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Recent Research in the Etruscan Necropolis of Sasso Pinzuto at Tuscania

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Abstract: The Sasso Pinzuto necropolis is one of the main Etruscan cemeteries of Tuscania, containing more than one hundred chamber tombs and was used mostly from the early seventh to the fifth century BCE. Like other cemeteries around Tuscania, it also yielded remains of terracotta decoration belonging to the roof of a building, dated to the early sixth century BCE. The terracotta decoration includes friezes showing banqueting people and other scenes closely connected to the Etruscan elites. At Sasso Pinzuto near the tumuli containing chamber tombs the foundation of an *oikos* has been recently identified: the terracotta decorations belonging to this building can shed new light on the *oikoi* in the necropoleis.

Keywords: Etruscan necropolis; Tuscania; Etruria; funerary cults; *oikoi*

1 Tuscania

Tuscania, a town located in southern Etruria in the hinterland between the Tyrrhenian coast and Bolsena Lake, is strategically placed in a territory crossed by natural pathways along the valley of the Marta River. The town sits at a point where two streams join this river (Figure 1). The streams have cut a spur of land which projects into the Marta River valley. The spur consists of two low hills named Rivellino and Colle San Pietro.¹

Through its history, Tuscania and the surrounding area had relevant periods of human occupation. The site of Colle San Pietro yielded residual pottery from the Copper Age through different phases of the Bronze Age. While scanty remains date to the Early Iron Age, we can see the town flourishing from the early seventh century

¹ Quilici Gigli 1970, 152–54; Andrews 1982, 137–45.

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Figure 1: Location of Tuscania within Etruria (plan from Barker and Rasmussen 2023, 2, Fig. 1.2).

BCE onwards through the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods.² In Etruscan and Roman times several roads were built. The main one, the via Clodia, was constructed in the third century BCE, joining existing Etruscan roads cut out in the tufa and paving the segments with basalt stones.³ In the Roman period Colle San Pietro was occupied by several buildings and thermal baths, and the landscape around Tuscania was intensively populated.⁴ From the end of the sixth to the end of twelfth century

2 Lucidi 2003; Petitti 2007, 324–25. The Copper Age sherds from Colle San Pietro are still unpublished, and sites from that period have been identified in the landscape around Tuscania. See Barker 2023.

3 Quilici Gigli 1970, 15–23; Quilici 1989, 463–78; Sanna and Proietti 2019.

4 Quilici Gigli 1970, 157–67; MacDonald et al. 2023 (Republican period); MacDonald and Grant 2023 (Imperial period).

CE, Tuscania was the seat of a bishop. During the Middle Ages the abbey of San Giusto, the impressive churches of San Pietro and Santa Maria Maggiore and the city walls were built. In each mentioned monument several phases of renovation have been identified.⁵

2 History of the Research

In the 19th century, the Etruscan cemeteries around Tuscania have been widely investigated by V. Campanari and his sons, and several necropoleis and many chamber tombs, mostly dated to the Classical and Hellenistic periods, were discovered.⁶ In 1837 the antiquities from Vulci,⁷ Tuscania, and other Etruscan sites were exhibited in London at Pall Mall as part of the first exhibition dedicated to the Etruscans. The event was organized by the Campanari and was very successful; it contributed largely to the knowledge of the Etruscans, outside of Italy.⁸ The exhibited artifacts were purchased mostly by the British Museum. Other finds from Campanari's excavations were purchased by the Marquis G. Campana for his collection, which was later sold.⁹ Terracotta plates from Tuscania, already in the Campana collection, are still preserved in the Musée du Louvre (Paris) and the Antikensammlungen (Munich). This material has been published by A. Andrén.¹⁰ In the 20th century impressive remains of a terracotta roof have been found around the tumuli in the Etruscan cemetery explored south of Tuscania at Ara del Tufo. One sherd of a frieze (showing banqueting people) matches another one with a similar scene preserved in the Musée du Louvre and allows us to identify Ara del Tufo with a place excavated by Campanari.

Also, in the 19th century, other Etruscan cemeteries were identified around Tuscania, and some important finds came to light. Notable discoveries include the huge statue of the nefro lion from Valvidone, the famous bronze mirror depicting Tarchon,¹¹ and some relevant chamber tombs containing several sarcophagi as the

⁵ Raspi Serra 1971; Andrews 1982.

⁶ Portraits of V. Campanari and his sons have been traced by Giontella (2002).

⁷ V. Campanari carried out several excavation campaigns at Vulci. See Buranelli 1991.

⁸ Colonna 1978; Colonna 1999. The documents written by the Campanari family about the exhibition and its preparation are preserved at Tuscania and have been reviewed by Cascianelli (2004).

⁹ For more on the Campana collection, see Gaultier et al. 2018.

