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1 Montepulciano, San Biagio,  
upper storeys and spire of the bell tower,  
after 1543

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# ETRUSCAN SPEECH CINQUECENTO ARCHITECTURE IN FLORENCE AND THE *ARAMEI*

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Between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as increasing attention was devoted in Florence to the Etruscan origins of the city, a particular interest in linguistic origins was echoed in the field of architecture and its theory. Especially in the mid-Cinquecento, the *questione della lingua* came to be reformulated as a debate on the architectural style of the newborn Tuscan nation:<sup>1</sup> a style based on an uncanonical vision of antiquity, alternative to the normative classicism traditionally identified with the Roman High Renaissance, from Bramante onwards. That vision belonged to a vernacular but still high and erudite tradition, developed in Florence as early as the Quattrocento, when certain distinctly local features were reframed by antiquarian interpretations.

However, the attempt to codify a regional, or better, a national language became particularly important in the first decades of the duchy, under Alessandro de' Medici and in the first half of the reign of Cosimo I.

A dramatic and unstable period followed the end of Florence's second republic, with almost seven years in which the government of the city took on a definitively autocratic form and the Medici family was formally acknowledged as the ruling dynasty. A new need for representation emerged alongside nationalistic ambitions, and the first generation of architects hired by the Tuscan rulers sought a response to such demands in Etruscan antiquity.<sup>2</sup> But who exactly were the elusive protagonists of the first age of the duchy who began to shape a new

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Alina A. Payne, "Architects and Academies: Architectural Theories of *Imitatio* and the Literary Debates on Language and Style", in: *Architecture and Language*, ed. by Georgia Clarke/Paul Crossley, Cambridge/New York 2000, pp. 118–133; Caroline Elam, "'Tuscan Dispositions': Michelangelo's Florentine Architectural Vocabulary and Its Reception", in: *Renaissance Studies*, XIX (2005), pp. 46–82. Cf. also the earlier studies

by Charles Davis, "Cosimo Bartoli and the Portal of Sant'Apollonia by Michelangelo", in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XIX (1975), pp. 261–276, and Detlef Heikamp, "Rapporti fra accademici e artisti nella Firenze del Cinquecento", in: *Il Vasari*, XV (1957), pp. 139–163.

<sup>2</sup> A documentary survey of the early architectural patronage of the Tuscan dukes can be read in Mauro Gianneschi/Carla Sodini, "Urbani-

2 Giorgio Vasari and collaborators, *Cosimo de' Medici among his artists* 1556-1563. Florence, Palazzo Vecchio



architecture for a radically transformed state? Some of these builders and engineers were portrayed around 1560 by Giorgio Vasari in the famous fresco with *Cosimo de' Medici among his artists* in Palazzo Vecchio (Fig. 2). According to the most recent scholarship on the painting, Battista del Tasso, Niccolò Tribolo, Nanni Ungaro, and Giovanni Battista Belluzzi, il Sanmarino, appear at Cosimo's sides.<sup>3</sup> In the background on the left are portraits of the two older sculptors, Bandinelli and Cellini, and on the right the two *capomaestri* of the cathedral,

both architects and sculptors: Francesco da Sangallo with the young Bartolomeo Ammannati.<sup>4</sup> This entire generation of architects, active for more than two decades between the siege of 1529 and the conquest of Siena, has been generally set aside by art historians: in the common narrative of Florentine architectural history, a long gap separates Michelangelo's years at the complex of San Lorenzo and the hegemony of Giorgio Vasari and Ammannati in the 1550s.<sup>5</sup> The interest in Etruscan antiquity grew mostly among this group of neglected

stica e politica durante il principato di Alessandro de' Medici, 1532-37", in: *Storia della città*, X (1979), pp. 5-34.

<sup>3</sup> The discussion is recapitulated by Daniela Lamberini, *Il Sanmarino: Giovan Battista Belluzzi architetto militare e trattatista del Cinquecento*, Florence 2007, pp. 322-332.

<sup>4</sup> Daniela Lamberini, *ibidem*, associates the figure on the left with Sanmarino; the identification with Francesco da Sangallo is presented here for the first time and will be further explained in a forthcoming monograph on the artist. For Bartolomeo's portrait, cf. Amedeo Belluzzi, "Il volto di Ammannati", in: *L'architetto: ruolo, volto, mito*, ed. by Guido Beltramini/Howard Burns, Venice 2009, pp. 79-95.

<sup>5</sup> This is especially true for the textbook tradition, from Ludwig H. Heydenreich/Wolfgang Lotz, *Architecture in Italy: 1400 to 1600*, Harmondsworth 1974, pp. 245-249, 320-326, to Colin Rowe/Leon G. Sattkowski, *Italian Architecture of the 16th Century*, New York 2002, pp. 237-267. This lack of attention has been partially compensated by Caroline Elam, "Firenze 1500-50", in: *Storia dell'architettura italiana: il primo Cinquecento*, ed. by Arnaldo Bruschi, Milan 2002, pp. 208-219, particularly pp. 228-233, which contain the pithy definition of "tuscanesimo etrusco" for the linguistic experimentations of this generation. In the same series of collective volumes, the topic is also addressed by Claudia Conforti, "Cosimo I e Firenze", in: *Storia dell'architettura italiana: il*

artists in parallel with the crafting of a fictitious myth about the origins of Florence by the city's literary academy, and particularly by the circle of the so-called *Aramei*, motivated by distinctly nationalistic aims.<sup>6</sup>

### Architecture and Language

The existence of an 'Etruscan revival' in Renaissance Florence has been observed by scholarship since the 1950s, with Raymond Bloch's suggestions on the sources of Donatello's *San Giorgio* or André Chastel's *Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique*, which contained an entire chapter on the topic.<sup>7</sup> True, the association between Etruscan examples of mural paintings and the frescoes by Antonio del Pollaiuolo in Arcetri, proposed by the latter, remains conjectural.<sup>8</sup> However, the interpretation of a drawing in the Louvre (Fig. 3) – attributed by Chastel to Francesco di Giorgio but actually by Leonardo da Vinci – as the image of an Etruscan tomb has proven to be correct, especially after its plan was discovered to be based on a sepulcher in Castellina in Chianti, already visible in 1508.<sup>9</sup> More interestingly, the document that establishes such an identification is a description, accompanied by a rough plan, in a manuscript treatise on the origins of the Tuscan language: the *Dialogo in defensione della lingua Toschana* written by the Dominican friar Santi Marmocchini between 1541 and 1545:<sup>10</sup>

*secondo Cinquecento*, ed. by eadem/Richard J. Tuttle, Milan 2001, pp. 130–165: 134f.

