

Etruscan Literacy in its Social Context

*edited by
Ruth D. Whitehouse*

Etruscan Literacy in its Social Context



edited by
Ruth D. Whitehouse

VOLUME 18
ACCORDIA SPECIALIST STUDIES ON ITALY
(Series Editors: Ruth D. Whitehouse)
ACCORDIA RESEARCH INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Published by
Accordia Research Institute
University of London
c/o Institute of Archaeology
Gordon Square
London WC1H 0PY

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

Computer typeset by the Accordia Research Institute

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers

Published 2020

© Accordia Research Institute, University of London

Cover: layout & design © Accordia Research Institute

Image: Crocefisso del Tufo cemetery at Orvieto, inscription over tomb entrance; photograph by Ruth Whitehouse

ISBN 978 1 873415 37 5

Printed and bound in Great Britain

This book is dedicated to the memory of John Wilkins (27.4.1935 – 8.3.2017)
scholar of language, literacy and society of ancient Italy

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgements	<i>ix</i>
Abbreviations	<i>x</i>
Introduction <i>Ruth D. Whitehouse</i>	<i>1</i>
The Social Context of Proto-Literacy in Central Italy: the case of Poggio Civitate <i>Anthony Tuck & Rex Wallace</i>	<i>9</i>
Etruscan Inscriptions on Pottery Vessels: contexts and functions (8 th –6 th centuries BC) <i>Jean Gran-Aymerich & Jean Hadas-Lebel</i>	<i>21</i>
Potters' Signatures: the relationship between craftsmen and artefacts <i>Valentina Belfiore & Lucilla Medori</i>	<i>41</i>
Etruscan Vase Painters: literate or illiterate? <i>Dimitris Paleothodoros</i>	<i>69</i>
'Drawing' Inscriptions: preliminary remarks on writing artisans in 7 th century BC Faliscan territory <i>Maria Cristina Biella</i>	<i>91</i>
Engravers and Readers of Inscribed Etruscan Gems <i>Laura Ambrosini</i>	<i>103</i>
The International Etruscan <i>Sigla</i> Project: an introduction <i>Giovanna Bagnasco Gianni & Nancy T. de Grummond</i>	<i>113</i>
Traces of Orality in Writing <i>Daniele Maras</i>	<i>125</i>
Writing Time and Space in Ancient Etruria <i>Massimiliano Di Fazio</i>	<i>135</i>
Writing Against the Image <i>Larissa Bonfante</i>	<i>145</i>
Between Etruscans and Phoenicians: the impiety of Thefarie <i>Maurizio Harari</i>	<i>151</i>
Evidence for Etruscan Archives: tracking the epigraphic habit in tombs, the sacred sphere, and at home <i>Hilary Becker</i>	<i>159</i>
Personal Names in Early Etruscan Inscriptions: an anthropological perspective <i>Ruth D. Whitehouse</i>	<i>181</i>
Addresses of contributors	<i>195</i>
Notes for authors	<i>197</i>

Preface and Acknowledgements

The conference from which this volume arises was held at the Institute of Classical Studies (School of Advanced Studies), University of London in September 2010. Its aim was expressed in its name, preserved in the title of this volume: *Etruscan Literacy in its Social Context*. The conference itself took its name from a research project organised by myself and John Wilkins with Kathryn Lomas as Research Fellow and funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. This project, which ran from 2005 to 2009, was restricted to the earlier period of Etruscan writing (8th to 5th centuries BC). The aim of the conference was to draw on the interests and expertise of the larger Etruscology community to explore the social context of Etruscan writing on a broad chronological, geographical, and thematic basis.

The current publication, intended to follow soon after the conference, has been sadly delayed by the illness and then death of John Wilkins, to whom the volume is dedicated.

In the last year the scholarly community has also lost Larissa Bonfante, doyenne of Anglophone Etruscan studies and a good friend to *Accordia*. It is a melancholy privilege to include what may be her last published paper in this volume.

My debt to John is immeasurable, in intellectual as well as personal terms. He introduced me, previously exclusively a prehistorian, to an exploration of ancient societies illuminated by the study of their writing, however fragmentary its survival and difficult its interpretation. Our joint interest in exploring how writing functioned in ancient society was behind two successive research projects and the conference published in this volume.

I would like to thank Kathryn Lomas for her major contribution to the organisation of the conference and for all her hard work on the *Etruscan Literacy* Project. I am also grateful to Mike Edwards, former director of the Institute of Classical Studies, for hosting the conference at the ICS.

I wish to record my gratitude to the contributors to the volume, who have responded to the delay in publication with patience and tolerance and whose understanding has helped me through a difficult process.

