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ENZO LIPPOLIS

*in memoriam*

GABRIEL ZUCHTRIEGEL

BRINGING THE DIVER HOME  
LOCAL ELITES, ARTISANS, AND ESOTERICISM  
IN LATE ARCHAIC PAESTUM

Since its discovery in a small rural necropolis about 1.5 kilometers south of Paestum, the Tomb of the Diver has been discussed within large and rather abstract frameworks such as ‘Greek’ and ‘Etruscan’ art and culture. The paper presents new evidence that helps contextualize the Tomb of the Diver in local traditions, both artistic and social. The analysis of other frescoed tombs, though without figurative scenes, from the late sixth to the late fifth century BC suggests that the Tomb of the Diver is only understandable against the backdrop of the local context. However, the tomb may also be linked to wider Mediterranean trends in philosophy, religion, ritual and art. To describe the interaction between local and Mediterranean factors, the author makes use of the concept of ‘glocalization’ which originates in the economics of globalization but which has recently been applied to the fields of cultural studies and archaeology.

FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

Since its discovery in a small rural necropolis about 1.5 kilometers south of Paestum, the Tomb of the Diver has been discussed within broad and rather abstract frameworks such as ‘Greek’, ‘colonial Greek’/‘Western Greek’, ‘Campanian’ and ‘Etruscan’ art and culture (*Figs. 1-2*). While Mario Napoli, who first published the tomb, considered it a unique example of the lost tradition of Greek painting from the early Classical period, other scholars like Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, Massimo Pallottino and Mario Torelli have emphasized parallels with Etruria and Campania<sup>1</sup>. On these grounds, it has been argued

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<sup>1</sup> NAPOLI 1970; BIANCHI BANDINELLI 1970-1971; SCHEIBLER 1994, p. 89; TORELLI 1997, pp. 122-151. See also CERCHIAI 1986; HOLLOWAY 2006; ROBINSON 2011; PALLOTTINO 1972 and ROUVERET 1987 in particular have emphasized the “mixed” and “hybrid” character of the tomb paintings that emerges from the combination of Etruscan and Greek elements typical of Paestum and other colonial contexts. While it is undoubtedly true that the Tomb of the Diver and other artifacts from Paestum may have combined stylistic and iconographic elements from various regions and cultures, the notion of “hybridity” in these contributions remains linked to macro-categories such as Etruscan and Greek. I would like to thank the following persons for discussing and sharing with me various aspects of the topic: Angelo Bottini, Paul Carter, Marina Cipriani,

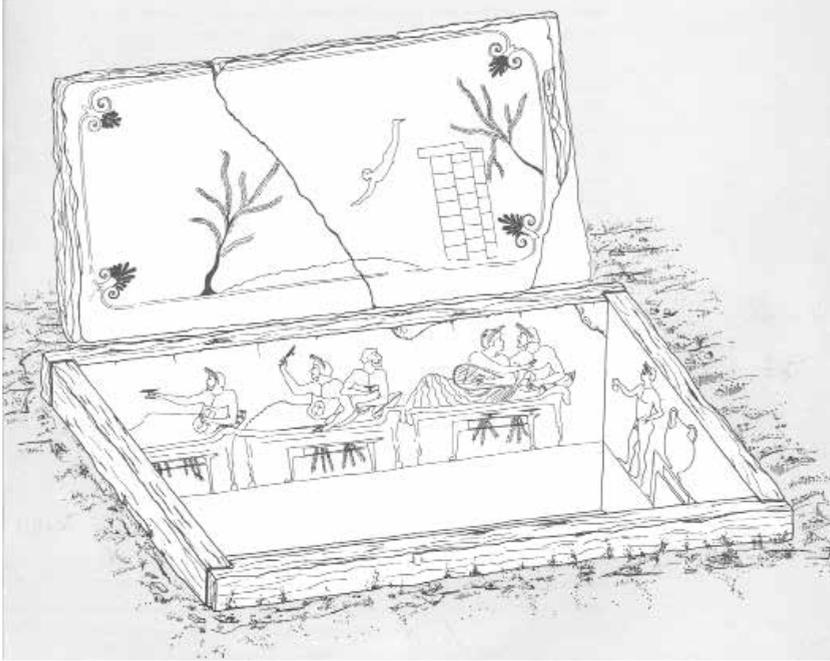


Fig. 1a. Tomb of the Diver: wall paintings (first quarter of the fifth century BC). Reconstruction drawing (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).



