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Crustumerium and Etruria

Introduction

Excavations at *Crustumerium* have corroborated what one suspects from its geographical location: that there are close contacts with Etruscans, Sabines and Faliscans. Pottery finds, especially bucchero and white-on-red, are examined here to show this contact with particular reference to the Etruscans. In addition, the case of white-on-red suggests a local workshop tradition perhaps inspired or influenced by the Etruscans.

The geographical location of *Crustumerium*, as the northernmost Latin city, ensured close trade and cultural contacts with the Etruscans, the Sabines and the Faliscans. This paper examines contacts with the Etruscans who occupied the territory to the west, across the Tiber, and whose major city of *Veii* is less than 15 km from *Crustumerium*.

Crustumerium's extensive cemeteries, almost exclusively inhumation burials, show Etruscan influence in the types of trench burials with *loculi* for grave goods, and of tombs with rectangular pit entrance and *loculi* both for corpses and grave goods ("tombe a loculi"). Their design, as well as those of the later subterranean chamber tombs, finds close parallels at many Etruscan sites, especially *Veii* and Narce. Most burials contain grave goods. These might include sporadic bronzes, especially fibulae and simple vessels, carved bone and amber, and almost always pottery. Any of these items might have been imported from Etruria. However, I propose to focus on Etruscan influence that is best seen in the ceramic evidence. Along with local impasto products¹, two types of pottery, closely associated with the Etruscans, are found: bucchero and white-on-red.

Bucchero pottery

We believe that bucchero production begins ca. 675 B.C. at Cerveteri, the major Etruscan urban area about 45 km to the west of *Crustumerium*. But at this point, relatively little early bucchero sottile has been discovered at *Crustumerium*. Instead, the first examples are from the middle of the 7th century. In fact, it is strange that no really fine examples of bucchero have yet been discovered at the site. This is perhaps merely a function of not yet having excavated the earliest portions of the various cemeteries.

¹ DI GENNARO 1997; DI GENNARO 1999a, 54–5; DI GENNARO *ET ALII* 2007, 154–62.

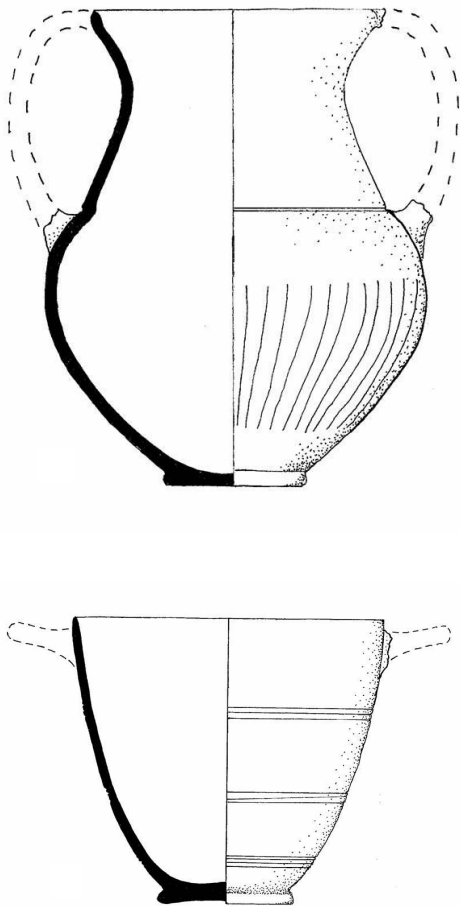


Fig. 1 a-b – Bucchero sottile. *Amphoriskos* (H. 10 cm) and *kotyle* (H. 8.5 cm), Crustumerium MDB, Tomb 121 (drawing by author).

