

# Vacuna and Sabus: eponymous deities in the peoples of ancient Italy

Giampietro Fabbri<sup>+\*</sup>

<sup>+</sup>Eubios Study Centre, Bologna, Italy

<sup>\*</sup>Alma Mater Studiorum, University of Bologna, Italy

[giampietro.fabbri@unibo.it](mailto:giampietro.fabbri@unibo.it)

**ABSTRACT** – In this work the significance of two of the most important Sabine deities, *Vacuna* and *Sabus*, is investigated. To this aim, the origin of *Sabines* is investigated and their relationships with other ancient Italic peoples are analysed. In particular, *Proto-Hiberians*, *Proto-Umbrians*, *Proto-Etruscans*, *Proto-Gaul-Latins*, and *Pelasgians* are considered together with their migrations to Italy. The peopling of ancient Central Italy is then reconstructed taking the ancient sources and the most recent theories into account. In such a context, the origin, the developing, and the significance of *God Sabus* and *Goddess Vacuna* is analysed seeking similarities and identifications with the deities of the other ancient Italic peoples.

**KEYWORDS** – Sabine deities, Italic Peoples, Italic Eponyms, Migrations.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Cato<sup>1</sup>, the ancient Italic people of *Sabines* took their name from *God Sabus*, son of *God Sanctus*. The latter was also called *Jupiter Fidius* or *Dius Fidius*. In Rome, *God Sancus* was then worshipped as a god of trust (Lat. *fides*) and oaths. However, Aelius Stilo<sup>2</sup> believed that *Dius Fidius* was an expression corresponding to Lat. *Diovis Filius* (son of Juppiter-Jovis) and *Sabines* called *Sancus* the same deity that Greeks called Heracles. Moreover, Johannes Lydus<sup>3</sup> believed that the word *sancus* in the languages of Sabines means sky. In facts, the rites of *God Sancus* were celebrated under open sky and, to this purpose, its temple on the Quirinal Hill in Rome had no roof. According to Hyginus<sup>4</sup>, *Sabus* was instead an eponymous leader, who drove *Sabines* from Persia to Italy stopping in Sparta. In Italy he fought against Sicels, chasing them out of Lazio. In the Sabine pantheon the *Sabus*' daughter was Goddess *Vacuna*. According to Varro<sup>5</sup>, she was the goddess of victory. However, woods<sup>6</sup> and lakes<sup>7</sup> were sacred to *Vacuna*, being the goddess associated to the nature and, due to the consonance with Lat. *vacuus* and Lat. *vacatio*, to the freedom and rest. In the Roman age *Vacuna* was assimilated to other goddesses worshipped by *Sabines*, particularly to *Feronia* and *Bellona*<sup>8</sup>. The former was invoked as a goddess of wildness (associated to Lat. *ferus*, wild), fertility (associated to Lat. *fero*, Gr. *φέρω*<sup>9</sup>, to bring), open space<sup>10</sup>,

---

<sup>1</sup> Dionysius: II, 49, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Varro: V, X, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Lydus: IV, 90.

<sup>4</sup> Servius: in Aen. VIII, 638.

<sup>5</sup> Pseudo-Acron: in Horat. Ep. I, 10, 49.

<sup>6</sup> Plinius: III, 109.

<sup>7</sup> Dionysius: I, 15, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Porphyryon: in Horat. Ep. I, 10, 49.

<sup>9</sup> Dionysius: III, 32,1.

<sup>10</sup> Plinius: II, 146.

and freedom<sup>11</sup>. She was considered the feminine counterpart of *Soranus* (also called *Sur* and *Suri* by *Etruscans*<sup>12</sup>), a underworld deity identified for some aspects with Apollon<sup>13</sup>. *Bellona* was instead invoked as a goddess of war (associated to Lat. *bellum*, war) and victory. She was considered the feminine counterpart of *Mars*, god of the war, and identified with goddess *Nerio*.

Actually, as we will see in the next sections, *Sabus* and *Vacuna* were eponyms which *Sabines* of the Roman age had received from *Proto-Scythian* peoples that reached Italy in the first half of the second millennium BC, shortly after *Proto-Umrians*. Moreover, *Feronia* and *Bellona*, to whom *Vacuna* was assimilated, originally were eponymous goddess of *Proto-Etruscan* tribes that penetrated the Italic peninsula during the last centuries of the second millennium BC.

## PROTO-SCYTHIAN ETHNOYMS

The names *Sabus* and *Vacuna* can be easily derived from the terms *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-s* and *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-na*, which have been reconstructed<sup>14</sup> as names by which some Proto-Scythian peoples were indicated, that lived in the grasslands between southern Russia and Iran in the IV and III millennium BC. Having domesticated the horse<sup>15</sup>, these peoples were able to drive large herds of cows through the prairies, searching for suitable pastures. Therefore, they should be known as the “cow breeder people”.

The names of these peoples have been reconstructed by composing the Proto-Indo-European roots *\*sw-* (self, own) and *\*g<sup>w</sup>au-* (cow) into the word *\*swag<sup>w</sup>au-s*, to which the meaning of “own cow”, “bred cow”, or “herd of cows” can be attributed. The *-na* derivation (*\*swag<sup>w</sup>au-na*) is very common in the Indo-European languages and even in Etruscan<sup>16</sup>. Other common derivations are *-ta* and *-la*. From *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-na*, *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-ta*, and *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-la*, we can easily obtain the following historical Scythian names: Hebr. *Askenaz*<sup>17</sup> (from the ablative *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>aun-at*, “from the country of cow breeders”), Gr. *Σκύθαι*<sup>18</sup> and *-σαγέται* (as in *Μασ-σαγέται*<sup>19</sup>), Ass. *Ashkuzai*<sup>20</sup>, Gr. *Σκολότοι*<sup>21</sup> (from the derivation of the derivation *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-la-ta*).

As we can see, in the derived historical Scythian names, the vowel in the first syllable of *\*swag<sup>w</sup>au-s* is often missing or slid before the consonant. According to Szemerényi<sup>22</sup>, these changes are only due to the transcription in the Semitic alphabets, which did not indicate the vowels. However, both derivations with the vowel before and after the consonant are attested in Italy in names (eg. Lat. *Siculi* and Lat. *Asculum*) which can not have been distorted by Semitic alphabets. Therefore, we could assume that the first syllable of *\*swag<sup>w</sup>aus* was originally not vocalised and replaced by a voiced labiosibilant sound: *\*s<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aus*. Such a sound, in the derived names, resulted in a sibilant preceded or followed by a vowel (mainly *a* and *i*), as in *Sakas/Askas* (whence *Saci* and *Osci*), *Sakanas/Aska-nas* (whence *Sicani* and *Ascani*), and *Saka-las/Aska-las* (whence *Shekelesh* and *Ashqelon*). Mythology is used to often employ sequences of fathers and sons to indicate the chronological order or the derivation. The sequence *Sancus* father of *Sabus*, father of *Vacuna*, can then be read as: originally the eponym *Sancus* was used, afterward *Sabus* and *Vacuna*, and *Vacu-na* was a derivation of *Sabu-s*. Probably, the nasovelar sound *nc* was introduced in the name of *Sancus* as a recall of the

---

<sup>11</sup> Servius: in Aen. VIII, 564.

<sup>12</sup> Colonna 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Vergilius: XI, 785; Di Fazio 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Fabbri 2017b.

<sup>15</sup> Toynbee 1977: 104; Diamond 1998: 122.

<sup>16</sup> Pallottino 2016: 466.

<sup>17</sup> Genesis, 10, 3; Jeremiah, 51, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Herodotus, IV, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Herodotus, I, 201-216.

<sup>20</sup> Szemerényi 1980, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Herodotus, IV, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Szemerényi 1980, 7.

labiovelar one, which was no more common in the historical age in Italic peoples. Similarly, the labiosibilant was changed to sibilant (cf. Sans. *swa* with Lat. *se*, beside Lat. *suus*). Therefore, we can read again the sequence as: first the eponym *\*S<sup>w</sup>ag<sup>w</sup>us*, then *Sabus* and *\*Vacus*, from which *Vacu-na*.

We can observe that the original labiovelar *g<sup>w</sup>* results both in labial and velar in the historical eponyms *Sabus* and *Vacu-na*, handed down in the same people. We could then assume that in the people of *Sabines* different proto-scythian tribes had miggled, that reached Italy having resulted the labiovelar in different manner and thus worshipping different eponymous deified ancestors (*Sabus* and *\*Vacus*). However, these tribes should have been aware that their ancestors were the same even remembered under different names, since *Sabines* considered *Vacu-na* as a daughter of *Sabus*, letting therefore *\*Vacus* be equal to *Sabus*. Such an awareness was probably difficult to be kept by peoples enough distant for enough time to result the labiovelar in different manner. Otherwise, we could assume that the ancestors of *Sabines* reached Italy still having labiovelar sounds in their language and afterward they resulted them differently by influence of other peoples.

## THE PEOPLING OF CENTRAL ITALY IN ANCIENT SOURCES

To understand how the names of two of the most important and peculiar Sabinian deities present different linguistical characteristics, we have to consider the peopling of Central Italy, where *Sabines* lived.

### *Siculi and Sicani*

According to Dionysius<sup>23</sup>, *Siculi* (Gr. *Σικελοί*) were the first people remembered as inhabiting the region where Roma rose. Afterwards, through a long war, this land was conquered by *Aborigines*, who previously lived in little villages without walls. They then united to *Pelasgians* miggled with some Greeks, chasing *Siculi* completely out<sup>24</sup> and fighting against *Umbrians*<sup>25</sup>. Such a confederation occupied all the lands between Tevere and Lari rivers, providing walls for many cities and maintaining the name *Aborigines* until the time of Trojan war. Afterwards, this population assumed the name *Latini* after *Latinus* king. Varro too believed that *Siculi* once inhabited Latium, since he found many similarities between their language and Latin<sup>26</sup>.

Plinius cites<sup>27</sup> *Aborigines* as the first inhabitants of Lazio, followed by *Pelasgians*, *Arcadians*, *Siculi*, *Aurunci*, and *Rutuli*. However, this chronological order seems to be influenced by the fact that the Lazio region was extended in the course of time to include peoples further South. Plinius also cites<sup>28</sup> *Siculi* together with *Liburni* as the first inhabitants of some cities on the Medio-Adriatic coast such as *Palma*, *Prætutia*, and *Adria*, which later were taken by *Umbrians* and then by *Etruscans*. According to Plinius, also *Numana* and *Ancona* were founded by *Siculi*<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, Plinius cites<sup>30</sup> *Sicani* as a people in Albani Mounts. The presence of *Sicani* in Lazio is confirmed by Vergilius<sup>31</sup>, who cites them as allied of *Rutuli*. Aulus Gellius<sup>32</sup> and Macrobius<sup>33</sup> cite *Sicani* together with *Aurunci* and *Pelasgians*.

---

<sup>23</sup> Dionysius: I, 9, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Dionysius: I, 2, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Dionysius: I, 19, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Varro: V, 20, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Plinius: III, 56.

<sup>28</sup> Plinius: III, 112.

<sup>29</sup> Plinius: III, 110.

<sup>30</sup> Plinius: III, 63.

<sup>31</sup> Vergilius: VII, 795; VIII, 328; XI, 317.

<sup>32</sup> Gellius: I, 10, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Macrobius: I, 5, 1.

