

## Revisiting the Stele of Lemnos: Questions of Etruscan Connectivity

The Lemnian Stele (6<sup>th</sup> c. Archaic period) posed a problem for Etruscan scholars such as Gras (1985) and van der Meer (2004). They tried to make the stele fit neatly into the then popular unidirectional “Orientalizing” model of Etruscan migration. They even used it to support the tantalizing theory of eastern origins of Etruscans. In this paper, I will use new comparanda to reevaluate the interpretation of the Lemnian Stele as a case study for heightened Mediterranean connectivity during the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Building on the work of current scholars—Mac Sweeney (2017), Ficuciello (2013), Pieraccini (2023)—I argue for ongoing connectivity between Etruscan settlers, likely economically motivated merchants and craftspeople, and the indigenous inhabitants of Lemnos. This entanglement resulted in material synchronisms exemplified in their respective necropolises.

My paper will include two parts: first, I will begin with an epigraphic analysis. The Lemnian Stele bears the Lemnian language, comparable only to Etruscan and Raetic spoken nearly 2,000 kilometers away. Stylistically, the monument finds new comparanda in Etruria. The recently discovered Vicchio Stele shares epigraphic peculiarities with its Lemnian counterpart such as the rare serpentiform boustrophedon. After establishing the striking linguistic and epigraphic similarities, I will move into the second part, an analysis of the archaeological record of the Efestia necropolis. There, the use of biconical urns reinforces the reciprocity between Etruscan and Lemnian material culture as early as the Iron Age. Based on my preliminary conclusions, and the emergence of the Vicchio Stele, a reevaluation of the Lemnian Stele is necessary in order to reposition it within the context of Mediterranean mobility in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

The contact between Etruscan and Lemnian people, I conclude, was not a product of merely occasional interaction, leading to a superficial exchange of material and language. Nor was it a matter of origin. The relationship between Lemnos and Etruria does not answer questions of Etruscan origin nor vice versa. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that people from Etruria, perhaps an organized enclave or small group of independent craftspeople, settled on Lemnos. Their language and material culture was folded into Lemnian local identity. This new model I present is more nuanced than a scenario that imagines a single onslaught of Etruscan ships in the Lemnian harbors. Based on commonalities present in the necropolis at Efestia, it is instead a process that found a significant foothold in the 8<sup>th</sup> c. BCE. This relationship was not only a gradual development but likely was reciprocal. The later 6th c. BCE Lemnian Stele is an emblem of this ongoing entanglement.

### Bibliography

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