Ruth D. Whitehouse
London
January 2020

ABBREVIATIONS

Castellina 2011	Gran-Aymerich, J. & Domínguez-Arranz, A. (eds) 2011. <i>La Castellina a sud di Civitavecchia, origini ed eredità. Origines protohistoriques et évolution d'un habitat étrusque.</i> L'Erma di Bretschneider, Rome
CIE	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Etruscarum</i>
CII	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Italicarum</i>
CSE	<i>Corpus Speculorum Etruscorum</i>
ES	Gerhard, E., Klugmann, A. & Koerte G. 1840–1897. <i>Etruskische Spiegel, I–V.</i> Reimer, Berlin
ET	Rix H. (ed.) 1991. <i>Etruskische Texte. Editio minor.</i> Gunter Narr, Tübingen
Etrusker in Berlin 2010	<i>Etruskische Kunst in der Berliner Antikensammlung. Eine Einführung.</i> Schnell & Steiner, Regensburg
Gli Etruschi 2015	<i>Gli Etruschi maestri di scrittura. Società e cultura nell'Italia antica.</i> Silvana editoriale, Cinisello Balsamo
Italia 2005	Colonna G., 2005. <i>Italia ante Romanum imperium. Scritti di antichità etrusche, italiche e romane (1958-1998)</i> Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali, Pisa
LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mitologiae Classicae</i>
Rasenna 1986	Pallottino, M. et al. (eds) 1986. <i>Rasenna: storia e civiltà degli Etruschi.</i> Scheiwiller, Milan
Rediscovering Pompeii	Franchi Dell'Orto, L., & Varone, A.,(eds) 1990. <i>Rediscovering Pompeii Exhibition Catalogue (New York 12 July – 15 September 1990).</i> L' Erma di Bretschneider, Rome
REE	<i>Rivista di epigrafia etrusca</i> (in <i>Studi Etruschi</i>)
SE	<i>Studi Etruschi</i>
ST	Rix H. 2002. <i>Sabellische Texte. Die Texte des Oskischen, Umbrischen und Südpikenischen.</i> Winter, Heidelberg
TLE ²	Pallottino, M. 1968. <i>Testimonia linguae Etruscae.</i> 2nd ed. La Nuova Italia, Florence

Engravers and Readers of Inscribed Etruscan Gems

Laura Ambrosini

This paper represents a small part of a larger study that I have conducted on inscribed Etruscan gems. It is the outcome of a project¹ upon which I was engaged in collaboration with the *École française de Rome*, and which I have presented at a conference (see *Melanges de l'École française de Rome – Antiquité* 124–2, note 2). I have subsequently expanded this work and published it in book form (Ambrosini 2011: 107–14). For full details please refer to this book (see also Ambrosini 2009 (2012); 2015; Bruni 2018).

I would like to give a brief introduction to Etruscan gems and their inscriptions, and then group them by author, user, and their contribution to the knowledge of literacy in the Etruscan world. It is fascinating how small precious objects such as gems can give us extensive information about literacy in Etruscan culture.

In Etruria finger rings came into fashion around the middle of the 6th century BC. They were often made entirely from precious metal (gold or silver), but more commonly they were rings consisting of metal hoops (usually gold) with hinged scarabs of semiprecious stone. To mount the scarab, the base was perforated lengthwise, a wire was then threaded through and secured to the ends of the hoops. Stones frequently used were carnelian, agate and sardonyx. Carnelian was used because, as we learn from Pliny, it does not stick to the wax when used as a seal, and this property avoided the necessity of wetting the stone with saliva. Pliny writes (*NH* XXXVII.30–1): “*omnia autem haec genera contumaciter sculpturae resistunt partemque in signo cerae tenent*”, “all these kinds of stone, however, offer the most obstinate resistance to the engraver, and, if used for seals, tend to remove part of the wax”). Carchedonia have the same property, though they are far inferior in value to the stone already mentioned. Pliny says that all these kinds of stone offer the same kinds of problem to the engraver.

We find a clear example of this usage in the 1st century AD in an elegiac couplet, written on the entrance of the rear vestibule of the House of Menander at Pompeii, and dedicated by a poet to Novellia Primigenia. The Pompeian inscription (CIL IV 8365) invites us to go to Nocera at Porta Romana and ask for Novellia Primigenia, a prostitute of Nuceria Alfaterna, who practised at Porta Romana “in vico Venerio”. In another inscription (CIL IV 10241), found on the funerary monument 20 EN, a poet says:

Primigenie Nuc(er)inae)
vellem essem gemma
(h)ora non amplius una
ut tibi signanti oscula pressa darem

Primigenia of Nucera, for just one hour I'd like to be the gem (of this ring), to give to you who moistens it with your mouth, the kisses I have impressed on it.

He kisses the ring so that she, when damping it to set the seal, can receive his kiss. We can compare some verses of Vergil (*Aen.* 1.683) and Ovid (*Amor.* 2.15.9; 2.15.15–18), even if the connection between the authors is still debatable (Varone 1990: 152–3, 13E).

Some of the Etruscan gems, mostly carnelian scarabs, bear Etruscan inscriptions. I managed to collect about 160, and most of the samples can be included in the late Archaic period – the so-called ‘Severe style’ (480–430 BC). These Etruscan gems bear different types of Etruscan inscription. These can be basically divided into:

- 1 inscriptions designating the character portrayed (legends)
- 2 inscriptions that designate the role of the character represented
- 3 inscriptions of possession or of a gift
- 4 inscription of uncertain definition
- 5 fake inscriptions (added in modern times)

Extensive study shows that the majority of inscriptions belong to the first group. They comprise 81% of all gems catalogued. The inscriptions on Etruscan gems are descriptive or explanatory, and have the function of naming the figures represented. They always show substantial congruence with the mythical image (Torelli 2002: 135). Figures on gems are related to deities, Homeric heroes and mythological figures.

A few examples actually constitute the names of deities. These show the names of certain deities only, viz., *Aita*, *Castur*, *Eros*, *Hercle*, *Menerva*, *Nethuns*, *Pultuche*, *Šethlanś*, *Turan* and *Turms*. Bearing the image of a deity on his ring-seal or seal helped the owner express his strong devotion to a specific deity, the gem becoming a sort of talisman, capable of providing the owner with the direct personal protection of the chosen deity. The primary function was ornamental, but these gems probably also served as amulets. Significantly greater is the number of engraved gems bearing the names of many Homeric heroes, both Greek and Trojan. Among the Greek examples we have *Acha/e/ile*, *Achle*, *Aivas*, *Uthuz/se*, *Antiluche*, and *Talmith/te*.

