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## Primary Use of the Technical Language of Archaeology and its Re-Adaptation for Anglophones: A Case Study

### Abstract

*The Italian technical terms linked to Archaeology, of significant Greek and Latin origins, do not have appropriate multilingual renditions for specific characteristics that can be suitable for non-Italian speaking readers. The main reasons for this aspect are the complex stratifications in terminology and the sense of linguistic belonging that has always characterised the Italian institutions which have performed the studies in Archaeology. Such an issue has had evident repercussions on scientific publications, where authors and recipients have often coincided, despite today's advancements in intercultural and inter-linguistic communication.*

*The case study examined here regards the possibility to provide English-speaking readers with scientific materials related to the archaeological site of the Etruscan city of Veii (VT) together with the museums where most of the materials are housed today.*

*Keywords: technical terms; multilingual renditions; terminology; stratifications; intercultural communication.*

In the last few decades, the archaeological research in Italy has yielded the first significant results of an intense process of internationalisation, after a period in which archaeology was mainly characterised by studies whose diffusion outside Italy had never been taken into account. This is the reason why the vast majority of the data produced over time were accessible only by Italian readers, or, in very low percentage, by an English audience. Such circumstances have never been assessed carefully, due to the fact that, in the past, the Italian archaeological sites were very little visited by a non-specialised or foreign public, which, as a consequence, has confined them to an exclusive local interest.

Since its establishment as a scientific discipline back in the 1970s, two of the unique features of the Italian archaeological research have been its strong domestic belonging and closeness towards an international scenario, resulting in the assumption that such specific contexts could not be addressed in other environments, where a form of socio-linguistic adaptation was not considered plausible<sup>1</sup>. The ever increasing active participations of foreign universities in historical and archaeological investigations, together with a renewed interest shown by tourists,

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<sup>1</sup> Besides Italian, the tradition languages linked to the reconstruction the ancient civilisations are those of Central Europe, namely French, English and German; starting from the nineteenth century, in their countries, considerable studies have been performed, often funded by political authorities. Nevertheless, even in the above-mentioned cases, the inter-linguistic communication took place among the same scholars involved in the studies; such situation improved more easily and at a fast pace if compared to Italy.

have led to a considerable improvement in that regard.

As a matter of fact, the main twelfth-century scholars in the field of archaeology were both authors and recipients of the most important results achieved over time – this appears to be in complete contrast with current trends, which are instead dominated by great advancements in technologies that today allow for multiple multilingual renditions of a text.

This contribution is the re-elaboration of a dissertation whose central study is the adaptation of technical language linked to archaeology for Anglophone readers<sup>2</sup>. The funerary or sacred contexts that have been analysed throughout the study belong to the ancient Etruscan city of *Veii*, located only 15 kilometres north of the Roman Republic, which destroyed *Veii* in 396 B.C., to later re-found it as a *colonia*, (in mid-first century B. C.) and a *municipium* (during Augustan Age)<sup>3</sup>. The close relationship between the two cities, that was not simply topographical, is still clearly present during a visit to the archaeological park of *Veii*, situated near the northern outskirts of Rome. Such correlation between the history of the two centres needs to be addressed by making the content more suitable in order to guarantee an actual understanding of the events occurred during the centuries before 396 B.C. Nevertheless, the current situation at a territorial level is far more complicated than this.

Two of the most important areas within the Archaeological Park of *Veii*<sup>4</sup>, namely the Museum of the *Agro Veientano*<sup>5</sup> and the sections of the Etruscan Museum of *Villa Giulia* (in Rome)<sup>6</sup>, only provide information in the Italian language, thus leading non-Italian speaking visitors to interpret the contexts autonomously, without the support of professional guides. The fitting choices of the archaeological areas, together with the relevant museums, are still today greatly oriented towards an Italian audience, without considering that these would clearly represent a considerable potential if aimed at international and multilingual targets.

