

Shards and Status: What the Spatial Analysis of Glass can Reveal about Community Organization in Early Italy

The study of ancient glass rests at the intersection of technological innovation, cultural contact, and socio-political developments. The presence of glass in Pre-Roman Italy, particularly in the Etruscan Orientalizing Period, is rightfully treated as a reflection of intensifying systems of cultural and technological exchange in the Mediterranean. It is traditionally assumed that such objects were introduced as finished products from the ancient Near East, and that their presence in tombs reflects an emerging princely class which attempted to distinguish itself through elite imports. Yet the Late Bronze Age site of Frattesina has revealed evidence of glass working in early Italy, and archaeometric testing of certain Etruscan glasses has tentatively suggested some local production with a chemical makeup different from that of the Eastern Mediterranean (Towle and Henderson 2004). Moreover, some forms such as the spiked *oinochoe*, dubbed *Stachelflaschen*, are unique to Etruscan contexts (Yatsuk 2023). These new trends in scholarship suggest that the interaction with glass in Etruria was far more complex than a passive reception of goods. This paper adds to the current dialogue by proposing that the spatial analysis of glass assemblages may help identify patterns in production and consumption, providing more nuanced insight into those who worked and owned the material. As a case study, this paper maps the glass assemblage at the Etruscan site of Poggio Civitate in Murlo, Italy — a site unique in its preservation of centers of both industry and elite and non-elite habitation.

Poggio Civitate's Orientalizing-Period workshop and residences show substantial evidence of craft production, including metallurgy, textile and ceramic manufacturing, and the working of antler and ivory. A similar spatial analysis of spindle-whorls noted that, while widespread, textile production differed across social class in the quality of the fabrics that could

be produced (Tuck 2021). While many of the other craft types have received attention (Nielson 1998; Tuck 2014; Tuck et al. 2013; Winter 2019), the glass has been largely left unstudied. Thus, this paper studies the glass assemblage in two parts: by typology, and in comparison to other craft products. The assemblage and its relative distribution suggest that not only was glass worked on site, but that the artisans thereof had some access to ownership of the finished goods, raising larger questions about social stratification and community dynamics in Murlo at this time.

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