Fig. 1b. Tomb of the Diver: east and south slab (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).



Fig. 1c. Tomb of the Diver: west and north slab (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).



Fig. 2. Tomb of the Diver: downside of the lid (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).

that the tomb was inspired by non-Greek traditions and perhaps belonged to a foreigner who was buried in Paestum according to non-Greek customs<sup>2</sup>. In both cases, the Tomb of the Diver is explained through macro-narratives that involve large areas of the Mediterranean but which generally neglect the local context.

The interpretation of the frescoes has reinforced this tendency. Today, it is commonly assumed that the image of the diver metaphorically alludes to the passage from life to death. It has been argued that this should be seen against the backdrop of initiation rituals and religious beliefs linked to Pythagoreanism, Orphism or Dionysian mystery cults<sup>3</sup>. Thus, the Tomb of the Diver has been contextualized within a Mediterranean trend which is attested from the late sixth century onwards in a large area stretching from the Black Sea region to southern Italy and which breaks with the traditional notion of 'Polis Religion'<sup>4</sup>. In line with this interpretation, it has been emphasized that the necropolis where the Tomb of the Diver was found lies some distance away from the urban necropolis of Paestum in an allegedly unproductive area where metics and other non-citizens lived<sup>5</sup>. According to this view, the marginality of the burial place, the religious background of the buried person (mysticism) and the paintings are three features that stand out from the local context<sup>6</sup>.

Carmine Lubritto, Maria Emanuela Oddo, Massimo Osanna, Angela Pontrandolfo, Agnes Rouveret, and Francesco Scelza.

<sup>2</sup> See for example TORELLI 1997, *loc. cit.*; ROBINSON 2011.

<sup>3</sup> NAPOLI 1970, pp. 149-165; LOMBOLEY 1980; BOTTINI 1992, pp. 85-91; OTTO 2003; PONTRANDOLFO 2015; ZUCHTRIEGEL 2016. Critical remarks in CERCHIAI 2011.

<sup>4</sup> BOTTINI 1992.

<sup>5</sup> GRECO 1982.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, CIPRIANI 1989; PONTRANDOLFO 2015, pp. 42-44.



Fig. 3. Tomb of the Diver: grave goods (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).

The Tomb of the Diver is unquestionably exceptional. However, readings focusing on the exceptionality and marginality of the tomb risk overlooking the ties that link it to the local community. Nowadays, we are experiencing similar problems since we face a globalizing world but also dynamic local identities that stem from, and fight against globalization. In the case of the Tomb of the Diver, the question is whether we can explain this tomb without losing sight either of the Mediterranean or of the local context.

There can be little doubt that the Tomb of the Diver was inspired by wider artistic and religious trends. Another painted tomb dating to the early fifth century BC was discovered at Capua Vetere, suggesting that there might have been a craft tradition that involved both ‘Greek’ and ‘Etrusco-Campanian’ settlement centers, as in the case of temple architecture<sup>7</sup>. The tomb from Capua is lost but a drawing from the 1860s preserved at the German Archaeological Institute in Rome suggests that it resembled the Tomb of the Diver both in terms of technique and style<sup>8</sup>. Yet it remains to be explained how ‘transcultural’

traditions were transformed and adopted at local level. It is likely that in fifth-century Paestum, Greeks mingled with Etruscans, Oscans and other groups (a Greek inscription from the site of Fratte mentioning sexual intercourse between men and women with Greek, Etruscan and Oscan names demonstrates this quite tellingly), but we cannot be sure whether the person buried in the Tomb of the Diver – presumably a young man – had a non-Greek background or, even if this were the case, how common this was<sup>9</sup>. Equally, the interpretation of the figurative scenes as allusions to mystic beliefs and initiation rites cannot be dismissed so easily, but once again the question remains how such beliefs and rituals were introduced and perceived in the local context.

