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## **The Architectural Terracottas of Della Seta's First Phase at Veii: Comparisons with the Greek World**

Decorated roofs with figured friezes in relief are characteristic of architecture in Etruria and Rome throughout the 6th century B.C., classified by Della Seta in his 1918 catalogue of the Villa Giulia Museum as the first phase of Etruscan architectural terracottas. Veii, the largest Etruscan city and the one closest to Rome, is one of the first Etruscan centers to produce roofs with figured friezes. The earliest example belongs to the so-called *oikos* on the Piazza d'Armi, the ancient acropolis of Veii (fig. 1)<sup>1</sup>. The roof is characteristic of a decorative system probably originating at Veii already in the first quarter of the 6th cent. B.C., but particularly popular throughout southern Etruria during the second quarter of the century, using revetment plaques with military scenes, antefixes with female head, and eaves tiles with painted floral patterns on the soffit. By decorative system, I mean that there are a series of roofs that include all three elements of this roof with the same type of decoration on each, even when found in different centers, made with different moulds and produced by different workshops.

The revetment plaques from the *oikos* roof represent a procession of two chariots of Crouwel's Type II, the high-front chariot, said to be the standard type in mainland Greece from the 7<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C. onwards<sup>2</sup>. The armed charioteers are accompanied by a foot soldier equipped as a Greek hoplite, with crested helmet, round shield with recessed rim, and a weapon, apparently a sword. The charioteers wear a bell corselet in addition to a crested helmet, a feature that cannot be confirmed on the foot soldiers because the area is covered by the shield. No greaves are visible either, but could have been indicated in paint. The shield, which should always be carried on the left arm, is correctly shown on the scenes moving to left but incorrectly shown held on the right arm on scenes moving to right, perhaps because of the difficulty of showing a shield from the inside, or perhaps because the artist was unfamiliar with actual practice; after 570 B.C., depictions on Etruscan revetment plaques regularly do show the shield correctly held on the left arm, regardless of the direction of the scene, a trait documented on Greek vase painting much earlier. A similar concession to difficulty in portrayal is suggested by the depiction of the chariot as being drawn by a single horse, whereas after 580-575 B.C. the horses on revetment plaques are regularly shown to be two. Perhaps for the same reason, only an armed warrior is shown in the chariot, where one would expect also the driver who would look after the chariot and team of horses while the warrior was engaged in battle on the ground.

<sup>1</sup> STEFANI 1944; COLONNA 1985, 58. 9; BARTOLONI *ET ALII* 2006, 50. 69; WINTER 2009, 224. 228, Roof 4-1, Ill. Roof 4-1.1-2.

<sup>2</sup> CROUWEL 1981, 73, pls. 143. 146.

