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EGYPTIAN AND EGYPTIANIZING SCARABS FROM THE NECROPOLIS OF PONTECAGNANO

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PONTECAGNANO

The archaeological site of Pontecagnano is located in Southern Italy, in the Sele river plain and about 3 km from the sea. It is mainly known for its **extensive necropolis** of the Etruscan and Samnite periods (from 9th to first half of the 3rd century BC).

They have been investigated since 1962 and have yielded about **10,000 graves** so far. Their study is allowing scholars to outline the phases in the history of the settlement and define an **absolute chronology** for the burials.

The site flourished especially in the so called **Orientalizing period (725-550 BC)**, when Greece and the Mediterranean area fell under the influence of the culture, ideology and art of Egypt and Near East.

Thanks to its favorable geographical position, Pontecagnano became in that period one of the most important **crossroads** of Campania. Greeks, Phoenicians, Etruscans and other Italic peoples converged there, on a par with the near Greek settlements of *Pithekoussai* and *Cumae*.

Between the wide range of exotic goods imported by Greeks and Phoenicians, almost 200 Egyptian and Egyptianizing **scarabs** have been found, together with other *Aegyptiaca* coming from **Egypt** and the **East Mediterranean area**.



Some of the relations between Pontecagnano and the Mediterranean area in the Orientalizing period.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

These - mostly unpublished - *Aegyptiaca* from Pontecagnano will be first **documented** and photographed.

A **typology** for the scarabs will be developed, also through comparison with other *Aegyptiaca* from Campania and the Mediterranean area.

We'll link the typology to the **chronological data** provided by the **context** of the necropolis of Pontecagnano, in order to give them an absolute chronology.

The results will be published in a **database**, through which the data will be made easily available for further comparison.

THE SCARABS

The almost 200 *Aegyptiaca* of Pontecagnano mainly consist of scarabs with inscriptions on the base.

They have often been found in funerary equipments of graves dating to the **Orientalizing period**, even if a few had already appeared in the first half of the 8th century.

These burials usually belong to **women** and **children** and the scarabs are sometimes inserted in metallic **pendants** and coated with gold sheet.

Some of them are of **Egyptian** provenance, but many seem to be imitations made in the **east Mediterranean area**, maybe Rhodes, as suggested by Hölbl. Most of the scarabs belong to his "Perachora-Lindos" group, placeable between **750-650 BC**.

They're the direct precedents of the **Naukratis** production, imported until the **end of the 6th century BC** and then gradually replaced by local productions.



Bronze pendant with scarab (67270, 67255) from T. 2465. National Archeological Museum of Pontecagnano. Photo by the author.

References

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