In 1968, when the Tomb of the Diver was discovered, there was little evidence that could shed light on these questions<sup>10</sup>. Mario Napoli suggested that there was some kind of relationship (artisanal, artistic or ritual?) between the Tomb of the Diver, which he dated

<sup>7</sup> RESCIGNO 1998.

<sup>8</sup> WEEGE 1909, pp. 108-109. See also PARISE BADONI 1968-1969 on possible connections between Campanian vase-painting and the Tomb of the Diver.

<sup>9</sup> On the inscription from Fratte see: CIPRIANI, LONGO 1996, p. 45, no. 33.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. BIANCHI BANDINELLI 1970-1971, p. 137.

to around 480 BC, and later ‘Lucanian’ tomb paintings dating to the fourth century BC<sup>11</sup>, although he could not demonstrate this. The burial fields of the fifth century at Gaudo and Santa Venera had yet to be discovered<sup>12</sup>. The urban topography and the agora were also generally unknown, as was the rural settlement<sup>13</sup>. Thus, the discussion inevitably remained at a rather abstract level. However, excavations in the necropolis and the urban area of Paestum carried out since then have yielded data that provide new insights into social structures, burial rites and craft production in sixth - and fifth - century Paestum.

I will attempt here to use the new evidence to present a different reading of the Tomb of the Diver: not as an exceptional piece of ‘Greek’ or ‘Etruscan’ art, but as part of a local elite culture in Paestum during the Late Archaic period<sup>14</sup>. The paintings remain exceptional, but the tomb is not as isolated as might appear at first sight.

#### OTHER FRESCOED TOMBS OF THE LATE SIXTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES BC

The most intriguing evidence that sheds new light on the Tomb of the Diver comes from the urban necropolis of Paestum. Rescue excavations around Paestum have brought to light other tombs with frescoed walls that fill the chronological gap between the Tomb

<sup>11</sup> NAPOLI 1970, p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> PONTRANDOLFO 1987; CIPRIANI 2000.

<sup>13</sup> GRECO 1987; DE CARO 2015.

<sup>14</sup> I propose here a slightly earlier dating of the tomb. Mario NAPOLI (1970, pp. 67-68) dated the tomb to around 480 BC solely on the basis of the vase found inside it. Ranuccio BIANCHI BANDINELLI (1970-1971, p. 137; see also HOLLOWAY 2006, p. 371) suggested down-dating the tomb to around 475/70 BC because of the krater on the eastern slab. Today, the tomb is usually dated to 480/70 BC. However, the lekythos found inside the tomb might have a slightly earlier date, as Mario Napoli admitted. While there are close parallels in form and decoration (palmettes on the shoulder, black-glazed belly) dating to as late as 470/60 BC based on their contexts (See KUNZE-GÖTTE *ET AL.* 1999, p. 256, no. 5), other black-figured lekythoi (with figures) that are even closer in shape and decorative details (dots between palmettes on the shoulder) were found in contexts dating to 500/490 BC (See KUNZE-GÖTTE *ET AL.* 1999, p. 278, no. 6, attributed to the Athena Painter). Attempts have been made to date the paintings based on the vases portrayed in the symposium scenes (NAPOLI 1970, p. 68; BIANCHI BANDINELLI 1970-1971.). The cups have parallels in vase-shapes attested as early as 500 BC (eye-cups and similar shapes on the south-slab, Blösch-C cups on the north-slab). The form of the krater, which led Bianchi Bandinelli to lower the dating to around 475/70 BC, is currently the subject of intense debate. It may derive from older krater types that were in use in the sixth century BC. Fabio COLIVICCHI (2004, pp. 55-56) considers it a local, ‘Oinotrian’ form of the fifth century BC. However, the form of the krater depicted on the Tomb of the Diver may also refer to vases produced in Greece during the sixth century BC, or to metal vases (cfr. SCHNEIDER-HERMANN 1980, p. 20). The paintings in the Tomb of the Diver have also been compared to Athenian vase-painting, although the extent to which parallels in vase-painting can be used to date images in other media and formats is the subject of fierce debate. Whatever the case, the stylistic features of the tomb paintings can be found in Late Archaic Athenian red-figure vase-paintings (even on the more progressive north-slab, the eyes – without lids – recall works by Late Archaic vase-painters such as the Berlin Painter rather than early Classical works). Etruscan tomb-paintings are not really helpful, as their dating often relies on stylistic comparison with Attic vases. As far as can be judged from drawings and copies, the *Tomba delle Bighe* (Tomb of the Chariots) at Tarquinia (dated to around 490 BC) has parallels with the Tomb of the Diver, as does the *Tomba del Triclinio* (Tomb of the Triclinium), which is dated to around twenty years later (STEINGRÄBER 1985, pp. 295-296, no. 47; 355-357, no. 121). In conclusion, the dating of the Tomb of the Diver could be raised to the early fifth century BC, especially as we do not know to what extent wall-painting was stylistically ahead of vase-painting, although it may equally have been done as late as around 475 BC. Therefore, a plausible date could be the first quarter of the fifth century BC.