The quality and quantity of the data used for the diachronic reconstruction of its territory make *Veii* a multi-faceted case of study. The point is that such complexity and abundance of materials have not found today a proper response that could guarantee a valid promotion from an historical and archaeological point of view. The scientific publications linked to the decades-long investigations performed *in situ* by the main involved bodies (universities and archaeological superintendence authorities) have not so far produced valid supports and tools in foreign languages, apart from some rare exceptions related to general school activities or brief

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<sup>2</sup> Dissertation written by Faustino Dardi and defended on 07/07/2015 in Pisa at the Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici (Higher School for Translators and Interpreters), whose title is "Veii: A Study of Five Tombs from the Orientalising and Archaic Periods. A Proposal of Analysis for Anglophones" (Supervisors: Ms Veronica Irene Cioni and Ms Eleonora Romanò).

<sup>3</sup> The historical importance that *Veii* had in its relationship with the Roman Republic is due to the fact that it was the first centre to be occupied during the centuries-long process of romanisation, which did not involve only Etruria, but all the Italic peninsula. See BOITANI (2001); BOITANI (2008); CASCINO, DI GIUSEPPE, PATTERSON (2012); COLONNA (2003).

<sup>4</sup> Soprintendenza Archeologica del Lazio e dell'Etruria (The Archaeological Superintendence of Latium and Southern) Etruria) <http://www.archeologia Lazio.beniculturali.it/it/291/veio>; <http://www.parcodiveio.it>

<sup>5</sup> Museo dell'Agro Veientano (Museum of the Agro Veientano) [http://www.comune.formello.rm.it/pagina2906\\_museo-agro-veientano.html](http://www.comune.formello.rm.it/pagina2906_museo-agro-veientano.html)

<sup>6</sup> Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia (National Etruscan Museum of Villa Giulia) <http://www.villagiulia.beniculturali.it>

texts.

Such lack of innovation is not only the result of obsolete management at ministerial level - in strong need for a change -, but also that of actual difficulties due to the mandatory use of technical lexicon, which is a real obstacle for a complete understanding of ancient contexts. Technical terms, indeed, are linked to constructive and decorative aspects that are still adhering firmly to times and words that cannot be considered appropriate and valid today. This is because the origins of most of the technical words used are re-elaborated or simply derive from Ancient Greek and Latin, whose importance cannot be fully understood by the general public.