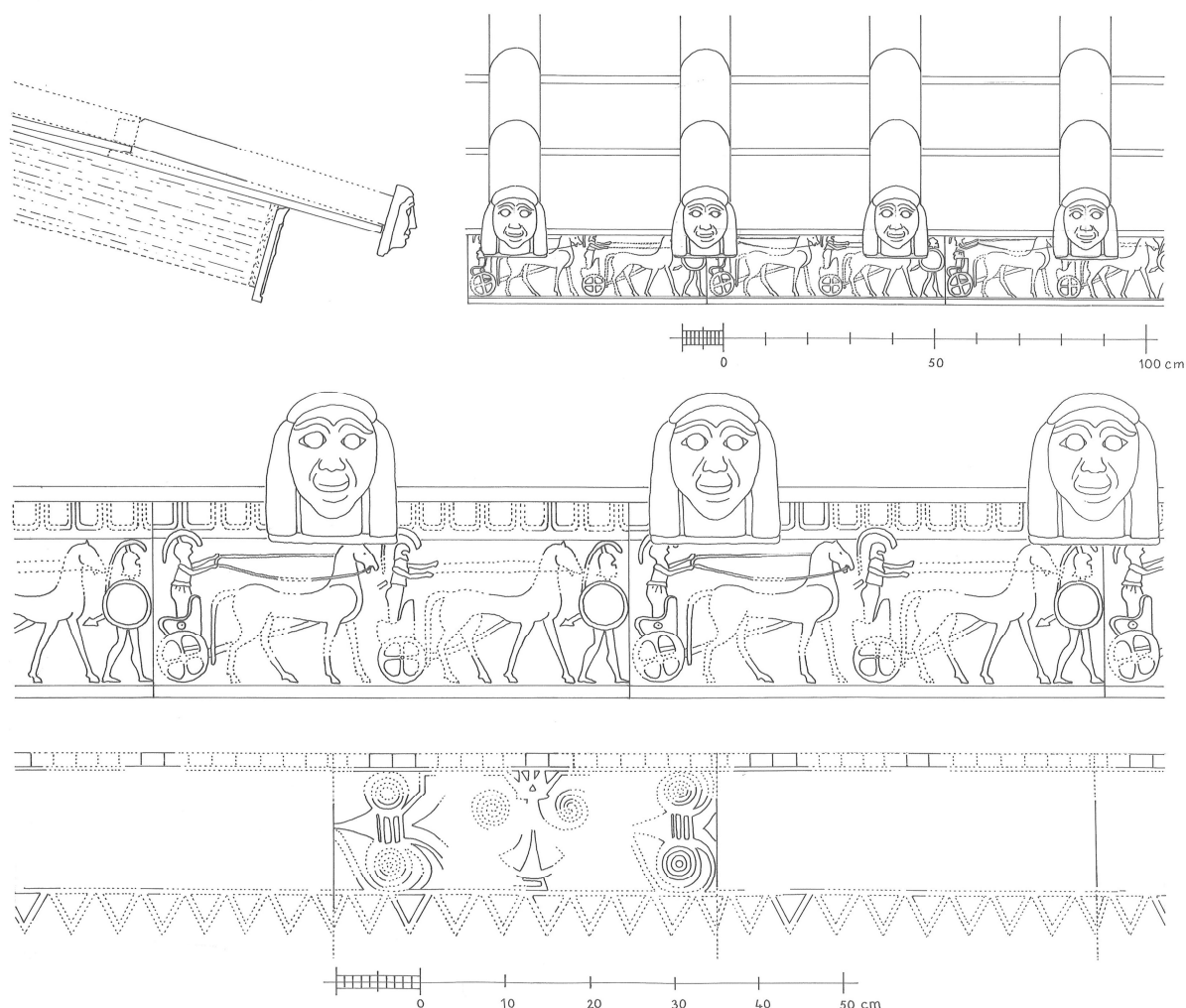


Fig. 1 . Reconstruction of the roof of the *oikos* on Piazza d'Armi at Veii (eaves) (drawing by Renate Sponer Za).

The morphology of the revetment plaques may echo plaques from nearby Rome belonging to buildings constructed after a flood dated ca. 600 B.C., there decorated with felines<sup>3</sup> or, on one fragment only, an armed rider with shield held incorrectly on the right arm<sup>4</sup>. In both Rome and Veii, the revetment plaques have a flat or flattish top border with a painted tongue pattern. While the Rome plaques with felines may have drawn inspiration from Corinthian or Etrusco-Corinthian vase painting, the military scene on the Veii revetment plaques follows no obvious iconographic source, although all of the military gear depicted is Greek, as mentioned above.

Another set of revetment plaques with a military scene, also excavated in and around the *oikos* on Piazza d'Armi at Veii, with mirror-image scenes from opposite sides of the slope of the roof as demonstrated by the oblique side edge on one fragment, depicts what becomes the popular departing warrior motif (fig. 2)<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Rome, Antiquarium forense, inv. R64.320 (moving to left); R65.5/20 406505, R65.19 406594 (moving right): CRISTOFANI 1990, 60. 1, nos. 3.2.11.1-3 and 3.2.12, pl. III; DOWNEY 1995, 9. 32, 73. 8, nos. 1-6, 11, 14, with earlier bibliography; WINTER 2006, fig. 2a; WINTER 2009, 175-178, 3.D.1.a, figs. 3.9 (photo reversed), 3.11, Ill. 3.4.1.

