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## Review of Alessandra Minetti, ed., *Pittura etrusca: Problemi e prospettive*

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Alessandra Minetti, ed. *Pittura etrusca:  
Problemi e prospettive.*

*Atti del Convegno. Sarteano, Teatro Comunale  
degli Arrischianti – 26 ottobre 2001.*

*Chiusi, Teatro Comunale Mascagni – 27 ottobre 2001.*

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*pp. 167, figs. 147, many in color.*

*by Stephan Steingraber*

The corpus of the painted Etruscan tombs did not increase significantly during the last two decades following the publication of *Etruscan Painting* (ed. S.Steingraber, New York 1986). This contrasts with Southern Italy, where new exciting tomb paintings (dating mostly from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C.) come to light almost every year, especially in Northern Campania, in the Lucanian Paestum area and in Apulia. The most recent discovery in Etruria dates to October 2003, when Alessandra Minetti excavated a chamber tomb near Sarteano in Loc. Pianacce. The tomb was decorated with partially preserved wall paintings displaying scenes of the underworld and included: a banquet of two men, a female demon with red hair on a cart and a snake-like creature with three bearded heads. These impressive paintings were presented briefly by G. della Fina in *Archeo* 229, 2004, pp. 31-42 and by A.Minetti in *Archeologia Viva* 106, and date to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C. They are most likely the product the workshop from the Volsinii/Orvieto area responsible for the two Golini tombs and the Hescana tomb as well as a series of red figure vases with animated underworld scenes.

We owe the book presented and reviewed here to Alessandra Minetti, the director of the Museo Civico Archeologico at Sarteano. Minetti already published another book, *La Necropoli della Palazzina nel Museo Civico Archeologico di Sarteano* (Siena 2001), in the same series. The new book, *Pittura etrusca. Problemi e prospettive*, includes the contributions of a congress held on October 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> 2001 in Sarteano and

Chiusi. It starts with two brief prefaces by Angelo Bottini, the Soprintendente Archeologico of Tuscany, and by Gianni Resti, the Assessore di Cultura of the Provincia di Siena. The presentations of Mario Iozzo, the director of the Museo Nazionale Archeologico at Chiusi, and of the editor, Alessandra Minetti, follow. The body of the book is divided in 14 well illustrated chapters by 15 different authors on various subjects concerning Etruscan tomb painting. Each chapter has its own bibliography.

In the first chapter, Alessandro Naso deals with tomb painting of the Orientalizing period in Southern Etruria and presents some new materials such as remains of paintings – mainly those from the ceiling and the column – in the Tumulo del Sorbo, the Tomba dei Leoni dipinti and the Tomba Mengarelli at Cerveteri and the Tomba Cima at San Giuliano. The motifs of these paintings, applied directly on the tufa walls, are primarily of ornamental or vegetal motifs, a point the author has made in previous publications, especially *Architetture dipinte. Decorazioni parietali non figurate nelle tombe a camera dell'Etruria meridionale (VII – V sec.a.C.)* (Roma 1996). Naso's contribution includes several interesting detail photos and reconstruction drawings of the ceiling in the Tumulo del Sorbo, the Tomba Mengarelli (both dateable to the second quarter or middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> cent.) and the Tomba Cima as well as figure motifs such as the “felino” in the Tomba Mengarelli and the two heraldic panthers on the back wall of the Tomba Cima. The author emphasizes the importance and influence of the Caeretan architectural workshops, active in Vulci (Tomba del Sol e della Luna) and in the inner part of Southern Etruria (Tomba Cima at San Giuliano).

In the second chapter, Paola Rendini presents and analyzes the painted tomb of S.Andrea in Loc. Cancellone near Magliano Toscano (where another tomb was discovered in Loc. Ficaie in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) which was discovered in 1984 but was never fully published apart from some preliminary notes. The walls of this two chamber-tomb (the characteristic division wall in front of the back wall of the second chamber reminds one of tombs in the Chiusi area) are partly decorated with a series of walking, almost life-size winged lions (about 1,30m high) in the three color-technique (dark red, ochre yellow and black) typical of the late Orientalizing period at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> cent. On both sides of the entrance we find a wingless rampant lion and a palmette. The lions are a “Phoenician type” and can be interpreted as symbols of death, the palmettes as symbols of immortality. These well preserved paintings – the only real figure paintings in Northwestern Etruria – show close connections with Chiusi, specially with the lost painted tomb of Poggio Renzo, and with Veio (Tomba Campana) but are probably the work of a workshop from Caere, active in the Veio and Chiusi area.