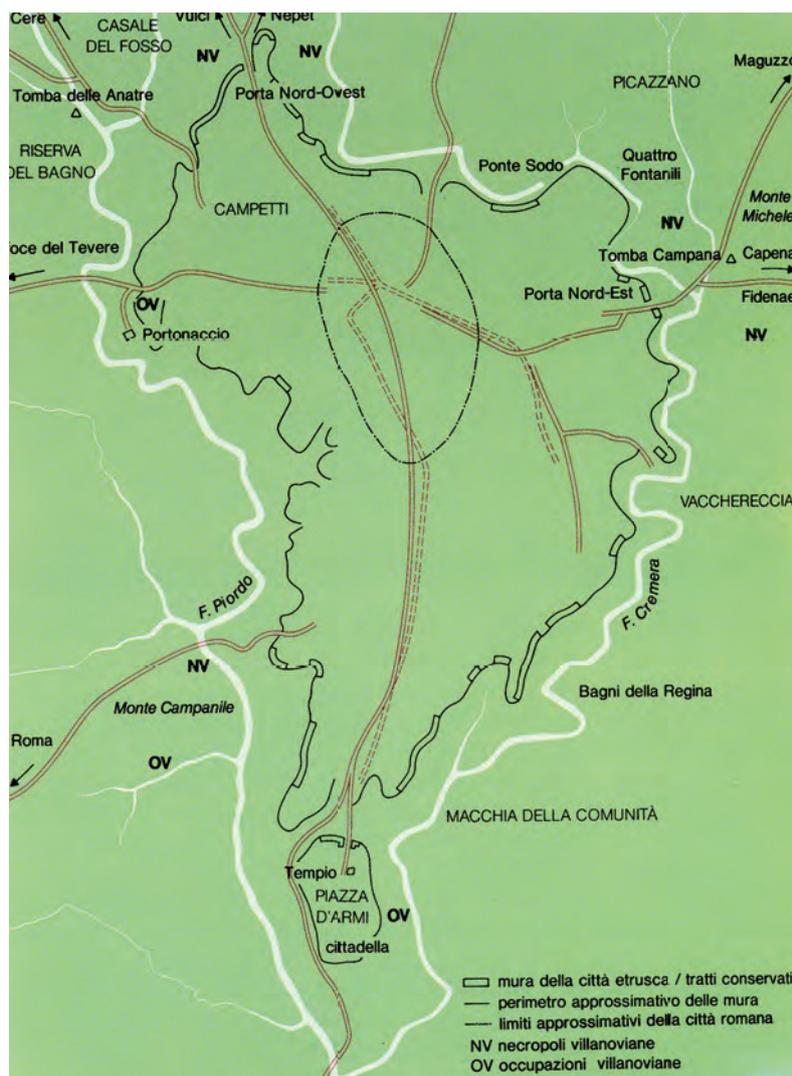


Fig. 1 Distribution of the studied areas (from BARTOLONI 2010)

On the other hand, if these were no longer used for a scientific divulgation of the historical and cultural heritage, a lack of information would be produced, since such lexicon was commonly used among ancient peoples who did not regard it as "specialistic". Overall, what can be undoubtedly assumed is that in today's academia, there seems to be a tendency to maintain specialistic terms even when they are not necessary, for instance when the aim of a text is to communicate with readers who belong to different linguistic and cultural levels.

Clear examples of an incorrect foreign language adaptation of contexts that are potentially suitable for an international audience (at least Anglophone) can be traced in the exposition

materials of the Archaeological Park of Veii<sup>7</sup> – here, the interesting funerary structures from the Orientalising and Archaic periods (respectively seventh century B. C. and sixth-first half of the fifth century B.C.), still partially visible, are not explained properly from an historical point of view<sup>8</sup>.

