we have at least four weights that can be considered reliable.²³²

no. 105	1,060 g	H. 43 cm	Equine legs	3+2+4 animals
no. 106	1,086 g	H. 41 cm	Human legs	No animals
no. 282	738 g	H. 38.7 cm	Human legs	One animal
no. 285	969 g	H. 45 cm	Equine legs	Climbing human

It goes without saying that the height, the shape of the legs, and the attached figurines must affect the weight, and some obvious connections are to be seen here. The shortest specimen (no. 282) is also the lightest, and no. 105 with no fewer than nine attached animals is heavier than the slightly higher no. 285 (with a bigger but single climber). But remarkably, the plain no. 106 is heavier than nos. 105 and 285, even though both are higher and furnished with figurines. Nor does it contain a high percentage of lead. The explanation must be that the diameter of the shaft of no. 106 (1.0–1.5 cm) is greater than those of nos. 105 (0.9–1.3 cm) and 285 (0.75–1.3 cm). It seems reasonable to reckon with an average thymiaterion weight of about 1 kg or slightly less.

The silver/bronze ratio varied over time, but a rough approximation of the situation towards the end of the 3rd century BC can perhaps be deduced from the Roman monetary system. But the calculations are complicated by the varying weights of the as and by the redating of the introduction of the denarius.²³³ Nevertheless—in spite of uncertainties in the fundamental passages of Plinius' *Naturalis historia*—it seems reasonable to trust his statement that the original value of the silver denarius equalled that of ten pounds of bronze.²³⁴ Whenever this connection was first established, it should cor-

²²⁵ Ambrosini 2002, 422:2 (no. 2), 424:3 (s.n.), 425:4 (no. 4), 427:5 (no. 362), 428:6 (no. 119), 430:8 (no. 313), 433:10 (no. 297), and 435:13 (no. 321). The stand with inscription 424:3 is not included in Ambrosini's general catalogue, as she felt uncertain whether it actually is a thymiaterion (ibid., 328).

²²⁶ Cf. de Grummond 1982, 166f., on the presumed use of bronze mirrors by living men. Moreover, female tombs can contain objects normally associated with men (and *vice versa*). For instance, bronze strigils have been found in female tombs (Massa-Pairault 1991 [non vidi]). Cf. Ambrosini *et al.* 1996, 63, fig. 38). It should always be kept in mind that funeral rituals are mostly conservative and include customs which are very difficult to explain.

²²⁷ Ambrosini 2002, 354 no. 206, 359 no. 288, 360 no. 291.

²²⁸ De Simone 1970, 232, 244, 266; Ambrosini 2002, 447.

²²⁹ Hayes 1984, 35–38 nos. 41–45. Generally, Ambrosini (2002, 240; 2006, 227) states that Vulcentian thymiateria are heavier than Faliscan and Volsinian ones. She presents no figures, but the information tallies with those given here: nos. 105 and 106 are of Vulcentian production, nos. 282 and 285 of Faliscan.

²³⁰ No. 148 (Hayes 1984, no. 42) has its bowl replaced by a Curunas censer, and its base and shaft probably do not belong together (Ambrosini 2002, 238). No. 283 (Hayes 1984, no. 43) has its bowl replaced by a similar censer; moreover, it is extremely low (34.2 cm; cf. Fig. 5). No. 284 (Hayes 1984, no. 45A) has no bowl preserved, and the stated weight (485 g) is suspiciously low, considering the height of the stand (42.8 cm; Ambrosini's figure, 47.9 cm, includes the obviously not-belonging Hayes 1984, no. 45B).

²³¹ I received this information in 2008 from Kristian Göransson, then curator at the Medelhavsmuseet.

²³² A bronze tripod base, 7 cm high, found at Chieti, weighed 340g (Ambrosini 2002, 295 no. BA 20).

²³³ See, for instance, Catalli, in Coarelli & Gatti Lo Guzzo 1973, 33–43; Sutherland 1974, 40–47.

