New Data from the Fortified Settlement of Ghiaccio Forte in the Albegna Valley

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The middle reaches of the Albegna Valley are dominated by the hill of Ghiaccio Forte that lies a short distance from the north bank of the river Albegna and stands out above the surrounding countryside at an altitude of 250 meters. The slopes of Ghiaccio Forte and nearby Monte Aperto are quite steep, whilst the surrounding hills are lower and have more gentle contours. In the Archaic Period this outstanding, centrally located position with respect to the lower valley, seems to have favoured settlement in this area. Furthermore, routes along the Albegna could be controlled from the hill, along with several fords that allowed a river crossing on inland routes that ran parallel to the coast. Surface survey has documented a certain concentration of settlements in the hills around Ghiaccio Forte. Meanwhile excavations on the hill have located stratified deposits and various finds (bucchero, moulded blocks of nenfro, and objects from a votive deposit) relating to the occupation of the site in the Archaic Period. To these may be added, slightly to the North of Ghiaccio Forte, the recent discovery of a necropolis of small tumuli in use until the end of the sixth century.

It is probable that from the fourth century this stretch of the valley was notable for the development of the oppidum at Ghiaccio Forte that closely overlooked the course of the river. The birth of the oppidum seems to be a part of a larger phenomenon of colonization of the countryside promoted by Vulci, just like other cities in Etruria, in the search for a new social equilibrium. Another even more clear expression of this phenomenon, also in the Albegna Valley is the contemporaneous development of the city at Doganella, which occupied a lowland position closer to the sea (fig. 1). Ghiaccio Forte could, itself, be a dependency of this large centre. The choice of a location for Ghiaccio Forte that was strategically suited to defence and the presence of defensive walls, are an indication of a climate of instability probably resulting from the growing pressure exerted by Rome. Indeed at the same time other hill-tops in northern Etruria sheltered the occupants of the countryside within defensive walls or became fortresses for the control of territory and sea routes.
The end of the settlement on Ghiaccio Forte is marked by the Roman conquest which coincided with the victory achieved over the cities of Vulci and Volsinii by the general Tiberius Coruncanius in 280 BC. All the finds and their contexts -clear destruction layers of the buildings- are in agreement in indicating the date and the violent nature of the destruction of the settlement. The same fate overtook other settlements in the northern part of the territory of Vulci: nearby Saturnia, Doganella and Talamone. After the destruction of the fortified settlement the hill of Ghiaccio Forte seems to have been rarely and scarcely occupied so far only a few coins have been found, whilst the surrounding hills were rapidly occupied by numerous farms of Roman colonists.

The place name Ghiaccio Forte, perhaps Medieval in origin, does not seem to have anything to do with ice (ghiaccio) which is a rare phenomenon there, rather it derives from addiaccio (composed of ad and the vulgar Latin jacjum) meaning a shelter for shepherds and flocks. Other place names in the area also derive from the same root (Diaccialone and Ghiaccio di Vetta). The attribute Forte (strong) could derive from the remains of the fortification walls which surrounded the summit, and which have never entirely disappeared from view, either that or the surrounding thick woodland that even now make it like a fortress.

The Etruscan settlement was discovered in 1970 thanks to a local archaeological enthusiast Zelino Biagiotti. Since then a series of archaeological excavations conducted by

figure 1 – The territory of Vulci with settlements before the Roman conquest (from Carandini ed. 1985).
the Archaeological Superintendency of Tuscany (Anna Tallochini) and the University of California - Santa Barbara (Mario A. Del Chiaro), have revealed the presence of a sacred place and a Hellenistic settlement protected by a circuit of walls and enabled the recovery of numerous finds documenting life at the settlement. From 1999 the Comune of Scansano, now the landowner, has taken up the restoration of the structures and has given a new impetus to the research and the finds, some from the recent excavations are now on display in the Archaeological Museum in Scansano opened in 2001. 6

