MOURNING DEATHS AND ENDANGERING LIVES: ETRUSCAN CHARIOT RACING BETWEEN SYMBOL AND REALITY

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This paper examines the iconographic and archaeological evidence for chariot racing in Etruria, its context and audience. We then focus on the representation of the chariot crash — a motif pervasive in Etruscan art on a variety of locally-produced artistic media. The incongruous depiction of the most exciting, dangerous and tragic occurrence in the race alongside scenes of banqueting and dancing complicates our understanding of Etruscan tomb painting and of funeral ritual. Images of chariot crashes reveal an Etruscan appreciation for Greek epic, while also reflecting real details of the burial rite and the nature of élite competition.

In questo articolo si esamina l'evidenza iconografica e archeologica delle corse di carri in Etruria, il suo contesto e il suo pubblico. Ci si concentra poi sulla rappresentazione dell'incidente durante la gara — un motivo ampiamente diffuso su di una vasta gamma di prodotti artistici di ambito etrusco. La contraddittoria rappresentazione della più emozionante, pericolosa e tragica circostanza nella gara, affiancata a scene di banchetto e di danza, rende difficile la nostra comprensione della pittura tombale etrusca e del rituale funerario. Le raffigurazioni di incidenti durante le corse di carri rivelano un apprezzamento per l'epica greca, riflettendo allo stesso tempo dettagli reali del rito funerario e la natura della competizione nell'ambito dell'élite.

In the British Museum's gem collection, two Etruscan specimens bear the depiction of a chariot 'in great confusion': contorted horses overturned, legs flailing, a broken chariot with its wheels seeming to spin (Figs 1 and 2). Both carnelian gems date to the second half of the fifth century BC (Richter, 1968: 208, no. 850).[1] One features a four-horse chariot, or *quadriga*; the other has a three-horse chariot, a *triga*. These gems clearly depict a scene of a chariot crash.[2] Ancient gems functioned as seals and decorative ornaments, and therefore the choice of such an engraved image suggests something about the values and desires of its owner. The illustration calls to mind the dramatic chariot crashes represented in Roman art, like the well-known circus mosaic in Piazza Armerina from the fourth century AD, or the Silin mosaic in

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[1] All dates are BC unless otherwise indicated.

[2] In several gem catalogues published in the early twentieth century, the engraved scene on both gems is labelled alternatively as either a generic chariot crash or as the figure Phaethon punished by Zeus, falling from his chariot. This mythological attribution, however, is not founded upon any similarities with other Greek or Etruscan Phaethon scenes, since on these gems there are no other indications of mythological figures or symbols. For a much more persuasive example of a Phaethon gem, see: Furtwängler, 1900: pl. 58, no. 2. It dates from about the mid-fourth century. Judith Swaddling most recently labelled the scene on our gems as a generic chariot crash (Swaddling, 1999: 84).

Fig. 1. *Quadriga* on a carnelian gem (British Museum no. 679). *(Reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)*

Fig. 2. *Triga* on a carnelian gem (British Museum no. 678). *(Reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)*

Lepcis Magna in the third century AD. These Roman examples compared with images from 800 years earlier suggest that there were Etruscan sporting precedents for a Roman racing tradition that would become the crucial element of political manoeuvring in the Republic and the source of widespread mania during the Empire (Cameron, 1976; Veyne, 1990).

Richard Bronson's 1965 analysis of Etruscan chariot racing compiled the first corpus of images and helped to establish the prevailing line of argument for the Etruscan sporting tradition: the Etruscans adopted Greek sports, adapted them to suit their tastes, and subsequently these practices contributed to Roman

traditions. It follows that the depiction of a chariot crash, as on our gems, is found in numerous examples in both Etruscan and Roman art. The most recent scholarship on ancient sporting practices contends that the 'Etruscanization' of Greek athletic practices, including chariot racing, meant a new focus on spectacle. In Etruria, we are told that the entertainment of the spectator, rather than the enjoyment of the competitor seeking personal fulfillment or excellence (*arētē*) as in Greece, became paramount. This then inspired the later Roman focus on the spectacular (Harris, 1972: 185; Thuillier, 1985: 612; Decker and Thuillier, 2004: 158; Kyle, 2007: 526).[3] The paradigm of viewing Etruscans as a cultural bridge between Greece and Rome is common enough; yet it is clear that Etruscans ascribed a distinct meaning to chariot racing. The importance of the chariot vehicle as a symbol of status in a processional context has been long acknowledged by scholars of ancient Etruria as a correlate to chariots in ancient Greece and the Near East (Colonna, 1997; Emiliozzi, 1997; Haynes, 2000: 102; Pérez, 2010); however, chariot racing itself should be understood both as a window into the funerary culture of the Etruscan élite and as a reflection of an attachment to the traditions of the heroic age — that is, the world narrated by the Homeric bard. The following paper examines the evidence for Etruscan chariot racing as a real practice, and considers the social and ritual implications of the sport.[4]

EVIDENCE AND ORIGINS

The use of textual evidence to examine the contribution of Etruscan chariot racing to the later Roman tradition has landed scholars in a quagmire of contradictory ancient narratives.[5] One text that is cited rarely is Herodotus's statement on the origin of one Etruscan city's racing tradition. Following the Battle of Alalia against the Phocaeans in about 540/535, the Etruscans of Caere took their

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[3]   Nigel Crowther (1994) emphasized the dangerous and spectacular aspects of Greek equestrian events of many types (including chariot racing), noting the many textual references to accidents and risk at Olympia and other venues. Thus, equestrian contests in the Greek world certainly had a spectacular aspect, which their contemporary audience noticed.

[4]   Joost Crouwel's examination of the structure and design of wheeled vehicles in pre-Roman Italy touches briefly on the logistical concerns regarding the staging of chariot racing in Etruria. His discussion of the topic is understandably summary, and he does not address the social or cultural meanings of the practice (Crouwel, 2012: 66–7).

[5]   Jean-Paul Thuillier (1982) defined the difference between Livy's (39.22.2) dating of the first *ludi circenses* and the much earlier conflicting date and descriptions of Dionysios of Halicarnassos (*Antiquitates Romanae* 7.70–3), Cicero (*De Legibus* 2.38) and Livy (39.22) himself; Crowther (1983) grappled with the contradiction between Dionysios's account of the founding of the Roman games and Livy's description; Dominique Briquel (1993) explained Tacitus's attribution of equestrian games in Rome to the Greeks at Thourioi (*Annales* 14.21.1) in the light of Livy's Etruscan account; Clemence Schultze (2004) addressed Dionysios of Halicarnassos's account of the Greek inspiration for Roman sports and explained Dionysios's motivations.

Phocaean prisoners of war back to Caere and stoned them to death. Then, they sent envoys to Delphi to seek penance for their violence: 'the Pythian priestess told them to do what the people of Agylla [the city of Caere] do to this day: for they pay great honours to the Phocaeans, with religious rites and games and horse-races [καὶ ἀγῶνα γυμνικὸν καὶ ἱππικὸν]' (Herodotus 1.167.2).[6] While not explicitly naming chariot racing, Herodotus's brief account associates games and racing in Etruria with death and memorialization. This is a context that we shall see repeated in the material evidence for the racing tradition.

The following discussion relies primarily on two-dimensional depictions of chariots and races to understand details such as the nature of the race and the composition and structure of the chariot. It is essential to consider, therefore, the degree of care with which each scene was executed, distinguishing between 'messy' and 'careful' depictions in order to determine an image's reliability (Crouwel, 1992: 33). I also consider the genres of the chariot scenes being presented. Chariots appear in a number of contexts: divine, processional, military and racing. Before labelling a two-dimensional scene definitively as a race, the following criteria should be present: there should be an impression of speed, often with symbols of speed (such as a dog or rabbit running underfoot);[7] the charioteers lean forward driving on the horses; they wear wind-blown clothing; the horses appear to be galloping rather than stationary; and there are multiple competitors often overlapping. Some basic characteristics of Etruscan chariot racing scenes also include charioteers wearing short tunics not long ones as in Greek depictions, and often a small skullcap or helmet. They also carry a short goad or whip, not a long one as in Greece, and the Etruscan racing chariot typically used two or three horses, a *biga* or a *triga*. The *triga* is found quite commonly in Etruscan and later Roman representations, while it is very rare in Greek depictions (Bronson, 1965: 97–102; Thuillier, 1985: 498; Thuillier, 1997a: 259, 260).

In order to examine the use of the chariot for racing in Etruria, it is necessary first to touch upon the chariot's military function. Hoplite armour and warfare may have played a role in the operation of vehicles in battle. In Greece, hoplite armour developed from the middle of the eighth century, and the employment of the phalanx as a strict warfare tactic followed gradually after this (Snodgrass, 1965; Snodgrass, 1967; Schwartz, 2009: 12–13; *pace* Echeverría, 2012). It is uncertain whether chariots were employed simply as a means of transport into battle, or whether in certain periods they were manoeuvred during the fighting and used as platforms from which to launch weapons.[8] In either case, we might envisage a Greek aristocrat raging on to the battlefield on

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[6]   All texts are taken from the Loeb editions. All translations are my own.

[7]   This motif is 'the improbable combination of hare-hunt and chariot race' (Brown, 1974: 61). It is found also in East Greek depictions (Bronson, 1965: 96) and Caeretan hydriae (Hemelrijk, 1984: pl. 41, no. 6 and pl. 109, no. 31).