We turn now to issues of literacy as raised by the inscribed gems.

WRITERS AND READERS

Study shows that the use of a gem was restricted by social considerations. Probably only the socially most important persons (men and women), nobles or people with high political and religious positions, would have gems with inscriptions. Social grouping is high, both in Archaic and more recent times, with prestigious political, religious and, of course, economic position.



Fig. 1 Gem from Cortona (not to scale): 5th century BC. (last quarter), showing a *gemmarius* working with a drill

(reproduced by kind permission of the British Museum)

The Writers

What do we know about the engravers of gems in Etruscan culture?

Almost nothing . . .

I think that we cannot be sure that the gem-cutter (*gemmarius*) was also the author of the inscriptions. Some errors in the inscriptions make it clear that the writers probably were not professional, and that they were not real scribes (for the scribes: cf. Briquel 1992; Colonna 1976). So it is likely to be gem-cutters who worked in the laboratory. I think that a *gemmarius* is represented on a British Museum gem from Cortona of the last quarter of the 5th century BC (Fig. 1) (Richter 1968: 192, no. 771; Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: 90, 316, 391, pl. 79.337). The *gemmarius* is working with a

drill on a table (for images of artisans on Etruscan gems see Ambrosini 2014). In other gems the drill shown is bigger, so I think that this kind of drill could be a special drill for gems and not a common drill for wood like the others represented on gems. His drill is almost identical with the one depicted on a funerary stele of Doros, the *δακτυλοκοιλογλύφος*, from Sardis of the 2nd century BC, found in Philadelphia (Alaşehir) in Lydia (Asia Minor) (Zwierlein-Diehl 2007: pl. 221.959–60) (Fig. 2).

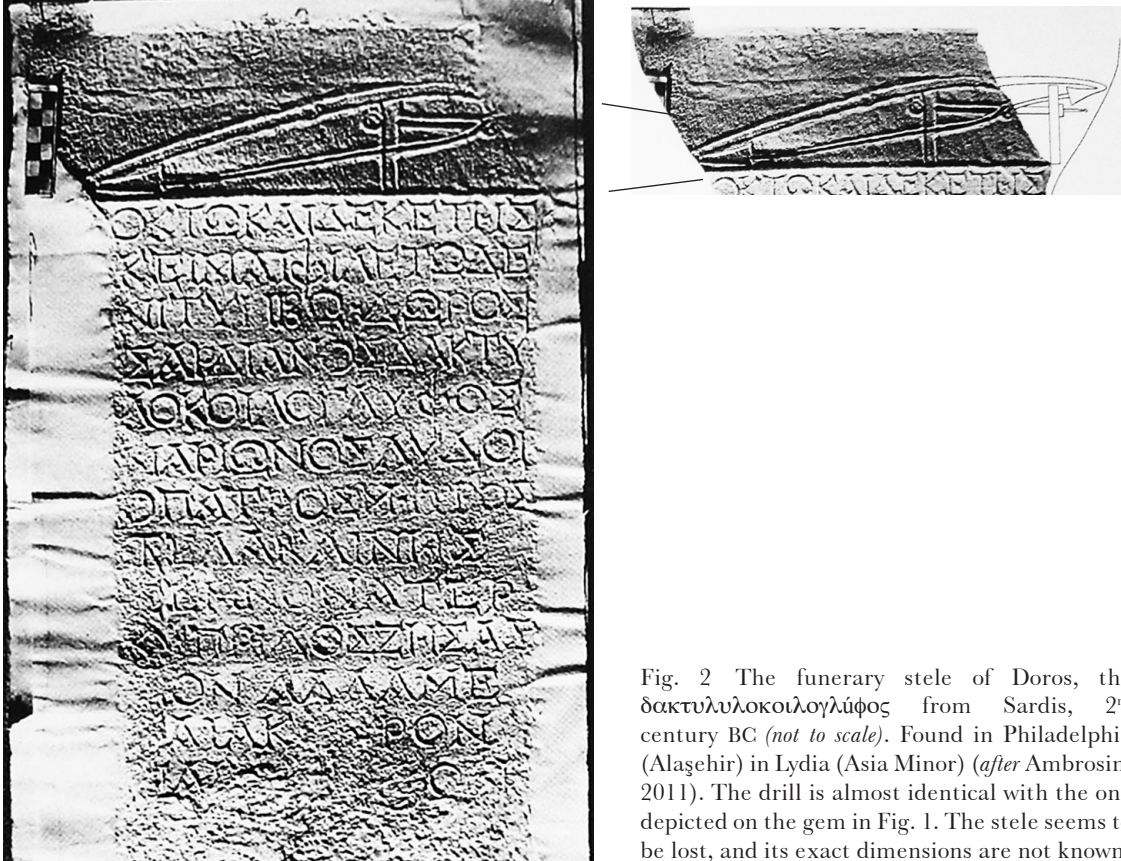


Fig. 2 The funerary stele of Doros, the *δακτυλοκοιλογλύφος* from Sardis, 2nd century BC (not to scale). Found in Philadelphia (Alaşehir) in Lydia (Asia Minor) (after Ambrosini 2011). The drill is almost identical with the one depicted on the gem in Fig. 1. The stele seems to be lost, and its exact dimensions are not known



Fig. 3 Etruscan carnelian scarab (not to scale) from the Volterra Museum, showing the figure of a warrior with helmet, spear, shield and shin guards. There is the inscription *Lysandros* (reproduced courtesy of © Gabriele Cateni)

We know the home and workplace of one particular Roman *gemmarius*, viz., the house of the gem-cutter Pinarius Cerialis at Pompeii, in which a jewellery box was found containing 114 plain and engraved gems, among them 24 intaglios and 6 cameos, together with some iron tools (a little knife and some burins) (Pannuti 1975: 179, figs 1, 3, 38–40). Perhaps we can learn something about the social status of two gem-cutters in the Etruscan world.

