



Etruscan News



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Who is the “Etruscan traveler”?

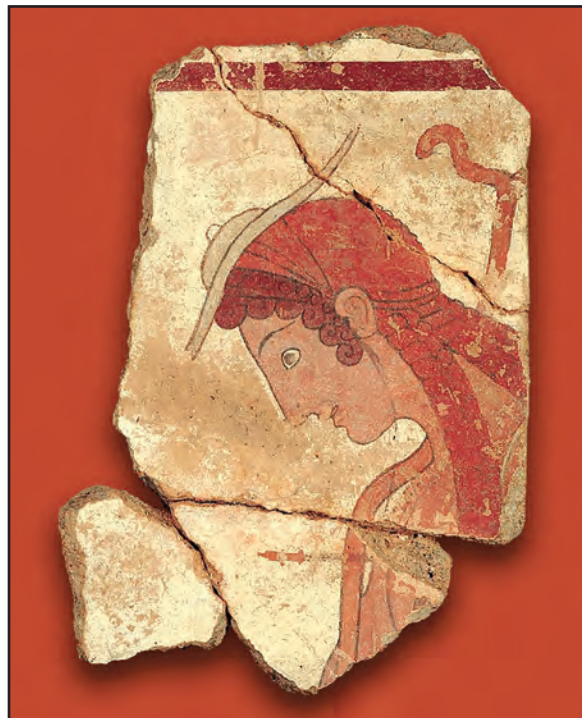
by Daniele F. Maras,

Superintendency of Archaeology, Fine Arts and
Landscape, Province of Viterbo and Southern Etruria

The return to Italy of a precious fragment of a painted terracotta slab from Caere (shown at right), is now on display in Venice in an exhibition comparing ancient and modern art; a lost masterpiece returns to the public and opens the way to intriguing hypotheses on the subject it depicts.

New York, June 16, 2020: the international auction house Christie's was selling a fragment of an Etruscan slab of painted terracotta, of the type produced in Cerveteri between the 6th and 5th centuries BC. The decoration depicts a young man in profile, painted in vivid colors, with long red hair braided and gathered in an elaborate hairstyle with a brimmed headdress and a sinuous cane, which characterize him as a traveler.

The object came from the collection of Hanita Edelman (1915-2019) and Aaron Dechter (1918-2000) and had been put up for sale after the death of the two el-



erly American collectors. Previously, it had been purchased by them at the same auction house in 1997, with the anonymous provenance “property of a gentleman.” Given the importance of the find, the Ministry of Culture immediately took action to follow the story and check if there were the right conditions to initiate an international rogatory for its repatriation.

At this point, thanks to a fortunate series of circumstances, the Luigi Rovati Foundation of Monza became interested in the object for sale; it contacted the Superintendency for Southern Etruria and proposed to buy the painted fragment and sell it to the State, with the aim of completing the known series of figured plaques (*see Etruscan News vol.21*) of the same type already present in Italian collections. The Foundation thus fulfilled one of its institutional goals, promoting and making a national archaeological heritage accessible to all, and the Ministry could quickly recover for public use a cultural asset that had ended up abroad.

Thus began the novel odyssey of the “Etruscan traveler,” as the young man depicted on the plaque was nicknamed. He took the road *continued on page 4*



Fig.1. Metauro valley view: La Valle dei Principi.

Tumulus I of Cantinaccia di Urbania (PU):

Discovery and First Excavation

by Diego Voltolini

Soprintendenza ABAP for AN-PU

Director, Museo Archeologico Nazionale delle Marche

The discovery

Aerial territorial monitoring by helicopter over the upper Metauro Valley (Apennine area in the province of Pesaro and Urbino) in 2019 identified some anomalies in the plowed fields of the river terraces between Urba-

nia, Peglio and S. Angelo in Vado (Fig.1) The aerial photographs of Cantinaccia di Urbania (PU), revealed a large ring of reddish soil, inside of which appeared a concentration of light gravel. An analysis of the aerial photographs of different years and seasons in the area, as well as bibliographic and archival verification revealed that the circular anomaly was visible in various periods, both on the plowed land and in the vegetational growth; this was also reported by W. Monacchi in 2010.

Under direction of the Superintendency, A. Aguzzi opened several trenches to explore the nature of the anomaly. These revealed the *continued on page 8*

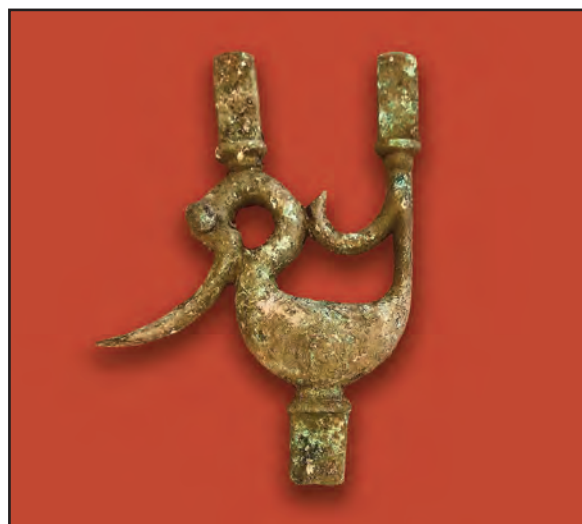


Fig.2. Chariot railing ornament of a waterfowl.