¹⁰ Andrén 1940, 73–75, pl. 24. The specimens from the Louvre have been published later by Gaultier (1993), the sherds from Munich by Fendt (2015).

¹¹ See Camporeale 2014, with literature.

sepulchers of the Vipinana and Statlane families.¹² Stone and clay sarcophagi were common at Tuscania, with the clay ones produced there. They were particularly successful in Hellenistic times as a cheaper version of the stone ones.¹³

After the Second World War, field research has been done that revealed important structures, particularly after the terrible earthquake of 1971 which leveled most of the medieval town.¹⁴ For a long time Tuscania was primarily noted for its Hellenistic structures. Indeed, the Hellenistic tombs of the Curunas family were discovered in 1967.¹⁵ However, the unearthing of relevant monuments in the same year such as the *tomba a casa* allowed G. Colonna to cast new light on the Archaic phase of Tuscania.¹⁶ From 1988 the main archaeological finds are preserved at Tuscania in the National Archaeological Museum.¹⁷

3 The Necropolis of Sasso Pinzuto

The Sasso Pinzuto necropolis sits along the eastern side of the Marta River, southeast of the urban center of Tuscania and on the western slope of the large plateau of San Lazzaro (Figure 2). It is one of the least investigated cemeteries in the area. The burial ground is flanked by a segment of an Etruscan road cut into the tufa, that connects Tuscania with the hinterland of Caere. In Roman times, this segment joined other roads, which were then paved, becoming the via Clodia.¹⁸ Due to its connection with this crucial communication route, the site experienced an uninterrupted occupation in ancient times. The chamber tombs that are currently visible belong to two main types: the first type exhibits an upper fissure in the middle of the roof ("*tombe a fenditura superiore*"), while the second is entirely excavated in the tufa. The tufa tombs are the most numerous and display different types of plans. Most of them consist of single rooms, but several

¹² For the lion from Valvidone, see Morandini 2018, 91–93. The Vipinana tomb has been published by Colonna (1978). The monuments of the Statlane have been published by Noferi (2008–2010) and Noferi et al. (2018). Further finds from Tuscania preserved in the National Archaeological National at Florence have been published: Geiger 1994, 76 no. 50 pl. 55; Bruni 2014; Noferi 2021; Noferi 2023, with literature.

¹³ Clay sarcophagi from Tuscania have been classified by Gentili (1994, 125–43, 153–63); Noferi 2025; Magrini 2025. Stone and clay sarcophagi from Tuscania are preserved in several European countries. Clay specimens are listed in Gentili (1994, 209), including Sintra in Portugal (Blanck 1994), and Cambrai in France (Haack 2006). Museums in USA (Gentili 1994, 209) and in Japan (Gentili 2010) also have clay sarcophagi from Tuscania.

¹⁴ Console and Sonaglia 1972.

¹⁵ Moretti and Sgubini Moretti 1983.

¹⁶ Colonna 1967.

¹⁷ Sgubini Moretti 1991.

¹⁸ See the literature mentioned in no. 3.



Figure 2: Location of Sasso Pinzuto necropolis (in red) in relation to the urban center of Tuscania.

tombs are also composed of two coaxial rooms. Generally, the typology of the two coaxial chambers is widespread in Tuscania and began in the late seventh century BCE. Other hypogea with plans and characteristics of internal elements suggest dating mostly within the sixth century BCE, mainly influenced by models developed in Caere.¹⁹

C. Campanari and F. Marcelliani conducted limited and challenging-to-identify excavations on the site in the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century.²⁰ Between the 1960s and 1990s, the Soprintendenza dell'Etruria Meridionale undertook targeted excavations, mostly aimed at recovering illicit and clandestine activities; the findings remained largely unpublished.²¹ At the end of the 1960s, S. Quilici Gigli focused on the archaeological topography of the site, as part of her work on the archaeological map of Tuscania.²² Within the research carried out at Sasso Pinzuto, a notable discovery occurred during the rescue excavations conducted by L. Marchese in April-May 1963. Fragments of molded clay plaques decorated with figures in relief

¹⁹ Quilici Gigli 1969; Prayon 1975.

²⁰ Quilici Gigli 1970, 41–43, no. 2. About C. Campanari (1800–1871) see Giontella (2002, 23–24, 32, 49). A biography of F. Marcelliani (1824–1895) has been offered by Costantini (2023).

²¹ Scardozzi 2012, 101–7.

²² Quilici Gigli 1970. For further field survey see Barker and Rasmussen (2023); Rasmussen and Barker (2025).

were found, including one depicting a departing warrior moving right and followed by two bigas pulled by horses.²³ In August 1994 the Superintendency, in collaboration with volunteers from the Gruppo Archeologico Romano (GAR), carried out a cleaning and documentation operation on a tumulus in the area (Tumulus 1, see below). Some years later G. Scardozzi made a valuable contribution to the documentation of archaeological evidence at Sasso Pinzuto,²⁴ recording, systematizing, and updating both legacy and newly acquired data. Further investigations were carried out in the 2000s by the Superintendency, leading to the discovery of new tombs, culminating in 2020 with the first intervention by the Center for Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Studies (CAMNES), based in Florence but already active in the Tuscania area. The new excavation is carried out by CAMNES in closed collaboration with the University of Naples Federico II under the authors' direction.²⁵ Three campaigns were conducted in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

(A. Naso)

4 Excavation Campaigns at Sasso Pinzuto from 2022 to 2024

Two areas have been investigated in the necropolis of Sasso Pinzuto, conventionally called the Northern and the Southern Areas (Figure 3).²⁶ In the Southern Area – a small plain about 90 m from the Northern Area – four fossa graves (nos. 126, 127, 128, 130) and two chamber tombs (nos. 125 and 129) were excavated (Figure 4). The fossae correspond to two types: one with a simple profile (nos. 126 and 128), and the other with a more complex profile of a deeper level (nos. 123 and 130). All the tombs appeared robbed, but it was still possible to recover small finds of personal equipment that had escaped the illegal excavations.

In Tomb no. 126, a fibula, type Lo Schiavo 142, establishes the chronology within the seventh century BCE;²⁷ Tomb No. 127 yielded a thin fibula with a rhomboidal profile, type Lo Schiavo 183.²⁸ In small Fossa 128 (approx. 90 cm long and 30 cm wide),

²³ Sgubini Moretti and Ricciardi 1993, 177, fig. 46 (“scena di partenza II”); Sgubini Moretti and Ricciardi 2004; Winter 2009, 262, no. 4.D.4.

²⁴ Scardozzi 2012, 2019.

²⁵ It is our pleasure to thank G. Guarducci and S. Valentini, directors of CAMNES, who entrusted us with the management of the excavations. S. Giuntoli (2015) reported the CAMNES activity in the necropolis of Pian delle Rusciare at Tuscania.

²⁶ Naso et al. 2024a; Naso et al. 2024b; Naso et al. 2025.

²⁷ Lo Schiavo 2010, 310, pl. 151.

²⁸ Lo Schiavo 2010, 416, pl. 229–32.

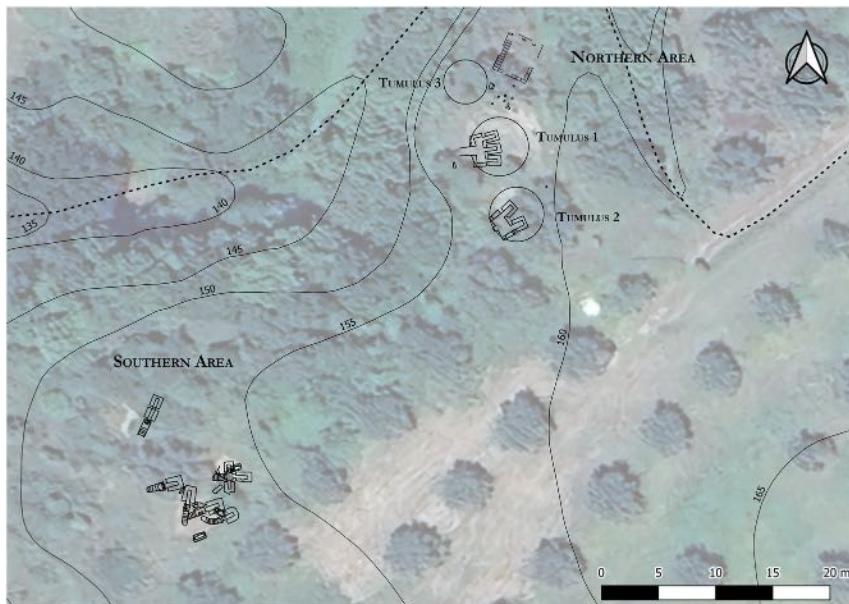


Figure 3: The two excavation areas at Sasso Pinzuto.

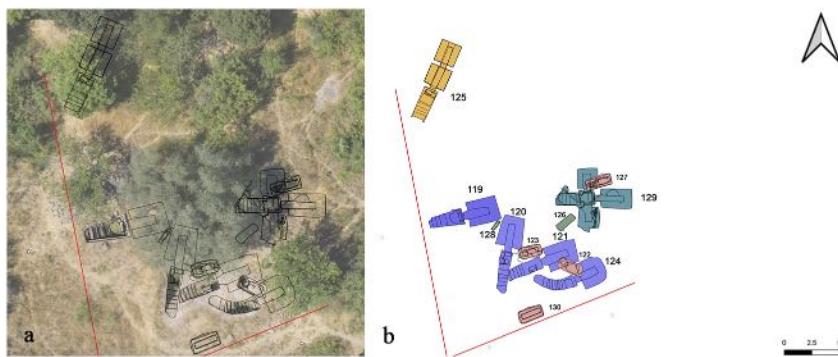


Figure 4: Southern area: (a) Tomb plans superimposed on the aerial photo of the area; (b) Tomb plans with structural differentiation.

a small cushion in relief had been cut into the inner surface. Although the burial did not yield any grave goods, the dimensions suggest that it belonged to an infant and shows in this sector the presence of tombs reserved for both infants and adults, perhaps members of the same family. In Chamber Tomb 125, of the coaxial type, some



Figure 5: Tomb 129: (a) photogrammetry of the chambers; (b) photos of the seal tufa slabs positioned at the end of the *dromos*.

elements such as an impasto lenticular ribbed spindle, allow us to establish that at least one female individual was buried there. Some complete vases belonging to bucchero drinking sets (kyathoi, cups, chalices, kantharoi, oinochoe, and a small jug) have also been found.

Particularly significant on a stratigraphic level is the discovery of a layer composed by dense, dark clay, with plastic consistency, positioned in the vestibule of the tomb near the entrance door around the closing squared block. This can be interpreted as a waterproofing arrangement, functional to the sealing of the chamber to avoid water infiltration. The preliminary results of chemical analysis of samples carried out by C. Rispoli (Department of Earth Sciences, University of Naples Federico II) revealed that some minerals have been intentionally added to the natural clay to increase its waterproof properties.²⁹

Chamber tomb no. 129 has a cruciform plan (Figure 5a) with a dromos and vestibule featuring a tufa seal still in situ. It is made of two overlapping quadrangular slabs resting on two monoliths, both positioned at the end of the dromos (Figure 5b). Although the tomb was already robbed, some iron objects such as spear- and javelin heads, *sauroteres*, a knife, and a spit were found along the steps of the dromos. These pieces can be interpreted as a possible ritual offering after reopening the tomb. On that occasion, the tufa slabs were placed in the vestibule, and some ceramic vases were moved in front of the entrance door. The vases consist of Etruscan-Corinthian pots (two amphorae, a figured alabastron, and additional balsam flasks painted with linear decoration), bucchero (chalices, kantharoi, cups, oinochoai, and olpai) and

29 C. Rispoli, in Paoletti et al. 2025, 70.



Figure 6: Tomb 129: (a) Naucratis scarab; (b) sherds of bucchero vessels shaped as a protome of a ram and as a small paw.

impasto vases (jars and bowls). Two trade amphoras, respectively from Samos and Chios, along with an Athenian floral band cup, date the deposit no later than 530–510 BCE.³⁰ In the chambers, some elements shed light on the people buried in the tomb. In the left-side chamber, fragments of iron sandals and a scarab from Naukratis³¹ (Figure 6a), suggest that at least one woman was buried here; in the right-side chamber, a protome of a ram and a small paw (both in bucchero) belong to rare objects and probably indicate they were special commissions for the tomb's owners (Figure 6b).

The Northern area corresponds to a little plateau measuring circa 1,600 square meters (Figure 7a), which dominated the lower Etruscan road cut out in the tufa and allowed for several monuments to be built. The area includes tumuli (of which three were brought to light in 2023–2025) and a zone reserved for cults with an *oikos* (Figure 7b). The tufa in this area is unfortunately soft and fragile, and as a result, both

³⁰ Cf. a floral band-cup from Adria, see Bonomi 1991, 39–40, pl. 37 no. 3.

³¹ Hölbl 1979, 142, tav. 95, 6–7; 96, 8–10; Gorton 1996, 96, fig. 20.3; 98, 123–24.

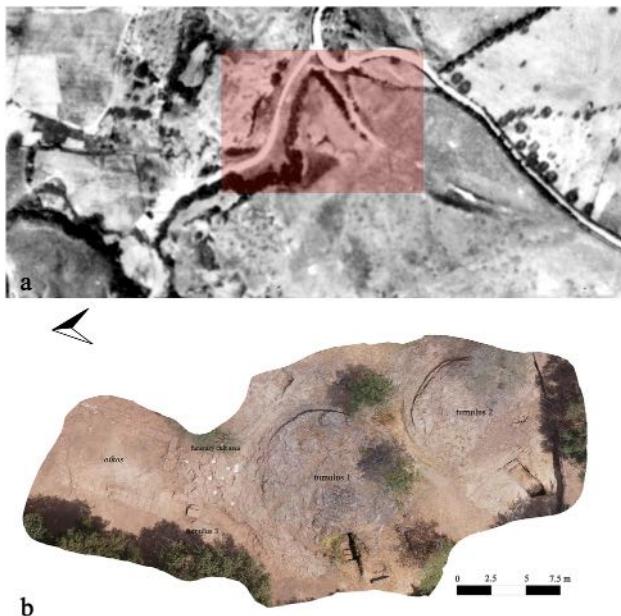


Figure 7: The plateau. (a) Photo by Royal Air Force in 1944: in red the plateau with tumuli; (b) orthophoto of the Northern Area displaying all the excavated evidence from campaigns held between 2022 and 2024.

tumuli are very poorly preserved. The krepis of the tumuli could not be dug completely in the rock, so Etruscan architects were forced to supplement the krepis with squared blocks, originally placed in two or three upper rows. Despite the poor quality of the tufa rock, the area was still chosen for its position on the road and its flat topography.

In the Northern Area, the research started with Tumulus 1, already investigated in 1994 by GAR. The chamber tomb no. 58 within Tumulus 1 (approx. 10 m in diameter) is a hypogea tomb totally dug into the tufa, and it follows a typology derived from models developed at Caere in the late seventh century BCE with a transversal atrium and three chambers excavated on the back wall (Figure 8). Scanty remains of painted decoration are preserved on the back wall. Similar tombs can be found in several cities in Southern Etruria as signs of close connections with the funerary architecture elaborated at Caere. This tomb type with the transversal atrium and three chambers on the back wall is the most complex plan of the Etruscan funerary architecture; it was also used for religious and urban architecture.³²



Figure 8: Photogrammetry of tomb 58 (by S. Amici – LEICA Geosystem) superimposed on the orthophoto of tumulus 1 (on the left); photogrammetry of tomb 131 (by Metalshape) superimposed on the orthophoto of tumulus 2 (on the right).

Tomb no. 58, called “tomba Incitti” in honor of the leader of the GAR excavation, the late M. Incitti,³³ had already been robbed, but the excavation recovered remarkable finds: some ceramics of Etruscan production (bucchero and Etruscan-Corinthian amphorae from the Monte Abatone Group), imported goods (East-Greek and Athenian black-figured vases), and a few metal pieces including a gold braid clip. According to the architectural typology and materials found during the 1994 GAR excavation, it is possible to date the tomb to the first quarter of the sixth century BCE. A small fossa grave was found intact (and recently published) and belonged to a newborn child. The grave was located on the southern side of the dromos and was covered by a tufa block; based on the objects found inside, it may be dated to the second quarter of sixth century BCE.³⁴

During the 2022 excavation some fragments of molded decorated clay slabs were found around the tumulus. Of particular note are a fragment with riders (finds from Tuscania, Ara del Tufo)³⁵ and other fragments displaying parts of a biga, including

³³ About M. Incitti (1953–2004) see several papers in Frazzoni 2009.

³⁴ Moretti Sgubini 2018.

³⁵ Sgubini Moretti and Ricciardi 1993, 169, fig. 25–26 (“cavaliere al passo II”).

horse hooves and wheel.³⁶ Worth mentioning are also fragments with painted guilloche in the white-on-red technique.³⁷

The campaigns in 2023 and 2024 have been concentrated in the northern area, and a complete tumulus and part of a third one have been discovered (Figures 7b and 8). Tumulus 2 contains Chamber Tomb no. 131, which has a transversal atrium and two chambers on the back wall. This type of tomb plan seems to have been developed at Caere in the first half of the sixth century BCE and later adopted in other cities in Southern Etruria (Figure 8). The high social level of Tomb no. 131 is stressed by the presence of the tumulus. It was partly dug out in the tufa and partly built with regularly dressed blocks, originally placed in two or three rows. Despite the low quality of the stone, the area has been chosen for its position. The tomb was dug in a rock layer showing a series of deposits of different colors; the walls were covered by a clay plaster that was probably intended to create a uniform interior. The plaster is still partly preserved. Although it was robbed, the tomb yielded several objects, mainly vases of bucchero and impasto pottery. Particularly interesting are a nearly complete cooking stand and a large basin, both made of red impasto.

Other noteworthy finds include two bone dices and a bronze fragment belonging to a folding chair, a *diphros*. The former are particularly frequent in female burials,³⁸ and the latter is considered a typical male attribute and sometimes can be connected to the role of magistrate held by the deceased.³⁹ In the epigraphical record, Tuscanian local magistrates are documented from the early third century BCE onward.⁴⁰ The most important finds in the tomb 131 are from the atrium, including fragments of an Athenian black-figure lip cup by the Little Masters with a goat in the tondo, dating back to the third quarter of the sixth century BCE.⁴¹ Several architectural fragments were discovered from the surface layer, especially fragments of molded clay plaques. The annular trench, preserved only in the eastern portion of the tumulus, was filled by three levels. In those fills, fragments of plain tiles, cover tiles, and numerous molded clay plaques were recovered, too.

The third tumulus is the smallest of the group (about 7 m in diameter) and is probably the earliest. The excavations revealed only a small portion of the krepis.

36 Sgubini Moretti and Ricciardi 1993, 169–75 (“scena di partenza I”).

37 Winter 2009, 94, fig. 2.6.a, *guilloche A*.

38 Macellari (2002, 169, 388, 391, 394, 396), followed by Cerchiai (2008, 102), stressed the association of dices and *diphroi* in Etruscan funerary grave groups. At Tuscania, the dices and bronze fragment of a *diphros* were found in the dromos of a tomb repeatedly violated in ancient times, and their association is far from certain.

39 Naso 2020, 136–41.

40 Maggiani 1996, 128, 134 no. 35–39; Maggiani 2025.

41 Athenian black-figure lip cup by the Little Masters have been collected by Heesen (2011, 229, tab. 32), and Heesen 2020.

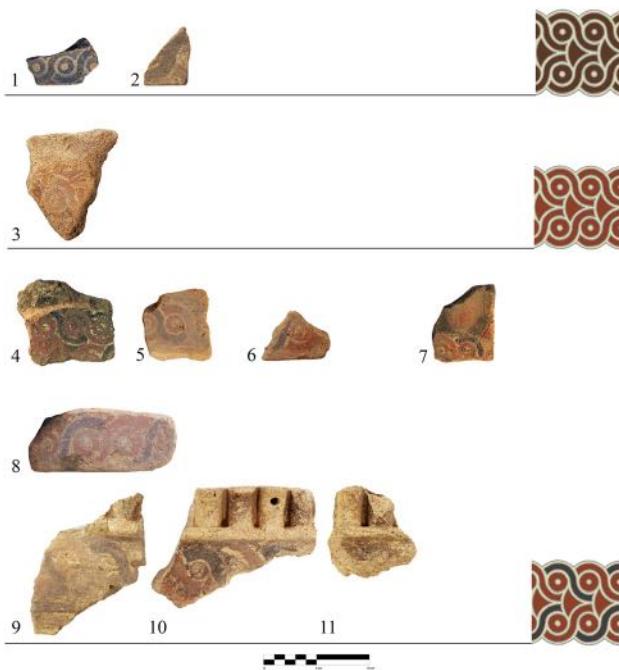


Figure 9: Fragments with guilloche decoration, from top to bottom: groups 1, 2, 3. Fragments with guilloche painted in white on red (groups 1 and 2), or with black retouching (group 3). The fragments nos. 2, 3, 5, and 8 come from the 1994 excavations (elaborated by M. Zinni).

The structure shows two blocks of red tufa linking the tumulus to the surrounding area and working like a ramp.⁴² The number of architectural fragments from the tumulus is more than 150, including sherds of molded decorated and painted clay slabs. The main results have been presented at the recent international conference *Deliciae Fictiles VI*.⁴³ Thanks to the collaboration with the National Archaeological Museum of Tuscania it was possible to join the architectural fragments recovered in 1994 during the excavation of tumulus 1 with some fragments found during our most recent excavations.

Regarding the painted fragments, 11 with guilloche decoration (Winter Type A)⁴⁴ may belong to raking simas or revetment plaques. These fragments have different sizes and show a single or double guilloche painted only in white on red technique (group 1 and 2) or with small black outlines (group 3) (Figure 9). Those belonging to a

⁴² Prayon 1975, 81–85.

⁴³ Naso and Zinni 2025.

⁴⁴ Winter 2009, 94, Ill. 2.6.a.

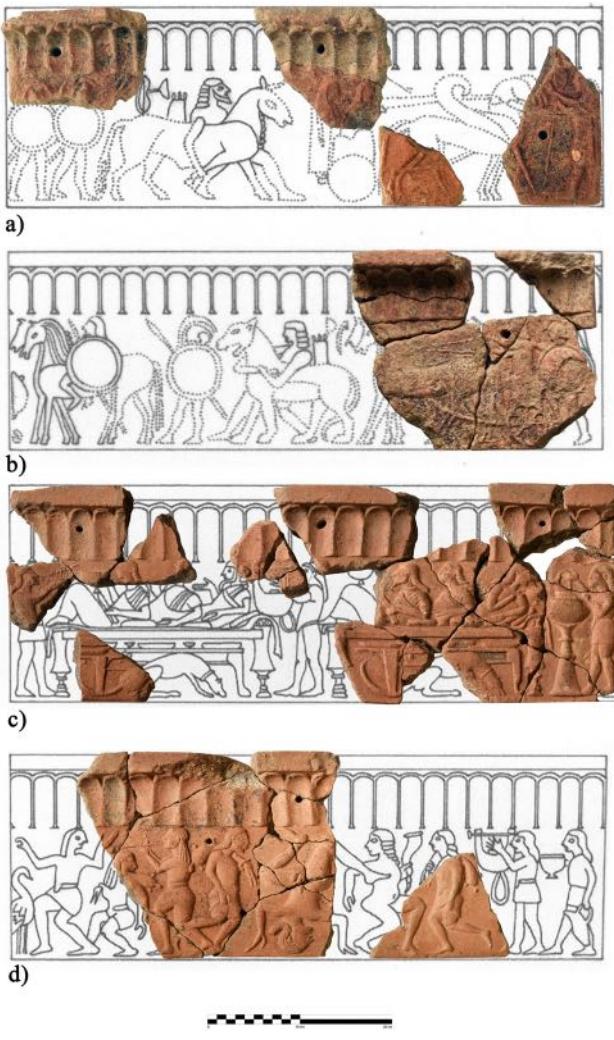


Figure 10: Revetment plaques. (a-d) Fragments of Acquarossa type A, B, C, D (by M. Zinni, from Winter 2009).

raking sima, such as the central fragment of group 3, also preserve traces of red color on the surface.⁴⁵ Fragments of recomposed revetment plaques or raking simas follow

⁴⁵ Unlike the necropolises of Ara del Tufo and Guadocinto, the state of the slabs at the time of their discovery at Sasso Pinzuto is highly fragmented, and except in rare cases, the painting has faded. We

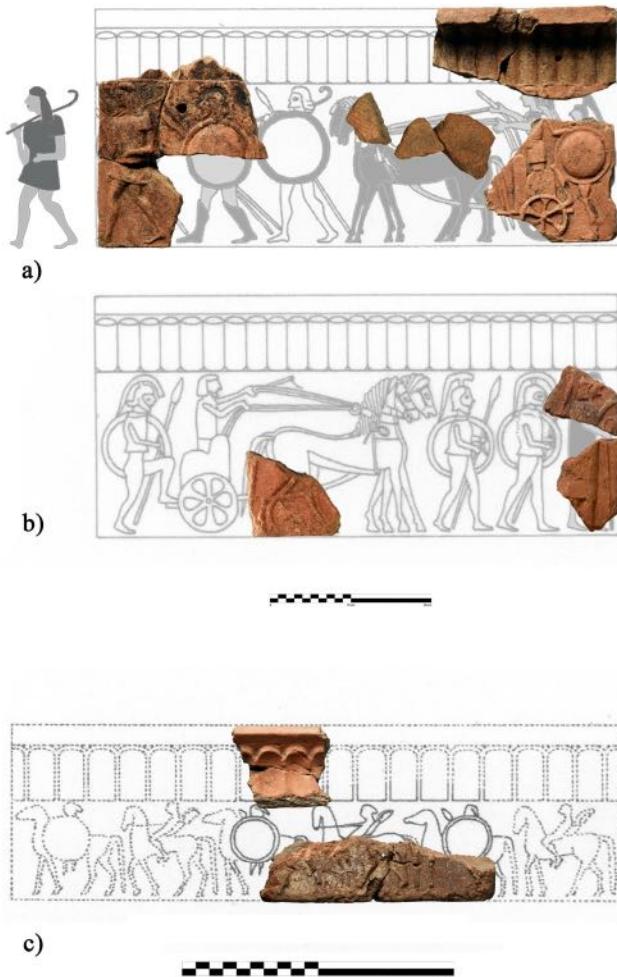


Figure 11: Revetment plaques and sima. (a) Revetment plaque: *Tuscania scena di partenza I*, figure with lituus on his shoulder at the end of the plaque; (b) revetment plaque: *Tuscania scena di partenza II*; (c) Fragment of raking sima: *Tuscania cavalieri al passo I* (by M. Zinni, from Winter 2009).

the Acquarossa Types: A, B, C and D and the Tuscania group known as *ciclo di Tuscania* (*scena di partenza I e II*). The Acquarossa A, B, C and D examples have a top

extend our heartfelt thanks once again to B. Morelli and G. Giacconi, who carried out the restoration on behalf of CAMNES.

fascia with convex strigils (the size range from 21 to 23 cm in height and from 65 to 66 in length) (Figure 10).

Numerous fragments of Tuscania type *scena di partenza* (departure scene) I e II have also been recomposed after the excavation campaigns (Figure 11a and b). The Tuscania *scena di partenza I* (Winter type 4.D.4.c)⁴⁶ shows figures in relief depicting the departure of a warrior moving to the left. At the front of the procession are three walking hoplites, who are followed by a biga with charioteer and mounting warrior. In this type, two variants have been identified: variant 1 depicts the first figure with a thick mass of long hair and a short tunic, he carries a shield and a spear, and a *lituus* over his shoulder. Variant 2 presents the third figure with a helmet with cheek guards, carrying a shield, two spears, and a *lituus* over his shoulder.⁴⁷

In Sasso Pinzuto another variant of this last figure from the left was identified. On all the known revetment plaques this figure always holds a shield and spear; on the plaque from Sasso Pinzuto this figure bears just the *lituus* over his shoulder (Figure 11a). Most of the fragments that could be identified as raking simas conserve the top fascia with concave or convex strigils. Here we show (Figure 11c) a lower side fragment with a horse's hooves (Winter type 4.A.2.d).⁴⁸

(M. Zinni)

5 Conclusions

Based on the evidence, we believe that these terracotta sima fragments may belong to the roof of an oikos, a type of structure already recorded in other necropoleis at Tuscania. Remains of two terracotta roofs have been found also in two other necropoleis of Tuscania (Ara del Tufo and Guadocinto): slabs, antefixes, acroteria, and pan and cover tiles belong to these roofs. Such roofs were very heavy; Ö. Wikander estimated the weight of an Etruscan archaic roof was at least 60 kg per square meter, ridge-tiles and simas excluded.⁴⁹ To support this weight, reaching several tons, one has to presume the existence of a building, consisting in wooden frameworks for the roof and squared blocks in *opus quadratum* for the foundations. At Guadocinto the foundation of a structure in squared blocks has been identified, but the blocks seem to be reused.

In the last days of the 2024 Sasso Pinzuto campaign, near Tumulus 1, a foundation in squared blocks of red tufa was recorded. It is approximately 6 m wide and 6 m

⁴⁶ Winter 2009, 267–69, Ill. 4.8.3.

⁴⁷ Winter 2009, 268, figs. 4.16–17.

⁴⁸ Winter 2009, 243–44, Ill. 4.2.3.

⁴⁹ Wikander 2017, 163.



Figure 12: Orthophoto of the oikos at the end of 2024 campaign.

long, oriented NE/SW. We hope to obtain more information from the excavation of the *opus quadratum* foundation, planned for the 2025 campaign (Figure 12). Between the trench of the tumulus and the foundation there is a flat area. In this surface seven round pits, measuring a diameter of circa 30 cm and a depth between 20 and 40 cm, have been excavated. They were filled with earth containing few fragments of bucchero and animal bones. One pit yielded a small bucchero olla still in situ. The vase was removed and a CT scan was done on it. The analysis did not reveal any particular filling. We are waiting for the results of the analysis of the earth contained in the olla. It probably contained liquid or solid votive offerings. Similar cultic actions have been identified in other cemeteries in southern Etruria.⁵⁰

Based on our findings, the chronological range of the three tumuli at Sasso Pinzuto can be determined: Tumulus 1 dates to the first-second quarter of the sixth century BCE, and Tumulus 2 is slightly later, around the middle of the sixth century BCE. The third tumulus is probably the earliest, but our excavations in 2025 will verify or disprove this hypothesis.

The oikos was erected around 570-560 BCE, when two of the three tumuli were already built. The chronological range of the tumuli makes it probable that they

⁵⁰ See some monuments in the cemeteries of Banditaccia at Caere (Benedettini and Zaccagnini 2021) and of Osteria at Vulci (Carosi and Regoli 2014, 117–18; Regoli and Carosi 2014; Carosi and Regoli 2018).

belonged to the same family or gentile group. We know that such building programs were accurately planned and realized by gentile groups of Tuscania in other cemeteries of the city, and we think we may have yet another one here at Sasso Pinzuto. The terracotta plaques on the oikoi showed scenes strictly reserved for elite ideology. The oikoi defined the burial landscape at Tuscania and probably followed models established at Vulci and also documented elsewhere.⁵¹

The remains of the roofs at Sasso Pinzuto, Ara del Tufo, and Guadocinto have been found around the tumuli, but no traces of collapses have ever been identified. One can presume that the buildings they belonged to were destroyed, and the terracotta decorations were probably intentionally fragmented. The date of the destruction is still unclear, but the preservation of color on some of the terracottas implies a short duration for the roofs of the oikoi. Is it possible to presume deliberate destructions of the oikoi, when the owner's families perished? This and other work hypotheses will be verified in the next excavations campaigns.

(A. Naso and M. Zinni)

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51 Carosi and Regoli 2018. See the oikos explored at Cortona near the huge Melone del Sodo II (Salvi 2019).

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