

NUOVA LUCE SUL GUBBIO PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

THIS article¹ updates the state of knowledge of a broad geographical area covered by a project originally undertaken between 1983 and 1987, and published in 1994.² Much of the update is known to the audience of the Institute so the occasion will be taken principally to present some new evidence from the nearby frontier of Perugia that has remained unpublished and thus generally unknown outside the United Kingdom. This material is preserved in two museums: the Fitzwilliam Museum of Cambridge and the Pitt Rivers Museum of Oxford. The first material is on display, whereas the second set of material is currently held in store.

The Gubbio project undertook multi-period field survey of the Gubbio valley, environmental reconstruction and excavation of five locations ranging in date from the Neolithic to the Roman period, concentrating on Bronze Age, but including an archaic sanctuary. This latter sanctuary produced a small sample of some 65 figurines which have been published with detailed drawings, something rarely achieved for most of these objects.³ Samples of the finds from these excavations are now on display, the Neolithic finds of national importance in Perugia Museum and the Bronze Age and Archaic finds of regional significance in the Gubbio museum. The archive of this project has now been consigned to the Superintendency of Perugia and to the Comune of Gubbio so that further work can be developed in collaboration with a fresh range of expertise and this collaboration is very much welcomed by the original team, and some work has already been undertaken under the direction of Maria Cristina De Angelis.

The publication of the 1994 volume has also sparked a series of fresh researches into the Gubbio valley. One line of work appears to have employed the survey data against altitudinal, and some fresh geological, data, although seemingly not employing the geomorphological data collected by the project. The result is a strongly ecological interpretation which gives little room for the social and political forces which must have played a substantial part in human geography of the region.⁴ A more prominent line of work has been philological and textual in its inspiration. The publication of the Gubbio project fieldwork⁵ emphasised the lack of material evidence for some of the textual reconstructions from the Iguvine Tables. A series of substantial volumes have taken the opposite approach, by looking at the evidence from the Gubbio project (and subsequent finds, see below) to give material substance to the same and more elaborate textually inspired reconstructions of Gubbio and the Umbrians.⁶ Paradoxically the impact of the core element of the volume, the study of the Bronze Age, has been less evident,⁷ probably given that Gubbio is geographically distant from the main protagonists of the Bronze Age in Lazio and Tuscany, albeit relatively close to the Marche where there is another well researched concentration of Bronze Age activity. However, the new work undertaken by Maria Cristina De Angelis will undoubtedly change this situation.

Many new data have been added to our understanding of Gubbio and its landscape since the publication of the 1994 volume. The first major development was the publication of the cata-

¹ This article is dedicated to the memory of Roberto Abbondanza who contributed so much to the Gubbio project.

² Malone, Stoddart (editors) 1994.

³ STODDART, WHITLEY 1988, 1994.

⁴ BERTACCHINI 2008.

⁵ Malone, Stoddart (editors) 1994.

⁶ ANCILLOTTI, CERRI 1996; SISANI 2001, 2009.

⁷ BIETTI SESTIERI *et alii* 2001; Silvestrini, Sabbatini (editors) 2009.

logue of the local museum;¹ even though some of these finds now prove not to be of an Iguvine provenance because of the more recent discovery of an inventory, the effect has been to infill some of the vacuum between the Bronze Age and the Roman period, through probable grave goods. This infilling has been given more substance by the rescue excavations by the Superintendency, particularly in very recent times. The most notable of these discoveries is the nucleation of population onto the right bank of the Camignano by the 8th century BC that continued until the fifth century BC, with an associated cemetery of Picene style circular graves at S. Biagio in the eighth century that developed into a more extensive cemetery over the same period. The only challenge to this neat model² is that there may have been a contemporary settlement near S. Agostino on the left bank of the Cavanello at the foot of Monte Ansciano, as already reported in the 1994 volume and excavated by Maria Cristina De Angelis of the Superintendency. Most importantly there has been no challenge to an essential discovery of the Gubbio project, that population was restricted to the nucleated centre between the 9th and 4th centuries BC, and thus rural settlements were almost non-existent until the 4th century BC, with one possible exception at Torre Calzolari.