On an Etruscan carnelian scarab in the Volterra Museum (Fig. 3), bearing the figure of a warrior armed with helmet, spear, shield and shin guards, there is an inscription which was originally read as *Alsanpros* by Zazoff and Krauskopf. Lately, however, Mario Torelli (Torelli 2002: 138) has correctly read it as *ΛΥΣΑΝΔΡΟΣ*. This is, of course, a Greek (Attic) name. The correct reading, however, is nothing new, as it had already been published by Lanzi (Lanzi 1824: 132–3), back in 1824 and accepted by the *Corpus Inscriptionum Italicarum* of Ariodante Fabretti, by Brunn and

even by Lucia Guerrini in the Italian *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica* in 1961 (Brunn 1889: 421; Guerrini 1961: 750; Zazoff 1968: 58, no. 73), under the heading *Lysandros*. Opinions differ however, on the interpretation of the name on the gem: while Lanzi and Fabretti thought that *Lysandros* was the name of the craftsman (the gem-cutter), Torelli considers it to be the name of the owner of the gem (Lanzi 1824: 133; CII 306; Torelli 2002: 138).

In any case, compared to Greek gems with the craftsman's signature, the Volterra scarab does in my opinion show some small anomalies:

- 1 the position of the inscription. Above all with the *rho*, but also partly with the *omicron* and *sigma*, the inscription protrudes from its field and fills the decorated frame of the scarab.
- 2 the arrangement of the inscription. The inscription is not concentrated within the perimeter of the scarab, as is usually the case with Greek gems.
- 3 lack of care in execution of the inscription. This seems to lack the care and tidiness characteristic of inscriptions on Greek gems.
- 4 the shape of the letter *alpha*, which in Greek inscriptions usually has a horizontal (not diagonal) cross-bar, and the shape of the letter *rho* with an open loop.

All these anomalies lead us to believe that the inscription was made not by a Greek craftsman, but by an Etruscan (see the form of the letter *alpha* and the letter *rho*). He probably cut the inscription on the scarab, copying it when it was already decorated with the warrior figure. We do not know if the Etruscan who cut the inscription is even the same person who made the scarab decoration, but, in any case, it is highly probable that he wanted to copy the signature of a Greek artisan for his gem (Ambrosini 2011: 102–3, 109).

From the iconographic point of view the gem can be compared with a Greek scarab from Tomb 10 at Tharros (Fig. 4) (Richter 1968: 37, n. 40), dated according to Gisela Richter, to the early 5th century BC.

In a more recent case we have an Etruscan gem that comes from a known archaeological context. This is an onyx scarab of the second half of the 4th century BC in Taranto Museum, depicting a warrior with spear and sword, and a shield on the ground. It bears the inscription $\text{ἸΘ}^2\text{ΑΕΦΟΣ}$, intended as a label to the image. The gem was discovered in *Satyrion* (Saturo, Taranto) (Krauskopf *et al.* 1995: 123, n. 993a, pl. 3.993; Lo Porto 1977: 500, pl. 57.3), in 'a hiding-place' with silver coins of the 4th century (of Taranto, *Thurii* and *Heraclea*), golden coins of Alexander the Molossus age and two gold earrings with lion's head. The scarab is particularly interesting because it could indicate the presence of Etruscan artisans in Apulia, in contact with Greek-speaking people, and enable us to broaden the horizons of our research on the development of contacts between the Etruscan and Apulian cultures, which are most visible chronologically later (Ambrosini 2009; 2010).



Fig.4 Greek scarab with warrior, from Tomb 10 at Tharros (*not to scale*) (inv.no:1856.1223.856: reproduced by courtesy of the British Museum)

But who engraved the inscriptions on the gems? Let us assume that the inscriptions were made by gem-engravers who were not fully literate. Analysis of all the inscriptions collected shows that there is no big gap between the number of inscriptions engraved from Left to Right (*destrorse*) and those engraved from Right to Left (*sinistrorse*). For an Etruscan, it would be easier to carve inscriptions on the gem from Right to Left rather than Left to Right. Certainly the carving of the inscription

from Left to Right would require a greater degree of skill. So it would follow that the gem-cutters were clever enough to cut the inscription in contrary direction, i.e. *destrorsa* (from Left to Right), thus ensuring that, when cast, the resultant inscription had the usual direction *sinistrorsa* (from Right to Left).

This is important because it shows that, in these cases, the craftsman had a good mastery of writing. He was presumably able to engrave the inscription on the gem in mirror fashion, or to copy by mirror an inscription already made by someone else on another object (perhaps the purchaser, or a scribe working in the workshop or the workshop's master). In the first half of the 5th century BC, the production of scarabs moves onto a vast scale, involving the demise of the gem-cutting workshops which had worked exclusively within noble families, engraving the first inscriptions on Etruscan scarabs.

We do not know the relationship between the person who commissioned the gem and the engraver, but it might be that the buyer chose the subject and that, being socially of higher status, he could also read and write, and was thus able to ask the gem-cutter to engrave on the gem a text of the owner's own preparation.

