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Mars outside Rome

*A regional study of the interpretations of the Italic
Mars in Umbria and Latium*

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Master's Thesis in History HIS4090, 60 Credits

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Spring 2023

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Chapter 1: Scholarship on Mars

Introduction to the thesis

In recent decades, no monographic work has been consecrated to the god Mars, traditionally interpreted as the Roman god of war. Largely one must consult the works written over half a century ago, while the study of religion and, most importantly, the field of polytheism has advanced drastically since the 1970s. Thus, there is a discrepancy between the monographic works and the theoretical background for such studies. Moreover, new pieces of evidence, such as the lapis satricanus, have emerged since. This thesis will focus on the different meanings of Mars in Latium and Umbria, and the goal will be to provide a splintered image of the deity based on local sources and material. This approach, dividing the evidence into their corresponding regions and treating Mars as independently as possible from other material, is in stark contrast to the earlier scholarship. In previous scholarship on Mars, evidence from across Italy was gathered and analysed together to form a larger coherent image. My goal is to shatter that image and look at the different meanings attributed to Mars which can be found in the different regions. The choice of treating Latium and Umbria in this thesis stems from the availability of the material. Umbria is in a special situation due to the existence of the Iguvine Tables, which provide a unique view into a religious tradition that is removed from the Roman material. A further restriction on the material which this thesis will cover is the choice of not including Etruscan material. Etruscan religion belongs to a different field of study and represents another set of challenges and scholarship to analyse. This is also a difference between this thesis and the previous work on Mars as it is, for some of the scholars, a crucial part of their analysis. I, however, do not wish to include Etruscan material and religion in this thesis and will instead focus on the Italic Mars. The goal of this chapter will be to give a small introduction to the earlier works on Mars and the theoretical works that today would inform and guide such a study. The older works on Mars that will be discussed in detail here are the books by Udo Scholz and Gustav Hermansen, *Studien zum altitalischen und altrömischen Marskult und Marsmythos* and *Studien über den Italischen und Römischen Mars*, and selected chapters of Georges Dumézils *Archaic Roman Religion vol. 1* and *vol. 2*. I will go through their main arguments and conclusions and summarise them, but in a manner that hopefully will allow the reader to understand their point of view. After an overview of their works, I will contrast their

findings and practices to modern scholarship in the field of polytheism, most notably gods in translation, the work on epithets, and how one should interpret deities.

1.1 The “Italic Mars”

The Terminology

What does the term “Italic” mean? The term is used in connection with the broader cultural and religious identity of the peoples and societies of ancient Italy, more specifically the Pre-Roman Italy with the exception of *Magna Graecia*, the Greek colonies in the south of Italy, and the Etruscan and Celtic areas. “Italic” generally refers to a collection of related languages spoken in Italy which is attested from the 6th century BCE and encompasses Umbrian, South Picene, Oscan and Latin, and thus also the people who spoke these languages.¹ The term “Italic Mars” can therefore be understood as the perception and perceived identity and meanings of Mars by the different peoples of Pre-Roman Italy. This thesis does not have as a goal to construct an image of Mars that encompasses all the archaeological and epigraphic evidence but rather show the various different interpretations of Mars which existed within the minds and cultural and religious traditions of the ancient peoples of Italy before they came under Roman influence, and more or less adopted their traditions. In this thesis, I will use the term “Italic Mars” to describe Mars in this framework, outside of Rome, but I will not use it as a term to designate a “true” version of Mars.

A further complication in the use of the term “Italic Mars” must also be addressed. The name Mars is a Roman name, referring to a Roman god, which defeats the purpose of the entire thesis if I use a Roman name or try to find evidence of a god which stems from the Roman tradition in the historical and archaeological material of other societies. If Mars is a Roman god, how should we treat the issue about the Italic Mars or Marses? For example, in the Iguvine Tables, there are not a single reference to the Roman god Mars, but numerous references to the Umbrian god Marte. This raises an important question about how one should interpret this, can this be said to be the god Mars in an Italic context? Is it an Umbrian variant of the Italic Mars, contextualised through the Iguvine tradition? Can Marte and Mars be the same god at all, and would it not raise the same problems and restrictions as with the Etruscan material? In

¹ Bradley, Guy, Glinister, Fay. “Italic Religion” in *The Handbook of Religions in Ancient Europe* edited by Lisbeth Bredholt Christensen, Olav Hammer and David A. Warburton. Bristol: Acumen, 2013. p. 173.

difference to the Etruscan god Laran, who is often considered the “equivalent” of Mars, Marte and Mars belong to the same broader cultural, linguistic, and religious family. As mentioned above, the Latin, Umbrian and Oscan languages all belong to the same language family, Italic, and on a broader scale, they are all Indo-European languages, while Etruscan belong to the Paleo-European languages, a set of languages that existed in Europe before the Indo-European migrations.² This is not to say that the two language families did not influence one another, but even though the Etruscan-speaking population of ancient Italy was incorporated into the Roman Empire, this process took many centuries.³ Given the relation between the Latin and Umbrian language and culture, I believe that there is, to a degree, possible to argue for a translation of the name Marte into Mars. Still, the Umbrian evidence should not be used as an argument about the Roman Mars, and vice versa. Since this thesis is based on regional evidence and an independent analysis of the evidence, as far as it is possible, I believe that the translation of the Umbrian Marte into Mars, for the sake of the study is acceptable.

The ritual of the Sacred Spring (ver sacrum)

There is still one more consideration about the Italic Mars which must be discussed, which is the role of Mars in the *ver sacrum*, the Italic migration myths. The *ver sacrum* is originally a sacrifice of what grows or is born during the spring, but in some traditions, the children born that spring is included as well. These children get expelled from the community when they become adults. These expelled people then set out to find new land for themselves. The earliest preserved source of these migration stories is L. Cornelius Sisenna, preserved in a later work by Nonius Marcellus, but all preserved sources of the *ver sacrum* stem from the 1st century BCE, from about 80BCE to 24AD, in the works of Sisenna, Varro, Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Strabo, and Festus.⁴ The only outlier to this chronological classification is Sex. Pompeius Festus from the 2nd century AD.⁵ Additionally, of the preserved sources, it is only Varro, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Strabo, and the much later Festus who mention the “offering” of people in the *ver sacrum*.⁶

² Haarman, Harald. “Ethnicity and Language in the Ancient Mediterranean”. In *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, edited by Jeremy McInerney, 17-33. Vol. 119. N/A: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. p. 22.

³ Haarman, “Ethnicity and Language in the Ancient Mediterranean”, p. 25-26.

⁴ Tikkanen, Karin W. “On the building of a narrative: the *ver sacrum* ritual”. *Mnemosyne* 70, 2017: 958-976. p. 960.

⁵ Tikkanen, “On the building of a narrative”, p. 965.

⁶ Tikkanen, “On the building of a narrative”, p. 960-967.

The main component of the *ver sacrum* ritual was the expulsion of a group of people from the community so that they could settle another territory, but why this is necessary vary from story to story and varies between the Latin and Greek sources. The Latin sources treat the *ver sacrum* as a historical reality, while the Greek sources view them as mythological tales where the gods intervene.⁷ The reason behind the expulsion varies too. Varro and Dionysius of Halicarnassus state practical reasons like overpopulation as the reason why the *ver sacrum* takes place, while Sisenna, Livy, and Strabo focus on disasters like plague and war.⁸

The reason why these stories have to be covered in the introduction is because a several of the earlier scholars on Mars have used these myths in their conclusions of the meanings of Mars. This connection to Mars is most prominent in the work of Scholz, who sees the *ver sacrum* as exclusive to Mars and that the role of Mars in the *ver sacrum* is especially visible in the myth of the Picentes, the Hirpines, the Mamertines, the foundation of Bovarium, among others.⁹ Dumézil agrees with Scholz and sees the *ver sacrum* as the domain of Mars, going as far as to say that the tradition of the *ver sacrum* and the expelled warbands, as Dumézil understood them, were a driving force behind the Indo-European migrations.¹⁰ Hermansen, on the other hand, sees the role of Mars in the *ver sacrum* only when it is explicitly dedicated to Mars and that not all bulls and wolves are equivalent to Mars.¹¹ Tikkanen writes that the tradition of the *ver sacrum* is offered to Mars, which is not always the case, as Livy writes that it was dedicated to Jupiter.¹² Bispham argues that modern scholars may take the myths of the *ver sacrum* too seriously because the archaeological evidence and languages of ancient Italy seem to support the idea of a common culture in the Iron Age, but the *ver sacrum* was not the only explanation offered by the ancient authors.¹³ When analysing myths and stories such as the *ver sacrum* and directly using them to support an argument, such as Scholz does, it is important to remember the principal role of myth in the common consciousness of ancient people: “Furthermore, myth

⁷ Tikkanen, “On the building of a narrative”, p. 973.

⁸ Tikkanen, “On the building of a narrative”, p. 960-964.

⁹ Scholz, Udo. *Studien zum Altitalischen und Altrömischen Marskult und Marsmythos*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1970. p. 49-50.

¹⁰ Dumézil, Georges. *Archaic Roman Religion vol 1*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1970. p. 208.

¹¹ Hermansen, Gustav. *Studien über den Italischen und Römischen Mars*. København: Gyldendanske Boghandel, 1940. p. 99-100.

¹² Tikkanen, “On the building of a narrative”, p. 963.

¹³ Bispham, Edward. “The Samnites”, in *Ancient Italy: Regions without borders*, edited by Guy Bradley, Elena Isayev and Corinna Riva. Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2007. p. 181.

in the ancient world is not primarily a vehicle for historical record, but for making sense of the present with selective help from the past."¹⁴

1.2 Methodology

The thesis relies upon translations of several of the primary scholarly works, both in German and Italian. To accomplish this, I have applied the DeepL translation programme through Mara Menghi, a translator whom I was put into contact with through a friend. The programme made it possible to read the German and Italian works with relative ease, but where it was necessary or there where a need for further clarification, I consulted the original text and had it translated. The DeepL programme was therefore crucial for the thesis since the foundation is based on the works and analysis of Hermansen, Scholz, and Dumézil, along with some of the other more modern research.

An important area of study is three gods from Iguvium, attested in the Iguvine Tables. These gods, Serfus Martius, Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius, and Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius, are often grouped together as a triad. The purpose of this paragraph is to acknowledge that the triad is a reconstruction by scholars and not an entity in the Tables themselves. I will treat these gods as a triad for the purposes of classification in the evidence and systemisation in the thesis, but each of the three gods will be analysed individually later in the thesis. There are, to some degree, overlaps in their spheres of influence in the Iguvine Tables and what prayers and invocations they receive, and these will later be used to analyse the gods. Most importantly, the deities will not be treated as a monolithic set of gods but will receive an analysis based on their associations and possible interpretations. From their names, translated by Poultney for this thesis, it is the god Serfus Martius whom the two other goddesses “belong to.” The connection between these three gods, how and why they have received the epithet Martius, will be discussed later. What can be said here is that Serfus is the god who is the recipient of the epithet Martius, and it is because of Tursa`s and Prestota`s spheres of influence and functions within the tables correspond with Serfus that they also receive the epithet through “– Serfia of Serfus Martius.” The term “Martius-triad” will also be used as a quick reference to the three gods without writing their full names. I will also apply the translated versions of their names. In the Umbrian language of the Iguvine Tables, Serfus Martius is written as Cerfie Marti, Prestota Serfia of

¹⁴ Bispham, “The Samnites”, p. 181.

Serfus Martius is written as Prestate Cerfie Cerfe Marties and Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius is written as Tuse Cerfie Cerfe Marties.¹⁵ I will do this as the scholarship I engaged with the most uses the translated versions of their names or versions which are similarly close or translated. I do not believe that the use of the translated names should be influential in my thesis since I do not conduct any linguistic or etymological analysis which is not already been conducted by previous scholars.

The core of the thesis is a comparative study of the older scholarship and the modern field of polytheism and archaeological research. The thesis is based on the principal modern works on Mars by Scholz, Hermansen and Dumézil, compared against modern scholarship of polytheism, ethnicity and identity, ritual, art history, linguistics and the early history of Italy. In Chapter 2, the study of epithets in relation to the theonym, the name of the god, is especially important. How these epithets will be interpreted will be discussed below, but I will be following the interpretative model of Parker, where the epithets are a means for the worshipper to invoke a specific meaning of the god in question.¹⁶ I interpret the epithets as a focus, but they do not alter or drastically change the fundamental meaning of the deity. Mars is still fundamentally Mars despite various different epithets drawing on different powers of the god or drawing the power of the god into different spheres which the god traditionally is not associated with. An example of this is Grabovius, an epithet assigned to Jupiter, Mars and Vofionus, which have been linked to the protection of the community.¹⁷ A further discussion about the treatment of epithets will be covered in under *1.7 Theoretical developments in the study of polytheism*.

Alongside this research material, archaeology plays an important role in this thesis, as the evidence for the meanings of Mars in both Latium and Umbria is based upon archaeological evidence. The most substantial of the archaeological evidence is the Iguvine Tables, discovered in 1444, and modern research on these artefacts. Besides the Iguvine Tables new finds such as the discovery of the *Lapis Satricanum* in 1977, the recovery and rediscovery of a votive column from Tusculum in 1960 and the two *cista*, bronze boxes, from Praeneste play an important role.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the goal of the thesis is not to provide an absolute image of Mars or a “canonical” Italic Mars but to review the existing scholarship of Mars, both new and old, and compare them in relation to the archaeological evidence. By doing this, I hope

¹⁵ Poultney, James Wilson. *The Bronze Tables of Iguvium*. Baltimore: American Philological Association, 1959. p. 164-166.

¹⁶ Parker, Robert. *Greek gods abroad: Names, natures, and transformations*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. p. 13-14.

¹⁷ Rosenzweig, Irene. *Ritual and Cult in Pre-Roman Iguvium*. London: Christophers, 1937. p. 72.

to highlight some of the methodological difficulties and flaws in earlier scholarship while also using that scholarship as a point of departure for new interpretations of Mars supported by modern research and archaeological data. The main difference between this thesis and the work of Hermansen, Scholz and Dumézil is that my goal is to study Mars on a regional level and not extrapolate regional data into a conclusion about the Italic Mars. Mars will be treated, to the best of my ability, as a separate identity in both Latium and Umbria. This means that in the case of the Praenestine *cista*, the two Etruscan bronze mirrors, which often get interpreted together with it are not a part of my analysis (see p. 63). In other cases, for example, in Latium, I will not engage with the Roman material except in a few instances where the archaeological data support this or that the geographical proximity to Rome, in the case of Tusculum, is suitable for the discussion.

1.3 General issues of previous scholarship

To further enhance the discussion of these works, two problems with earlier scholarship will be discussed in the following section. The scholarship on Mars is mostly Roman-centric, and the main focus is on Roman festivals, ceremonies, calendars, and priesthoods, where the arguments are almost always taken from Roman sources. When the Italic Mars is discussed, the authors often use evidence or comparison to Roman sources and traditions instead of only using Italic evidence. Of course, the issue with using Roman sources is related to what sources the historian has at hand. If no other sources survive in any meaningful way, one cannot help but use the sources that are available. If one writes, as Hermansen and Scholz do, about the Italic Mars, one cannot argue for the different interpretations and details of worship of Mars in Umbria based on the writings of ancient scholars whose focus is on Rome.

The second aspect of the issue of evidence is how the scholars argue for their point of view. In the three books on which this thesis will be based, they all have their own way of viewing Mars and what type of god he was. Scholz interprets Mars as a state-supporting deity, while Hermansen argues for the idea of a chthonic Mars related to death and fertility, while Dumézil argues that Mars was, and always was, a god of war. The issue is how they use their sources and evidence to argue their points, which also relates to the theoretical changes that have happened in the field of ancient religion and polytheism since these works were written. Scholz, Hermansen and Dumézil use evidence from all over Italy, using material from Roman, Italic, Etruscan and Greek sources to argue and further their points without considering the different

contexts. While discussing how Mars was an Italic god related to death, fertility, and the divine circle of Ceres, Hermansen uses Etruscan mirror motifs or uses imagery and ideas related to horses and centaurs from all of Italy to further his point of view. The scholar that is the “guiltiest” of using evidence from other areas to support their argument is Dumézil. He extensively uses Indo-European studies to support his arguments and interpretations, ranging from India to Ireland. Scholz is also “guilty” of this, but he uses this line of argument to a much smaller degree than Dumézil does. Instead of looking at the ideas and representations of Mars as separate ideas and concepts, the scholars of the previous century argues for a universal meaning of Mars based on sources from widely different areas. Although today we view Italy as an entity, that was not the case in classical times. It is true that the various communities and groups of Italy were united under the Roman banner to various degrees, but one should not diminish the local identities and traditions.

The second problem this chapter raises regarding previous scholarship is the teleological view of Mars. The scholars argue for one interpretation of Mars, that the Mars worshipped in Rome is the same as in Etruria or Umbria, or that all the “Marses” worshipped in Umbria and Etruria are the same Mars. A more fractured view of polytheism is another theoretical development that the older scholarship predates and thus lacks. Instead of looking at the plurality of Mars and the different meanings, they try to blend and mesh the different evidence together to support a specific point of view, e.g., that Mars was a chthonic god or a state-supporting god. This leads to a teleological view of Mars; it is known today how Mars was perceived by the time of the Roman Empire, but there is a lack of exploration in the earlier scholarship of the different religious traditions surrounding Mars or the various local interpretations of the deity before the Roman Empire.

After presenting these issues related to the earlier scholarship on Mars, one might think that this chapter will primarily be about these, but the goal of this chapter is to present their views and their research in a coherent way so that it can serve as a useful background for further research. This thesis will be structured in a way where the scholarship will be presented first before it delves into the issues and problems discussed above. The thesis will follow the scholarship on Mars in chronological order, so the monograph written by Hermansen will be discussed first, then Scholz and Dumézil.

1.4 The Chthonic Mars of Hermansen

In Hermansen's *Studien über den Italischen und Römischen Mars* written in 1940, Hermansen argues that Mars is a chthonic god connected to death and rebirth. This theory is based on three main principles: The lack of evidence and change of the cult of Mars in terms of identification with Ares, the archaeological and iconographical evidence from Etruria, and the written sources supplied by the Iguvine Tables. The first point in the discussion of Hermansen will thus be the debate about the identification of Mars and Ares, as it is crucial for all the scholars to differentiate and separate their interpretation of Mars from the traditional Roman interpretation of Mars, symbolised by Mars Ultor.

For Hermansen, there is not enough evidence to support the claim that Mars was identified with, or influenced by, the Greek war god Ares before the reign of Augustus.¹⁸ To support this claim, Hermansen argues that little evidence has been found of the worship of Ares in Italy and *Magna Graecia*; this is also the case with archaeological evidence from Sicily and Campania.¹⁹ Even if there ever was a Hellenization of Mars, as Hermansen calls it, it was of little or no importance: the cult of Mars was too prominent and important in Italy, and if there ever occurred a change in the worship of Mars because of the identification with Ares it was only exterior.²⁰ In the same paragraph, Hermansen discredits the idea that Greek influences affected the cult of Mars. For all intents and purposes, Hermansen regards the cult, both Roman and Italic, as “untouched” by Greek influences.²¹ Here one can already spot a theoretical change in the scholarship between 1940 and today, as Hermansen speaks of Hellenization rather than a translation of the god. This term indicates a one-way transmission of ideas and concepts while one should rather speak about the interaction and two-way transmission of ideas and concepts, and how these changed in the course of the translation between the different groups.

As already mentioned above, Mars is a chthonic god in the view of Hermansen and is connected to the circle of deities connected with Ceres. Hermansen's analysis of the Iguvine Tables provides a useful part to begin with. The first reason is that the Iguvine Tables are primary literary sources about the worship of an Italic Mars. The second reason is that Umbria will be one of the primary areas of study of this thesis. The Iguvine Tables tell of several deities with

¹⁸ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 14.

¹⁹ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 15-17.

²⁰ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 18.

²¹ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 18.

the epithet Mars, Cerrus Martius, Praestota Cerria Cerri Martii and Torra Cerria Cerri Marti.²² In other scholarship and in Poultney's translation from 1959, the names of these gods are translated as Serfus Martius, Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius and Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius, but in this paragraph I will use Hermansen's own translations of the names as he uses them in his book. The first point of argument that Hermansen uses is that Cerrus Martius is a male variant of Ceres, or as Wissowa calls him, a male sidepiece.²³ To support this argument, Hermansen turns to linguistics; the root of the names Ceres and Cerrus are connected, but they are different deities.²⁴ In addition, Cerrus Martius is to receive, according to the Iguvine Tables, an offering of three black boars.²⁵ The colour of the sacrifice also ties this deity to the underworld. Hermansen has thus connected Cerrus Martius to Ceres and the circle of deities surrounding her, and the underworld.²⁶ Where is Mars in all of this? Hermansen argues further that for Cerrus to get the epithet of Mars (Martius) and fulfil the same functions as Mars had in the Roman purification rituals, Cerrus and Mars must have shared the type of functions, at least in Iguvium.²⁷ This connection between Cerrus and Ceres and Mars and Cerrus is crucial to Hermansen's argument that Mars is a chthonic god.

It is not only the Iguvine Tables that Hermansen uses to support the argument of a chthonic Mars. He extensively uses archaeological material found in Etruria, such as mirrors and grave motifs, typically horses and wolves, which were the animals associated with Mars. Horses were regarded as soul-guides which is attested by horse symbols found in Etruscan tombs, which are linked to an interpretation of Mars in the form of a centaur.²⁸ The main issue with this interpretation of a chthonic Italic Mars in the form of a centaur comes from Hermansen himself. He states that the centaur is a rare mythical creature in Italy, and the proof of the chthonic centaur is from a place and time which was strongly influenced by the Greeks.²⁹ A single relief to support the idea of an Italic chthonic Mars instead of a more local, Etruscan or Umbrian Mars is weak.

²² Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 28-29.

²³ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 32.

²⁴ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 31.

²⁵ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 28-29.

²⁶ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 31-33.

²⁷ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 33.

²⁸ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 72-73.

²⁹ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 71, 77.

1.5 The state-supporting Mars of Scholz

For Scholz, Mars is a god with state-supporting associations. Mars is not a god of war, a chthonic god or a god of the outdoors, or that which is outside the familiar limits. Scholz also addresses the issue of the identification between Mars and Ares, as it is crucial for the foundation of his theory. In his book *Studien zum Altitalischen und Altrömischen Marskult und Marsmythos* Scholz produce a religious history of the figure of Mars. It is mainly focused on Rome and uses examples from Rome, such as the October Horse ritual and the Regia, but evidence and traditions from other parts of Italy are presented to support Scholz's theory. Mars was originally a god that had protective abilities and thus protected the community.³⁰

Later, in the Republic and the end of the kingship in Rome, Jupiter acquired these meanings from Mars, and Mars then became influenced and identified with Ares.³¹ Mars was then identified with Ares but had no real military role or importance; oaths and sacrifices were not primarily given to Mars but to all the gods and the triumphant commander was dressed as Jupiter, not Mars.³² Mars as a god of war was then a literary work, and the iconography and literature connected with Ares were laid over Mars.³³ This general outline is then applied to the other evidence from elsewhere in Italy.

As with Hermansen, this review begins in Iguvium, and like Hermansen, Scholz also uses the Iguvine Tables in his analysis and argument, but Scholz draws a different conclusion about the meaning of Mars. The prayer from Iguvium has the characteristics of a pastoral prayer that has been modernised to also benefit the city as it calls for the protection of the city, people, fields, fruit, and animals.³⁴ According to Scholz, this is evidence that Mars in Iguvium was a god who had a more agricultural focus but still had the protective associations. Scholz also argues that Mars was the previous primary god of Iguvium and that he had a larger place in the worship before the supremacy of Jupiter because the sacrifices to Mars happened in the grove of Jupiter, while Jupiter got his sacrifices in front of the city gates. Mars also received an offering of spelt bread; this type of agricultural product is older and thus, the sacrifice to Mars is older.³⁵ This evidence for worship of Mars that predates that of Jupiter is not a strong argument. It seems circumstantial that one should judge the age of a cult based solely on the type of grain used in

³⁰ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 41.

³¹ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 44.

³² Scholz, *Studien*, p. 39-40.

³³ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 39.

³⁴ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 56.

