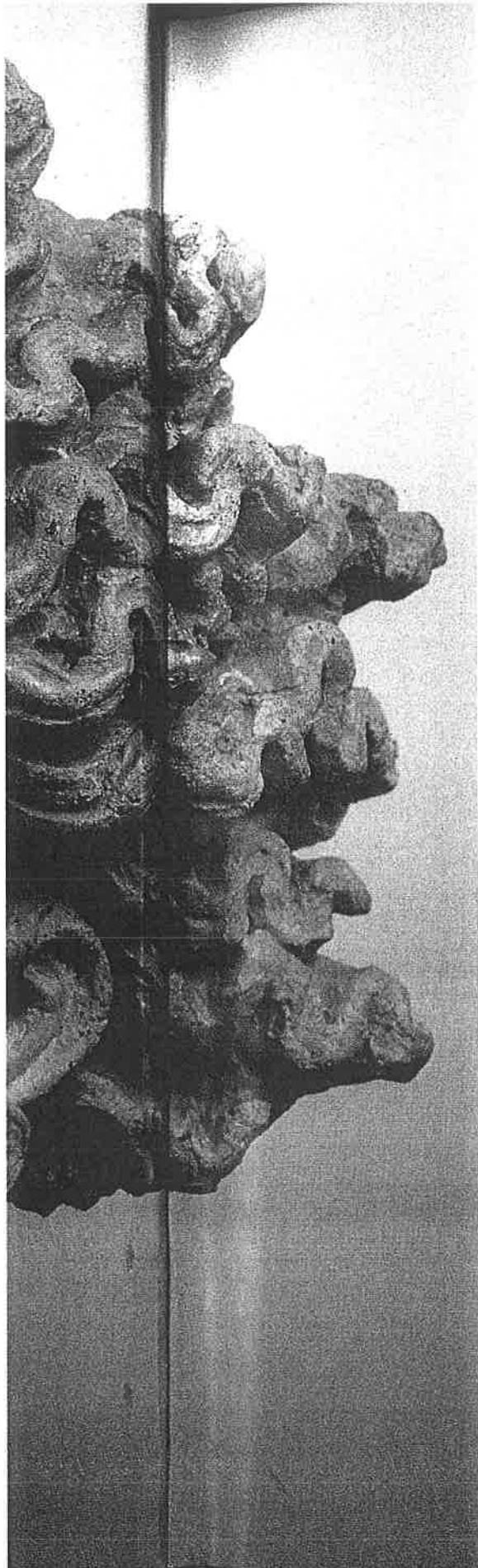




Etruscan Civilization

A Cultural History

Sybille Haynes

THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

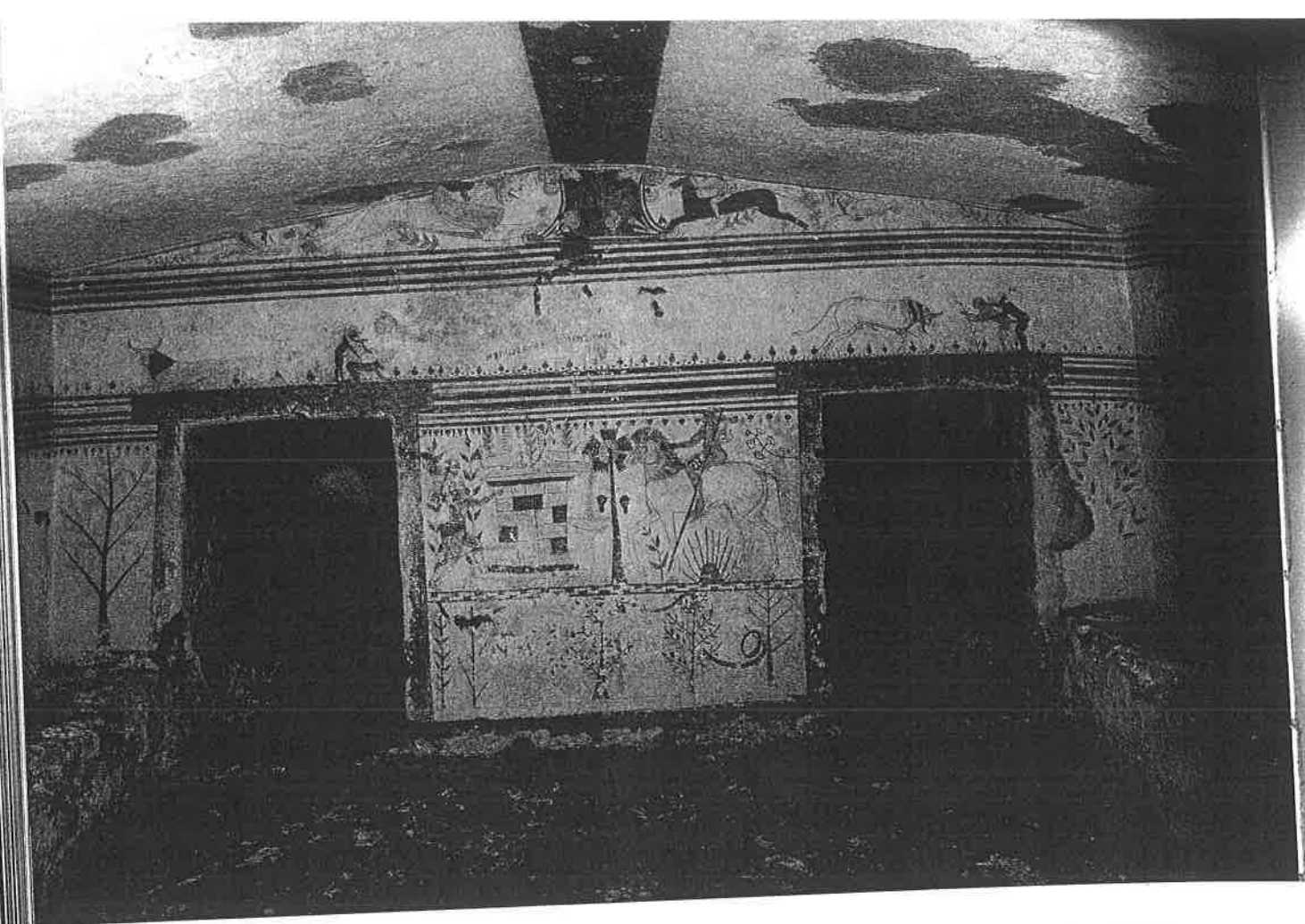


Fig. 181 Wall-painting:
Achilles ambushes Troilos.
From the main chamber
of the Tomb of the Bulls,
Tarquinia. Ca. 540–530 B.C.

The earliest of the tombs, dating from the end of the seventh to the mid-sixth century, are small rectangular rock-cut chambers with shallow ridge roofs, whose architectural features, imitating those of real wooden houses, are picked out by simple bands of paint. From about 550 onward, real or mythical animals arranged in heraldic schemes were painted flanking the king post, the central support of the pediments; such creatures probably have an apotropaic and transcendental significance. Other motifs that appear in the triangular space of the pediments are drinking parties in which the participants recline on mattresses on the ground in the open air or, more rarely, on wooden beds. After about 530, the entire walls of the tomb chambers were painted with figured scenes and occasionally with false doors, which perhaps symbolized the entrance into the other world.

THE TOMB OF THE BULLS One of the oldest and largest of the Archaic painted tombs and the only one with representations securely based on Greek myths, is the Tomb of the Bulls (*Tomba dei Tori*). It has a wide anteroom with two parallel tomb chambers opening off it in the rear wall. The space between their doors shows Achilles ambushing the young Trojan prince Troilos (FIG. 181), a story that was