A further discussion of note is the status of the final Bronze Age in Gubbio. In many of the accounts by specialists in later periods, continuity of ritual on the mountain tops has been the *leitmotif*, a prediction of the textual interpretations from the Iguvine Tables. In fact, the evidence points not towards continuity but towards discontinuity, if time and socio-political context are considered important dimensions. During the final Bronze Age, the mountain peaks (Monte Ingino and Monte Ansciano) were foci of ritual embedded in domestic activity. This is seen most clearly on Monte Ansciano where the feasting deposits were encircled by a drystone structure and flanked by an oval posthole structure. Furthermore surface survey (and geophysical survey) of the much more extensive hilltop of Monte Ansciano was highly indicative of a substantial village next to the apex of the hill. This also seems to have been the case, in a more restricted space, on Monte Ingino. In addition, the mountain occupation was part of a system that must be considered together with the domestic occupation on the flanks of both Monte Ingino and Monte Ansciano, now associated with the recently discovered cemetery of via dei Consoli. Although these focal points were re-occupied by sanctuaries in the sixth century BC, after a substantial lapse of time, these sanctuaries were no longer embedded in domestic space, but profoundly separated from the concentration of population on alluvial slopes below Monte Ansciano and Monte Ingino. *Ergo*, the context of ritual is discontinuous.

[S. S.]

THE FRONTIER OF PERUGIA

One of the most profitable contexts of excavation for archaeologists is in the museums of Europe where detective work can reconstruct the working context of old collections by combining old records and new fieldwork such as that of the Gubbio project and other more recent work on similar sites. Recent work on the redisplay of the Italic collections of the Fitzwilliam Museum (disguised under the title Greek and Roman) and a re-evaluation of the Pitt Rivers archaeological collections have brought to light schematic bronze figurines that fall within the class of bronze figurines originally analysed by Colonna.³ The Cambridge and Oxford schematic bronze figurines appear to be, so far, unpublished, and thus can contribute towards the successive re-assessments of the spatial distribution of these distinctive objects,⁴ which for various reasons – topographic, inscriptional and ritual – appear to have been discovered on a political boundary.

¹ Matteini Chiari (editor) 1995.

² Manconi this volume.

³ COLONNA 1970.

⁴ COLONNA 1976-1977, 2009; MAGGIANI 2002.

A first element of the reconstruction of the more accurate provenance of these figurines is their date of discovery, which can be estimated by their date of acquisition. Both sets of figurines have a date of acquisition which can be associated with the Monte Tezio excavations of the early twentieth century in the immediate region of Perugia.¹ Comparable finds from Monte Tezio preserved in Florence museum appear to have been acquired in September 1900. Other prominent Perugia collections appear to have been discovered at a substantially earlier or later date. The deposits of figurines would originally have contained hundreds if not thousands of examples, and these dispersed examples contribute a further small step towards establishing the full range of the collection found in this location.

The Cambridge material (PL. I)² was presented to Fitzwilliam Museum in 1904. The donor was Robert Carr Bosanquet (1871-1935)³ a scholar of Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, as well as a distinguished javelin and hammer thrower, classicist and archaeologist. Between 1900 and 1905 he was director of the British School at Athens, when his father died and he had to return to the north of England to look after the family agricultural estates and subsequently take up the chair of archaeology at the University of Liverpool (1906). The figurines must have been purchased on his travels between his family in Northumberland and Athens, a journey which could have taken him through central Italy.

The Oxford material (PL. II)⁴ was loaned to the Pitt Rivers Museum in 1985, but had been originally purchased in 1919 in Italy by Dr Walter Leo Hildburgh and passed to the Wellcome Collection in London on his death in 1955. Unfortunately Hildburgh's diaries are only extant up to 1915 and so we do not know the precise circumstances of the purchase other than the date and general provenance. The transfer to the Pitt Rivers Museum was part of a drawn out process managed by his trustees in the period after the death of Sir Henry Wellcome (1853-1936) in an attempt to reduce the burden of about a million objects and place them in more appropriate non medical collections (Rhodes James 2004). Dr Hildburgh (1876-1955), the original collector, was born in America and a graduate of Columbia, an electrical engineer by profession, a considerable collector of works of art and a major donor to the Victoria and Albert Museum, who also collected in support of his interests in folklore and anthropology. From 1912, he was based in London, and as a wealthy man, was able to devote his time to his non professional interests, achieving a respect from his contemporaries that led to his election to the Society of Antiquaries of London. One of his interests was in magic and this led to the inclusion of some 3,000 amulets which sometimes incorporated prehistoric flint, for their supposed magical properties. In pursuit of his collection of amulets he may have acquired some of the Giuseppe Bellucci collection, mainly held in Perugia museum. A further part of his 'amulet' collection included schematic figurines of the sixth-fifth century BC which were also derived from the Perugia area. This 'amulet' linkage seems to have led to some hybridity of the collections some of which have, at the very least, been transformed to turn some of the objects into pendants.

The profile of the schematic figurine types (PLS. I and II) in Cambridge and Oxford broadly conform to examples of known provenance from Monte Tezio in Florence museum, although some of the range of types are shared with the neighbouring site of Pasticcetto di Magione.⁵ The forms include a combination of male and female Esquiline,⁶ Mars Nocera Umbra⁷ and female Vöcklabruck⁸ examples. Some of the individual types are less easy to parallel except in details of the crested headdress seen at Bettona.⁹ In the Oxford examples, there appears to have been some subsequent treatment of the objects to comply with the amulet origin of the collection

¹ COLONNA 2007; MAGGIANI 2002, p. 276, note 54.

³ BOSANQUET, GILL 2004.

⁵ BRUSCHETTI 1989.

⁷ COLONNA 1970, p. 100.

⁹ SCARPIGNATO 1989, p. 129, 4-58.

² The inventory numbers are: GR.32.1904; GR.33a-e.1904.

⁴ The inventory numbers are: 1985.50.466-97; and 1985.50.561.

⁶ COLONNA 1970, pp. 103-105.

⁸ CAGIANELLI 1999, pp. 241-272; COLONNA 1970, pp. 88-89.

(e.g. 1985.50.496) and this same suspicion applies to an animal figure without any clear parallel (1985.50.501). Four out of the six Cambridge examples have very close parallels with the Monte Tezio examples: GR.32.1904 cf female Vöcklabruck;¹ GR.33C.1904;² GR.33D.1904;³ GR.33E.1904.⁴ A further example (GR.33E.1904) is closely matched with Colonna's Foligno group.⁵

The context of these discoveries can be inferred from comparable discoveries on Monte Acuto⁶ and Monte Ansciano,⁷ and even more recent work on Monte Tezio itself under the direction of Maurizio Matteini Chiari by the University of Perugia.⁸ At a general level, they represent deposits on mountain tops at some altitude, in the case of Monte Tezio at 971 m, seemingly deliberately placed to be intervisible from one another, and delimit the upper parts of the landscape. The phasing generally combines a first phase of final Bronze Age date and a later sanctuary phase of sixth century BC onwards relating precisely to the figurines. These later levels were likely to have taken the form of a drystone platform, accompanied in some cases by a deliberately prepared hollow most elaborately seen on Monte Acuto. In the case of Monte Tezio, the recent excavations appear not yet to have uncovered the ground preparation for the sanctuary which in the case of Monte Ansciano was placed directly above a drystone enclosure of the final Bronze Age.

As kindly pointed out by Professor Colonna at the time of the original delivery of this lecture in Gubbio, the combined evidence of broad provenance of Perugia, date of discovery and typological character of the figurines, points convincingly towards Monte Tezio as their point of origin. This cannot be proved conclusively given the number of high altitude places which have yielded these small objects. Nevertheless, the Cambridge and Oxford objects can now be understood in a new light to which simple display in a museum does not give justice.

[S. S., A. S., L. B.]

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¹ MAGGIANI 2002, p. 293, fig. 10.

³ MAGGIANI 2002, p. 292, fig. 8.

⁵ COLONNA 1970, pp. 96-99.

⁶ Cencioli (editor) 1998.

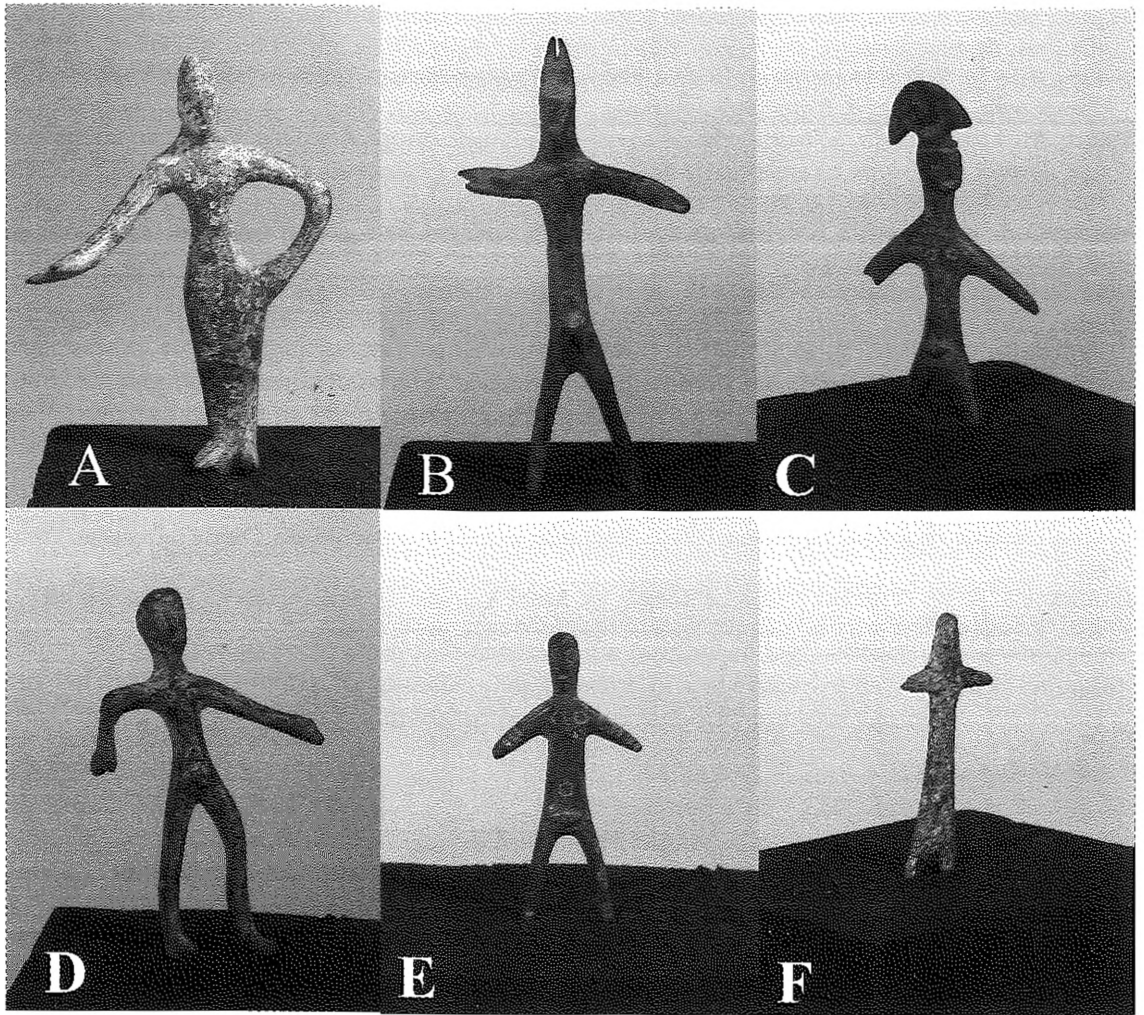
² MAGGIANI 2002, p. 292, fig. 8.

⁴ MAGGIANI 2002, p. 292, fig. 11.

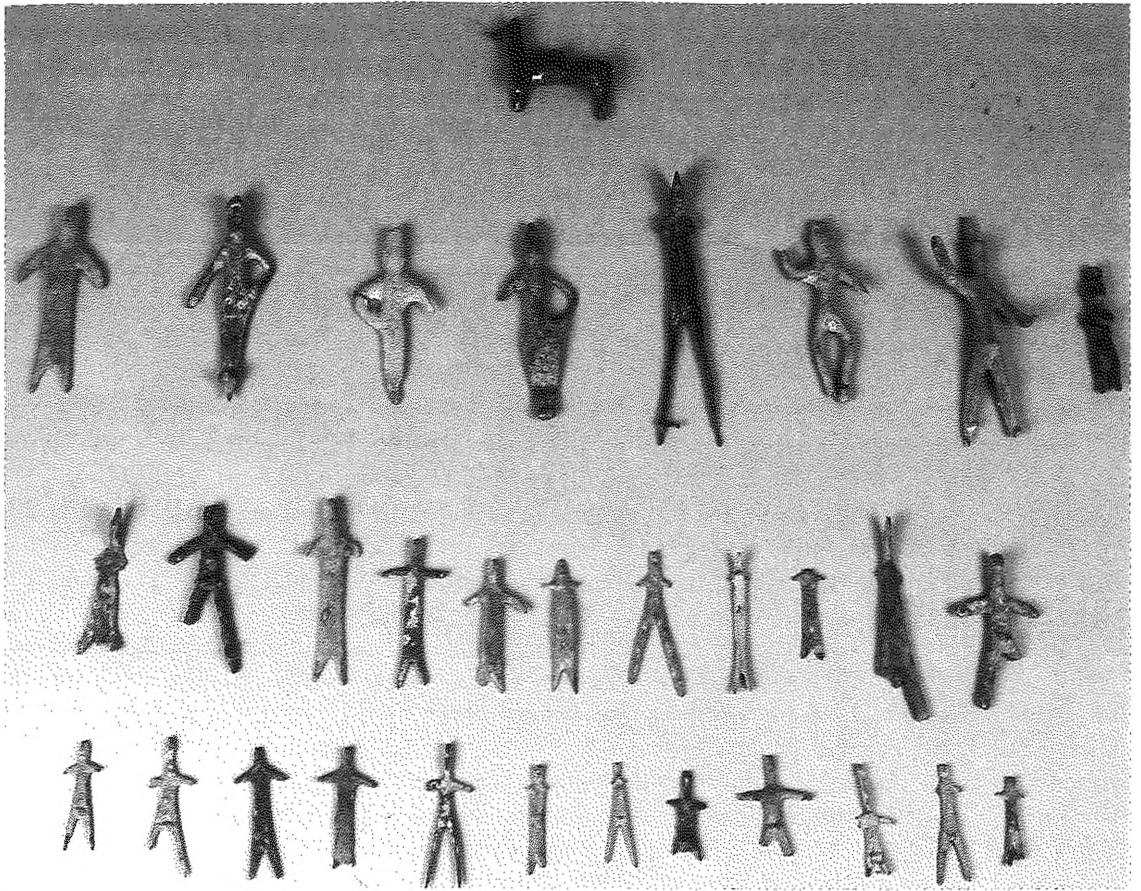
⁷ STODDART, WHITLEY 1994.

⁸ <http://www.unipg.it/dipstor1/tezio.htm>. Although the location of this sanctuary is now considered to be on a lower hill to the east, not on the summit occupied by the Bronze Age enclosure.

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PL. 1. Six figurines from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. A) GR.32.1904 (7.3 cm high \times 4.8 cm wide \times 0.4 cm deep); B) GR.33a.1904 (8 cm \times 3.6 cm \times 0.4 cm); C) GR.33b.1904 (6.2 cm \times 2.9 cm \times 0.5 cm); D) GR.33c.1904 (6.2 cm \times 3.5 cm \times 0.6 cm); E) GR.33d.1904 (4.1 cm \times 1.8 cm \times 0.2 cm); F) GR.33e.1904 (4.1 cm \times 1.7 cm \times 0.2 cm) (Copyright Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



PL. II. Thirty-two figurines from the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. 1985.50.466-97; and 1985.50.501 (Photo taken by Matthew Nicholas and photo remains the copyright of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.).