The settlement occupies an area of 3.7 hectares of gently rolling land formed by the twin summits of Ghiaccio Forte and the saddle of land that joins them (fig.2). A 1km circuit of walls runs along the edge of the grassy summit plateau above the edge of the woodland that entirely covers the slopes of Ghiaccio Forte. The walls are now visible in only a few places, but their line may be followed as an earthwork around the edge of the field partly covered by brambles. They are constituted by a low foundation of stones (30-100 cm. high) c. 4 meters wide. The interior and exterior facings are formed of large river pebbles that are unshaped and simply laid together. The infill is, on the other hand, constituted of noticeably smaller stones and pebbles. On this foundation there must have been an elevation of unfired bricks or clay as can be deduced from the collapse layer found on the interior and the exterior of the foundation. 7 The full height of the structure may have reached 5-6 meters on the exterior in order to provide an effective defensive

figure 2 – Plan of the settlement at Ghiaccio Forte (updated with the results of the 2001 excavations).
wall. However, there is, as yet, not sufficient evidence to provide a certain reconstruction of the upper portions of the walls.

There are three monumental gates in the wall circuit, at the north western and south eastern extremities where the circuit narrows, and at the saddle between the hilltops on the southern side.\(^8\) The existence of a fourth entrance, even if only a postern, on the northern side of the saddle is, for now, only a hypothesis.\(^9\) In contrast to the walls, all the three gates were built with blocks of variable dimensions, but carefully squared to ensure a stable construction. The building stone used in the construction also helps to distinguish the gates from the wall circuit and the walls of the buildings in the settlement: in the gates travertine is commonly used, with sandstone (in the south eastern gate in particular) and nenfro, a volcanic stone from the area of Vulci.

The plan of each of the gates is more or less identical and they are known as the ‘a camera’ type, meaning room-like (fig. 3). The surface between the two thresholds, built of large rectangular blocks, upon which would have been wooden gates, was paved, whilst on the interior and exterior of the walls the roads were simply gravelled. On the right hand side of the paving of the South East gate, and on the left in the other two, ran a channel to carry away rainwater, largely built of travertine slabs fixed into the ground. The defence of the gates was facilitated by, if not real and proper towers, at least a thickening of the walls on the exterior, a kind of bastion that enabled the defenders to deploy their weapons against anyone trying to force an entry into the settlement. The room-like plan of the gates is evidence for direct contact with defensive schemes developed in the Hellenized world as a response to siege craft from the end of the fifth century onwards.\(^10\) In Etruria solutions analogous to those used at Ghiaccio Forte may be found in the contemporary, and in many ways similar settlement of Musarna in the territory of Tarquinia,\(^11\) at the northern gate of Tarquinia itself,\(^12\) and at the North west gate of the Roman colony at Cosa,\(^13\) close to Ghiaccio Forte and founded immediately subsequent to its destruction in 273 BC. In Italic areas close typological parallels may be found at; the South gate of Moio della Civitella, in the territory of Velia,\(^14\) dated along with the walls to the end of the fifth century, the examples from the Lucanian settlements at Croccia Cognato\(^15\) and Serra di Vaglio,\(^16\) both built before the middle of the fourth century, or the slightly later West gate at Civita di Tricarico also in Lucania.\(^17\)
On the inside of the wall circuit a pebbled and gravelled road leads from the far South East and North West gates towards the central saddle. So far only two short stretches have been excavated, and it seems to have followed the course of the present-day track.  

The buildings within the enclosure are concentrated between the two hilltops in a position sheltered from the winds. Here, starting from the first excavations, various connected rooms have come to light over the seasons, that seem to constitute a single occupation complex (fig. 4). The variously sized rooms are arranged on two alignments and face each other across an open courtyard that is enclosed on the southern side by a wall and opens on the north towards a large area clear of buildings. Towards the East, in the direction of the South gate, where current work is focussed, the complex continues with an extensive open area, perhaps for keeping animals. Presently only the northern boundary wall of this area has been located and an occupation layer above a surfacing of pebbles and small stones has yielded carbonised material, animal bone, pottery sherds and iron slag. 

The walls of the buildings consist of a footing of calcareous stones bound with clay upon which rose walls of unfired clay. These were protected from rain by the roofs

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*figure 4 – Plan of the buildings*
that ensured their durability. The paving was simply beaten earth or a few pebbles. Many carbonised traces\textsuperscript{19} of the timber structure that supported the roof of pantiles and canal tiles have been found.

In the building complex it is not possible to identify a function for all of the rooms. However at least two rooms may be identified as storerooms because of the high concentration of dolia, and the large room in the South West corner of the structure, within which an area is partitioned off to form an smaller room, seems to have been a kitchen. Here an oven was found built from half of a dolium set in the ground and a ceramic hearth was set in a niche in the interior wall. Traces of burning provide evidence for their use \textit{in situ}.

