

The Etruscan settlement of Poggio Colla (1995-98 excavations)

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Introduction

Poggio Colla is the modern name for an Etruscan settlement c.22 miles northeast of Florence near the modern town of Vicchio, at the junction of the Mugello basin and the Val di Sieve (fig. 1).¹ The site is admirably situated on a hilltop overlooking the Mugello to the north and the Sieve (a tributary of the Arno) to the east.² The fortified acropolis has clear views of the Apennines with their passes that lead from NE Etruria to the Adriatic to the north, and to the Casentino and major Etruscan centres such as Arezzo to the southeast. At a height of 390 m and at a point that controls both valleys, Poggio Colla dominates a discrete region at the edge of Etruria, a well-defined intermontane basin on the E edge of the Apennines that has received relatively little attention archaeologically.³ The Mugello and Val di Sieve traditionally have been considered part of the territory of Fiesole, and the characteristic "pietre Fiesolane", the sculpted *stelae* and *cippi* found throughout this region, attest to local centres with flourishing élites in the Orientalizing and Archaic periods.⁴ The prevalence of these sculptures in the Val di Sieve and Mugello, the recent excavation of two nearby sites, San Piero a Sieve⁵ and Frascole (Dicomano),⁶ and Poggio Colla's proximity to the major Etruscan sanctuary of Monte Falterona (at the headwaters of the Arno),⁷ suggest that there is promise for a study of the region and of Poggio Colla, which may have been its ceremonial and political centre.

Reports of Etruscan remains in the region of Poggio Colla have circulated since the 19th c.,⁸ but the site was first excavated by F. Nicosia in three seasons between 1968 and 1972.⁹ His excavations focused on the N edge of the top of the hill, the actual "poggio", that turned out to be an acropolis or *arx*, at least in the site's later period, girdled by fortification walls. Nicosia found evidence of monumental architecture, two foundations that run E-W at the N edge of the

- 1 For a preliminary report of the first two seasons see P. G. Warden and S. Kane, "Excavations at Poggio Colla (Vicchio) 1995-1996," *EtrStud* 4 (1997) 159-86. A "semi-live" web site intended for a general audience has been active since 1996 (its URL is "www.smu.edu/~poggio") as part of a project initiated by S. Carrier (Oberlin College), now continued by K. Windrow (Eastfield College). Annual reports, again intended for a lay audience, have been published: G. Warden, *Southern Methodist University Excavations in Tuscany, 1995* (Dallas 1995). G. Warden, S. Kane, K. Vellucci, and D. White, *Southern Methodist University Excavations at the Etruscan site of Poggio Colla (Vicchio di Mugello). The 1996 season* (Philadelphia 1996); G. Warden, *Excavations at the Etruscan site of Poggio Colla (Vicchio di Mugello). The 1997 season* (Philadelphia 1998) and id., ... *The 1998 season* (Philadelphia 1999).
- 2 *Carta archeologica della provincia di Firenze* I.2 Sezione no. 264060 (Firenze 1995). For a general introduction to the region: F. Niccolai, *Guida del Mugello e della Val di Sieve. Guida topografica storico-artistica illustrata* (Borgo San Lorenzo 1914).
- 3 There has been partial excavation at 4 Etruscan sites in this region: Frascole, Londa, San Piero a Sieve, and Poggio Colla.
- 4 See F. Magi, *StEtr* 6 (1932) 10-85 and, most recently, G. Capecchi, "Le 'pietre fiesolane': nuova carta delle segnalazioni," *Alle origini di Firenze. Dalla preistoria alla città romana* (Firenze 1996) 154-67.
- 5 G. de Marinis, *Nuove testimonianze etrusche a S. Piero a Sieve. Lo scavo in località "I Monti"* 1983-87 (Firenze 1988). G. de Marinis and L. Fedeli, "Scavi e scoperte, s.v. San Piero a Sieve," *StEtr* 55 (1989) 477-79. *Archeologia in Alto Mugello-Mugello-Val di Sieve e il caso di S. Piero a Sieve* (Atti della giornata di studio) (Firenze 1994).
- 6 F. Nicosia et al., *Reperti archeologici del territorio di Dicomano* (Firenze n.d.). G. de Marinis, "Notizario, s.v. Dicomano, Loc. Poggio di Frascole," *Studi e Materiali* 6 (1991) 289-91.
- 7 A. M. Fortuna and F. Giovannoni, *Il Lago degli Idoli* (Firenze 1989).
- 8 Niccolai (supra n.2) 141.
- 9 C. Curri, *StEtr* 35 (1967) 267-73; F. Nicosia, *StEtr* 35 (1967) 273-83; C. Curri, *NSc* 1976, 93-112.