

W. D. C. de Melo

## Faliscan

### Introduction

#### Location of the Faliscan territory

The Faliscan territory, the *ager Faliscus*, lies some 50 km north of Rome. The Tiber is its eastern border; in the west the territory ends where there is a mountain range, the most important mountain being the Mount Cimino; in the south-west the territory ends at the Lago di Bracciano.

The neighbours of the Faliscans are the Etruscans in the east and the Umbrians in the north; south of the Faliscan territory is the city of Capena, where people seem to have spoken a dialect close to Latin or Faliscan.

#### History

The Romans associated the Faliscans with the Greek hero Halaesus, a companion of Agamemnon who also fought against Troy:

Venerat Atridae fatis agitatus Halaesus,  
a quo se dictam terra Falisca putat. (Ovid, *Fasti* 4. 73–4)

... Agamemnone caeso  
et scelus et patrias fugit Halaesus opes,  
iamque pererratis profugus terraque fretoque  
moenia felici condidit alta manu.  
Ille suos docuit Iunonia sacra Faliscos;  
sint mihi, sint populo semper amica suo! (Ovid, *Amores* 3. 13. 31–6)

On Italian soil, Halaesus fought against Aeneas.

These mythical associations were probably used to explain the various wars between the Faliscans and the Romans; the true reason was of course the expansion of Rome, by which several neighbouring peoples felt threatened. The popular association of the Faliscans with Halaesus was perhaps facilitated by a confusion of initial f and h in later Faliscan and by the common Greek substitution of h for f:

... nam contra Graeci aspirare f solent, ut pro Fundanio Cicero testem, qui primam eius litteram dicere non possit, irridet. (Quint. *inst.* 1. 4. 13)

Such later associations can of course not be upheld. The area was already inhabited in the neolithic and the Bronze Age. There was agriculture and cattle breeding, but little hunting and fishing. At the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age, i.e. between the middle of the 12th c. until the end

of the 10th c., the Faliscan territory seems to have been part of the Villanovan culture, partly characterized by fire burial.

The Faliscan territory became a centre for trade; from the 8th c. onwards we can find imports of Greek origin and even some imports from as far away as Mesopotamia.

This is also the time when the burial rites changed. Before the 8th c. we find cremation urns in the earth, but after that inhumation was generally adopted, often in sarcophagi made of tufa. From the 7th c. onwards the tombs are in walls.

The two centres of Faliscan civilization were Falerii ueteres and Narce, but from the 6th and 5th c. onwards Falerii ueteres became the more important of these two.

The expansion of Rome inevitable led to rivalry between Rome and the Etruscans. Between 402 and 395 there was an alliance between Falerii, Capena, and the southernmost Etruscan city, Veii, against Rome. In 396 Veii fell and in 395, Capena. In 394 there was a peace agreement between Rome and Falerii. Livy (5. 27) describes how it came about: a teacher abducted the children of the leading inhabitants of Falerii and brought them to the general M. Furius Camillus, who had already conquered Veii. He asked Camillus to use these children as hostages. Camillus refused (5. 27. 5–8):

*Quae ubi Camillus audiuit, 'non ad similem' inquit 'tui nec populum nec imperatorem scelestus ipse cum scelesto munere uenisti. Nobis cum Faliscis, quae pacto fit humano, societas non est; quam ingenerauit natura utrisque, est eritque. Sunt et belli sicut pacis iura, iusteque ea non minus quam fortiter didicimus gerere. Arma habemus non aduersum eam aetatem, cui etiam captis urbibus parcutur, sed aduersus armatos et ipsos qui nec laesi nec lacessiti a nobis castra Romana ad Veios oppugnarunt. Eos tu, quantum in te fuit, nouo scelere uicisti; ego Romanis artibus, uirtute, opere, armis, sicut Veios, uincam.'*

According to Livy, this moved the Faliscans to surrender.

Between 358 and 351 Tarquinii, the chief Etruscan city, was fighting against Rome and Falerii was on the side of Tarquinii. This war resulted in a truce in 351.

Despite these wars, the 4th c. marked the zenith of Faliscan arts and culture.

Between 298 and 290 there was the 3rd Samnite War, and Falerii again fought against Rome. In 293 the Faliscans were defeated.

At the end of the 1st Punic War, in 241, the Faliscans rebelled against Rome again, and this time the Romans destroyed Falerii ueteres. Falerii ueteres was easy to defend because of its location, and since the Romans did not want any more resistance they rebuilt the town some five km away (Falerii noui). The end of Falerii ueteres meant the end for Narce, too.

Falerii noui was essentially Roman, but a few linguistic monuments still attest to the presence of Faliscans there.

When the uia Amerina and the uia Flaminia were built (after 241 and in 220, respectively), the Romans deliberately avoided contact of these roads with Falerii ueteres.

In the 5th–6th c. AD the Goths invaded the area, and in the 6th–8th c. the Longobards came. This is the time when Falerii noui was abandoned again and its inhabitants rebuilt the city in its old place, which is easier to defend. The city is now called Civita Castellana. There remains a Benedictine monastery in Falerii noui, and the church still bears the name Santa Maria di Falleri.

### Religious cults

There are remains of various temples. In Falerii ueteres there is a high point nowadays called Vignale; this probably used to be citadel of the town. Here we find remains of three temples: a small sanctuary, a temple for Mercury ('ai sassi caduti') from where a number of Inscriptions come, and the famous temple for Juno (cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 6. 49: Iunonicolasque Faliscos).

From another inscription we know that there was also a temple for Minerva in Falerii noui. Presumably there were a number of cults, but the archaeological evidence is limited.

### Necropolises

Burial sites are the main source of our inscriptions. Around Falerii ueteres we find the following cemeteries: Celle, Montarano, and Colennette are old; Valsiarosa, La Penna, and Terrano are more recent.

Other epigraphically important burial sites are in the following towns: Corchiano, Gallese, Fabrica di Roma, Carbognano, and Vignanello.

### Some conventions

The Faliscan texts are collected in Vetter and Giacomelli (see bibliography). Giacomelli's edition is more recent and contains some textual improvements as well as a more detailed commentary, but since most scholars still cite according to Vetter I shall do the same. Note, however, that the texts provided should always be checked against Giacomelli's edition (which contains a concordance). In addition, there are a few recent finds not listed in these two editions.

Texts in the native Faliscan alphabet are normally transcribed in bold and those in the Latin alphabet in italics.

Faliscan is attested over several centuries and the language underwent some changes; some of them are the result of Latin influence. The most common temporal classification recognizes three periods:

- a) archaic Faliscan, 7th–6th c.: mainly vase inscriptions
- b) middle Faliscan, 5th c. until 241 (destruction of Falerii ueteres): mainly funerary texts
- c) late Faliscan, after 241