In the corner opposite the oven two walls enclosed a bathroom, where a large basin with a stand, both of terracotta, were found along with a tub cut into a block of nenfro with moulings that had been reused, like the others used in the gates and fortification walls: it had probably, initially, been an altar.\textsuperscript{21} The functional association of the bathroom and kitchen in neighbouring rooms made it possible to use the heat from cooking food to be used to warm the bathroom. This architectural solution, which had already been used at Olynthos in the pastas houses in the Classical Period, was also applied in an Italic context in some Hellenistic houses at Monte Sannace dating between the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the third century BC.\textsuperscript{22} At Ghiaccio Forte, as in the majority of cases, the presence of the louterion, the tub and the hearth clearly identifies the so-called ‘kitchen complex.’ The use of this precise architectural model, along with the ‘\textit{a camera}’ gates already described in the fortification walls, despite the limited complexity of the building, provide evidence for exposure to and contact with the building traditions of the Hellenic world.

To the West of the building complex a gravelled road was found, on the other side of which lay another isolated room, with the same orientation as the others, that served as a store room. In the large open area to the North that the building faced, lay a large well or cistern c.3m deep, with two channels on opposite sides that served to collect and store rain water. On the other side of the well was an area used for craft production with two ovens, although their purpose is unknown.\textsuperscript{23}

A large quantity of ceramics was found in the building complex,\textsuperscript{24} most was found below the collapsed structures, in the places where it was in use at the moment of the violent destruction at the hands of the Romans in 280 BC. The dolia are numerous and
concentrated in a few rooms along with utilitarian ware storage jars. The tableware, on the other hand, was largely black-gloss ware, amongst which were Latial products of the atelier des petits estampilles and others similar. Other table wares were Genucilia plates from the workshops of Cerveteri and grey bucchero whose repertoire of forms shares features with, on the one hand, Hellenistic black gloss wares and on the other Archaic bucchero. The cultural horizon of the ceramics fits in with its context in the Albegna and Fiora valleys and shows strong contacts with southern Etruria and the Faliscan area.

During the earliest research a votive deposit was found on the western hill-top. It was simply excavated in the ground and provides evidence for a sacred place. The ex-votos were bronzes and terracotta heads that represented the offerant, bronzes and terracottas of animals, human anatomical parts such as arms and legs and male and female genitalia. The nature of the offerings, far from unusual in a rural context, evidently relate to a healing cult and a fertility cult extending to both animals and humans. The almost equal division between bronze and terracotta ex-votos illustrates the intermediate nature of the Ghiaaccio Forte deposit, between the Etrusco-Latial-Campanian type dominated by terracottas and theItalic type consisting almost exclusively of bronzes.25

Three of the votive objects, two very similar bronzes of youths holding a pruning hook and a terracotta statuette are of some interest in providing a better definition of the cult practiced at Ghiaaccio Forte. The bronzes may be identified as Selvans, the divinity ofItalic origin who cares for the cultivated fields and protects their boundaries, and so promotes the fertility of the land and the animals including humans.26 The cult of Selvans is attested principally between the fourth and the third century by inscriptions and bronzes that are iconographically similar to the Ghiaaccio Forte examples and found in a zone which extends from the interior of Etruria, West and South to the territories of Tarquinia and Vulci and pivoting on Chiusi and Volsinii. It is probable that devotion to the divinity, who is not one of the Greek pantheon, may be connected to the unstable social, political and economic conditions that were characteristic of central and southern Etruria, exposed to pressure from Rome, between the end of the fourth and the beginning of the third century. Indeed, Selvans, the guardian of fields and property boundaries was the guarantor of the well-being that derived from those fields. The presence of the cult of Selvans at Ghiaaccio Forte and in two other places in the hills to the North of the Albegna, demonstrated by finds of the same type of bronzes,27 is perhaps linked, in addition to the generic guardianship of agricultural prosperity, with his particular attribute as defender of boundaries (Selvans tularia)28 this ridge of hills marked the boundary between the territory of Vulci to the South and Roselle to the North.