The Readers

Who were the readers of the gem inscriptions? The first readers of the inscriptions were, of course, the buyers, who became the owners, including those who purchased them for a gift. It follows that inscribed gems are objects of prestige, enjoyed by those who can read (but not necessarily write). In fact in this way a person of high rank could affix his seal to a text written by a scribe. Inscribed gems, because of their low number, must have been destined for the most important persons in society, viz., for the nobility, for people with political and religious position.

Gems inscribed with the names of mythical characters presumably belong to the context of people who wished to trace back their ancestry, and therefore their *gens*, if not to the specific hero named, then at least to the relevant mythological period (Krauskopf 1999: 414; Rizzo 1985: 222). Gems with owner's name show onomastic formulae (such as *metna* and *mi papaś XXa*; *tarchnas*; *achersie vetus*; *nanivas*; *a titule*; *vel max vel pem*; *v. tesés. a.*; *apie mariu*) (see Ambrosini 2011).

Among the gems with inscriptions related to religion, we have the well known example from Florence, with the inscription *appius alce*. This has a representation of two bearded *Salii* with *capite velato*, dressed in short tunic, carrying to the left, six *ancilia*, decorated with spirals, hanging from a pole. According to Torelli, this would be a gift inscription, written in Etruscan by a Latin man, while, according to Colonna, it is a seal to be stamped on a gift. The owner, a member of the *Salii* college, should be identified with *Appius Claudius Caecus* (the Blind). He would have made a gift of it to a person associated with him by family connections. We know that *Appius Claudius* was *Salius* into old age and thus the gem could refer to his priestly office (Amrosini 2011: 77, no. 9, 99–100, 110; Colonna 2016; Torelli 1997; 2016: 264). Another example of religious context is the well known gem with the inscription *natis*, commonly interpreted as the Etruscan word for 'haruspex' (Ambrosini 2011: 73, no.1, fig.111, 98).

An example of association with political and/or social office (as scribe), is the important gem in Paris, which has the inscription *apcar* (Fig. 5). On this gem, already studied by Francesco Orioli (Orioli 1825), the seated man is holding an object that can be interpreted as a *diptych* of the type known on the Palermo cippus. This interpretation is to be preferred to that of a writing tablet of the type known from Marsiliana d'Albegna, or that from the Giglio shipwreck (Bound 1985: 67; 1991: 234–5, figs 81–2). Other examples of the *diptych* are to be found on the Berlin stylus from Orvieto (Etrusker in Berlin: 118, fig. 11.5), on the Shields Tomb wall painting of Tarquinia (Rasenna: fig.243), in the Artile hands on the mirror from Bolsena (ES, V:127), or in the dead man's hand on the lid of Volterra cinerary urns (see CIE, 70; ET Vt 1.106). A wonderful ancient *diptych* of this type, in African ebony and ivory, comes from the Uluburun shipwreck, off the coast of Turkey (Cristofani 1992–1993 (1998): 219–20, note 41; Pulak 2001: 30–2).

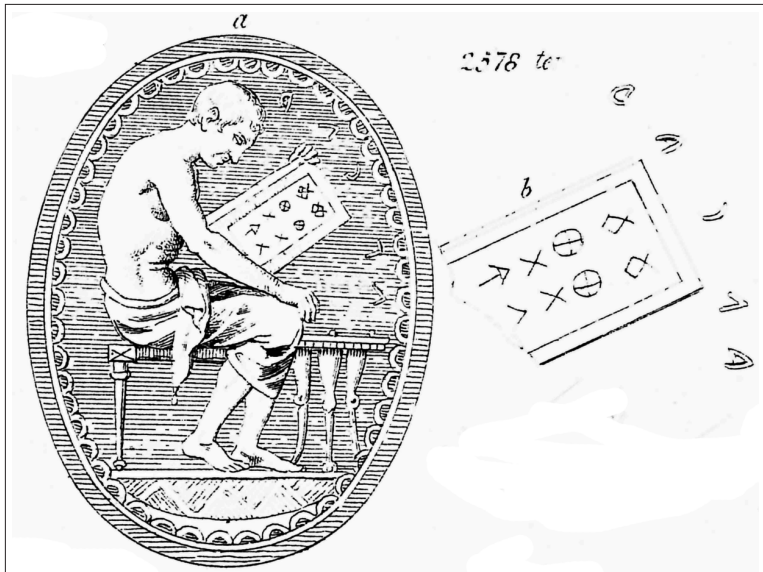


Fig. 5 Gem with the inscription *apcar* (not to scale) (Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, inv.no.1898 (after CII 2578 *ter*))

In any case, the best comparison for the Paris gem seems to me with the well known votive writing tablets from the sanctuary of the goddess *Reitia* at Este, where letters of the same type appear. While the letters on the Este writing tablets are commonly interpreted as writing exercises, in the gem the letters have been interpreted as numerals, as the man takes pieces in the hand from a table and the inscription *apcar* allows us to connect him or the table with the pieces identified by the Greek word *abax* and by the Latin word *abacus*, indicating the *abacarius* or the *tabula calculatoria*. On the Paris gem the tablet show pairs of identical letters, while on the Este tablets the letters are in a full alphabetic sequence, consonantic or vocalic sequence, or, in one case, we have the first and the last letter of an alphabetic sequence (Cristofani 1988: 18).