Fig.1. Aerial view drone shot of the forge.

Etruscan forge found in Orvieto.

by Francesco Pacelli

In March 2020, in the necropolis of Cannicella-Fontana del Leone, close to the south side of Orvieto's tuffaceous mass, an Etruscan forge, probably of the Hellenistic period, was discovered during a work-site survey. The pozzolanic soils degraded by the erosion of the tuff cliff offer erratic boulders and building materials for the construction of tombs, whose chronological horizon goes from the third quarter of the 7th to the mid 3rd century BC. *continued on page 10*

ETRUSCAN NEWS

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For submission guidelines,
see *Etruscan News* 3 (2003).



Amici delle Tombe Dipinti annual picnic in honor of Maria Cataldi. It was a great day thanks to the wonderful hospitality of Roberto Carra (second from left) at his farm, *Quattro Grani*, Tarquinia October 2021.

Dear Editors:

Two years after her death, the “Days in Memory of Maria Cataldi” were held in Rome and Tarquinia by the Friends of the Painted Tombs of Tarquinia Association. Mariolina, as she was known by all, was president of the Association after she had retired as director of the Necropolis and of the National Archaeological Museum, a position which she had held for nearly thirty years. Many colleagues and scholars presented also reflections and studies on individual painted tombs and on wall painting generally, as well as news of recent excavations in Tarquinia and its territory.

In the Curia Iulia in the Roman Forum, the Director Alfonsina Russo opened the first day of the meeting with the reading of a text by Mario Torelli on the iconography of the paintings in the tomb of the Blue Demons, the exceptional discovery of 1985, excavated by Maria Cataldi with Gloria and Rodolfo Carmagnola. In the text Torelli focuses on the theme of hunting, only recently revealed in all its grandeur on the entrance wall of the tomb by the innovative multispectral technique.

Paola Pelagatti spoke on the numerous excavations conducted by Mariolina in the Monterozzi necropolis and on her commitment to conservation of the painted tombs, as well as on her work in the reorganization of the National Archaeological Museum. Also on the first day colleagues and scholars drew attention to Maria Cataldi’s early research in Latium Vetus. The excavations and research in the inhabited area and in the necropolis of the Latin city of Ficana were thus presented with necessary updates, along with new data from Castel di Decima and from the necropolis of Osteria dell’Osa in ancient Gabii.

The second day of the meeting took place at the Odeion of the University of Rome “Sapienza.” Scholars reported on excavations and research promoted by Mar-

iolina in various necropoleis of the early Iron Age around La Civita, such as that of Poggio Cretoncini with its inhabited area, or the Monterozzi hill, the necropolis near Villa Falgari, the monumental Orientalizing Period tumuli of the Doganaccia, and the Archaic period tomb of the Panthers. Other scholars offered reflections on different aspects of tomb painting, including a new interpretation the Tomb of the Augurs, and interesting observations on the pictorial style of the Classical Period.

The third day’s activities took place in the Council Chamber of Tarquinia and was moderated by Daniele Maras.

Francesca Boitani
Presidente dell’Associazione
Amici delle Tombe Dipinte di Tarquinia

Dear Editors:

I am Stefano Spiganti, the assistant of the archaeological excavations at the Necropolis of the Vallone di San Lorenzo in Montecchio in Umbria, Italy. On this occasion I wanted to thank you for your precious collaboration in disseminating information about our excavation through your newsletter *Etruscan News*. In 2021 we received a lot of applications thanks to the articles in your magazine. That excavation campaign we unfortunately had to postpone due to Covid-19. Attached I send you the announcement of the next excavation campaign, to be held in the summer of 2022, and kindly ask if it is possible to disseminate it through your online channels. (**Editors note: see page 38**)

Kind regards,
Stefano Spiganti
Montecchio, Umbria, Italy

Dear Editors:

Enjoying the wonderful *pranzo* and the company at ristorante Casaletto Mengarelli, Parco di Vulci, during the conference “Vulci. Work in progress.”

Saluti e “Prost!”, Stephan Steingraber



Left to right, Stephan Steingraber, Wolfgang David, Massimo Legni, Alfonsina Russo, Simona Carosi, Carlo Casi, Francesco di Gennaro, Andreas Steiner enjoy lunch at Vulci and exchange publications.