### *Aborigines and Oenotrians*

Dionysius refers<sup>34</sup> different opinions about *Aborigines* (Gr. *Ἀβοριγῖνες*). Somebody believed that they were an autochthonous people, that lived in the same place “*ab origine*”. Others, correcting the name into *Aberrigines* (Gr. *Ἀβερριγῖνες*; cf. Lat. *aberro*, to wander away), believed that they were nomads coming from different places, joined together, and living on hunting and breeding. Others more considered *Aborigines* a Ligurian tribe bordering on *Umbrians*. Moreover, some Roman historians, such as Portius Cato and Caius Sempronius, thought that *Aborigines* came from Greece. Dionysius believes<sup>35</sup> that, in this case, they should have come from Arcadia led by *Oenotrius*, son of Lycaon, son of *Pelasgus*, and in Italy they should have taken name *Aborigines* since they lived on the mounts (Gr. *ὄροι*). Moreover, Dionysius considers *Oenotrians* (Gr. *Οἰνωτριοί*<sup>36</sup>) as the first Greeks who colonised Italy, before *Cretesians* and *Pelasgians* themselves. Lastly, citing Antiochus Xenophanes, Dionysius relates<sup>37</sup> that *Oenotrians* once occupied Italy and later were reigned by the kings *Italus* and *Morges*, becoming *Itali* and *Morgetes*.

### *Umbrians*

According to Plinius<sup>38</sup>, *Umbrians* (Lat. *Umbri*) were the oldest peoples of Italy and had taken their name from having survived to the deluge (cf. Gr. *ὄμβρος*, storm of rain, inundation). They lose 300 cities, conquered by *Etruscans*. Solinus<sup>39</sup>, citing Marcus Antonius, confirms Plinius’ etymology of the name of *Umbrians* and, citing Cornelius Bocchus, reports the belief that *Umbrians* were an offspring of Gauls. However, such a belief should probably have been originated as a consequence of the late settlement of Senones Gauls in the lands of *Umbrians*. Plinius also attests the presence of *Umbrians* to the North up to the territory of Ravenna, where they founded the village of Budrio (Lat. *Butrium*)<sup>40</sup>. According to Strabo<sup>41</sup>, *Umbrians* (Gr. *Ὀμβρικοί*) lived between *Sabines* and *Tyrrhenians* and their territory extended over the Apennine mountains as far as Ariminum and Ravenna.

### *Etruscans*

*Etruscans* are called *Tyrrhenians* (Gr. *Τυρρηνοί*<sup>42</sup>) by Dionysius, who cites different opinions about their origin. Some historians<sup>43</sup> believed that *Tyrrhenians* came from Lydia, once called *Meonia*, led by *Tyrrhenus*, son of *Atys*, brother of *Asies*. Others<sup>44</sup> (in accordance with Strabo<sup>45</sup>) considered *Tyrrhenus* as a son of Heracles and Omphalè and believed that he came in Italy from Lydia and chased *Pelasgians* out of their cities North-West of Tevere. Others more<sup>46</sup> said *Tyrrhenus* son of *Telephus* and come to Italy after the fall of Troy. Xanthus of Lydia<sup>47</sup> said that *Atis* procreated *Lydus* and *Torebus*, whence the peoples of *Lydians* and *Torebians*, respectively, that spoke similar

---

<sup>34</sup> Dionysius: I, 10, 1-3; I, 11, 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> Dionysius: I, 11, 1; I, 13, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Dionysius: I, 13, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Dionysius: I, 12, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Plinius: III, 112-113.

<sup>39</sup> Solinus: II, 11.

<sup>40</sup> Plinius: III, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Strabo: V, 2, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Dionysius: I, 25, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Dionysius: I, 27, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Dionysius: I, 28, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Strabo: V, 2, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Dionysius: I, 28, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Dionysius: I, 28, 2.

languages. According to Hellanicus of Lesbos<sup>48</sup>, *Tyrrhenians* were *Pelasgians* that changed name when arrived in Italy, ruling *Nanas*, son of *Teutamides*, four generation after *Pelasgus*. They landed at the mouth of Po river (Gr. Σπινῆτι < Etr. *Spina* < \**Sabina* < \**Swag<sup>w</sup>auna*), invaded the city of *Croton* (the Roman *Corthona*<sup>49</sup> or *Cotornia*), and then founded the city of *Tyrrhenia*. However, Dionysius believes<sup>50</sup> that *Thyrrhenians* were not *Pelasgians* nor *Lydians*, but autochthonous and took their name from their leader or their robust houses (Gr. τύρσεις<sup>51</sup>). Actually, Etruscans are called *Tyrseians* (Gr. Τυρσηνοί<sup>52</sup>) by Herodotus, who instead says them migrated to Italy from *Lydia* following *Tyrseus* (Gr. Τυρσηνός<sup>53</sup>).

According to Plinius<sup>54</sup>, *Etruria* was originally occupied by *Umbrians*, who later were chased out by *Pelasgians*, who were in turn expelled by *Lydians*, who afterward were called *Tyrrhenians* after their king and *Tusci* in Greek. Dionysius specifies<sup>55</sup> that *Tyrrhenians* were called *Tusci* (Gr. Θυοσκόοι) due to their ability in sacrificing (cf. Gr. θύειν, to sacrifice). Livius relates<sup>56</sup> that *Etruscans*, above all other peoples, were dedicated to religion rituals and excelled in this art.

### *Pelasgians*

According to Dionysius<sup>57</sup>, *Pelasgians* (Gr. Πελασγοί) originally lived in the city of *Argos* in the *Achaea* region of *Peloponnesus* and took their name from King *Pelasgus*, son of *Zeus*. Hence, led by the *Poseidon*'s son *Pelasgus*, living five generation after the homonymous one, they moved to *Thessaly*. Hence, after five generations again, they were chased out by *Curetes* and *Leleges*, towards *Crete*, the *Cyclades* islands, *Estiotidis*, *Beotia*, *Focidis*, *Eubea*, the coasts around *Ellespontis*, and to the *Islands* in front of them<sup>58</sup>. Most of *Pelasgians* headed to the region around *Dodona*, whence they passed to *Italy*<sup>59</sup>, landing at the mouth of *Po river*<sup>60</sup>. Hence, they penetrated the land of *Umbrians* conquering some of their cities<sup>61</sup>. Later, chased out by *Umbrians* and meeting *Aborigines* near *Cutulia*, they allied and integrated with the latter<sup>62</sup>. Dionysius cites other migrations of peoples (led by *Evander*<sup>63</sup> and *Heracles*<sup>64</sup>] from *Peloponnesus* to *Lazio* after that of *Pelasgians*. These peoples integrated with those migrated from the *Trojadis* (led by *Aeneas*<sup>65</sup>) and with *Latini* and founded many cities, among which, sixteen generation after the *Tojan war*, *Rome*<sup>66</sup>.

Herodotus refers to *Pelasgians* as some tribes that at his time lived by the northern coast of the *Aegean sea* in the *Thessalotis*<sup>67</sup> and *Hellespont*<sup>68</sup> regions and spoke an ancient language very different from *Old-Greek*. The historian also relates that at the time of *Darius* *Lemnos* and *Imbros*

---

<sup>48</sup> Dionysius: I, 28, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Dionysius: I, 26, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Dionysius: I, 30, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Dionysius: I, 26, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Herodotus: I, 94, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Herodotus: I, 94, 5.

<sup>54</sup> Plinius: III, 50.

<sup>55</sup> Dionysius: I, 30, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Livius: V, 1.

<sup>57</sup> Dionysius: I, 17, 2-3.

<sup>58</sup> Dionysius: I, 18, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Dionysius: I, 18, 2.

<sup>60</sup> Dionysius: I, 18, 3.

<sup>61</sup> Dionysius: I, 19, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Dionysius: I, 19, 2-4.

<sup>63</sup> Dionysius: I, 31, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Dionysius: I, 34, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Dionysius: I, 45, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Dionysius: I, 9, 4.

<sup>67</sup> Herodotus: I, 57, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Herodotus: I, 57, 2.

where still inhabited by *Pelasgians*<sup>69</sup>. Moreover, the inhabitants of Athens once were *Pelasgians* and later changed their language still remaining in the same place<sup>70</sup>.

According to Thucydides<sup>71</sup>, Athens and Lemnos were once populated by *Tyrrhenians*, from which *Pelasgians* generated. Thucydides also cites bilingual tribes of *Pelasgians* in the Chalkidike peninsula at the time of Brasidas. Herodotus distinguishes *Pelasgians* from *Tyrsenians*, placing some of the former living in Creston above the latter<sup>72</sup> (Gr. *ὕπερ Τυρσηνῶν*; that probably means “North of *Tyrsenians*”, but could be also interpreted as “on the remains of *Tyrsenians*”, i. e. “from *Tyrsenians*”, as in Thucydides). The relationship between *Pelasgians* and *Tyrrhenians* has been discussed by several ancient historians<sup>73</sup>.

### *Sabines*

Dionysius cites different opinions about the origin of *Sabines* (Gr. *Σαβῖνοι*<sup>74</sup>). According to Cato<sup>75</sup>, *Sabines* originally lived in a village named *Testruna* (Gr. *Τεστροῦνα*) near the city of *Amiternum*. They took their name from *Sabinus* son of *Sancus*, a local god, by some called Zeus (Gr. *Ζεύς, Διός* = *Dius Fidius*). From their original land, they expanded towards *Ager Reatinus*, where lived *Aborigines* and *Pelasgians*, and took their most important city, *Cutilia*. From *Ager Reatinum* they founded several colonies, among which *Cures*, where they lived without walls. According to Zenodotus of Troezen<sup>76</sup>, *Sabines* were originally *Umbrians* living in *Ager Reatinus*. Chased out by *Pelasgians*, migrated to the land where they lived at the time of Dionysius, changing name from *Umbrians* to *Sabines*<sup>77</sup>.

The local tradition<sup>78</sup> recalls that when Licurgus ruled in Sparta, some Lacedaemonians moved to Italy and settled by *Sabines*, in a coast region that they called *Foronia* remembering their transfer (Gr. *φόρησις*) through the sea and edifying a sanctuary to the local goddess who later was known as *Feronia*. These Lacedaemonians brought Spartan customs to *Sabines*. Plutarchus<sup>79</sup> relates that *Sabines* declared themselves to be colonists of Lacedaemonians. However, Dionysius says<sup>80</sup> that *Sabines* fighting against Romans and integrating with them at the time of Roma birth were no less frivolous (Gr. *ἀβροδιαίτοι*) than *Etruscans*.

Dionysius also reports that *Sabines* coming by night from *Amiternum* took *Lista*, the mother-city of *Aborigines*, who refuged in Reate<sup>81</sup>, and that the city of *Cures* (Gr. *Κύρεις*) took name from God Quirinus (Gr. *Κυρῖνος*) and was founded by *Modius Fabidius* (Gr. *Μόδιος Φαβίδιος*), son of a woman of *Ager Reatinus* who had been impregnated by that god<sup>82</sup>. However, Varro believes that the city took name from the spear, called *cureis* (*κύρεις*) in Sabinian<sup>83</sup>. According to Plinius<sup>84</sup> *Sabines* were called *Sebini* due to their piousness (cf. Gr. *σέβομαι*, Gr. *σεβίζω*, to worship).

---

<sup>69</sup> Herodotus: V, 26, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Herodotus: I, 57, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Thucydides: IV, 109, 4.

<sup>72</sup> Herodotus: I, 57, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ulf 2017.

<sup>74</sup> Dionysius: II, 36, 3.

<sup>75</sup> Dionysius: II, 49, 2-3.

<sup>76</sup> Dionysius: II, 49, 1.

<sup>77</sup> However, Letta (2008) believes that Dionysius intended that peoples from Reate changed name from *Sabines* to *Umbrians*.

<sup>78</sup> Dionysius: II, 49, 4.

<sup>79</sup> Plutarchus, *Life of Numa Pompilius*: 1, 3.

<sup>80</sup> Dionysius: II, 38, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Dionysius: I, 14, 6.

<sup>82</sup> Dionysius: II, 48, 1-3.

<sup>83</sup> Dionysius: II, 48, 4.

<sup>84</sup> Plinius: III, 108.