SOCIAL PURPOSES OF READING AND WRITING

For gems, the social purposes of reading and writing were to indicate eminent social status. In fact the gem owner is enabled to boast of being descended from a family that goes back to mythological time, by posing as the character whose name is written on the gem, or by writing the *nomen* of his *gens* on the gem. The inscriptions found on gems had both symbolic and practical use, for at least three reasons: first, they could be read by the owners of the gem; secondly, they could be displayed by their owners to people who could read; and thirdly, they could be impressed into wax or other perishable material to leave the mark or symbol of the gem's owner. Obviously the images depicted on gems conveyed further messages associated in detail with the inscriptions, and the inscriptions would make their identification more readily intelligible.

WRITING AND IDENTITY FORMATION

If we analyse the onomastic formulae on these gems in terms of the chronological *excursus*, we can see that in the earlier examples the *nomen* of the *gens* predominates, while in the later, the *praenomen* is added. This reflects a social phenomenon, generally well known from Etruscan inscriptions. The onomastic formulae on the gem highlight, on the one hand, the importance of assigning Etruscan names to the characters of Greek myth, which were evidently chosen as symbolic of a mythological time, back to which the origins of a *gens* could be traced; on the other hand, the onomastic formulae emphasise the importance of the *gens* in contemporary society, and the role played in that society by the owner of the gem, emphasising his political or religious position etc.

CONCLUSION

Now I come to my conclusions, especially about Etruscan inscriptions containing the name of the character represented – which constitute the majority of inscriptions in the *dossier* I have collected. I do not need to dwell on the ethical and political values innate in the themes depicted, since these have already been extensively discussed by Mario Torelli (Torelli 2002). The seal, by the depiction of which the owner presented the symbolic representation of himself and his family, although free from external and therefore ‘state’ influences, takes part, I think, from the late Archaic period onwards, in a circuit of standardisation. Etruscan gem-cutters worked for clients who, in my opinion, showed a strong interest in Greek myth and its characters, and whose subjects they aspired to appropriate, wishing thereby to participate in the Greek mythological past. As stressed by Ingrid Krauskopf, Greek myth provided themes for most of the Archaic and Classical Etruscan scarabs (Krauskopf 1999: 418). Probably the wish was to choose a hero as a symbol for a gem, or someone who could trace their descent and therefore his *gens*, if not to that specific hero, at least back to mythological time (Krauskopf 1999: 414; Rizzo 1985: 222).

The transmission of iconographic models from the Greek world to the Etruscan is a well known phenomenon in antiquity, embracing not only mythological but also animalistic subjects. For example, an Etruscan obsidian scarab from Clusium with the Etruscan inscription *metna* (Richter 1968: 188, n. 752; Walters 1926: 93, n. 759, pl. XII.759) shows the same scene (a rooster on a hen) as a Greek rock crystal scaraboid (Richter 1968: 119, n. 452; Walters 1926: n. 555).

Etruscans also used stock figures taken from the Greek iconographic repertoire to represent the heroes who did not have models or for which the Etruscan engravers could find a setting that would make them clearly identifiable. These figures were given a caption with the name of the character. Otherwise the figure would have been identifiable only by placing it in more complex scenes, involving numerous people – the complexity of which