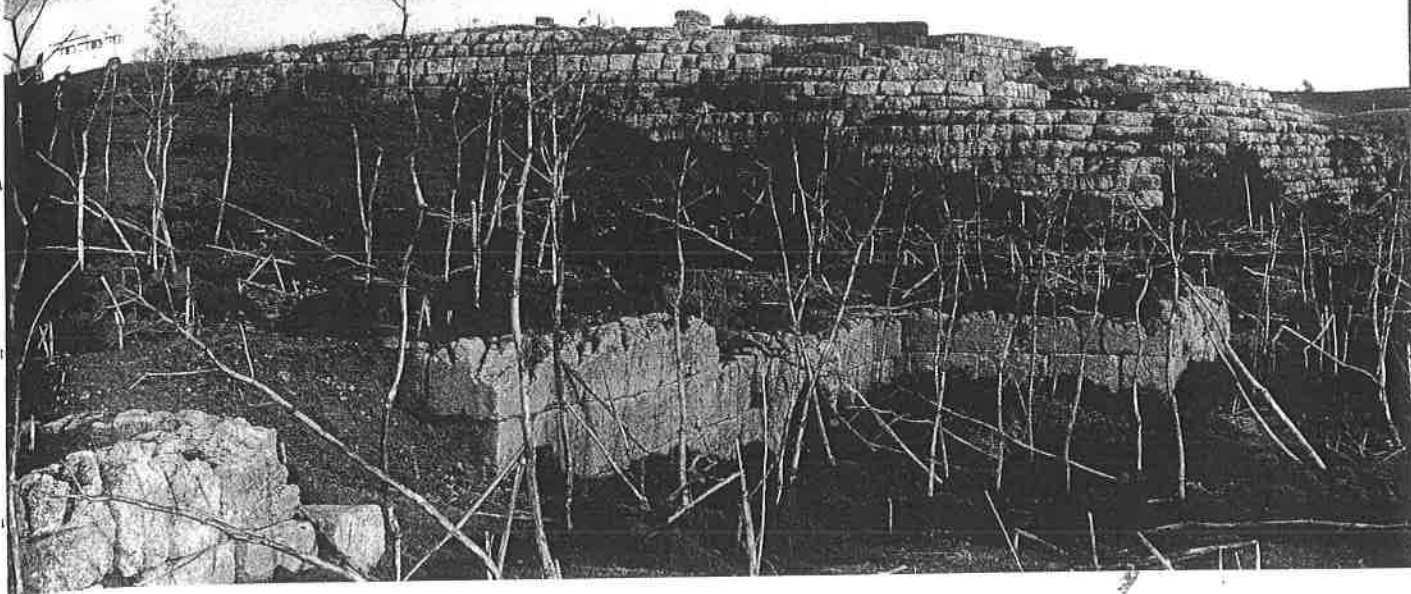


Fig. 180 View of platform of Ara della Regina temple on Pian di Civita at Tarquinia. First half of fourth century B.C.

was dedicated to Artemis, for among the few votive objects found was a fragmentary bronze rod inscribed with her name and the gold-covered bronze blade of a lance. The construction of such a huge temple in the fourth century is a sign of the renewed prosperity of Tarquinia, as is the grandiose circuit of the city walls.

Among the votive inscriptions found on the city plateau are the names of a number of other divinities: Śuri, Selvans, Culsans, and Thufłtha.

Archaic Tomb-Painting

The most important wall-paintings in tombs of the Orientalizing period were found at Veii (see FIG. 72) and Cerveteri, but there outlines and colors, applied directly on the smoothed tufa walls, have suffered irreparable decay. The colors employed were black, yellow, red, and white, while blue and green appeared only rarely.

During the Archaic period Tarquinia became the prime center of tomb-painting and, thanks to the use of a more durable technique and a wider range of colors, the decoration on the rock walls here is better preserved, though today increasingly menaced by exposure. Of the more than six thousand tombs identified in the Monterozzi necropolis, only about two hundred were distinguished by painting, an indication that only the wealthiest families could afford such luxury.

