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Etruscan News

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Newsletter of the American
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Etruscan and Italic Studies



Winter 2022

Who is the “Etruscan traveler”?

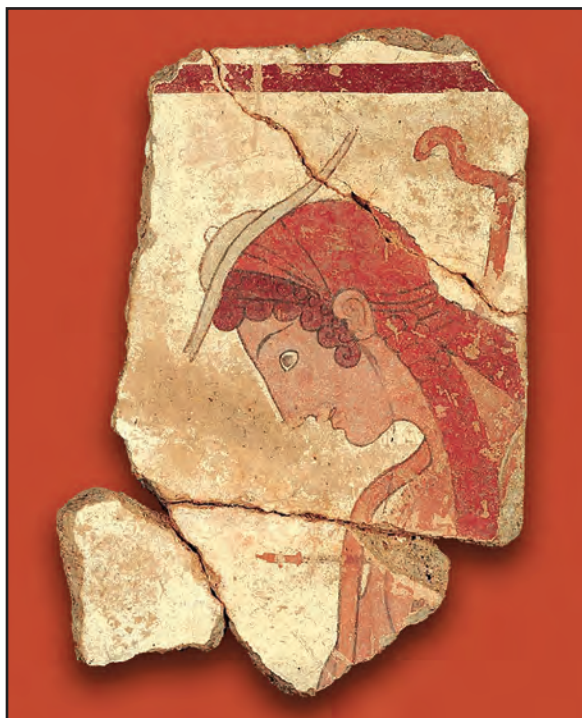
by Daniele F. Maras,

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*

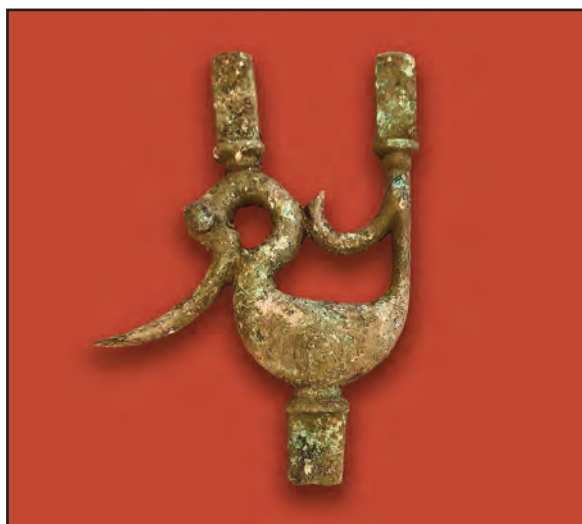


Fig.2. Chariot railing ornament of a waterfowl.



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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ARTICLES

The “Return” of the warrior

by Valentino Nizzo

An Etruscan inscription, cold engraved on the inside of the neck roll of an Italic helmet, has remained hidden for over 90 years. The helmet’s form, with a throat and cast bronze discs, can be related - for enthusiasts - to the “type A” of the H. Pflug classification and to the “type III” of the “Etruscan-Thracian” series by JM Paddock in 1993.

Discovery

On June 2, 1931 a small tomb (55), which had contained the helmet for about 2300 years, came to light, well aligned with other similar tombs in the necropolis “dell’Osteria” in Vulci. The excavation was carried out by a wealthy businessman, Ugo Ferraguti, a passionate archaeologist, and at the time honorary inspector of Vulci and Canino. A century had passed since the first season of discoveries, which in 1828 had made the name of Vulci famous among European antiquarians. Very little of what had been recovered, however, had survived the dispersion, causing serious damage to the knowledge of the ancient city. Aware of this, Ferraguti aimed to donate the fruit of his research to the State and to ensure that the data were scientifically flawless.

The discoveries were extraordinary, both for the importance of the materials and for the quality of the data acquired, methodically noted by Mengarelli in his notebooks with the aim of assembling an exemplary publication. His multiple work commitments and the premature death of his patron prevented that dream from being realized but did not prevent the most significant contexts from being immediately exhibited, as they still are today in the Villa Giulia’s Vulcian galleries.

In January 2019, as part of a project aimed at creating 3D digital models of some of the weapons in the Villa Giulia, the helmet of tomb (55) finally revealed the secret it had hitherto jealously contained.

Distribution of the “Negau” type helmet

The fame of Vulcian metallurgists and the role perhaps played by the city in the production of the most characteristic Etruscan helmets, the so-called “Negau” type — widespread between the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 4th century and documented in the famous “Warrior’s tomb” (no. 47) of the same necropolis — have led some to hypothesize that the “throat” typology had been developed locally, as an evolution from a previous type. The distribution of throat helmets also extends to the Adriatic - from Piceno to Apulia - and occasionally Iberia (cf. the wreck of Les Sorres near Barcelona). Examples of the type prevail in Vulci and, above all, Perugia. Their possible relationships with the Italo-Celtic button helmets of the so-called “Montefortino” type, however, are not yet clear. The latter, more or less simultaneously, because of their simpler manufacture and greater functionality, began to assert themselves throughout the peninsula, and came to be regularly adopted by the Roman Republican army from the end of the 4th century.