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Inauguration of the Archaeological Gallery of the Royal Museums of Turin

On February 19, 2022 the Archaeological Gallery of the Royal Museums of Turin opened to the public a new section dedicated to the civilizations of the ancient Mediterranean, the oldest nucleus of its art and archeology collections. It is located on the ground floor of the Manica Nuova of the Royal Palace.

More than a thousand works, some of which have never been exhibited before, are on display: Mesopotamian finds, Greek and Roman statues, Greek pottery, Etruscan and Phoenician funerary elements. These materials were collected by the Museum of Antiquities over more than four hundred years of history, thanks to the House of Savoy and the discoveries of scholars, explorers and entrepreneurs.

This is a great opportunity to bring archaeology back to the center of the Royal Museums, and to reveal a fundamental chapter in the history of the Savoy in Turin.

Greek and Etruscan Collections

The two main nuclei of the collection of Greek and Italic pottery are formed from the Moschini collection,

Restoration of the Cinerary Urn with Reclining Woman from the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia

by Valentino Nizzo, *et al.*

The terracotta cinerary urn was discovered in Cerveteri, in the necropolis of Monte Abatone, Tomb n.171, and it dates back to the last decades of the 6th century BC (Fig.1). It is in the shape of a bed (*kline*) with a lid that represents, in the round, a semi-reclined woman pouring perfume from an ointment jar (*alabastron*). The woman is richly dressed; she wears a chiton, the typical Etruscan headdress (*tutulus*), pointed-toed shoes and jewelry. Large areas painted with engobe are preserved on the figure: red for the clothes and white for the skin. On the bed there are just few traces of a red engobe.

State of conservation

The urn was in fragments and it was restored around the 1950s. The woman is in fairly good condition, while the *kline* shows many cracks and fractures caused by an old support, no longer usable, and by the deterioration of the materials used in the past treatments. The plaster fillings hide much of the original surfaces and are painted in an unsuitable tone. A metal bar has been incorporated in the plaster between the two front feet, which are not original. The reclining woman and the few fragments of the cushion are not displayed in the correct position.



Royal museums redesigned Etruscan galleries.

acquired in 1827-28 by Carlo Felice (a total of about 400 vases), and part of the collection of the Prince of Canino, Luciano Bonaparte, purchased in 1871. The remainder of the collection was purchased from other European and Italian museums, in addition to the mainly Greek part of the Dianzani collection.

The collected groups are partially constituted of pottery from the excavations of the necropoleis of Vulci, Chiusi, Bomarzo and Tarquinia. The provenance of much material already present in the Savoy collections is uncertain, however. A further core belongs to the Grattoni donation, which was received in 1866, and includes indigenous southern pottery.

Closely linked to the Greek collection (as most of the Greek pottery comes from Etruscan tombs) is the Etruscan collection, which includes ceramics, bucchero, bronzes, cinerary urns and sarcophagi. Most of this material comes from the necropolis of Vulci; it was brought to light by excavations started in 1828 by Luciano Bonaparte. Other objects entered into the museum collections from 1871, thanks to purchases made by the director Ariodante Fabretti, mainly from the area of Chiusi. Also worth mentioning are the canopic urns in a stylized human shape (7th-6th c. BC), heavy bucchero cinerary urns, painted jars and bell-shaped vases from the Hellenistic period. The repertoire is completed with a variety of funeral sarcophagi in carved stone or terracotta.



Fig.1. The completed restoration of the urn.

Conservation treatment

The conservation treatment started with the removal of the altered materials, such as the coating and the inpaintings, most of the fillings, all the excessive plaster, the two not original feet and the metal bar. The urn has been consolidated and some fragments of the *kline* have been glued back together. The fillings, made with pigmented dental plaster, have been evened out with the *puntinato* (small dots of different colors) technique. Two new feet have been made with dental plaster, by molding the original ones.

The new plexiglass support has been designed in three different parts: one element that gives structural stability to the *kline* and allows it to be moved without

touching the original parts; a second element, which holds the woman in the correct reclined position; and the third, a support made for the cushion fragments, that is placed between the bed and the woman (Figs. 2-3).

The conservation of the cinerary urn was made possible thanks to the sponsorship of Q8Italia. The restoration was carried out through the synergy between the De.Co.Re.srl company, the Head Office and the Conservation Service of the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia.

This project was particularly exciting because an all-female team had the opportunity to care for a woman from the past, thanks to the precious collaboration and love for Italian art of Tracy Roberts, Vice-President and Co-Founder of LoveItaly (loveitaly.org).

Authors

Valentino Nizzo, Director; Maria Paola Guidobaldi, Curator; Miriam Lamonaca, Conservator-Restorer; Domizia Colonnello, Conservator-Restorer; Alice Rivalta, Conservator-Restorer, De.Co.Re.srl.

Fig.2. Pre restoration. Fig.3. Placing a new support.