## *Piceni and Samnites*

According to Strabo<sup>85</sup>, *Sabines* were a very ancient race and were indigenous inhabitants, while *Piceni*, that the historian calls *Picentini* (Gr. Πικεντίνοι), and *Samnites* (Gr. Σαννίται) were colonists of *Sabines*, as well as *Leucani* (Gr. Λευκανοί) of *Samnites*, and *Brettii* (Gr. Βρέττιοι) of *Leucani*. In particular, Strabo relates<sup>86</sup> that *Piceni* took their name from a woodpecker (Lat. *picus*), sacred to Mars, that drove them from the Sabine country to their territory, stretching from the mountains to the plains and the sea, south of the Umbrian cities placed between Ariminum and Ancona, and north of *Vestini* (Gr. Ὀνησιῖνοι), *Marsi* (Gr. Μαρσοί), *Peligni* (Gr. Πελίγνοι), *Marrucini* (Gr. Μαρρουκῖνοι), and the Samnitic tribe of *Frentani* (Gr. Φρεντιανοί). Plinius specifies<sup>87</sup> that *Piceni*, as he calls them (Lat. *Piceni*), were descendants of *Sabines*, who had made a vow to celebrate a holy spring. Such a kind of colonisation is also described by Dionysius<sup>88</sup> for *Aborigines*. Moreover, Strabo relates<sup>89</sup> that *Samnites* migrated to the country of *Opici* (Gr. Ὀπικοί) as a consequence of a vow to Mars, that they made in the course of a long war against *Umbrians*. They were driven by a bull, which they later sacrificed to Mars. Strabo finds reasonable that their alternative name *Sabelli* (Gr. Σαβέλλοι) was a diminutive derivation of *Sabines*. Lastly, *Hirpini* (Gr. Ἱρπῖνοι) migrated southwards from *Samnites* to their territory close to that of *Leucani* led by a wolf, that is called *hirpus* (ἵρπος in Strabo<sup>90</sup>) in the language of *Samnites*<sup>91</sup>.

## MIGRATIONS TO ITALY

The local traditions and the myths reported by ancient historians often transpose the events from a time to another, or condense several events in one, or even multiply the same event attributing it to different times. The opinions cited may be influenced by the will to attribute a particular characteristic to a people or to inspire some sentiments. These are for example the case of Roman historians who wanted to attribute a Greek origin to Rome<sup>92</sup> and that of Anatolian Greek historians who wanted to inspire solidarity against Persians<sup>93</sup>. Aiming to make order in the ancient testimonies, it is possible to find help in the archaeological finds. However, for the prehistoric age, finds can give information on the morphology of the people and, nowadays, on the genes, but not on the language they spoke. A method to obtain information about the languages spoken in an area in the prehistoric age is that of analyse the current and the past geographical names. People migrations and diffusion processes have been studied as an inverse problem by analysing the time and space distributions of geographical names, together with those of ethnonyms and with historical testimonies<sup>94</sup>. We now try to employ this technique and its previous results, to distinguish the ancient migrations to Italy.

## *Proto-Hiberians*

*Proto-Hiberians* were present in Europe already in the IV-III millennium BC. They had some common ancestors with *Proto-Scythians*. Both these peoples, in fact, descended from

---

<sup>85</sup> Strabo: V, 3, 1.

<sup>86</sup> Strabo: V, 4, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Plinius: III, 110.

<sup>88</sup> Dionysius: I, 16, 1-3.

<sup>89</sup> Strabo: V, 4, 12.

<sup>90</sup> Strabo: V, 4, 12.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Paulus: F. 93L and Servius: in Verg. Aen. XI, 785-788.

<sup>92</sup> Hill 1961.

<sup>93</sup> Ulf 2017.

<sup>94</sup> Fabbri 2017b; 2018a.

*\*Suparsthas*<sup>95</sup>, a caucasoid morphology population that concentrated on the mountains of Armenia probably as a consequence of a flood on Mesopotamia after the melting of glaciers of the last glaciation. The name *\*Suparsthas* has been reconstructed by considering the ethnonyms of the peoples who lived or passed near the mountains of Armenia and Caucasus. From this name, in fact, we can derive those of the historical peoples of *Subarus*, *Hurrians*, *Parthians*, *Kurds*, *Hattians*, *Persians*, *Arsi*, *Ari*, *Asi* through common phonetic changes.

While the ancestors of *Proto-Scythians* (*\*Parsthas*) moved eastward through the Iranian highlands and northward into the grasslands of southern Russia, those of *Proto-Hiberians* (*\*Suparas* / *\*Subaras* / *\*Hubaras*) expanded northward through Caucasus, and hence westward to Eastern Europe. In the last half of the III millennium BC *Proto-Scythians* started to move westward from current Kazakhstan, forcing *Proto-Hiberians* to penetrate Europe or flow back through Caucasus. While *Proto-Scythians* were nomad cow breeders, *Proto-Hiberians* were more sedentary, breeding small animals and living on agriculture.

Italic *Proto-Hiberians* (*\*Subaras* / *\*Tubaras* / *\*Lubaras* / *\*Hubaras*) reached the peninsula mainly through the Alps and Adriatic Sea during the III millennium BC. They merged with a palaeoanthropic substrate and contributed to the Terremarne Culture<sup>96</sup>. In the historical age, their descendants were known as Iberi, Liguri, and Liburni, and were mainly located at the west side of Italy<sup>97</sup> and, due to more recent migrations from Illyria, in some places by the Adriatic coast<sup>98</sup>.

### *Proto-Umbrians and Proto-Calabrians*

At the beginning of II millennium BC the Proto-Hiberian settlements were separated from the Proto-Scythian lands by a border line stretching from Anatolia to current Poland, approximatively. In the border area some hybrid populations generated from the two peoples. They should have been known as *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulubras* (< *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulas* *\*Hubras* < *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>aulas* *\*Hubaras*) and *\*G<sup>w</sup>aumbras* (< *\*G<sup>w</sup>aunas* *\*Hubras* < *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>aunas* *\*Hubaras*)<sup>99</sup>. The name *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulubras* diffused mainly to the south. We can derive from it the historical names of Anatolian *Chalybes* (Gr. *Χάλυβες*<sup>100</sup>), Balcanian *Galabrii* (Gr. *Γαλάβριοι*<sup>101</sup>), and Italic *Calabri* (Gr. *Καλαβροί*<sup>102</sup>). The name *\*G<sup>w</sup>aumbras* diffused inside the Únětice culture<sup>103</sup>, in an area of commercial and cultural exchanges, where the main ancient communication routes between Asia and Europe (along Boristhenes, Danube, Vistula, Elbe, and Rhine rivers) crossed.

When *Proto-Scythians* moved their border up to the Rhine valley in the course of the great migration of the beginning of the II millennium BC, *\*G<sup>w</sup>aumbras* were forced to move to the North Sea and Baltic Sea and to descend on Italy (fig. 1). The name of the peoples that lived in the historical age in the territories where they migrated can be derived from the name *\*G<sup>w</sup>aumbras*: *Cambri*, *Cumbri*, *Humber*, *Cimbri*, *Ambrones*, *Umbrians*.

Living in territories where products of different countries were exchanged, *\*G<sup>w</sup>alubras* and *\*G<sup>w</sup>aumbras*, learnt the more advanced manufacturing techniques. In particular, they excelled in the metal manufacturing. In Anatolia *Chalybes* were considered the inventors of metallurgy and by the Adriatic coast of Italy a millenary tradition in metal processing was originated by *Umbrians*.

---

<sup>95</sup> Fabbri 2017b.

<sup>96</sup> Cardarelli 2010.

<sup>97</sup> Plinius, III, 38; Strabo, IV, 6, 2.

<sup>98</sup> Plinius: III, 110; III, 112,

<sup>99</sup> Fabbri 2017b.

<sup>100</sup> Herodotus: I, 28, 1.

<sup>101</sup> Strabo: VII, 5, 7.

<sup>102</sup> Strabo: VI, 3, 1.

<sup>103</sup> Gimbutas 1965, 44; 2017, 56;

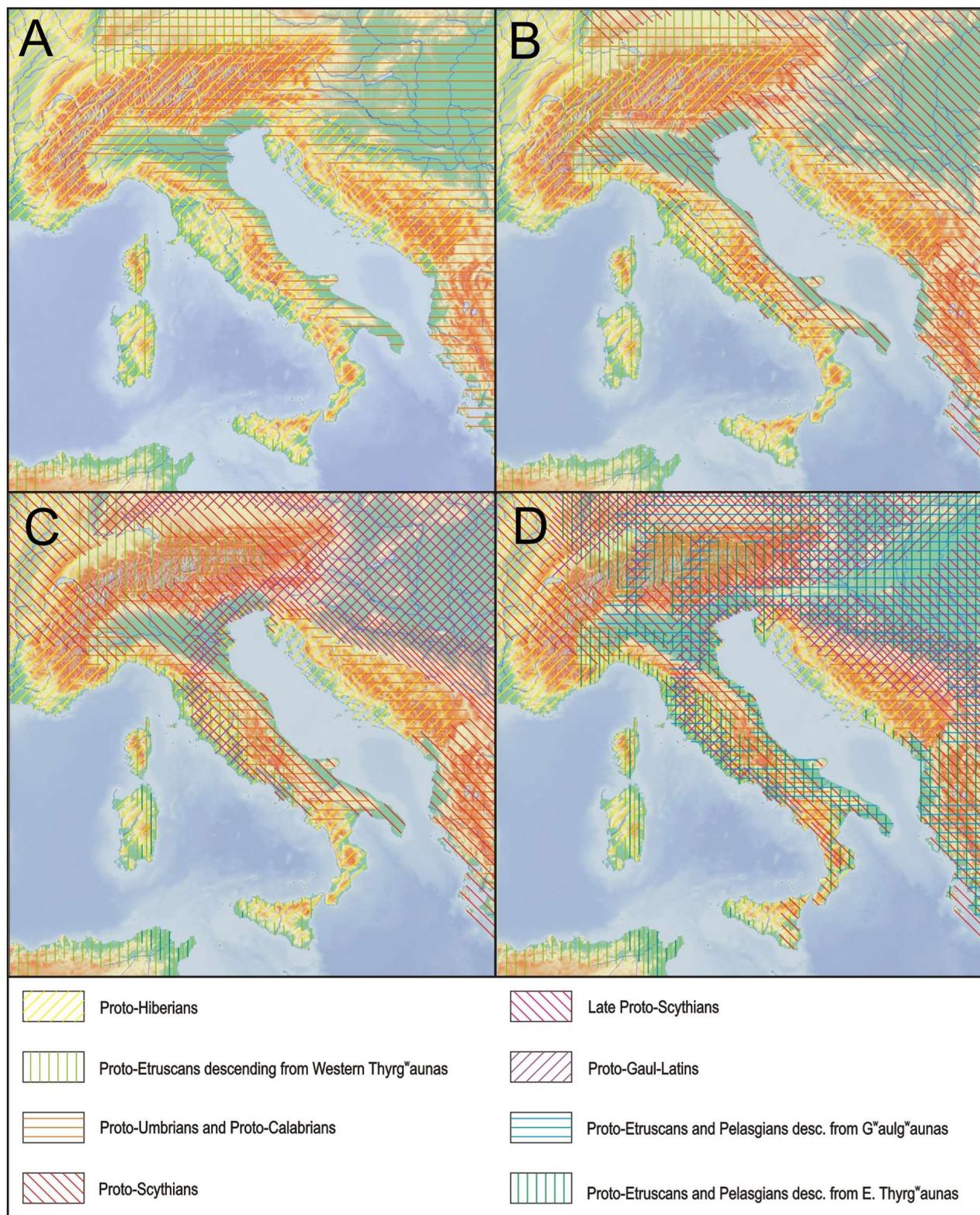


Fig. 1. Diffusion of ancient peoples in Italy during the centuries XIX-XVII BC (A), XVIII-XVI BC (B), XIII-XII BC (C), and XI-XII BC (D).