³⁵ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 54, 59.

its sacrifice. One cannot completely deny that this is something that can be used in an argument about the Iguvine Mars, but on the other hand, it does not seem like a convincing argument. In line with the theory that Mars was supplanted by Jupiter and then lost his state-supporting associations, Scholz argues that the widespread worship and importance of Jupiter in Italic tribal religion is proof of Mars's previous influence.³⁶

The religious importance of Mars in the other Italic communities can be explored through the *ver sacrum*. The *ver sacrum* is of great importance in Scholz's interpretation of a wider Italic Mars. The *ver sacrum* are myths about migrations guided by the gods towards a new homeland, and these travels were often guided by an animal sacred to Mars.³⁷ As mentioned previously, these monographs are written with a strong Roman influence and the Roman interpretation of Mars, and the Roman traditions and rites loom large in these works. His study of the *ver sacrum* implies a link between the worship of Mars with the primal kings of Italy.³⁸ These kings were often the child of a Vestal virgin or similar characters, and Mars. Examples of these kings are Romulus, Remus, Caeculus and Erulus.³⁹ In this way, Mars was, according to Scholz, a god of the state and the father of the founders of these communities.

1.6 *The warrior god of Dumézil*

For Dumézil, the argument is quite clear; Mars always was a war god. This also fits with his own interpretation of the structuring of society, which was divided into three classes, the ruler-priest class, the warrior class, and an agrarian and production-based class.⁴⁰ This partition is a fundamental aspect of Dumézil's two-volume book, where he explores the Roman gods and religion in light of this theory.

Dumézil views Mars and Jupiter as ideological opposites: Jupiter is the divine king, while Mars is a physical force.⁴¹ In order to argue for the interpretation of Mars as a god of war Dumézil circumvents the fact that Mars did not hold a particularly high position in Roman military rituals by separating the events and stages leading up to a battle. The events preceding the battle, the battle itself, and the victory are different stages, where Mars is the god of the battle itself, the

³⁶ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 78.

³⁷ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 49-50.

³⁸ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 155, 156.

³⁹ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 155-157.

⁴⁰ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol 1*, p. 161.

⁴¹ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol.1*, p. 155-156, 161.

clash between the opposing forces.⁴² To strengthen this argument Dumézil turns to Roman sources where Mars supposedly intervened in combat on several occasions.⁴³ Dumézil also draws heavily on the October Horse ritual, especially what he interprets as martial aspects, such as that the horse was a warhorse that would later be killed by a javelin.⁴⁴

The Italic Mars is also connected to war-like meanings and interpretations. From the Iguvine Tables, Dumézil draws on the names of the deities mentioned alongside Serfus/ Cerrus Martius. By applying linguistics, it seems like Tursa Martius and Prestota Martius are invoked to destroy and terrify the enemy; the name Tursa means “terror”, while Prestota seems more protective and is invoked to ward off evil.⁴⁵ The idea that one of Mars’ supporting deities from Iguvium is invoked for the protection of the community is an interesting idea, which Scholz does not mention in his own analysis of the Tables. The Italic Mars does not loom large in Dumézil’s writing and it is therefore difficult to say anything conclusive about what Dumézil regards the Italic Mars to be, but one can conclude from his interpretation of Mars, which he places into his own system of classification, that Mars will always be a god of war.

Other interpretations of Mars come from Dumézil’s disagreement about the agrarian Mars. In these parts of the book, Dumézil does argue against the previous interpretations that Mars can be understood as an agrarian god, which Hermansen claims he can be understood as, or at least have connections to. The debate about the agrarian element of Mars pushes Mars in the direction of the state-supporting, protective deity that Scholz argued for, while Dumézil sees Mars’s protective abilities as a by-product of his aggressive, war-like association. Mars is not a protective spirit even if he is invoked for protective means, but an aggressive spirit put to defensive means.⁴⁶ Further, to strengthen this argument, Dumézil analyse the *Ambarvalia* and similar rituals where Mars is called upon to protect either borders or boundaries, and thus secondly the community, and the fields and animals, and concludes that Mars is there as a divinity for “protection through force.”⁴⁷ The *lustratio agri*, as described by Cato, is understood as a lesser variant of these rituals.⁴⁸ In both cases, Mars is called upon to reinforce and re-establish the borders, which Mars is charged to protect.

⁴² Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol.1*, p. 209.

⁴³ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol. 1*, p. 210.

⁴⁴ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol. 1*, p. 221-224.

⁴⁵ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol. 1*, p. 244-245.

⁴⁶ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol. 1*, p. 220, 228.

⁴⁷ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol. 1*, p. 230-231.

⁴⁸ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol. 1*, p. 231.

“In describing a divinity, the definition of his mode of action is more characteristic than the list of places where he is active or the occasions for his services. An important divinity is inevitably solicited by everybody and for everything.”⁴⁹

What Dumézil says is that it is not important to acknowledge by whom, where or why Mars is called upon or how it is expected of the god to intervene or benefit the worshipper in the specific scenario. Mars is not an agricultural god because farmers call upon him to protect their fields, animals or fruits. Mars is a war god that protects these with an aggressive, physical force. The conditions of the prayer do not alter the meaning of the god.

1.7 Theoretical developments in the study of polytheism

The study of polytheism has advanced since the 1970s, and there are several key issues with the scholarship on Mars that are, at times, theoretically outdated. In light of recent developments and practices in the field of polytheism, several components in the books mentioned above have theoretical holes in them. In this section, a brief overview of these developments will be given, and the arguments that Hermansen, Scholz and Dumézil put forward will be challenged. The first and most striking is the way these scholars treat the identity of Mars, seeing Mars as a monolithic deity where one can pick from different regional traditions to achieve a “true” interpretation of Mars; the second point of criticism is the way Hermansen, Scholz and Dumézil debate the identification between Mars and Ares. The subject of gods in translation and how these processes occur, and how it impacts the god being translated, as well as the receiving culture, have progressed further than the simple term of “Hellenization”, which the previous authors chose to call this process. This implies a one-sided relationship between the “sender”, the recipient, and the god where the receiving culture incorporates the new deity into their system without issue or that this process does not really have any noticeable impact.

Unity and order versus chaos and plurality

A fundamental debate in the study of polytheism is about how polytheism should be understood. Is it a chaotic arrangement of deities, or is it a structured, logically coherent system? In this debate, there are three main participants, the structuralist approach represented by Vernant, the

⁴⁹ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion* vol. 1, p. 174-175.

chaotic polytheism represented by Burkert, or a combination of the two, represented by Versnel. Within this primary debate there is also a secondary debate about how one should view the individual gods in relation to the epithets and regional and local differences in contrast to the wider understanding of the pantheon.

These two understandings of polytheism are radically different from each other. This, therefore, requires further examination by first examining the structuralist arguments presented by Vernant. A core idea is that the pantheon is a logical, clearly defined structure that classifies divine entities in a system.⁵⁰ In comparison to the structuralist approach, Vernant describes the chaotic interpretation of polytheistic pantheons as "... in association rather by virtue of accidents of history than by the inherent requirements of an organized system" whereas "the pantheon is a product and reflection of contemporaneous socio-political structures and the concomitant mental categories" and that it should not rely on accidents and individuals.⁵¹ From this, it is clear that the structuralist approach to polytheism is based on the understanding that a god is a unity; there are no different Jupiters or Marses. To elaborate this further, order versus chaos and unity versus plurality is two sides of the same coin. In the view of order, the world of the gods is structured, hierarchical and clearly defined, but in the view of chaos there are many variants of all the gods, even if they share the same name, and thus several identities of Jupiter, Minerva and Mars would exist in this religious view. These accidents and individuals that Vernant writes about are exactly what those that argue for polytheistic chaos base their understanding on. For Vernant and the structuralists, this approach is wrong, as the gods should not be understood as persons and having identities, but as powers.⁵² Religious thought differentiates these divine powers and classifies them by limits, how they operate and interact with the world and a hierarchy, balance, and opposition between the divine powers.⁵³

On the other end of the spectrum is the thoughts put forth by Burkert, where he argues for a chaotic view of polytheism. In his view, the polytheistic gods, with all their local and regional variants, epithets and vastly different cults, are a clear sign of the plurality of the gods. In clear contrast to the order and unity school, those who support the chaotic arguments see the gods as individuals with distinctive personalities.⁵⁴ Burkert arrives at four principles that separate the variants of the gods: Local cult practices and rituals, the divine name, the myths that are told

⁵⁰ Versnel, H.S. *Coping with the gods*. Leiden: Brill, 2011. p. 30.

⁵¹ Versnel, *Coping with the gods*, p. 31-32.

⁵² Vernant, Jean-Pierre. *Myth and thought among the Greeks*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983. p. 359.

⁵³ Vernant, *Myth and thought among the Greeks*, p. 359.

⁵⁴ Versnel, *Coping with the gods*, p. 30.

about the deity and the iconography.⁵⁵ This theoretical approach does not sit kindly with Vernant, who has described this approach as:

*“... an assemblage of unusual personages of diverse origin, the products, in random circumstances of fusion, assimilation, and segmentation. They seem to find themselves in association rather by virtue of accidents of history than by the inherent requirements of an organized system.”*⁵⁶

This criticism of chaos is a good definition of what the theory itself is since Burkert himself describes Greek religion as a collection of religious ideas, concepts and influences from Mycenaean Greece and the Near East which then have been subjected to historical processes and influences.⁵⁷

The third alternative in this debate between chaos and order is proposed by Versnel himself, arguing that both chaos and order coexisted in the ancient Greek religion but that the Greeks themselves managed to navigate through this world. The assumption that chaos existed in ancient Greek religion is supported by both archaeological and literary sources. The most famous example is from Xenophon, where he writes in the *Anabasis* that he had twice sacrificed to Zeus the King. Once before his journey and once during, but later writes that he has not sacrificed to Zeus the Merciful since he left after being told that this god is an obstacle.⁵⁸ The archaeological evidence directly states that there were multiple gods that shared the same name since sacrifices to the Aphrodities and Apollos have been discovered.⁵⁹ To navigate this mixture between chaos and order, unity and plurality Versnel turns to psychology and proposes that the ancient Greeks used context to focus on different interpretations of the gods when necessary.⁶⁰

Different circumstances required the Greeks to think differently, thus helping them change between the Pan-Hellenic Zeus and their own local Zeus. This school of thought also operates with the idea of gods in a network but as a combination of both the structuralist and chaotic approach. The “core” of each deity is its name, e.g., Mars. Connected to this core are the different interpretations and meanings, epithets, and cults, both local, regional and the pan-

⁵⁵ Versnel, *Coping with the gods*, p. 30.

⁵⁶ Versnel, *Coping with the gods*, p. 31.

⁵⁷ Versnel, *Coping with the gods*, p. 32.

⁵⁸ Xenophon. *Anabasis*. 3.1.6-8, 6.1.22, 7.8.4. Translated by Carleton L. Brownson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922.

⁵⁹ Versnel, *Coping with the gods*, p. 80.

⁶⁰ Versnel, *Coping with the gods*, p. 83-85.

Latin, pan-Italic, or pan-Roman idea of Mars. When a Latin farmer thus invokes Mars for the security of his crops, he activates a part of that network, but only the part relevant to him. If a wealthy man from the same area as the farmer goes to Rome and watches a play featuring Mars as the god of war, he only activates the part of the network that directly correlates to what he needs from it.

The work on epithets

A major change in the study of polytheism can be exemplified by the MAP project, a five-year study conducted by the University of Toulouse in 2017 focusing on the strategies and naming conventions of gods. The project aims to view gods as more than a monolithic structure in a pantheon by focusing on the epithets to gain insight into the plurality of the divine.⁶¹ Epithets attached to a divine name, the name of the god, can be divided into two different functions. The first function is to distinguish and differentiate the same god from place to place, while the second function is about focusing the god.⁶² For this thesis, it is the second classification of epithets which is the most interesting and useful, so this section will primarily be centred on this phenomenon. Mars in the later chapters of this thesis does not receive a geographical epithet which roots the deity to a specific place, but there are several epithets attached to Mars, and the usage of Mars itself as an epithet, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 2. The focused epithet could aid in focusing a specific power or interpretation of the god in question which the worshipper wanted to attract or an attitude in the god which the worshipper wanted to interact with, either attracting said attitude or diverting it.⁶³ The focused epithet also created a set of expectations by the worshipper to the god in question, hoping to draw on the power or favour of certain meanings or associations of the god or phenomena within the god's sphere of influence.⁶⁴

Hermann Usener developed a theory of the focused epithets in relation to the Greek pantheon, claiming that the epithets originally stemmed from highly specialized gods, so-called *sondergötten*.⁶⁵ Over time, as these gradually lost their meaning for the people, the name of the

⁶¹ Porzia, Fabio, Lebreton, Sylvain. "Noms de dieux!" Gods at the Borders". *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 21, no. 1, 2021: 221-224. p. 221.

⁶² Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 13-14.

⁶³ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 14.

⁶⁴ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 174.

⁶⁵ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 18.

god was turned into an epithet for another, more major god or goddess.⁶⁶ This theory holds little acclaim today, but as Parker writes, the theory can still be applied to the work on epithets, although in a reworked fashion. Parker argues that Usener's theory of the evolution of cult epithets can be applied to the study of polytheism. Parker, who also works on the ancient Greek pantheon, shows how the major Greek gods have names that cannot be etymologically explained, or they are vague, but lower and lower in the pantheon, one encounters gods and goddesses which have very functional and concrete names.⁶⁷ An example of this is the Umbrian goddess Tursa, who will be featured in Chapter 2, whose name can be translated to "terror".⁶⁸ Parker argues that the development that causes a major god to receive the more specialised epithets can occur when the function of the specialised god is also covered by the major god.⁶⁹ Is it possible for this proposed theological development to occur the other way around, that the specialised god might receive the epithet of a major god who shares some of their meanings with the specialised god? This question is crucial in the following chapter, where I will discuss a triad of deities that share the same epithet as well as a discussion about the epithet Grabovius, shared by Jupiter, Mars and Vofionus.

In this thesis, there are some works and analyses of epithets in Chapter 2 centred on the goddess Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius and Tursa Jovia, Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius, Mars Grabovius and Jupiter Grabovius, Picus Martius, Ahtus Mars and Mars Hodius. The epithets assigned to these gods only inform us about a part of their meaning or the meaning that the worshipper wants to invoke in the god. Gods cannot be treated as a static, monolithic entities as they were constantly under development and redefined by the people who worshipped them.⁷⁰ For this thesis, I will treat the core name of the god, the theonym, as the core of the deity, with the various epithets in a supporting role or as foci for the god. As an example, I will quote Table VIIa of the Iguvine Tables:

"Tursa Jovia: the Tadinatē state, the Tadinatē tribe, the Tuscan, the Narcan, the Iapudic name, the chief citizens in office and not in office, the young men under arms and not under arms, of the Tadinatē state, of the Tadinatē tribe, of the Tuscan, the Narcan, the Iapudic name: terrify them and cause them to tremble, cast them down to

⁶⁶ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 18-19.

⁶⁷ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 19.

⁶⁸ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol 1*, p. 244-245.

⁶⁹ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 22.

⁷⁰ Delforge, Vinciane Pirenne, Pironti, Gabriella. "Many vs. One". In *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion* edited by Esther Eidinow and Julia Kindt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. p. 41.

*Hondus, to Hola, overwhelm them with snow, overwhelm them with water, deafen them with thunder and wound them, trample them under foot and bind them.*⁷¹

Tursa Jovia, who receives her epithet from Jupiter, draws on the association of the weather, while Tursa Martius, who receive the same prayer in Table VIb, receive her epithet from Mars and focus on the martial interpretation of the prayer. At the core, Tursa is literally named “terror”, and the different epithets focus her power.

To further draw on the example with Tursa Martius I also need to discuss the rest of her epithets, which in full is Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius. Here Tursa not only receives two epithets related to two different gods, Serfia from Serfus and Martius from Mars, but also belong to Serfus Martius. This can be interpreted as Tursa Serfia operating, or having her sphere of influence, within the sphere of Serfus Martius, or since these epithets are used when Tursa is invoked in the Martius-triad, that in this instance Tursa belongs to this triad, underneath Serfus Martius.

Another example from Iguvium is the case of Mars Grabovius and Jupiter Grabovius, which will be discussed further in Chapter 2. This epithet creates a different interpretative problem, as there is no clear explanation of “Grabovius”. Irene Rosenzweig implies an origin outside of Italy, in Illyria, and that the word migrated over to Umbria via the Adriatic Sea, and that “Grabovius” designate Mars and Jupiter as “gods of the oak”.⁷² Rosenzweig argues further that the original meaning of the epithet was lost to the Iguvines as well and that the ancient Indo-European tradition of tree-worship survived through the epithet, although it did not carry a literal meaning but implied the protection of the community.⁷³ Alternatively, the word might be an Umbrian word, but the closest linguistic parallel is Illyrian.⁷⁴ Others, like Ancillotti and Cerri, argue that Grabovius originally was the name of another Umbrian god called Grabus.⁷⁵ This interpretation is reminiscent of the evolutionary theory of Usener mentioned above.

Translation and interpretation

The translation and interpretation, and sometimes reinterpretation, of gods is not a straightforward process. It involves both conscious and unconscious actions, both materialistic,

⁷¹ Iguvine Tables, VIIa. Translated by Poultney. Baltimore: American Philological Association, 1959.

⁷² Rosenzweig, *Ritual and Cult in Pre-Roman Iguvium*, p. 70.

⁷³ Rosenzweig, *Ritual and Cult in Pre-Roman Iguvium*, p. 70, 72.

⁷⁴ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 28, 47.

⁷⁵ Ancillotti, Augusto, Cerri, Romolo. *The Tables of Iguvium*. Perugia: Jama Perugia, 1997. p. 73

mental, and psychological. Reading the works of the previously mentioned scholars, one might assume that it is an easy process. It is of no real importance, either because only the iconography and literature of the Mars cult changed or because the worship of Mars was already widespread in Italy.⁷⁶ These considerations alone undermine the understanding of Mars. However, a further account of how this process came to be that Mars and Ares became identified with each other will not be given as that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, this section seeks to debate and acknowledge the theoretical framework needed to treat these processes in the study of polytheism. The translation, rather than import, of a deity is a process where concepts, ideas and contexts are shifted, realigned, changed, and re-incorporated from one culture into the fabric of another culture.

There are no ancient theories or explanations for why the translation and interpretation of different gods occurred. When it does appear in the sources it is not treated as an issue, so it must have been a regular way of thinking about the divine, e.g., Herodotus describes and identifies the Egyptian and Greek gods without much issue.⁷⁷ To say that there were no issues is false. Herodotus separates the hero Heracles and Heracles the god when talking about the Phoenician god Melqart, he also tries to rationalise that Heracles was originally Egyptian by stating that the parents of the Greek Heracles, Alcmene and Amphitryon, were Egyptian.⁷⁸ There is also an instance where Eudoxus of Cnidus asks the question of why gods that were identified with each other, like Osiris and Dionysus, had different powers.

Why translation and identification happened between the ancient gods is difficult to answer, but there are some sources that indicate why different gods were identified with each other. From Roman sources, the identification is based on specific powers, the rank of the god in the pantheon and society, the mythology associated with the deity and the iconography.⁷⁹ Still, there are caveats that should be mentioned in terms of interpretation, first and foremost, it is a two-way process. If one culture begins to associate God X with God Y the other culture might begin to identify God Y with God X.⁸⁰ Therefore, when the process first begins, it accelerates faster since the identification of different gods happens between cultures that are already exposed to and interact with one another. Iconography, while it is a way to associate different gods, might also be a confusing factor, allowing one god to be described as having a multitude

⁷⁶ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 15.

⁷⁷ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 43.

⁷⁸ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 38.

⁷⁹ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 48.

⁸⁰ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 40.

of associations from a wide range of deities to fit the god into the interpreter's cultural framework.⁸¹ Thirdly, there are several ways for interpretation to occur. The name of the god, the theonym, might be changed. A famous and relevant example of this is Mars and Ares, or Osiris into Dionysus. Another way interpretation can occur is that the name of the god gets translated and an epithet is added, either to define the new god (Zeus Thebais) or to combine their powers (Zeus Ammon).⁸²

How do the arguments of Scholz and Hermansen fare in terms of translation and interpretation? Studies about Roman Gaul show that after the interpretation of the gods from Gallic to Roman, a new religious system emerged, where few pieces of the original pantheon and religious system were left untouched or intact.⁸³ If identification between a larger, "global" god and a local god were to happen, how could that not present change? For instance, it created possibilities since the power of the god could now be transferred, but if that local god and the global god had a range of different meanings, then the local god might adopt these new meanings and morph into something else.⁸⁴

That Scholz and Hermansen argue that it is only the iconography of Mars that takes on the identity of Ares and that it does not impact the cult to some degree is questionable. Religious iconography is one of the ways to shape how people think about a god, and how the sacred space was designed symbolised the divine power of the god.⁸⁵ It is a logical and rational paradox that the identification between Mars and Ares had any impact at all on the worship of Mars in Italy. If Hermansen is right and Mars is a chthonic god associated with the underworld, fertility, and the circle of Ceres, how would the worshippers of Mars rationalize the idea of an armoured, helmeted, spear-wielding god in their temple? The connection between the thoughts and the visual would take root in the consciousness of the community after some time and thus alter their ideas and perception of the god.

⁸¹ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 47.

⁸² Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 42-43.

⁸³ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 72.

⁸⁴ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 72-74.

⁸⁵ Bonnet, Corinne, et al. "Mapping Ancient Gods: Naming and Embodiment beyond "anthropomorphism". A Survey of the Field in Echo to the Books of M.S. Smith and R. Parker." *Mediterranean Historical Review* 34, no. 2 (2019): 207-20. p. 209.

Chapter 2: Mars in Iguvium and the Iguvine Tables

Introduction

In this chapter, I will focus on the representation of Mars in a specific part of Umbria, the ancient city of Iguvium, the modern-day city of Gubbio. The reason why I will dedicate an entire chapter to Iguvium in this thesis about Mars stems from the extraordinary position of Iguvium in the source material of Italic religion. Iguvium was an important city in the region of Umbria, and home of the Iguvine Tables, one of the best-preserved sources of Italic, and Umbrian, religion. In fact, the Iguvine Tables are the longest surviving religious text from Classical Antiquity.⁸⁶ In the Iguvine Tables, Mars is one of the most important deities and a member of the Grabovian triad. The so-called Grabovian triad gets its name from the epithet that the three gods share. It consists of the Italic gods Jupiter Grabovius and Mars Grabovius and the Umbrian god Vofionus Grabovius. Serfus, Tursa and Prestota, a god and two goddesses are Umbrian deities associated with Mars, also have important roles in the Tables. These three deities belong to what is often called the Martius triad, from their shared epithet, Martius, which connects them to Mars. These two triads, although they are in part a reconstruction by scholars, will be important for my analysis of Mars. In this chapter, I will use evidence from both historical and epigraphic sources, the Iguvine Tables, coins, and votive bronze figurines found on the mountaintop sanctuary of Monte Ansciano, close to Iguvium. These newer archaeological finds will prove a useful comparison to the theories put forth by Hermansen, Dumézil and Scholz, discussed in the previous chapter. I will use this evidence to analyse the interpretations of Mars by the ancient Iguvines.

I will preface this discussion of the Iguvine Mars with a summary of the state of scholarship on the social organisation of Umbria. It is important to understand how Iguvine society was organised because if all material was influenced by Roman culture, then the evidence for regional distinctiveness would be lacking. This also informs the reader about the social, economic, and cultural context this religious environment fits into. Following this, I will move onto the votive bronzes found on the shrine in Monte Ansciano, close to the city of Iguvium. In that section, I will discuss the bronzes and what they can inform us about the Iguvine Mars.

⁸⁶ Bradley, Glinister, "Italic Religion", p. 179.

This section will rely on the work of Simon Stoddart and Caroline Malone. In the last section of this chapter, the Iguvine Tables are the main object of study, particularly Table I, II VI and VII. The purpose, dating and content of the Tables will be discussed and analysed, followed by a discussion and summary regarding the Iguvine Mars both as a stand-alone divinity but also in the context of the two triads, the Martius triad, consisting of Tursa Martius, Prestota Martius and Serfus Martius, and the Grabovian triad, consisting of Jupiter, Mars and Vofionus.