In the third chapter, Francesco Roncalli discusses the sepulchral space in Etruria between architecture and painting using the Tomba del Barone of Tarquinia (approximately 510 B.C.) as a starting point. Ten figures are represented on three walls but the argument deals only with five figures, including the noble deceased lady and the Dioscuri. Roncalli emphasizes the harmonic distribution of the figures and colors and the symmetrical construction of the scenes but also the shifting of the scenes on the side walls towards the main scene on the back wall. The author takes into consideration the Late Archaic Tombe dei Giocolieri and dei Tori and sees a division of the tombs in two dif-

ferent spaces: the first of transitional character and reserved for the living, the second dedicated to the deceased. This division is reflected in the arrangement of the stone beds towards the back wall as well. In his discussion, Roncalli includes in his study a group of painted terracotta pinakes from Caere (around 520) and two Etruscan black figure vases (around 490) with themes of funeral significance.

The fourth chapter, by Giovanni Colonna, is dedicated to the well known Tomba della Nave at Tarquinia, dateable to the middle of the 5th cent. (or shortly thereafter). Colonna's article includes new observations and interpretations of the wall paintings, removed from the tomb in 1958 and now exhibited in the National Archaeological Museum of Tarquinia. Especially useful are new drawings of the paintings, particularly of the left wall with its unique representation of a harbour bay with a huge two-masted trading ship, a series of other smaller ships and two rocks. Colonna's erudite article discusses the chronology, the stylistic elements of the composition and the main theme of the paintings – the symposium and dance which includes 14 figures, four *klinai* and a *kylikeion*. For Colonna, the symposium occurs in the 'other world' (like in the Tomba del Triclinio). The banqueting ancestors await the arrival of the deceased descendants. Colonna also interprets the famous seascape on the left wall in a symbolic sense – the arrival of the big ship in the 'other world,' rejecting the popular "socio-economic" interpretation which sees in the harbour bay and trading ship as reflecting the importance and success of the tomb owner as a ship owner and merchant. He compares the picturesque rocks around the bay with "faraglioni," such as the so-called Canna di Filicudi (Aiolian islands), and sees an evocation of the legendary "plotai" or "planktai" at the end of the world. On the other hand, he emphasizes the remarkable quality and sense of perspective in the seascape and suggests possible influences from the "scaenae" of Agatharchos of Samos and from some dramas by Aischylos, Sophokles and Euripides.

The fifth chapter by Luca Cerchiai is dedicated to the motif of boxer figures flanking the entrance doors of some Tarquinian tombs. We find this rather dramatic and humorous looking motif in a group of late Archaic tombs at Tarquinia such as in the Tombe Cardarelli, della Fustigazione, del Teschio and del Citaredo. In these tombs, which are attributed to a single workshop, the boxers are not associated with other athletic games, suggesting they have another meaning. The other scenes consist mostly of *komoi* of Dionysian character and the false door in which the author sees the representation of the dead "ex absentia". He discusses the representations of animals or animals attacking prey in the pediments as well, connecting them primarily with the sphere of Dionysos and Aphrodite. Cerchiai emphasizes the relationship between hunting and eros on the one hand and between the boxers and the Dionysian *komos* on the other hand. He takes into consideration possible influences from Greek poetry and compares the boxer motif with representations on a cippus relief from Chiusi, on a hydria of the Micali painter and on an Attic black figure amphora. His interpretations are well considered but one might ask if they fully capture the true meaning of Etruscan tomb painting and funeral ideology.