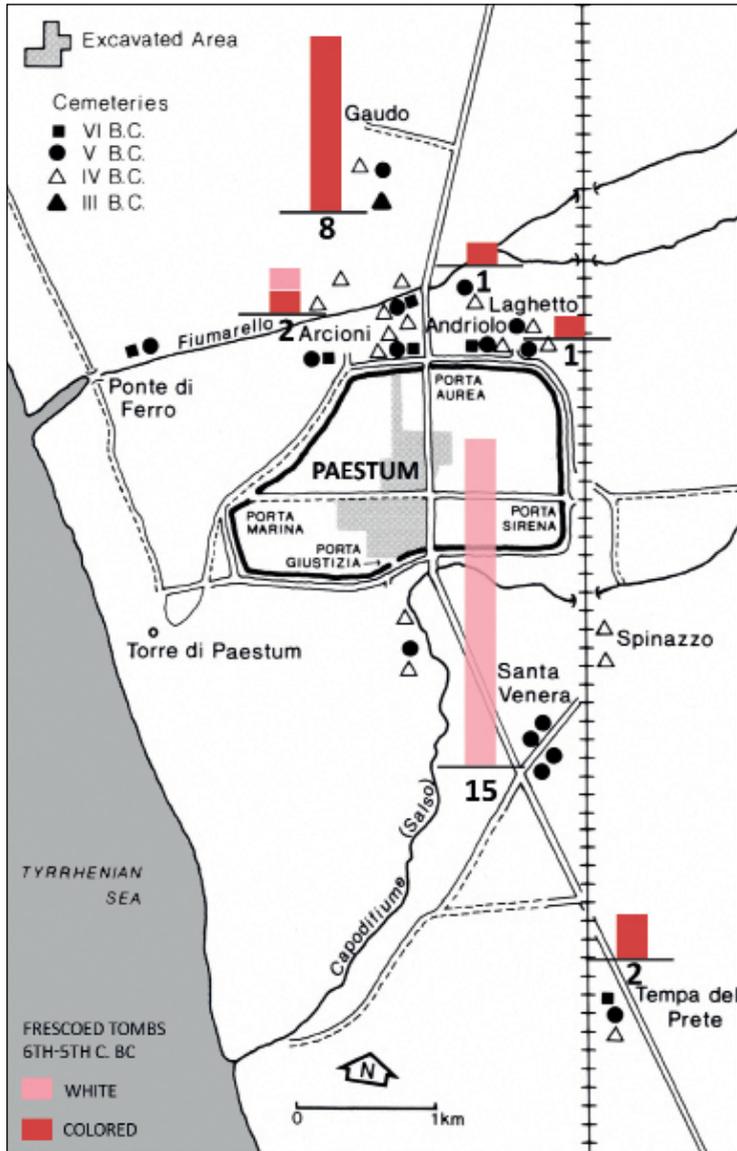


Fig. 4. Map of Paestum with finds of frescoed tombs in the necropolis, late sixth and fifth centuries BC (elaboration F. Valletta based on PEDLEY 1990).

