

1973

Review of *Fouilles de Bolsena, Poggio Moscini II: Les architectures 1962-1967*, by A. Balland, A. Barbet, P. Gros and G. Hallier

Russell Scott

Bryn Mawr College, dscott@brynmawr.edu

[Let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.brynmawr.edu/classics_pubs

 Part of the [Classics Commons](#)

Custom Citation

Scott, Russell T. Review of *Fouilles de Bolsena, Poggio Moscini II: Les architectures 1962-1967*, by A. Balland, A. Barbet, P. Gros and G. Hallier. *American Journal of Archaeology* 77 (1973): 247-248.

This paper is posted at Scholarship, Research, and Creative Work at Bryn Mawr College. http://repository.brynmawr.edu/classics_pubs/37

For more information, please contact repository@brynmawr.edu.

sands of surviving examples from Tarentum have long daunted even the most valiant. We must therefore welcome an investigation of the 85 pieces studied here, now in the Basel Museum, but with the reservation that the full story is still to be told.

The author concentrates on the two most important aspects of early Tarentine terracottas. First, she traces the chronology of the craft; second, she discusses the interpretation of the most characteristic type, the reclining banqueter. A full and well-organized catalogue of the Basel examples gives the necessary information for the consideration of each piece.

The chronology is based on all manner of evidence, especially the technical details of manufacture. The dating, without any stratigraphical support, is fundamentally reasonable, but it certainly requires a more solid basis before it answers modern requirements. It seems clear that the first types in Tarentum derive from the East Greek sources, chiefly Rhodian. Laconia seems to have little influence, but South Italy contributes certain types and styles. The author traces a logical stylistic development throughout the archaic period, but after the middle of the 5th century the sequence becomes confused. Toward the end of the 5th century many new types and styles are apparent, which, according to the author's shrewd analysis, are owing not so much to fresh artistic inspiration as to bolder combinations of mold types. This contaminatory trend makes for strange figures: banqueters recline not on couches but on animals; male torsoes acquire female heads. The author's interpretation of this new creativity as a revolt against the mechanical spirit inherent in figures made from conventional molds may be too serious. Surely, it is not a bold and whimsical inventiveness, but growing indifference to tradition and to religious conservatism that underlies the changes. Strepsiades would undoubtedly have grumbled at them.

At the basis of these changes, in many cases, lay technical carelessness. The author notes how errors of total unimportance may confuse modern scholars. When the coroplast added a female head to the figure of a banqueter, he converted him into Aphrodite or Persephone, probably without realizing the error. A wife, seated upon her husband's couch, might as easily be transformed into an hetaira or a goddess. Belief was at the mercy of the careless craftsman. Only by looking at the earliest examples of a type and refusing to be seduced by the aberrant specimens, can we learn folk-belief. We thus owe much to the author's common sense.

The most significant contribution of this book is its analysis of the meaning of the reclining type. Beginning with the earliest piece, which seems to date in the last decade of the 6th century B.C., the author

argues that the simple headband and the common libation vessel, the rhyton, indicate that the type represents a banqueting man. Later, when the figure assumes a rich robe and elaborate headdress, he is obviously not human, but at least semi-divine. He sometimes holds the kantharos or egg belonging to the chthonic Dionysos. Is he then a hero or the heroized dead, as many scholars have suggested?

On this difficult problem, Dr. Herdejürgen again chooses a sensible point of view. She points out that such a type, though created by contemporary thought, can become blurred by the confused ideas of the dedicants who bought a piece as well as by the man who made it. The vital point to the donor was the gift offered for approbation to vague powers. How many dedicants knew the name of the banqueter?

This book is not only sensible and imaginative; it is well written and very nicely illustrated. It should be read by students of terracottas and of religion. But the real task now lies ahead of the author who has by this beginning prepared herself for undertaking the full story of Tarentine production; we pray that the gods of Tarentum will help her.

DOROTHY B. THOMPSON

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

FOUILLES DE BOLSENA, POGGIO MOSCINI II: LES ARCHITECTURES 1962-1967 (*MélRomeSupp* 6, 1971), by A. Balland, A. Barbet, P. Gros, G. Hallier. Pp. 394, figs. 140, pls. 19. E. de Boccard, Paris.

In 1945 Italian authorities invited the French School in Rome to establish an excavation in Italy. In 1946 after preliminary investigations excavations were undertaken in and around Bolsena, known casually for Roman remains, by Prof. Raymond Bloch. Prof. Albert Grenier, then Director of the School, explained that Bolsena seemed a particularly attractive site because it offered the prospect of a solution to the old question of Orvieto or Bolsena as the site of Etruscan Volsinii.¹ On the basis of his campaigns through 1961 Bloch chose Bolsena, but the campaigns described in this volume and subsequent ones by members of the School within the ancient town around Poggio Moscini have as yet produced no traces of pre-Roman habitation.²

The authors' accounts of their work in a rectangular sector (47 x 40 m.) sw of the presumed location of the forum of Roman Volsinii may be summarized as follows, the sector being divided into three zones.

1) To the nw on a terrace supported by retaining walls is an atrium house dating initially to the last quarter of the 2nd century B.C.³ and twice modified

¹ See A. Grenier, *MélRome* 58 (1941-46) 267, and R. Bloch, *MélRome* 59 (1947) 9.