2.1 The development of Umbrian societies

Ancient Umbria was rural in comparison to the Etruscan and Latin centres on the Tyrrhenian coast.⁸⁷ This has sparked a debate among scholars about the area of Umbria itself about how Umbria and Umbrian communities can be understood. Can they be treated as polities at all, and if they are not polities, how should they be interpreted? The reason why this is a relevant question is that it would severely impact how the evidence from Iguvium should be analysed. If Iguvium cannot be considered a type of polity, had a common identity, or did not have any degree of state formation before the conquest by the Romans, it would mean that much of the evidence could be influenced by Roman and Latin ideology, religion, and culture. On the other hand, Mackil has demonstrated that religious interactions prompt the development of regional ethnic identity and material culture, even if the participants were not strong, centralised states.⁸⁸ Therefore, Umbria, despite being more rural, could still develop a regional culture, regardless of the urbanism debate. That said, Iguvium and Umbria were also influenced by the neighbouring communities and polities since the transhumance of the Apennine area connected the various groups.⁸⁹ According to Glinister and Bradley, the Italic peoples can be divided into three groups, depending on which larger power had the most influence over them, either through proximity or trade relations. The Umbrians were under the influence of the Etruscans, the Sabines by the Romans, while the Lucanians and Campanians were influenced by the Greeks of Magna Graecia.⁹⁰ One cannot find an unaltered, “pure” Iguvine, Umbrian or Latin religion

⁸⁷ Cifani, Gabriele. “Approaching Ethnicity and Landscapes in Pre-Roman Italy: the middle Tiber Valley”. In *Landscape, Ethnicity, and Identity in the Archaic Mediterranean area*, edited by Gabriele Cifani, Simon Stoddart and Skylar Neil, 144-163. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2012. p. 152.

⁸⁸ Mackil, Emily Maureen. *Creating a common polity: religion, economy, and politics in the making of the Greek koinon*. Berkely: University of California Press, 2013. p. 403, 405-406.

⁸⁹ Bradley, Guy. *Ancient Umbria: State, culture, and identity in central Italy from the Iron Age to the Augustan era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. p. 50.

⁹⁰ Bradley, Glinister, “Italic Religion”, p. 176.

as cultures always get influenced by one another. This is evident in the Iguvine Tables as well, as they mention several curses on the Iapudic name, which is understood to be an Illyrian people.⁹¹ To state a claim like Hermansen does about the unaltered nature of the Italic societies would be extreme, but if little to none of the evidence about the culture and religion of the Umbrians, and thus the Iguvines, are local, then it would be exceptionally difficult to state or interpret anything about the Umbrian or Iguvine Mars without the Roman Mars “interfering”.⁹²

State organization or urbanism?

One interpretation of urbanism in ancient Umbria can be connected to the work of Guy Bradley and Adriano La Regina. This school of thought argues that the settlement pattern in Umbria developed in a way unlike those on the Tyrrhenian coastline or the classical Greek *polis*.⁹³ Bradley’s thesis is that urbanism as a measurement of development or civilization in the Apennines has been overused and that state organization should be the way to interpret the evidence. To summarize this reconstruction, it is not how large or complex the population centres were, but rather how, if and to what extent the different elements of Umbrian society cooperated and worked together as a structure.⁹⁴ By looking at state organization rather than urbanism, Bradley argues that one can remove oneself from the teleological idea about how one should view such communities, starting from tribal societies to territorial polities to city-states.⁹⁵ In the view of this school of thought, the settlement pattern in Ancient Umbria was a system where different units could effectively take on the same tasks as that of a state. The villages were the most obvious population centres, numerous hillforts provided security, and the mountaintop sanctuaries provided the people with a religious environment. Together the hillforts and sanctuaries also provided a social, political, and economic arena where people would gather.⁹⁶

The reconstruction outlined above of the dispersed state organization is built on a model of the settlement pattern in Umbria. The archaeological records of the central Apennines show a pattern centred around mountaintop sanctuaries, hillforts, and villages. The existence of a

⁹¹ Iguvine Tables VIb and VIIa. Translated by Poultney; Rosenzweig, *Ritual and Cult in Pre-Roman Iguvium*, p. 69.

⁹² Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 14.

⁹³ Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 33.

⁹⁴ Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 17.

⁹⁵ Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 34-36.

⁹⁶ Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 57-58.

similar pattern of settlement is also visible in Samnium, meaning that it is not a purely cultural product, given that Samnium and Umbria had different cultural influences.⁹⁷ Support for this theory, or at least an argument about the plurality of societal development, comes from the work of Gabriele Cifani. Cifani writes that by the middle of the 6th century BCE, there were two patterns of state formation that take place in Central Italy; the large territorial states like those in Etruria and Rome, while on the other side there are several smaller city-states.⁹⁸ This might be a result of the different geographical characteristics of the regions, as Umbria and Samnium are heavily mountainous areas, while Latium and Etruria are not.

Furthermore, in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE there are increased signs of ritual activity which, according to studies of the Eastern Mediterranean, is both a sign of increasing social and political functions and social complexity.⁹⁹ This theory is also supported by the work of L. Bouke van der Meer. Van der Meer wrote a study of the Roman influence of *luci*, sacred spaces or groves, in Italy and supported the idea that these areas were important for the creation of social bonds and ethnic identities.¹⁰⁰ Van der Meer concludes that the rituals associated with the groves near Iguvium did not seem to be influenced by Rome, meaning that Iguvium already had a strong religious tradition or a tradition that already was acceptably similar to the Romans.¹⁰¹

The physical evidence of this state organization is from the 4th century BCE when fortifications such as walls were built in Vettona and Oriculum, and public buildings such as temples were built at Todi.¹⁰² From this time period, there has been found coinage that supports the idea of an Iguvine community and collective identity. The coinage of Iguvium is commonly dated to the 3rd century BCE.¹⁰³ The coins from Iguvium are cast in bronze and many depict the cornucopia or other agricultural products such as grapes or palm leaves, perhaps symbolising the wealth of the state.¹⁰⁴ Other coins from Iguvium have depictions of helmets or shields, perhaps meant to show the strength or security of the Iguvine state.¹⁰⁵ The coins might also

⁹⁷ Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 33, 61; Bradley, Glinister, "Italic Religion", p. 176.

⁹⁸ Cifani, "Approaching Ethnicity and Landscapes in Pre-Roman Italy", p. 153, 154.

⁹⁹ Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁰ Van der Meer, L. Bouke. "The impact of Rome on *luci* (sacred glades, clearings and groves) in Italy". *Babesch* vol. 90, 2015: 99-107. p. 99.

¹⁰¹ Van der Meer, "The impact of Rome on *luci* (sacred glades, clearings and groves) in Italy", p. 105.

¹⁰² Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 80.

¹⁰³ Stoddart, Simon. "Ritual Processes and the Iron Age state 5.3". In *Territory, Time and State*, edited by Simon Stoddart and Caroline Malone, 142-178. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. p. 175.

¹⁰⁴ Rutter, N.K. *Historia Numorum: Italy*. London: British Museum Press, 2001. p. 20.

¹⁰⁵ Rutter, *Historia Numorum: Italy*, p. 20.

depict the Iguvine state's favoured deity or a deity they wanted to draw the attention of. The most obvious, in relation to the war-like symbols, would be Mars, which already had an important place in the pantheon of Iguvium. The theory of a common identity in Umbrian societies is also supported by epigraphic material and coinage that attest to a common local identity for the communities in Nuceria, Plestia, Iguvium and Tadinum by the usage of communal names.¹⁰⁶ Based on the dating of the coinage to the 3rd century BCE, the development of more monumental buildings, the traditional dating of the Iguvine Tables, which depict a system of priests and politics, one can argue that a process of state-formation, and thus a collective identity, were taking place in Umbria in the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE.

The region lacked the same level of urbanization and urban areas in comparison to Etruria and Latium, but the settlement pattern of Umbria was different. Rather than developing and gathering into a few larger urban areas, the ancient Umbrians were spread over several communities, making the proto-urban areas less populous than the neighbouring regions.¹⁰⁷ The Umbrian societies were relatively small in relation to population and territory compared to the neighbouring polities in Etruria and Latium. They were more dispersed communities instead of a stronger central power, and they were more reliant on transhumance, but they did develop a form of urban or communal culture.¹⁰⁸ The discussion about state formation and the development of Umbrian societies is important to the study of Mars because it is now possible, to some extent, to understand what sort of environment Mars was worshipped in.

2.2 *Votive bronzes from Iguvium and Monte Ansciano*

Now that I have discussed the epigraphic and numismatic evidence for the existence of Umbrian communal identities, this section will discuss the archaeological evidence of the Iguvine religion. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this section will rely heavily on the documentation about the excavations on Monte Ansciano. About 65 votive, human-like bronze figurines have been found at the mountaintop-sanctuary on Monte Ansciano. These human figurines are schematic in shape, but a couple stands out in terms of shape and detail, given that

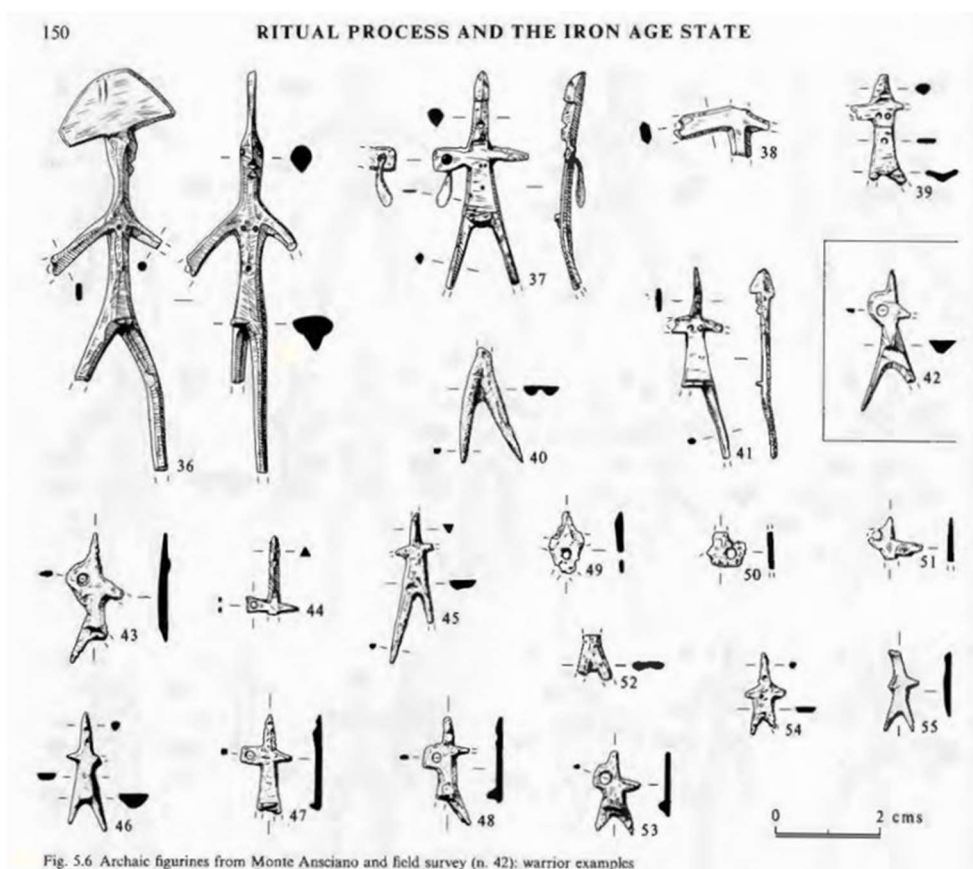
¹⁰⁶ Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 48, 256-257.

¹⁰⁷ Cifani, "Approaching Ethnicity and Landscapes in Pre-Roman Italy", p. 154.

¹⁰⁸ Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁸ Van der Meer, "The impact of Rome on *luci* (sacred glades, clearings and groves) in Italy", p. 99; Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 62.

the figures have a large crest on their head as if they were wearing a helmet.¹⁰⁹ Votive bronze offerings represent an important part of Italic religion, and in this practice was the most developed in Umbria.¹¹⁰ Previously it was believed that the Italic votive tradition of anatomical bronzes, in the shape of human limbs, bodies and internal organs, originated outside of the Italian peninsula, in Greece, and spread from Etruria to Rome and then spread further with the pace of Roman expansion and influence.¹¹¹ According to Stoddart, the votive activity on the shrine on Monte Ansciano was at its highest between the late 6th and the 3rd centuries BCE.¹¹² This will make the practice of the votive bronze offerings contemporary with Table I, II, III, IV and Va of the Igvine Tables.¹¹³



From *Territory, Time and State. The archaeological development of the Gubbio Basin*. Edited by Simon Stoddart and Caroline Malone. Fig. 5.6. p. 150.

¹⁰⁹ Stoddart, Malone, Whitley, James "5.1 Rituals without texts". In *Territory, Time and State*. Edited by Simon Stoddart and Caroline Malone 142-152. p. 150.

¹¹⁰ Bradley, Glinister, "Italic Religion", p. 178. Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 74.

¹¹¹ Glinister, Fay. "Reconsidering "religious Romanization". In *Religion in Republican Italy*, 10-33. Edited by Celia E. Schultz and Paul B. Harvey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. p. 14-17.

¹¹² Stoddart, Whitley, "5.1 Rituals without texts", p. 145.

¹¹³ Wilkins, John B. "Ritual Processes and the Iron Age state 5.2". In *Territory, Time and State*. Edited by Simon Stoddart and Caroline Malone, 152-172. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. p. 155.

The total number of votive bronzes (65 figurines and 169 nails) found in the sanctuary of Monte Ansciano pales in comparison to other similar sites in Umbria. Stoddart believes that the nails could have secured the votive gifts to a grove or wall.¹¹⁴ Irene Rosenzweig, based on work by Kretschmer, argues in support of the interpretation of the shrine as a grove. The etymological reconstruction put forth by Rosenzweig is that the three Grabovian gods, Jupiter Grabovius, Mars Grabovius and Vofionus Grabovius, stem from woodland deities would strengthen this interpretation.¹¹⁵ Further evidence for the existence of groves in ancient Iguvium comes from the Tables themselves. Groves, or *luci* in Latin, is attested in Tables I, III and IV where sacrifices are to be undertaken.¹¹⁶ Based on this evidence, the presence of a holy grove on Monte Ansciano is not unprecedented.

In comparison to Monte Ansciano, in the sanctuaries of Monte Acuto and Pasticcetto di Magione, a total number of 2200 votive bronzes were found, 1600 in the former and 600 in the latter.¹¹⁷ These sanctuaries had similar types of votive offerings, but several anatomical votives in the shape of human limbs were also found. The issue when discussing this type of material evidence is that during history a lot of material could have been lost. We have no idea today how many votive figurines were really displayed in the shrine on Monte Ansciano, maybe the shrine was a relatively poor one, the Iguvines could have had a different votive tradition than their neighbours or the votives could have been stolen or melted down through the centuries.

There is a major problem in terms of classifying the warrior-figurines as representations of gods. The votive figurines bear no inscriptions; even the famous “Mars of Todi” has no identifiable inscription which links it to the god. The inscription only allows us to read the name of the person who donated it. This means that the entire understanding of the warrior figurines as representations of Mars is based on previous assumptions about the identity and symbols of Mars.¹¹⁸ Despite this, Bradley argues that in terms of the male warrior figures, they should be interpreted as Mars.¹¹⁹ The Italic peoples did mostly share a pantheon, so a degree of similarity is expected from group to group, but even the Iguvine Tables mention gods which are unheard of in Roman society. We can only extrapolate the role of Mars in the Iguvine religion based on our knowledge and understanding of the deity from other contexts, except when the Iguvine

¹¹⁴ Stoddart, Whitley, “5.1 Rituals without texts”, p. 145.

¹¹⁵ Rosenzweig, *Ritual and Cult in Pre-Roman Iguvium*, p. 69.

¹¹⁶ Van der Meer, “The impact of Rome on *luci* (sacred glades, clearings and groves) in Italy”. p. 102-103.

¹¹⁷ Stoddart, Whitley, “Ritual Processes and the Iron Age state 5.1”, p. 149.

¹¹⁸ Glinister, Bradley, “Italic religion”, p. 182.

¹¹⁹ Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 74.

Tables mention his name. In sum, the idea that the warrior-figurines can tell us something about the role of Mars is insecure as no signs on the schematic figures identify them as representations of Mars, nor is there any sign that they were specifically offerings to him.

The votive bronzes can still give us important insight into the religious world of the Iguvines, which we cannot otherwise access beside the obscure Iguvine Tables. These offerings provide a material picture of the Iguvine religion. If we are to use the votives as a gateway into the Iguvine religion it is of interest to try, if possible, to get to know the people that placed these votives on the mountain. Why did they do it? What do the votives signify? These questions will provide a rudimentary answer which we can use to get to know the Iguvines on Monte Ansciano.

There are two ways one can interpret the votive offerings, according to previous research. The first interpretation is that the votive bronzes are a sign of the socio-economic reality of the Iguvines, reflected by the warriors and animal remains in the sanctuary, in addition to a reflection of the pantheon.¹²⁰ The second interpretation is that the sanctuary was a hub for seasonal activity, mostly in use by pastoralists.¹²¹ Stoddart and Malone support the idea of seasonal activity, writing that the upland sanctuaries were only a seasonal gathering point, while on the other hand, they also state that the distinction between the domestic areas of life and the religious did not exist in the bronze age the same way it does today.¹²² Much of the religious activity that were performed during the Bronze Age are not visible or understandable in the archaeological material. For example, the most common of all religious activity where the sacrifice of animals. From this we only have the bones preserved, and if they were not used for further action or decoration, just left in the ground or otherwise, it will not appear as a religious action in the archaeological material unless there is already attested religious activity in the area.¹²³

The bronze figurines consist of much of the archaeological evidence about the worship and interpretation of Mars. Given the position of Mars within the Iguvine pantheon and the fact that the votive tradition was the most developed in Umbria, it can be stated with relative safety that the figures are representations of Mars. The protective association of Mars, which emerge from

¹²⁰ Stoddart, Whitley, "5.1 Rituals without texts", p. 144.

¹²¹ Stoddart, Whitley, "5.1 Rituals without texts", p. 144.

¹²² Malone, Caroline, Stoddart, Simon. "4.4 The regional setting of Gubbio in the Later Bronze Age and early Iron Age". In *Territory, Time and State*. Edited by Simon Stoddart and Caroline Malone, 127-142. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. p. 129.

¹²³ Rüpke, *Pantheon*, p. 27, 28.

the Iguvine Tables (see below), coincide with the position of the warrior-figures in the shrines marking the borders of society.¹²⁴

According to Stoddart, the sanctuaries were often used by a large number of men, from the number of pins found and lack of *fibulae*, brooches, in the deposits, which seems like a weak argument.¹²⁵ These men, following Stoddart, participated in social, political, and economic ritual contexts of protecting the upland areas.¹²⁶ The votive offerings, particularly those where one can clearly see a martial figure, may hint at this protective task. This is similar to what Dumézil argues about the “protective” Mars; however, Mars is not a protective deity but an aggressive, martial force that can be invoked or tasked with protection, in his interpretation.¹²⁷ If it is true that these mountain sanctuaries were indeed symbolic of the borders between these different communities, the votive warrior-figurines will make this interpretation stronger.¹²⁸

The votive bronzes and the Iguvine Mars

I will base my assumption about the participation in the rituals on Monte Ansciano that it was open for the community. This interpretation does fit with the epigraphic material on the Iguvine Tables as well, where the names of Mars, both as a god and as an epithet, in the form of Mars Grabovius, Mars Hodijs, Serfus Martius, Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius and Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius, is invoked for the purification and lustration of the Fisian Mount, the Iguvine community and the Iguvine people.¹²⁹ Furthermore, the arguments for a male-dominated environment are unconvincing. The presence of the female figurines would not make sense in a male-dominated environment if they participated in the political, social, and economic rituals associated with the defence of the uplands.¹³⁰

These communal offerings described in the Tables then make me view the Mars-figurines, the crested male warrior figures, as a means of protection. The crest itself also leans towards this conclusion since the crest is a sign of a helmet, a means for protection, while none of the figures

¹²⁴ Cifani, “Approaching Ethnicity and Landscapes in Pre-Roman Italy: the middle Tiber Valley”, p. 156.

¹²⁵ Stoddart, Simon. “Between text, body and context: Expressing “Umbrian” identity in the landscape”. In *Landscape, Ethnicity and Identity in the Archaic Mediterranean Area*. Edited by Gabriele Cifani, Simon Stoddart and Skylar Neil, 173-187. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2012. p. 179.

¹²⁶ Stoddart, “Between text, body and context: Expressing “Umbrian” identity in the landscape”, p. 179.

¹²⁷ Dumézil, Georges. *Archaic Roman Religion vol 1*, p. 220, 228.

¹²⁸ Cifani, “Approaching Ethnicity and Landscapes in Pre-Roman Italy: the middle Tiber Valley”, p. 156.

¹²⁹ Iguvine Tables. Ia, Ib. Translated by J. W. Poultney, 1959.

¹³⁰ Stoddart, “Between text, body and context: Expressing “Umbrian” identity in the landscape”, p. 179.

seem to have any visible signs of weapons. The majority of what Stoddart and Malone describe as the warrior-figures do not bear this crest though, and instead seem to have a shield on their right side.¹³¹ It is also worth noting that there is a distinction between the “male” and “warrior” figures, meaning that the two were not interchangeable. The male figures appear in the same, simple style as the warriors but do not have any semblance of carrying arms or shields; some of them also have a depiction of genitalia.¹³² The warrior-figures also have this, but fewer of the warriors are depicted with visible phallus. This feature might imply associations with fertility, which would strengthen Hermansen’s interpretation of the Iguvine Mars being connected with Ceres through Serfus Martius.¹³³

2.3 *The Iguvine Tables*

The Iguvine Tables is the longest surviving religious text from Classical Antiquity and consist of seven bronze tables and were found in the area close to the Roman theatre in Gubbio in 1444. Each of the tables are inscribed on both sides except Table III and IV. According to the scholarly tradition, there were originally nine tables, but the two last tables were lost after disappearing in Venice in 1540.¹³⁴ Further research by Prosdocimi and Ancillotti & Cerri dismiss this tradition and argue that the idea of there ever being nine Tables stems from a misunderstanding on behalf of Leonardo Alberti in 1540.¹³⁵ In this section of the chapter, I will write about the general history and analysis of the Tables. Special attention will be given to Tables I, II, VI and VII since these four Tables specifically mention Mars and the accompanying triad. One caveat to keep in mind when using the Tables as a historical source is that they are not dated from the same time: The Tables are cast at different times, which the difference in letters shows.¹³⁶ While sceptical to the idea that different people created the Tables, Wilkins dates the entire collection of the seven Tables to the Late Republican era, most likely in the 2nd century BCE.¹³⁷ The reasoning behind this date is that the words used in the text hint at a familiarity with Rome and Roman customs, while the 2nd century was still culturally and politically fluid so the local

¹³¹ Stoddart, Whitley, “5.1 Rituals without texts”, p. 150.

¹³² Stoddart, Whitley, “5.1 Rituals without texts”, p. 148.

¹³³ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 28, 29, 32.

¹³⁴ Poultney, James Wilson. *Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 11.

¹³⁵ Ancillotti, Cerri. *The Tables of Iguvium*, p. 36.

¹³⁶ Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 12-13.

¹³⁷ Wilkins, “5.2 The Iguvine Tables: problems in the interpretation of ritual text”, p. 154, 157.

culture and traditions were not replaced or undermined.¹³⁸ Ancillotti and Cerri argue against this idea and believe that the words used in the Tables, which Wilkins uses as an argument for the familiarity with Rome, were done on purpose by the Iguvines to bring the text closer to the contemporary situation in Iguvium.¹³⁹ Juxtaposed this contextual-based dating of the Tables is a dating purely based on the scripts and words within the text itself. This dating would place Tables I, II, III, IV and Va in the 3rd or 2nd century BCE and Tables Vb, VI and VII in the 2nd or 1st century BCE.¹⁴⁰ Michael Weiss disagrees and dates the earliest of the Tables, III and IV, to the 4th century BCE, while Table VI and VII dates from the 2nd or 1st century BCE.¹⁴¹

A major criticism of the earlier work done on the Tables by previous scholars is found in Wilkins, who offers a lot of criticism on the Western textual tradition and the traditional reading of the Tables. More specifically, he criticises the methods that linguists have applied in their work on the Tables. In Wilkins' view, the previous work and methods have been too focused on translations and finding meaning while glossing over the fact that much of the text is completely obscure, and finding a meaningful translation or interpretation is close to impossible.¹⁴² These translations lack any context and reduce the text to a series of etymological and phonological equations.¹⁴³ These criticisms are not widely accepted or mainstream in the academic circles surrounding the Tables.¹⁴⁴ Weiss goes into further detail and breaks down each of the main arguments that Wilkins put against the comparative method of the etymological and linguistic work. In Weiss' introduction, he defends the methods that linguists have applied to the Tables.¹⁴⁵ Among the issues that Wilkins raises which is relevant to this thesis is that the archaeological data that are supposed to be evidence of the branches of the language tree, such as Proto-Sabellic, Proto-Latino-Faliscan and Oscan-Umbrian, are lacking.¹⁴⁶ This argument goes back to what was discussed about the urbanisation and states in Umbria. Wilkins finds that

¹³⁸ Wilkins, "5.2 The Iguvine Tables: problems in the interpretation of ritual text", p. 157; Van der Meer, "The impact of Rome on *luci* (sacred glades, clearings and groves) in Italy", p. 103.