In the sixth chapter, Gabriele Cifani reviews the wall paintings of a four room chamber tomb in the Volsinii area in Loc. Pranzovico near Grotte Santo Stefano (discov-

ered in 1904), dateable from the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. and those from the Grotta dipinta in Loc. Pian Miano near Bomarzo, dating to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. Old water colors by E. Stefani of the paintings in the Pranzovico tomb are reproduced. These tombs are located in the Valle Veza, the border area between the territories of Tarquinia, Volsinii and Falerii. The paintings of the first tomb, now almost destroyed, show typical Tarquinian themes such as banquet, dance and athletic games including perhaps a kalpe too. The paintings show iconographic parallels with Chiusi's tombe della Scimmia and del Colle Casuccini. In that period, painting workshops from Tarquinia were probably active in the Chiusi and in the Volsinii area. The second tomb, decorated with a frieze of waves, jumping dolphins and hippocampi, is iconographically comparable with the reliefs of the Vel Urinates sarcophagus from Bomarzo (now in the British Museum, London). Tarquinian influences obviously moved towards the Tiber area in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. too.

The seventh chapter, by Anna Rastrelli, deals with tomb 13 of the Palazzina Necropolis near Sarteano, excavated in the late 1990s and, according to the remaining burial gifts, used from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. The small remains of wall paintings, mainly the profile head of a bearded man in one of the five loculi used for cremation burials, belong to the oldest, late Archaic phase of the tomb. This early group also includes fragments of four horses, perhaps of a quadriga. This loculus – probably of the tomb founder – was surrounded by a doric door. The style of the paintings is influenced by Tarquinian-Ionic models. Chronologically the Sarteano tomb is older than the group of late- and subarchaic Chiusinian painted tombs.

In the eighth chapter Bruno D'Agostino discusses aspects of the Tomba François at Vulci, one of the most interesting and studied Etruscan painted tombs, dating from the third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. The starting point for D'Agostino's arguments is the famous article by F. Coarelli in *D'Arch* 1983,2, pp. 43ss. in which the author saw allusions to the Romans in the succumbing Trojans and the Etruscans in the victorious Greeks. D'Agostino deals both with the mythological scenes and the historical battle scene between Etruscans. He notices that the winners are not all clearly named as "Vulcentes" and sees a conflict between an alliance of Vulci (Aulus Vibenna) and Chiusi (Larth Ulthes) on the one hand and of Tarquinia and Volsinii on the other. He discusses the obvious parallelism between the tragic duel of the Theban brothers Eteokles and Polyneikes and the duel of Cneve Tarchunie and Marce Camitlnas as well as the problems of human sacrifice (Achilles and the Trojan prisoners). In the alliance between Achilles and Agamemnon against the Trojans, D'Agostino sees an appeal to "omonia" or "concordia". Thus the tomb owner Vel Saties and the members of his aristocratic family want to be seen as distant from the tragic epic and historic fights and to be treated as equal with Nestor and Phoinix the symbols of wisdom and prudence. In search of the "Urbild" for the sacrifice scene D'Agostino takes in consideration representations on the priest sarcophagus from Tarquinia, on bronze cists and on Apulian red figure vases (Dareios Painter).

The ninth chapter by Antonella Romualdi is dedicated to the only two painted

tombs of Populonia (the northernmost painted tombs in Etruria) located in the Necropoli delle Grotte (now part of the recently created Parco Archeologico di Populonia) of Early Hellenistic period: the Tomba del Corridietro or delle Onde marine and the Tomba dei Delfini. Both date from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C. and were carved from the local soft arenaria/sandstone, including the stone benches for burials themselves. Motifs (wavy frieze, dolphins, ram heads) and style of the paintings refer to Southern Etruria, especially Cerveteri (Tomba delle Onde marine and Tomba dei Sarcofagi) and Tarquinia (Fondo Scataglini). The hypothesis of a South Etruscan origin of the tomb owners is strengthened by a fragmentary inscription found near these painted tombs and written in South Etruscan style. The Late Etruscan Necropoli delle Grotte was used from the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> until the middle of the second cent. B.C. and includes some older quarries, partly reused for rock tombs.