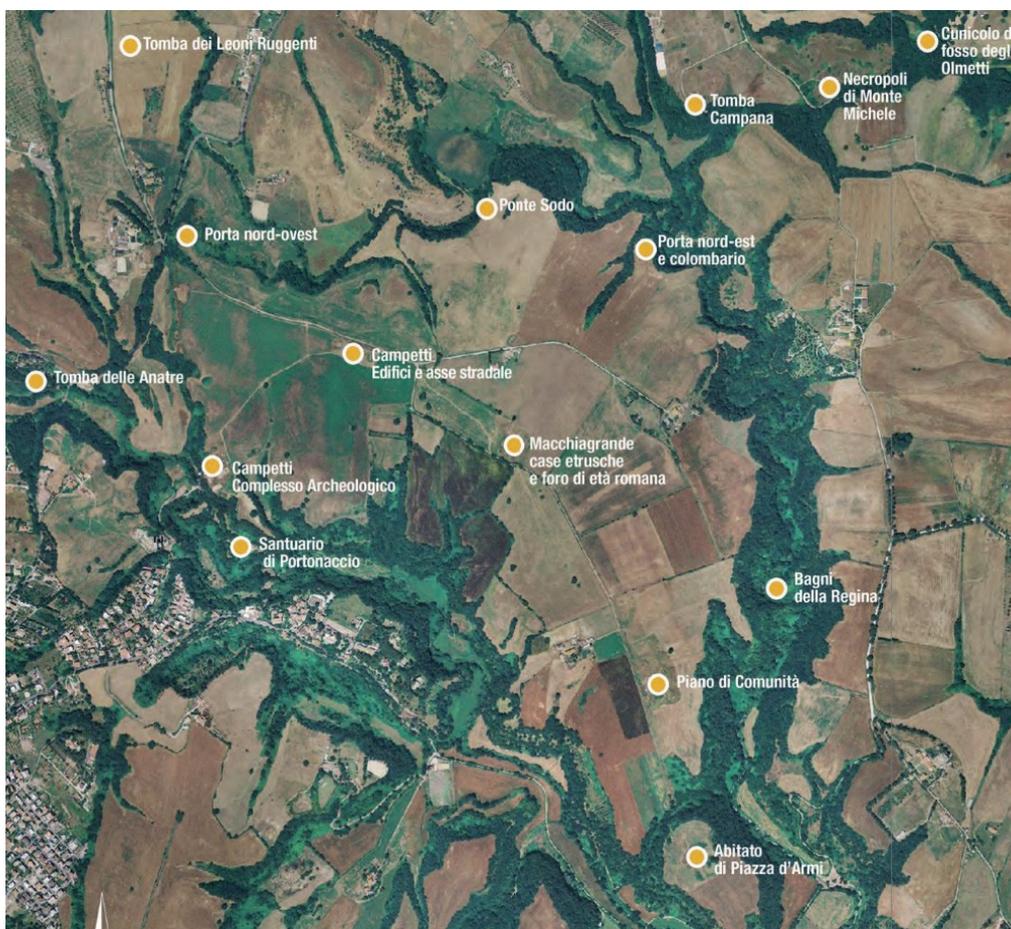


Fig. 2 Aerial photography of the archaeological site (from REGGI ET ALII 2010)

The extraordinary value of their structural, decorative and ethnic features - which proves fundamental for the understanding of the funeral and sacred rituals of the entire Etruscan civilisation - ends up confined in a generic, vague dimension of "ancient" and "antique", with no specifications or additional information on the contexts. Even though they are in a place where the flow of visitors is evident for the wide range of activities offered, the structures are not promoted through precise reference texts capable to convey their historical meaning to an extended audience.

In particular, the most representative and interesting contexts in that regard are the 'Tomb of the Roaring Lions' (*Tomba dei Leoni Ruggenti*)<sup>9</sup>, the 'Tomb of the Ducks' (*Tomba delle Anatre*)<sup>10</sup>, the 'Princely Tomb no 5 at Monte Michele' (*Tomba Principesca n. 5 a Monte Michele*)<sup>11</sup>, the 'Chigi

<sup>7</sup> The archaeological park covers only a small part of the vast Parco Regionale di Veio (Regional Park of Veii).

<sup>8</sup> See BARTOLONI (1995), BARTOLONI (1997), BERARDINETTI (1994-1995), BETTINI (1977); DE SANTIS (1995), DI SARCINA (2012); DRAGO (1995); MORETTI SGUBINI (2001b).

<sup>9</sup> REGGI (2010).

<sup>10</sup> BROCATO (2008); BROCATO (2012).

<sup>11</sup> BOITANI (1982); BOITANI (1985).

*Tumulo'* (*Tumulo Chigi*)<sup>12</sup> and the 'Campana Tomb' (*Tomba Campana*)<sup>13</sup>. Thanks to their structural characteristics (the *Chigi Tumulo*), rich grave goods (the Princely Tomb no 5), parietal paintings still partially preserved (the Tomb of the Roaring Lions and the Tomb of the Ducks) and controversial past investigations (The *Campana Tomb*), the five structures are a valid starting point for scientific studies that may be addressed to an international audience.

Their monumental nature, conformation and positions are all data that may prove ideal for the production of further materials for multicultural environments and multilingual targets, by means of a detailed study of specialistic lexicon of archaeology and appropriate communicative solutions.