<sup>6</sup> As observed *ibidem*, p. 132. Cf. also Alessandro d'Alessandro, "Vincenzo Borghini e gli 'Aramei': mito e storia nel principato mediceo", in: *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500*, conference proceedings Florence 1980, ed. by Gian Carlo Garfagnini, Florence 1983, I, pp. 133–156.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond Bloch, *Gli Etruschi*, Milan 1959, p. 169; André Chastel, *Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique: études sur la Renaissance et l'Humanisme platonicien*, Paris 1959, pp. 63–71. Cf. Simonetta Valtieri, "Il 'revival' etrusco nel Rinascimento toscano: il mito etrusco contrapposto al mito romano", in: *L'architettura: cronache e storia*, XVII (1971), pp. 546–554: 547f.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 63f.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Marina Martelli, "Un disegno attribuito a Leonardo e una scoperta archeologica degli inizi del Cinquecento", in: *Prospettiva*, 10 (1977), pp. 58–61. Cf. also Richard V. Schofield, in: *Leonardo da Vinci, 1452–1519: The Design of the World*, exh. cat. Milan 2015, ed. by Pietro C. Marani/Maria Teresa Fiorio, Milan 2015, pp. 566–567.

that is, in the years when Giovan Battista Gelli developed his *Trattatello dell'origine di Firenze*, assuming that the Etruscans – instead of the Romans – had founded Florence.<sup>11</sup> Gelli followed the theories of Anniius of Viterbo's *Antiquitates*, a collection of presumed ancient sources compiled in the Quattrocento, which were recognized as a substantial forgery even by the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> According to Anniius, the patriarch Noah had come to Italy long before the onset of Rome's dominion, establishing a pious and monotheistic society and founding many of the first Etruscan colonies. Among them were Arignano – Rignano sull'Arno – and Fiesole, whose population was said to have later founded Florence, with the help of Lydian Hercules. Even if already questioned, this story served as a very functional foundation myth for Cosimo I, who was still trying to legitimate his power less than a decade after his nomination as duke, or at least for his supporters in the Accademia. The unique antiquity of Florence, previous to that of Rome, justified its supremacy over the whole of Tuscany: once political control of the region was consolidated, at the end of his reign, Cosimo would have chosen for himself the title of *Magnus Etruriae Dux*, formally obtained in 1569.<sup>13</sup>

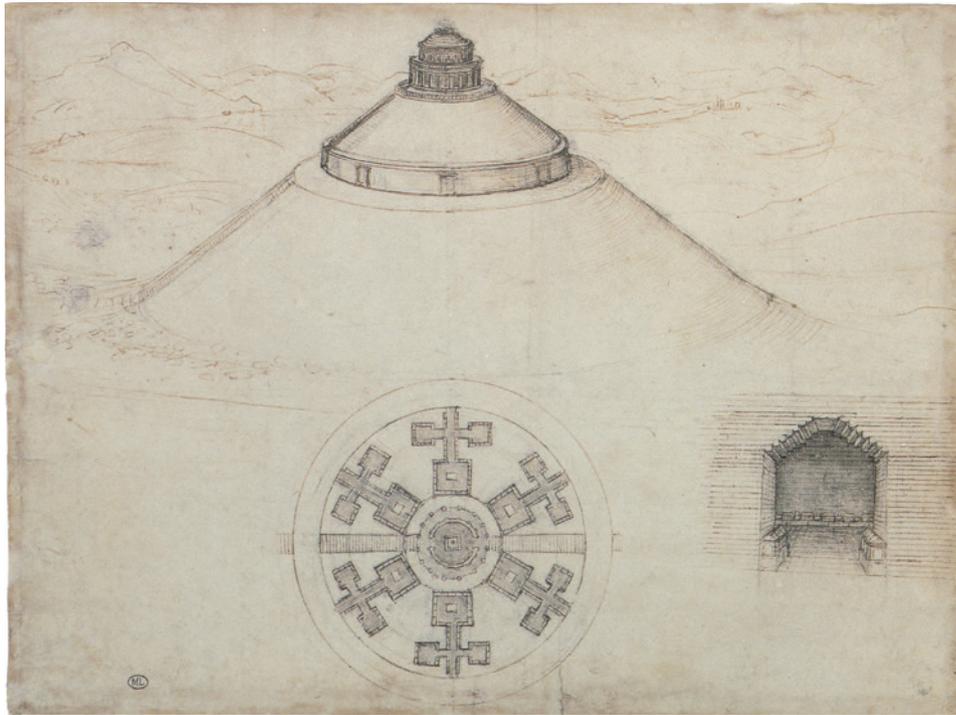
This apocryphal narrative gained popularity in the mid-sixteenth century especially due to such

<sup>10</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Magl. XXVIII.20. Cf. Martelli (note 9), p. 61, note 10.

<sup>11</sup> The first publication of Gelli's treatise dates to the late nineteenth century: Michele Barbi, *Il trattatello sull'origine di Firenze di Giambattista Gelli*, Florence 1894. For a critical edition, by Alessandro d'Alessandro, cf. Giovan Battista Gelli, "Dell'Origine di Firenze", in: *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettere 'La Colombaria'*, XLIV (1979), pp. 59–122.