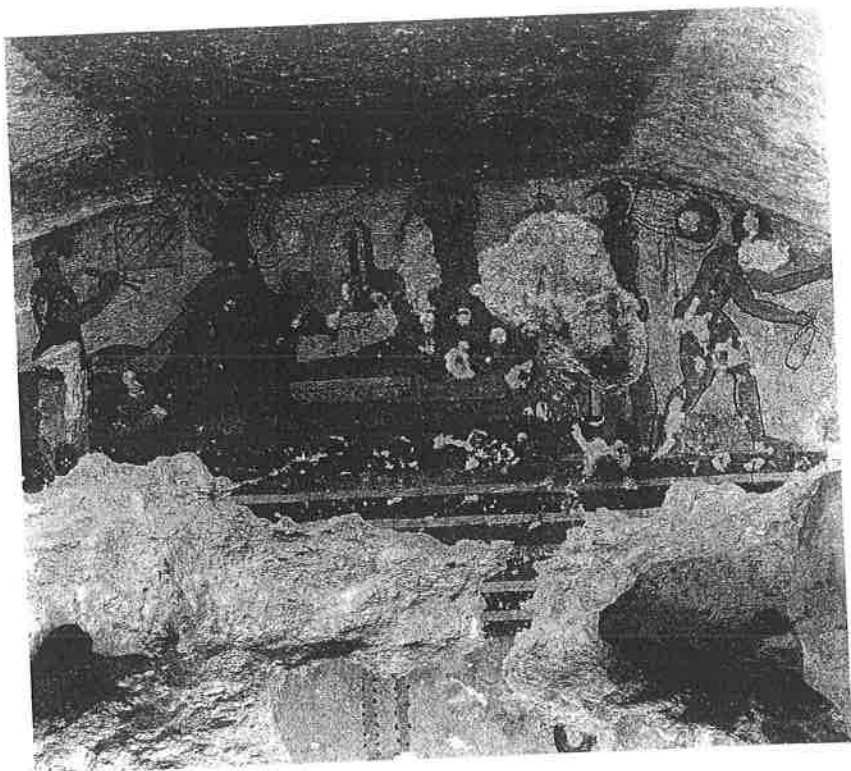


Fig. 186 Wall-painting: banquet couple, girls, and servants. From the pediment of the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, Tarquinia, Ca. 530–520 B.C.

THE TOMB OF HUNTING AND FISHING The most lively and beautiful of such representations is found in the pediment of the second tomb chamber of this tomb (*Tomba della Caccia e Pesca*, FIG. 186). An elegantly dressed and bejeweled lady wears her hair tied up high, covered by a veil and wreathed. She lies on her stomach on a mattress and, looking at her husband, hands him a wreath. Facing her, he places his right hand tenderly on her shoulder and his right leg on her back, while holding an embossed metal phiale in his left hand with the elbow supported on a cushion. He wears a mantle wrapped around his lower body and on his bare chest a gold necklace with pendants in the form of ram's heads. A lyre with a sound box made from a tortoiseshell and a plectrum attached to it by a string hangs from the wall, hinting at his musical accomplishment. On the wife's side this is balanced by a container for toilet instruments (Lat. *cista*), decorated with a lattice pattern, which is suspended above her. The couple are surrounded by two attentive girls in simple dresses (probably daughters), making wreaths; an aulos player; and two nude cupbearers, one dipping a stick into a scent bottle, the other bending to fill his jug from a large amphora that stands with other banqueting vessels within a thick packing of foliage, indicating that this is an outdoor scene.

Below this pediment the walls are painted with a seascape enlivened by leaping dolphins and countless birds flying and settling on the waves (FIG. 187). Youths in boats are fishing, and on multicolored rocks hunters armed with slings take aim at birds, while one boy dives into the sea.