### **The Tomb of the Ducks: A Case Study<sup>14</sup>**

The Tomb of the Ducks, English translation of *La Tomba delle Anatre*, is situated in the west of the territory of *Veii*, on a hill bordered by two rivers, the *Fosso del Piordo* and the *Fosso della Rimessola*. The tomb is part of the little-known necropolis of *Riserva del Bagno*, a location that, unlike most of the other areas surrounding the plateau, has not been significantly investigated<sup>15</sup>. The Orientalising<sup>16</sup> tomb was brought to light in 1958 by Alfredo De Agostino who briefly described the state of the tomb in a report sent to the Superintendence.<sup>17</sup> After this important achievement, the excavations in the necropolis continued during the next two years and led to the discovery of another four tombs similar in structure, all built in the same line.<sup>18</sup>

Today, due to the erosion and change in earth, this part of the area is rather steep; nevertheless, the tomb is easily reachable through a path that retraces an ancient route going up the hill. The outdoor rectangular *dromos* is 2.8 meters wide and presents a slight difference in the length of the two sides; this is because the east side allowed the path to reach the entrance of the tomb. The deterioration of the tufa over time has caused several vertical and horizontal lesions. In addition, the bottom part of the internal walls of the *dromos* features remnants of red paintings that are no longer visible because of restoration works that probably took place in 1963<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> MICHETTI - VAN KAMPENI (2014).

<sup>13</sup> REGGI ET ALII (2010).

<sup>14</sup> Among the funerary contexts examined in Faustino Dardi's dissertation, is also the Tomb of the Ducks, on which extensive investigations have been performed recently. Based on new data coming from a recent publication by Paolo Brocato, this tomb has been chosen as an example of re-adaptation of reading materials for Anglophones. In particular, it is interesting to analyse the difference in content and style when passing from a scientifically organised text to its version in a brochure-like presentation.

<sup>15</sup> As stated by Paolo Brocato, "è difficile pensare che non ci sia stato interesse per la zona" (It seems difficult to think that no one has been interested in this area). This would explain the discovery of a number of back urns and vases at *Riserva del Bagno* in 1842, according to a map by Luigi Canina. See: BROCATO (2008: 36).

<sup>16</sup> Since the first half of the seventh century, the first chamber tombs. These consisted in an outdoor *dromos* leading to one or more funerary chambers.

<sup>17</sup> This description indicates the state of preservation of the parietal paintings along with the works to be performed. It also gives some details about the outside and the inside, in particular about the *dromos* and the square room dedicated to the burials and the possible reconstruction of some architectonic elements. See: BROCATO (2008: 37-38).

<sup>18</sup> See: BROCATO (2008: 40).

<sup>19</sup> The intention was probably that of making the structure stand out so that it could be seen in the distance. This use of painting decorations is also evident in tomb 868 located at *Casale del Fosso*. See: BROCATO (2008: 53; 107).

The entrance door is at the end of the *dromos*, and when the excavations started, it was completely closed with tufa blocks of different size. This implies that the door might have been opened after its first closure because of new burials, and then closed again with different blocks of tufa. The tomb has a square planimetry (north side: 3.29, south side: 3.28, east side 3.11, west side 3.00) with a total surface of 9.94 square meters. The internal walls taper towards the top and have an average height of 1.62 meters. The wall at the bottom is straight, whilst the sidewalls tend to follow a curvilinear line that gives the room further space at the centre.

The floor is even and extends to the west of the area in correspondence with the burial bed. The latter consists of a low step covered with five plates of different size. The complex structure of the bed suggests the presence of a space for the deposition of the body, a side border and a recess serving as a coverage of the bed. Two main reconstructions have been proposed.

The first, by Mario Torelli, identified the presence of a wooden canopied bed; the second, by Paolo Brocato, a sarcophagus-like bed. According to the last data collected, it is possible to state that the funerary bed had gone through two different phases: a canopied or sarcophagus-like bed first and a short, uncovered plane exactly as it is now.<sup>20</sup> Whatever the solution adopted in the tomb, it did not last long, since the bed soon collapsed and was then turned into what is visible today.

The original surface of the ceiling is considerably damaged, due to the separation of some parts over time; nevertheless, the investigated pitches have allowed for the reconstruction of the pavilion-like shape of the roof.