<sup>12</sup> Anniius of Viterbo, *Commentaria super opera diversorum auctorum de antiquitatibus loquentium*, Rome 1498. For bibliography, cf. Ingrid Rowland, "Annius of Viterbo (1432/7–1502) and the Beginnings of Urban History", in: *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*, XII (2013), pp. 13–30.

<sup>13</sup> The apocryphal myth, as well as its fortune, has been recently examined in an exhaustive account by Caroline Hillard, "Mythic Origins, Mythic Archaeology: Etruscan Antiquities in Sixteenth-Century Narratives of the Foundation of Florence", in: *Renaissance Quarterly*, LXIX (2016), pp. 489–528, particularly pp. 495–499.



3 Leonardo da Vinci, *Sepolcro a pianta centrale*. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques, inv. 2386

political conditions. The immediate consequences of Gelli's treatise include the 1546 publication of a dialogue by Pier Francesco Giambullari, dedicated to Giovan Battista himself and, therefore, titled *Il Gello*.<sup>14</sup> The dialogic pamphlet written by Giambullari, another prominent member of the Accademia Fiorentina, employed the legend of Lydian Hercules as founder of Florence in order to assert the independence of Tuscan vernacular: the language used in modern Florence was, in fact, proclaimed to have derived from that used by the descendants of Noah, the *Aramei*.<sup>15</sup> On such a basis, the Accademia could

defend the autonomy of Florentine *volgare* from standardization attempts promoted by the followers of Pietro Bembo.

As recent scholarship has pointed out, this debate – commonly defined as the *questione della lingua* – was inextricably intertwined with architectural theory. Art historians such as Charles Davis, James Ackerman, and John Onians had already proposed a linguistic reading of the architectural orders.<sup>16</sup> Building on such methodological examples, parallel research by Alina Payne and Caroline Elam focused on the Florentine architectural theory of the

<sup>14</sup> Pier Francesco Giambullari, *Origine della lingua fiorentina, altrimenti il Gello*, Florence 1546.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Giovanni Cipriani, *Il mito etrusco nel Rinascimento fiorentino*, Florence 1980, pp. 83–87; Hillard (note 13), pp. 509–516.

<sup>16</sup> Davis (note 1); James S. Ackerman, “The Tuscan/Rustic Order: A

Study in the Metaphorical Language of Architecture”, in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, XLII (1983), pp. 15–34; John Onians, *Bearers of Meaning: The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance*, Princeton 1988.

<sup>17</sup> Payne (note 1); *eadem*, “Vasari, Architecture, and the Origins of His-



4 *Chimera of Arezzo*, fifth century B.C. Florence, Museo Archeologico Nazionale

mid-Cinquecento, revealing its many exchanges of metaphors, arguments, and objectives with contemporary treatises on the *volgare*.<sup>17</sup> In the case of both architecture and literature, the final aim was to codify a new national language for the rising Tuscan state.

The point of contact between the two disciplines was offered by another treatise, Carlo Lenzoni's *In difesa della lingua fiorentina*, accompanied by a dedicatory letter written by Giambullari which compared

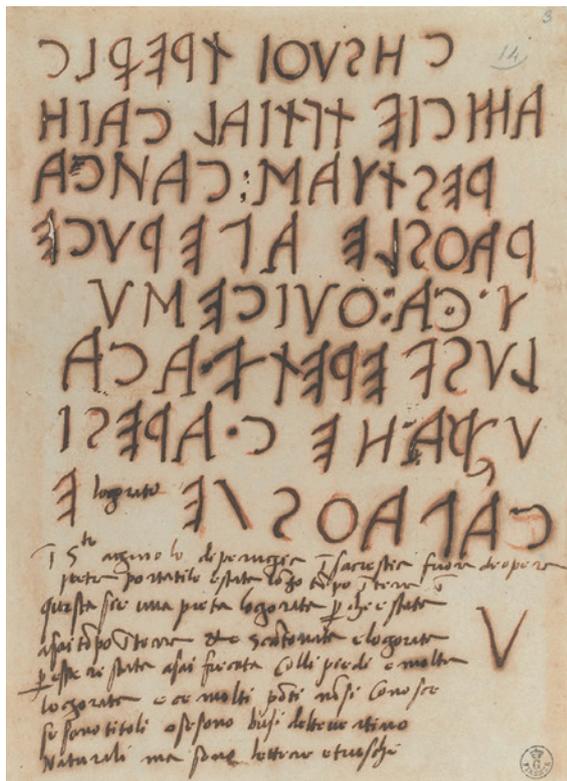
Michelangelo's architecture with the inventive, vernacular-based vocabulary of Dante Alighieri:<sup>18</sup> the composite character of Dante's Florentine, its *mescolanza*, was presented as being as effective as the inventive order employed by Buonarroti in his vestibule of the Laurentian Library. Not by chance, the building Michelangelo designed was chosen by Giambullari as the fictitious setting for his dialogue on the Aramaic, and subsequently Etruscan, origins of the Tuscan language.<sup>19</sup>

toricizing Art", in: *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, XL (2001), pp. 51–76; Elam (note 1). Cf. also David Hemsoll, "A Question of Language: Raphael, Michelangelo and the Art of Architectural Imitation", in: *Raising the Eyebrow: John Onians and World Art Studies. An Album Amicorum in His Honour*, ed. by Lauren Golden, Oxford 2001, pp. 123–131.

<sup>18</sup> Carlo Lenzoni, *In difesa della lingua fiorentina, et di Dante [...]*, Florence 1556. Cf. Margaret Daly Davis, "Carlo Lenzoni's 'In difesa della lingua fiorentina, e di Dante' and the Literary and Artistic World of Cosimo

Bartoli and the Accademia Fiorentina", in: *Cosimo Bartoli (1503–1572)*, conference proceedings Mantova/Florence 2009, ed. by Francesco Paolo Fiore/Daniela Lamberini, Florence 2011, pp. 261–282.

