

The production and usage of non-decorated Etruscan roof-tiles, based on a case study at Poggio Colla

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In a recent reflection on the state of scholarship on architectural terracottas, C. and Ö. Wikander commented that, while a great deal of attention has been directed toward stylistic and iconographical study of ancient roofs, the production process has long been neglected.¹ This is starting to change, as is reflected by the important work by N. Winter and A. Ammermann and their team on clay beds near the Tiber river and their relationship to the production of terracotta tiles and other decorative roof components in Early Rome.² Studies such as theirs demonstrate, through a combination of stylistic and chemical analyses, production links between contemporaneous sites or within the ceramic industries of a particular settlement. Yet this type of data is far too infrequent for the scholar studying roofing elements from non-decorated roofs in Etruria, who is often forced to rely on brief discussions of basic terracotta roofing elements buried within excavation reports and rarely encounters geochemical analyses of roof-tile fragments as part of the study of a site's ceramics. Here we argue for a comprehensive view of the rôle of undecorated terracotta roof-tiles within the wider ceramics industry in Etruria by incorporating the results of geochemical analysis into more traditional typological study.

The Etruscan sanctuary site of Poggio Colla (N Etruria) is suitable for a case study due to the close proximity to its acropolis of an area known as the Podere Funghi where archaeologists have uncovered evidence for an active ceramics industry, including a number of kilns and a midden filled with Hellenistic pottery. The Podere Funghi site also yields information about the tile industry. A child's footprint is preserved on a fragment found in 2003, while extensive use of tile as floor packing tells us of the broader use, and even the after-life, of roof-tile. We present here a typological assessment of the tiles from the Podere Funghi, together with a discussion of their secondary uses, in the context of a much larger ceramics industry. This typological and contextual presentation of the roof-tiles is considered alongside results from recent scientific analyses conducted on the roof-tiles and ceramics from the site. By combining a typological study of the site's largest deposit of terracotta tiles with the results of scientific analyses (X-ray fluorescence [XRF], X-ray diffraction [XRD], and petrographic and thermogravimetric [TGA] analyses) on samples of pan and cover tile, we are able to suggest that roof-tiles from Poggio Colla were produced locally and that the industry was well-integrated with ceramic production on the site.³ We hope that these results will serve as a model for the inclusion of roof-tiles in the research design of Italian sites of all periods, and that our broad approach will illuminate the usefulness of even undecorated tile in reconstructing technology, industry and building practices.

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- 1 C. and Ö. Wikander, "Architectural terracottas in theory and practice. Reflections on thirty years of experience." *Deliciae fictiles III. Architectural terracottas in ancient Italy* (Oxford 2006) 42-44.
 - 2 N. Winter, I. Iliopoulos and A. J. Ammermann, "New light on the production of decorated roofs of the 6th century B.C. at sites in and around Rome," *JRA* 22 (2009) 6-28; A. Ammermann *et al.*, "The clay beds in the Velabrum and the earliest tiles in Rome," *JRA* 21 (2008) 7-30.
 - 3 P. G. Warden, M. L. Thomas, A. Steiner and G. Meyers, "Poggio Colla: a N Etruscan settlement of the 7th-2nd c. B.C. (1998-2004 excavations)," *JRA* 18 (2005) 252-66.