The decorative painting<sup>21</sup> of the Tomb of the Ducks is one of the most representative examples of painting in South Etruria.<sup>22</sup> All the internal walls feature paintings, and, as said before, evidence shows that the external walls were also painted. The painting is divided into two registers separated by a band consisting of three black horizontal lines and comprising a yellow line in the space between the first and second lower lines, and a red line at the top. The only part of the internal walls without such a band is that of the funerary bed. This is because of the presence of the recesses for the coverage of the bed.

The entrance door divides the wall into two parts showing two different types of decoration. The east part is characterised by the same decoration as the other walls, whilst the west part features a band of two unrefined black lines, comprising a yellow line; these seem to have been

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<sup>20</sup> Based on this data, it is useful to point out the reconstruction of the funerary bed carried out by Paolo Brocato BROCATO (2008: 59-60). The hypothesis of the wooden canopied bed finds no evidence today, although it is technically plausible. Such a reconstruction involves the presence of at least three wooden vertical supports fixed at the centre and along the sides. A wooden beam might have been necessary for the cover of the bed. This would result in a canopied bed, half in wood, half in stone. In the second case, a sarcophagus-like bed might have required vertical plates for the box and at least three smaller plates for the cover. A clear example of a sarcophagus-like bed is provided by tomb no 1089 at Casal del Fosso that contains a bed made of plates and with a cover of triangular plates. See: BROCATO (2008: 59-60); TORELLI (1980: 22); COLONNA (1989: 19).

<sup>21</sup> The technique used is that of *pictura linearis*. It consisted in applying natural pigments to the wall that would later absorb them. The decorations were very simple and involved above all curved or straight lines.

<sup>22</sup> The technique used to paint this tomb is, to some extent, an evolution of the painting typical of South Etruria, because the colour is applied to a layer of clay and the animals depicted have a precise shape. Nevertheless, it is important to quote Paolo Brocato, who claimed that: "La grande novità delle pitture antiche di Veio è l'originalità tecnica con cui vengono realizzate." See: BROCATO (2008:130-131).

made with less accuracy compared to the others. It is possible that this part of the wall did not include any decoration before the reconstruction of the bed and that it was only painted after, since the absence of any structure covering the bed made it visible.<sup>23</sup> It is important to stress that it would have been somewhat improbable to disregard such an important part in direct contact with the dead.