In Italy the Proto-Umbrian people of *\*G<sup>w</sup>aumbras* penetrated from North-Eastern Alps, while the Proto-Calabrian people of *\*G<sup>w</sup>alubras* through the South-Eastern coasts, mainly near the Otranto Strait. They pressed Proto-Hiberians towards the Tyrrhenic coast and partially overlapped them. In the historical age, the descendants of *\*G<sup>w</sup>aumbras*, the *Ambrones* and *Umbrians*, were located in

Liguria<sup>104</sup> and around Umbria<sup>105</sup>, respectively. However, some geographical names attest the past presence of relatives of these peoples also between these two regions. For example, we can derive from *\*G<sup>w</sup>aumbras* the name of *Sambro* torrent and *Ombrone* river, which flow south of Bologna and further south, respectively [an other *Sambro* torrent flows in Umbria, an other *Ombrone* river flows south of Florence]. The descendants of *\*G<sup>w</sup>alubras*, the *Calabri*, were instead located in the South-Eastern part of Italy<sup>106</sup> (current Puglia).

By analysing the names of the historical descendants of *Proto-Calabri* and *Proto-Umbrians* (*Calabri*, *Cambri*, *Cumbri*, *Cimbri*, *Chalybes*, *Humber*, *Ambrones*, *Umbrians*), we can observe in this peoples a tendency to transform the labiovelar *g<sup>w</sup>* into unvoiced velar also aspirated and muted. We will see similar results in many Italics toponyms and ethnonyms.

### *Proto-Scythians*

Having chased Proto-Hiberians towards the Atlantic Ocean and *Proto-Umbrians* northwards and southwards, *Proto-Scythians* occupied Central Europe at the beginning of the II millennium BC. Hence, they started penetrating the Italic peninsula through North-Eastern Alps, driving their herds of cows to the pastures of Padanian Valley and pressing *Proto-Umbrians* on the Apennine mountain chain from Liguria to Marche. In the same period, other Proto-Scythian tribes occupied the Balkan area. Hence they were progressively forced to penetrate Italy through the Otranto strait and the Adriatic coasts nearby, heading for the plains of South-Eastern Italy and pressing *Proto-Calabrians* on the mountains.

From the names of *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-tas* / *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-nas* / *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-las* we can derive the historical names of *Sabates*, *Sabines*, *Sabelli*, *Sicani*, *Siculi*, and *Apuli*. These peoples were mainly located in Central and Southern Italy in the historical age. However, many hydronyms (*Savena*, *Aposa*, *Seveso*, *Savio*) and toponyms (*Savona*, *Sabatia*, *Spezia*, *Spina*) demonstrate the past presence of Proto-Scythian tribes even in Northern Italy<sup>107</sup>. In the Italic names derived from *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>aus* we can observe that the labiovelar *g<sup>w</sup>* results both in labial and velar.

### *Proto-Gaul-Latins*

The great migration of the last centuries of II millennium BC brought to Central Europe a new wave of peoples descending from *Proto-Scythians*. These peoples had previously occupied the territories between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, and had been pressed westwards by populations coming from the Orient. Among these migrating peoples, *Proto-Gaul-Latins* partially settled in Central Europe and partially descended on Italy. For these tribes the names *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulas* / *\*G<sup>w</sup>aula-tas* / *\*G<sup>w</sup>aula-ta-nas* have been reconstructed<sup>108</sup>, from which the historical names *Galli*, *Galati*, *Collati*, *Collatini*, *Latini*, *Lithuans*, and *Lettons* can be derived. *Proto-Gaul-Latins*, closely preceded by *Itali* and *Vetuloni* (< *\*Sg<sup>w</sup>ytas* / *\*Sg<sup>w</sup>etas*) and followed by *Proto-Etruscans*, descended on Italy mainly from North-East. They forced a passage through the Proto-Scythian tribes occupying the Padanian Valley, crossed the Apennine chain and diffused along the Tyrrhenian coast up to Central Italy. Their close relatives, the *Venetici* (Lat. *Veneti*<sup>109</sup> < *\*Vainai-tas* < *\*G<sup>w</sup>auna-tas*), settled by the northern Adriatic coast, whence subsequently they penetrated North-Western Italy.

In toponyms derived from *Proto-Gaul-Latins* (such as *Collatia*, *Palatium*, *Falerii*) we can observe that the original labiovelar results both in labial and velar. Therefore, we could assume that these tribes still had labiovelars in their language when they arrived in Italy and later they resulted these

<sup>104</sup> Plutarchus, Life of Marius, 19, 4.

<sup>105</sup> Plinius: III, 109; III, 112.

<sup>106</sup> Plinius, III, 99.

<sup>107</sup> Fabbri 2018b.

<sup>108</sup> Fabbri 2018a.

<sup>109</sup> Plinius: III, 38.

sounds influenced by neighbour peoples, mainly the *Etruscans*. However, they penetrated the peninsula closely preceded and followed by peoples who resulted the labiovelar in labial. In the historical age, the descendants of *Proto-Gaul-Latins* in Italy were located in Lazio (*Latins*, *Collatins*<sup>110</sup>) and, due to more recent migrations, in Gallia Cisaplina (*Gauls*<sup>111</sup>).

### *Proto-Etruscans*

*Etruscans* can be considered as an autochthonous people, since their characteristic culture developed on the Italic soil<sup>112</sup>. However, the Etruscan tribes or communities can be connected to three distinct lineages descending from *Western \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* (e. g. *Tarchna*), *Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* (e. g. *Phersna* and *Rasna*), and *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas* (e. g. *Velsna*)<sup>113</sup>.

*\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* or *\*Thyras G<sup>w</sup>aunas* were originally a population living on the border (cf. Gr. *θύρα*, door) between mongoloid morphology peoples and *Proto-Scythians* and resulted from the crossing of these populations. As a border people, they were subjected to commercial and cultural exchanges, thus developing the attitude to the commerce and acquiring the knowledge of advanced technologies. In the III millennium BC *Proto-Scythians* broke into the territory around *Volga* river, separating *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* into two branches, the Eastern one of which forced towards Mongolia and China, the Western one towards Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Eastern Europe.

In the course of time, *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>aunas* bordering on *\*Thyras G<sup>w</sup>aunas* assumed the name *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulas G<sup>w</sup>aunas* or *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas*. to emphasise that they were pure *Proto-Scythians* having maintained the original costumes and language. In fact, they still lived mainly on cow breeding, while *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* also lived on trade and had simplified and adapted their language in order to better communicate with the bordering peoples. Moreover, by the contraposition of *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas* and *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* the term *g<sup>w</sup>auna* lost the original meaning of "bovine", "related to cows", "fodder for cows", "fence for cows", "cow breeder", "group of cows", assuming that of "shelter", "refuge", "fortified place", "village", "group of breeders", "community" (as Etr. *zena* translated into Lat. *senā* / *sina*, and Celt. *bona*, and Celt. *din* / *dun* latinised in *dinum* / *dunum*). Similarly, the terms derived from *-g<sup>w</sup>aus* assumed the meaning of country or region (as Ger. *-gau* in *Breisgau* and *Thurgau*, Dutch *gouw*, Frisian *goa*).

*Western \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* reached Anatolia in the second half of the III millennium BC. Hence, they moved along the course of Danube river to Central Europe, where they participated to the Únětice culture. They were forced to Italy together with *\*G<sup>w</sup>aumbras*, to whom they had handed their tendency to aspirate the velars. They also reached the Italic peninsula by sea from Anatolia through stopovers on the Syrian and African coast and the Italian islands. The Etruscan city of *Tarquīnia* (Etr. *Tarchuna* or *Tarchna*<sup>114</sup>), the people of *Tyrrhenians* (Gr. *Τυρρηνοί*<sup>115</sup>), the Anatolian god of the sky and storm *Tarhun* (or *Tarhunna*<sup>116</sup>) take their name from *Western \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas*<sup>117</sup>. In these derived names the original labiovelar *g<sup>w</sup>* results in unvoiced velar also aspirated or muted, and the vowel in the first syllable also change to *a*.

At the beginning of the II millennium BC *Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* stopped migrating eastwards and slowly flowed back into the territories occupied by *Proto-Scythians*. The latter were then forced to expand further west, starting the first great migration of the millennium. In the course of time *Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* and *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas* fought each other, interacted and joined into a multilingual confederation of peoples, that in the Aegean area was known as *\*Mykg<sup>w</sup>aunas*, the

<sup>110</sup> Plinius: III, 68-69.

<sup>111</sup> Plinius: III, 123.

<sup>112</sup> Pallottino 2016: 106.

<sup>113</sup> Fabbri: 2018a; 2018b.

<sup>114</sup> Bonfante & Bonfante 2002: 16.

<sup>115</sup> Strabo, V, 1, 7.

<sup>116</sup> Taracha 2009: 93.

<sup>117</sup> Fabbri 2017b.

*Mixed People*<sup>118</sup>. In the second half of the II millennium BC the expansion of Mongol and Chinese peoples caused a new back-flow of Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian tribes, starting the second great migration. Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian forced \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aurian around Volga river to crash into Proto-Gaul-Latins, who in turn pressed toward Central Europe other Proto-Scythian tribes located north of Black Sea (Late-Proto-Scythians).

\*Eastern Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian or \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian left their name, for example, to the peoples of *Shardana* (or *Sherden* [letters of Amarna (EA 61, 122, 123; 1350 BC approximately), the stele of Tani (1250 BC approximately) and the inscription at Karnak (rows 13 and 15; 1200 BC approximately)]), *Tyrsenians* (Gr. *Τυρσηνοί*<sup>119</sup>), *Arzawa*, *Thracians* (Gr. *Θραῦκες*<sup>120</sup> and Gr. *Θρήικες*<sup>121</sup>), and *Phryges* (Gr. *Φρύγες*<sup>122</sup>), to the *Ferghana Valley*, and to the Etruscan city of *Perugia* (Etr. *Phersna*)<sup>123</sup>. In some of these derived names we can observe an anomalous result of the original labiovelar g<sup>w</sup> into dental (*d*) subsequently aspirated (*dh* = *z*) and unvoiced (*s*), again the change to *a* of the first vowel, and the fall of the initial aspirated dental (*th*) or the change to unaspirated dental (*t*), sibilant (*s*), and even aspirated labial (*ph* = *f*), which is also characteristic of Italic dialects (cf. Gr. *θύρα* with Lat. *foris*, door). \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aurian and \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aurian left instead their name, for example, to the Volga river, the Etruscan city of *Bol'ogna* (Etr. *Velzna*<sup>124</sup>, Lat. *Felsina*<sup>125</sup>), and to the peoples of *Volcae*<sup>126</sup>, *Belgae*<sup>127</sup>, *Caledones* (Gr. *Καληδῶνες*<sup>128</sup>), *Halizones* (Gr. *Ἀλιζῶνες*<sup>129</sup>, Gr. *Ἀλιζῶνοι*<sup>130</sup>, and Gr. *Ἀλαζῶνες*<sup>131</sup>)<sup>132</sup>. We can observe that in these derived names the initial labiovelar mainly results in labial, while the internal one has different results by influence of the neighbour peoples, in particular of \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian.

Applying the phonetic changes observed in the names of the descendants of Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian and \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aurian to the terms \*Mykg<sup>w</sup>aurian and \*Mykg<sup>w</sup>aurian, we can obtain the names of *Mysians* / *Moesians* (Gr. *Μυσοί* / *Μοισοί*<sup>133</sup>), *Meonia* (Gr. *Μηονία*<sup>134</sup> < \**Mechponia*), *Mygdonians* (Gr. *Μυγδόνες*<sup>135</sup>) and *Mycenaeans* (Gr. *Μυκηνάι*<sup>136</sup> < \**Μυκφήναι*). Moreover, we can derive from \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian and \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian the mythological name of *Atys* (< \**Sa'dys* < \**Sardus* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian*), *Telephus* and *Torebus* (both from \**Tarbus* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian*), and *Teutamis* (descendant of \**Teutamos* < \**Teu'tana* < \**Thyrdana* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian*).