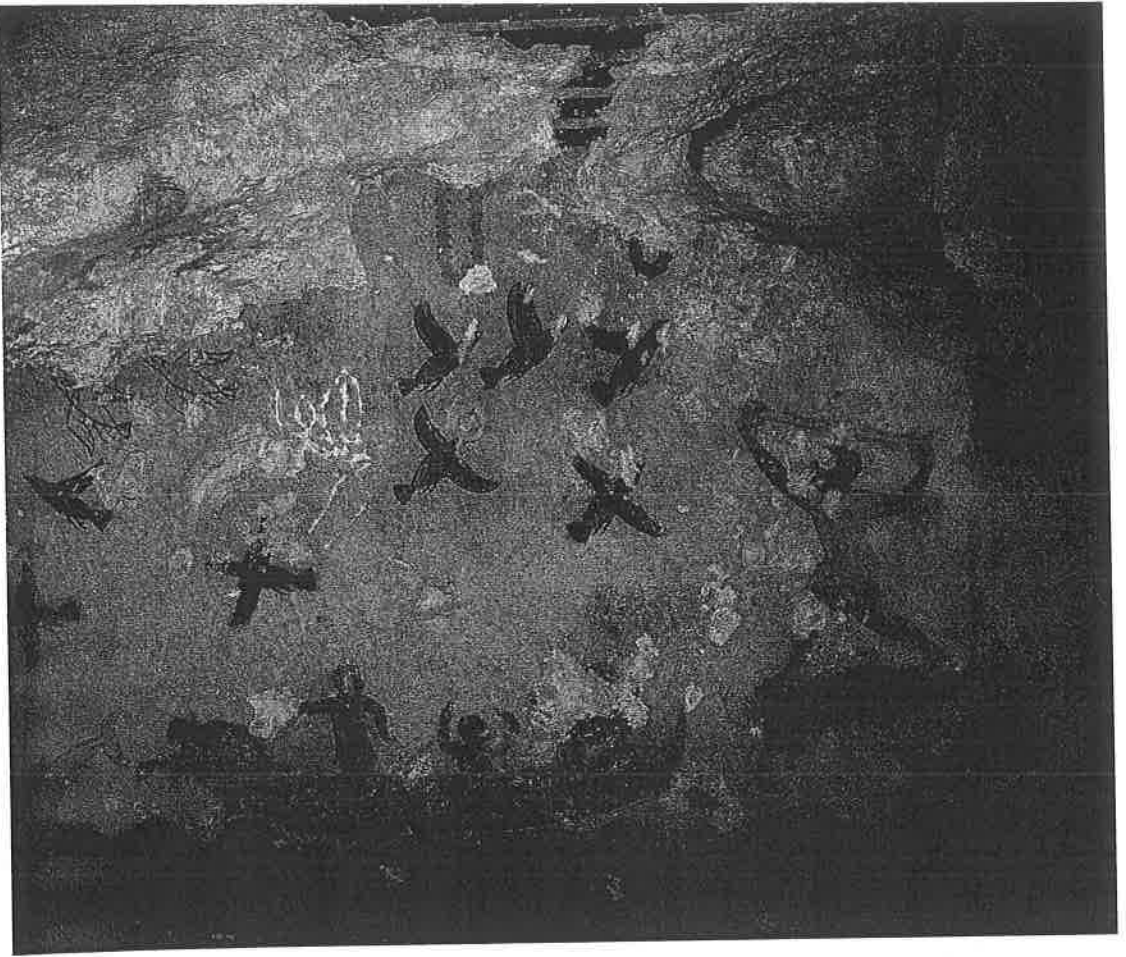


Fig. 187 Wall-painting: seascape and rocky shore. From the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, Tarquinia. Ca. 530–520 B.C.

In the first chamber of this tomb the pediment represents the return from a hunting expedition, with two horsemen in the center accompanied by their dogs and servants carrying the quarry. The figures move through a forest of varied trees. On the walls below, small but sturdy figures of male dancers, dressed in loin-cloths, leap and gesture between slim laurel bushes hung with fillets, a mirror, baskets, and wreaths.

It has been suggested that these dancers are performing a religious rite in a laurel grove sacred to Apollo. But like similarly attired dancers in other Tarquinian tombs (Cardarelli Tomb, Tomb of the Dead Man [*Tomba del Morto*], Tomb of the Inscriptions [*Tomba delle Iscrizioni*], and Tomb of the Bacchantes [*Tomba dei Baccanti*]) disporting themselves between such trees, their enthusiasm must be inspired by Fufluns/Dionysos, the god of wine, rather than by Apollo. Dionysiac religiosity, which flourished in Attica in the sixth century, was also being introduced into Etruscan tomb contexts. This interpretation is confirmed by the representation of satyrs with drinking horns reclining in the gable of the entrance wall, mythical figures belonging to the cortege of Dionysos. The Tomb of Hunting and Fishing is unique in its exquisite feeling for nature and the activities of human beings blending with it. The figure of the boy diving from the rocks into