<sup>19</sup> In his argument, Giambullari (note 14), pp. 30–39, also identified the figure of Noah with that of the god Janus. On the widespread use of the Ancient Testament and analogies with Hebrew figures in the early propaganda of Cosimo I, cf. Janet Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora in the Palazzo Vecchio*, Berkeley 1993, pp. 287–291.



5 Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, Copy after an Etruscan inscription in Perugia, 1535-1540 ca. Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 2080 A

6 Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, Sketches of the Etruscan walls and other antiquities in Civita Castellana (Falerii), 1540-1545 ca. Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 1145 A

## Etruscan Antiquities

These evocative overlaps between architectural and linguistic theory in mid-Cinquecento Florence legitimize the hypothesis that the architects of the 1530s and 1540s had cultivated an interest in Etruscan antiquity. Perspicaciously, Claudia Conforti had already suggested that latent Aramaic inspiration lays behind Vasari's theory on the composite Tuscan order and its nationalist implications.<sup>20</sup> However, it must be verified that the 'first generation' active in the initial years of the duchy transposed the fascination with such myth into their architectural creations. A starting point should be antiquities that, without any doubt, were acknowledged as authentically Etruscan. The opinion expressed by Giorgio Vasari in his *Vite* on the *Chimera of Arezzo* (Fig. 4), for instance, is well-known; it was discovered in 1553 and immediately admitted into the duke's collection as a local testimony of the most ancient Tuscan period:

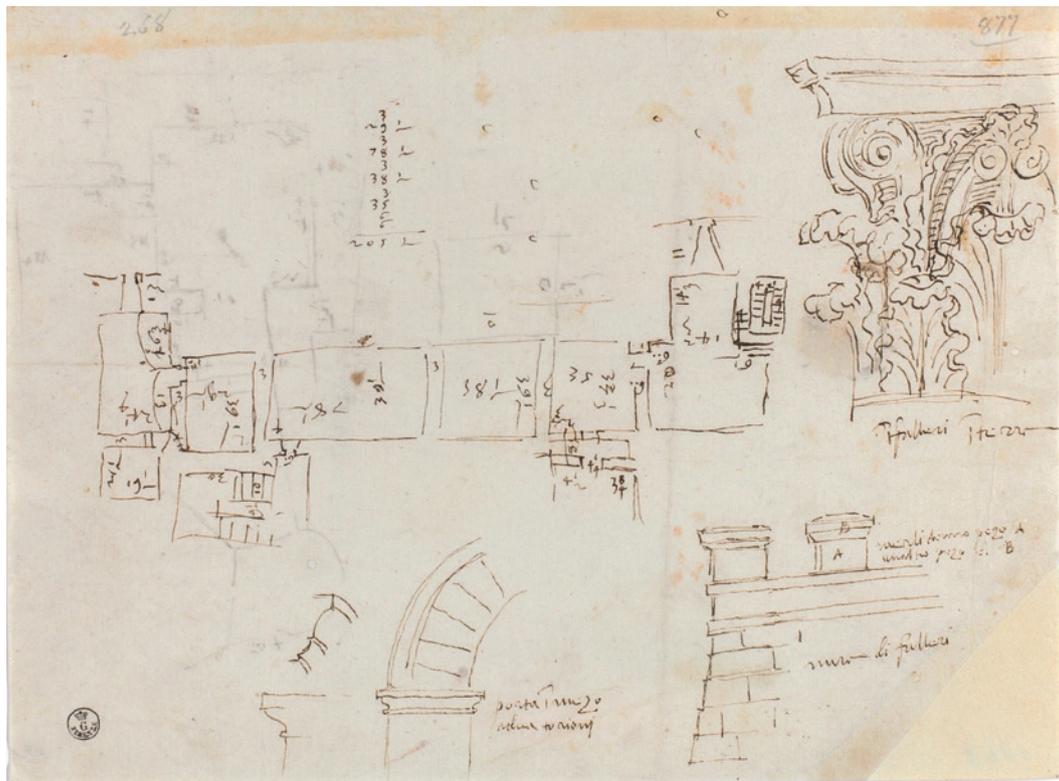
nella quale figura si riconosce la perfezione di quell'arte essere stata anticamente appresso i Toscani, come si vede alla maniera etrusca, ma molto più nelle lettere intagliate in una zampa: che, per essere poche, si coniettura non si intendendo oggi da nessuno la lingua etrusca.<sup>21</sup>

In Vasari's exercise of archaeological connoisseurship, the final proof for the Etruscan authenticity of the *Chimera* seems to be its cryptic inscription in ancient cyphers. Indeed, Etruscan epigraphs were copied and studied in the first decades of the

<sup>20</sup> Claudia Conforti, *Giorgio Vasari architetto*, Milan 1993, p. 41. Cf. also Gabriele Morolli, "Vetus Etruria": il mito degli Etruschi nella letteratura architettonica nell'arte e nella cultura da Vitruvio a Winkelmann, Florence 1985, pp. 112–126.

<sup>21</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini/Paola Barocchi, Florence 1966–1997, II, p. II ("we can recognize in this figure the perfection that the art of sculpture achieved in ancient times among Tuscans, in an Etruscan manner as can be seen, and even more so in the letters incised in one of its legs: they are few in number and we can only speculate about their meaning, since

nobody can understand the Etruscan language anymore"; my translation). Cf. Andrea Gáldy, "The Chimera from Arezzo and Renaissance Etruscology", in: *Common Ground: Archaeology, Art, Science, and Humanities*, conference proceedings Boston 2003, ed. by Carol C. Mattusch/Alice A. Donohue/Amy Brauer, Oxford 2006, pp. 111–112; Beat Wyss, "Vasari, der Etrusker: Totemismus und kulturelle Identität", in: *Nachleben und Rekonstruktion: Vergangenheit im Bild*, ed. by Peter Geimer/Michael Hagner, Munich 2012, pp. 95–108; Caroline Hillard, "Vasari and the Etruscan Manner", in: *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, XLIV (2013), pp. 1021–1040; *Chimera Relocated. Vincere il mostro*, exh.