The Proto-Etruscan descendants of \*Eastern Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian and \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aurian arrived in Italy from North-East at the end of the II millennium BC, following and pressing Proto-Gaul-Latins. The descendants of \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aurian arrived as first and stopped in the lands most suitable for cow breeding, while those of Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aurian headed for the commercial ports and the marshes, the “maremme”, which they knew how to transform into fertile lands, having learned and developed drainage techniques in the Orient<sup>137</sup>. On the Tyrrhenic coast, the latter met peoples descending from

<sup>118</sup> Fabbri 2017a; 2017b

<sup>119</sup> Herodotus, I, 94.

<sup>120</sup> Xenophon: VI, 3, 4.

<sup>121</sup> Herodotus: VI, 45, 1.

<sup>122</sup> Herodotus: VII, 73.

<sup>123</sup> Fabbri 2017b

<sup>124</sup> Pittau 2018, 488.

<sup>125</sup> Plinius: III, 115.

<sup>126</sup> Caesar: VI, 24.

<sup>127</sup> Caesar: II, 4.

<sup>128</sup> Ptolemaeus: II, 2.

<sup>129</sup> Homer, Ilias: II, 856; Stephanus of Byzantium, Ethnica: I, 74, 1.

<sup>130</sup> Strabo: XII, 3, 4.

<sup>131</sup> Herodotus: IV, 17, 1.

<sup>132</sup> Fabbri 2018b.

<sup>133</sup> Strabo: VII, 3, 2; Herodotus: VII, 20.

<sup>134</sup> Dionysius: I, 27, 1.

<sup>135</sup> Strabo: VII, 3, 2.

<sup>136</sup> Strabo: VIII, 6, 19.

<sup>137</sup> Keller 1971, 59.

*Western* \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas, arrived by sea<sup>138</sup>. Moreover, they learnt the script, probably by Greeks<sup>139</sup>, and developed an alphabet adapted to their own language. The Italic descendants of \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas probably acquired the script already elaborated by those of \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas and use it in an ideographical way. This is the reason for which we have no direct attestation of the endonyms of the descendants of \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas, and we have to reconstruct them by analysing the geographical names in the territories where they lived.

We can assume that the Italic descendants of \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas called themselves by names such as \*Volvoni or \*Volvona (< \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas; whence the name of *Bologna* city), and were also called \*Calvona, \*Calvana, or \*Galvana (whence the names *Calvana* mount chain between Bologna and Florence and *Calvano* mount near Sarsina) by influence of *Proto-Umbrians* and *Proto-Oscans*, and *Velzena*, *Velsna*, *Campeua* and \*Campana (whence the Lat. names *Felsina* and *Campania*) by \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas. The descendants of *Eastern* \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas called instead themselves by names such as \*Sarsna (whence the names of *Sarsina* city and *Sarsinates*<sup>140</sup> tribe), *Rasna* or *Rasenna*<sup>141</sup>, and *Phersna* (Etr. name of Perugia).

In the historical age the descendants of \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas were generally known in Italy as *Tusci*<sup>142</sup> or *Etrusci*<sup>143</sup>. These ethnonyms derived from the alternations of the names of their tribes, that resulted in velar (from *Western* \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas) or in sibilant (from *Eastern* \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas) the labiovelar: \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aus > \*Turkas / \*Tursas > Umbr. *Tursko*<sup>144</sup> > Lat. *Tu'sci* / Lat. *E-trusci*. Similarly, the name *Volsci* [Plinius, III, 56] derived from the alternation of the names by which the tribes descending from *Western and Eastern* \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas called the descendants of \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas: \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aus > \*Volkas / \*Velsas > Etr. *Velch*<sup>145</sup> / Etr. *Velzu*<sup>146</sup> > Lat. *Volsci*. *Etruscans* were settled mainly by the Thyrrenic coast<sup>147</sup> from Liguria to Campania, on the border between Tuscany, Lazio, and Umbria and also in the Padanian Valley<sup>148</sup> and by the Adriatic coast<sup>149</sup> from Veneto to the Marches.

### *Pelasgians*

When *Eastern* \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas (*Shardana*, *Tyrsenoi*, *Proto-Thessaloi*, *Proto-Thraces*, and *Proto-Phryges*) arrived in the Aegean area in the course of the II millennium BC, they partially forced the Proto-Scythian tribes previously immigrated (\*Sw-g<sup>w</sup>aulas and \*Sw-g<sup>w</sup>aunas) to move by sea westwards to Italy (*Siculi* and *Sicani*) or eastward to Anatolia and Syria (*Ashqalonians* and *Ascani*). The Proto-Scythian tribe that remained and settled (\*stha) by the northern coast of the Aegean sea were indicated as \*G<sup>w</sup>aula-sthas and \*G<sup>w</sup>auna-sthas and were considered as a subordinate class subdued to *Eastern* \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas. These tribes had merged with the Pre-Indo-European population that inhabited the Aegean area before the arrival of *Proto-Scythians*<sup>150</sup>.

When new Indo-European peoples arrived at the end of the second millennium BC, the descendants of *Eastern* \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas integrated with those of \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas in the *Mixed People* were partially forced to move westwards to Italy and Central Europe and eastwards to Syria and Egypt, and partially subdued and included in the subordinated class. The newcomers were indicated by the

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Müller 1828.

<sup>139</sup> Pallottino 2016: 452.

<sup>140</sup> Pallottino 2016: 128.

<sup>141</sup> Dionysius, I, 30,3.

<sup>142</sup> Plinius: III, 38.

<sup>143</sup> Plinius: III, 52.

<sup>144</sup> Pallottino 2016: 6.

<sup>145</sup> Pittau 2018: 477.

<sup>146</sup> Pittau 2018: 489.

<sup>147</sup> Plinius: III, 50.

<sup>148</sup> Plinius: III, 115.

<sup>149</sup> Plinius: III, 112.

<sup>150</sup> Fabbri 2018a.

names of the territories where they settled, so that we know them for example as *Thracēs* and *Phrygēs* (who spoke Indo-European languages in the historical age). Moreover, the subordinate classes should have assumed the names *\*Bailastas* and *\*Bainastas*, by influence of the newcomers or the descendants of *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas* (*Mycenaeans*), and the names *\*Dailastas* and *\*Dainastas* by influence of the descendants of *Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas*. From these names we can easily derived the historical forms *Pelasgians* (Gr. Πελασγοί<sup>151</sup> < *\*Belasdai* < *\*Bailastas*) and *Penastae* (Gr. Πενέσται<sup>152</sup> < *\*Benestai* < *\*Bainastas*), as well as Ass. *Palastu* (Tiglatpileser III Inscriptions), Hebr. *Pelištīm*<sup>153</sup>, and Egyp. *Peleset* (p-r-s-t; Medinet Habu Inscriptions).

In particular, by the name *Pelasgians* the tribes of the Mixed People were remembered, that reached Italy through the Adriatic coast. In the same age, the mixed communities were also indicated by names deived from *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulas \*Thyuras* and *\*G<sup>w</sup>aunas \*Thyuras*<sup>154</sup>, whence for example the names of the Italian cities of *Velletri* (Etr. *Velthuri*), *Volterra* (Etr. *Velathri*), and *Feltre*, and those of *Oenotrians* (Gr. Οἰνωτροί<sup>155</sup> < *\*Vainathras*), of the Italian cities of *Bonefro* and *Venafro* (Lat. *Venafrum* < *\*Venaphras* < *\*Vainathras*), and of inhabitants of the latter the *Pentrians* (Lat. *Pentri* < *\*Benthras* < *\*Vainathras*), respectively.

## ETHNOGENESIS OF ITALIC PEOPLES

After having considered the peopling of Central Italy in the ancient sources and the early migrations of peoples to Italy, we can now try to reconstruct the ethnogenesis of the ancient Italic populations. We saw that in the names of peoples descending from *Proto-Scythians* the results of *\*g<sup>w</sup>au-na*, and similarly *\*g<sup>w</sup>au-la*, and *\*g<sup>w</sup>au-ta*, lose the meaning of “herd of cows” and “cow breeder” and assumed that of “people”, “community”, and “city”. We can in fact recognise these derivations with such a meaning in many Italic ethnonyms and toponyms, as we will see. Moreover, we saw that *Thyrrhenians*, *Proto-Umbrians*, and *Proto-Calabrians* changed the labiovelar *g<sup>w</sup>* into unvoiced velar (*k*), also aspirated (*ch*) and muted (*h*). The descendants of *Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* changed instead the labiovelar *g<sup>w</sup>* into dental (*d*), also aspirated (*dh = z*) and unvoiced (*s*), while those of *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas* into voiced aspirated labial (*v*) also subsequently unaspirated (*b*). Lastly, we saw that the labiovelar had changed in labial in the names of *Pelasgians* and *Oenotrians*. By looking at these results in geographical names and ethonyms, we can then distinguish the presence and the influence of some of these peoples in a particular area of Italy.

In doing that, we must remember that we received many of these names through the translation and the transcription respectively in languages and alphabets of peoples different from those to which the names were referred. For example many names have been transcribed in the Etruscan alphabet, in which the voiced occlusives were missing and substituted by the respective unvoiced ones, the Lat. sounds *o* and *u* were both written as *u*<sup>156</sup>, and one of the Etruscan results of Proto-Scythian diphthong *au*, a sound intermediate between Lat. *e* and *i* corresponding to *η* Greek letter (cf. Gr. Τυρσηνοί<sup>157</sup>), was some time written as *e* and some other as *i*. Therefore, the name of the Italian city of *Modena*, for example, was received by Romans through the Etruscans as *Mutina*. Moreover, *Etruscans* frequently used in writing to omit internal unstressed vowels<sup>158</sup>. Therefore, the name of *Tarquinius* was written both as *Tarchuna* (< *\*Tàrchona* < *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>auna*) and *Tarchna*, that of *Perugia* as *Phersna* (< *\*Phèrsηna* < *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>auna*), and those of *Bologna* and *Bolsena/Orvieto* as *Velzna* (< *\*Vèlzηna* < *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>auna*). Beside, Romans used to transform the original names in a

<sup>151</sup> Herodotus: I, 57, 1.

<sup>152</sup> Aristoteles: II, 9, 3.

<sup>153</sup> Bible: Genesis, 10, 14.

<sup>154</sup> Fabbri 2017°.

<sup>155</sup> Dionysius: I, 12,1.

<sup>156</sup> Pallottino 2016: 240.

<sup>157</sup> Herodotus: I, 94.

<sup>158</sup> Banti 1969: 129.

form closer to Latin words and possibly having a meaning. This was often obtained by introducing the metatheses *tn* > (*e*)*nt* and *zn* > (*e*)*nti*, sometimes doubling the dentals: *tn* > *t(e)nt*<sup>159</sup>. Therefore, the probable local name of the territory where *Trento* rose, *\*Tritna* (< *\*Tirdhna* < *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>auna*), was changed to *Tridentum* (cf. Lat. *tridens*, trident), and that of the area of *Firenze* (*Florence*), *\*Phirzna* (< *\*Phirzhna* < *\*Phirdhna* < *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>auna*), was changed to *Florentia* (cf. Lat. *florens*, flourishing), but the original names survived in the local tradition, so that the current ones are more similar to them than to the Roman names.