Above, side and back of the helmet inv. 63688 (photo M. Benedetti). Photomosaic of inscription inside neck roll of helmet, (graphic elaboration Miriam Lamonaca).

The homogenization of production and the simultaneous disappearance of hybrid transitional forms such as the Negau type are all effects of the climate of strong conflict triggered by the descent of the Celts and culminating in the famous sack of Rome in 390 BC by Brenno. This situation had generated, since the mid-5th century, a progressive evolution in military organization. Armies no longer consisted of armed “gangs” loyal to a patron, but were institutionalized and professionalized through the massive use of mercenaries. From the beginning of the 4th century, the mobility of warriors is well documented, not only by the presence of weapons in funerary and sanctuary contexts but also by the rare onomastic formulas engraved on some of them.

The phenomenon has more ancient roots, as evidenced by the exceptional deposit of about 150 helmets of the Negau type found in 1905 on the acropolis of Vetulonia. At least 59 specimens were distinguished by the Etruscan noble *haspnaś*, indicating the family that may have provided arms for a private army around the middle of the 5th century. In the 4th and 3rd centuries, however, formulas prevail that seem to directly recall the holder of the helmet, without indicating whether the name was that of its first owner or of someone who had come into possession of it as a gift or war booty.

Names “related to” or “deriving from” toponyms or ethnonyms constitute another peculiarity of the military world, characterized, as we have seen, by a great “mobility” connected both to the craft of war and to the circulation of weapons. Weapons acquired in battle could also lend themselves even more to being reused and exhibited. The “biography” of objects loaded with symbolic meanings such as these, the very metaphor of the warrior and his deeds, increased the objects’ importance. At the same time, it enhanced the association between the helmet and the wearer, and justified the affixing of onomastic formulas, indicators of possession, particularly when they are not immediately visible and, thus, potentially “votive.”

The inscription

This new inscription from Vulci is a case in point and allows us to recover an unpublished page of the bi-

ography of a warrior who lived around the middle of the 4th century BC. The inscription is written right to left and is placed along the edge inside the neck roll. The seven letters that compose it are interrupted at a rivet, without overlapping. This suggests that the incision took into account the obstacle and can therefore constitute a single word: **harn ste**.

The palaeographic characteristics are consistent with both the place of discovery and the dating of the support and constitute a good example of the so-called “capital” orthographic variety, which has its epicenter of diffusion in the Tarquinian and Vulcentana area starting from the 4th century. The “hidden” location, in an area that could have been at least partially covered by the padding, seems to reinforce the idea that it was therefore made on the occasion of the manufacture of the helmet.

The termination **-ste** is not very common, and its main attestations have been traced back to a foreign matrix adapted to the local language; such is the case in the Greek names Orestes, Adrastos, Pegasos and Ulysses, which became in Etruscan, respectively, *urste*, *atrste*, *pakste*, *uθuste*.

In Etruscan onomastics, on the other hand, the suffix **-te /-θe** is much more common, typical of “ethnic gentiles” and/or adjectives derived from toponyms; these include **cleus(i) -te/cleus-te**, ***vel(a)θri-te**, ***hurta-te**, **manθva-te**, **velθi-te**, **kavia-te** etc., which lead, respectively, to Chiusi, Volterra, Horta, Mantua, Vulci and Gabii. If such were the case, one could hypothesize a connection between the aristocracy and a toponym of the type ***harna**, of which, however, there is no evidence. One might consider, however, the Oppidum Aharnam mentioned by Livy (X, 25.4) as the site of the praetor Appius’s camp shortly before the battle of Sentinum in 295 BC. Regardless of whether or not Aharnam can be identified with Arna and Civitella d’Arna near Perugia, the presence of the aspirated intervocalic (recurring in Umbrian-Latin toponyms such as Nahars) could actually indicate some affinity with ***harna**, given also the absolute peculiarity of the toponym, considered a hapax of probable Etruscan origin.

Biography of the helmet

The clues collected so far therefore allow us to reconstruct the hypothetical stages in the biography of the helmet of tomb 55: it was produced in the Perugia area shortly before the middle of the 4th century; it came into the possession of a soldier, characterized by an Etruscan noble name, ***harn(u)ste**, perhaps derived from the Umbrian toponym ***(A)harna(s)**. Its owner was defeated in war or moved as a mercenary to Vulci, and the helmet continued its trajectory, ending around the middle of the century in the tomb of a warrior, who was evidently proud of his military exploits and was perfectly integrated into the community to which the helmet belongs.

Even if it is no longer possible to establish whether Harnste was his family or that of a rival killed on an unknown battlefield, the public, who in the future will admire the Vulcente helmet, will remember not only the cold order number of a tomb but also something more intimate and personal: a name and some shreds of the possible history of those who once possessed it and entrusted their lives to it.