²³⁴ Plin., *HN* XXXIII 13.44: *placuit denarium pro X libris aeris valere*.

respond better to the true ratio between the metals than do the later changes in weight and currency which were intended to strengthen the economy of the Roman state.²³⁵ As the earliest denarii are supposed to have weighed 4.55 g (corresponding to 3.276 kg for ten bronze asses), the metal in a thymiaterion weighing *c.* 1 kg should have cost very approximately 1/3 denarius, less than half the daily earnings of a skilled craftsman—seemingly too cheap to be true.²³⁶

The manufacture of a censer was a complex working process that needed highly skilled craftsmen. A complete tripod stand is composed, as a rule, from ten to fifteen parts, cast separately (often using *cire perdue*) and soldered together with lead or tin.²³⁷ Such stands also need a decorative after-treatment in the form of incising, punching and polishing. Altogether, the manufacture of each thymiaterion must have demanded a great number of working hours, a fact that was inevitably reflected in the price.²³⁸ Only from a much later period (AD 301), do we get some information concerning the wages of bronze-smiths (*aerarii*)—calculated, not according to their hours of work, but to the amount of metal involved.²³⁹

The purchase cost of a tripod thymiaterion must, thus, have been quite high. There is reason to believe that an incense burner was more costly than most contemporary bronze utensils (elaborate *cistae* and high-class mirrors being among the

few exceptions). The apparently rapid change-over to incense stands of Curunas type towards the middle of the 3rd century BC must, however, have made the use of bronze thymiateria much cheaper—whether that change was caused by Roman sumptuary laws or something else.

From a strictly practical point of view, the value of the tripod thymiateria must have been insignificant. Incense could as well be burnt in much simpler (and thus cheaper) devices: small terracotta altars (*acerrae*), terracotta censers, or even plain ceramic bowls. But the very fact that thymiateria were expensive must have made them significant manifestations of social status. At banquets, they constituted an essential part of the household utensils, and with their abundant decoration they necessarily attracted attention. At funerals, they were undoubtedly in practical use, and through the smell of incense they must, in a similar way, have emphasized their presence more than other tomb gifts. In both cases, it was obviously the status of the family that was enhanced rather than that of an individual family member. Nor should we perhaps underestimate the importance of tripod thymiateria as tokens of cultural (or even ethnic) identity. During a period of increasing Roman pressure, utility articles manifestly absent among the threatening enemy may have promoted the resolution to resist.

Summary and conclusions

“Like all truly excellent books, that of Ambrosini also opens the door to further research. Both her catalogues and her discussions are goldmines for other scholars, and for the foreseeable future her work will remain the basic work of reference.”²⁴⁰ This article presents my own endeavours to dig deeper into these mines, concentrating on five of the ten problematic fields that I outlined in my review: those of production centres (item 5), workshops and technology (6), distribution (7), function (8), and chronology (9).

(5) On the whole, I have no objections to Ambrosini's division of the material by different production centres.²⁴¹ It seems mainly convincing and well argued. My suggestions for alterations concern, on one hand, some individual censers which

²³⁵ *Ita res publica dimidium lucrata est*, as Plinius (*HN* XXXIII 13.45) writes concerning the reform in 217 BC.

²³⁶ This estimation is, of course, no more than an educated guess. Our knowledge of wages and prices in the Roman Middle Republic is based mainly upon some statements by Cato the Elder—a century after the end of tripod thymiateria production. An ox-driver was then paid less than 2 sesterces (½ old denarius) a day (*Agr.* 22.3: the rent of oxen plus 6 × 6 daily wages amount to 72 sesterces). An oil-mill (*trapetum*) cost 400 sesterces (100 denarii), a roof-tile 1 sesterce (1/4 denarius) (*Agr.* 14.3). *Tegula* should here probably be understood as a pantile plus its accompanying cover-tile (Wikander 2017, 70 n. 116).

²³⁷ Counting the number of original parts can be far from easy. But, for instance, Haynes (1985, 309 no. 170) states that no. 63 “is solid-cast in fifteen separate parts”, and no. 229 was “assembled from nine separate pieces” (MacIntosh Turfa 1982, 176 no. 40). On the other hand, the parts may occasionally have been fewer than suspected. Ambrosini (2006, 226f.) suggests that the birds in the corners of the square platform are, at least in one case, cast in one piece with the bowl. But this is an exception. They were normally fastened with rivets (Ambrosini 2002, 110, 112), but occasionally only soldered to the platform. At my visits to the Museo di Villa Giulia in 1981, I noticed that censer no. 83 has lost one dove leaving a completely smooth surface, without a rivet hole. Ambrosini does not mention the fact, but her drawing (*ibid.*, *tav.* XXIX) confirms my observation. No. 261 seems to lack corner holes (*ibid.*, *tav.* LXVIII; but cf. p. 164, Type CIVa1), but shows “*resti di piombo su due angoli*” (*ibid.*, 262). Cf. also no. 354. Cf. Quint. *Inst.* II 1.12: *is ne statuam quidem inchoari credet, cum eius membra fundentur*.