In the tradition reported by Dionysius three different aspects are condensed in the figure of *Aborigines*: a people founding Rome and living there “ab origine”, a people nomad (*Aberrigines*), a people called *Aborigines*. These three aspects can refer to one only people or to two or three different peoples. To understand how many peoples are condensed in the figure of *Aborigines*, we have to start by considering the population living in Lazio at the time of Roma birth and earlier when *Aborigines* are firstly mentioned.

We saw that *Proto-Hiberians* migrated to Italy before the peoples descending from *Proto-Scythians*. After *Proto-Hiberians*, at the beginning of II millennium BC, arrived in Italy *Proto-Umbrians* and *Proto-Calabrians*. These mixed peoples were not warriors fighting to expand their territory, but peoples escaping from their home. Moreover, they were relatives of *Proto-Hiberians*, and probably they mainly lived on the breeding of small animals and small herds of cows during and after their escape. Differently from *Proto-Scythians*, they did not break into the countries with large herds of cows, but they slowly penetrated the land of *Proto-Hiberians* integrating with them in the border regions.

We can then imagine that when *Proto-Scythians* arrived in Lazio, they found there little villages of peoples resulting from the merging of *Proto-Hiberians* (*\*Hubaras* / *\*Tubaras*) and *Proto-Umbrians* (*\*G<sup>w</sup>aumbras* < *\*G<sup>w</sup>aunas* *\*Hubaras*) on a Palaeoanthropic substrate. They probably called this people, breeding small animals and cows, *\*Hubaras* *\*G<sup>w</sup>aunas* or *\*Hubarag<sup>w</sup>aunas*, whence the forms *\*Ubaragainas* and *\*Ibaragenes* could be derived, later handed down as *Aborigines* to better match “ab origine” and *Aberrigines*. Moreover, *Proto-Scythians* still used labiovelars in their language and called themselves *\*Swg<sup>w</sup>aunas* and *\*Swg<sup>w</sup>aulas*, but *Proto-Umbrians*, who had the tendency to enhance the velar, called them, in the course of time, *\*Sicaunas* and *\*Sicaulas*, whence the historical name *Sicani* and *Siculi*.

To this people called *\*Hubarag<sup>w</sup>aunas* and later *Aborigines*, we could also attribute the aspect of being nomad, since *Proto-Umbrians* had recently migrated when *Proto-Scythians* arrived and since breeders are used to move with their livestock at least during some parte of the years. Moreover, to this mix of *Proto-Hiberians* and *Proto-Umbrians* we could attribute also the aspect of being the people that mainly contributed to the foundation of Rome, living in the region “ab origine”. However, other elements in the tradition lead us to include also other peoples inside the primitive people of *Aborigines*.

Dionysius reports the names of the cities that *Aborigines* had in the territory of Reate according to Varro<sup>160</sup>: *Palatium* (Gr. Παλάτιον), *Trebula* (Gr. Τριβόλα), *Suesbula* (Gr. Συεσβόλα), *Suna* (Gr. Σούνα), *Mefula* (Gr. Μήφουλα), *Orvinium* (Gr. Ορουϊνιον), *Carsula* (Gr. Κόρσουλα), *Issa* (Gr. Ίσσα), *Marruvium* (Gr. Μαρούιον), *Vatia* (Gr. Βατία), *Tiora* (Gr. Τιώρα) also called *Matiene* (Gr. Ματιήνη), *Lista* (Gr. Λίστα) the capital, *Cutilia* (Gr. Κοτυλία). He specifies<sup>161</sup> that *Aborigines* took this territory from *Umbrians*, and later they invaded the lands of *Siculi* and founded the colonies of *Antemnae*, *Tellenae*, *Ficulnea*, and *Tibur*. We can observe that some of these names end in *-bula*, *-fula*, *-sula* (all from *-g<sup>w</sup>aula*), *-suna* (from *-g<sup>w</sup>auna*), and *-batia* (from *-bata* < *-g<sup>w</sup>auta*), terms which denote a Proto-Scythian origin. Moreover, the original labiovelar presents a result typical of the descendants of *G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas* in *-bula* and of *Eastern* *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* in *-sula*, while in *-fula* we recognise the Latin translation of the Etruscan results (cf. Lat. *Felsina* < Etr. *Velzna*). We could

<sup>159</sup> Fabbri 2017°.

<sup>160</sup> Dionysius: I, 14, 1-15, 2.

<sup>161</sup> Dionysius: I, 16, 1.

then deduce that these cities were once founded by *Proto-Scythians*, later occupied by *Aborigines* and only later by *Proto-Etruscans* and *Latins*. However, the complete name of the cities of *Tribula* (< \**Trivola* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aula*), *Mefula* (< \**Mechvola* < \**Mykg<sup>w</sup>aula*), *Marruvium* (< \**Mar-ruvas* < \**Mar-Truva* < \**Mar-Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aus*), and *Corsula* (\**Carsola* < \**Tarsola* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aula*; cf. It. *Chieti* < Lat. *Teate*), refer to *Proto-Etruscans*, *Palatium* (< \**G<sup>w</sup>aulatas*) to *Proto-Gaul-Latin*, *Suesbula* (< \**Swag<sup>w</sup>aula*) and *Issa* (< \**Isg<sup>w</sup>a* < \**Iwsg<sup>w</sup>aus* < \**Swg<sup>w</sup>aus*) to *Proto-Scythians*. Therefore, some cities were not only occupied but founded by *Proto-Etruscans* and *Proto-Gaul-Latins* themselves. This implicates that the *Aborigines* mentioned by Dionysius wether occupied the cities already founded by *Proto-Etruscans* and *Proto-Gaul-Latins* or they founded those after having merged with some Proto-Etruscan and Proto-Gaul-Latin tribes. In both case they were living after the arrival of *Proto-Etruscans*, *Proto-Gaul-Latins*, and *Itali*, peoples that migrated to Italy the one shortly after the other. Therefore, we can attribute to these peoples arrived at the end of the II millennium BC the aspect of migrating people condensed in the figure of *Aborigines*.

*Aborigines* were then fighting against *Siculi* after the arrival of *Proto-Etruscans*, *Proto-Gaul-Latins*, and *Itali*, and shortly before the migration of *Pelasgians*. In this period, the descendants of *Western \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas*, the *Tyrrhenians*, were already arrived in Italy. They were mainly located by the Thyrrhenic coast, but they had also diffused up to the Adriatic coast through commercial routes that were still used in both directions in the historical age<sup>162</sup>. We can recognise their past presence in the Medio-Adriatic and Medio-Apennine area in some geographical names and ethnonymes ending in -*ern-* (< -*erna* < \**Therchna* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>auna*), such as the name of *Aternum* river (along which the cities of *Amiternum* and *Aternum*, the current *Pescara* < \**Pe'scarum* < \**Pherskas* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aus*; cf. Umbr. *Tursko*), *Tifernus* river, *Aesernia* city, and *Herni-ci* (< *Herna*<sup>163</sup> < \**Ferna* < \**Pherchna* < \**Therchna*; see below about *Hirpini*) people, and others similar such as *Tolenus* (but in local tradition and currently *Turanus* < \**Turchana* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>auna*).

When the descendants of *Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* and \**G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas*, descended on Italy, *Tyrrhenians* integrated mainly with the former, having the same origin, similar customs, and closer languages, but joined both in confederations of tribes that in the historical age were mainly known in Padania<sup>164</sup>, Etruria<sup>165</sup>, and Campania<sup>166</sup>. *Tyrrhenians* maintained their cities by the Medio-Tyrrhenic coast, while the descendants of *Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* settled by the Medio-Adriatic coast and along the commercial routes, leaving their names to rivers such as *Truentus* (< \**Trùtna* < \**Thyrdhna* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>auna*) and *Frento* (< \**Frètna* < \**Pherdhna* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>auna*, also called *Fertur* from the alternation *Pher-* / *Tyr-* in the tribe names of *Western and Eastern \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas*), and cities such *Frentum* and *Ferentinum* (both from \**Ferentum* (< \**Fèrtna* < \**Pherdhna*).

The descendants of \**G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas* and *Proto-Gaul-Latins* drove their herds of cows into the planes of Lazio. These *Aberrigenes*, integrated with *Proto-Hiberians* and *Proto-Umbrians*, fought against *Proto-Scythians* who were ruling on Lazio and around. The latter resisted for a long time, but lose their supremacy when other tribes of the *Mixed People*, the *Pelasgians*, arrived through the Adriatic Sea. *Pelasgians* (< \**G<sup>w</sup>aula-sthas*) and their relatives *Oenotrians* (< \**G<sup>w</sup>auna-thyras*) and *Morgetes* (< \**Mor-g<sup>w</sup>au-tas*) left probably their names to the cities of *Lista* (< \**G<sup>w</sup>au-lasthas*), *Bonefro*, and *Venafrum* (the two last from \**Venaphri* < \**Vainathri* < \**G<sup>w</sup>aunathyras*), the people of *Paeligni* (< \**Bailgna* < \**G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas*), *Pentri* (< \**Benthri* < \**Vainathri*), and *Marsi* (< \**Mor-g<sup>w</sup>aus*), and to the river \**Trinius* (< \**Trygna* < \**Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas*; cf. It. *Trigno*).

It must be noticed that the human density was very low at that time. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that *Siculi* were completely chased out as handed down. Most of them probably continued breeding their herds in pastures among those of the newcomers, and slowly integrated with them. The only thing to be chased out of Lazio was the name of *Siculi*. We saw in fact that the

<sup>162</sup> Papi 2014.

<sup>163</sup> Servius (ad Aeneidem VII, 684) considered instead *herna* as a Sabine word meaning stone.

<sup>164</sup> Keller 1971: 156.

<sup>165</sup> Strabo: V, 2, 2.

<sup>166</sup> Keller 1971: 145.

descendants of \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas, arrived in Italy both by land or sea, had changed the labiovelar in labial in their language, that in general should be close to the original one of *Proto-Scythians*. Therefore, these newcomers called *Proto-Schyrians* \*Swavaunas, \*Swavaulas and \*Swavautas, whence the historical names Lat. *Sabini*<sup>167</sup>, Gr. *Σαβῖνοι*<sup>168</sup>, Gr. *Σαφινεῖς*<sup>169</sup>, Osc. *Safinim* (Pietrabbondante inscription), Lat. *Sabelli*<sup>170</sup>, Gr. *Σαβέλλοι*<sup>171</sup>, and Gr. *Σαβάτα*<sup>172</sup>, Lat. *Sabatia*<sup>173</sup>, Lat. *Lacus Sabatinus*<sup>174</sup>, Lat. *Tribus Sabatina*<sup>175</sup>.

A similar process can be also observed in Padania, where firstly *Proto-Etruscans* met the Italic *Proto-Scythians*. In particular, the geographical names show that peoples that called themselves *Volvas* (whence *Melpa/Melpum* and *Mediolanum*<sup>176</sup>) and *Volvonas* (whence *Bologna*) settled by Proto-Scythian communities that they called by names in which the labiovelar was changed in labial (cf. Italian hydronyms *Seveso* and *Aposa*, both from \*Swag<sup>w</sup>aus). In the territory of Bologna and in Romagna, *Proto-Scythians* were called \*Swavaunas and \*Swavaus, whence the names of *Savena* river, *Savio* river (Lat. *Sapis*), the *Sabines* founders of Ravenna according to Plinius<sup>177</sup>, the *Sapinia* tribus of Livius<sup>178</sup>, and *Spina* city. In the course of time the descendants of \*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas diffused in Romagna and further south through *Proto-Scythians* and *Proto-Umbrians*, integrating with them and propagating the labial result of the labiovelar which is characteristic of the language spoken by *Sabines* and *Umbrians* in the historical age.