¹³⁹ Ancillotti, Cerri, *The Tables of Iguvium*, p. 38,39.

¹⁴⁰ Wilkins, "5.2 The Iguvine Tables: problems in the interpretation of ritual text", p. 155; Poultney, *Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 23, 24. Bradley, *Ancient Umbria*, p. 18.

¹⁴¹ Weiss, Michael. "Iguvine Tables". *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. Edited by R.S. Bagnall, K. Brodersen, C.B. Champion, A. Erskine and S.R. Huebner. First published 26. 10. 2012. Accessed 10. 01. 2022. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah17210>

¹⁴² Wilkins, "5.2 The Iguvine Tables: problems in the interpretation of ritual text", p. 158-161, 164.

¹⁴³ Wilkins, "5.2 The Iguvine Tables: problems in the interpretation of ritual text", p. 158-161.

¹⁴⁴ Weiss, Michael. *Language and Ritual in Sabellic Italy: The Ritual Complex of the Third and Fourth Tabulae Iguvinae*. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010. p. 9.

¹⁴⁵ Weiss, *Language and Ritual in Sabellic Italy*, p. 9-24.

¹⁴⁶ Weiss, *Language and Ritual in Sabellic Italy*, p. 14-15.

the language tree is an inadequate model as its branches are not archaeologically visible, and thus it is wrong. Michael Weiss writes:

*“Wilkins may or may not be correct in claiming that the concept that he describes is a construct of urban state society. But even if we grant the correctness of this view for the sake of argument, it does not follow that distinct languages with discernible borders may not exist in nonstate societies even in the absence of explicit or implicit conceptualization.”*¹⁴⁷

Weiss argues well for the fact that languages are intangible constructs and that Wilkins' criticisms of the Indo-European language tree as a faulty model are not well founded. Weiss defends the linguistic method of interpretation, but Wilkins still presents a valid point that much of the work on the Tables is linguistic in nature rather than historical.

The meaning and content of the Iguvine Tables

Rather than attempting a translation or etymological analysis, I will summarize what the Tables contain based on the work by Poultney and Weiss before we will take a deeper look at the tables that specifically mention Mars.¹⁴⁸ The Tables mostly contain instructions and descriptions of ceremonies and rituals, when and how the sacrifices should be made, what god should receive what offering and the lustration and purification rituals for the Iguvine people. The Tables could be divided into three sections, Table I, II, III and IV describe sacrifices for the lustration and purification; Table Va and Vb are exceptions to the pattern as they contain information about the privileges, tasks, and liturgical information of the Atiedian Brotherhood, a priestly college of Iguvium, while Table VI and VII reiterate the information given in Table I and II but provide further details.¹⁴⁹

Much of the information in the Tables is obscure and layered in references and cultural practices that are unknown from other sources. An illustrative example of this is the figure of Vofionus, the third member of the Grabovian-triad. This triad of gods, consisting of Mars, Jupiter and Vofionus, is the most important triad of gods that appear in the Tables. Mars and Jupiter are gods that are known to us from other sources in Italy, especially Roman, but Vofionus is an unknown god which we do not know anything about.

¹⁴⁷ Weiss, *Language and Ritual in Sabellic Italy*, p. 14-15.

¹⁴⁸ Wilkins, “5.2 The Iguvine Tables: problems in the interpretation of ritual text”, p. 159.

¹⁴⁹ Poultney, *Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 15-18.

According to Wilkins, the Tables were not created by the Atiedian Brotherhood themselves, as they would know their own rules and ceremonies, but rather as a means for the population of Iguvium to know the rules too.¹⁵⁰ Wilkins draws a parallel to the famous Twelve Tables of Rome, which were placed in the Forum Romanum so that the inhabitants of the city could participate and be knowledgeable in the legal practice of the city and not simply subjects to it.

Further, I will try to contextualize the different times Mars appears in the Iguvine Tables. In total there are two times when Mars appears as the primary divine name, Mars Grabovius and Mars Hodius. Mars also appears in the form of the epithet in the names of Serfus Martius, Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius, Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius, Ahtus Mars and Picus Martius. Given the larger number of Mars-related epithets, I will continue the chapter with a discussion of these.

In the Iguvine Tables, scholars have identified two different triads of gods, both of which are important for this study. The Grabovian triad, mentioned in the context of the purification of the Fisian Mount, is made up of Jupiter, Mars and Vofionus, all sharing the epithet Grabovius.¹⁵¹ The second triad is connected to Mars via their epithets. This second triad is made up of Serfus Martius, Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius and Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius.¹⁵² In the following section, I will discuss the Martius-triad consisting of the three deities mentioned above.

2.4 *The Martius triad*

Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius and Tursa Jovia

Then along with prinuati they shall make the circuit with the unblemished victims. When they have made the circuit and have come to the boundary; at the boundary he and the prinuati shall thus pray silently: “Serfus Martius, Prestota Serfia od Serfus Martius, Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius: the Tadinat state, the Tadinat tribe, the Tuscan, the Narcan, the Iapudic name, the chief citizens in office and not in office, the young men under arms and not under arms, of the Tadinat state, of the Tadinat tribe, of the Tuscan, the Narcan, the Iapudic name: terrify them and cause them to tremble, cast them down to Hondus, to Hola, overwhelm them with snow, overwhelm them with water, deafen them with thunder and wound them, trample them under foot and bind them. Serfus Martius, Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius, Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius, be favourable and propitious with your peace to the of the Iguvium, to the state of Iguvium,

¹⁵⁰ Wilkins, “5.2 The Iguvine Tables: problems in the interpretation of ritual text”, p. 168, 171.

¹⁵¹ Iguvine Tables Ia, Ib, IIa, IIb. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁵² Iguvine Tables Ia, Ib, IIa, IIb. Translated by Poultney

*to their chief citizens in office and not in office, to their young men under arms and not under arms, to their name, to the name of the state.*¹⁵³

The Martius-triad consists of two female deities, Prestota and Tursa, and one male deity, Serfus. The former two have names that allude to two interpretations of Mars; according to research done by James Wilson Poultney, Prestota symbolise the protective abilities and Tursa symbolises the hostile abilities.¹⁵⁴ This is a similar conclusion to that which Dumézil reaches about Tursa and Prestota, even the name Tursa alludes to this, meaning terror or fear.¹⁵⁵ Although it is also worth noting that Martius is not the only epithet applied to Tursa, she is also called Tursa Jovia in Table VIIa.¹⁵⁶ Would this, then, reflect a war-like interpretation of Jupiter? In fact, Tursa Jovia and Tursa Martius are mentioned in Table VIb and VIIa with the same task: To terrify, trample and turn the elements against the Tadinate, Tuscan, Narcan and the Iapudic peoples and cast them down to Hondus and Hola, and to bring peace to Iguvium.¹⁵⁷ Due to the content of the Tables, it would seem like Hondus and Hola represent the underworld or deities related to the underworld.

The quote above is gathered from Table VIb and shows the prayer that the Iguvines dedicated to Tursa, along with Serfus and Prestota. The only difference between this prayer to Tursa Martius and the prayer directed to Tursa Jovia is that in the latter, Tursa does not have any associates in the prayer.

Throughout the Iguvine Tables, Tursa Jovia is only mentioned four times, once in Ib and thrice in VIIa, while Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius is mentioned once in Ib, twice in VIb and once again in VIIa. The difficulty with assigning meanings to the two Tursas is that they appear to be invoked to fulfil the same functions but with different epithets. They are both invoked and prayed to in relation to the lustration and purification of the people, to cause harm to the perceived enemies of the Iguvines and bring peace. The meaning that the Iguvine Tables assign to Tursa cannot tell us much about Mars, which is odd given that the dating of the later Tables stems from a time when the Romans had a larger presence and influence in Umbria. Given that the two Tursas have different epithets it is possible to see them as different goddesses who both have hostile or aggressive interpretations. To conclude on the question about the difference

¹⁵³ Iguvine Tables, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁵⁴ Poultney, *The Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 19.

¹⁵⁵ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol 1*, p. 244-245.

¹⁵⁶ Iguvine Tables Ib, VIIa. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁵⁷ Iguvine Tables VIb and VIIa. Translated by Poultney.

between Tursa Jovia and Tursa Martius, given they receive the same prayer, is that the domain of Tursa Jovia is the weather-based part of the curse (water, snow, thunder), while the domain of Tursa Martius is the martial associations like wounding, trampling and binding the enemies. A different interpretation of the goddess comes from Rosenzweig, who compares Tursa to the Roman gods Pavor and Pallor, or the goddess Paventia.¹⁵⁸ The association both in Umbrian and Roman tradition as fear might also be the type of fear that foreigners might invoke, according to Rosenzweig.¹⁵⁹

If we return to the Tables themselves, it is clear that Tursa is associated with the lustration, a ritual of purification and aversion of evil, of the people of Iguvium and the banishment of certain foreigners, specifically the Tadinates, Tuscans, Narcans and Iapudics. The priest then places a curse on these people, where he calls upon Tursa to turn the elements against them and trample them. This prayer, in Table VIIa, is offered to both Tursa Jovia and Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius, which would imply that both Tursas had some means of providing this divine service which the Iguvine priest calls for. Thus, it can be understood that Tursa's position in the lustration and banishment also hold a mixture of martial and elemental abilities. The war-like abilities and meanings, connected with the traditional understanding of Mars, come to light in that Tursa is supposed to frighten the enemies of Iguvium, trample them and bind them. The "men under arms" is also mentioned in the prayer, but since the "men not under arms" is also mentioned, it does not appear that it was specifically the armies of the Tuscans, Tadinates, Narcans and Iapudics the prayer was directed against, but rather the entire population.

Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius

Prestota is mentioned a total of twenty-seven times in the Tables. Like Tursa, Prestota is only mentioned once in Table Ib in relation to the lustration of the people of Iguvium, twice in VIb and twenty-four times in VIIa. Contrary to Tursa, Prestota does not change any part of her name or her epithets through the text, which could be interpreted to be "closer" to the meaning of Mars than Tursa, but I do not think that is correct. From the prayers in the Tables, it appears that the tasks given to Prestota are indeed to terrify and crush the enemies of Iguvium and bring the Iguvines a good peace, as mentioned above, but to a larger extent, Prestota is expected to

¹⁵⁸ Rosenzweig, *Rituals and Cults in Pre-Roman Iguvium*, p. 89-90.

¹⁵⁹ Rosenzweig, *Rituals and Cult in Pre-Roman Iguvium*, p. 90.

keep Iguvium and its magistrates, priests, people, animals, and fruit safe from harm, and that her evil should rather be inflicted upon the enemies.¹⁶⁰

Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius, thee I invoke with these black vessels for the people of the state of Iguvium, for the state of Iguvium, for the name of the people, for the name of the state. Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius, in every way turn thou evil against the Tadinatè people, the Tadinatè tribe, the Tuscan, the Narcan, the Iapudic name, against the chief citizens in office and not in office, against the young men under arms and not under arms, of the Tadinatè state, of the Tadinatè tribe, of the Tuscan, the Narcan, the Iapudic name, and against their name. Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius, be favourable and propitious with thy peace to the people of the state of Iguvium, to the state of Iguvium, to their name, to the name of the state, to its chief citizens in office and not in office, to its young men under arms and not under arms. Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius, keep safe the people of the state of Iguvium, the name of the state of Iguvium, keep safe the magistrates, the priesthoods, the lives of men and of beasts, the fruits. Be favourable and propitious with thy peace to the people of the state of Iguvium, to the state of Iguvium, to the name of the people, to the name of the state.¹⁶¹

From this invocation, the Rubinia invocation, it could seem that Prestota did have an agricultural interpretation, but an argument of an agricultural Prestota, as a goddess of protecting agricultural produce and livestock, cannot be a functional explanation. Prestota is not the only deity in the Tables that are tasked with protecting the animals and crops. Jupiter Grabovius, Tefer Jovius and Fisovius Sancius, in Table VIa for the former and VIb for the two latter, are also tasked with a similar type of agricultural protection.¹⁶² On the basis of these prayers, it is not sufficient to simply categorise Prestota as an agricultural or nature deity.

Prestota is still invoked in relation to the lustration and purification of Iguvium and the people. The triad of Serfus, Prestota and Tursa are all invoked with the task of terrifying the enemies of Iguvium, but Tursa and Prestota distinguish themselves from Serfus Martius, who is only mentioned twice alone. When mentioned together, they are invoked for harming the enemies and bringing peace to Iguvium, but when mentioned separately some details change. When Prestota is invoked alone for the peace of Iguvium, she is also invoked for the protection of magistrates, priests, the people, and animals.

Prestota's role in the Iguvine religion, as it appears on the Tables, is that of a protective deity although, with some violent connotations. Prestota is also called upon in relation to frightening the enemies of Iguvium but also to let her evil harm them. This is a protective meaning of the deity, where Prestota would shield Iguvium but let evil come to the enemies of Iguvium.

¹⁶⁰ Iguvine Tables, VIIa. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁶¹ Iguvine Tables, VIIa. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁶² Iguvine Tables, VIa, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

Prestota maintains a level of martial associations, along with other protective functions. It is notable that when the people of Iguvium are ordered into their military ranks, it is during the ceremonies and prayers that are dedicated to the Martius-triad.¹⁶³ According to Jean-Claude Lacam, Prestota's name is also an indicator of what type of goddess she is and what functions she fulfilled. I mentioned above that the name Tursa can be translated to fear or terror, alluding to her aggressive martial association. Prestota can also be translated and give basis to her protective martial interpretations. Lacam argues that the name Prestota comes from the Umbrian word *staheren* combined with a prefix and the word *preveres*.¹⁶⁴ This would mean, according to Lacam, that Prestota's name can be translated to "the one who stands in front".¹⁶⁵ How this triad of Serfus, Tursa and Prestota is believed to have worked, or how the ancient Iguvines thought about this triad is difficult to say, but what can be attested from the Tables is that in difference to Tursa, Prestota had the ability to protect more than Iguvium and that this protection was granted to the animals and crops.

Serfus Martius

Serfus Martius is the one deity that ties Prestota and Tursa together with Mars and should therefore be key to our understanding of the deities, but Serfus do not appear in the Iguvine Tables alone as a single deity, but rather always in company with Tursa and Prestota. Due to the naming convention, one can argue that Serfus is the primary god of the Martius triad since Prestota and Tursa belong to the divine sphere of Serfus and in a larger context, that of Mars. Serfus appear only once in Table Ib, twice in Table VIb and again once in VIIa.¹⁶⁶ In these instances, it is in relation to the lustration of the people, the purification ritual to ward off evil, that Serfus is invoked. The invocation to Serfus only happens after the priest and those assisting in the ceremony have cleansed the borders of the city, and the men of Iguvium are organized into priestly or military ranks.¹⁶⁷ This leads to the logical assumption that, despite the lack of detail about the worship of Serfus, that the organization of the men into the ranks of the military, given the martial interpretations already discussed in relation to Tursa and Prestota, is an important element. Scholz supports this line of thought, as he imagines the Martius-triad as

¹⁶³ Iguvine Tables, Ia, VIb. Translated by Poultney; Lacam, Jean-Claude. "Prestota Serfia Serfer Martier, la déesse immobile". *Archimède* 4, 2017: 216-228. p. 217,218.

¹⁶⁴ Lacam, "Prestota Serfia Serfer Martier, la déesse immobile", p. 218.

¹⁶⁵ Lacam, "Prestota Serfia Serfer Martier, la déesse immobile", p. 219.

¹⁶⁶ Iguvine Tables, Ia, VIb, VIIa. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁶⁷ Iguvine Tables, Ia, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

specialisations of Mars, similar to Parker's theory of name-sharing and as a reverse variant of Usener's evolutionary theory of epithets, which Hermansen also supports.¹⁶⁸

This is not the only explanation for the meaning of Serfus. Hermansen and Poultney view Serfus as a deity connected with Ceres, the traditional goddess of agriculture.¹⁶⁹ This connection is based on linguistics, as the closest Latin equivalent of Serfus is Cerus, which would imply a male variant of Ceres, or at the very least, a common root with Ceres.¹⁷⁰ Poultney argues for a chthonic understanding of Serfus, arguing that the sacrifice of a black boar would imply this connection while at the same time also arguing that Prestota and Tursa represent the protective and war-like meaning associated with Serfus.¹⁷¹ Hermansen agrees but goes further than Poultney, claiming that Serfus have taken over the perceived functions of the Roman Mars and have therefore also taken the name of Mars.¹⁷² There are problems with Hermansen's interpretation of the evidence, and the more recent discovery of the Agnone Tablet argues against the idea of a chthonic Mars in the circle of Ceres.¹⁷³ Hermansen's interpretation relies on the connection between Mars and Ceres through the Serfus epithet, but the Agnone Tablet refutes that Mars was connected to the circle around Ceres.¹⁷⁴ The Agnone Tablet might be an Orphic cult object, but it does list several deities that were associated with Ceres, and Mars does not appear in that list.¹⁷⁵ If the agricultural interpretation of Mars cannot be attested, then it is plausible that the agricultural interpretation of Prestota was not the meaning of the deity that caused Prestota to receive the epithet. Rather it would seem to be the protective ability and the association with the lustration and purification of the city and the people that tied Prestota and Mars together.

Ceres and Serfus/Cerus might be linguistically connected, but within the framework of the Iguvine Tables Serfus is not mentioned or invoked in relation to agriculture. The closest comparison would be Prestota, who is invoked to protect the fields and animals in addition to harming the enemies of the Iguvines. Besides this, Serfus receive his own sacrifice at Fontuli of three black or red boars and is invoked with the same prayer as was uttered in front of the Trebulan gate (see p. 48).¹⁷⁶ This prayer does have some agricultural elements like the

¹⁶⁸ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 146; Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 18-19; Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 32.

¹⁶⁹ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 30; Poultney, *Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 277.

¹⁷⁰ Poultney, *Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 277; Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 31, 32.

¹⁷¹ Poultney, *Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 277, 283.

¹⁷² Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 33.

¹⁷³ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 32-33.

¹⁷⁴ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 30-33.

¹⁷⁵ Bradley, Glinister, "Italic religion", p. 181.

¹⁷⁶ Iguvine Tables, VIIa, VIa. Translated by Poultney.

purification and safety of the beasts and fruits, but using this as evidence for an agricultural interpretation of Serfus is dubious because the Trebulan invocation is also offered to Mars Grabovius, Jupiter Grabovius, Trebus Jovius, Fisius Sancius, Vofionus Grabovius, Tefer Jovius, Mars Hodius, Hondus Serfius, Prestota, Tursa Serfia and Tursa Jovia.¹⁷⁷ Based on this information, the Trebulan invocation cannot be used as evidence of an agricultural interpretation of Serfus due to its general use within the religious rituals of Iguvium.

Given the meanings of Tursa and Prestota discussed above, and the theory of epithets discussed in Chapter 1, it does seem more likely that Serfus was connected to protective interpretations than agriculture. The importance of Serfus must be understood through the lens of epithets and names given to Prestota and Tursa, as the details surrounding his worship, except for a brief description of his sacrifice, are lost. Parker's theory of how minor gods could receive the names of major gods as epithets, we can see a hierarchy within the Martius-triad.¹⁷⁸ At the top, there is Mars, the "progenitor" of this theoretical structure and it is from Mars that Serfus receive his epithet Martius due to Serfus operating within the same divine sphere as Mars. Tursa and Prestota receive their epithets from Serfus, again acting as even more specialised goddesses, derived from their literal names, within the same divine sphere as Serfus. While the meaning of Serfus is more obscure to us, Serfus must have been an important god within the Iguvine religion, either through his linguistic relationship to Ceres and agriculture or from his relationship to Mars and the Martius-triad as both a protective and terrifying force of Iguvium, connected with the expulsion of foreigners and organisation of the population into military or priestly ranks.

2.5 The different meanings of Mars in the Iguvine Tables

In the Iguvine Tables, Mars appear in only five instances, all in connection with the sacrifices made for the community or for the people of Iguvium. In these instances, the figure of Mars is again divided into a total of six entities, two larger and four smaller: Mars Grabovius and Mars Hodius are the two interpretations of Mars which are mentioned the most and can provide some detail. Ahtus Mars and Picus Martius are all mentioned in very brief detail which would not

¹⁷⁷ Iguvine Tables, VIa, VIb, VIIa. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁷⁸ Parker, *Greek gods abroad*, p. 22.

allow me to sufficiently analyse them due to the severely limited evidence provided by the Tables. Still, I am going to analyse what the Tables say about them.

Ahtus Mars

Ahtus Mars is the deity which one can say the most about. Poultney interprets Ahtus Mars to represent the oracular power of the god.¹⁷⁹ This power, Ahtus, also has a Jupiter-centric epithet, Ahtus Jupiter. The context for sacrifices to these entities is when the auspices by the Atiedian Brotherhood turn out unfavourably. Rosenzweig argued that Ahtus, which she called Actus, were the god who presided over the correct auspices and correct procedures during the sacrifices.¹⁸⁰ Because of this, Ahtus is therefore important, but no further information about this divine figure is present in the Tables. Ahtus must have been an important deity in terms of the sacrifices and ceremonies that the Tables describe, but they do not tell of any other interpretations of the god. Therefore, it is difficult to say if Ahtus did have a substantial following or if Ahtus was simply important for the correct proceedings of the sacrifices and auspices. Conceptually, Ahtus might have been an extremely important deity, especially for the priesthood, given his perceived meaning, but it seems unlikely that Ahtus would have a large following among the ordinary people. Despite this, it is important to note that it is only Jupiter and Mars who are epithets of Ahtus, reiterating the position of these two gods in the Iguvine pantheon. A further note about the deity Ahtus is that Ahtus does not seem to have a Vofionus epithet, which is odd considering that the two epithets of Ahtus are the other two members of the Grabovian triad. This might have something to do with the meanings of Ahtus or Vofionus, both of which would be difficult to account for given the unique pantheon of the Iguvines. A possible explanation could be that the different epithets signified what sort of omens or futures Ahtus presided over.

Mars Hodus

Mars Hodus appear in Table Ib and VIb in relation to the sacrifices conducted for the sake of the people and Iguvium.¹⁸¹ In close relation, both textually and thematically is the sacrifices

¹⁷⁹ Poultney, *The Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁰ Rosenzweig, *Ritual and Cult in Pre-Roman Iguvium*, p. 79.

¹⁸¹ Iguvine Tables, Ib, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

done in the name of Hondus Serfius. The two gods receive a similar sacrifice, with the difference being that Hondus gets additional foodstuffs, like cakes, and an offering in wine or mead, while for Mars Hodus, it is just mead. Other than that, both gods receive the same principal sacrifice, the ribs of bull calves. In Table VIb Mars Hodus is also a recipient of a *fickla* cake. It would seem that in the same manner as Tursa and Prestota, Mars Hodus and Hondus Serfius are connected, as they fulfil the same purpose as described in the Tables.¹⁸²

There is, however, the issue of naming practice. Tursa and Prestota share similar epithets, both being “Serfia of Serfus Martius,” except for the instance of Tursa Jovia. The naming link between Mars Hodus and Hondus Serfius appears in different sections of the name. Hondus also have the epithet of Jovius.¹⁸³ It is a difference between the two gods as they receive their offerings at different places. Mars Hodus receives the sacrifice in the Grove of Jupiter, while Hondus receive the sacrifice in the Grove of Corelius. The figure of Corelius, either a divinity or a person, is difficult to identify. The name only appears as the name of the father of a Roman official in Syria and Arabia.¹⁸⁴ It seems that Mars Hodus might have fulfilled a different purpose or function in the Iguvine religion than that of Mars Grabovius and the Martius-triad. Therefore, without any other clues as to the connections associated with the Hondus-name, other than the assumption of a chthonic meaning, as discerned from the prayer to Tursa, it is difficult to reach a conclusion about this entity. Besides this association with Hondus Serfius there is little information available about Hodus, but some scholars connect the name with Hurie, meaning “horse”, but this cannot be confirmed.¹⁸⁵

Picus Martius

Information on this entity is sparse in the Tables. Picus Martius is only mentioned once and appear in Table Va in relation to what the Atiedian Brotherhood are owed each year by two different groups, the Clavernii and Casilas.¹⁸⁶

The decuvia of the Clavernii are required to give to the Atiedian Brothers each year four pounds of choice spelt from the Ager Tlatius of Picus Martius, and dinner for the two men who come to fetch the spelt, or else give six asses. The Atiedian Brothers are

¹⁸² Iguvine Tables, Ib, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁸³ Iguvine Tables, IIa. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁸⁴ Gambash, Gil; Yasur-Landau, Assaf. “Governor of Judea and Syria” A new dedication from Dor to Gargilius Antiquus”. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 2018, vol. 205. P. 158-164. p. 159, 160.

¹⁸⁵ Poultney, *The Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 267.

¹⁸⁶ Iguvine Tables, Va. Translated by Poultney.

*required to give to the Clavernii at the decurial festival of Semo each year ten portions of pork and five portions of goat-meat, the former pickled, the latter roasted, and dinner or six asses. The decuvia Casilas is required to give to the Atiedian Brothers each year six pounds of choice spelt from the Ager Casilus of Picus Martius, and dinner for the two men who come to fetch the spelt, or else give six asses. The Atiedian Brothers are required to give to the decuvia Casilas at the decurial festival of Semo each year fifteen portions of pork and seven and a half portions of goat-meat or six asses.*¹⁸⁷

From the excerpt, the deity is here included in a written agreement between the Atiedian Brotherhood and the Casilias and Clavernii. These groups are interpreted by Michael Weiss to be members of the citizen body of Iguvium and represent a *decuria*, meaning a tenth of the citizens.¹⁸⁸ The question is then how this interpretation relates to Mars. The precise laws and regulations that were valid in Iguvium are impossible to know, but the Tables give the impression that the produce which were to be given to the Atiedian Brotherhood was a form of yearly tax or tribute. What stands out is that the priests are later expected to pay the *decurial* groups back during a festival. The *decurial* groups must have had control over the areas mentioned, the Ager Casilus and Ager Tlatus, which from Latin would mean that these were fields or agricultural areas. I would argue that the Ager Tlatus and Ager Casilus of Picus are temples or areas of similar use that had these fields under their control. The crucial key to this interpretation is that the agricultural products that the Atiedian Brotherhood was owed are said to come “from the *Ager Tlatus* of Picus Martius”, from the field of a divinity.¹⁸⁹ If these *ager* are fields connected to temples or in their ownership, it would further prove that Mars was an important deity in the Iguvine religion. What type of deity Picus Martius was cannot be stated based on the information given by the Tables, but its existence in the Iguvine society must be noted.

Picus is also a character within Latin mythology and have to be discussed in relation to the Iguvine Picus. Picus appear as the namesake of the Picentes, an Umbrian-speaking people on the Adriatic coast who took their name from the god because a woodpecker leads the people on their *ver sacrum*, *picus* meaning “woodpecker”. The ancient authors are not uniform in their description of the woodpecker which Picus presumably was. Ovid has the most fantastical one, as he describes a purple and yellow woodpecker, which does not exist, and Plinius are so vague

¹⁸⁷ Iguvine Tables, Va. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁸⁸ Poultney, *The Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 190, 302, 326.

¹⁸⁹ Iguvine Tables, Va. Translated by Poultney.

that his description is unhelpful in providing an identity of the bird.¹⁹⁰ Vergil's description of the character of Picus is the most interesting, as he is described as both king, augur and warrior.¹⁹¹ The woodpecker was the sacred bird of Mars, but none of the stories related to Picus, either as king, god or bird, relates to Mars and Rosivach argues that the three should be treated as different, independent entities.¹⁹² To further complicate the identity of Picus, Rosivach argues that Picus as a god or king only existed in folklore or scholarly works and imagination, as there have been found no temples, shrines, rites or epigraphic material related to the character.¹⁹³

Therefore, based on what was discussed about the *ver sacrum* tradition in Chapter 1 and this brief summary of Picus in the Iguvine Tables and the Roman tradition, it does not seem like it is possible to construct a useful meaning. If my interpretation of the *ager Tlatius* is correct and it is meant to be understood as a farm connected with a temple of Picus Martius, this would contradict Rosivach. Another interpretation is that Picus were a god who was more venerated in the Apennine areas such as Umbria and Samnium and that the Romans appropriated the name of Picus to construct the genealogy of their kings. In either case, the Roman and Latin tradition of Picus do not inform us further about the meaning of the Iguvine Picus since so little is known of this particular Picus. Hermansen even speculates that the association between Picus, or the *picus*, is a result of the Roman incentive to rationalise their own vague gods with something more concrete, like the highly personalised Greek gods.¹⁹⁴

Mars Grabovius

Mars Grabovius is an important figure in the Iguvine religion and appears in relation to the lustration and purification of the people of Iguvium, the Iguvine community and the Fisian Mount. Despite the central position of Mars in the Iguvine pantheon Mars Grabovius only appears two times in the Tables. The first appearance is in Table Ia in relation to the sacrifices conducted before the Tesenacan Gate for the purification of the Fisian Mount and of Iguvium.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ Mackay, Theodora Stillwell. "Three poets observe picus". *American Journal of Philology* vol. 96, no. 3, 1975: 272-275. p. 272.

¹⁹¹ Vergil, *Aeneid* 7, 170-191. Translated by Theodore C. Williams. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1910.

¹⁹² Rosivach, V. J. "Latinus' genealogy and the place of Picus (Aeneid 7.45-9, 170-91). *The Classical Quarterly* vol. 30, no. 1, 1980: 140-152. p. 142.

¹⁹³ Rosivach, "Latinus' genealogy and the palace of Picus", p. 142, 145.

¹⁹⁴ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 177-178.

¹⁹⁵ Iguvine Tables, Ia. Translated by Poultney.

Before the Tesenacan Gate sacrifice three oxen; sacrifice to Mars Grabovius for the Fisian Mount, for the state of Iguvium. Present grain-offerings, place the ribs on a tray, sacrifice with mead, and pray in a murmur with (offerings of) fat and grain.¹⁹⁶

The second appearance, in Table VIb, follows the same type of sacrifice: oxen, mead and cakes are to be sacrificed. Here it is possible to gain more information than the invocation in Table Ia, as the Tables order that the invocation to Jupiter Grabovius, that was used at the Trebulan Gate, shall be said in this sacrifice as well. This invocation will henceforth be referenced as the Trebulan invocation. For the purpose of this thesis, I have changed the name from Jupiter to Mars Grabovius, as it is reasonable to argue that during the sacrifice to Mars it would not be appropriate to invoke Jupiter, even though the invocation is the same. The Tables include an invocation to Jupiter Grabovius that is to be performed first, then orders that the same invocation should be repeated for Mars Grabovius, but this invocation is not engraved in the Tables. Therefore, I have included the invocation to Jupiter for illustrative purposes and changed the name from Jupiter to Mars, otherwise, the invocation is unaltered and unmodified.

“Thee I invoke as the one invoked, Mars Grabovius, for the Fisian Mount, for the state of Iguvium, for the name of the mount, for the name of the state. Be thou favourable, be thou propitious to the Fisian Mount, to the state of Iguvium, to the name of the mount, to the name of the state. In the consecration I invoke thee as the one invoked Mars Grabovius; in trust of the consecration I invoke thee as the one invoked, Mars Grabovius. Mars Grabovius, thee I invoke with this perfect ox as a propitiatory offering of the Fisian Mount, for the state of Iguvium, for the name of the mount, for the name of the state. Mars Grabovius, by the effect of this ox bring it to pass, if on the Fisian Mount fire hath occurred or in the state of Iguvium the due rites have been omitted, that it be not as intended. Mars Grabovius, if in thy sacrifice there hath been any omission, any sin, any transgression, any damage, any delinquency, if in thy sacrifice there be any seen or unseen fault, Mars Grabovius, if it be right, with this perfect ox as a propitiatory offering may purification be made. Mars Grabovius, purify the Fisian Mount, purify the state of Iguvium. Mars Grabovius, purify the name of the Fisian Mount, of the state of Iguvium, purify the magistrates, the priesthoods, the lives of men and of beasts, the fruits. Be favourable and propitious with thy peace to the Fisian Mount, to the state of Iguvium, to the name of the mount, to the name of the state. Mars Grabovius, keep safe the Fisian Mount, keep safe the state of Iguvium. Mars Grabovius, keep safe the name of the Fisian Mount, of the state of Iguvium, keep safe the magistrates, the priesthoods, the lives of men and of beasts, the fruits. Be favourable and propitious with thy peace to the Fisian Mount, to the state of Iguvium, to the name of the mount, to the name of the state. Mars Grabovius, thee with this perfect ox as propitiatory offering for the Fisian Mount, for the state of Iguvium, for the name of the mount, for the name of the state of

¹⁹⁶ Iguvine Tables, Ia. Translated by Poultney.

*Iguvium, for the name of the mount, for the name of the state, Mars Grabovius, thee I invoke.*¹⁹⁷

This lengthy invocation to Mars and Jupiter Grabovius provides crucial information about the Iguvine perception of Mars. The most important aspects of the invocation are the purification of the Fisian Mount and the Iguvium, the safety of the magistrates and the priests, and that Mars Grabovius should be favourable to Iguvium. The Tables depiction of Mars Grabovius does not mention or contain any references to the war-like associations which we know from Roman sources and tradition and only refers to the safety of the community and its administration. This divine “portfolio” that has developed from the previously mentioned invocation in Table Ia has a strong connection to the key aspects of the prayers to Tursa and Prestota as well. Since the religious formula from Table VIb is the longest record in the Iguvine Tables regarding Mars Grabovius, it should be a significant piece of any analysis of Mars from the Tables. What might further complicate the analysis is the fact that the invocation is the same to Jupiter Grabovius. It is therefore possible to question if the invocation is dedicated to Mars or if it is a result of the epithet Grabovius and should belong to an analysis of the epithet instead of Mars. The information available in the Iguvine Tables about the figure of Jupiter Grabovius is also mainly focused on the same invocations that Jupiter shares with Mars Grabovius. Thus, it is not possible to differentiate between them on the basis of the epithet. It seems like Jupiter Grabovius and Mars Grabovius did have a functional overlap in terms of divine functions.

The other meanings of Jupiter that are found in the Tables might be useful to analyse as to see if that might provide further information so that we might decide if the invocation in Table VIb can say something about Mars Grabovius. Besides Jupiter Grabovius, several other deities with different epithets or that have Jupiter, in the form of Jovius/Jovia, as an epithet is found in the tables. They are Tefer Jovius, Ahtus Jupiter, Jupiter Arsmo, Jupiter Sancius, Dicamnus Jovius, Hondus Jovius, Trebus Jovius and the aforementioned Tursa Jovia. Earlier in the text, I have already discussed the entity of Ahtus and Hondus and the epithet in association with Tursa Jovia. That leaves Tefer Jovius, Jupiter Arsmo, Jupiter Sancius, Dicamnus Jovius and Trebus Jovius for analysis. Some of these variations of Jupiter do not provide much information about Jupiter at his core or of themselves. Some are also clouded in uncertainty due to translations, such as Dicamnus Jovius.¹⁹⁸ It might even be the case that Dicamnus is not even a divine

¹⁹⁷ Iguvine Tables, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

¹⁹⁸ Poultney, *The Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 173.

name.¹⁹⁹ Jupiter Arsmo and Jupiter Sancius are both connected to the decurial festival described in Table IIb, whereas Jupiter Arsmo seems to be associated with the priesthood and Jupiter Sancius to the keeping of oaths.²⁰⁰ Concerning the interpretation of Tefer Jovius and Trebus Jovius, they seem to be connected to the community of Iguvium. Tefer is mentioned in Table Ia and receives a larger prayer in VIb, where the god receives a sacrifice for the purification of Iguvium, the Fisian Mount, the purification and safety of the priests and magistrates, the men, beasts and fruits.²⁰¹ Trebus Jovius are always connected to the sacrifices conducted at the Trebulan Gate, the first gate to receive the sacrifices and the first gate which the priests reach during the purification of the city.²⁰²

Further discussion about the epithet Grabovius can still be made. The origin of the epithet may be an Umbrian word, but linguistically it is tied to Illyrian. Therefore, some scholars have argued that Grabovius is an Illyrian epithet. Through its relation to Illyrian, Grabovius can be interpreted as “belonging to oaks” or “oak god”.²⁰³ The relationship between Mars and Jupiter to oaks has a long tradition but must be based on Roman and Greek sources. According to Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Propertius and Plutarch, there was supposedly in Rome a temple to Jupiter Feretrius where Romulus sacrificed, which had an ancient oak tree, which traditionally was regarded as the first Roman temple; according to Vergil Aeneas offered spoils to Mars and planted an oak, the Flavii estate is also said to have an oak dedicated to Mars.²⁰⁴ Rosenzweig ties the connection with the tree to the protection of the community, which might explain the importance of Jupiter and Mars in the purification of Iguvium, both in a ritual sense and physically with the expulsion of the foreigners and perceived enemies of Iguvium. Another interpretation of the epithet is proposed by Augusto Ancillotti and Romolo Cerri. They propose that the Grabovius epithet is connected to an older god called Grabus, whose place the Grabovian triad has taken.²⁰⁵ Their interpretation is rooted in the tradition of the Indo-European religious ideology, similar to Dumézil. Ancillotti and Cerri argue that the figure of Mars is both that of an agrarian god and a war god since in the Indo-European tradition, the landowner is also a warrior.²⁰⁶ For Ancillotti and Cerri, the Roman *optimatus* is the prime example of this, but

¹⁹⁹ Poultney, *The Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 173.

²⁰⁰ Poultney, *The Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 245, 199.

²⁰¹ Iguvine Tables, Ia, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

²⁰² Iguvine Tables, Ia, VIa. Translated by Poultney.

²⁰³ Rosenzweig, *Ritual and Cult in Pre-Roman Iguvium*, p. 69.

²⁰⁴ Rosenzweig, *Ritual and Cult in Pre-Roman Iguvium*, p. 71, 85.

²⁰⁵ Ancillotti, Cerri, *The Tables of Iguvium*, p. 73.

²⁰⁶ Ancillotti, Cerri, *The Tables of Iguvium*, p. 68-69.

this term is associated with the late Roman Republic and should not be used as an argument to reconstruct the ideology of the ancient Iguvines.

From this brief analysis of the different interpretations of Jupiter and the meaning behind Grabovius, it can be stated that there is a similarity between Mars and Jupiter Grabovius via the epithet. Since they are the two most important gods in the Grabovian triad, since Vofionus do not receive prayers to the same extent, it is not too strange that the gods receive similar prayers and sacrifices.

From the rudimentary analysis above, it is obvious that Jupiter had a central place in the Iguvine pantheon, hence the many epithets that draw upon his name and the many different epithets assigned to Jupiter. These epithets or divine name of Jupiter do not form a coherent portfolio. They cover a wide range of different functions and places in the Iguvine pantheon, from the decurial festivals and deities associated with the different *gens*, to the more mysterious and un-tangible Jupiter Hodius and Ahtus Jovius and to the city oriented and protective Tefer Jovius and Jupiter Grabovius. The Martius-triad of Prestota, Tursa and Serfus constitutes a coherent front in terms of divine functions as they are connected with the protection of Iguvium. The shared Grabovius epithet between Jupiter and Mars is therefore not enough to deny the association of Mars with the community in terms of lustration, purification and safety. On the basis of this, I would argue that Mars Grabovius can be counted as a god that is connected with the community, rather than the traditional Roman association with war. Details about the worship of Mars are rather lacking, as aside from the invocations regarding the purification of the Fisian Mount, no other details are provided. This is a stark difference from the numerous and detailed prayers to Tursa and Prestota which we know from the Tables written in the Latin script. Again, if we ignore our Roman-biased presumptions and knowledge, Mars is a god of the city, or a protective force of it, given the references to the Fisian Mount and the people and community of Iguvium.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Iguvine Tables, Ia, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

2.6 Conclusion about Mars in Umbria

A protective Mars?

The question I asked above is how the Martius-triad relate to Mars in a functional sense since we do not know how the ancient Iguvines thought about their divine relation to each other or if there ever were any. In this regard, the Tables provide no further evidence. Tursa is an aggressive, hostile force, both in terms of the natural and martial, which the Iguvines could direct towards their traditional enemies. Secondly, Prestota fulfils much of the same function but has more protective associations, based on the prayers and analysis of the name, while also being charged with providing a good peace. Thirdly, Mars is not invoked in any of these martial contexts, only appearing in the source material as a god in relation to the purification of Iguvium and its people. This is most evident in the Trebulan prayer to Mars and Jupiter Grabovius in Table VIb, where Mars is invoked primarily for the protection and safety of the community, the magistrates, priests and the people and animals of Iguvium.²⁰⁸

This does not mean that one should draw a dichotomy between the “aggressive Mars” and “protective Mars”. Mars could still have martial connotations, although these do not appear as clearly in the Iguvine Tables as the protective associations. I will therefore not exclude the possibility of a war-like Mars on the basis of the Tables. An example of a typically martial-focused god worshipped in association with something outside of their traditional sphere is Hercules in Samnium, a neighbouring region of Umbria. Hercules and Mars are also often associated with each other, which might inform us about how Mars could be interpreted in Umbria.²⁰⁹ In Samnium, Hercules was worshipped in relation to transhumance and was an important god, as transhumance was the cornerstone of the Samnite economy.²¹⁰ The reason for this is the myth of Hercules and the cattle of Geryon, which Hercules travelled to Italy to gather, thus, the myth created the transhumance interpretation of Hercules, who is often most associated with war, victory and triumph.²¹¹ The worship of Hercules in Samnium proves how a myth could provide a foundation for a very different local interpretation or worship and could inform us about how important meanings of a god could change based on local interpretations.

²⁰⁸ Iguvine Tables, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

²⁰⁹ Bradley, Glinister, “Italic Religion”, p. 182.

²¹⁰ Bispham, “The Samnites”, p. 187.

²¹¹ Bispham, “The Samnites”, p. 187.

It seems like the Martius-triad and Mars do indeed have protective meanings, especially towards the Iguvium. This conclusion should not be taken as the same conclusion that Scholz reached about the state-supporting interpretation of Mars in Rome.²¹² Scholz's focus was primarily on the *ver sacrum*, the traditional migration and city founding myths of the ancient Italic societies, and the replacement of Mars in favour of Jupiter. Scholz also studied the Iguvine Mars and drew the conclusion that Mars of Iguvium was a chthonic god with an agricultural focus.²¹³ I would instead argue that Mars is a protective deity which in the Iguvine Tables can be interpreted as state-supporting only through the association of protecting the community and the purification of Iguvium. The Martius-triad is prayed to as the foreigners are banished and expelled.²¹⁴ This could be interpreted as a method of strengthening the legitimacy of the community or the coherence of the population or removing foreign, hostile elements, as the foreigners who are expelled are the traditional enemies of Iguvium. In all instances where Mars, under different epithets, Serfus, Tursa and Prestota are called upon or prayed to in the Tables, it is for the benefit of Iguvium, either by purification, harming of their enemies, protection of their people, magistrates, soldiers or indirectly by protecting the fields, fruits, and animals. Each of these divine functions can be broken down into separate pieces and each part of the triad could be labelled an agricultural, a protective or a martial deity, but in sum, it seems like the Martius-triad, and thus Mars, is mainly a protective god.

The votive bronzes found on Monte Ansciano must also be included to provide a larger picture. The important question is, then, how these votives can be interpreted to support the idea of a protective Mars and Martius-triad in Iguvium. First, it is worth noting the work done by Gabriele Cifani, who interprets the mountaintop shrines as borders between the numerous small societies in Umbria.²¹⁵ These were highly visible areas that could be seen from afar, and this interpretation has an archaeological foundation in both Umbria and Etruria.²¹⁶ The bronze votives found in the shrine of Monte Ansciano that have been interpreted as typical warrior figures could thus have been a method for the ancient Iguvines to draw the attention of Mars to the shrine and the border of the polity, and in that way ensured that the border and lands of the Iguvium were protected. From this vantage point the god would have a view of the surrounding land which the Iguvines wanted to protect or draw Mars's attention to.

²¹² Scholz, *Studien*, p. 41, 54, 56, 59.

²¹³ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 56.

²¹⁴ Iguvine Tables, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

²¹⁵ Cifani, "Approaching Ethnicity and Landscapes in Pre-Roman Italy: the middle Tiber Valley", p. 156.

²¹⁶ Cifani, "Approaching Ethnicity and Landscapes in Pre-Roman Italy: the middle Tiber Valley", p. 156.

Even though Mars Grabovius and the Martius-triad seem to strengthen and keep the Iguvium safe as their listed functions, there is no mention of a “Mars of Iguvium”. Reviewing the evidence presented by the Tables one has the advantage of hindsight, as we, the scholars, are in the future looking back at the past, and with societies like Iguvium where there are few literary sources, we can categorize and theorize as we seem fit, or what suits our interpretation. From what I can interpret from the evidence, it seems that it can be argued that Mars had some functions that would support or keep the Iguvine community safe. There are few literary sources that could inform us about the Iguvine view of Mars, which would mean that the Tables are where we could find answers, if at all. Mars, as he is presented in the Iguvine Tables, seems to be the primary god of protection of the Iguvium. Mars Grabovius is one of the two chief gods of the purification of the Iguvine community, the city, and the people. Following this understanding of Mars as a mixture of martial and protective meanings, the role of Ahtus Mars is also more clearly understood as Ahtus is an oracular god, and with the Mars-epithet Ahtus has the oracular power of the protection of Iguvium. The Martius-triad with Serfus, Tursa and Prestota also exhibit the different interpretations of Mars; Serfus must be interpreted as receiving his epithet through association with the purification, Tursa through her martial connotations and Prestota through her protective and preservation aspects.

Chapter 3: Mars in Latium

Introduction

In this chapter, I will focus on another region of Italy, Latium. Latium is a region on the western coast of Italy and the region where Rome is located. Because of this geographical proximity, Roman influences would be easier to detect than in Umbria, which was further away from Rome and came under the influence of Rome at a later date. The Latin city of Tusculum itself also represents a different relationship with Rome than Iguvium, as Tusculum repeatedly interacted with Rome and was the first Latin city to gain Roman citizenship.²¹⁷ At the same time, this proximity to the Roman source material will provide a good contrast to the local evidence from the communities in Latium, like Tusculum and Praeneste. As stated in the introduction of the thesis, I will not conduct a study of the Roman Mars, but rather of the various interpretations of the Italic Mars. Therefore, Rome and Roman traditions, festivals, and objects will not be a part of this study, even though Roman influence in Latium is unavoidable.

It is the three Latin cities, Tusculum, Satricum and Praeneste that will supply the epigraphical and archaeological material for this chapter. The votive columns from Tusculum, dedicated by the military tribune M. Furius to Mars and Fortuna will be covered and analysed in the first section of the chapter.²¹⁸ In that section, I will discuss the relationship between Mars and Fortuna which is attested in several Latin communities, even from Capua. In the second section of this chapter, I will discuss the *lapis satricanum*, an inscription discovered in 1977 in the ancient city of Satricum, south of Rome. From Praeneste, I will study two *cistae*, decorated bronze boxes produced in local workshops and discovered in burials in the territory of the city. One of these *cista* is often an important topic of discussion in previous scholarship on Mars, and there exist no consensus about how the image should be interpreted, but I will review the arguments surrounding it.²¹⁹ The second *cista* is closer to the Roman tradition of Mars and lacks any identifying engravings, but it is still counted as a depiction of Mars in the *LIMC*, *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, and should therefore be included in the discussion. In

²¹⁷ Salmon, Edward Togo, Potter, T. W. "Tusculum". *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. <https://oxfordre.com/classics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-6610;jsessionid=637A9CC9B8DFF30340DE05C502A57DC6> . First published 07.03.2016, accessed 20.04. 2023.

²¹⁸ Miano, Daniele. *Fortuna: Concept & Deity in Archaic & Republican Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018., p. 20; Ariño, Borja Diaz, Gorostidi Pi, Diana. "Tusculum en época medio-republicana: La *gens Furia*". *Archaeologia Classica* vol. 61 (2010): 161-192. p. 163-165.

²¹⁹ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 52; Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 20.

the section about the Praenestine material I will compare the previous analyses of this *cista* by Scholz, Hermansen and Dumézil against that of newer research conducted by van der Meer, Scott Ryberg and Bordenachi Battaglia and Emiliozzi.

3.1 Mars and Fortuna in Tusculum

Rome and Tusculum had an adversarial past, as Tusculum harboured Tarquinius Superbus and founded the Latin League to fight against the hegemony of Rome, but despite this, Tusculum was the first Latin town to get Roman citizenship in 381 BCE.²²⁰ Tusculum also joined the Latin revolt against Rome 340-338 BCE and as a result Tusculum was invaded by Rome.²²¹ The mythological genealogy of the Latin cities was an important mark of identity which lasted until the 4th century BCE when it slowly got replaced with the Roman foundation myth of Aeneas and his line of descendants.²²² Some Latin cities shared a common myth for their founder, it was Telemachus, son of Odysseus and the sorceress Circe, although many other competing stories are attested.²²³ In Tusculum, it eventually developed into two alternative foundation myths, balancing both identities, where one claimed Telegonus as the founder, from the Latin Odysseus and Circe myth, the other claimed Silvius, a king of Alba Longa and thus a descendant of Aeneas as the founder, which belonged to the Roman tradition.²²⁴

Two inscribed columns were discovered in Tusculum, offered by M. Furius, and dedicated to Mars and Fortuna between the 3rd and the 1st century BCE.²²⁵ The votive columns were made of white limestone and were found in 1842, close to the tomb of the Furii which was already discovered between 1665 and 1667 in what would then have been the extra-urban area of the city.²²⁶ The base diameter of the columns is 24cm and the columns themselves have a diameter of 18cm and a height of approximately 45-50cm.²²⁷ The reason for the uncertainty of the

²²⁰Salmon, Edward Togo, Potter, T. W. "Tusculum". *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

<https://oxfordre.com/classics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-6610;jsessionid=637A9CC9B8DF30340DE05C502A57DC6> . First published 07.03.2016, accessed 20.04. 2023.

²²¹ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en época medio-republicana", p. 185.

²²² Ceccarelli, Letizia. "Ethnicity and the identity of the Latins. The evidence from sanctuaries between the sixth and the fourth centuries BC". In *Landscape, Ethnicity and Identity in the archaic Mediterranean area*, edited by Gabriele Cifani and Simon Stoddart. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2012. p. 109-111.

²²³ Ceccarelli, "Ethnicity and the identity of the Latins", p. 109.

²²⁴ Ceccarelli, "Ethnicity and the identity of the Latins", p. 110.

²²⁵ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en época medio-republicana", p. 168; Warmington, Eric Herbert. *Archaic Inscriptions volume IV*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940. p. 72; Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 49-50.

²²⁶ Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 49; Ariño and Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en época medio-republicana", p. 167, 179.

²²⁷ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en época medio-republicana", p. 167.

measurements of the columns has been damaged since their creation.²²⁸ At some point before 1930 the columns disappeared from the villa Rufinella, where they had been housed since their discovery, and in 1960 the column dedicated to Mars was recovered, while the Fortuna column is considered lost.²²⁹

Through some parts of Italy, among them Latium, there seems to be an association or a divine relation between Mars and Fortuna, evident from the votive columns of M. Furius. The exact manner of this association between the gods is impossible to answer fully, as it certainly changed from place to place and person to person, but it is possible to see a tradition in Latium and Campania in which Mars and Fortuna were invoked in proximity to each other.²³⁰ Daniele Miano argues that several of the places of worship for Fortuna in the instances where the god is in connection with Mars, such as Praeneste and Tusculum in Latium, points towards a defensive interpretation.²³¹ Indications for this theory are that temples and places of worship of Fortuna, with Mars, have been found close to borders between cities and outside the city walls.²³² The idea that the association between Fortuna and Mars might be a result of local myths and legends is not strong, in my opinion. Fortuna and Mars have been found in close proximity in Praeneste, Tusculum and Capua.²³³ The fact that the practice of associating these gods with each other is found not only in Latium but also in Campania indicates that the practice is not a result of a single local tradition or Latin tradition.

The dedicatory columns of M. Furius

The connection between Mars and Fortuna is evident on the columns of M. Furius as well, where the dedication is paid for or commissioned out of spoils of war, synergising the divine spheres of the goddess of luck and fortune and the Roman god of war.²³⁴ The purpose of the columns, besides being dedicatory objects, is to provide a place for the offering of smaller votive goods and materials and Ariño and Gorostidi Pi argue that the columns must have been placed in a sacred area and were not household objects.²³⁵ This statement coincides with

²²⁸ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en época medio-republicana", p. 163, 165-166.

²²⁹ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en época medio-republicana", p. 163, 165-166.

²³⁰ Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 50, 51, 54, 61.

²³¹ Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 61, 73, 75, 76.

²³² Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 53, 61.

²³³ Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 61, 73, 75, 76.

²³⁴ Warmington, *Archaic Inscriptions volume IV*, p. 72.

²³⁵ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en época medio-republicana", p. 167, 175.

Miano's statement that a cult dedicated to Fortuna could have been present in Tusculum.²³⁶ If the columns were housed in a small cult space or altar, perhaps this area was also dedicated to Mars, given the two gods' connection. It would also be fitting for a family whose rise to prominence possibly stemmed from the marriage of a Roman general or adoption.²³⁷ The inscription on the columns follows below:

- (i) *M. Fourio C. f. tribunos*
[milita]re de praidad Fortune dedet.
- (ii) *M. Fourio C. f. tribunos*
*militare de praidad Maurte dedet.*²³⁸

The inscription has been translated by Eric Herbert Warmington and reads:

- (i) *Marcus Furius, military tribune, son of Gaius, gave this to Fortune out of spoils.*
- (ii) *Marcus Furius, military tribune, son of Gaius, gave this Mars out of spoils.*²³⁹

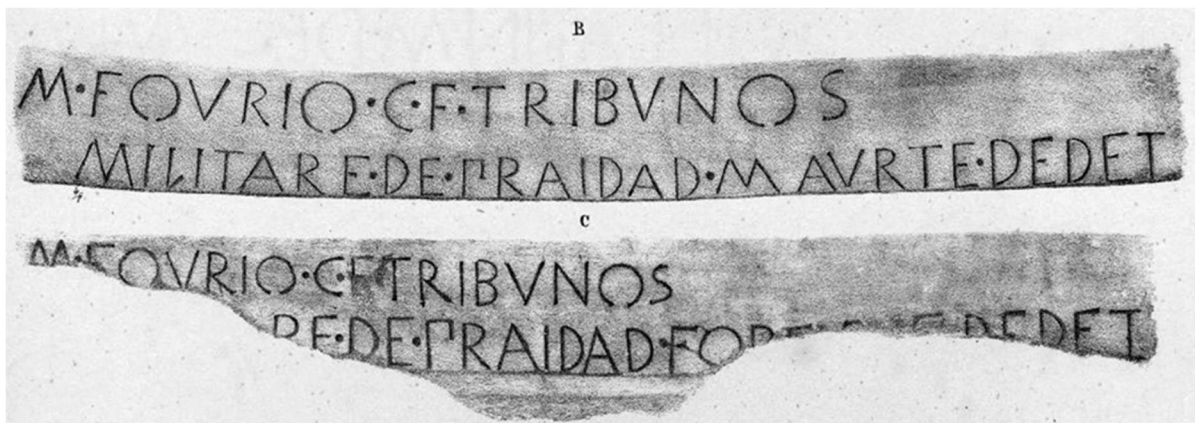


Photo provided by Daniele Miano.

The dating of the votive is, however, heavily discussed, as several scholars disagree on the issue. The dating ranges from the latter half of the 1st century BCE (Champeaux, Degrassi and

²³⁶ Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 49-50.

²³⁷ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en época medio-republicana", p. 185.

²³⁸ Miano, Daniele. *Fortuna*. p. 49; Warmington, *Archaic Inscriptions volume IV*, p. 72.

²³⁹ Warmington, *Archaic Inscriptions volume IV*, p. 72.

Münzer) to the third century BCE (Warmington, Pocetti and Gorostidi Pi).²⁴⁰ The arguments for an older dating stem from linguistic evidence and the formulations on the columns, leaning more towards the style of older epigraphic material.²⁴¹ The most similar material to compare the formulations with is the epitaphs of the Roman Scipio family, dating from the 3rd century BCE.²⁴² Besides the formulations, the spelling itself is archaic in style but also contains some regional dialect, leading to the spelling of Mars as Maurte and Furius as Fourius.²⁴³ Even though there is no consensus on the dating of the columns it can be assumed that they are from the 2nd or the 3rd centuries BCE, based upon the estimates of previous scholars mentioned above. The inscription itself, where Furius describes his occupation as a military tribune, already gives away that it was created after Rome annexed Tusculum and properly incorporated the city into its sphere of influence.

We must assume that, to a degree, that M. Furius knew his own gods and what would be a suitable and appropriate offering for the two gods and that a votive made of spoils suited the gods. The identity of M. Furius is also important, and there are some archaeological clues from Tusculum which can provide more details about the Furii-family such as the Furii-family tomb, discovered between 1665 and 1667.²⁴⁴ The tomb of the Furii is evidence of the amalgamation of cultures and traditions that interacted with each other in Latium, from Roman, to Latin, Etruscan and Greek. The sarcophagus was made of local stone but inspired by Greek marble styles popular in Latium in the 3rd and 4th century BCE, while the tomb itself is inspired by Etruscan styles which were common in Latium.²⁴⁵

What can the dedicatory columns say about Mars?

What does the dedication tell us about Mars in Tusculum, and to a broader extent, about Mars in Latium? First, we have to put the question the other way and instead ask ourselves: what the association between Mars and Fortuna can tell us about the meaning of Mars in this specific occurrence? As we have seen above, Mars and Fortuna have been found in close proximity to each other in different cities and towns in Latium and Campania.²⁴⁶ This proves that it is not a

²⁴⁰ Miano, Daniele. *Fortuna*. p. 50; Warmington, *Archaic Inscription volume IV*, p. 72.

²⁴¹ Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 50; Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en època medio-republicana", p. 168-169.

²⁴² Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en època medio-republicana", p. 168.

²⁴³ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en època medio-republicana", p. 168.

²⁴⁴ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en època medio-republicana", p. 175.

²⁴⁵ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en època medio-republicana", p. 180,181.

²⁴⁶ Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 51, 61, 73.

local tradition and can be used in a broader context to say something about the meaning of Mars. Besides the Roman material, we do not have access to any material which can tell us anything directly about Mars, like the Iguvine Tables, and given the proximity and early influences from Rome, it would be plausible to assume that there had been certain religious overlap in the figure of Mars between the Latins and Romans. M. Furius is one such example. Since he was a military tribune, and considering the dating of the inscription, he must have served in the Roman army. Consequently, he must have been exposed to the Roman traditions about Mars, which might have informed his dedication.

The question remains of whether the inscription and the column inform us about how Mars was perceived in Tusculum, in spite of the limits of the evidence. On the subject of the proposed cult site in the area where the columns were found, close to the Furii-tomb, it is also difficult to say anything for certain since the columns might have been moved from their original space.

There are three crucial components in the dedicatory inscriptions that inform us about the meaning of Mars. The first part is the occupation of Furius as a military tribune, the second is by what means he had at his disposal to commission the artefact and lastly, the god it is dedicated to. Through these three components, it is possible to say something about the meaning attached to Mars in Tusculum on this specific occasion. That Furius were a military tribune is important because it informs us to some degree about his experiences and perhaps his ideas about Mars. Furius served in the Roman army, and it is thus extremely likely that in his mind, Mars was a god of war. At the same time, it is impossible to state the intent behind the dedication, as we can only guess. In addition, Tusculum had been under Roman influence and citizenship since 381 BCE.²⁴⁷ Being an officer in the army would also mean that Furius had a specific set of ideas and expectations of the gods which would be different from that of a potter or shepherd. Furius did not need to ask Mars for the protection of the cattle or sheep but for victory in battle, coupled with the benevolence of Fortuna. Furius's military occupation, on the path of the *cursus honorum*, would also point towards a military association of Mars.²⁴⁸ The *cursus honorum* is the traditional series of offices and political and military positions which an elite Roman citizen passed through in their career in the military or politics.

²⁴⁷ Salmon, Edward Togo, Potter, T. W. "Tusculum". *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. <https://oxfordre.com/classics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-6610;jsessionid=637A9CC9B8DFF30340DE05C502A57DC6> . First published 07.03.2016, accessed 20.04. 2023.

²⁴⁸ Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en época medio-republicana", p. 174.

The inscription on the column says that M. Furius gave this, meaning the column, to Mars out of spoils.²⁴⁹ This is significant because it further supports the impression of what kind of god Mars was through the offering of loot from the war in which M. Furius fought. It also strengthens the militaristic connotations of the columns. The gift of spoils to Mars and Fortuna creates a coherent narrative that Furius produced this offering from his own reward after participating in a conflict, thanking the gods he perceived as responsible for his survival and, thus, success. The specific mentioning that the columns were given as a result of the spoils could also be interpreted as a sign of the god's power and influence in Furius's life as a method of explicitly saying that it was through the power of the gods that this dedication was made possible.

The last significant part of the dedication is perhaps obvious, the choice of deities that it is dedicated to. As we have seen in the analysis of the dedicatory inscription it clearly has military connotations; the identification of M. Furius as a military tribune and the columns themselves are specifically stated to be a product of military spoils. If the choice of gods were in no way related to the inscription, it would be odd to mention these specific characteristics. The connection between Mars and Fortuna, found in Rome, Latium (Tusculum and Praeneste) and Campania (Capua) and the characteristics of their place of worship point towards martial interpretations of the gods.

3.2 Mars in the *Lapis Satricanum*

In 1977 a block of tufa was discovered in the ancient city of Satricum, modern-day Le Ferriere, carrying an inscription dedicated to Mars. The block was found buried in relation to Temple II of Mater Matuta, goddess of dawn, and was originally made to be a part of a different monument.²⁵⁰ The block and the inscription have been dated to the end of the 6th century BCE, as this fit within the linguistic framework as well as the construction of the temple on the Satricum acropolis between 500-480 BCE.²⁵¹ The *Lapis Satricanum*, as the inscription is often called, are by some considered to be one of the oldest Latin inscriptions, dating back to the

²⁴⁹ Warmington, *Archaic Inscriptions volume IV*, p. 72.

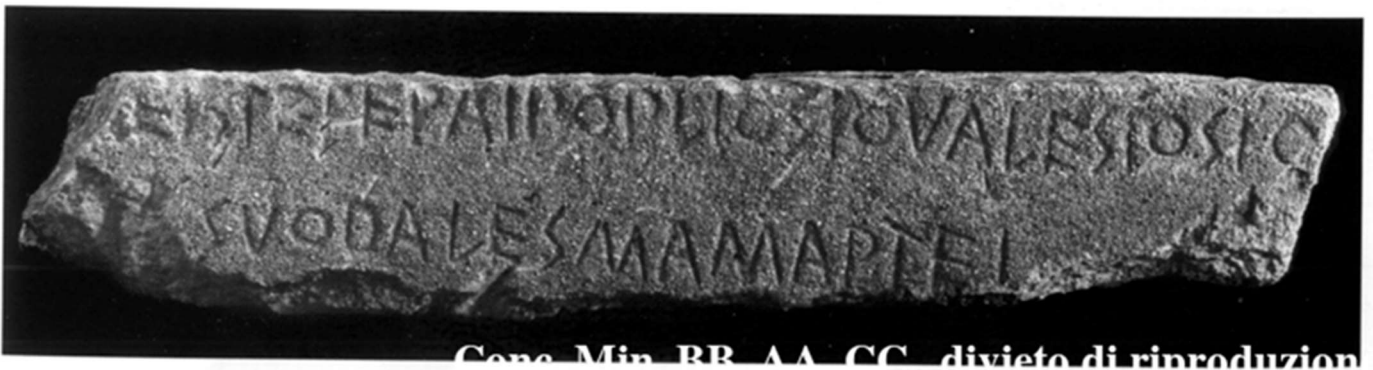
²⁵⁰ Stibbe, C.M. "The Archaeological Evidence". In *Lapis Satricanus. Archaeological, epigraphic, linguistic and historical aspects of the new inscription from Satricum*. Edited by C.M Stibbe, G. Colonna, C. de Simone and H. S Versnel. Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1980. p. 34.

²⁵¹ Gnade, M. "Lapis Satricanus". In *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, edited by R.S. Bagnall, K. Brodersen, C.B. Champion, A. Erskine and S.R. Huebner. Accessed 12. 04. 2023. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uio.no/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah20080>

foundation of the Roman Republic.²⁵² This belief comes from the name of the dedicant, Poplios Valesios, which some has been identified with the founder of the Roman Republic, Publius Valerius Publicola, despite the fact that there are no historical or archaeological data which support this theory.²⁵³ There have been put forth several theories about the origin of the inscription, but there have been found no link to any Volscian material, and even a connection to Latin is problematic.²⁵⁴ The inscription does have several Faliscian links, which Lucchesi argues strongly for.²⁵⁵ The inscription is only partially readable, and a key point of the sentence is missing, leaving only fragmentary words, thus it is not clear what the original inscription was. The inscription is, as far as we can read:

[---] uiei steterai Popliosio Valesiosio / suodales Mamertei.

± Publius Valerius and his companions (offered this) to Mars.



From *Epigraphic Database Rome*. Originally from: *Satricum. Thirty years of Dutch excavations*, edited by M. Gnade, Amsterdam, 2007. p. 2007. http://www.edr-edr.it/edr_programmi/view_img.php?id_nr=078476.

For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to the standard Roman Latin way of writing the name as this is the form that the research literature uses.

There are three important elements of the inscription which need to be discussed. First, it is the *suodales*, often translated as the companions of Publius Valerius; secondly, it is the character Publius Valerius, if he is of any importance to the dedication and, consequently, how should

²⁵² Lucchesi, Elisa. "Old and New (un)certainities regarding the Lapis Satricanum". *Journal of Latin Linguistics* 9, no. 1. 2005: 161-170. p. 161.

²⁵³ Lucchesi, "Old and New (un)certainities regarding the Lapis Satricanum". p. 161.

²⁵⁴ Lucchesi, "Old and New (un)certainities regarding the Lapis Satricanum", p. 162.

²⁵⁵ Lucchesi, "Old and New (un)certainities regarding the Lapis Satricanum", p. 162.

his person shape our view of the inscription; thirdly, the connection between Mater Matuta and Mars.

The block carrying the inscription is most likely part of a set of blocks which belonged to another monument. C. M. Stibbe, who participated in the Dutch excavation of the site in 1977, speculates that there are more blocks in the temple which stem from other monuments, but that is not yet confirmed.²⁵⁶ The block carrying the inscription is called Block II, and was flanked by two blocks of similar type, Block I and Block III. Stibbe argues that the care and craft behind the shaping of the three blocks of stone is evidence that they once belonged to another monument and were later fitted into the temple structure, where the workers even preserved the original inscription and put it out of commission by facing the inscription inwards, into the temple wall, upside down.²⁵⁷ What the original monument that the Mars inscription belonged to were like is difficult to say, but Stibbe does put forth a convincing argument that because of the character of the stone, it was most likely placed indoors, or at least under some form of shelter.²⁵⁸ While Stibbe and Colonna do not reach a final conclusion about the original Mars monument or why it was fitted into the second temple of Mater Matuta, they present a hypothesis. Colonna believes that it was once a part of a monument fitted with a lion on top, as this is common from the Etruscan areas, and the markings of the other blocks associated with Block II show signs of large amounts of work done to them which is unusual if it were a simple stone block.²⁵⁹ The issue with this interpretation is that these lion-monuments are not found in sacral environments but in relation to funerals and graves, although a single monument from the Faliscan areas has been found in a sacred context.²⁶⁰ Another hypothesis that Stibbe put forth is that the blocks once belonged to a sort of step pyramid, but due to the dimensions of the blocks, the inscribed block would be a part of the foundation which would be very unusual.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ Stibbe, "The Archaeological Evidence", p. 35.

²⁵⁷ Stibbe, "The Archaeological Evidence", p. 34, 36.

²⁵⁸ Stibbe, "The Archaeological Evidence", p. 29, 35, 36.

²⁵⁹ Stibbe, "The Archaeological Evidence", p. 35-36.

²⁶⁰ Stibbe, "The Archaeological Evidence", p. 35.

²⁶¹ Stibbe, "The Archaeological Evidence", p. 35.

The identity of Publius Valerius

The identity of Publius Valerius, the standard Latin translation of the name Popliosio Valesiosio, is of importance and should have a place in the discussion. What makes the instance of the name even more interesting is that Publius Valerius Publicola is also the name of Rome's first consul after the expulsion of the monarchy, and Versnel discusses the identification between Publius Valerius and Publicola at length. Versnel presents four different explanations about the identity of Publius Valerius: that he might be a Samnite, that he is a local aristocrat from Satricum, a member of the Roman *gens* Valeria but not Publicola or his son, or that he might be Publicola or his son.²⁶²

Of these proposed theories, Versnel only seriously discuss the last three, but I will focus on the theory of the local identity of Publius Valerius, as this seems the most plausible to me. The language in the inscription is not Roman Latin so the theory of Publius being a local aristocrat is strengthened by this, but Versnel counters this by arguing that a Roman might have commissioned the inscription in the local language or dialect. The question is, then, why would a Roman aristocrat commission this purely in the local dialect and not a transcription in Roman Latin? To me, this is further evidence that the identity of Publius Valerius point towards a local aristocrat.

Another explanation for why the appearance of the name in Satricum is that members of the *gens* simply existed in other places than in Rome and the assumed native Sabine area, like how different branches of the same *gens* existed in different cities at the same time in other places in Latium.²⁶³ It is difficult to prove this, as the epigraphic evidence of Satricum is severely limited, but Satricum were a city of a certain standing, so the idea of a local aristocracy is not unfounded, supporting both the idea of multiple *gens* or a local aristocrat.²⁶⁴

Further, there is no literary or archaeological evidence that ties the famous Publicola or his son to Satricum, and Versnel's argument that Publicola *could* have travelled to Satricum and conducted a military action in the area, possibly by himself or by orders of the king, seems like a circumstantial argument.²⁶⁵ Since there is no evidence for Publicola ever interacting with

²⁶² Versnel, H.S. "Historical Implications". In *Lapis Satricanus; Archaeological, epigraphical, linguistic and historical aspects of the new inscription from Satricum*. Edited by C.M. Stibbe, G. Colonna, C. de Simone and H.S. Versnel. Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverji, 1980. p. 129.

²⁶³ Versnel, "Historical Implications", p. 131.

²⁶⁴ Versnel, "Historical Implications", p. 130.

²⁶⁵ Lucchesi, "Old and New (un)certainties regarding the Lapis Satricanum", p. 161, Versnel, "Historical Implications", p. 133, 134, 146.

Satricum, it would mean that his son, Publius Valerius, could have been the namesake on the inscription, but this seems even less likely given the chronology of their ages, the date of the inscription and the construction of the second temple to Mater Matuta.²⁶⁶ On the basis of this, although brief summary, I hope I have made it clear why I believe and find it most plausible that the Publius Valerius in the inscription was a local aristocrat or dignitary from Satricum or the surrounding area.

Mars and Mater Matuta

Another important part of the discussion of the inscription is its location, the second temple to Mater Matuta, traditionally interpreted as the goddess of dawn. How did a dedication and part of a monument to Mars get reworked into the temple of Mater Matuta? Mater Matuta was a goddess and had temples in other Italic towns, among them Praeneste and Rome, where her temple was dedicated by M. Furius Camillus, the same Roman general who invaded Tusculum in 382 BCE.²⁶⁷ In addition to being a goddess of the light and dawn, Mater Matuta was also identified as Juno Lucina due to connotations about childbirth and children, but other theories by other researchers associate her with kindness, matrons, married women, maternal fertility, infant survival and healing.²⁶⁸

Mater Matuta did have other connotations besides the dawn and protection of children, which have been briefly explored by Smith. Smith draws a connection between the Satricum inscription and war-like interpretations of Mater Matuta based on the similar iconography in her temples in Satricum and Rome.²⁶⁹ The iconography in question is an adaption and retelling of the Gigantomachy and Amazonomachy, known from Greek myth which are found on the roofs of Temple II in Satricum.²⁷⁰ There are two roofs from the Mater Matuta temple in Satricum which would be applicable to mention within this context. The first is the Etrusco-Ionian roof which was built around 540 BCE and were placed on another building within the

²⁶⁶ Versnel, "Historical Implications", p. 136.

²⁶⁷ Mantzilas, Dimitris. "Mater Matuta: An overview of her cult", *Articles and Essays* 30. Ioannina: Carpe Diem Publications, 2018. 487-540. p. 495, 501; Ariño, Gorostidi Pi, "Tusculum en época medio-republicana", p. 185.

²⁶⁸ Mantzilas, "Mater Matuta: An overview of her cult", p. 498-500.

²⁶⁹ Smith, Christopher. "Worshipping Mater Matuta: ritual and context". In *Religion in Archaic and Republican Rome and Italy*. Edited by Edward Bispham and Christopher Smith. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. p. 144.

²⁷⁰ Lulof, Patricia S. "Myths from Greece. The Representation of Power on the Roofs of Satricum". *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* volume 56, 1997: 85-115. p. 94-96.

complex of Temple I.²⁷¹ This roof was decorated with imagery related to Hercules and Athena, which were mentioned by Smith above. Lulof herself propose that this decorative plan of Athena and Hercules accompanied by horsemen might imply associations to leadership or triumph.²⁷²

The Late Archaic roof from Temple II is the roof which has the clearest martial depictions since the decorations on this roof depicted the Gigantomachy on the ridgepole and the Amazonomachy. Lulof proposes that the depiction of the Gigantomachy comes from the participation of Dionysius, since Mater Matuta was identified with Ino Leucothea, his nurse.²⁷³ A war-like interpretation of Mater Matuta is still possible.²⁷⁴ The Gigantomachy, the centrepiece of the decorations is depicted in great detail, showing the gods with arms and armour slaying the giants. The Gigantomachy is “...the mother of all wars, the battle for world power” and this divine war might have been reflected by the wars fought around Satricum as well, a real victory depicted in a divine scene as a symbol of victory and triumph.²⁷⁵

The Companions (Suodales)

Despite these interpretations of Mars and Mater Matuta, it is still possible that the inscription was simply reused without any other context, which Stibbe hints to.²⁷⁶ The interpretation of the inscription cannot be based purely on a speculative association between Mars and Mater Matuta. The inscription itself is damaged, but the part of the inscription that is left will be discussed further. The companions of Publius Valerius, the *suodales*, are important. The term itself is complicated by the religious associations of the numerous *suodales*, but Versnel concludes that the *suodales* of Publius Valerius were of a private character, not a religious or formal companionship.²⁷⁷ The term had other interpretations too, the members could be a part of a society in a religious, professional, political or funerary connection.²⁷⁸ The social character of this *suodales* is attested in the inscription itself, as no religious companionship was named after private individuals.²⁷⁹ Ultimately, Versnel concludes that the *suodales* must be a type of

²⁷¹ Lulof, “Myths from Greece”, p. 85, 87.

²⁷² Lulof, “Myths from Greece”, p. 90.

²⁷³ Lulof, “Myths from Greece”, p. 96, 101.

²⁷⁴ Lulof, “Myths from Greece”, p. 96, 101.

²⁷⁵ Lulof, “Myths from Greece”, p. 96, 103.

²⁷⁶ Stibbe, “The Archaeological Evidence”, p. 34.

²⁷⁷ Versnel, “The Historical Implications”, p. 108, 109.

²⁷⁸ Versnel, “The Historical Implications”, p. 113.

²⁷⁹ Versnel, “The Historical Implications”, p. 121.

retinue, bound to their leader in both war and peace, sharing the destiny of their leader and having a duty to one another. The interpretation of Versnel thus has both a social and martial association, reflecting the social bonds in both war and peace.²⁸⁰

This interpretation of the evidence is critiqued by Bremmer, who states that the Roman, Samnite and Etruscan traditions which Versnel draw on are misinterpreted.²⁸¹ Where Versnel interpreted the *suodales* of Publius Valerius as a permanent retinue, Bremmer draws on both ancient sources and traditions of other Indo-European people, among them Greeks and Romans, as Versnel did, and concludes that the *suodales* is not a permanent retinue, but a temporary one.²⁸² An important aspect of these temporary retinues was that they consisted of young men who had not properly made a name for themselves, which these temporary raiding parties allowed them to do.²⁸³ Bremmer argues that these raiding parties also consisted of escaped slaves or outlaws, similar to the traditional story of the men who joined Romulus and Remus.²⁸⁴ Further, these groups of young warriors could form a new elite in other areas.²⁸⁵ This aspect of the *suodales* draws parallels to the *ver sacrum* myths discussed in Chapter 1 and could explain their association with Mars. Both the interpretation of Versnel and Bremmer construct an association between the martial world and Mars, either through the permanent retinues or through temporary, youthful raiding parties. A weak connection between the raiding parties, Hercules and Mars can also be constructed. The primary goal of the raiding parties was the acquisition of cattle and in Samnite areas Hercules was associated with cattle due to his own stealing of the cattle of Geryon.²⁸⁶ Meanwhile, one of the surrounding buildings of the first temple of Mater Matuta had a decorative plan dedicated to Hercules.²⁸⁷ This is a brief digression, but it is interesting to note that in relation to the Mars inscription, most likely created in remembrance or in honour of one of these raiding parties, and a building decorated in honour of Hercules, a stealer of cattle and associated with transhumance, existed in close proximity to the temple of Mater Matuta.

²⁸⁰ Versnel, "The historical implications", p. 112-121.

²⁸¹ Bremmer, Jan. "The Suodales of Poplios Valesios". *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 47, 1982: 133-147. p. 137.

²⁸² Bremmer, "The Suodales of Poplios Valesios", p. 147.

²⁸³ Bremmer, "The Suodales of Poplios Valesios", p. 137, 142.

²⁸⁴ Bremmer, "The Suodales of Poplios Valesios", p. 145.

²⁸⁵ Bremmer, "The Suodales of Poplios Valesios", p. 145.

²⁸⁶ Bispham, "The Samnites", p. 187.

²⁸⁷ Lulof, "Myths from Greece", p. 87.

3.3 Mars in Praenestine cista

An enigmatic local myth?

In Praeneste, there is further archaeological evidence about the potential meanings attributed to Mars in Latium through the visual imagery attested on engraved *cistae*. A *cista* is a bronze box which was often used to store toiletries, but the engravings and their perceived purpose have been debated among scholars. Most of the Praenestine objects have been dated from the second half of the 4th century BCE to about circa 280 BCE.²⁸⁸ Among the Praenestine *cistae*, there are two which will be discussed as they are the only ones that have a depiction of Mars. The primary focus for the research on Mars related to these objects is the *cista* from the Colombella necropolis which will be discussed at length.²⁸⁹

The engraving on one of the *cista* from Colombella necropolis shows a gathering of the gods, identified by iconography and inscriptions in Latin as Juno, Jupiter, Mercury, Hercules, Apollo, Liber, Victoria, Minerva, Mars, Diana and Fortuna.²⁹⁰ The purpose of the gathering is debated, and it will presently be discussed. Mars is shown naked but armed with a spear, helmet and shield, and is being shown above a jar filled with boiling water, vapour or fire.²⁹¹ Closest to Mars is Minerva, who has left her war gear on a rock and is shown holding her left arm around Mars while either touching his face, feeding him or applying a kind of ointment to him.²⁹² Above the gods, there is a palmette frieze which is broken above the figure of Mars. Instead of the frieze there is a depiction of a three-headed dog, commonly referred to as a *cerbereus*, and beside the *cerberus* there is a snake.²⁹³ There is no clear consensus on the interpretation of this scene, but some of the interpretations offered by modern scholars can be used to say something about Mars.

²⁸⁸ Van der Meer, L. Bouke, "Elite ideology of Praeneste. On the imagery of pear-shaped mirrors and cista.", p. 105; Van der Meer, "Re-evaluating Etruscan influences on the engravings of Praenestine pear-shaped mirrors and cistae", p. 70.

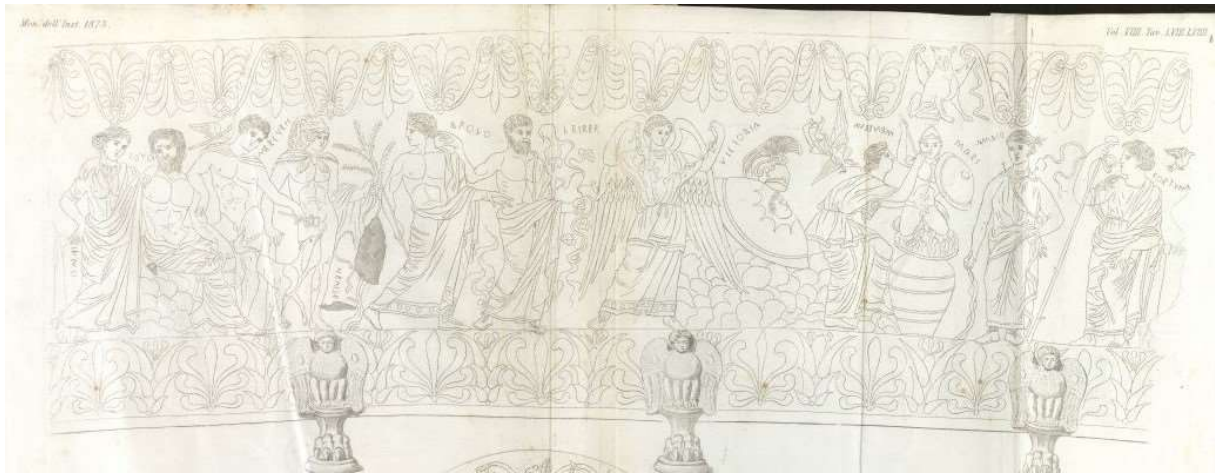
²⁸⁹ Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 20.

²⁹⁰ Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 20; Hermansen, *Studien über den Italischen und Römischen Mars*, p. 51.

²⁹¹ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 51; Dumézil, Georges. *Archaic Roman Religion vol. 1*, p. 243.

²⁹² Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 51.

²⁹³ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 51.



From *Monumenti dell' Instituto di Corrispondenza Archaeologica* 9 (1873). Screenshot provided by Daniele Miano.

There have been many interpretations of the scene on the *cista*, but the older scholarship wrongly classified the object as Etruscan and discusses it in the context of other Etruscan material.²⁹⁴ This is particularly odd, given that the box is inscribed in Latin. According to Bouke van der Meer, the objects of Praeneste should not be considered to be Etruscan, nor Roman or Italic but belong to their own culture and tradition.²⁹⁵ Further, van der Meer argues that the Etruscan influence on Praenestine engravings was minimal.²⁹⁶ Previous scholarship on Mars has often been trying to create a complete identity of Mars from a wide variety of sources, ranging from Roman literature and archaeological evidence to explanations from Indo-European studies that range from Ireland to India, all of which have been discussed in Chapter 1. With that in mind, it is often difficult to clearly differentiate how scholars like Hermansen, Scholz and Dumézil interpret this *cista* on a detailed level, as they often move from evidence to evidence rather quickly.

Fr. Marx came to the conclusion that the engraving depicts the underworld due to the presence of the *cerberus* and that the jar were filled with the waters of the river Styx, which were on fire.²⁹⁷ This interpretation of the engraving propagates the idea that what is happening in the scene is a bathing of Mars, similar to what Thetis did to Achilles in Greek mythology.²⁹⁸ Another interpretation that Hermansen introduces in his book, before his own, is that of Bayet.

²⁹⁴ Bordenache Battaglia, Gabriella, and Adriana Emiliozzi. *Le Ciste Praenestine: 1 1: Corpus A, 1-2, Numeri I-XX, B, Numeri 1-56. Vol. 1 1.* Roma: Consiglio Nazionale Delle Ricerche, 1979. p. 52-54.

²⁹⁵ Van der Meer, L. Bouke. "Re-evaluating Etruscan influences on the engravings of Praenestine pear-shaped mirrors and *cistae*", p. 68.

²⁹⁶ Van der Meer, L. Bouke. "Elite ideology of Praeneste. On the imagery of the pear-shaped mirrors and *cistae*". p. 105.

²⁹⁷ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 52.

²⁹⁸ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 52.

Bayet's interpretation is of a looser sort and is based on the idea of a resurrection or rebirth of Mars and that it is Minerva who is receiving him from the underworld, from the water in the jar.²⁹⁹

Let us then follow the argument and interpretation proposed by Hermansen. First, there has to be some significance that the *cerberus* and the snake is breaking the frieze above Mars.³⁰⁰ The snake can point to the Underworld, and while *cerberus* is connected to the underworld itself, it is also depicted like a wolf, an animal sacred to Mars. This is where Hermansen strays from a pure analysis of the engraving on the *cista* and tries to connect the engraving with other evidence to support his interpretation of Mars. Specifically, he tries to connect it to a myth about a centaur called Maris, who got resurrected and lived three lives, which in Hermansen's view coincide with the three-headed *cerberus* and the engraving of Mars over the jar on the *cista*.³⁰¹ The theme of resurrection and rejuvenation is important for his theory, but Hermansen tries to connect evidence from several different places and time periods, like Aelian, Vergil, Etruria and Praeneste. In the end, it is the theme of rebirth which is the most important to Hermansen as he connects Mars on the Praenestine *cista* to Etruscan mirrors showing children, which is similar to other stories of primal kings of Italy like Erulus, Romulus and Remus.³⁰² George Dumézil agrees that this tradition may have influenced the engraving, but he attributes the focus on the three lives of Maris as a combination of Etruscan number-tradition and their adoption of the Italic Mars.³⁰³ Hermansen's theory is not convincing to me, as it seems to be built upon a weak foundation. Hermansen states that there are no clues in Italic mythology which can identify the children, but he still argues that there is no difference between the three Etruscan mirrors and the Praenestine *cista* due to similarities in the scene; the role of Minerva, the presence of Hercules and the presence of the jar.³⁰⁴ Hermansen also draws a further parallel with the myth of Feronia and Erulus, who is the king of Praeneste in Vergil's *Aeneid*, by interpreting Minerva's role in the *cista* scene as how Feronia gave three souls to her son Erulus.³⁰⁵ Hermansen ties this association with Erulus, Mars on the *cista* and the boys on the Etruscan mirrors, all of which belong to different traditions and source material. The tradition for interpreting the two Etruscan mirrors and the Praenestine *cista* is incorrect, Praeneste was a

²⁹⁹ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 53.

³⁰⁰ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 54.

³⁰¹ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 59.

³⁰² Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 67.

³⁰³ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion vol. 1*, p. 243-244.

³⁰⁴ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 57, 58, 61.

³⁰⁵ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 67.

Latin city and were not Etruscan in culture or artistically.³⁰⁶ As I mentioned in Chapter 1, this is one of the missteps in earlier scholarship on Mars, as they draw on a multitude of sources and without proper, detailed analysis of each one they move on to another subject or argument.

The work done by Scholz in 1970, thirty years after the work of Hermansen, provides a more nuanced look at the *cista* engraving but also focus and ties this Praenestine *cista* into the context of Etruscan mirrors, providing iconographical parallels such as the story of Romulus, Remus and Erulus.³⁰⁷ These mirrors are not included here as they, at least according to the *Corpus Speculorum Etruscorum*, are not considered Praenestine or stem from Latium, so even though several of the previous scholars often refer to these objects, they are not a part of this thesis. Scholz views the Praenestine *cista* as a depiction of Mars as a boy, and thus in a similar category as the “Mars-boys” (Marishalna, Marishurnana and Marisisminoians), but Scholz argues that they could be depictions of different interpretations or meanings of Mars.³⁰⁸ Scholz step away from the idea of Minerva in a motherly role, as Hermansen interprets her, drawing attention to the concept of virginity as sacred and important for the goddess, and did not develop any motherly connotations until later in the Roman times.³⁰⁹ Following Hermansen, Scholz also believes in the significance of the broken frieze above Mars, but Scholz keeps an open interpretation of the symbol of the snake, as it is not only a symbol of the underworld but for ancestors, death, the fertility of the earth, change and renewal.³¹⁰ These last two concepts, change and renewal, stand out for Scholz as the possible interpretation of the *cerberus* and the snake.³¹¹

Scholz comes to a different conclusion about the Praenestine *cista* than Hermansen; instead of Mars appearing from the *pithos*, Mars is instead submerged into it.³¹² The bathing of Mars is not to make him immortal, contrary to Marx’s idea but is instead a cleaning ceremony that takes place after birth.³¹³ This interpretation is also supported by the much older scholarship done by Michaelis in 1873.³¹⁴ Other *cistae* found in Praeneste also strengthen this theory, as their motifs

³⁰⁶ Bordenache Battaglia, Emiliozzi, *Le Ciste Prenestine*, p. 52-54.

³⁰⁷ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 151-156. These mirrors are not discussed here because, while providing relevant iconographic parallels, they were not produced in Latium.

³⁰⁸ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 141, 146.

³⁰⁹ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 147-149.

³¹⁰ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 146-147.

³¹¹ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 146-147.

³¹² Scholz, *Studien*, p. 150.

³¹³ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 150.

³¹⁴ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 51.

often revolve around bathing scenes, battles or Dionysian scenery.³¹⁵ Even though the scenes of the Praenestine *cista* would fit into the theme of cleaning, since the *cista* was made for toiletries, and several of the *cistae* show bathing scenes van der Meer is uncertain about the meaning of the imagery but leans towards a similar conclusion as Hermansen. For van der Meer, the *cista* could very well be a depiction of a local myth, which there are no written records of, but it could also represent initiation, birth or rebirth, liberation, or protection from the Underworld.³¹⁶

In contrast, George Dumézil does not delve into a deeper analysis of the engraving or the often-compared Etruscan mirrors depicting the boys Marishalna, Marishurnana and Marisisminoians. Instead, Dumézil argues that the scene on the *cista* depict an initiation ritual and that the Mars-boys is proof of that too.³¹⁷ The essential and most important part of the scene is the martial aspects, both on the *cista* engraving and also on the mirrors. On the *cista*, Mars is seen armed with a spear, shield and helmet, and on the Etruscan mirrors both the boys and the surrounding gods have either weapons or armour.³¹⁸ At the same time, Dumézil does not believe that the figures above Mars, the *cerberus* and the snake hold special significance in the context.³¹⁹ In relation to this statement I feel more inclined to agree with Scholz and Hermansen, as the *cerberus*, or three-headed dog or wolf, must hold some kind of significance given the nature of the animal. If it had been a normal wolf or dog, something that is already associated with Mars, it would make more sense not to give it special importance.

Analysis of the cista

From previous scholarship, it is clear that there are no interpretations which can be agreed upon, and if this engraving should be considered a local myth for which we can know nothing about or if it should be linked to other archaeological material. Given that we have no written record of a myth in which the engraved image might fit, I will try to analyse the image as a lone object. In this section of the chapter, I will analyse the different parts of the arguments of previous scholars and focus on the contents of the jar since for some scholars, this is indicative of what sort of scene it is or what it is meant to represent. I have chosen to move away from the idea

³¹⁵ Van der Meer, "Elite ideology of Praeneste", p. 107.

³¹⁶ Van der Meer, "Elite ideology of Praeneste", p. 111, 112.

³¹⁷ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion* vol. 1, p. 244.

³¹⁸ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion* vol. 1, p. 243; Scholz, *Studien*, p. 143-145.

³¹⁹ Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion* vol. 1, p. 244.

that the scene shows Mars emerging from the underworld, echoing Scholz, as there is no evidence for this interpretation.³²⁰

Fire and water in Roman and Italic religion

I want to briefly discuss the interpretations of the content of the jar, as for some scholars this is an important part of their interpretation; Marx used the interpretation of the boiling or sulphurous water to base his interpretation of an underworld scene, with Minerva and Mars in the role of Thetis and Achilles; Bayet also interprets the water as being from the underworld, arguing instead that Mars is resurrected and emerge from the water; Hermansen also agrees with the interpretation of the water in the jar being from the underworld.³²¹ Water was an important part of Roman and Italic religion, especially for cleansing and purifying baths.³²² Water was more often used in the domestic and ordinary religion of the people than in the rituals and ceremonies conducted by the priests, the *flamen*.³²³ This brief introduction to the use of water in the religion of the Romans is important for two reasons. First, it gives some context to what the importance of the jar could be, which Mars is either submerged in or emerge from. Secondly, if it is water, it could inform us about the connection between Mars and other deities.

A connection with Mars and a goddess more directly associated with water, especially sulphurous water, is Mefitis. Mefitis was an Italic goddess associated with freshwater and the protection of the flocks.³²⁴ Even though we have no evidence of their connection in Latium, Mefitis was still worshiped there, and in Lucania there has been found a dedication to *Mamartei Mefitanoi*, translated as: To Mars (of) Mefitis.³²⁵ Even though this dedication is found outside of Latium there could have existed trade between the two areas, thus transmitting the idea or reinforcing it in Praeneste. The existence of sulphurous areas in the vicinity of Praeneste could

³²⁰ Scholz, *Studien*, p. 152.

³²¹ Hermansen, *Studien*, p. 52, 53.

³²² Edlund-Berry, Ingrid. "Hot, cold, or smelly: The power of sacred water in Roman religion, 400-100 BCE" in *Religion in Republican Italy* edited by Celia E. Schultz and Paul B. Harvey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. p. 163, 165, 166.

³²³ Edlund-Berry, "Hot, cold, or smelly: The power of sacred water in Roman religion, 400-100BCE", p. 170.

³²⁴ Glinister, Fay. "Mefitis". *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. Edited by R.S. Bagnall, K. Brodersen, C.B. Champion, A. Erskine and S.R. Huebner.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah17265> . 29.03.2023.

³²⁵ Linderski, Jerzy. "Religion, Italic", *Oxford Reference*.

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199545568.001.0001/acref-9780199545568-e-5539?rskey=45xhk1&result=2> . 29. 03. 2023.

have led to the transmission of the *Mamertei Mefitanoi* since Mefitis was so closely associated with sulphurous waters.³²⁶

Fire was an important part of religious life in both Greece and Italy, and several rituals and ceremonies relied upon fire to purify the city and in some cults fire was a symbol of the safety of the community.³²⁷ This would fit with the theme in the worship of Mars, which we have seen so far, both in Umbria and Latium, where the focus seemingly lies on the protection or defence of the community. The problem is that the engraving does not fit within this use of the fire. Mars is seen on his knees above the jar, and it does not fit with the most common use of fire in religion, namely offerings.³²⁸

Based on the brief analysis of the role and use of water and fire in Roman and Italic religion seems more plausible that the jar would contain some sort of water, either boiling or normal. It does not seem fitting, according to how fire was perceived and used, that the jar should be filled with fire. In addition, Mars is also connected to two different goddesses who also had connections to water, something which was essential to Mefitis.

A possible adaptation of a Greek myth

Another interpretation of the engraving is that it depicts a Greek myth, but not of Thetis bathing Achilles, but of the imprisonment of Ares by two giants, Otus and Ephialtes. They imprison him for thirteen months in a bronze jar.³²⁹ The story is told in the *Iliad*, but the iconography of the scene corresponds with that of the *cista*. The only difference is that in the re-telling in the *Iliad* it is Hermes, Latin Mercury, who rescues Ares, and not Minerva as it appears on the *cista* if it is supposed to be the same story. Due to the obscure literary source material for this myth Bordenache Battaglia and Emiliozzi propose that it could still be the same story.³³⁰ This explanation seems quite plausible given the trade relations that existed between the native inhabitants of Italy and the Greek colonists.

³²⁶ Edlund-Berry, "Hot, cold or smelly: The power of sacred water in Roman religion, 400-100BCE", p. 179.

³²⁷ Hitch, Sarah. "Fire, in cult, in Greece and Rome". *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. Edited by R.S. Bagnall, K. Brodersen, C.B. Champion, A. Erskine and S.R. Huebner.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah17161> . 28.03.2023.

³²⁸ Hitch, "Fire, in cult, in Greece and Rome", *Encyclopedia of Ancient History*.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah17161> . 28.03.2023.

³²⁹ Homer. *Iliad*, translated by A. T. Murray. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924. 385-395.

³³⁰ Bordenache Battaglia, Emiliozzi, *Le Ciste Prenestine*, p. 61.

My goal is not to come up with the ultimate conclusion of this Praenestine *cista*, but rather to highlight the scholarship and compare it. However, there are some interpretations of Mars which can be attested in the engraving. The first clue is which gods are depicted as closest to Mars, which are Minerva and Nike. The presence of these two gods close to Mars and the position of the greater gods of the pantheon like Jupiter and Juno, placed further away than Mercury and Hercules, could mean different things. It could either point toward a perception of the hierarchy of the pantheon, it could symbolize that Juno and Jupiter were not as relevant for this myth as Minerva and Nike or it could be the result of the theme that the artisan wanted to convey in the object. On the other hand, Jupiter is the only of the gods gathered that is sitting, which might imply a higher status.

Any interpretation of the engraving is extremely difficult, but through my analysis my goal has been to present the scholarship surrounding the *cista*. For this *cista*, there have been four theories to explain the scene: A chthonic rebirth or associations with the underworld or a adaptation of Thetis and Achilles, an initiation ritual, a connection with the Etruscan tradition and the young boys Marishalna, Marishurnana and Marisisminoians, and the interpretation of the scene in light of the Greek myth of the imprisonment of Ares by the giants. What the *cista* does show, however, is that Mars had, to a certain extent, a place in the artistic tradition of Praeneste, possibly a large enough presence to influence the engraver of the two Etruscan mirrors mentioned above.³³¹

The dancing Mars, is it Mars at all?

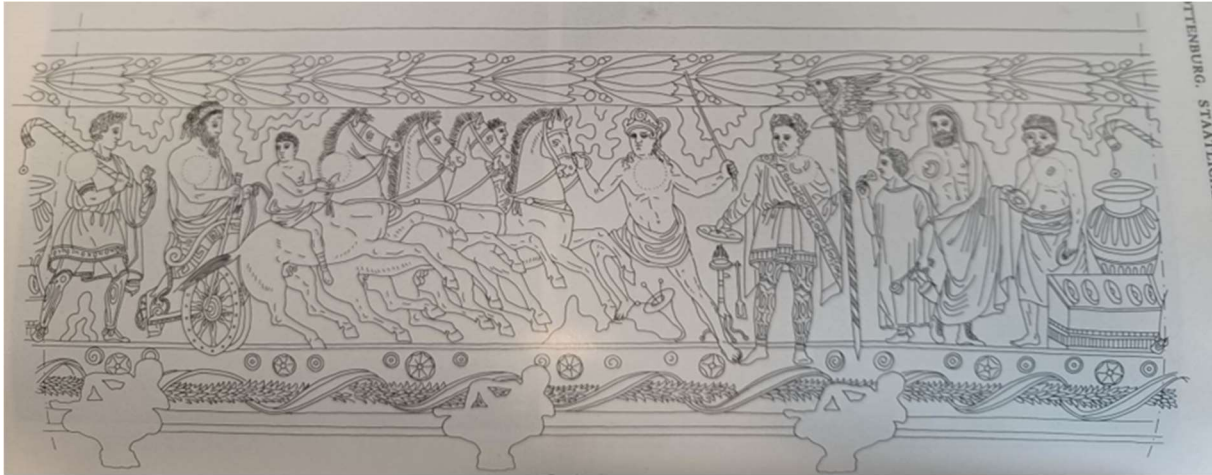
The second Praenestine *cista* has been called the first Roman reference to a religious rite and dates to the 3rd century BCE.³³² At the time of its manufacture Praeneste was under the control of the Romans, so a Roman influence in the material is not unnatural. What makes this piece more difficult to work with and interpret is the lack of identity of the characters. In difference to the previously discussed *cista*, this does not have engravings which identify the figures on the box. The identity of the character which the *LIMC* proposes could be Mars is highly uncertain.³³³ The image on the *cista* is a triumphal procession, the main character is the general

³³¹ Bordenache Battaglia, Emiliozzi, *Le Ciste Prenestine*, p. 53-54.

³³² *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* vol. 2 Aphrodisias-Athena. Zürich: Artemis verlag, 1984. p. 510; Scott Ryberg, Inez. "Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art". *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, volume 22. 1955: iii-227. p. 20.

³³³ *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* vol. 2. P. 510.

which is dressed in a more oriental fashion than the standard Roman general during the triumphs.³³⁴ Other characters in the scene include two boys, which Scott Ryberg proposes could be the sons of the triumphal general, two priests and a soldier who follow the chariot, possibly carrying a trumpet or staff.³³⁵ The charioteer, to the left in the image, is depicted similarly to how Jupiter was depicted in the Praenestine tradition.³³⁶



From *Le Ciste Praenestine I.1*, Gabriella Bordenache Battaglia and Adriana Emiliozzi. Roma: Consiglio Nazionale Delle Ricerche, 1979. Tav. LXX.

Scott-Ryberg's interpretation of the *cista* has also received some criticism, arguing that the *cista* does not represent a triumphal procession at all but rather a scene more closely associated with theatre.³³⁷ This argument is based on the clothing of the figures, their jewellery, the huge sceptre of the general and the depiction of the Jupiter-like figure in the chariot.³³⁸

The idea of the “dancing Mars” was already attested in Latium at this point, but using this *cista* as an expression of the local Praenestine interpretation of Mars is also problematic; it is supposedly a depiction of a Roman tradition, the triumph, but the depiction is a mixture of Roman, Greek and Etruscan traditions.³³⁹ Despite these problems, it is still worth a brief discussion about the dancer which the *LIMC* proposes could be Mars. The reasoning behind this argument builds upon the Roman tradition of the Arval brotherhood, a priesthood dedicated

³³⁴ Scott Ryberg, “Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art”, p. 20.

³³⁵ Scott Ryberg, “Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art”, p. 21.

³³⁶ Scott Ryberg, “Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art”, p. 20.

³³⁷ Bordenache Battaglia, Emiliozzi, *Le Ciste Praenestine*, p. 58.

³³⁸ Bordenache Battaglia, Emiliozzi, *Le Ciste Praenestine*, p. 58, 59.

³³⁹ *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* vol. 2, p. 510; Scott Ryberg, “Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art”, p. 22.

to Mars, and the imagery connected with this group from the Augustan era, almost three hundred years after the piece was created.³⁴⁰

I think the identification of the dancing priest with Mars is less useful for a discussion about the Italic Mars since the identification relies on interpretation alone. Based on the available information given by the *cista* itself and the strong connection with the Roman tradition, both for this piece and the tradition of the Arval priesthood, along with the lack of concrete confirmation that the figure in question is Mars, I do not think that this should weigh as heavy in the debate about the meaning of the Italic Mars.

3.4 Conclusion on Mars in Latium

There are several interpretations of Mars in Latium which I have discussed in this chapter. In this section of the chapter, I will discuss the findings and propose some insights into the meaning of Mars which can be seen in Latium. To conclude about the meaning of Mars in Latium, I must first trace the findings from the archaeological evidence from Tusculum, Satricum and Praeneste. The most easily attestable meaning of Mars in the evidence is war-like connotations. The Tusculum column dedicated to Mars is evidence of the association between war and Mars since it is explicitly a dedication made possible by spoils of war. The association between Mars and Fortuna for the defence of the borders and success in war strengthens this interpretation.

Across Latium, Mars is found in association with Fortuna and circumstantially with Mater Matuta. The issue with the connection with Mater Matuta is that the evidence we have analysed from Latium does not indicate that Mars had any real connection with Mater Matuta except for an iconographic overlap in terms of martial aspects. The depiction of the Gigantomachy and Amazonomachy is not a strong enough connection between the two gods. Furthermore, Mars has no association with the children either. The only evidence that could be connected with Mars and children is the flawed connection of the Etruscan “Mars-boys” Marishalna, Marishurnana and Marisisminoians. Since Mars does not actually appear on the mirrors this is a flaw in the research, as it is based solely on the similarity of the scene on the *cista*. The scholarship that argues for the connection between the two is based on Etruscan rather than Italic evidence. While the roof decorations might be real victories translated into the Greek

³⁴⁰ *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* vol. 2, p. 510.

myth for remembrance, there is no direct connection to Mars in the decorations of the temple. The hypothetical monument of Colonna and Stibbe does not help the interpretation either, as it adds more speculation to an already speculative aspect.

The inscription itself is the most useful if interpreted alone. The discussion about the character of the *suodales*, either as permanent retinues or temporary war- and raiding bands led by local aristocrats, provides the most data for an interpretation of Mars in Satricum. Regardless of if it is Versnel or Bremmer who is correct in their assumptions of the *suodales*, their definitions and conclusions place the inscription firmly within a war-like association with Mars. Some aspects of Bremmer's argument is influenced by Indo-European material, but also draw parallels to the myths regarding the *ver sacrum*, without making swooping arguments like the earlier scholars. The *suodales* of Publius Valerius commissioned or dedicated the inscription to Mars, and given the interpretation of the *suodales*, Mars is here associated with victory or war. In that regard, the Satricum-inscription can be interpreted as an archaic reflection of the Tusculum columns.

From Praeneste, the two *cista* have been analysed thoroughly by Hermansen, Scholz, Dumézil, van der Meer, Scott Ryberg, Bordenache Battaglia and Emiliozzi. The *cista* of the supposedly dancing Mars, reminiscent of the Arval brotherhood in Rome, is disputed as Mars at all. It lacks the identifiable engravings, the characteristics could be taken for many other figures, Bordenache Battaglia and Emiliozzi propose that the *cista* does not represent Mars at all but that the scene is a depiction of theatre.³⁴¹ Due to these criticisms, it is difficult to use this piece in the discussion about Mars. The other *cista*, with Mars over the jar, is equally difficult to interpret, but for other reasons. As mentioned previously in the text, the interpretations of this *cista* range from chthonic, apotheosis or birth of Mars to initiation or purification rituals or a translation of a Greek myth in an Italic context.

The appropriation of the Greek myth of Ares on the Praenestine *cista*, if that is the correct interpretation, could also strengthen the martial interpretation of Mars. If Mars is, in the eyes of the artisan, a direct or close translation of Ares into the Italic belief system, then Mars would be the closest comparison to a god of war. In Greek mythology, Ares did not have other interpretations associated with him like Mars have in Italy. If Mars is the closest equivalent the Praenestine craftsman could think of when he translated the Greek myth into the Italic context, then a war-like association of Mars is strengthened further. Given the highly debated interpretation of the *cista* it is possible to interpret this evidence in different ways, as

³⁴¹ Bordenache Battaglia and Emiliozzi, p. 59.

demonstrated above, but given the Greek influences on the temple in Satricum and on the sarcophagus of the Furi-tomb, it is not impossible to argue for a knowledge of Greek religion in Praeneste.

What emerges from the various evidence about the meaning of Mars in Latium is that Mars was a god which most of all seems to inhabit a war-like association. From the Tusculum columns to the Praenestine *cista*, to the Satricum-inscription, Mars is thanked and depicted as a god who is associated with war. At the same time, other meanings of Mars existed, like the association with defence, the evidence from Latium lean towards an “aggressive” Mars. Of the evidence analysed in this chapter, there are no deviations in the evidence without including material and traditions from elsewhere, as in the case of Fortuna, which could lead to other interpretations of Mars. Other, much weaker, interpretations of Mars could tie Mars to other aspects, such as Mater Matuta or Hercules briefly discussed above, but these arguments are not well founded. Even the association between Mars and Fortuna in terms of defence is constructed based on other scholarship and evidence beyond what is discussed in this thesis. To conclude on the meaning of Mars in Latium, Mars appears to be a god closely associated with war and victory.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

During the last two chapters, the archaeological and epigraphic evidence on the Italic Mars from Latium and Umbria have been analysed. This chapter will use the previous discussions to compare how Mars was perceived and worshipped in these two regions. As stated in the introduction to the thesis, the goal has not been to discover a “true” meaning of the Italic Mars but rather to look at the regional evidence to ascertain how a variety of people in Umbria and Latium worshipped Mars.

From the evidence in Umbria, it can be interpreted that Mars had a protective association. Mars was heavily connected with the lustration and protection of Iguvium, although in connection with Jupiter. The prayer to Mars Grabovius in front of the Tesenacean gate, a repetition of the Trebulan invocation to Jupiter Grabovius, is an important factor for this interpretation. The prayer invokes Mars Grabovius as a protector of Iguvium and the community.³⁴² By applying Rosenzweig’s analysis of the Grabovius epithet, the interpretation of Mars in a protective association is strengthened.³⁴³ The rituals and sacrifices in Iguvium also focuses on the community’s borders, as the sacrifice to Mars took place before the Tesenacan gate, meaning outside of the wall.³⁴⁴ The archaeological evidence supports that Mars had a dual meaning, associated with the protecting the community and with war. The votive bronzes from Iguvium and Monte Ansciano were deposited at a mountaintop sanctuary, which, in Umbria, was often associated with the demarcation of borders.³⁴⁵ The protective association of Mars in Umbria is further enhanced by the deposition of these bronze warriors at the mountaintop sanctuaries. Through the sacrifices conducted by the Iguvine people, Mars was invoked to watch over the borders of Iguvium.

Moreover, the Martius-triad supports a protective interpretation of Mars. Given that Serfus receives his epithet from Mars, it must mean that, in the context of the Iguvine Tables, he was operating within a divine sphere which also includes Mars. Serfus was also the recipient of the Trebulan invocation and the same invocations of banishment of the foreigners and harming of the enemies.³⁴⁶ Serfus may be interpreted as similar to Mars, inhabiting a dual meaning through

³⁴² Iguvine Tables, VIa. Translated by Poultney.

³⁴³ Rosenzweig, *Ritual and Cult in Pre-Roman Iguvium*, p. 72.

³⁴⁴ Iguvine Tables, Ia, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

³⁴⁵ Cifani, “Approaching Ethnicity and Landscapes in Pre-Roman Italy: the middle Tiber Valley”, p. 156.

³⁴⁶ Iguvine Tables, VIIa. Translated by Poultney.

protective and war-like associations, with Tursa and Prestota operating as specialised goddesses within the same sphere of influence as Serfus. Because Serfus is the recipient of the epithet *Martius* rather than *Grabovius*, it can be assumed that it was these war-like connotations of Serfus that resulted in *Martius* epithets usage. Since the only attestable major appearance of Mars in the Iguvine Tables, as the primary divine name, is in association with the protection and purification of the community and not war. The divine relationship with Serfus points toward a dual meaning of Mars, while the primary interpretation of Mars is that of a protective god. Through the association with Serfus, it can be argued that Mars does have war-like associations, but that in the context of the Iguvine Tables, these are not the primary focus, but rather the protective interpretation of Mars.

The focus on a protective interpretation does not mean that Mars in Umbria is a god devoid of his traditional war-like associations. The prime example is *Tursa Martius*, who is invoked to protect Iguvium and harm their enemies through combat (wound them, trample them and bind them).³⁴⁷ *Tursa* is primarily connected with Serfus but is a specialised goddess associated with terror, combat and harming the enemies of Iguvium. Due to the invocation from *Trans Sanctam* to *Tursa Jovia*, it can be attested that harming the enemies is the primary function of *Tursa* in the Tables.³⁴⁸ This corresponds to the divine sphere of both Serfus and Mars, justifying that *Tursa* receives the epithets – *Serfia* of *Serfus Martius*. Since this martial association is the primary interpretation of *Tursa* in the Iguvine Tables, it can be assumed that this association allows *Tursa* to be a recipient of the *Martius* epithet, while her association with the protection of Iguvium grant her the epithet from Serfus. *Tursa*, interpreted as a specialised goddess of terror and harming of enemies, can attest a war-like meaning of Mars can be attested.

The last goddess in the *Martius*-triad, *Prestota*, further exemplifies the dual meanings of Mars in Umbria and Latium, even though the association of Mars and war is barely attested in the Iguvine Tables. *Prestota* is primarily interpreted as a protective deity due to the contents of the *Rubinia* invocation. *Prestota* is invoked for the physical and metaphysical protection of Iguvium, and its people and curses their enemies. The name “*Prestota*” also alludes to this protective role.³⁴⁹ The *Rubinia* invocation implies how *Prestota* was interpreted in the context of the Tables as a specialised goddess of protection, both physical and metaphysical, through the warding against evil. Despite being closely associated with protection *Prestota* is a recipient

³⁴⁷ Iguvine Tables, VIb. Translated by Poultney.

³⁴⁸ Iguvine Tables, VIIa. Translated by Poultney.

³⁴⁹ Lacam, “*Prestota Serfia Serfer Martier, la déesse immobile*”, p. 218.

of the Martius epithet, implying that war-like aspects are not a sufficient category to receive the epithet. Prestota represents the same issue as Serfus in terms of the Martius epithet. Prestota is represented as a protective deity of Iguvium but does not receive the Grabovius epithet and only the Serfia epithet. This implies that Mars was also associated with the same form of protection and that Prestota received the epithet because of functional overlap with Mars, while she is still a specialised goddess in the sphere of Serfus.

In Latium, Mars has a slightly different range of meanings associated with him, most notably, the war-like interpretations are more evident. The prime is the votive columns of Tusculum and the Praenestine *cista*, where Mars most likely is identified with Ares. This identification with Ares, or at least the close iconographical similarity with the imprisonment of Ares, is a sign of the role attributed to Mars by some of the inhabitants of Praeneste. Ares is a god of war, and if the Praenestine artisan or recipient thought of Mars as the closest equivalent of Ares, this implies that Mars was a god of war for the recipient. The Tusculum column is explicit evidence for the association between Mars and war, and the inscription of M. Furius reinforces this by the mention of spoils. The second column dedicated to Fortuna adds another layer to this analysis considering that Fortuna is also associated with the defence of the borders and success or luck in war.³⁵⁰ The inclusion of the Fortuna column, now lost, into this discussion about Mars focuses the association between Mars and war from a general association towards a more direct, war-like, aggressive interpretation.

The Satricum-inscription is difficult to use as evidence for the meaning of Mars in Latium because of the problems associated with it, especially regarding its original use and placement. These problems have already been discussed earlier in the text. The hypothetical monument to Mars, discussed by Colonna and Stibbe, does not further the discussion since it only builds upon theory and speculation. The placement of the inscription does not offer much insight, for while it is possible to trace a vague connection between Mars and Mater Matuta, this connection is weak and relies too much upon Roman tradition and Greek myth and art. It is the inscription itself which must be the primary piece of discussion, and the term “*suodales*” which have to inform us about the interpretation of Mars in this context.

The *suodales*, the companions of Publius Valerius, have been interpreted as both permanent retinues of local aristocrats and as a loose grouping of young men who conducted raids. These *suodales* are undeniably tied to the martial world through their activities as raiders or warriors.

³⁵⁰ Miano, *Fortuna*, p. 61, 73, 75.

The Satricum-inscription attests to this model of leadership as Publius Valerius must have been the leader of these *suodales*, hence the name. The most important aspect of the Satricum-inscription is that the inscription is undeniable evidence for their interpretation of Mars. The inscription is epigraphic evidence of a warrior group, regardless of permanence, under the leadership of Publius Valerius, who dedicated something to Mars, presumably a monument. The *suodales*, due to their perceived character by Bremmer, appear similar to the warbands or expelled youths concerning the *ver sacrum*. In the *ver sacrum* myths, Mars is depicted as a protective but still war-like deity by protecting the community from various crises by the expulsion of the children in some traditions. This is very similar to the *suodales*, youths who form raiding parties and, sometimes, become new elites. In the context of these myths, Mars does not receive sacrifices for his association with war, but he is the god associated with protecting the community. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the *ver sacrum* takes place for the security of the community from overpopulation, famine, or plague.

Through the inscription, Mars is associated with the world of the *suodales*, who dedicated something to Mars as a thanksgiving. Again, the interpretation of Mars is that of a warrior, connected to war-like associations. The Satricum inscription leave little room for other interpretations of the meaning behind the inscription. Although separated by two hundred years, the Satricum inscription is an archaic reflection of the Tusculum columns of M. Furius. Like the columns, the inscription is dedicated by a group of warriors to Mars as a sign of gratitude for their success.

Mars seemed to have a range of meanings associated with two different semantic areas. In Umbria, as the primary divine name, Mars was associated with the protection and purification of the community and the borders, but as an epithet, Mars was connected with the lustration and physical and metaphysical protection of Iguvium and the harming of their enemies through Serfius and the specialised goddesses Tursa and Prestota. Furthermore, Mars, in the form of an epithet, also focuses the power of Ahtus, the oracular power; in the obscure deity of Picus, it is possible to see the influence of the temples of Mars, even though Picus himself eludes us, as Mars Hodiis there seem to be a connection with the underworld given the functional similarity with Hondus Serfius and the associations with Hondus and Tursa in Table VIb were she casts them (the enemies of Iguvium) down to Hondus and Hola. Besides this association, there is

little information available about Hodus, but some scholars connect the name with Hurie, meaning “horse”, but this cannot be confirmed.³⁵¹

In Latium, Mars is always the primary divine name, and no epithets are involved in the discussion, so the number of associations Mars receives is not as varied as in Umbria. There are still three attestable interpretations of Mars in Latium. The first is the defensive interpretation attestable with the connection with Fortuna. However, this alludes to a dual meaning of Mars since Fortuna is also associated with success and luck in war. The second interpretation is the association of Mars as a god of war. This is the interpretation that most of the evidence in Latium support, either directly like the Tusculum columns and Satricum inscription, or indirectly like the Praenestine *cista*. The evidence from Tusculum and Satricum is the strongest evidence for this interpretation as they directly link Mars to associations of war; Tusculum through the inscription and dedicant, and Satricum through the context of the inscription and the identity of the group who dedicated it. This material connects Mars with a sphere of influence incorporating the world of warriors and war. The third interpretation of Mars in Latium is built upon the second, martial interpretation and is focused on the Praenestine *cista*. The *cista* still ties Mars through the war-like world, but not as strong as the other evidence, as the *cista* is still open to interpretation. Because the scene is so heavily debated and opens for so many wildly different interpretations, it is difficult to place it within the discussion. However, the most plausible interpretation would be that Ares is translated into Mars by the artisan or recipient of the *cista*. The Praenestine *cista* of the dancing Mars, if we follow Scott Ryberg’s interpretation, clearly has an association with victory, which again is related to the martial sphere.

If we were to construct a network of interpretations and associations of the Italic Mars in Umbria and Latium, the two largest categories would be protection and martial associations. Further, there would be connections between protection, lustration and purification, and physical and metaphysical protection. In these categories, Mars Grabovius, Serfus Martius, Tursa Serfia of Serfus Martius, and Prestota Serfia of Serfus Martius would have been placed as they invoke Mars in a specific interpretation, operate within the perceived sphere of influence of Mars, or use Mars as an epithet for their own focus.

Another branch to this network would be represented by Ahtus, whose place in the associations of Mars is understood to a certain degree, but not fully how Mars as an epithet impacted the

³⁵¹ Poultney, *The Bronze Tables of Iguvium*, p. 267.

understanding and interpretation of this deity. There are some obscure categories which we cannot reconstruct or interpret from the evidence, i.e., how Picus Martius and Mars Hadius fit into the wider network of Mars and his associations.

The second large branch of the “network of Mars”, would be the sphere of influence containing the martial aspects. Much of the evidence from Latium would be placed within this sphere of the network, such as the Tusculum columns and the Satricum-inscription because these create an interpretation of Mars dedicated to war and war-like associations. There will also be cross-references between these two categories. Tursa would be placed within the more martial-focused part of the network, while the association with Mars and Fortuna would be placed in both. The interpretation of Mars as a protector of the community through the *ver sacrum* could also be interpreted as belonging to the martial and protective associations. The Martius-triad can also be interpreted as belonging to both branches of the network, operating both with the protection of the borders of the community, the purification of Iguvium, the structuring of the men into military ranks, the wounding and cursing of the enemies, protection of the citizens, magistrates, priests, and fruits.

What emerges from the various epigraphic and archaeological material on Mars is that it is varied. Yes, it is possible to artificially construct two large interpretations of Mars and the deities related to him through association or name structures, but these are not useful categories. As demonstrated, these categories can, with relative ease, overlap each other; one day defence of the border is a protective aspect, but during war, it is the soldiers who keep it safe. There should be no dichotomy between a “protective” and “war-like” Mars, as the two interpretations are relative concepts, invoked and focused as the worshipper deem useful: both existing simultaneously as concepts within the same deity.

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