Two examples of typical bucchero products from Tomb 121 in the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis will illustrate the kinds of Etruscan imports found at the site². The spiral *amphoriskos* (fig. 1a) belongs to Rasmussen's Type 1b³. The earliest examples of this type begin ca. 650 B.C. but the shape continues to ca. 600 B.C. Our example is probably best assigned to ca. 625 B.C. and could have come from *Veii* or Cerveteri, both centers where this shape is popular. The *kotyle* (fig. 1b), a standard type derived from Corinthian cups, belongs to Rasmussen's Type c which runs from ca. 635 to at least 600 B.C. This example is similar to many others found at a variety of Etruscan sites, but perhaps Cerveteri is the most likely place of origin⁴.

What do we presently know about bucchero at *Crustumerium*? First, at this point, most of the bucchero found at *Crustumerium* may have been imported from workshops in and around *Veii* and Cerveteri. This is based on stylistic analysis and the proximity of both sites, especially *Veii*. Second, there is a limited variety of bucchero shapes represented at *Crustumerium*. Third, clay analysis would perhaps pinpoint the sources used and thus provide evidence for the original provenance of specific bucchero pieces. Of course, this summary is provisional and certainly will change as more tombs are excavated. Barbara Belelli Marchesini, Angelo Amoroso, Francesco di Gennaro and Paolo Togninelli are presently working on a major publication of the bucchero finds from *Crustumerium*⁵. We look forward to their contributions to this important aspect of exchanges between *Crustumerium* and the Etruscans.

White-on-red Pottery

This fabric has been studied extensively by Marina Micozzi in her magisterial monograph⁶. Among her many valuable findings:

1. Most white-on-red can be associated with Cerveteri, and like the earliest bucchero, it seems to develop in the first quarter of the 7th century B.C.
2. Peak production at Cerveteri occurs at the end of the 7th century B.C.
3. Other areas, such as the *ager Faliscus* just north of *Crustumerium*, also seem to have had thriving production centers of this kind of pottery⁷.

² DE PUMA 2002-2003.

³ RASMUSSEN 1979, 70, pl. 2. COMPARE RAMAGE 1970, 19–22, fig. 16, 1-2; MARCHETTI, KRAUSKOPF 2004.

⁴ RASMUSSEN 1979, 94: "This is the most common of the *kotyle* types." See also, RAMAGE 1970, 22–24, with numerous examples. A close parallel comes from Tomb 79, Monte Abatone: BOSIO, PUGNETTI 1986, 45, no. 5.

⁵ NASO 2004.

⁶ MICOZZI 1994.

⁷ MICOZZI 1994, 227–35.



Fig. 2 – White-on-red ciotola (D. about 14 cm), *Crustumerium* MDB, Tomb 8 loculo est. (SSBAR).



Fig. 3 – White-on-red olla (H.22,7 cm), *Crustumerium* MDB, Tomb 113: SSBAR 475052 (photo by author).

Several examples of white-on-red pottery have been found in the tombs at *Crustumerium*. Some pieces (figs. 2-3, small plate; olla) are decorated with simple geometric patterns, but a few items (fig. 4, amphora from Tomb 4) have figural ornament, in this case a bird grasping a snake and flanked by two fish⁸. The most spectacular pieces discovered thus far are two large *pyxides* from Tomb 111 in the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis⁹. The first (fig. 5) has an elegant Phoenician palmette frieze running around the belly and

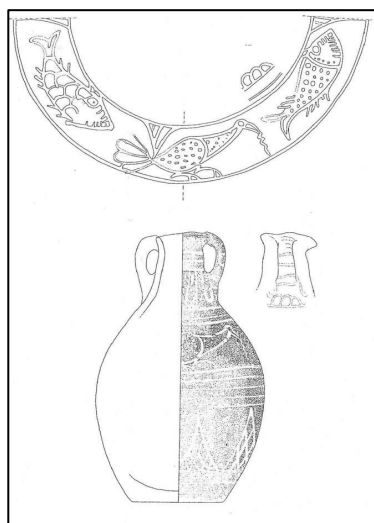


Fig. 4 – White-on-red amphora (H. 27 cm, *Crustumerium* MDB, Tomb 4 (drawing from DI GENNARO ET ALII 2007; photo SSBAR).



and an animal frieze with feline, horse(?) and hybrid quadruped with two heads on the lid. The second (fig. 6) is slightly smaller but of almost identical shape albeit with a more elaborate handle. Decoration is not figural but consists of various hook patterns and zigzags.