In Central Italy the result in velar prevailed in the area influenced by *Tyrrhenians*, including Rome, and, for long time, in the Medio-Apennine and Medio-Adriatic area. In this region where the Apennine chain stretches close to the Adriatic coast and lands were less suitable for the large herds of cows, the descendants of *Proto-Scythians* merged mainly with those of *Proto-Umbrians* and *Western and Eastern* \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas, who continued calling them by names having velar results. The name of the city of *Asculum* (< \*Asculi < \*Askolas < \*Aws<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aulas < \*Sw<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aulas) maintained in the Roman age the Proto-Umbrian form, as well as the names of the people of *Aequi* (Gr. *Ἄῤῥοι*<sup>179</sup>) or *Aequiculi*<sup>180</sup> (< *Aequi* and \*Aeculi < \*Aekwas and \*Aekwalas < \*Aws<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>as and \*Aws<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aulas). Similarly, on the Tyrrhenic coast *Proto-Scythians* were initially called *Osci*<sup>181</sup> (< \*Oskas < \*Aws<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aus < \*Sw<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aus) and *Ascanaxes* (Gr. *Ἀσκανάξις*<sup>182</sup> < \*Askanas < \*Aws<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aunas < \*Sw<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aunas) by influence of *Tyrrhenians*, and *Ausones*<sup>183</sup> (Etr, \*Ausuna < \*Aws<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aunas < \*Sw<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aunas) by influence of the descendants of *Eastern* \*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas.

Other historical names of the Medio-Adriatic region present deformations characteristic of *Proto-Etruscans*. In particular, the latter translated the sound sw into v, that later was transcribed as p. (after deaspiration into b). Therefore, \*Swag<sup>w</sup>aunas were called \*Pik<sup>w</sup>ηna, whence Lat. *Piceni*<sup>184</sup>, but the aspirated voiced sound v (as in *Vacuna*) remained in the oral tradition, so that the colony of *Picentia* (near Salerno) is currently called *Vicenza*. The name *Picentes* (Gr. *Πίκεντες*<sup>185</sup>) can be

<sup>167</sup> Plinius: III, 38.

<sup>168</sup> Dionysius: I, 14, 6.

<sup>169</sup> De Iulio 2019.

<sup>170</sup> Plinius: III, 107.

<sup>171</sup> Strabo: V, 4, 12.

<sup>172</sup> Strabo: V, 2, 9.

<sup>173</sup> Silio Italicus: VIII, 490.

<sup>174</sup> Columella: VIII, 16, 3.

<sup>175</sup> Livius: VI, 5, 8.

<sup>176</sup> Fabbri 2017a.

<sup>177</sup> Plinius: III, 115.

<sup>178</sup> Livius: XXXI, 2, 6.

<sup>179</sup> Strabo: V, 3, 2.

<sup>180</sup> Vergilius: VII, 747; Plinius: III, 108.

<sup>181</sup> Plinius: III, 56.

<sup>182</sup> Josephus: I, 6, 1.

<sup>183</sup> Plinius: III, 56.

<sup>184</sup> Plinius: III, 100.

<sup>185</sup> Polybius: III, 86, 9.

obtained from *Piceni* through the *-ta* derivation (*\*Pikḡna-ta* > *\*Pikḡn'ta* > *Pikentes*<sup>186</sup>). However, when the labial result of the labiovelar diffused in Osco-Umbrian languages, *Piceni* probably called themselves *\*Vibona* (< *\*Viwaunas* < *\*Swg<sup>w</sup>auanas*), later deformed in *\*Bobona* and transcribed as *Pupun*<sup>187</sup>.

We can find the Proto-Umbrian / Tyrrhenian form *-kḡna* also in other historical names of Medio-Adriatic peoples, such as *Marrucinians* (Lat. *Marrucini*<sup>188</sup> < *\*Mar-'rukḡna* < *\*Mar-Trukainas* < *\*Mar-Thyrḡ<sup>w</sup>auanas*; beside the labial result in *Marruvium* river and city), and *Caracenians* or *Caracinians* (Gr. *Καρακḡνοι*<sup>189</sup>, Lat. *Caracini*<sup>190</sup>, and *Caricini*<sup>191</sup> < *\*Carakḡna*; beside the dental result in *Caretini*<sup>192</sup> < *\*Caradḡna*). By influence of *Proto-Umbrians* and *Tyrrhenians*, *Proto-Scythians* were probably also called *\*Avchauna* (< *\*Awsḡ<sup>w</sup>auanas* < *\*Swg<sup>w</sup>auanas*), whence the names of the city of *Ancona* and *Anxanum* (whose *x* letter was originally a Gr. *χ*), while by influence of the descendants of *Eastern \*Thyrḡ<sup>w</sup>auanas*, they were also called *\*Vesḡna* (from the alternation of *\*Vedḡna* and *\*Vesḡna* < *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>auanas*, or from < *\*Wasḡ<sup>w</sup>auanas* < *\*Swg<sup>w</sup>auanas*), whence the name of the people of *Vestini*<sup>193</sup>.

Further south by the Adriatic coast *\*Asculi* became *\*Aspuli* and later *A'puli*<sup>194</sup>, by influence of *Pelasgians* and *Oenotrians*, who mainly migrated through the Otranto strait and the Gargano promontory. Analogously, by the Tyrrhenic coast, *Osci* became *\*Ospi* and later *O'pi-ci* (Gr. *Όπικοι*<sup>195</sup>), by influence of *Volsci* and *Campani* (both descendants of *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulḡ<sup>w</sup>auanas*), while Romans rhotacised the name *\*Ausuna* (< *\*Awsḡ<sup>w</sup>auanas* < *\*Swg<sup>w</sup>auanas*; whence also Lat. *Ausones*) into *Aurun-ci*<sup>196</sup>.

Actually, *Piceni* were once the same people as *Sabines*, previously called *Sicani*. The tradition recalls this identity by telling *Piceni* colonist of *Sabines* and inventing the woodpecker leader to explain the change of name. The name of *Samnites* (Lat. *Samnites*<sup>197</sup>, Gr. *Σαυνῖται*<sup>198</sup> = *Savni-tai* < *\*Savḡna-ta* < *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-na-tas*) can be derived from that of *Sabines* in the same way as *Picentes* from *Piceni*. The capital of *Samnites*, *Bovianum*, named after a bull leader according to the tradition, probably took its name from the cows herds driven into the underlying valley by the descendants of *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>auanas* and *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulḡ<sup>w</sup>auanas*. Similarly, *Hirpinians* (Lat. *Hirpini*<sup>199</sup>) did not take name from a wolf, but probably from *Proto-Etruscans* (*\*Thyrḡ<sup>w</sup>auanas* > *\*Phyrbḡna* > *\*Firpini* > *Hirpini*; cf. Sab. *fircus* and Lat. *hircus*<sup>200</sup>, he-goat) who previously inhabited their lands and merged with *Proto-Scythians* and other peoples into the Sabellic peoples

The genesis of Sabellic peoples from the merging of different populations is confirmed by the historical testimonies on *Sabines*. For example, the original city of *Sabines*, *Testruna* (< *\*Trustena* < *\*Thursḡna* / *\*Thurdḡna* < *\*Thyrḡ<sup>w</sup>auana*) had a Proto-Etruscan name. The Sabine king, who came from *Cures* to fight against Romulus and later ruled with him, was called *Titus Tatius* (= *Titus* son or descendant of *Tatus* < *\*Ti'dus* / *\*Ta'dus* < *\*Tirdaus* / *\*Tardaus* < *\*Thyrḡ<sup>w</sup>aus*; cf. *Tyrrḡnoi* / *Tarchuna*) and probably descended from *\*Thyrḡ<sup>w</sup>auanas*. The Sabine wife of Romulus, *Hersilia* (< Sab. *\*Fersilia* < Etr. *Phersu* < *\*Thyrḡ<sup>w</sup>aus*; cf. Sab. *fāsena* and Lat. *harena*<sup>201</sup>, sand) had an

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Szemerényi 1971.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. La Regina 1981.

<sup>188</sup> Plinius: III, 38.

<sup>189</sup> Ptolomaeus: III, 1, 57.

<sup>190</sup> Tacitus: IV, 5, 1.

<sup>191</sup> Livius: XV, 7.

<sup>192</sup> Plinius: III, 106.

<sup>193</sup> Plinius: III, 38.

<sup>194</sup> Plinius: III, 38.

<sup>195</sup> Strabo: V, 4, 3.

<sup>196</sup> Plinius: III, 56.

<sup>197</sup> Plinius: III, 71.

<sup>198</sup> Strabo: V, 4, 12.

<sup>199</sup> Plinius: III, 99.

<sup>200</sup> Varro: V, 19, 3.

<sup>201</sup> Velius Longus: VII, 69, 8.

Etruscan name. The founder of the *Gens Claudia*, who came from *Regillum*<sup>202</sup> or *Inregillum*<sup>203</sup> (probably near *Cures*) bringing his people and riches to Rome, was called *Attius*<sup>204</sup> (also *Atta*<sup>205</sup> and *Titus*<sup>206</sup>) *Clausus* and later *Appius Claudius* and probably was the eponymous leader of a mixed tribe of *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas* and *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aunas* (*Titus* / *Atta* / *Attius* // *Appius* < *Ti'dus* / *\*Ardu* // *\*Arpus* < *\*Tirdaus* / *\*Tardaus* // *\*Tarbaus* < *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aus*; *Clausus* / *Claudius* < *\*Clauzus* / *\*Claudus* < *\*Gauldaus* < *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>aus*; cf. the methatesis in Lat. *Clusium*, Etr. *Clevsina* < *\*Ceuls<sup>n</sup>na* < *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>auna*). Moreover, the city of *Cures* is currently called *Fara*. This lead us to believe that it was named not from *Quirinus* god, nor from the sabine spear, nor later from the longobardian *fara*, but after some people called *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulas*, whose name, later rotacised (or hypercorrected), was written with an initial velar (*C* or *Q*) by *Tyrrhenians* and remembered with and initial labial (*F* as in Lat. *Felsina* = Etr. *Velzna* < *\*G<sup>w</sup>aulg<sup>w</sup>auna*) by the local oral tradition.

The institution of tribes (Lat. *tribus* < *\*tirbus* < *\*thyrvus* < *\*thyrg<sup>w</sup>aus* > *\*thyrdaus* > *\*theudas* > *\*teuta* > Sab. *touta*; cf. *Teate* = *Touta* (*Marouca*) and *Reate* < *\*Treadais* < *\*Teardaus* < *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aus*; cf. Old Eng. *Theod* < *\*Theudones* < *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aunas*; cf. *Teutamis* and *Teutani*<sup>207</sup>) in *Sabines* had a Proto-Etruscan origin. *Proto-Etruscans* also brought in Central Italy their eponymous gods. *Phers<sup>n</sup>na* / *Tarchona* brought *\*Pherchona*, later worshipped as *Fer'onia*. *Vels<sup>n</sup>na* / *\*Volvona* introduced *\*Velvona*, later celebrated as *Bellona* (also called *Duellona*<sup>208</sup>; cf. Old Lat. *duenos*<sup>209</sup>, Lat. *bonus* < *g<sup>w</sup>auna*). To *Feronia*, the properties of a people living on craft and trade were attributed. This people freely traveled in peace bringing their merchandise through territories ruled by different peoples often fighting esch others. Their eponymous goddess was then associated to the freedom and travellers. Its sanctuaries mainly rose on the border between different peoples and along important communication routes<sup>210</sup>. Moreover, its worship was radicated in cities having a Proto-Etruscan origin, such as *Furcona* (< *\*Phyrchona* < *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>auna*; in current Civita di Bagno), *Trebula* (< *\*Tervola* < *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>aula*), and *Tarracina* (< *\*Tark<sup>n</sup>na* < *\*Thyrg<sup>w</sup>auna*). To *Bellona*, the character of an invader people breaking into the lands with its herds of cows was instead attributed. The goddess was associated to the war.