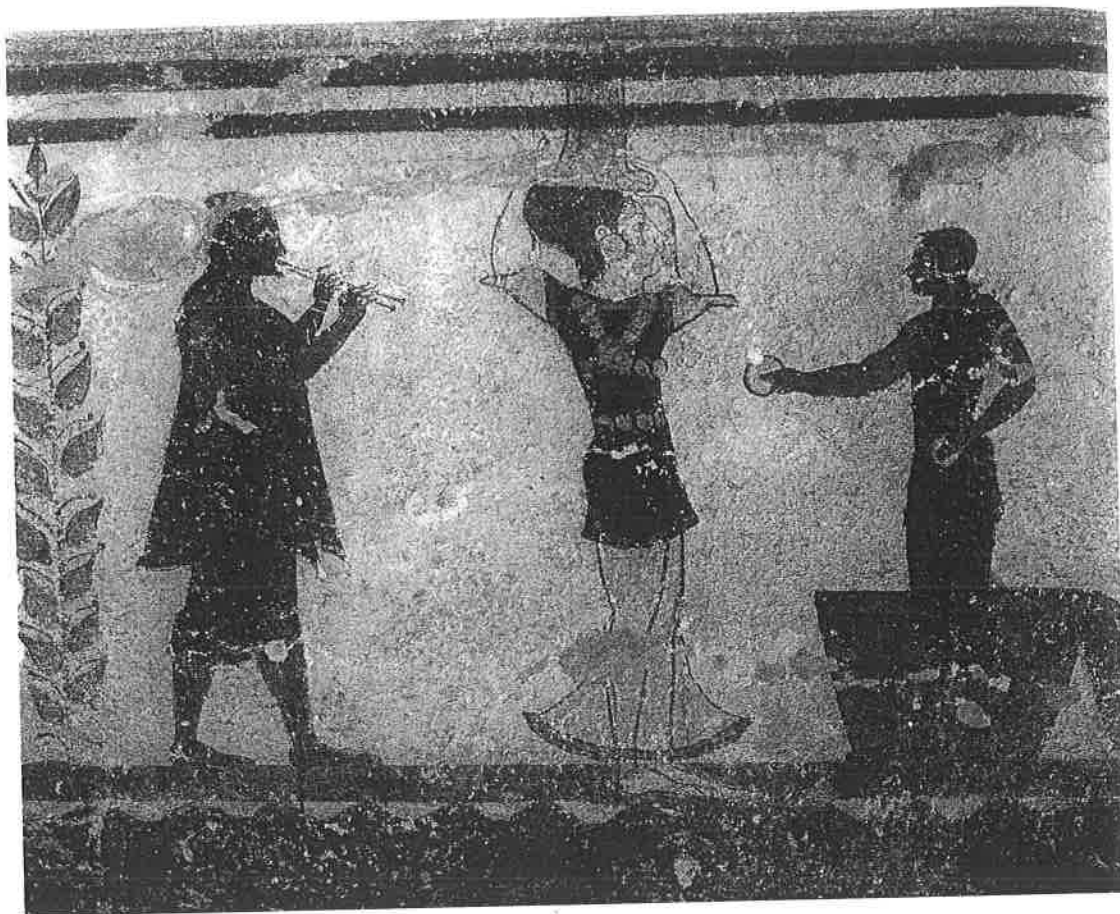


Fig. 188 Wall-painting: girl dancing with incense burner on her head. From the back wall of the Tomb of the Jugglers, Tarquinia, Late sixth century B.C.

the sea has been compared with that of a youth diving from a pedestal painted on the inside of a tomb at Paestum, a subject of possibly transcendental significance. The banqueting and hunting scenes in the pediments are well-known motifs celebrating aristocratic pleasures and privileges (cf. the friezes from Murlo, FIGS. 102, 105), but here, in the funerary context, the banquet may have a more esoteric meaning. The tenderness husband and wife express for each other in their gestures is typically Etruscan and recalls in spirit the terra-cotta sarcophagi from Cerveteri (see FIGS. 176a, b).

THE TOMB OF THE JUGGLERS This tomb (*Tomba dei Giocolieri*) is named after figures painted on its rear wall, which is divided by four slim laurel trees (FIG. 188). On the left are two small nude boys, facing right and drawn in outline only; their pale color may be meant to convey their tender age (cf. the small figure in the Tomb of the Lionesses, p. 226). One sits on the ground, the other stands on a low podium holding a wreath. A nude young man standing to the right of them looks with a gesture of amazement at the central scene, where a girl juggler performs a balancing act, accompanied by a draped flute player. She wears a transparent chi-