The single example of a terracotta statuette of a human subject (fig. 5) fits well with this context of a fertility cult with marked chthonic powers. It represents Veii / Demeter standing with a piglet, jug and a taper, a type characteristic of the area of Cerveteri.29 Demeter and her closely similar daughter Kore embody the myth of the cyclical rebirth of nature in all seasons and are responsible for the fertility of the earth and therefore may easily be associated with Selvans in the context of a rural sanctuary.

In the light of the identification of the statuette as Demeter, the find in the votive deposit of a Punic bronze coin showing Kore crowned with ears of corn, gains in signifi-
can ce. Now, the presence of a coin with Kore in the context of a fertility cult appears more motivated by the subject represented than by the intrinsic value of the metal, especially considering that at Ghiaccio Forte the monetary circulation was still dominated by *aes rude*, as the conspicuous finds made in the recent seasons of excavation demonstrate.

No remains of any sanctuary in which Selvans, a minor deity of the Etruscan pantheon who may have been worshiped in association with greater divinities, have yet been found in situ. However, various nenfro blocks, some with moldings, have been found reused in the walls that enclose the hill top, and these are similar to those used in religious structures in the area of Vulci. The worked blocks of nenfro are particularly concentrated in the North West gate, but in the recent seasons of excavations (1999-2001) they have also been found used in the South East gate and in other parts of the enclosure wall. Within the settlement an altar, also of nenfro, was reused as a tub.

Various finds provide evidence for metalworking in the interior of the oppidum: a pair of blacksmith’s tongs and numerous slags, probably related to the workings of a forge. Many iron objects and tools, from nails to arms and also numerous bronze ingots (*aes rude*), that functioned as money, found at Ghiaccio Forte may have been produced at the site, as has been hypothesised for the bronzes in the votive deposit.

Ghiaccio Forte, as far as is known, creates the impression in the Hellenistic period of being a rural settlement, equipped with considerable defensive works and organised around an articulated residence that occupied the central saddle of the hill top.

The settlement could be associated with the Statie, a gens of Oscan origin, whose name appears in two recently discovered inscriptions, one scratched into the base of a black gloss ware cup (fig. 6) and the other on a lead sling-shot (fig. 7), some other similar examples are also known from the area between the Albegna and the Fiora valleys. This lends weight to the earlier hypothesis formulated upon the evidence of the slingshots, that suggests the owner named on the slingshots was one of the ‘Etruscan princelings’ who, according to Livy (10.36f.), used rural slaves as a forced militia when Marcus Fabius penetrated into Etruria at the end of the fourth century. Celts, who supported the Etruscans (Polybius 2, 19,1-4) motivated by the desire for booty from Roman territory, may also have been included in such forces, and there may be evidence for this at Ghiaccio Forte in the form of a Gallic type of sword (fig. 8).

The elevated position of Ghiaccio Forte, close to the river, made it a favoured location to control the transport routes through the valley, but the principal activities were probably agriculture and animal husbandry, as suggested by the evidence of the
numerous *dolia*, loom weights and, indirectly, the offerings in the votive deposit that include several animals, some with offspring, and the bronze ‘pruner’ who evokes care of the fields.

Several classes of finds and individual objects provide evidence for the relationship between the centre in the Albegna Valley and the wider world. The table wares (black gloss ware, overpainted ware and products of the *atelier des petits estampilles*) replicate the forms and product of southern Etruria, Latium and the Faliscan area. The bronzes and the cult of Selvans itself demonstrate familiarity with the interior of Etruria centred upon Chiusi and Volsinii. The grey bucchero of Ghiaccio Forte and the area of Vulci between the Fiora and the Albegna finds numerous parallels at Orvieto, in the Tiber Valley and in southern Etruria. The grey bucchero of Ghiaccio Forte and the area of Vulci between the Fiora and the Albegna finds numerous parallels at Orvieto, in the Tiber Valley and in southern Etruria. The grey bucchero of Ghiaccio Forte and the area of Vulci between the Fiora and the Albegna finds numerous parallels at Orvieto, in the Tiber Valley and in southern Etruria. The grey bucchero of Ghiaccio Forte and the area of Vulci between the Fiora and the Albegna finds numerous parallels at Orvieto, in the Tiber Valley and in southern Etruria. The rare coins from the Hellenistic settlement, where the predominant form of money was still *aes rude*, are a sextans from Vetulonia and three Punic coins.\(^{37}\)