² For the bibliography of Bloch's excavations and those at Poggio Moscini through 1969 see J. Andreau, A. Barbet, J.-M. Pallier, *MélRome* 82 (1970) 187; for the 1970 campaign see Pallier, *MélRome* 83 (1971) 367. For the effect of the Poggio

Moscini excavations on the Orvieto-Bolsena question see now F. T. Buchicchio, "Note di Topografia antica sulla Volsinii Romana," *RömMitt* 77 (1970) 19.

³ The basis for this and all other dates B.C. are the typological chronologies established for Etrusco-Campanian black glaze and plain Arretine wares in these works: A. Balland,

late in the 1st century B.C. It incorporates elements of earlier constructions, including dry-laid rubble walls of uncertain destination dating from the second half of the 3rd century B.C., and parts of a rectangular building in an *opus quadratum* of local tufo, identified as a *horreum* and dated to the first half of the 2nd century B.C.

2) To the sw were uncovered additional dry-laid rubble walls and walls dated within the first two decades of the 2nd century B.C., made of roughly-cut blocks of a friable local tufo, the varying intervals between them filled with loose stones. Careful study of these remains together with related ones to the NW permits the distinction of two unpaved parallel streets running NW-SE, to which the incomplete constructions are oriented. When the house described above was built, the axis of street orientation shifted away from the lake to the NW to coincide with the NE-SW thrust of the newly completed Via Cassia.

3) To the SE are these remains: A) a cistern with access stairs carved out of the natural tufo in the second quarter of the 2nd century B.C. It probably came to be associated with B), a small temple/sanctuary of which only elements of the foundations survive, built facing SE sometime in the second half of the 2nd century B.C. and perhaps dedicated to Venus. C) elements of a portico, dated to the first half of the 1st century B.C., that closed the area of the sanctuary on the NE. But shortly afterward the sanctuary was abandoned and in the last half of the 1st century (before 30), D), a nymphaeum connected with the atrium house, was built over it. An irregular commemorative wall was built around the exposed top of the sanctuary altar, however, and a second-style painted plaster decoration applied to the outer face of the SE wall of the nymphaeum in the space between the two antae of the suppressed temple still protruding from it. The enlarged house was wasted by fire within a few years and was only sporadically occupied prior to the 3rd century A.D.; final abandonment occurred in the 4th.

The thoughtful presentation of zones 1 and 2 is by Pierre Gros, that of zone 3 by André Balland. These constitute parts one and three of the report. Part two (and an appendix to part three) is an overly ambitious study of the metrology of individual structures and town design by Gilbert Hallier, the architect responsible for the uniformly clear plans and sections of these and later campaigns. Part four by Alix Barbet is a brief but detailed examination of technique and composition of the second-style painting mentioned above.

In their separate investigations the authors are united in an effort to find traces, in Roman Volsinii, of influence or survival of local Etruscan culture. Gros observes similarity in technique of wall construction at Bolsena to others in Etruria. Hallier seeks to demonstrate the primacy at Bolsena until the con-

struction of the *horreum* of a local, non-Roman unit of measure, a foot of 0.309 m., that is compared to the Alexandrian foot, but is unparalleled in Etruria. Balland is inclined to see evidence of Etruscan survivals in artistic and cultic details of the small sanctuary. But these and other observations are made with the caution required by the limited extent and state of the remains treated. As the reports appear of subsequent campaigns (which have now extended the excavation SE to the forum) there will be the more reason to return to various theses proposed here. Meanwhile one may wish the School further success in its exploration of a challenging site.

RUSSELL T. SCOTT

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE
AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME

DIE FICORONISCHE CISTE IN DER VILLA GIULIA IN ROM (Monumenta artis romanae XI), by Tobias Dohrn. Pp. 54, pls. 40, folding plate, text figs. 8. Berlin, Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1972. DM 56.

This scholarly monograph in a handsome series is enlightening in many ways, not least for purposes of appraisal of progress in one typical archaeological field, that of Praenestine metalwork. Comparing it with Jahn (1852) and Behn (1907), to mention only monographs, one notes enormous improvement in photography, drawing less decorative but more accurate, extension of artistic and historical study along the old lines, all leading to conclusions not very different and no more convincing than those of a century ago.

The cista that belonged to Ficoroni remains the greatest of its kind ever to be discovered. This study begins with an account of its history and ends with a brief presentation of the Amykos mirror that seems to have been found with it. The main text begins with a meticulous description; Dohrn has studied the cista very thoroughly and his observations are heartening. He discovered that the cylindrical body was made by rolling a sheet of bronze and soldering its ends (not the method usual with smaller cistae). He detects no modern retouching of the engraving but remarks upon a coating (plaster?) smeared over small areas since the familiar Alinari photographs were taken, aimed at equalizing irregularities of surface but actually concealing original incision; concealed lines, no matter how certain, are scrupulously omitted from the Dohrn drawing. One cast foot is modern, another is an ancient copy, leaving but one original foot. Otherwise Dohrn finds nothing to doubt: the two parts of the cover, inner circle and surrounding circular frieze, belong together and the cover fits the body—on which it can be placed to artistic advantage; the positions of the feet are correct and

"Fouilles de Bolsena, Poggio Moscini III: La céramique étrusco-campanienne à vernis noir," *MélRomeSupp* 6 (fasc. 1, 1969); C. Goudineau, "Fouilles de Bolsena, Poggio Moscini (1962-67) IV: La céramique arétine lisse," *MélRomeSupp* 6 (1968);

J.-P. Morel, "Céramique à vernis noir du Forum Romain et du Palatin," *MélRomeSupp* 3 (1965); D. M. Taylor, "Cosa Black Glaze Pottery," *MAAR* 25 (1957). Dates A.D. are deduced from coin evidence.