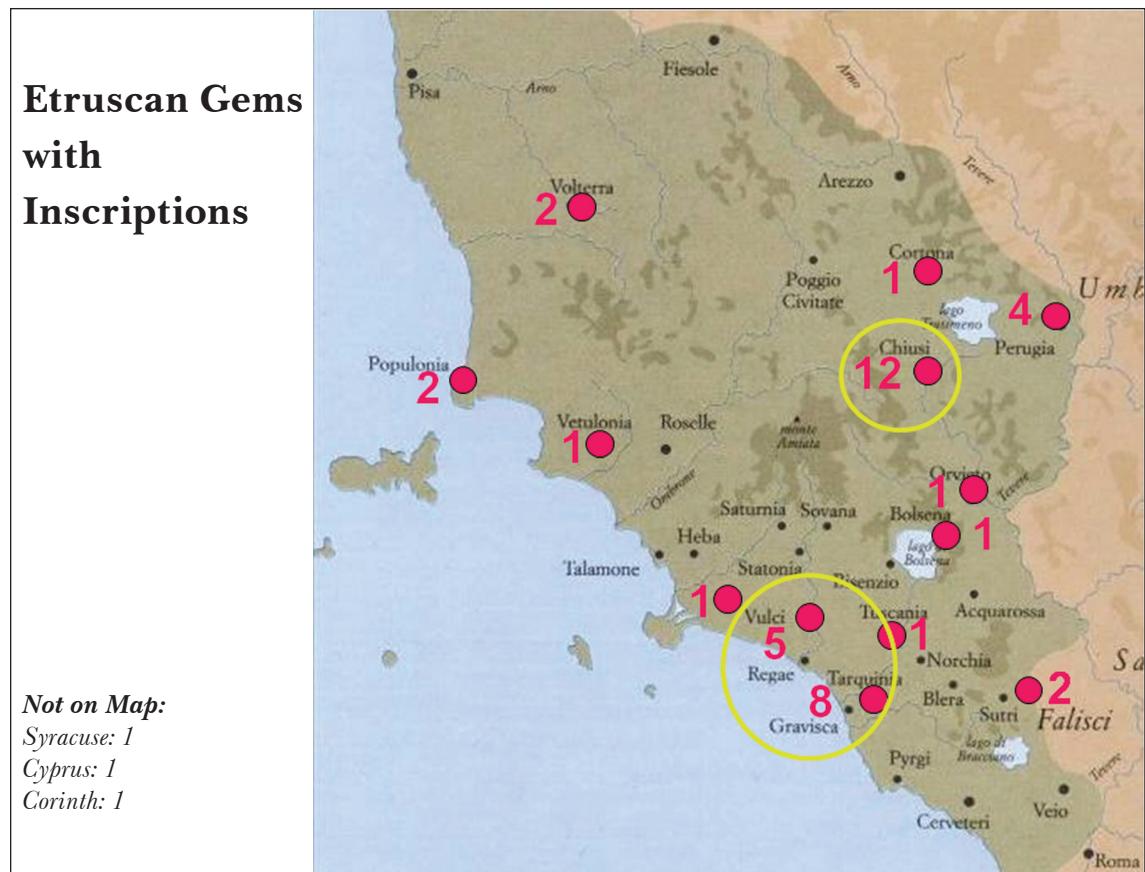


Fig. 6 Distribution map of Etruscan gems with inscriptions, showing the small number of provenances presently known (after Ambrosini 2011)

would have been impossible to reproduce within the constrained scale of a gem. Our study shows that, even given the marked indebtedness to Greek iconography, Etruscan examples exhibit a strong and often dramatic independence both in the characterisation of person and of mythological episode. Most of this deviation seems of a limited type, and tied to the distinctive socio-political character of Etruscan culture, such as religion, with all that implies, viz., sacrifices, divination and otherworldly beliefs.

It should be noted that the majority of these inscribed scarabs with the name of the character represented unfortunately have no provenance. The few provenances known are: Clusium with twelve gems, Tarquinia eight, Vulci five, Perugia four, Populonia and *Falerii Veteres* two, and finally Cortona, Orvieto, Bolsena, Pitigliano, Tuscania, Syracuse(?), and Cyprus(?), each with one (Fig. 6). The provenances known from the large number of Etruscan gems with captions collected, however, are useful to highlight a phenomenon of the evidence, viz., that it is essentially bipolar: on the one hand, we have Clusium and on the other Tarquinia. The location in Southern Etruria of gem-cutting workshops, hypothesised by Zazoff, as being located in Cerveteri or Vulci, (*contra* Martelli who considers Tarquinia more plausible, I think rightly), is supported not only by the stylistic characteristics and distribution of the scarabs, but also by the palaeographic characteristics of the inscriptions. This information is interesting because it suggests, as expected, that the place of *discovery* may have no connection with the graphic characteristics of the inscriptions. We conclude that the seal with a single image, and sometimes with a single word, served to represent symbolically its owner and his values (Torelli 2002: 102).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank John Wilkins, Ruth Whitehouse and Kathryn Lomas of Accordia for the invitation to speak at the conference. I would like to dedicate this article to the memory of John Wilkins. I would also like to thank Judith Swaddling, Senior Curator of the Greek and Roman Department of the British Museum. To all the staff of the Department, I am grateful for the kind and helpful support shown to me during my period of study in the Museum. My stay in London was made possible thanks to a CNR prize, which is awarded for results of particular innovation, excellence and strategic relevance in scientific research (Sciences of Antiquity). This prize was awarded in 2009 by the National Scientific Committee, chaired by the President of CNR (National Research Council), the illustrious physicist Professor Luciano Maiani. I would like to dedicate this short paper, written in 2010, to John's memory.