²³⁸ The cost of a Greek candelabrum could amount to the salary of a military tribune (Plin., *HN* XXXIV 6.11). Plinius also retells an anecdote concerning a Corinthian candelabrum sold, together with a fuller slave, for 50,000 sesterces.

²³⁹ *Price Edict of Diocletianus* VII 24–28.

²⁴⁰ Wikander 2005, 131.

²⁴¹ Except, perhaps, that her ambition to distribute virtually *all* specimens among her seven production centres includes even small details as, for instance, detached figurines of birds and felines and fragments of shafts and bowls. In many of these cases, an *originis incertae* verdict would obviously have been preferable. A typical example is no. 191, a small fragment of a tripod dolphin, assigned by Ambrosini to a Faliscan workshop—apparently just because it was found at Civita Castellana. But of the remaining five dolphin-legged censers, four are assigned to Todi and one to Orvieto (Ambrosini 2002, 131f., Type G). A further dolphin-legged tripod (Libertini 1930, 133 no. 526) may derive from Magna Graecia (Buccioli 1995, 392) or even be Roman (Ambrosini 2002, 460f.).

in various ways disagree with their supposed parallels and, on the other, two particular centres the position of which in the general development may be worthy of further investigation.

In three case studies, I have examined some less common details on the thymiateria: vertical fluting (pp. 127, 129), winding snakes on the shaft (pp. 110, 140f.), and chains with pendants hanging from the corners of the platform (p. 111–113). Moreover, I have compared the preserved complete heights (pp. 113f.), the platform doves (p. 113), and the censers with base and shaft cast in one piece (pp. 116f.). In all these cases, I have been able to identify some stands which diverge from the others. But the most important result of the investigation remains the fact that the major parts of these groups actually do agree—a phenomenon that would hardly have been possible, if Ambrosini's classification had not been basically correct. The case studies would otherwise have ended up in nothing.

A similar study of the types of base, shaft, and bowl of the Vulcentian censers justified a cautious questioning of Ambrosini's hesitation to accept a separate production centre at Tarquinia (pp. 114f.). The finds from that site show such distinct divergencies from the rest of the proposed Vulcentian output that I think the problem deserves further study. For other reasons, there may be cause for reconsideration of the position of the Chiusine stands in the early development of tripod thymiateria (p. 127).

(6) As far as the bronze-workers and their workshops are concerned, we are still obliged to resort to educated guesses based on our knowledge of pre-industrial crafts in general and Roman ones in particular (pp. 115f.). But much more can be deduced concerning the technical procedures. Ambrosini has laid the foundations by her careful ocular inspection of the censers, while I take even this opportunity to emphasize the importance of extensive chemical analyses (pp. 117–119). The few such examinations that were carried out in the 1980s have already provided information that contributes to our understanding of the beginning of serial production—perhaps, in turn, connected with an ascending middle class (pp. 119, 142).

Of importance for the ancient workshops was, of course, also the economic value of the stands—based on their weight and the price of the alloy (pp. 143f.), which can be at least roughly estimated, and the complex manufacture and mounting of their many parts (p. 144), which cannot. Such an estimation would only be possible by letting a skilled bronze-smith repeat the ancient procedures, a piece of experimental archaeology that I doubt that we will ever get the opportunity to witness.

(7) Whereas Ambrosini published distribution maps for different proposed production centres,²⁴² I present such maps for the entire production (Fig. 1) and for different chronological periods (Figs. 9, 13, 15, 17). Clear indications of the

quantities that derive from different find-sites are of importance both when suggesting probable production centres and because they show the extent of diffusion during various periods. To me, the most interesting fact revealed by these maps is the oddly shaped southern border of the distribution area—in almost exact agreement with the northern border of Roman power in the latter half of the 4th century BC. The article further develops my earlier suggestion of a connection between this border and Roman anti-luxury influence—whether in the form of actual *leges sumptuariae* or of more vague, hereditary customs (pp. 120f., 138f.).

Even more remarkable, however, is perhaps the almost total lack of other appreciable influence from the current romanization—be it the result of frequent warfare or peaceful contacts (p. 138). The end of thymiaterion production may be a consequence of the Roman capture of Vulci, Orvieto or Civita Castellana but, if so, the cause was presumably the virtual destruction and abandonment of the bronze workshops rather than a more abstract, ideological influence from Rome.

(8) At least three different functions have been suggested for the tripod thymiateria: use at élite banquets or at domestic sacrifices, and as grave gifts at female funerals. I see no necessary contradiction between these functions and rather feel inclined to believe in them all. I have earlier objected to Ambrosini's disposition to accept only the last one, and now present my arguments at much greater length (pp. 139–142). The high frequency of decorative details on this class of stand is a challenge to anyone trying to interpret their supposed profounder meaning. Some details most definitely support Ambrosini's proposition, whereas others belie it. Others again could be interpreted in a number of ways.