Cinquecento. For instance, many exemplars were discovered in Florence in 1532 during the excavations for the new fortress of San Giovanni, commissioned by Duke Alessandro.<sup>22</sup> A few years later, in the late 1530s, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger copied an obscure sequence of characters from a lapidary inscription in Perugia, on a sheet now in the Uffizi collection (Fig. 5).<sup>23</sup> Antonio drew many other Etruscan antiquities during his massive intervention on the fortifications of Perugia, including

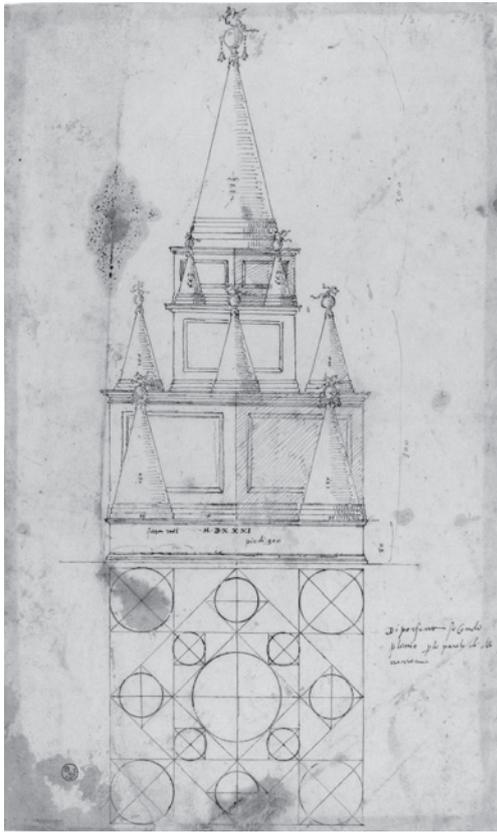
the so-called Arch of Augustus or the Porta Flavia, and his studies of the cyclopean walls of Civita Castellana, a town of Etruscan origin in northern Lazio, belong to the same period (Fig. 6).<sup>24</sup> Sangallo's curiosity about such antiquities, however, was concentrated on another monument in particular, probably the most popular example of Etruscan architecture in the Renaissance: the legendary tomb of King Porsenna in Chiusi, described by Pliny the Elder on the basis of a lost manuscript by Marcus

cat. Florence 2017, ed. by Sergio Risaliti/Valentina Zucchi, Milan 2017, particularly pp. 29–57, with essays by the curators and Maria Gatto.

<sup>22</sup> Maurizio Martinelli, "Firenze e le origini etrusche", in: *Atlante archeologico di Firenze: indagine storico-archeologica dalla preistoria all'alto Medioevo*, ed. by Mario Pagni, Florence 2010, pp. 45–68. On that site, Francesco da Sangallo probably copied an inscription on the *recto* of drawing inv. 7970 A in the GDSU, Florence: FONTINIA · P · L · HERACLEA; on the *verso* of the same sheet, Francesco tried to imitate the Etruscan alphabet in a dedicatory epigraph to Alessandro de' Medici: AVKMAVPEV — ALEIANDPO.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Stefano Borsi, in: *Fortuna degli Etruschi*, exh. cat. Florence 1985, ed. by Franco Borsi, Milan 1985, p. 40, no. 8; Gustina Scaglia, "The Etruscology of Siene and Florentine Artists and Humanists: Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane, Baldassarre Peruzzi, Sallustio Peruzzi and Cosimo Bartoli", in: *Palladio*, n.s., V (1992), 10, pp. 21–36: 23f.; *infra*, note 24.

<sup>24</sup> Florence, GDSU, inv. 1207 A, 2045 A. The entire group of drawings is analyzed by Stefano Borsi, "Disegni dell'antico di Antonio da Sangallo: le antichità etrusche", in: *Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane: la vita e l'opera*, conference proceedings, ed. by Gianfranco Spagnesi, Rome 1986, pp. 445–454.



7 Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, *Reconstruction of the tomb of Porsenna*, 1531. Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 1209 A

<sup>25</sup> Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, XXXVI, 19, 91–93. Cf. Ingrid Rowland, “Il mito di Porsenna: leggenda e realtà”, in: *Il mito nel Rinascimento: atti del III convegno internazionale di studi umanistici*, ed. by Luisa Rotondi Secchi Tarugi, Milan 1993, pp. 391–407. On the figure of Porsenna in Quattrocento Tuscany, cf. Lucia Bertolini, “Il *De gestis Porsenne* di Leonardo Dati: Montepulciano, gli Etruschi e un’idea di identità regionale”, in: *Architettura e identità locali: II*, ed. by Howard Burns/Mauro Mussolin/Clara Altavista, Florence 2013, pp. 91–102.