NOTES

¹ *Régler l'usage: norme et standards dans l'Italie préromaine*, concerning the phenomena of normalisation and standardisation in pre-Roman Italy (Ambrosini 2011:11).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ambrosini, L. 2009. Tarente et le monde étrusque à l'époque hellénistique. In Rivière, Y. (ed.), *De la Grèce à Rome: Tarente et les lumières de la Méditerranée, Catalogue de l'Exposition (Brest 2009)*: 128–31. Sépia, Baume-les-Dames
- Ambrosini, L. 2010. L'Etruria e Taranto in età ellenistica. In *Atti del XVII Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Classica, Incontri tra culture nel mondo mediterraneo antico (Rome, 22–26 Settembre 2008)*: 67–73. Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali & Associazione Italiana di Archeologia Classica, Rome (*Bollettino d'Arte on Line*, vol. speciale 1)
- Ambrosini, L. 2011. *Le gemme etrusche con iscrizioni*. Mediterranea. Supplemento 6. Istituti Poligrafici Internazionali. Pisa & Rome
- Ambrosini, L. 2009 (2012). Rivista di Epigrafia Etrusca. *Studi Etruschi*, 75: 284–306
- Ambrosini, L. 2014. Images of Artisans on Etruscan and Italic Gems. In Carpino, A. (ed.), *Proceedings of Artisans and Craft in Ancient Etruria: A Symposium in Honor of Nancy de Grummond, (Florence 2013)*: 172–91 *Etruscan Studies* 2014
- Ambrosini, L. 2015. Mondo greco occidentale ed Etruria. Il tema di “Eracle alla fonte” nella glittica. In Rourre, R. (ed.), *Contacts et acculturations en Méditerranée Occidentale. Hommages a Michel Bats*. Actes du Colloque Hyères-les palmiers, 15-18 Septembre 2011 (Bibliothèque d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne et Africaine -15, Etudes Massaliètes 12): 321–32. Errance, Arles – Centre Camille Jullian, Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, Aix-en-Provence, Paris
- Bound, M. 1985. Una nave mercantile di età arcaica all'Isola del Giglio. In *Il commercio etrusco arcaico. Atti Incontro di Studio (Rome 1983)*. (= Quaderni del Centro di studio per l'archeologia etrusco-italica, 9): 65–70. Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Rome
- Bound, M. 1991. The pre-classical wreck at Campese Bay, Island of Giglio. Second interim report. 1983 Season. *Studi e materiali. Soprintendenza ai beni archeologici per la Toscana*, 6: 199–244
- Briquel, D. 1992. Les tablettes à écrire étrusques. In Lalou, E. (ed.), *Les tablettes à écrire, de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne, Actes du colloque international du CNRS (Paris, Institut de France 10–11 octobre 1990)* (Bibliologia, 12): 187–202. Brepols, Turnhout
- Bruni, S. 2018. “Quel grande...dispettose e torto”. Un nuovo scarabeo etrusco con kapaneus. In Nizzo, V. & Pizzo, A. (eds), *Antico e non antico. Scritti multidisciplinari offerti a Giuseppe Pucci*: 55–62. Mimesis, Sesto San Giovanni
- Brunn, H. 1889. *Geschichte der griechische Künstler*, II, Ebner & Seubert, Stuttgart
- Colonna, G. 1976. Scriba cum rege sedens. In Bloch, R. (ed.), *Mélanges offerts à Jacques Heurgon. L'Italie préromaine et la Rome républicaine*: Collection de l'École française de Rome, 27: 187–92. École française de Rome, Rome
- Colonna, G. 2016. Appius alce, o la pratica del 'dono' in età ellenistica. *Studi Etruschi*, 79: 133–6
- Conticello, B. 1990. *Rediscovering Pompeii*. L'Erma di Bretschneider, Rome
- Cristofani, M. 1988. La scrittura nell'Italia antica. *Archeo Dossier*, 37. Marzo. De Agostini, Novara
- Cristofani, M. 1992–1993 (1998). Un naukeros greco-orientale nel Tirreno. Per un'interpretazione del relitto del Giglio. *Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene e delle missioni italiane in Oriente*, 70–71: 205–32
- Etrusker in Berlin 2010. *Etruskische Kunst in der Berliner Antikensammlung. Eine Einführung*. V. Kästner, Schnell & Steiner, Regensburg
- Guerrini, L. 1961. *s.v. Lysandros*. In *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica Classica e Orientale*, IV: 750: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana. Treccani, Rome
- Krauskopf, I. (with Brettelvon Eickstedt, E., Knittlmayer, B. & Simon, B.) 1995. *Heroen, Götter und Dämonen auf etruskischen Skarabäen. Listen zur Bestimmung*, (= Peleus, 1). Harrassowitz, O. Verlag, Mannheim
- Krauskopf, I. 1999. Interesse privato nel mito. Il caso degli scarabei etruschi. In Massa-Pairault, F.-H. (ed.), *Le mythe grec dans l'Italie antique. Fonction et image. Actes du colloque international, (Rome 1996)*: 405–21. L'Erma di Bretschneider, Rome
- Lanzi, L. 1824. *Saggio di lingua etrusca e di altre antiche d'Italia: per servire alla storia de' popoli, delle lingue e delle belle arti*. Stamperia Pagliarini, Florence
- LoPorto, F.G. 1977. La documentazione archeologica in Puglia. In *Locri Epizefirii. Atti del XVII Convegno di Studi sulla Magna Grecia, (Taranto 1976)*: 495–504. Arte Tipografica, Naples
- Orioli, F. 1825. *Spiegazione di una gemma etrusca del Museo Reale di Parigi e, in occasione di essa, breve discorso intorno il sistema della numerazione presso gli antichi toscani*. Nobili, Bologna
- Pannuti, U. 1975. Pinarius Cerialis, gemmarius pompeianus. *Bollettino d'Arte*, 60: 178–89
- Pulak, C. 2001. The cargo of the Uluburun ship and evidence for trade with the Aegean and beyond. In *Italy and Cyprus in antiquity. 1500–450 BC. Proceedings of an international Symposium held at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University, November 16 – 18, 2000*: 13–60. The Costakis and Leto Severis Foundation, Nicosia
- Rasenna 1986. *Storia e Civiltà degli Etruschi*. Scheiwiller, Milan
- Rediscovering Pompeii. Franchi Dell'Orto, L., & Varone, A. (eds), *Rediscovering Pompeii Exhibition Catalogue (New York 12 July – 15 September 1990)*. L'Erma di Bretschneider, Rome
- Richter G.M.A. 1968. *The Engraved Gems of the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans, 1. Engraved Gems of the Greeks and the Etruscans. A History of Greek Art in Miniature*. Phaidon, London
- Rizzo M.A. 1985. Orefici e intagliatori ioni in Etruria. In Cristofani, M. (ed.), *Civiltà degli Etruschi. Catalogo della mostra (Florence 1985)*: 221. Electa, Milan

- Torelli, M. 2002. Autorappresentarsi. Immagine di sé, ideologia e mito greco attraverso gli scarabei etruschi. *Ostraka*, 11(1): 101–55
- Torelli, M. 2016. The Roman Period. In de Grummond, N. T. & Pieraccini, L. (eds), *Caere*: 263–70. University of Texas Press, Austin
- Varone, B. 1990. *Rediscovering Pompeii*. L'Erma di Bretschneider, Rome
- Walters, H.B. 1926. *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems and Cameos, Greek, Etruscan and Roman, in the British Museum*. British Museum, London
- Zazoff, P. 1968. *Etruskische Skarabäen*, von Zabern, Mainz
- Zwierlein-Diehl, E. 2007. *Antike Gemmen und ihr Nachleben*. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin & New York