The descendants of *Proto-Scythians* living in the Medio-Apennine mounts integrated with *Proto-Umbrians* and *Proto-Hiberians*, continued worshipping their eponymous goddess, that in the territory was invoked as *Vacuna*. Moreover, they maintained more primitive costums, while their relatives living in the planes between the mounts and Tevere river were more influenced by *Proto-Etruscans*. *Sabines* of the mounts seemed therefore austere to writers such as Cato<sup>211</sup> and Plutarchus<sup>212</sup>, while *Sabines* of *Cures* and the plane seemed frivolous to Dionysius<sup>213</sup>.

The territory where *Vacuna* was originnaly worshipped, especially the *Reate* basin, was rich in woods and water. The characteristics of this land were then associated to the goddess. Her worshippers were aware of having the same origin of their relatives in the planes. Therefore, they considered *Vacuna* as the doughter of the common eponymous god, that in the planes was called *Sabus*. In the course of time the inhabitants of the whole Sabine integrated together, identifying the

<sup>202</sup> Dionysius: V, 40, 3.

<sup>203</sup> Livius: II, 16.

<sup>204</sup> Livius: II, 16.

<sup>205</sup> Svetonius: I, 1.

<sup>206</sup> Dionysius: V, 40, 3.

<sup>207</sup> Plinius: III, 50.

<sup>208</sup> Varro: VII, 3, 17.

<sup>209</sup> Gordon 1975.

<sup>210</sup> Di Fazio 2012.

<sup>211</sup> Malcovati 1953: Frag. 128.

<sup>212</sup> Plutarchus, Life of Romulus: XVI, 1.

<sup>213</sup> Dionysius: II, 38, 3.

deities of each tribe with those of the others. Due to the consonance of the name *Feronia* with Lat. *ferus* (wild) the goddess was also associated to the freedom of wildness and to the wild country natural elements, particularly to the water. The boucolic character was also enhanced in *Bellona*, eponymous of a people freely driving their herds through the country. In this way, the Proto-Etruscan goddess *Feronia* and *Bellona* were associated to *Vacuna*.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the name of two of the most important Sabine deities, *Sabus* and *Vacuna*, have been derived from the Proto-Scythian eponyms *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>aus* and *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-na*. It has been observed that in the names of the two gods the original labiovelar results in different ways. To understand this difference, we investigated the peopling of ancient Central Italy by considering the ancient sources and the results of a diffusion model based on the time and space distributions of ancient and current geographical names and ethnonyms. This analysis led us to the following conclusions.

The tribes of *Proto-Scythians* migrated in Italy in the first half of the II millennium BC still used the labiovelars in their language and maintained these sounds at least until the last centuries of the millennium, when the last tribes of *Proto-Etruscans* arrived and diffused. Therefore, they called themselves by names similar to *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-na*, *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-la*, and *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>au-ta*, derived from *\*Swag<sup>w</sup>aus* or *\*S<sup>w</sup>g<sup>w</sup>aus*.

In Italy, *Proto-Umbrians*, some tribes of *Proto-Etruscans* (*Tyrrhenians*), and *Proto-Calabrians*, who tended to result in velars the labiovelars, initially called *Proto-Scythians* by names from which the historical forms *Sicani*, *Siculi*, *Ascanaxes*, *Asculum*, and *Osci* derive. Afterwards, the tribes of *Proto-Etruscans* and *Pelasgians*, that had resulted the labiovelar in labial in their languages and diffused such a result in Italic peoples, called instead them by terms from which the historical names *Sabini*, *Sabelli*, *Sabates*, *Apuli*, and *Opici* come. *Proto-Etruscans* also transformed the name of *Proto-Scythians* into *Piceni* and *Vestini* and contributed to the genesis of Sabellic peoples, leaving their names to historical toponyms, hydronyms, and ethnonyms such as *Testruna*, *Trebula*, *Teate*, *Reate*, *Truentus*, *Aternus*, *Tifernus*, *Frentrum*, *Caraceni*, *Hernici*, *Hirpini*.

*Proto-Scythians* who lived in the Medio-Apennine and Medio-Adriatic areas mainly integrated with peoples that had resulted the labiovelars into velars and initially introduced such a phonetic change in their language. Their eponymous goddess then assumed the name *Vacuna*. Moreover, their customs remained more primitive and austere. *Proto-Scythians* who lived in the planes near Tevere river, integrating instead with the newcomers, changed the labiovelars into labials. Their eponymous god was then indicated by the name *Sabus*. Since they lived in a central exchange area between Medio-Tyrrhenic and Medio-Adriatic peoples, their customs were more influenced by cultural exchanges.

Both the one on the mountains and the other in the planes were aware of the common origin, and when they integrated together and the labial result diffused, while maintaining the previous deity names, they recognised *Vacuna* as *Sabus*' daughter. Moreover, *Feronia* and *Bellona* originally were eponymous goddesses of some tribes of *Proto-Etruscans*. When these integrated with *Proto-Scythians* the two goddesses were assimilated to *Vacuna*.

## REFERENCES

Anonymous 250 BC “Book of Genesis” *Bible*.

Aristoteles IV century BC *Politics*.

Banti, L. 1969 *Il mondo degli Etruschi*. Rome: Biblioteca di Storia Patria.

Giuliano, B. and Bonfante, L. 2002 *The Etruscan Language: An Introduction*, Manchester University Press.

Caesar, C. J. 50 BC *Commentarii de bello gallico*.

Cardarelli, A. 2010 “The collapse of the Terramare culture and growth of new economic and social system during the late Bronze Age in Italy” *Scienze dell’Antichità*, 15, pp. 449-520, Rome: Quasar.

Colonna, G. 2009 “L’Apollo di Pyrgi, Sur/Suri (“il Nero”) e l’Apollo Sourios” in *Studi Etruschi*, LXXIII, 101-134, Rome: Bretschneider.

Columella, I century *De re rustica*.

De Iulio, R 2019 “Il collegamento tra Tirreno e Adriatico. prospettive di sviluppo di un’area interna appenninica del mezzogiorno: il sannio” in *L’apporto della Geografia tra rivoluzioni e riforme. Atti del XXXII Congresso Geografico Italiano (Roma, 7-10 giugno 2017)*, edited by F. Salvatori, 1579-1584. Rome: AGeI.

Diamond, J. 1998 *Armi, acciaio e malattie*. Turin: Einaudi. (1997 *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: Norton.)

Dionysius, H. I century, *Roman Antiquities*.

Di Fazio, M. 2012 “I luoghi di culto di Feronia. Ubicazioni e funzioni” in *Annali della Fondazione per il Museo Claudio Faina*, 19, 379-403. Rome: Quasar.

Di Fazio, M. 2013 “Gli Hirpi del Soracte” in Cifani, G. (Ed.) *Tra Roma e l’Etruria: cultura, identità e territorio dei Falisci*, 231-264. Rome: Quasar.

Fabbri, G. 2017a “Kainua Misena e il popolo misto degli Etruschi” *Scienze e Ricerche* 51, 41-51.

Fabbri, G. 2017b. “Supartshas and Swag<sup>w</sup>autas - colonisers of the ancient word. Part I: Origins and early migrations” *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology* 4 n. 4, 5-25.

Fabbri, G. 2018a “Supartshas and Swag<sup>w</sup>autas - colonisers of the ancient word. Part II: Origins and early migrations” *Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology* 5 n. 1, 5-23.

Fabbri, G. 2018b “Savena, Volvona, Ravona: The Origins of Bologna” *Global Journal of Archaeology & Anthropology* 7 n. 2, 33-39.

Gellius, A. 179 *Noctes Atticae*.

- Gimbutas, M. 1965 *Bronze Age cultures in Central and Eastern Europe*. Boston / Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Gimbutas, M. 2017 *I Balti*. Milano: Medusa. (1963 *The Balts*. New York: Praeger).
- Gordon, A. E. 1975 “Notes on the Duenos-Vase Inscription in Berlin” *California Studies in Classical Antiquity*, Oakland: University of California Press, Vol. 8 , 53-72
- Herodotus 440 BC *Histories*.
- Hill, H. 1961 “Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the Origins of Rome” *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 51, 88-93, London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.
- Homer VIII BC *Ilias*.
- Jeremiah 586 BC “Book of Jeremiah” *Bible*.
- Josephus, T. F. 94 *Antiquitates Judaicae*.
- Keller, W. 1971 *Gli Etruschi*. Milan: Garzanti. (1970 *Denn sie entzündeten das Licht*. Droemer: Knaur).
- La Regina, A. 1981 “Appunti su entità etniche e strutture istituzionali nel Sannio antico” in *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli*, 3, 129-137. Neapol: Brill.
- Letta, C. 2008 “I legami tra i popoli italici nelle Origines di Catone tra consapevolezza etnica e ideologia” in *Patria diversis gentibus una? Unità politica e identità etniche nell'Italia antica. Atti del convegno internazionale di Cividale del Friuli, 20-22 settembre 2007*, edited by G. Urso, 171-195. Pisa: Fondazione Canussio.
- Livius, T. 14 *Ab Urbe Condita*.
- Lydus, J. 561 *De mensibus*.
- Macrobius, A. T. 430 *Saturnalia*.
- Malcovati, H. 1953 *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta*. Turin: Paravia
- Müller, C. O. 1828 *Die Etrusker*. Breslau: Max & Komp.
- Pallottino, M. 2016 *L'Etruscologia*, Milano: Hoepli. (1940 *La civilisation étrusque*. Paris: Payot).
- Papi, R. 2014 “Sabini, Piceni, Medio-Adriatici. L’apporto della produzione metallurgica alla definizione di una cultura” in *I Vestini e il loro territorio dalla preistoria al Medioevo*, 91-116. Rome: Collection de l'École française de Rome.
- Paulus, VIII century *Epitome of Verrius Flaccus*.
- Pittau, M. 2018 *Dizionario comparativo Latino Etrusco*. Dublin: Ipazia Books.
- Plinius, G. S. 77 *Naturalis Historia*.

- Plutarchus, L. M. I-II century “Life of Marius” *Vitae Parallelae*.
- Plutarchus, L. M. I-II century “Life of Numa Pompilius” *Vitae Parallelae*.
- Plutarchus, L. M. I-II century “Life of Romulus” *Vitae Parallelae*.
- Polybius, II century BC *Histories*.
- Porphyrion, P. II century *Commentum in Horatium Flaccum*.
- Pseudo-Acron, III century *Commentarii in Horatium Flaccum*.
- Ptolemaeus, C. 150 *Geography*.
- Servius, M. H. 380, *In Vergilii Aeneidem commentarii*.
- Silio Italicus 96 *Punica*.
- Solinus III century *De mirabilibus mundi*.
- Stephanus of Byzantium VI century *Ethnica*.
- Strabo 23, *Geography*.
- Svetonius, G. T. 121 “Life of Tiberius” *De vita Caesarum*.
- Szemerényi, O. 1971 “The name of Peicentes” in *Sprache und Geschichte. Festschrift für Harri Meier*, 531-544, edited by E. Coseriu and W. D. Stempel. Munich: Fink.
- Szemerényi, O. 1980 *Four old iranian ethnic names: Scythian - Skudra - Sogdian - Saka*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Tacitus, P. C. 110 *Histories*.
- Taracha, P. 2009 *Religions of Second Millennium Anatolia*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Thucydides V BC *History of the Peloponnesian war*.
- Toynbee, A. J. 1977 *Il racconto dell'uomo*. Milan: Garzanti. (1976 *Mankind and Mother Earth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.)
- Ulf, C. “An ancient question: the origin of Etruscans” in Alessandro Naso Editor, *Etruscology*, Vol. 1, Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Varro, M. T. 44 BC *De lingua latina*.
- Velius Longus II century *Orthographia*.
- Vergilius, P. M. 19 *Aeneis*.

Xenophon 370 BC *Anabasis*.