<sup>4</sup> Rome, formerly Antiquarium forense, currently Museo Nazionale Romano, Baths of Diocletian, inv. 118: ANDRÉN 1940, 332, no. I:3, pl. 105:373; ANDRÉN 1974, 7, pl. 27:59; CRISTOFANI 1990, 57, no. 3.1.35, pl. III; WINTER 2009, 178. 180, 3.D.1.b, fig. 3.12, Ill. 3.4.2.

<sup>5</sup> Scene to right: Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, inv. 11: ANDRÉN 1940, 8. 9, no. 4, series 2; STEFANI 1944, 249, no. 8, fig. 52; ANDRÉN 1974, 6. 7, pl. 26:58 (dated first quarter of 6th cent. B.C.); COLONNA 1985, 59, no. 2.4 2 (dated mid-6th cent. B.C.);

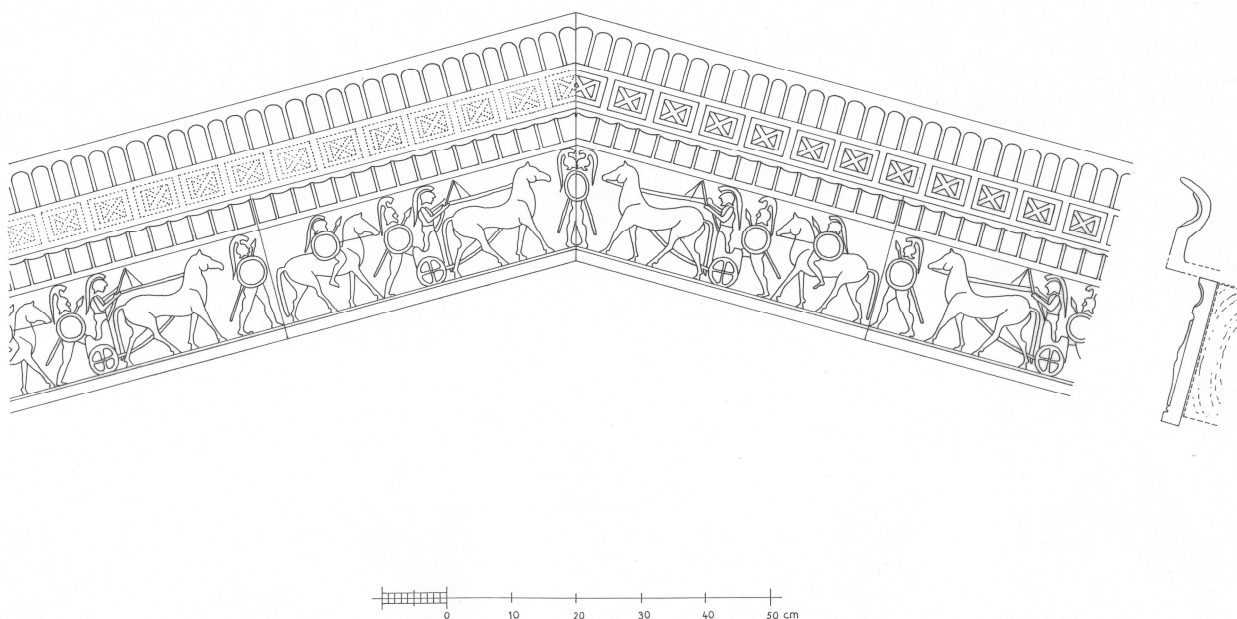


Fig. 2 . Reconstruction of the roof of the *oikos* on Piazza d'Armi at Veii (pediment) (drawing by Renate Sponer Za).

In both, the warrior mounting the chariot is placed in the center of each plaque, with a hoplite leading the procession and an armed rider bringing up the rear, all dressed in Greek armor with crested helmets, shields with recessed rim, and spears. The shield is still held on the wrong arm in the scenes to the right, and the horse is still depicted as single. The placement of revetment plaques side-by-side in a row repeating the scene over and over along the slopes of the pediment recalls the description by Strabo (10.1.10) of a military parade in Archaic Eretria with 60 chariots, 600 horseriders and 3,000 hoplites. Departing warrior scenes in Greek vase painting, however, generally represent Amphiaraos, and differ in showing the warrior mounting his chariot surrounded by family members saying farewell, clearly a different genre<sup>6</sup>.