of the Diver and later ‘Lucanian’ tombs of the fourth century BC (Fig. 4)<sup>15</sup>. Today, there can be no doubt that the fourth-century painted tombs belong to a local tradition that goes

<sup>15</sup> PONTRANDOLFO, ROUVERET 1992, pp. 449-451; CIPRIANI, PONTRANDOLFO 2012.



Fig. 5. Tomb 330 at Santa Venera with plastered side walls, dated to 480/60 BC (amphora by the Berlin Painter; Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).

back to the period of the Tomb of the Diver. None of the frescoed tombs of the late sixth and fifth centuries have figurative scenes, as does the Tomb of the Diver, but some of them are decorated according to a similar pattern: a red base on a white ground, often with lines (in black or red, and, in one case, in blue) running above the baseboard. There are at least six tombs of this type dating from the late sixth to the late fifth century BC. Apart from the necropolis of Tempa del Prete where the Tomb of the Diver was found, tombs of this type were found in various parts of the northern necropolis of Paestum (at “Arcioni”, “Gaudo”, “Laghetto” and “Andriuolo”).

Other tombs of the fifth century BC have monochrome walls. Most of them simply have white backgrounds without additional colors (*Fig. 5*). Around twenty tombs of this type have been identified so far. However, some other tombs of the same period (at least three) were painted entirely in red.

*Frescoed tombs with red/black base on white ground or completely red walls (sixth and fifth centuries BC)*

<i>Tomb</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Grave goods</i>	<i>Dating and bibliography</i>
‘Palmetta Tomb’ T. 781 at Arcioni ( <i>Fig. 6</i> ) (inhumation, female c. 20 years old)	Cist grave (inner measurements: m 1,98 × 1,05 × 0,93); black and red base on white ground, two black lines above base, red line running along the top; lid: black frame on white ground with palmettes in corners	Two Athenian black-figured lekythoi found on top of the lid	End of sixth century BC (CIPRIANI, PONTRANDOLFO 2010, p. 596)

Tempa del Prete Tomb 1/1968 (Fig. 7) (inhumation?)	Cist grave (m 1,93 × 0,96 × 0,79); red base on white ground; two black lines above base	Two Athenian black-figured lekythoi (one of which is lost) Locally produced jug, upper part covered with black glaze Alabastron	Around 500 BC
Tempa del Prete, Tomb of the Diver (Figs. 1-3) (inhumation)	Cist grave (m 1,93 × 0,96 × 0,79) description see above	Athenian black-figured lekythos Lyre made of tortoiseshell and iron elements Two alabastra?	First quarter of the fifth century BC (NAPOLI 1972)
Gaudo Tomb 310 (Fig. 8)	Cist grave (m 1,85 × 0,95 × 0,82); walls painted in red	Lekythos	First half fifth century BC? (CIPRIANI 2000, p. 198)
Gaudo Tomb 312 (inhumation, female over 60 years old?)	Cist grave (m 3,12 × 0,85 × 0,83); walls painted in red	-	First half fifth century BC? (CIPRIANI 2000, p. 198)
Gaudo, Tomb 232 (Fig. 9) (inhumation)	Cist grave (m 2,17 × 0,99 × 0,89); walls painted in red	Attic black figure Lekythos	First half fifth century BC (CIPRIANI 2000, p. 198)
Gaudo Tomb 314 (Fig. 10) (inhumation, female, age 20-30)	Cist grave (m 2,09 × 0,97 × 0,89); red base on white ground, two black lines above base, red line running along the top; lid: red frame on white ground	-	First half fifth century BC? (CIPRIANI 2000, p. 198)
Gaudo Tomb 320 (Fig. 11) (inhumation)	Cist grave (m 2,29 × 0,92 × 1,17) red base on white ground, blue line above base, blue and red line along the top; lid has white plaster	-	First half fifth century BC? (CIPRIANI 2000, p. 198)
Gaudo Tomb 210 (Fig. 12) (inhumation, male, age 50-60?)	Cist grave (m 1,92 × 0,94 × 0,93); black base on white ground, black and red lines above base		Late fifth century BC? (PONTRANDOLFO, ROUVERET 1992, p. 377)
Arcioni Tomb 642 (Fig. 13) (inhumation)	Cist grave (m 1,89 × 0,91 × 0,91); black base, black and red lines above base, black line running along the top (the painted slabs are lost and are known only through descriptions and drawings)	Black-glazed lebes gamikos (without lid) Black-glazed skyphos	400/390 BC (PONTRANDOLFO, ROUVERET 1992, p. 360)