Anyhow, these high-class censers had almost certainly a fourth, no less important, function: to emphasize or even enhance the status of their aristocratic owners (p. 144). This, of course, is only in accordance with the tripod thymiateria's later diffusion among a rising middle class. Few possessions could better illustrate the desired social position of an ambitious parvenu.

Much work remains to be done regarding these issues. Perhaps the most enigmatic one concerns the almost exclusive use of Archaic thymiateria in Classical and Hellenistic representations (pp. 123f.). Ambrosini's careful survey of the preserved material leaves no uncertainty. Even though I have tried to show that two Hellenistic images *might* depict tripod thymiateria, the basic problem remains. Of the two explanations that I suggest—their actual absence from banquets or an artistic convention—neither seems satisfactory.

(9) Even though most of the 54 tomb groups examined by Ambrosini provide only very approximate dates for the censers, her study has once and for all repudiated earlier datings based entirely on stylistic estimations of the human caryatids—ranging in time from the 5th to the 2nd centuries BC.

²⁴² Ambrosini 2002, ch. 12, figs. 2 (Vulci), 4 (Faliscan), 6 (Orvieto), 8 (Todi).

The earliest forerunners seem convincingly dated to the very end of the 5th century BC and the quantitative and qualitative peak to the second half of the 4th. The greatest problems concern the end of production, for which the dates are extremely vague. Of the 135 censers considered Faliscan by Ambrosini, only four are dated more precisely than “*Ultimo quarto IV–prima metà III sec. a.C.*”, that is, between c. 325 and 250 BC.

A closer examination of the dated tomb groups reveals that not one single tripod thymiaterion must necessarily be later than c. 290 BC. We have, accordingly, reason to ask if the suggested end-date around 250 BC is not, in fact, too late. It may well be that the destruction of Vulci in 280 BC and that of Orvieto in 264 BC were more devastating for the production than is generally assumed. It might, of course, have continued at Civita Castellana up to its destruction in 241 BC, but this is far from certain (p. 123).

My first distribution map (Fig. 9), which illustrates the situation between c. 410 and 360/340 BC, gives a clear picture of the initial development. Whereas we can trace the diffusion southwards along the coast from Populonia to Talamone, Vulci and Tarquinia, the early production at Chiusi apparently remained concentrated to that very site. The second map (Fig. 13, c. 350–325/290 BC) shows the heyday of Vulcentian influence. The initial importance of Populonia and Chiusi (pp. 127, 129f.) in the far north has been studied by Ambrosini in her chapter on “*I precedenti*”, but I have also tried to draw attention to some traits lingering from the Archaic censers which are still to be seen on a number of tripod thymiateria from Vulci: an Archaic kouros as caryatid on what is presumably a tripod stand (p. 122), the flat triangular base plaque on equine legs (p. 125), the animal figurines on the base (pp. 129f.), and the discs on the shaft (pp. 124f.).

The fact that so many early decorative details are still to be found within the Vulcentian production—but mainly or exclusively there—seems logical for many reasons. But there is inevitably a risk that precisely these early traits may have caused censers from other centres to be incorrectly assigned to Vulci. Like a philologist emending an ancient manuscript, the archaeologist classifying a complex find material always runs the risk of creating a picture more logical and consistent than that which once existed in real life. But, in the future, chemical analyses of the bronze alloys will hopefully help us to correct some of the mistakes that have been made through the classification instruments which are for the moment at hand.

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Indices

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The numbers refer to the catalogue in Ambrosini 2002. Provenance (if known) is indicated within parentheses. The lists on pp. 107 and 136f. are omitted. At the end are the numbers in Ambrosini's "*bibliografia archeologica*", and those without numbers.

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- 1 (Populonia) 122n, 125, 129f., 142n
- 2 (Populonia) 110n, 117n, 124n, 125, 127, 143n
- 3 (Populonia) 111n, 122n, 125, 127, 129f., 142n
- 4 (Populonia) 105n, 116f., 122n, 139, 143n, *Fig. 4*
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- 8 (?) 110n, 124
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- 24 (Perugia) 110
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- 26 (Vulci?) 112, 118n, 119, 121n
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This index includes mainly information concerning Etruscan bronze thymiateria and their parts. At the end are some entries concerning other Etruscan crafts and tombs.

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