<sup>26</sup> The other studies are nos. I037 A and I038 A. Cf. Scaglia (note 23), pp. 22f.; Stefano Borsi, in: *Fortuna degli Etruschi* (note 23), pp. 38f., nos. 3–4; Peter Fane-Saunders, *Pliny the Elder and the Emergence of Renaissance Architecture*, New York 2016, pp. 271–275. Other drawings by Antonio the Younger, with projects for San Giovanni dei Fiorentini in Rome (Florence, GDSU, inv. I055 A, 862 A, 863 A), are inspired in terms of their ratio by the Etruscan temple as described by Vitruvius; cf. Manfredo Tafuri, “Due progetti di Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane per la chiesa dei Fiorentini a Roma”, in: *Architettura: storia e documenti*, I/2 (1987), pp. 35–52; *idem*, *Ricerca del Rinascimento:*

Terentius Varro.<sup>25</sup> Its geometrical composition and varied combination of pinnacles was studied by Antonio the Younger in a group of drawings in the Uffizi collection, for instance no. I209 A (Fig. 7).<sup>26</sup>

One of the reasons for the interest in Porsenna’s mausoleum during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was that it provided a model for reshaping, with ancient forms, a challenging building typology, namely bell towers: Sangallo himself evoked the ancient literary model with the *campanili* included in his wooden model for Saint Peter’s basilica.<sup>27</sup> An echo of this can be seen in the upper storey of the bell tower of San Biagio in Montepulciano, completed in the mid-Cinquecento by Giuliano di Baccio d’Agnolo – who belonged to the first generation of architects working for the dukes of Florence – with an octagonal pyramid over a tower surrounded by pinnacles shaped as obelisks (Fig. I).<sup>28</sup> The tomb of Porsenna, however, is also mentioned as a masterpiece of Etruscan art in the text that inaugurated the Florentine tradition in architectural theory: the *De re aedificatoria* by Leon Battista Alberti.<sup>29</sup> Throughout his treatise Alberti quotes several examples of Etruscan antiquities, but his praise for the beauty of the colossal rusticated walls left by that civilization, in Book VII, Chapter II, is particularly remarkable:

*principi, città, architetti*, Turin 1992, pp. 178–189. In a forthcoming article titled “Giovanni Battista da Sangallo e la Compagnia di San Giovanni Decollato a Roma” – presented at the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca in Rome on 23 April 2018, at the study day in honor of Pier Nicola Pagliara *Materia, Struttura e Filologia* – Francesco Benelli explores the political implications of the reference to such models for the Tuscan community of artists that were present in Rome in the 1530s.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Howard Burns, résumé of the lecture “Roman Projects for Campanili and their Antique Sources”, in: *Kolloquium “Roma quanta fuit ipsa ruina docet”*, Rome 1986, pp. 30–32; Sandro Benedetti, *Il grande modello per il San Pietro in Vaticano: Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane*, Rome 2009, with bibliography.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Chiara Peroni, *Baccio d’Agnolo e la bottega dei Baglioni architetti e legnaioli fiorentini (15°-17° secc.)*, Ph.D. Diss., Università degli Studi La Sapienza, Rome 1999, pp. 181–183.

<sup>29</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, VIII, III; see *idem*, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, ed. by Joseph Rykwert/Neil Leach/Robert Tavernor, Cambridge, Mass., 1988, p. 250.



8 Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, *Porta dei Leoni*, 1549

The ancients, especially the Etruscans, preferred to use vast, squared stone for their walls [...]. In Tuscany and Villumbria, and also in the territory of the Hernicians, ancient towns may be seen constructed of huge, irregular blocks of stone; I approve of this form of construction very much: it has a certain rugged air of antique severity, which is an ornament to a city.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 192. Original version: “Moenibus veteres, praesertim populi Etruria, quadratum eundemque vastissimum lapidem probavere [...]. Visuntur et vetusta oppida cum Etruria tum et Vilumbriae tum et apud Hernicos lapide astructa praegrandi incerto et vasto, quod mihi quidem opus vehementer probatur: quendam enim prae se fert rigiditatem severissimae vetustatis, quae urbibus ornamento est” (*idem, L'architettura*, ed. by Giovanni Orlandi/Paolo Portoghesi, Milan 1966, p. 539). As for the other references to the Etruscans made by Alberti, cf. *De re aedificatoria*, IV, II (foundation rituals); VI, III (their skill as builders); VII, VIII (the plinth of column bases); VII, XVI (the invention of sculpture); VIII, IX (the Etruscan temple). On



9 Florence, Palazzo Pitti, courtyard, 1561-1575

### The First Generation and the Sangallos

Alberti's lines could underlie the preference that Cosimo I accorded to the extensive use of rustication in his early architectural commissions, such as the *Porta dei Leoni*, designed by Giovan Battista del Tasso in 1549 to proclaim the occupation of Palazzo Vecchio by the duke's family (Fig. 8).<sup>31</sup> A similar

the last of these topics, cf. Richard Krautheimer, “Alberti's Templum Etruscum”, in: *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 3<sup>rd</sup> s., XII (1961), pp. 65–72.

<sup>31</sup> Emanuele Barletti, “Ipotesi di lavoro su Giovan Battista del Tasso”, in: *Critica d'Arte*, LV (1990), 2/3, pp. 55–61; Elam (note 5), p. 232; Maria Camilla Pagnini, “Giovanni Battista del Tasso legnaiolo e architetto a corte”, in: *Palazzo Vecchio, officina di opere e ingegni*, ed. by Carlo Francini, Cini-sello Balsamo 2006, pp. 122–125; 123; Alessandro Cecchi, “Di Battista del Tasso, intagliatore e architetto fiorentino del Cinquecento”, in: *Forme del legno: intagli e tarsie fra Gotico e Rinascimento*, ed. by Gabriele Donati/Valeria Genovese, Pisa 2013, pp. 311–332; 317.



10 *Imbasamento del campanile di Santa Croce* (detail), nineteenth century. Florence, Archivio dell'Opera di Santa Croce, inv. c. X, c. 3, no. 8



11 *Roman sarcophagus with the gate of Hades guarded by Mercury* (detail), second century A.D. Florence, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo

exegesis could be applied to the later expansion of Palazzo Pitti, with the rusticated courtyard built by Ammannati (Fig. 9).<sup>32</sup> In addition to the more evident meaning of this ornamentation, alluding to civic models from Florence's medieval past, the roughly carved blocks in these mid-Cinquecento projects must have still had a certain antiquarian connotation:

<sup>32</sup> The project dates to 1561, while the construction of the courtyard was completed in 1575; cf. Michael Kiene, *Bartolomeo Ammannati*, Milan 1995, pp. 88–107, particularly pp. 104–107; Conforti (note 5), pp. 145–147; Amedeo Belluzzi, “Gli interventi di Bartolomeo Ammannati a Palazzo Pitti”, in: *Opus Incertum*, I (2006), I, pp. 56–74. On the presence of possible Etruscan references in Ammannati's built oeuvre, cf. Marco Calafati, *Bartolomeo Ammannati: i palazzi Grifoni e Giugni. La nuova architettura dei palazzi fiorentini del secondo Cinquecento*, Firenze 2011, p. 142.

<sup>33</sup> Roberto Gargiani, *Principi e costruzione nell'architettura italiana del Quattro-*

after all it had been common since the end of the previous century, when the motif began to be associated with the walls of Augustus' forum in Rome.<sup>33</sup> Alberti's passage is surely echoed in a letter written by Francesco da Sangallo to the duke in 1550 to defend his choice of rustication for the basement of the bell tower of Santa Croce:

*cento*, Rome/Bari 2003, pp. 340–344; Giuseppina C. Romby, “Di Luca Pitti ho visto la muraglia: l'impresa costruttiva di Luca Pitti. Documenti e testimonianze”, in: *Opus Incertum*, I (2006), I, pp. 15–24: 16–18; Richard Schofield, “A Local Renaissance: Florentine Quattrocento Palaces and all'Antica Styles”, in: *Local Antiquities, Local Identities: Art, Literature and Antiquarianism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Kathleen Christian/Bianca de Divitiis (forthcoming) suggests an Etruscan connotation for rusticated façades as early as the fifteenth century. Cf. also Morolli (note 20), pp. 87f.



12 Antonio da Sangallo the Elder, *Studies of a funerary figure, a central plan and a pavement*, ante 1534. Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, inv. 7882 A (Codex Geymüller, fol. 106r).

13 Bertoldo di Giovanni (attr.), *Frieze of the Medici Villa in Poggio a Caiano*, detail, ante 1491

Vostra Ex.a può vedere: a me mi pare che essendosi quella contente [sic] colli bozzi, perché fanno ornamento semprice et gagliardo e vi si vede variatione.<sup>34</sup>

The bell tower of Santa Croce no longer survives, and its construction was soon interrupted, in 1552. By that year, only the basement – the so-called *masso di Santa Croce* – had been built: all of its details are known thanks to surveys drawn in the nineteenth cen-

<sup>34</sup> Francesco da Sangallo to Cosimo I de' Medici on 30 August 1550, Firenze, Archivio di Stato, Mediceo del Principato, 398, fol. 723r; the letter was first published in a catalogue entry by Margaret Daly Davis, in: Laura Corti et al., *Giorgio Vasari: principi, letterati e artisti nelle carte di Giorgio Vasari. Casa Vasari: pittura vasariana dal 1532 al 1554*, exh. cat. Arezzo 1981, Florence 1981, pp. 299f, no. 58 ("Your Excellence can judge: I think that it will be satisfying with the addition of rusticated blocks, since they serve as a simple and brave ornament, and they provide variation"; my translation).

tury, before its demolition (Fig. 10).<sup>35</sup> This was one of the most ambitious commissions in the first half of Cosimo's rule: once completed, it would have equaled the height of Brunelleschi's dome for Santa Maria del Fiore.<sup>36</sup> In its basement appeared another meaningful detail, which seemed to evoke Etruscan archaeological models: a fake semi-open door, carved in the same brown stone as the rustication. This almost obvious quotation from Donatello's Gattamelata monument in

<sup>35</sup> Florence, Archivio dell'Opera di Santa Croce, inv. c. VIII, c. 3, nos. 29–30, and c. X, c. 3, nos. 6–9. Cf. Pietro Ruschi, "I campanili di Santa Croce", in: *Santa Croce nell'Ottocento*, exh. cat., ed. by Monica Maffioli, Florence 1986, pp. 17–38.

<sup>36</sup> Dario Donetti, "L'altra antichità di Francesco da Sangallo: due medaglie di fondazione nella Firenze di Cosimo I", in: *Le arti a dialogo: medaglie e medaglisti tra Quattro e Settecento*, conference proceedings Pisa 2011, ed. by Lucia Simonato, Pisa 2014, pp. 103–121: 112. For a different reconstruction of the project cf. Francesco Tioli, "Il campanile di Francesco da Sangallo",

Padua also responded to ancient prototypes, especially in funerary sarcophagi, such as the one once located in the so-called *Paradiso* of Santa Maria del Fiore – the area between the façade of the Florentine cathedral and the baptistery – and now in the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo (Fig. II).<sup>37</sup> In addition, this iconographic motif recurs in the oeuvre of Giuliano da Sangallo and his brother Antonio the Elder, respectively Francesco’s father and uncle: particularly, on a page of the Geymüller codex (Fig. 12) and in a section of the frieze in Poggio a Caiano, in which several Etruscan models have been recognized (Fig. 13).<sup>38</sup>

The first edition of Vasari’s *Vite* appeared in 1550 – the same year in which construction of the bell tower began – and Francesco da Sangallo was most probably one of the sources for its compilation. The “Vita di Giuliano e Antonio da San Gallo, architetti fiorentini” was very likely inspired by his own words, especially the long, moralistic introduction on family virtues and the closing epitaph written in Latin:

Cedite Romani structores, cedite Graii,  
 Artis, Vitruvi tu quoque cede parens.  
 Hetruscos celebrate viros. Testudinis arcus,  
 Urna, tholus, statuae, templa domusque petunt.<sup>39</sup>

These verses actually paraphrase a famous poem by Propertius written in honor of the *Aeneid*, which opens with the line: “Cedite Romani scriptores, cedite Graii”.<sup>40</sup> In roughly the same years as its reuse in the *Vite*, the Latin elegy was quoted by Benedetto Varchi, another protagonist of the Accademia Fiorentina, a celebrated commentator on Dante and a close friend of Francesco.<sup>41</sup> In his *Ercolano*, a dialogue he had written – once more – on the character of Florentine *volgare*, these verses served to demonstrate the primacy attained by Virgil’s poem.<sup>42</sup> Thus, by introducing a direct analogy with the domain of poetry, i.e. implying a parallel between the most ancient origins of local vernacular and the originality of the region’s architecture, the new generation celebrated the Sangallo

in: *Firenze delle torri: architetture verticali e loro intorno. I campanili di Santa Maria del Fiore e di Santa Croce*, ed. by Giorgio Verdiani, Florence 2005, pp. 47–60.

<sup>37</sup> Inv. 2005/929. The sarcophagus was removed from the area outside the cathedral in 1824, then collocated in front of the baptistery once again in 1930, and later moved to the museum’s collection; the figure trespassing the open door is commonly identified as Mercury. Chastel (note 7), p. 222, and James David Draper, *Bertoldo di Giovanni: Sculptor of the Medici Household. Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné*, City of Columbia 1992, pp. 218f., both identify it as a model for the glazed-terracotta relief of Poggio a Caiano; cf. *infra*, note 38.

<sup>38</sup> Maurizio Martinelli, “La villa medicea di Poggio a Caiano: Giuliano da Sangallo, il fregio di Bertoldo di Giovanni e le ‘anticaglie’ etrusche laurenziane”, in: *Arkos*, XXVII (2011), pp. 37–56, particularly pp. 46–52. On the drawing in the Geymüller codex and its association with the frieze, cf. Stefano Borsi, *Giuliano da Sangallo: i disegni di architettura e dell’antico*, Rome 1985, p. 513; Josef Ploder, in: *Bramante e gli altri: storia di tre codici e di un collezionista*, exh. cat., ed. by *idem*, Florence 2006, pp. 178f., no. I.92. On the problematic attribution of the frieze and on the hypothesis of two different phases in the execution, cf. Fabrizia Landi, *Le temps revient: il fregio di Poggio a Caiano*, Florence 1986; Litta Medri, “La misteriosa genesi del fregio in terracotta invetriata della villa di Poggio a Caiano e l’ipotesi della doppia committenza”, in: *L’architettura di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, ed. by Gabriele Morolli/Cristina Acidini Luchinat/Luciano Marchetti, Cinisello Balsamo 1992, pp. 94–100; Sabine Frommel, *Giuliano da Sangallo*, Florence 2014, p. 79.

<sup>39</sup> Vasari (note 21), IV, p. 152. Cf. Caroline Elam, “Giuliano da Sangallo architetto legnaiuolo”, in: *Giuliano da Sangallo*, ed. by *eadem*/Amedeo Belluzzi/Francesco Paolo Fiore, Milan 2017, pp. 75–86; 80f. Elam also suggested to me that the unlikely syntax of Vasari’s text could be due to a mistyping. If the period after “viros” was to be deleted and the imperative form “celebrate” replaced with the infinitive “celebrare”, these verses could be translated as follows: “Give place, Roman builders, give place, Greeks, and even you Vitruvius, the father of this art, give place. Vault’s arches, urns, domes, statues, temples, and palaces ask us to celebrate the Etruscan men.”

<sup>40</sup> Propertius, *Elegiae*, II, xxxiv, 65.

<sup>41</sup> On Varchi and the Florentine academy, cf. Heikamp (note 1); Massimo Firpo, *Gli affreschi di Pontormo a San Lorenzo: eresia, politica e cultura nella Firenze di Cosimo I*, Turin 1997, pp. 168–171. On his personal relationship with Francesco da Sangallo, cf. Leatrice Mendelsohn, *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi’s ‘Due Lezioni’ and Cinquecento Art Theory*, Ann Arbor 1982, p. 156; Diletta Gambellini, “The Artist as a Dantista: Francesco da Sangallo’s Dantism in Mid-Cinquecento Florence”, in: *Dante Studies*, CXXXV (2017), pp. 169–191.

<sup>42</sup> *L’Ercolano: dialogo di Benedetto Varchi dove si ragiona delle lingue e in particolare della toscana e fiorentina*, Florence 1846, p. 464. Cf. Umberto Pirotti, *Benedetto Varchi e la cultura del suo tempo*, Florence 1971, pp. 109–116; Marco Collareta, “Varchi e le arti figurative”, in: *Benedetto Varchi 1503–1565*, conference proceedings Florence 2003, ed. by Vanni Bramanti, Rome 2007, pp. 173–184, particularly p. 174, on the passage of the dialogue that defines the artists as “maestri di lingua”.

brothers as the champions of Tuscan style: literally, as Etruscan heroes who had rescued the art of construction and restored the splendors of its first antiquity.

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#### Abbreviations

GDSU      Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe delle  
Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence

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#### Abstract

The 1550 edition of Vasari's *Lives* contains an epigraph describing the Sangallo brothers as the champions of Tuscan architecture: "Cedite Romani structores, cedite Graii, Artis, Vitruvi tu quoque cede parens. Hetruscos celebrate viros." These verses are actually a meaningful paraphrase of Propertius and were printed when an apocryphal myth about the origins of Florence had reached its greatest popularity: after Giambullari's *Il Gello* was published in 1546, the fictitious history of how the Aramaic language was brought to Etruria by Noah strengthened the claim for the supremacy of the city. As recent scholarship has pointed out, the *questione della lingua* in mid-Cinquecento Florence was inextricably intertwined with architectural theory, and this article explores to what extent a neglected generation of architects – those of the first decades of Cosimo I's reign – appealed to Etruscan antiquity as a model for their own formulation of a national style.

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Umschlagbild | Copertina:  
Santa Maria Capua Vetere, anfiteatro, dettaglio di una delle due chiavi  
d'arco ancora in situ  
(Abb. 13, S. 79 | fig. 13, p. 79)

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