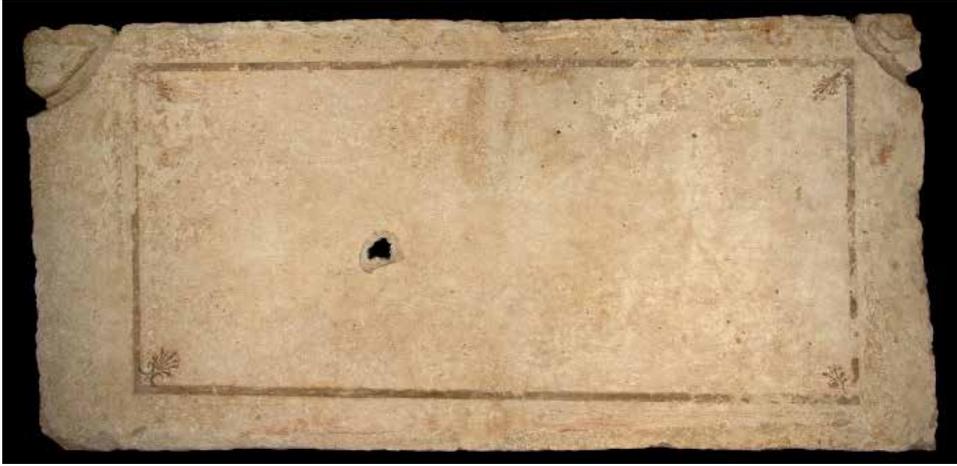


Fig. 6a. Tomb of the Palmettas (Tomb 781 Arcioni): downside of the lid (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).



Fig. 6b. Tomb of the Palmettas: south slab (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).

Some of the frescoed tombs in this list share another peculiarity with the Tomb of the Diver: the underside of the lid is decorated. The image of the diver is extremely unusual not only because it has no direct parallels in terms of iconography, but also because the lid is painted. The lids of the vast majority of cist tombs from Paestum and other sites in Italy are undecorated. However, at Paestum, there are at least two other tombs in which the underside of the lid was decorated. The most striking one is the so-called Palmetta Tomb (*Fig. 6*). The lid has the same kind of ‘frame’ with four palmette motifs in the corners as in the Tomb of the Diver. While the ‘frame’ in the Tomb of the Diver is drawn freehand, in the case of the Palmetta tomb, a straight edge was used to draw both the outlines of the frame and the central lines of the palmettes (*Fig. 14*). Two Athenian black-figured lekythoi found on the lid date the tomb to the late sixth century BC. One of them can be ascribed



Fig. 6c. Tomb of the Palmettas: west slab (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).



Fig. 7. Tempa del Prete: Tomb 1: wall decoration (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).

to the Leaving-Warrior-Group and has parallels with late sixth-century tomb groups from the Athenian Kerameikos.