Another roof from Piazza d'Armi at Veii employs revetment plaques with the departing warrior motif, accompanied by armed riders and foot soldiers (fig. 3)<sup>7</sup>. and, unusually, a rider on the chariot horse! Here the horses are clearly shown to be two, as on revetment plaques with a cart procession on the Upper Building at Poggio Civitate (Murlo)<sup>8</sup>, suggesting a date of 580-575 B.C. Another new feature on this plaque is the bird flying above the armed rider at the right, a combination found on a Middle Corinthian kylix by the Cavalcade Painter now in Moscow, dated to the first quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.<sup>9</sup>

Warrior departure scenes are known on architectural terracottas from Palaikastro, Crete<sup>10</sup>, and from Larisa am Hermos in Asia Minor<sup>11</sup>, but they could not have been the source of inspiration for the Veii revetment plaques because they are later in date. The Larisa revetment plaque, dating ca. 550 B.C., provides a point of comparison with the Veii plaque in having a flying bird over the horse, generally thought

BARTOLONI *ET ALII* 2006, 61. 3, fig. 6.18 B. Scene to left: Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, inv. 137308: ANDRÉN 1940, 8. 9, no. 4, series 2; STEFANI 1944, 249, no. 7, fig. 51; COLONNA 1985, 59, no. 2.4 2; MORETTI SGUBINI 2004, 51. 2, no. I.b.5. No inv.: STEFANI 1944, 247. 48, no. 5, fig. 49; ANDRÉN 1974, 7, pl. 26:57 (dated first quarter of 6th cent. B.C.). No inv.: STEFANI 1944, 247. 48, no. 6, fig. 50; WINTER 2009, 253. 255, 4.D.2.a, Ill. 4.6.1 (scene to right), and 255. 256, 4.D.2.c, Fig. 4.8, Ill. 4.6.2 (scene to left).

<sup>6</sup> LIMCI, 1981, 694, nos. 7-8, s.v. Amphiaraos (I. Krauskopf).

<sup>7</sup> Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, no inv. (found in the rectangular cistern at the north part of the plateau): MORETTI SGUBINI 2001, 34, no. I.E.12, pl. I; VAN KAMPEN 2003, 117. 19, nos. 177-80, pl. XVIb, dated no later than mid-6<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.; BARTOLONI *ET ALII* 2006, 70. 2, figs. 6.23\* and 6.24; WINTER 2009, 260. 262, 4.D.3.d, Ill. 4.7.4.

<sup>8</sup> STOPPONI 1985, 125. 27, nos. 3.425-36, with earlier bibliography; WINTER 2009, 185. 186, 3.D.5.b, fig. 3.17, Ill. 3.7.2..

<sup>9</sup> CVA Russia 7, fasc. 7: Pushkin State Museum, 33-4, pls. 26-8.

<sup>10</sup> WINTER 1993, 258, 261, pl. 107, with earlier bibliography.

<sup>11</sup> WINTER 1993, 237. 38, with earlier bibliography.

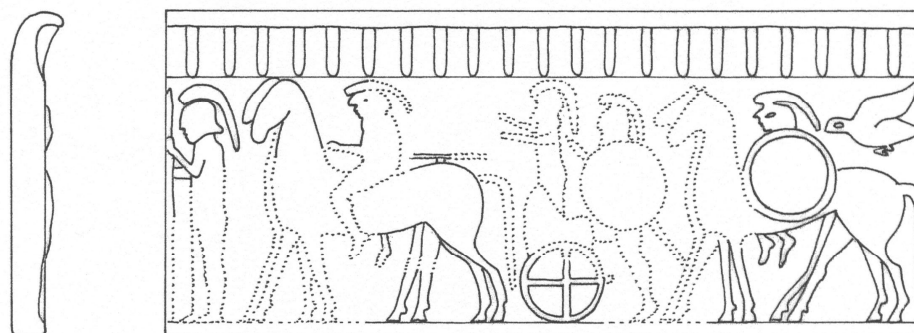


Fig. 3 . Reconstruction of revetment plaque with departing warrior scene from Piazza d'Armi at Veii (drawing by Renate Sponer Za).

to be an indication of speed<sup>12</sup>, as are the dog and hare below the horses . odd features when combined with a warrior in the act of mounting his stationary chariot.

Dating of the Veii plaque ca. 580-575 B.C. is supported by fragments of another plaque from the same context which shares the same size, fabric and morphology but carries instead a procession of felines moving to right<sup>13</sup>. Preserved fragments suggest that there were two felines flanking a third creature with winged feline body, perhaps a griffin or a sphinx, both creatures common on the animal friezes of Corinthian and Etrusco-Corinthian pottery. The morphology as well as the use of a feline frieze, however, may have been intentionally recalling the revetment plaques of the roof on the third-phase building below the later Regia in the Roman Forum<sup>14</sup>, constructed after the destruction of the second-phase building ca. 600 B.C. The later date of the Veii revetment plaque in relation to the Rome plaque is suggested by the narrower convex strigils on the crowning moulding and lack of a band below the strigils, an intermediary stage between the short, broad strigils of the Rome plaque and the tall, narrow strigils dating ca. 570 B.C. and later in Tuscania<sup>15</sup> and elsewhere. In addition, the S-curve of the tail of the feline on the Veii plaque differs from the felines of the third-phase building below the Regia but is found instead on revetment plaques belonging to the first-phase temple of Mater Matuta at S. Omobono in Rome dated 580 B.C.<sup>16</sup>.

Thus, the architectural terracottas of Veii of the first quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C. show an evident cognizance of Greek armor and military equipment. The morphology for the plaques suggests that some features of Greek iconography may have come together with the form of revetment plaque via Rome, its nearest neighbor to the south. By the same token, the predominance of military scenes may be a conscious choice also due to the proximity of Rome and the constant vying for power between these two important centers, a desire to display on the roofs of important buildings its military strength to visitors and inhabitants alike, by recalling the military prowess of the Greeks.

<sup>12</sup> VAN KAMPEN (2003, 119), however, refers to the bird on East Greek architectural terracottas as representing a hunt motif but prefers to see its presence on the Etruscan scenes as elevating the warrior mounting the chariot to the position of *rex quia augur*. Whatever the interpretation, the notable feature is the depiction of a bird in flight together with a stationary chariot.

<sup>13</sup> Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, no inv.: MORETTI SGUBINI 2001, 33. 4, no. I.E.10; VAN KAMPEN 2003, 116. 17, nos. 174-76, pl. XVIa; BARTOLONI ET ALII 2006, 69. 70, fig. 6.22. Inv. 137309: MORETTI SGUBINI 2004, 52, no. I.b.6; BARTOLONI ET ALII 2006, 68, fig. 6.21b; WINTER 2009, 259. 260, 4.D.3.b, Ill. 4.7.2..

<sup>14</sup> Rome, Antiquarium forense, inv. 1918: CRISTOFANI 1990, 61, no. 3.2.13, pl. III, with earlier bibliography; LIMC VI, 1992, 577. 78, no. D. 49, s.v. *Minotauros* (S. Woodford); DOWNEY 1995, 9. 15, 19. 32, fig. 4; WINTER 2006, 352, fig. 2b; WINTER 2009, 178-180, 3.D.2.a, fig. 3.13, Ill. 3.5.1.

<sup>15</sup> SGUBINI MORETTI, RICCIARDI 1993, 169. 75 (scena di partenza I and II), figs. 34-41; WINTER 2009, 262. 265, 4.D.4.a, Ill. 4.8.1 (scene to right) and 267. 269, 4.D.4.c, figs. 4.16, 4.17, Ill. 4.8.3 (scene to left).

<sup>16</sup> Rome, Antiquarium Comunale, inv. 15813: CRISTOFANI 1990, 128, no. 5.1.36, with earlier bibliography; MURA SOMMELLA 2000, 19. 20, figs. 12 and 14; WINTER 2009, 189. 190, 3.D.6.a, fig. 3.20.



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