In conclusion, the find of a Celtic sword in the ruins of the South East gate seems to provide the material evidence for the involvement, mentioned in the literary sources, of Celtic peoples with the anti-Roman opposition in the first decades of the third century BC.\(^{38}\) In 283 BC at the battle of Lake Vadimone the Etruscans and the Boi were defeated in an area between Orte and Bomarzo which was easily accessible to the Albegna Valley through natural routes of communication. The valley itself had a not inconsiderable strategic value as a route between the interior and the coast. It provided a rapid access to the coastal road to Rome, for the Gauls, as an alternative to the Tiber Valley. Later, this is the route they took in 225 BC when, having crossed Etruria to Chiusi, with some success, they marched to Talamone where they were defeated by the consuls Lucius Aemilius Paulus and Gaius Attilius Regulus.\(^{39}\)
NOTES

1. Perkins 1999 *passim*. To these may be added data from recent survey work that Phil Perkins has kindly provided.
4. For a rapid review of oppida and castella in Etruria see Giovannini 1985; Fontaine 1997; and recently, Donati 2000, 313 and 323.
5. According to Devoto “diaccio” derives from the vulgar latin ‘jacjum’, derived from *jacere* “to lay,” differentiated with di- (Devoto 1968, under diaccio). The explanation of Pieri is less convincing who derives “diaccio” from glaciem (Pieri 1969, under glaciem). Amongst the toponyms Pieri collects derived from glaciem are many for places that, given their closeness to the sea and altitude, make it seem unlikely that ‘ice’ would form an element of their name: they include Diaccino at Castiglione della Pescaia, Poggio Ghiaccialone near Magliano, Ghiaccialetti, Diaccialone and Diacciobello in the territory of Orbetello.
6. The 1999 season of excavation and restoration was directed by Paola Rendini (Soprintendenza Archeologica per la Toscana), and the following seasons in 2000 and 2001 by the author with the support of the Comune di Scansano.
12. Fontaine 1997, 128; 145, fig. 5 (with bibliography).
18. One stretch of the road was found on the western hill top (Del Chiaro 1976, 14; Talocchini 1986, 27, fig. 23) and another on the eastern in the 2000 season.
22. For the Pastas houses at Olynthos and the kitchen bath complex see Fusaro 1982, 12 (with bibliography). For an overview of the Hellenistic houses at Monte Sannace see Russo Tagliente 1992, 126-128 (with bibliography).
23. For the interpretation of the larger structure as a smithy hearth see (Talocchini 1986, 26, fig. 20-22) however there are serious doubts due to the lack of evidence, and the evidence of calcified stone found in the excavation could be from the remains of a later lime kiln, but there is currently no proof. The smaller structure, as far as can be
seen in the drawing (Talocchini 1986, fig. 20), could also be a pottery kiln.

24. For a significant sample of finds see Talocchini 1986; Del Chiaro 1976; and most recently Firmati and Rendini 2002.


26. For Selvans see LIMC and RE (s.v.) and the contributions of Pfiffig 1975, 297-301; Van der Meer 1987, 8-66; Bentz 1992, 49-52, 199-206; Chiadini 1995; De Simone 1997; Colonna 1997, with bibliography.

27. Bronzes of the “pruner” type have been found at Doganella following a recent find, near Montiano (Magliano in Toscana) (Rendini in press).

28. On Selvans’ function as *tutor finium*, analogous to the Latin Silvanus, see De Simone 1997 (with bibliography).

29. Firmati and Rendini 2002, 100f., n. 98538 (with bibliography).

30. The coin from the votive deposit was initially attributed to the Romano-Campanian series (Del Chiaro 1976, 38-39), but it now appears to be a Punic coin (see Firmati and Rendini 2002, 105 n. 103121).

31. The association Selvans/Suri has recently been supported on epigraphic grounds (Colonna 1997, 176-178).

32. Del Chiaro 1976, 12.


34. Firmati and Rendini 2002, 68f., n. 245088.

35. The hypothesis has been suggested by Del Chiaro (1976, 18-19) and taken up by Bentz (1992, 20f.).


39. On the conflicts between Gauls and Romans after the conquest of Etruria see Gabba 1990. The strategic importance of the valley as a communications route with the interior and the connection to the Tiber Valley, has recently been investigated by Rendini (2001, 20).

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