The Palmetta Tomb was part of a nucleus of four burials separated from other burials not only in terms of their position, but also by a small channel carved into the rock and containing pottery sherds which date to around 480/70 BC (*Fig. 15*). The Palmetta Tomb is the oldest of the three burials. It is followed by Tomb 689, a cist grave with white plaster on the walls containing a black figured lekythos that can be ascribed to the same circle or

workshop as the one from the Tomb of the Diver (Athena Painter?). A third cist burial (Tomb 779) made of slabs without plaster decoration was dug into the rock as part of a kind of enlargement of the channel on the northern edge of the precinct. Inside, the archaeologists found a skeleton as well as three round bronze appliques, but no grave goods. To the south of tombs 781 (“Palmetta Tomb”) and 689, a young child was buried in a small circular pit (diam. 0.8 meters), which was dug into the rock (tomb 780). The skeleton was found in a crouched position. Apart from two roof tiles, no further grave goods were found.

While other frescoed tombs are concentrated in specific areas of the necropolis (south side of Gaudio, Tempa del Prete), none of them appears to be separated by a channel or by a precinct from other tombs, as in the case of the nucleus of the Palmetta Tomb.

#### ELITE REPRESENTATION IN URBAN AND RURAL BURIAL GROUNDS

Evidently, the frescoed tombs of Paestum belonged to small or medium-size nuclei which were, in one way or another, separated from other ‘normal’ burials of the same period. The reason for this kind of separation can hardly have been social marginality or exclusion from citizenship, given that some of the discussed tombs occupy central areas in the north necropolis. The nucleus of frescoed tombs at Gaudio has been described as a marginal site in a ‘rural’ environment<sup>16</sup>. However, the tombs in this nucleus occupy one of the most prestigious areas in this part of the necropolis (as far as is known through excavations), as they are located on the south side near the city which lies at a distance of about five-hundred meters, considerably less than in the case of the ‘urban’ necropolis of Santa Venera south of Paestum which lies at a distance of about 750 meters from the city.

This leads to my first point: The Tomb of the Diver is part of a group of tombs which are special for a series of reasons (decoration, position) but which are by no means mar-

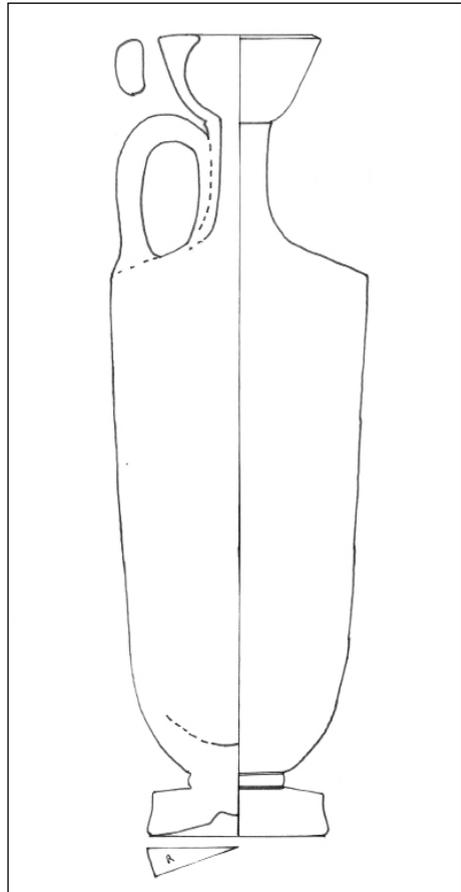


Fig. 8. Northern necropolis: lekythos from Tomb 310 at Gaudio (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).

<sup>16</sup> CIPRIANI 2000, pp. 197-199, 212; CIPRIANI, PONTRANDOLFO 2012, p. 596.



Fig. 9. Northern necropolis: Tomb 232 at Gaudio (Archivio del Parco Archeologico di Paestum/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali).