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THE TECHNOLOGY OF DAILY LIFE IN A HELLENISTIC ETRUSCAN SETTLEMENT



Michael L. Thomas

How did the Etruscans of the Hellenistic period live? What type of technology affected their everyday life? Until recently, archaeological evidence for the late period of Etruscan history has been scarce. Excavation of later settlements such as La Piana, Cetamura, Tuscania, Poggio La Croce, Montalcino, Monte Bibele, and Podere Tartucchino have brought to light aspects of a perhaps not so glamorous, but important, period in the twilight of pre-Romanized Etruria. Recent excavations at the site of Poggio Colla have provided further evidence of the Hellenistic period in northern Etruria. Since 1995, a project sponsored by Southern Methodist University and the University of Pennsylvania has excavated the remains of the Etruscan settlement at Poggio Colla, located 35 km. northeast of Florence in the Mugello basin. The finds and architectural remains of the Etruscan settlement at Poggio Colla document habitation at the site from the middle of the seventh century B.C. until the middle of the second century B.C. The most extensive body of evidence, however, dates to the site's later phase and preserves evidence of a variety of commercial and agricultural activities.

Although we are just beginning to understand the evidence from Poggio Colla, a picture of daily life and technology, especially in the site's later phases, is emerging. Life during the Hellenistic period was centered around the activities associated with Phase II (fourth to third centuries B.C.) of what seems to have been a fortified hilltop sanctuary, and its subsequent rebuilding in Phase III (second century B.C.). While the sanctuary may have been an important component of the local economy, the archaeological record helps reconstruct what seems to have been a self-sufficient urban settlement in the final years of pre-Roman Etruria. A variety of grains and fruits, similar to types found at numerous Etruscan sites, were grown in the fields surrounding the *arx*, where the inhabitants also raised domesticated animals. Textile production—as evidenced by loom weights, *rocchetti*, and spindle

Michael L. whorls—thruved near the *arx* and ceramic production was prevalent as archaeological evidence points to the existence of at least three kilns from the area. Numerous pieces of slag, from the *arx* area and from the fields below, suggest that the inhabitants also produced their own metal tools and nails.

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Since the material from the lower fields—those the furthest from the *arx*—to date contain no Classical or Archaic Period remains, the population at Poggio Colla was presumably at its largest during the Hellenistic period and forced to expand further from the fortified hilltop. Although excavated coins and ceramics indicate contact and perhaps trade with Rome and the Greek cities of southern Latium and Campania, excavations have produced no evidence of Roman activity on the *arx* or in the surrounding fields. Further excavation, one hopes, will shed light on the daily life at Poggio Colla and paint a clarified picture of the technology of construction, farming, weaving, and pottery production prevalent in this part of Hellenistic Etruria.

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