[8]   John Anderson (1975) maintained that there was no set usage of chariots in warfare. Mary Littauer and Crouwel (1983) argued that fighting from chariots would have been 'absurd'. Peter

his elaborately-decorated chariot and conveying among his own troops and those of his enemies a sense of grandeur and ferocity. The adoption of hoplite tactics in Greece may have caused chariots to fall out of use in warfare. The decline of the war chariot occurred, perhaps not coincidently, in the same period as the intensification of evidence of chariot games in Greece (Crouwel, 1992: 58–61; 2012: 54–5). At Olympia, for example, the earliest attested equestrian chariot race, the *tethrippon*, was in 680 (Golden, 1997: 338).

There could have been a similar sequence of events in Etruria. The hoplite panoply appeared in tombs in Etruria in the middle of the seventh century (Snodgrass, 1967: 75; Stary, 1979: 180). One singular literary reference to its use in Etruria is Diodorus Siculus's account of a battle sometime between the sixth and the fourth centuries that describes the Etruscans fighting the Romans with 'bronze shields and in phalanx formation' (Diodorus Siculus 23.2; Snodgrass, 1965: 118). Images from Etruscan art, the growing threat of the Greeks in Italy, and the sheer clumsiness of the hoplite panoply suggest the phalanx must have been adopted quickly as a tactic. It remains unclear, however, whether hoplite warfare in Etruria was an exact replica of the Greek system and whether it meant an end to the leader in his chariot (Stary, 1979: 193; Haynes, 2000: 137). Nevertheless. we can comment on the importance of the chariot as a tool of visual display. In battle, the speed and decoration of the chariot would have aided in the creation of a magnificent image for the leader. Thus, its use in chariot racing had visual connections with its war usage — whether this was an association with contemporary warfare practices, or an evocation of past military traditions. Rebecca Sinos (1994: 107) drew comparisons between warriors on chariots on black-figure vases and the 'splendid warriors of the mythic past'. Through their association with the chariot, generic warriors are likened to the gods and heroes depicted similarly in other images.

The chariot's association with a 'mythic past' transmits from the battlefield on to the racetrack, and reflects on the aristocracy who employed chariot games at their funeral. The chariot's possible displacement from the battlefield in the sixth century would be contemporary with our most prolific artistic representations of chariot racing in Etruria. Perhaps this artistic flowering has a correlation with the sporting practice's growth in popularity.

DESIGN AND FUNCTION

The association between chariot vehicles in different contexts becomes clear in a comparison of the physical remains of chariots and their depiction in two dimensions. Fragmentary remains of several hundred wheeled vehicles have been discovered inside Etruscan and other Italic tombs from the late eighth to the

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Greenhalgh (1973) and Jean Turfa and Alwin Steinmayer (1993) believed in the use of chariots during the battle at least in the Bronze Age, if not later.

Fig. 3. Chariot from Monteleone di Spoleto. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1903 (03.23.1). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: Art Resource, NY.

mid-sixth centuries in Populonia, Vulci, Cerveteri, Monteleone di Spoleto, Ischia di Castro and Capua (Woytowitsch, 1978: 30–48). The chariot found at Monteleone di Spoleto, for example, has curved walls constructed from wood faced in intricately-moulded bronze laminate (Fig. 3). The parapet is made up of three separate parts: one curved front and smaller curved side pieces. The central panel of the parapet is about 78 cm in height. This is high enough to reach from about the mid-thigh to the waist of a charioteer. The scenes depicted in bronze relief around the parapet are that of the cycle of Achilles: the gift of divine armour from his mother, his battle with Memnon over the body of Antilochos, and Achilles's apotheosis. It has been dated, based on the discovery of black-figure cups in the same grave, to the middle or late sixth century (Bonamici and Emiliozzi, 1997; Emiliozzi, 2011: 9–11). This specimen and many similar fragmentary chariots have been labelled as 'parade' chariots (Emiliozzi, 1997: 193, 206; Woytowitsch, 1978: 31–4).[9] They are all *bigae*, and all seem to be light and fast; yet their elaborate metal decoration

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[9]   Chariots have been found in the graves of both men and women: the Monteleone chariot was buried between a man and a woman. The deceased here were sexed on the basis of the grave-goods

and provenance in a tomb suggests that they played a part in aristocratic display at the funeral. By the sixth century, there seems to have been a new 'triumphal valence' in chariot usage. They were used either to emulate the apotheosis of the deceased, or simply as a way to heroize the deceased by associating him or her with luxury, victory or pomp (Borghini, 1984: 76–7; Bartoloni, 1993; Colonna, 1997: 17; Marcatilli, 2009: 150–5).

While these chariots' association with funerary processions is possible, their rigid attribution to solemn parades or processions is not based on any specific evidence. Several scholars have studied depictions and the remains of chariots, and have attempted to make a distinction between the structure of processional and racing chariots both in Greece and Etruria; however, the material evidence compared suggests that there was no consistent difference in style or design between the two types.[10] This seems to be the case in particular in examples of processional and racing chariots from the sixth century. Into the fifth century, two-dimensional depictions of racing chariots in Etruria become slightly less homogeneous. To begin with Greek images as a model for the Etruscan comparison, the most glaring example of consistency in the structure of chariots for both processing and racing is on the François Vase in the Museo Archeologico in Florence. Found in an Etruscan tomb outside the city of Chiusi, this large black-figure volute krater depicts a series of mythological scenes in six detailed figurative registers.[11] The chariot ridden by a god in the procession towards Peleus and Thetis is to be classified as a high-front chariot with side rails (Fig. 4). Its railings are three separate loops with the highest one in the front separating the charioteer from the team of horses. This was the standard type on mainland Greece from the seventh century onwards, and appears primarily in painted depictions (Crouwel, 1992: 31–3). On the same vase, one register above, the race of *bigae* at the funeral of Patroclus is depicted (Fig. 5). Each charioteer is named by an inscription, and each rides a high-front chariot identical to the processing vehicles below. Similarly, the stationary *quadrigae* poised for a procession on another Attic black-figure cup from Florence from *c.* 520 are identical to the racing *quadrigae* depicted on an amphora from the late sixth century (Figs 6 and 7). These examples suggest that the structure of processional and racing chariots did not differ significantly in the sixth century in Greece. This conclusion relies, of course, on an assumption that the artists' depiction of the chariots is relatively realistic, rather than stemming from a set chariot-drawing convention. We may assume, based on the degree of detail present in other components of these images, however, that a fair amount of

rather than by biological remains, and the records of the discovery of the tomb are quite confused (Emiliozzi, 1997: 15, 180; 2011: 17).

[10] Stuart Piggott (1983: 192–3) defined two types of Etruscan chariot, while Crouwel's study of the structural differences of both Greek and Italian chariots (1992: 29–30; 2012: 8–26) has distinguished five different chariot designs used for multiple purposes rather than for consistent or correlated purposes.

[11] The vessel dates about 570/560 (Small, 2003: 11).

Fig. 4. Procession on the François Vase (Museo Archeologico di Firenze no. 4209).
*(Reproduced courtesy of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana
— Firenze.)*

credit may be given to the artists' intention to portray objects relatively realistically (Boardman, 1991: 100–1). These 'Greek' examples have one common thread: they were all discovered in Etruria.

Fig. 5. Race on the François Vase (Museo Archeologico di Firenze no. 4209).
*(Reproduced courtesy of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana
— Firenze.)*

Fig. 6. Band cup (Museo Archeologico di Firenze no. 3904). *(Reproduced courtesy of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana — Firenze.)*
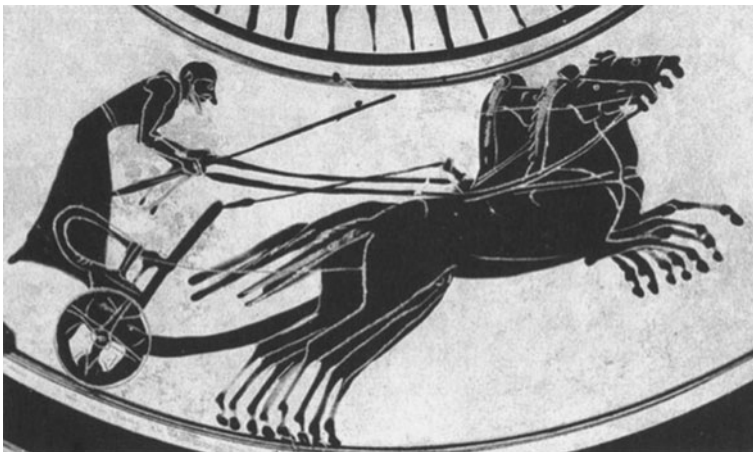

Fig. 7. Racing on the lid of an amphora (San Francisco 243.24874). *(Photo: W.C. Matthews.)*

A comparison between Etruscan-made images of racing chariots and the material evidence of so-called 'parade' chariots from Etruscan tombs reveals a similar homogeneity in the sixth century. We can compare the tri-lobed structure of the bronze grave-good chariots described above to, for example, two similar tri-lobed *bigae* painted in the race scene in the Tomba delle

Olimpiadi in Tarquinia (Fig. 8). The tomb dates from 530–10 (Steingräber, 1986: 329; Moretti, 1966: 120).[12]

Notable parallels are found also in the chariots depicted in several late sixth-century Clusine reliefs. The large fragment from a cippus in Palermo portrays two teams of *trigae* racing towards the right (Fig. 9). The charioteer of the leading team is overlapped by the horses of the team behind him as he turns his head to look back at his opponent. This is a common way of conveying the speed and tension of a race on this medium (Bronson, 1965: 97).[13] The execution of the sculpting, although unembellished, is relatively sophisticated: the horses are neck-yoked and the draught pole in between the two central horses is well-articulated. The structure of the first chariot is visible below the horses of the rear team. It is of the same solid-walled tri-lobed design of the 'parade' grave-good chariots. The wheels even have eight spokes, like the *bigae* in the Tomba delle Olimpiadi and many of our bronze examples.

Another stone cippus fragment in Palermo presents a similar composition (Paribeni, 1938: no. 119). The bottom half of two overlapping teams of *bigae* are preserved, and three chariots, all with a tri-lobed appearance, are visible under the horses' stomachs. The chariots are approximately the same relative size and shape as all the previous examples. Their one variation is that they seem to have low rectangular side walls with curved rails or handles instead of solid curved side walls. In the same way, a different relief fragment in Palermo has a similar tri-lobed design with the rail adaptation (Fig. 10). These examples date to about 510 (Jannot, 1984: 301).

Two sets of architectural terracotta relief plaques also carry images of chariot racing. One set, found in Velletri and dated to the last quarter of the sixth century, bear the images of two *bigae* chasing a *triga* (Fig. 11). The driver of the leading *triga* stands with bent knees in a tri-lobed chariot. The two *bigae* are constructed in an identical solid-walled tri-lobed manner. A similar set of terracottas in Oxford are of unknown provenance but are dated, based on comparison with the Velletri examples, to the middle of the sixth century (Brown, 1974: 65). One panel displays a *biga* chasing a *triga* (Fig. 12). Both the charioteers stand in tri-lobed vehicles identical to those described above. Like the Velletri plaques, the details of the scene are carefully but simply conveyed. Perhaps more intricate features of the figures would have been picked out in paint.[14]

These same revetment terracottas from Oxford also provide us with an excellent example of a sixth-century depiction of chariots in procession. One plaque contains a figurative register of a *biga* and a *triga* processing to the right

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[12]   Mario Torelli (1999: 150) dated it 520–500.
[13]   See additionally the architectural terracotta in Oxford (Brown, 1974: 61) and on the Clusine relief below (Thuillier, 1997b).
[14]   There are traces of paint on another plaque from the Oxford set (Brown, 1974: 65). The use of paint on Etruscan architectural terracottas elsewhere is well-documented (see, for example: Andrén, 1940).

Fig. 8. Racing scene from the Tomba delle Olimpiadi. *(From Steingräber, 1986: figs 123–4. Reproduced courtesy of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Etruria Meridionale.)*
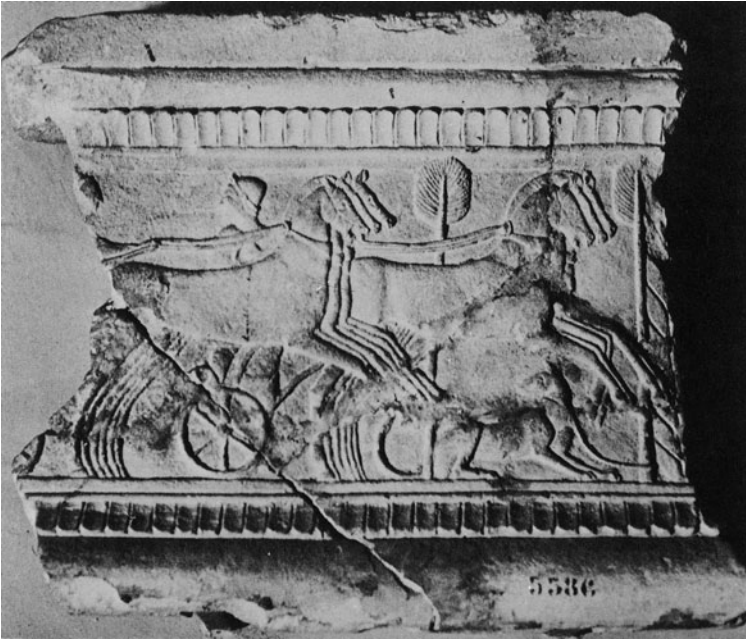
Fig. 9. Clusine cippus in the Museo Archeologico Regionale 'Antonio Salinas' in Palermo (no. 8392). *(From Jannot, 1984: C, II, 22.) (Reproduced courtesy of the École Française de Rome.)*
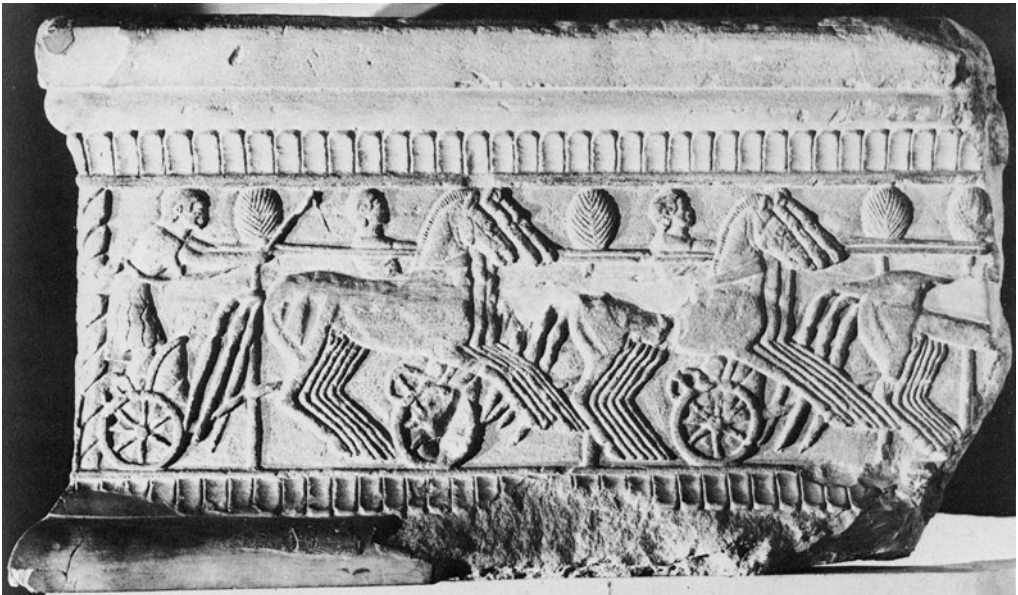
Fig. 10. Clusine cippus in the Museo Archeologico Regionale 'Antonio Salinas' in Palermo (no. 8385). *(From Jannot, 1984: C, I, 8. Reproduced courtesy of the École Française de Rome.)*

Fig. 11. Architectural terracotta from Velletri. *(From Andrén, 1940: i.33.444. Reproduced courtesy of the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompeii.)*

(Fig. 13). The leading *triga*'s horses are winged. This chariot is of the earlier-described Greek high-front railed design. The following *biga* has two wingless horses and the charioteer wears a helmet, cuirass and greaves, and carries a whip. His chariot is of a solid-walled tri-lobed design. The obvious and intentional variation in the structure of processional chariots within the same relief suggests that there was not a strict form for 'parade' chariots in the sixth century. There are undeniable similarities between grave-good chariots labelled
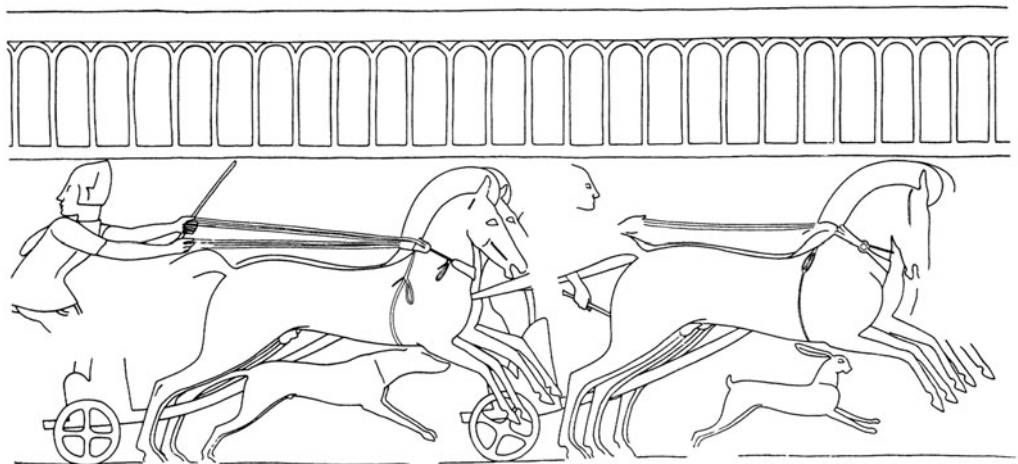

Fig. 12. Racing on an architectural terracotta now in Oxford. *(From Brown, 1974: fig. 2. Reproduced courtesy of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies.)*
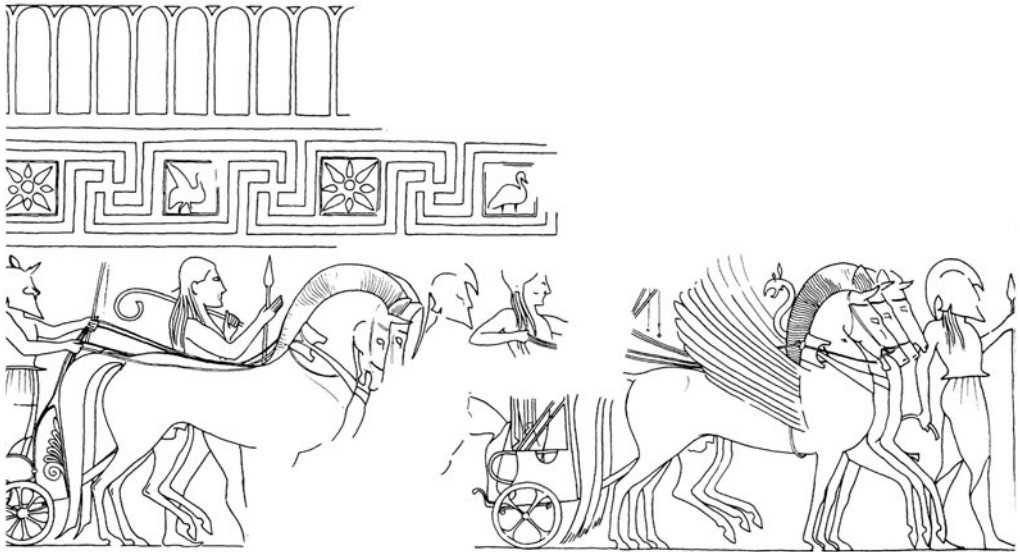
Fig. 13. Procession on an architectural terracotta in Oxford. *(From Brown, 1974: fig. 3. Reproduced courtesy of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies.)*

as being for parades and contemporaneous images of racing chariots. Thus, the identification of chariot function based solely on design is unsupported.

Moving into the fifth century, racing chariots tend to be depicted less uniformly. The shape of the four *bigae* depicted in the Tomba delle Bighe, from Tarquinia of about 490, have the same curved front panel reaching the knees of the charioteer as in the sixth-century examples; however, instead of being solid material, the parapet appears to be loosely-woven leather or wood mesh (Fig. 14) (Steingräber, 1986: 289, no. 82; Torelli, 1999: 156). The three *bigae* painted in the Tomba del Colle Casuccini in Chiusi are much wider than previous examples (Fig. 15). The low wall of each vehicle seems to be one single panel surrounding the front and sides, and there is a curved rail along the chariot's front. In addition, the wheels are set farther back on the chariot floor than any of the sixth-century examples. From about 475, we also have the painting of the Tombe di Poggio al Moro in Chiusi (Fig. 16). While the arrangement of the scenes is similar to that of the Tomba del Colle, the depiction of the racing chariots presents a third variation. In this case, the chariot wall is curved as in the tri-lobed design; however, the whole wall seems to wrap around the front and sides of the chariot with one solid piece of material, and there are curved handles sticking up from the back of the wall.

This comparison demonstrates that the assignment of bronze grave-good chariots to solely a processional function is a hasty one. There is nothing negating their possible use in a race. Furthermore, the use of such similar-looking chariots for multiple functions suggests that the chariot, as an object, could have had associations with wealth whether it was seen in an aristocratic procession or whether it was being used in a race at funeral games. This visual, historical and
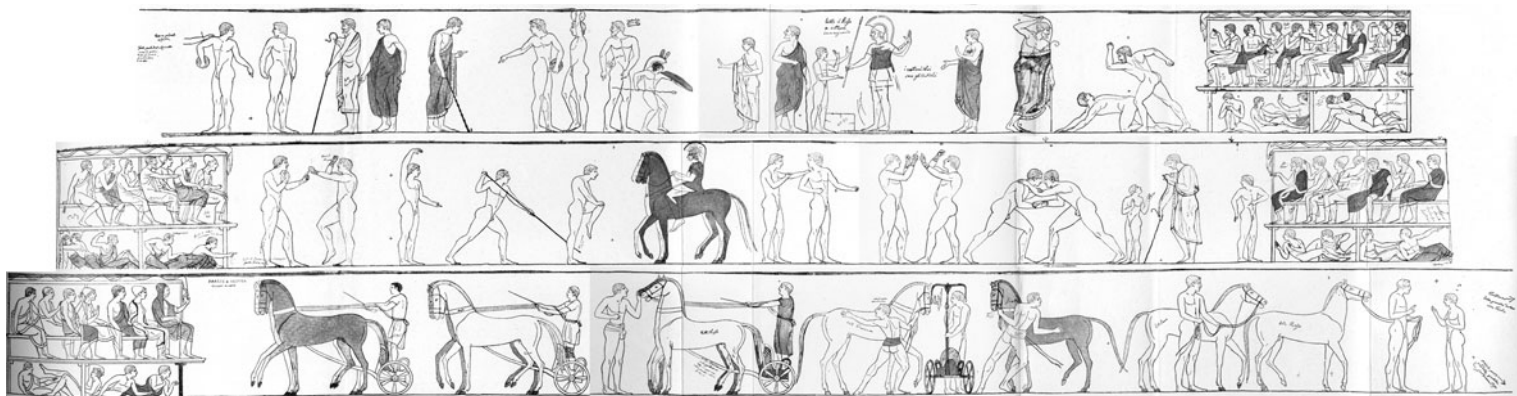
Fig. 14. Reconstruction sketch of the Tomba delle Bighe painting. *(From Weege, 1916: pl. 8.)*

Fig. 15. Tomba del Colle Casuccini — rear wall. *(From Steingräber, 1986: fig. 189. Reproduced courtesy of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana – Firenze.)*

Fig. 16. Tomba del Poggio al Moro. *(From Steingräber, 1986: fig. 192. Reproduced courtesy of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana – Firenze.)*

mythic link between ancient warfare, procession and racing competition all contribute to a confluence of messages conveyed to the audience of a public racing contest in Etruria. The evidence we have for racing in particular now deserves our full attention.

VENUE AND AUDIENCE

Sports help define community and 'provide people with a sense of difference and way of classifying themselves and others' (MacClancy, 1996: 2–3). In ancient Etruria, the large majority of our evidence of chariot racing comes from a funeral context. Our understanding of the function of Etruscan equestrian contests is centred on their role within the funeral rite. Unlike in the Greek world, there is no evidence in Etruria for civically-sponsored or organized equestrian events. The only hint of civic games is the *sollemnia ludorum* at the

fanum Voltumnae, the sanctuary of Voltumna, the Etruscan 'federal sanctuary', a site for political and religious gatherings mentioned by Livy (4.23.5, 4.25.7, 4.61.2, 5.1, 6.2.2). Only one passage (5.1) specifies games, but does not mention explicitly the name of the famous sanctuary. In this instance, the twelve Etruscan cities met to decide whether or not to support the city of Veii in its war against Rome, but because the Veiians appointed a king:

> The Etruscan peoples were offended because of their hatred for monarchy even more than for this particular king himself. He had already before been hateful to the people because of his wealth and pride, because he had violently broken up the sacred rites of the games that were impious to interrupt [s*ollemnia ludorum quos intermitti nefas est uiolenter diremisset*]. (Livy 5.1)

The other passages in Livy that reference the *fanum Voltumnae* also involved a meeting between the twelve Etruscan cities to make political decisions, so to associate this passage with the shrine is not unreasonable.[15]

The location of the *fanum Voltumnae* in Etruria has not been established definitely, but the most probable location is at modern Orvieto.[16] Recent excavations at Campo della Fiera on the plain just below Orvieto have revealed substantial archaeological remains of a sanctuary complex. Its location at the confluence of travel routes makes it an excellent location for meetings between delegates from Etruscan settlements, and it has been used in successive historical periods as a gathering space for fairs and markets. A temple structure with surrounding precinct with phases of construction from the Roman Republican period, several associated altars and inscribed bases, as well as Archaic architectural terracottas have been unearthed (Stopponi, 2011: 17, 25). There is no evidence, however, for a large horse track or associated structures.[17]

In contrast to this lack of definitive structural evidence, lively painted images from tombs and stone cippi are among the most instructive examples of racing available. The Etruscan penchant for a variety of other funeral rites is also interpreted based on these materials; we see lavish banquets, athletic feats such as boxing and wrestling, and dancing. In the fifth-century Tomba del Colle Casuccini near Chiusi, sequential figures of musicians, dancers, wrestlers, chariot racing, banqueters and revellers are painted around the four walls of the main chamber (Steingräber, 1986: 266–8). Processions depicted in relief on late

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[15]   Haynes (2000: 135–7), Thuillier (1997a: 263) and Jannot (1984: 76, C, II, 23) compared the games in this passage to the pan-Hellenic games, without any proof beyond *sollemnia ludorum* in Livy.

[16]   The town of Bolsena has epigraphic evidence to associate it with the town of Velzna, and so potentially the god Voltumna; however, there is currently no evidence for a large extra-urban meeting or sacred space (Timperi, 2010).

[17]   Nor is there evidence for structures associated with the Archaic phase of the Circus Maximus in Rome (Humphrey, 1986: 17). In Greece, the hippodrome at Olympia remains unexcavated. Pausanias credits a fifth-century sculptor with the design of the starting-gates of the track, giving us our only datable clue for the construction of permanent elements here (Pausanias 6.20.10; Harris, 1972: 171).

Etruscan sarcophagi have provided further evidence of the burial ritual. There remains some debate about the interpretation of such wall paintings and reliefs, and whether they do, in fact, depict actual funeral rites or instead are meant to represent something more metaphorical.[18] Perhaps they are a depiction of events in the Underworld or simply illustrate an aristocratic ideal of behaviour. If these images are meant to represent an aristocratic ideal — an aspiration towards a luxurious or leisurely way of life — this at least implies that there were some members of Etruscan society who lived in this lavish way (Decker and Thuillier, 2004: 150). We also may compare Etruscan funeral rituals to more solid indications of such traditions in both the Greek and the Roman world. In Archaic Delphi, for example, inscriptions on dedicated bronze vessels indicate that the deceased's family held a series of games to which people from different cities came to compete. Such examples from around the Greek world date from the early seventh to the fifth centuries (Roller, 1981: 2–3). Livy's accounts of Roman funeral traditions in the early Republic create an impression of the commemorative events Etruscans likely also staged (Toynbee, 1971: 56).

An indication of a venue is given by the column depicted in several racing scenes. The Tomba delle Olimpiadi in the necropolis of Tarquinia contains a series of sporting scenes covering its interior walls. The scenes depicted include three male figures running, a man leaping and a man hurling a discus. On the opposite wall there are two boxers on one end, a tall red post, and then four *bigae* galloping in succession towards it (Bartoccini and Moretti, 1958: 291–3). The red post could represent the *meta*, the post around which the racers were to turn, or it could be the starting- or finishing-post of the race (Åkerstrom, 1970: 68–9; Humphrey, 1986: 15–16). The suggestion of the *meta* is supported by the image on a black-figure amphora by the Micali Painter that is now in the British Museum (Fig. 17). The vase, found in Vulci, has a series of figures engaging in sporting activities and processing in its main register (van der Meer, 1986: 439).[19] With warriors on one side and processors on the other, four-horses, presumably attached to a chariot, emerge from behind a post. The horses seem to represent a chariot (or chariots) that has run the long axis of the track, reached the *meta*, and performed a sharp turn to run the other length of track (Thuillier, 1993: 29).[20]

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[18] Torelli's study of Tarquinian tomb painting understands the depiction of athletic contests as actual events that were native to Etruria, whereas the symposium and Dionysiac ritual were imported depictions of otherworldly events (Torelli, 1999: 156).

[19] It dates to 525–500. Bouke van der Meer explained that the presence of the *quadriga* (rather than a *biga* or *triga*) indicates that this sporting scene was directly inspired by Greek depictions, since *quadrigae* are not common on Etruscan-made objects. This explanation is slightly problematic considering the very un-Greek character of some of the other stunts depicted on the vase (van der Meer, 1986: 440–1). Thuillier identified the four horses as representing two *bigae* reaching the post simultaneously. While this is a convenient explanation, such a depiction would be unprecedented (Thuillier, 1985: 148).

[20] Paintings of chariot racing from the interior of Lucanian tombs in southern Italy suggest the column's purpose. Columns depicted here have been understood variously as the *meta* and as the

Fig. 17. Amphora by the Micali Painter now in the British Museum (British Museum, no. 1865,0103.25). © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved. *(Reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)*

One clear parallel we have for a temporary and improvised racing venue is found in the funeral of Patroclus scene of Homer's *Iliad*. Achilles designates 'the monument of some man long ago dead' as the turning-post of the race in the Trojan plain (*Iliad* 23.331–3).[21] The only other clues about race locations come from the background elements of racing images. Trees, for example, in many racing scenes on Clusine reliefs indicate an outdoor setting perhaps near a wood (Figs 9 and 10).

Jean-René Jannot explained that the games were meant to display the 'vitality, activity, strength, and extreme dynamism' of the living people in honour of the deceased (Jannot, 1998: 67). Funeral contests may be associated also with a system of deciding upon the heir of the deceased's wealth or rank within the community (Spivey, 1997: 86). It is only prudent to assume these to be the values and traditions of the wealthy class, rather than of every Etruscan person, since, for example, only 3% of Tarquinian tombs contain painted decoration (Haynes, 2000: 221). Furthermore, of all the options for funeral entertainments, chariot races must have been the most expensive to stage. They required a large venue, human resources, highly-trained animals and special equipment. Games in the Greek world required a large amount of wealth on the part of the aristocratic owner of each chariot team, and similarly in the Roman Republic huge amounts were spent to produce chariot games (Golden, 1998: 337; Veyne,

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finish line of the race. Such paintings should be understood within the Greek sporting tradition more than within an early Italian tradition, based on compositional and structural similarities with Greek chariot attributes, for example holding short reins and wearing long tunics (Pontrandolfo and Rouveret, 1992: 59).

[21] The equation between tomb markers and turning-posts throughout the Greek literary tradition further emphasizes racing's Archaic funerary context (McGowan, 1995).

1990): 208). While there are no figures for Etruscan expenditures on chariot racing, we can imagine that the financial output was equally significant.

Underlying the funerary dimension of the chariot race is the immense visual impact of the event. The decision to stage it in place of or in addition to other events meant the knowing display of status on the part of the deceased's kin. They were honouring their loved one and exhibiting their ability to sponsor such a lavish event. The inscriptions of the Tomba delle Iscrizioni in Tarquinia from the late sixth century,[22] furthermore, suggest that the participants in Etruscan equestrian competitions could have been members of the deceased's family (Jannot, 1998: 67). Though there are no charioteers depicted in the tomb, two youths on horseback appear to be men of status.[23] One is labelled as *Laris Larθiia*, or Laris son of Larth (*Corpus Inscriptionum Etruscarum* 5347; *Etruskische Texte*: Ta 7.24). The effort to distinguish Laris's parentage suggests he comes from a knowable family; the lack of a family name is somewhat unusual, but perhaps it suggests that it would have been obvious to those involved.[24]

With the funerary dimension of chariot racing as a constant backdrop, we must consider the audience of such equestrian contests. This might include the family members of the deceased, people from the town, and passers-by all performing and/or witnessing the burial ritual (Izzet, 1996: 60). The most explicit depiction of an audience at such games is found in the Tomba delle Bighe in Tarquinia (Fig. 14). The tomb painting, produced around 490, is now quite damaged and faded, but sketches made at the time of its nineteenth-century discovery reveal its extensive programme of figures on two registers (Steingräber, 1986: 289; Spivey, 1997: 115). The upper registers along three walls of the single-chamber tomb contain depictions of figures participating in numerous athletic contests. Boxing, wrestling, pole-vaulting and discus, together with several armed figures are found on two walls; the third wall is filled by a line of three *bigae* which, although processing slowly, seem to be moving into position to begin a race.

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[22] Steingraber (1986: 319) dated it to 520; Torelli (1999: 150) dated it to 510.

[23] Torelli (1999: 150–2) interpreted these riders voyaging to the Underworld through the doorway painted on the wall of the tomb. The other walls of this tomb depict non-equestrian athletic competitions and revelry, all typical scenes that accompany chariot and other equestrian events in other tombs. While the interpretation of different sections of scenes on wall painting as depicting different locations, times and activities is valid, as far as I am aware, there is no other example of a horseback journey towards a door that could support the interpretation of these riders as anything other than taking part in funeral festivities. Crowther (2007: 79) and Kyle (2007: 256) both have suggested that competitors in Etruscan chariot races were of low or even slave status; there is, however, no evidence for this. William Harris (1972: 185) made the distinction between Greek competitors and Roman professional sportsmen without discussing Etruscans. Torelli (1999: 147) said that these sporting competitions were 'actual events of aristocratic funerals', with no comment on who the performers were.

[24] Given that two of the other figures painted in the tomb have the family name Reciieniies, he is potentially a member of this family, but this cannot be confirmed. This family name only appears in this tomb, but a related name, Reicie, appears in Vulci several centuries later. In Vulci we also have Laris Reicies (Tarabella, 2004: 423–4).

Behind them men prepare to attach a team of horses to another chariot, and a further pair of horses is guided by nude squires. The *bigae* move towards a group of spectators who are seated on a wooden platform covered by an awning. The same construction is depicted on all three walls adjacent to the different athletic events. Each structure has seated spectators, both men and women, and all are fully clothed in long tunics or wrapped in mantles; they watch the athletic events with interest, pointing and gesturing. Underneath this level of each platform are figures reclining along the ground watching the athletes or interacting with each other. The assumption that the figures at this ground level are of a slave class is based on their secondary seating position and their minimal clothing (Steingräber, 1986: 289). These platforms on either side of the action are perhaps meant to represent temporary stands erected around a makeshift stadium where funeral games would take place. The presence of a large audience indicates that there was active viewing in Etruscan funeral games, and this particular image suggests the differing statuses of spectators.

We may compare this Etruscan depiction of chariot-race spectators to the two other known examples from the Archaic period in Greece and Etruria. One, a fragment from an Attic *dinos* from Pharsalos signed by Sophilos, was painted between 575 and 570 (Fig. 18). It seems to illustrate a chariot race; however, only the horses of one *quadriga* are preserved. Next to this team is the image of a grandstand full of spectators. All of the figures look identical: all are male, and three of the fifteen men portrayed are individualized by their overt hand gestures. Above the spectators is the inscription, *ΠΑΤΡΟΚΛΥΣ ΑΤΛΑ*, 'the Games of Patroclus'. Whether this fragment was intended as a Homeric depiction, or the label connecting it to the legendary event was an afterthought, its clear allusion to the Trojan cycle is illustrative of the permeation of the early Greek world with these stories (Small, 2003: 12). The audience is seated just as Homer describes it (*Iliad* 23.448–9). This is an allusion to an epic funeral event, rather than to civically-organized sacred games.

This scene has a number of visual similarities with another scene on a so-called Tyrrhenian amphora found in Tarquinia (Fig. 19). Two fragments housed in Florence and Berlin were reunited to reveal a scene of three chariot teams racing towards a column and a group of spectators seated on a mound. The mound is checkered white and dark, suggesting bleachers or a raised area of the landscape. The checks might represent a cloth pattern or crop growth. The six audience members all appear to be men who watch the race with wide eyes and gesture with their hands. This vessel and its painting are slightly problematic in terms of their cultural attribution. 'Tyrrhenian' has become a definition of a vase type that grew out of the belief that this style of vessel was made in the middle of the sixth century in Attica, but, since found only in Etruria, was intended specifically for an Etruscan market (Carpenter, 1984; Kluvier, 2003). While the accuracy of this view is still disputed, if this amphora was made for an Etruscan market and found in an Etruscan context, then perhaps it is a representation of an Etruscan, rather than Greek, event. If this is the case, we could label this as a second example of an illustration of an Etruscan audience.
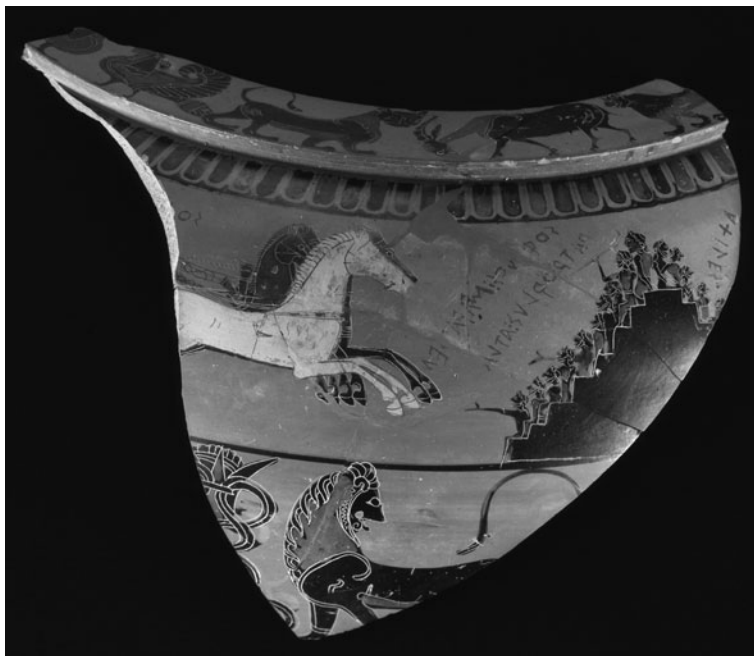
Fig. 18. Fragment of an Attic *dinos* by Sophilos. National Archaeological Museum, Athens, inv. no. 15499 (photographer: J. Tatrikianos). © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Archaeological Receipts Fund. *(Reproduced courtesy of the National Archaeological Museum, Athens.)*

Fig. 19. Drawing of the neck of a Tyrrhenian amphora by the Castellani Painter (Florence no. 3773). *(From Pfuhl, 1923: pl. 48, no. 206.)*

We have several less explicit depictions of sports spectators from Etruscan tomb paintings. The early fifth-century Tomba della Scimmia near Chiusi contains a main chamber surrounded by images of athleticism and entertainment; a trio of racing *bigae*, youths on horseback, wrestlers, boxers and musicians are depicted on a white background in the upper register of the wall (Steingräber, 2006: 121–2). In the midst of the action is a female seated on an elaborate ottoman, carrying a large parasol (Fig. 20). Stephan Steingräber labelled her as a spectator of the games and possibly the deceased of the tomb (Steingräber, 1986: 274). While she

Fig. 20. Female spectator in the Tomba della Scimmia. *(From Bandinelli, 1939: pl. IV.) (Reproduced courtesy of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana – Firenze.)*

does seem to be portrayed intentionally as a spectator, her identification as the deceased of the tomb is rather more tenuous considering this is a multi-chamber tomb, with space for as many as thirteen bodies.

In the Tomba del Letto Funebre, from several decades later in Tarquinia, the depiction of the games' spectators is even more ambiguous (Fig. 21). The wall of the single-chamber tomb has one figurative register along its upper half, which, although extremely faded, contains figures engaging in a variety of typical athletic exercises. On the right-hand wall is the image of a man yoking his horse to a *biga*, while another figure leads a horse towards him. Based on comparison with the images in the Tomba delle Bighe, we may assume that this yoking is in preparation for a race. On the same register as the various athletes, two sumptuously dressed men recline on covered couches beneath a canopy (Steingräber, 1986: 319–20). Another figure, who is perhaps a servant, stands next to them. It is possible that these reclining figures are meant to be attending the games represented next to them. Their position underneath a canopy supported by a post may be an attempt to place them outdoors, and we could compare the canopy structure to the platform and awning construction in the Tomba delle Bighe. The temporary nature of the structure also contributes to the idea of the sporadic quality of the games; they are staged purely for an unpredictable funeral event. The two men in the painting do not seem to be paying attention to the athlete-performers near them; however, this too would be in tune with the varied interaction of the spectators in the Tomba delle Bighe. Three similar reclining female figures on the opposite wall of this tomb seem to take more notice of the athletic display next to them. While two of the women face each other, one looks out and gestures towards her servant and the athlete-performers.

Both the more explicitly conveyed spectators and these few examples of lounging viewers in tomb paintings appear to have an intentional distinction

Fig. 21. Male spectators under a canopy in the Tomba del Letto Funebre. *(From Steingräber, 2006: fig. 141. Reproduced courtesy of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Etruria Meridionale.)*

between the classes of the figures depicted. This is achieved through their viewing position — where and how they are sitting or standing — as well as through the clothing and expressions they possess. The games are depicted as a venue where differences are defined. Although artistic depictions present wealthy members of society and their underlings seated nicely alongside the athlete-performers, we cannot assume that they were the only spectators of such events. They are simply the only ones to be illustrated. One can imagine that the exhibition of a horse race held in what must have been a fairly vast open space would have attracted the attention of everyone in town.

Another character present in several Etruscan racing images is also one who appears at the funeral of Patroclus. Before the race, Achilles appoints Phoinix, a former charioteer and friend of Peleus, to be the judge, and places him at the turning-post to verify the fair play of the competitors (*Iliad* 23.359–61; Richardson, 1993: 213). Etruscan depictions featuring judges include a gem of unknown provenance in the British Museum (Fig. 22). It has engraved on it six chariot teams racing around the margin of the stone. Although it is not possible to distinguish the number of horses attached to each chariot, one can discern

Fig. 22. Carnelian gem of a race with judges (British Museum, no. 740).
(Reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

the wheels of the chariots clearly, and the charioteers leaning forward egging the horses onward. The oval shape of the carnelian scarab is the perfect emulation of the form of a racetrack where such an event would be staged. The charioteers' and horses' heads all extend above the exterior cable border of the stone. It is as if they cannot be contained by the edges of the stone, or as if the border is meant to represent stands of spectators surrounding the track. In the centre of the stone, separated from the chariots by a raised line, are three figures seated on folding stools. They all face to the left, are all draped in robes, and all carry a staff or wand. We could identify these figures according to their attributes as men of rank, not only as spectators but also as judges of the race (Furtwängler, 1900: 94, no. 52).

Another possible instance of the judges of a race can be found on a Clusine relief discovered in Sarteano (Fig. 23). The large block of *pietra fetida* has four complete sides of carved sporting scenes and dates to about 470/460 (Thuillier, 1997b: 257). One face of the stone, Side A, has a scene of three *bigae* galloping to the right attempting to overtake one another. On the right-most side of the scene stands a figure facing the chariots. Damage to the stone means that the figure's head is no longer visible; however, it is possible to discern that he is male and wears a kind of long tunic or *tebenna*. He carries a staff and a bundle of rods, attributes belonging to a judge (Thuillier, 1997b: 249). We can compare this figure to Side D of the same cippus, where two figures carrying rods stand interspersed with athletes (Fig. 24). The positioning of the figures is similar to that of the chariot scene; on the left, a trio of runners faces a figure carrying a bundle of rods over his shoulder.[25] Another male figure wears a

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[25]   Behind him is a bearded man wearing a pointed hat. He touches the knees of a wrestler who holds his opponent in a headlock. Thuillier identified the bearded man with the pointed hat as

Fig. 23. Side A of a Clusine relief from Sarteano. *(From Thuillier,* 1997b: *fig. 4. Reproduced courtesy of the* Revue Archéologique.*)*

tebenna, carries a staff in one hand and rods in the other. He too faces the left watching the wrestlers. We should understand both to be judging the athletic contest before them.[26]

Another fragment of a Clusine relief fragment also bears the image of a robed man holding a long staff as he stands facing a chariot race (Fig. 25). On one side of the block, two *trigae* race towards the right, while around the corner on the edge of the adjoining side stands a figure identified as a judge (Jannot, 1984: 76). He wears a long *tebenna* and mantle, and his staff rests on his shoulders. Although his feet are turned towards the right, he faces behind him to the left, as if he is watching the chariots turn the corner. Unfortunately, further interpretation of the scene is impossible since the block is so fragmented. Whether the figure should be associated with the chariot race depicted around the corner is unclear; the palmette that decorates the corner and separates this individual from the lead chariot creates a kind of visual connection between the two sides. The fact that the judge-like figure's right hand gesture overlaps the palmette further suggests that it is meant to represent a plant in the background rather than a border separating two distinct sides.

Phersu, an Etruscan divinity associated with death and the funeral rite (Thuillier, 1997b: 255–6; Jannot, 1993: 288).

[26] An identical composition appears on the fourth-century AD mosaic from Baten Zammour in Tunisia (Khanoussi, 1994: 64).

Fig. 24. Side D of a Clusine relief from Sarteano. *(From Thuillier, 1997b: fig. 7. Reproduced courtesy of the* Revue Archéologique.*)*

Although the portrait of the viewer of Etruscan racing events remains somewhat limited, our several depictions of the audience and hints of geographical location indicate the presence of diverse classes of spectators, as well as the unscheduled funerary character of the games. There was an audience to be entertained and a competition to be taken seriously. Chariot races at a funeral ceremony presented the ideal opportunity to demonstrate these affiliations: they were staged in a vast, accessible space, and allowed for the interaction of many statuses of people.

THE CHARIOT CRASH

Returning to the gems at the beginning of this study, the chariot crash, a recurring motif in Etruscan chariot-race imagery, brings to the fore the question of the dynamic between the audience and the competitors of the sport. The occurrence of an accident was the most exciting part of a race; in ancient literature, the possibility of witnessing one seems to have been part of the motivation for people attending the races.[27] In Roman art, in addition to the mosaics

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[27] Demosthenes 61.29; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 4.8.28. Roman authors are not so explicit about the importance of the chariot crash, but there are numerous references to the excitement of the crowd (for example, Juvenal 8.58–9). Dio Chrysostom writes of the hippodrome of first-century AD Alexandria: 'It will not cause any of the horses to run more slowly ... if you preserve a due

Fig. 25. Fragment of a Clusine cippus in Florence. *(From Jannot, 1984: C, II, 23.*
Reproduced courtesy of the École Française de Rome.)

mentioned above, chariot crashes feature frequently on reliefs in terracotta and on stone funerary monuments and sarcophagi in the second and third centuries AD.[28]

The popularity of this motif in Etruscan art bears consideration if we are to comprehend more fully Etruscan motives for chariot competitions and their role in a funerary context. Before turning to the depiction of the crash itself, a piece that is related closely to this motif bears note. The claw foot of a bronze chest, from about 400, bears the figure of a charioteer driving a team of

decorum. But as things are now, if one of the charioteers falls from his chariot, you think it terrible and the greatest of disaster' (*Orations* 32.46). He describes the audience watching the horse race 'being driven by the whips of tragedy' (*Orations* 32.75).

[28]   Gerhardt Rodenwaldt (1940) and Marie Turcan-Déléani (1964) first compiled these images, and Janet Huskinson's catalogue of children's sarcophagi lists seven depictions of racing, of which four have a competitor who has crashed (Huskinson, 1996: 47–8, 107).

horses ([Fig. 26](#)).[29] The charioteer is dressed in a tunic with straps, probably of leather, crossing in an X on his torso. He leans forward and wraps his left hand under the horses' reins, about to cut them with a curved knife, the *falx*. This knife was always worn by Roman charioteers as a safety precaution in case of the horses tripping. This is because of both the Etruscan and the later Roman method of tying the reins behind the charioteer's back. While this allowed for more precise manoeuvring of the team, it also put the driver at greater risk should an accident occur (Bronson, [1965](#): 103–4; Decker and Thuillier, [2004](#): 192).[30] The possibility of a chariot crash was probably made less likely by the use of the *triga* rather than the *biga* or *quadriga*. While one might imagine that the *triga* caused the chariot to be unbalanced, and produced the most serious and spectacular accidents, experimental archaeological trials suggest that the trace-horse of a *triga* made the two yoked horses significantly more stable in the turns. Since the third horse was attached much more loosely to the vehicle and did not lean directly against the yoke, it would not have contributed to the forward motion of the chariot. Instead, it was used to aid in the 180 degree turns required in a race by leaning outwards and controlling the centrifugal force. This balance and control would have been possible also with a *quadriga*, since it had a trace-horse on either side of the yoked team; however, it may have required a significantly greater amount of skill to rein in the inside horses while simultaneously allowing the exterior horses to run out (Crouwel, [1992](#): 45; Spruttye, [1978](#): 423–4).

There exist many other examples of explicit crashes and scenes in the midst of or following an accident. A fourth-century carnelian gem from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge depicts a trio of horses flailing their legs in confusion next to the body of a charioteer ([Fig. 27](#)). Although the chariot is not visible, comparison with the British Museum examples leaves no doubt about the similarity of the subject (Henig, [1994](#): 66).

A complete picture of a crash comes from a late sixth-century Etruscan black-figure amphora now in Berlin ([Fig. 28](#)) (Beazley, [1947](#): 17).[31] On its main register two *trigae* race to the left, while behind them the horses of a third chariot have collapsed to the ground. One yoked horse remains standing, while the second horse falls to its knees and the trace-horse flails on its back, with its legs in the air. The charioteer is thrown forward as the chariot flies up behind him. Another person is depicted falling face first on to the ground behind the crashing chariot. This could be a charioteer falling from another nearby chariot, which has come into contact with the first.

The Tyrrhenian amphora discussed above has depicted on its shoulder two *trigae* racing to the right and passing next to a fallen charioteer and his horses ([Fig. 19](#)). The charioteer lies prostrate and one horse lies on the ground with its

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[29] Although Wolfgang Decker and Thuillier labelled it as a *triga*, the number of legs and heads do not add up (Decker and Thuillier, [2004](#): 192, fig. 112).
[30] For examples with *trigae*, see: Brown, [1974](#): 61; Jannot, [1984](#): C, I, 8. With *bigae*: Moretti, [1966](#): 108–9, 128–9; Bonfante, [1981](#): figs 12 and 14.
[31] Bronson erroneously attributed this piece to the Micali painter (Bronson, [1965](#): 100).

Fig. 26. Bronze cista foot with charioteer. *(From Jucker, 1991: 41. Reproduced courtesy of the Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna.)*

legs in the air. This is meant to be a moment just after the chariot has crashed; the frenetic action has passed and all that remains is the pitiable fallen charioteer, as his opponents continue by him, still intent on winning. The rendering of both these scenes on pottery can be compared to the illustration on the wall of the Tomba delle Olimpiadi in Tarquinia (Fig. 8). On the left-hand wall two *bigae* race, followed by a third in the midst of the crash. The chariot flips over, the charioteer flies backwards into the air, one horse rears up as the other on the ground on its back is tangled in the reins.

Fig. 27. *Triga* crash on an Etruscan gem in the Fitzwilliam Museum (no. 108).
(Reproduced courtesy of the Beazley Archive, Oxford University.)

Another probable crash can be found on a fragmentary Clusine relief that dates
to the late sixth century (Fig. 29). One face of the relief has two standing robed
figures, the other face must have had a chariot race depicted running towards
the left. All that remains of it now is the front half of a team of three horses

Fig. 28. Crash on a black-figure amphora in Berlin. *(From Endt, 1899: pl. 1.)*

Fig. 29. Clusine relief fragment in Palermo. *(From Jannot, 1984: C, III, 5. Reproduced courtesy of the École Française de Rome.)*

and the legs of another *triga* team gaining on them. Underneath the horses' legs lies a fallen charioteer. He is still holding his goad in his right hand, and is about to be trampled by the approaching chariots (Jannot, 1984: 93–4).

There is a series of chariot crashes on a second-century alabaster cinerary urn from the Inghirami Tomb in Volterra (Fig. 30). This was a chamber-tomb belonging to the Atia family; the tomb contained 53 urns spanning over a century, suggesting the established wealth of the family (Haynes, 2000: 373). The main façade of this particular urn features a mythological scene, possibly from the Odyssey cycle, while a dynamic race of six *bigae* is sculpted as a decorative border along its base. Three *bigae* race to the right and three to the left, all facing a *meta* in the middle. The accidents depicted are fairly gruesome: three bodies on the ground are trampled by passing chariot teams, and two pairs of horses are in the midst of tripping as their charioteers fall backwards out of the chariot.

The chariot crash draws attention to the *meta*, or turning-post of the racetrack. In the Roman world, the shrine of the god Consus at the turning end of the Circus Maximus in Rome had ritual geography. The line in the centre of the racetrack was the sacred boundary of the city itself, the *pomerium*, so that chariots were repeatedly crossing that border and leaving it throughout the race (Green, 2009: 74). This crossing over is reminiscent of the importance Etruscans seem to have placed on the crossing to the Underworld after death.[32] The possibility

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[32] On this belief and related motifs, see: Moretti, 1966; Izzet, 1996; Torelli, 1999; De Grummond, 2006.
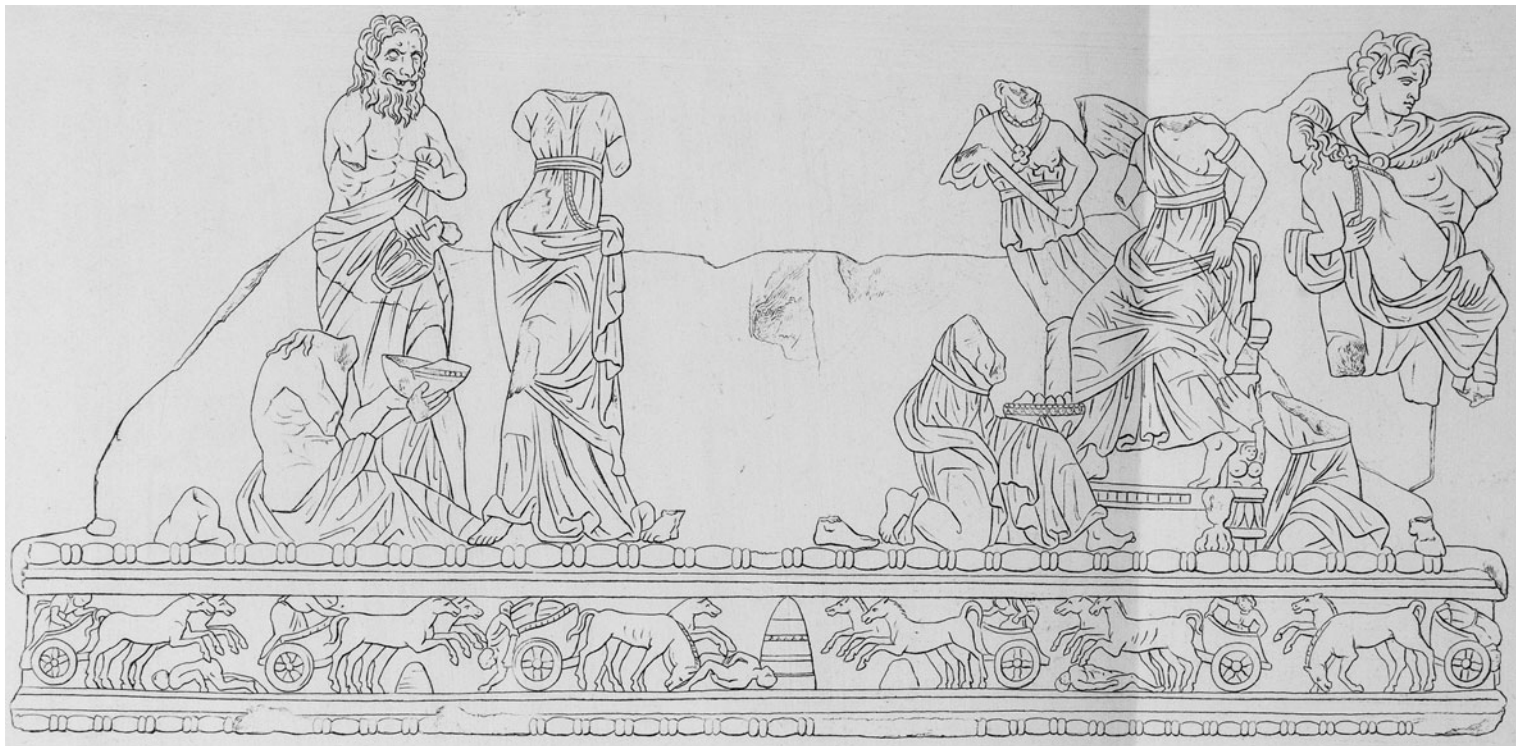
Fig. 30. Volterran cinerary urn from the Inghirami Tomb. *(From Brunn, 1870: pl. LXXXIX, 3.)*

of a chariot crash reminds us of the risk involved in the race; at every turn the competitors entered a liminal space between exhilarating life and terrible death or injury. Unlike the finality of entering the Underworld in death, the competitors tricked death and returned to the space of the living if they managed to steer their chariot so as not to falter and crash.[33]

For a clue to the resonance of the chariot crash motif as an epic symbol, we return to the sequence of events at the funeral of Patroclus. As the heroes race down the final stretch of track towards the finishing line, Athena ensures Diomedes's victory by causing Eumelus, son of Admetus, to crash:

> Then with wrath she went after the son of Admetus, and the goddess broke the yoke of his steeds, and to his peril the horses swerved from side to side along the course, and the draught pole swung down to the earth. Eumelus himself was hurled out of the car beside the wheel, and the skin was stripped from his elbows and his mouth and nose, and his forehead above his brows was smashed. Then both his eyes filled with tears and his sturdy voice was checked. (*Iliad* 23.391–7)[34]

The text is slightly confused as to whether Eumelus fell at the turning-post or along the straight, yet his injuries are vividly described (Roisman, 1988: 118, no. 10). The accident lends to the grandeur of the scene, while at the same time also contributing a certain pitiable tone to this heroic event, which is already associated so closely with grief. The relationship between the epic or mythic world and local practices in Etruria is understood best as an association through emulation. The most explicit example of this idea in another context is the painting of the fourth-century François Tomb in Vulci. Life-sized painted figures appear on the walls of the central chamber; they are labelled alternately with the names of Etruscan individuals and with the names of figures from the Trojan War. Their placement around the room creates an association between Etruscans and their contemporary politics, on the one hand, and the figures and stories of epic on the other. There is a 'visual symmetry between myth (left walls) and history and reality (right walls)' (van der Meer 2004: 1). In a less explicit, but more dynamic and iterative, way, the performing of funerary races placed the Etruscan élite in this Heroic world. The competitors emulate the

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[33]   The circular course and ritual path of the race is reminiscent of the course of the earliest triumphal processions and the ritualistic dimensions of what Larissa Bonfante called the 'purifying intention of the *circumambulatio*' (Bonfante Warren, 1970: 52, 63).

[34]   ἣ δὲ μετ' Ἀδμήτου υἱὸν κοτέουσ' ἐβεβήκει,
ἵππειον δέ οἱ ἦξε θεὰ ζυγόν· αἲ δέ οἱ ἵπποι
ἀμφὶς ὁδοῦ δραμέτην, ῥυμὸς δ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἐλύσθη.
αὐτὸς δ' ἐκ δίφροιο παρὰ τροχὸν ἐξεκυλίσθη,
ἀγκῶνάς τε περιδρύφθη στόμα τε ῥῖνάς τε,
θρυλίχθη δὲ μέτωπον ἐπ' ὀφρύσι· τὼ δέ οἱ ὄσσε
δακρυόφι πλῆσθεν, θαλερὴ δέ οἱ ἔσχετο φωνή.

William Hailey Willis noted that in alternative versions of the funeral of Patroclus, Eumelus wins the race (Willis, 1941: 395).

mourning and the simultaneous showmanship and glory of the heroes on the Trojan plain.[35]

CONCLUSION

The intricate engraving on a pair of fifth-century carnelian gems has spurred a much broader appraisal of Etruscan chariot-racing traditions and our conception of Etruscan sport within the ancient world. The élite of society exhibited to each other their ability to host games and justified their place within the upper echelons of the community. This exhibition also helped to emphasize the difference between the élite, their servants and the local population who were probably witnesses to the event.

There was also a desire to associate oneself or the deceased with an heroic ideal. There must have been an almost subconscious association between Etruscan funeral games and the days of the Homeric hero. It was an age when the gods were actively involved in the episodes of everyday life; they even made a point of interfering with the competitors of the race at Patroclus's funeral. The sponsors and participants of Etruscan races aspired to become part of this age of legendary power and high culture. This relationship with the heroic past was achieved not only through parallels in the staging of racing events, but also through the visual connections the racing vehicles had with chariots in other roles. The analysis of the structure of Archaic chariots from grave-goods and two-dimensional depictions confirms their similarity. The processional chariot and the racing chariot were visually analogous. The chariot race's role in the creation of an aristocratic image was manifested also through its connection with military traditions. The chariot in the military was associated with the man in command. The racing chariot may be connected with such military influences, whether this is a reference to chariots used in ages past, or a reference to the contemporary method of warfare.

The focus on the chariot crash as a reality of the race further reveals the importance given to the tradition of funeral games. Jannot (1998: 67) suggested that the chthonic nature of Etruscan games was a payment of tribute to the underworld to give the deceased 'a chance to survive' in death. They were so vital for the commemoration of the dead that the competitors were willing to risk their own lives — channelling powerful emotions of grief into a repetitive act of catharsis at every turn. Perhaps participating in extravagant and death-defying feats was a kind of living sacrifice or appeasement to the deceased and his keepers. Surviving the race and its harrowing turns, also leant further glory to the competitors.[36] Etruscan chariot races were events for the intersection of

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[35]   On the Etruscan exposure to and use of the stories and characters from the Trojan War see, for example: Hampe and Simon, 1964; D'Agostino and Cerchiai, 1999; Lowenstam, 2008.

[36]   This risk and subsequent glory is still present in races like 'il Palio' in Siena with its treacherous San Martino and Casato curves.

élite display, the tensions of sporting danger, the crossing of boundaries between the living and the dead, risk and glory.[37]

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