Large-scale *pyxides*, of similar shape and design but often with added feet, are usually associated with Cerveteri. However, most are in museum collections and have no secure archaeological context. Before considering the implications of this problem, I want to cite some additional examples.

⁸ DI GENNARO 1999b, 31 where the right photo is reversed; DI GENNARO ET ALII 2007, 141–2, fig. 6.

⁹ AMOROSO 2002, 38, fig. 5-6; 40, no. VII, 13; DI GENNARO ET ALII 2007, 139–41, figs. 3-4. I am not treating or illustrating a third fragmentary example discovered in the habitation area in 1998 by Angelo Amoroso: see DI GENNARO ET ALII 2007, 140, n. 18 and 141, fig. 5.



Fig. 5 – White-on-red *pyxis* (H. 30.5 cm; D. 47 cm), Crustumerium MDB, Tomb 111: SSBAR 445251-445253 (from DI GENNARO ET ALII 2007).



Fig. 6 – White-on-red *pyxis* (H. 26.5 cm; D. 42.5 cm), Crustumerium MDB, Tomb 111: SSBAR 445252-445250 (from DI GENNARO ET ALII 2007).



Fig. 7 – White-on-red *pyxis* (H. 53 cm): Fordham University Collection, 7.038 (courtesy J. Udell).



Fig. 8 – White-on-red *pyxis* (H. 40.6 cm): Fordham University Collection, 7.040 (courtesy J. Udell).

Two of the best known pieces are in the Louvre¹⁰. The elaborate lid on the first *pyxis* does not belong, although it would have had one of this type. Note that this, and at least three other examples, has tall tripod feet and large knobs between the handles. The simple knobbed lid on the second *pyxis* apparently does belong. This example is closer in shape to the Crustumerium *pyxides* but still has higher walls and larger feet. The sample size is still much too small to propose definite conclusions, but it is tempting to hypothesize that, given the typological and stylistic differences, we may be dealing with a local workshop.

Several unpublished examples that only recently have been publicly displayed are in a new museum collection at Fordham University, New York. These pieces were all acquired on the antiquities market by a single collector between the late 1970s and 2000¹¹. I have been unable to trace their earlier provenance history, if it exists at all, but it is clear that there are close similarities to some of the pieces excavated at Crustumerium. For example, note the parallel geometric ornament and especially the similar bird with snake on the first *pyxis* (fig. 7). A comparison of the drawing of the Crustumerium amphora and a detail of this frieze is instructive.

Of course, in this case we have different shapes, but the fabric, style and technique are close. Furthermore, if we examine another piece (fig. 8) we will see that almost identical shapes are indeed present in both excavated and unprovenanced examples. Although it is true that stylized birds of this type are a common motif, the birds painted on the

pyxis compare favorably to birds incised on impasto cups and amphoras excavated at Crustumerium¹².

¹⁰ Louvre inv. MNB 1781(D 151): KRAUSKOPF 1974, 13–14, pl. 4, 1-2; pl. 5, 3; MARTELLI 1987, 95, 266–67; MICOZZI 1994, no. C8. Louvre inv. MNB 1780 (D 150): MARTELLI 1987, 95, 267–68; MICOZZI 1994, no. C13.

¹¹ UDELL, CAVALIERE forthcoming.

¹² DI GENNARO 1999b, 30.

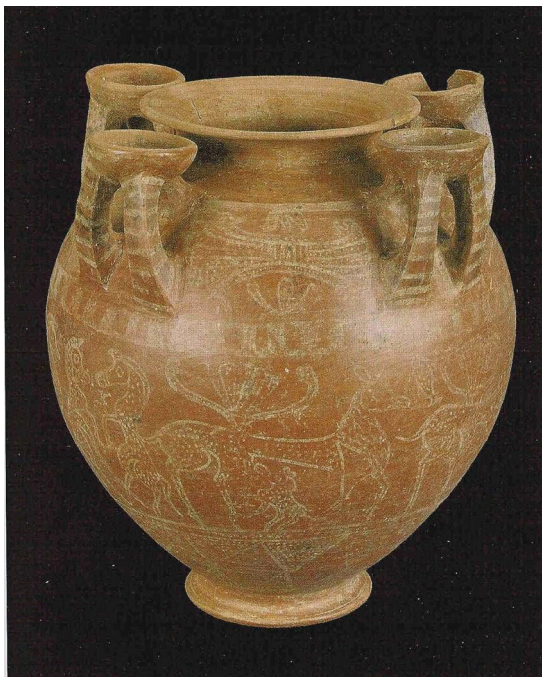


Fig. 9 – White-on-red olla with four attached bowls (H. 45.5 cm; D. of mouth, 18.5 cm), *Crustumerium* MDB, Tomb 169: SSBAR 507301 (courtesy SSBAR).



Fig. 10 – Pair of white-on-red ollas with four attached bowls (H. of each, 51 cm): Fordham University Collection, 2.002 and 2.003 (courtesy J. Udell).

An important shape at *Crustumerium* is the large olla with four attached bowls (fig. 9)¹³. An excellent example in white-on-red was discovered in 2005. It comes from Tomb 169 in the Monte Del Bufalo necropolis. The major frieze shows a series of horses. Barbara Beelli Marchesini, who recently published this vase, points out the stylistic similarities with other examples associated with Cerveteri and *Veii* and dates the piece to the second half of the 7th century¹⁴. It is close to an olla repatriated from New York a decade ago¹⁵, and another in a private collection in Linz¹⁶. There are also similar, unprovenanced parallels of this shape in the Fordham University collection mentioned earlier: two examples with ribbed bodies, one plain and the other with white-on-red decoration (fig. 10).

According to the museum's records, the dealer stated that this pair was "Found at the border of Etruscan, Faliscan and Latin Territories." This strikes me as an unusually precise and pedantic observation, given that most dealers might simply have said, "Found in an Etruscan tomb." The description "Found at the border of Etruscan, Faliscan and Latin Territories" sounds suspiciously like a reference to *Crustumerium* by one who knows his archaeology and his sources.

It is perhaps too early to tell, but given the frequent clandestine operations that we know occurred at *Crustumerium* in the late 1970s and especially in the 1980s, there is a strong likelihood that at least some of these unprovenanced objects came from the site. As always, it will probably remain impossible to prove definitively, but the likelihood of this coupled with the strong presence of white-on-red pottery excavated at the site, suggests that *Crustumerium* may have been a Latin production center for this ceramic type. Certainly, there is influence from Etruscan prototypes, but in my opinion, the evidence suggests local production. It appears to me that at least some artisans working at *Crustumerium* were inspired by pottery imported from their Etruscan neighbors but were able to develop their own stylistic variations. With more excavation we may be able to verify this hypothesis and demonstrate that in addition to the well-known idiosyncrasies of their impasto vases, artisans at *Crustumerium* were equally innovative with other types of pottery.

¹³ DI GENNARO 2006.

¹⁴ BELELLI MARCHESINI 2006, 229, no. II.226.

¹⁵ DI GENNARO ET ALII 2004, 156, fig. 6; BELELLI MARCHESINI 2006, 228, no. II.225, with earlier bibliography.

¹⁶ AICHMEIR 1998, no. 79 and cover photo. See also, BELELLI MARCHESINI 2006, 228; DI GENNARO 2006, 228.

Acknowledgements

I am especially grateful to Francesco di Gennaro for proposing and organizing a session of papers on Crustumerium, and for inviting me to participate. Paolo Togninelli has, as always, been encouraging and helpful. For photographs I am indebted to Francesco di Gennaro (S.S.B.A. Roma) and Jennifer Udell (New York).

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