The tenth chapter – the longest and most detailed contribution of this book – by Anna Eugenia Feruglio, is dedicated to the Tomba degli Hescana near Volsinii/Orvieto and provides a better understanding of these partially and poorly preserved tomb paintings, discovered in 1883 still *in situ* (as opposed to the paintings of the two Golini tombs). Thanks to the most recent restorations (1998 – 2000) and new techniques of observation, the architect R. de Rubertis was able to propose new computerized reconstructions in the form of colored drawings, considerably truer to the original than the old drawings by D.Cardella, *Le pitture della tomba etrusca degli Hescana* (1893) and which now allow a better iconographic review. The Hescana paintings – a bit later and of lesser quality in comparison to the Golini paintings – show various phases of the journey to the underworld including several female demons, a group of three apparitores, a male couple kissing, a purification scene with an animal sacrifice on an altar and a banquet with the ancestors (almost completely lost). The named figures represent members of the Hescana family, some appearing twice. This “continuous narration” is one of the oldest representations of the journey to the other world in Etruscan painting and emphasizes the values of the aristocratic “gens” of the tomb owner.

In the eleventh chapter, Licia Vlad Borrelli, the best specialist in the field of ancient painting techniques, summarizes the history of technology of Etruscan tomb painting and touches on many interesting aspects and problems of the subject. She emphasizes the importance of cooperation between archaeology and natural sciences which has already proven fruitful in this field. Vlad Borrelli includes several Etruscan painted tombs in her discussion, beginning from the Tomba delle Anatre of Veio (second quarter of 7<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.) and also includes paintings from Syria (Till Barsib), Lycia (Karaburun-Elmali), Macedonia, Alexandria, Apulia (Arpi), Paestum (tombs from the Spinazzo Necropolis) and the famous Amazon Sarcophagus from Tarquinia, for which she stresses the strong Tarentinian character. Concerning this unique monument, she quotes the innovative recent publication by H.Brecoulaki, *L'esperienza del colore nella pittura funeraria dell'età preromana V – III sec.a.C.* (Napoli 2001). In some cases, Vlad Borrelli's proposals concerning chronology are worthy of further discussion.

The twelfth chapter, by Pasquino Pallecchi, concentrates on the diagnosis and conservation of the Chiusinian painted tombs, primarily that of the Tomba della Scimmia

and the Tomba del Colle Casuccini. Pallecchi emphasizes the importance of examination and conservation of the right ambience as well as climatic conditions and includes good graphic documentation.

In the thirteenth chapter, the same author deals with the conservation and restoration methods of the Sarteano tomb paintings in the Necropoli della Palazzina.

The fourteenth and last chapter by M.P.Colombini, G.Giachi, P.Pallecchi and E.Ribechini is dedicated to the painting techniques used in the tombs of Chiusi (della Scimmia, del Colle Casuccini, del Leone) and Sarteano (Tomb 13 of Palazzina Necropolis). The main aim is the identification of the pigments (both mineral and vegetal), the layers of painting and the binders (partly egg-based) used for the fresco paintings on the undercoat.

In summarizing, this book includes many interesting topics and new discoveries presented by important authors in the field of Etruscan painting and is illustrated with good photographs, most of which are in color. Among the recent discoveries, only the very important and – in an iconographic and ideological sense – almost “revolutionary” Tomba dei Demoni Azzurri of Tarquinia, from the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> cent., is missing here. We await its final publication by M.Cataldi. This volume represents a blend of both unpublished new paintings as well as previously known paintings that have been reviewed or interpreted in new ways. Important aspects of technique, conservation and publicity are taken in consideration as well. The inspiration for this conference were the recently discovered tomb of the Palazzina Necropolis at Sarteano and the now reopened Tomba della Scimmia at Chiusi. Since this area includes the second most important tomb painting complex after Tarquinia in Etruria, it deserves particular attention and further research. The corpus of tomb paintings in the Chiusi region was definitely enriched in October 2003 by the discovery at Sarteano of another tomb with painted underworld scenes mentioned at the beginning of this review. We eagerly await the definitive publication of this tomb by Alessandra Minetti.