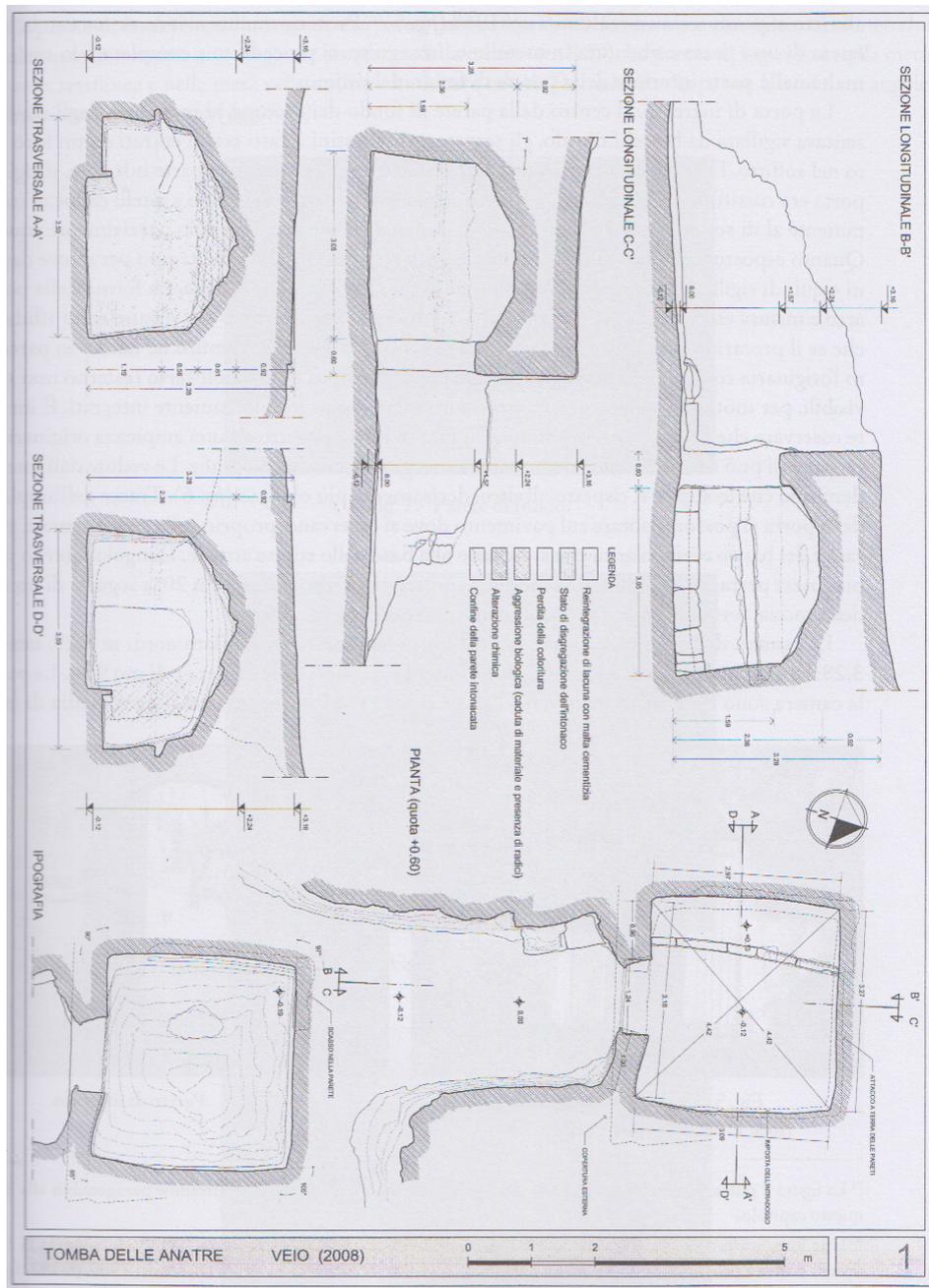


Fig. 3 Plan and section of the Tomb of the Ducks (from BROCATO 2012)

Therefore, the band divides two big portions of the walls; the upper part painted red and the lower part yellow. Despite the separation of the plaster in certain points and the state of deterioration of the walls, the painting is rather uniform in both parts.

The ceiling features simple geometric decorations, once painted yellow and red in correspondence

<sup>23</sup> A similar decoration can be found also at the striking Tomb of the Roaring Lions, which will be addressed later in this chapter. See: BROCATO (2008: 97)

with the pitch of the roof. Of these decorations, nearly nothing is left today, because in the past, the ceiling underwent several separations from the stone bank.<sup>24</sup>

In the upper part of the bottom wall, five water birds dominate the yellow background. They shift westwards and occupy the space until the coverage of the bed. They cover half of the yellow painting and rest upon the first black line.<sup>25</sup>

The first bird on the right has a red body and head, neck and legs surrounded by a black line. In the internal perimeter of the body, it is possible to identify more intense brush strokes, forming a motif with curls or small snakes, a possible imitation of the feathers of the animal. In addition, a motif with a line possibly referring to the wing of the bird is slightly visible in the body.<sup>26</sup>

The head and neck are painted with a black outline, the beak is prominent, and the legs have a triangle continuing into two lines from which two phalanges branch out.

A red line surrounds the second water bird. The body is discontinuous in the front and at the back and absent in the remaining parts. The body is decorated with back broken lines that diminish in height towards the back of the animal. The head, neck and legs follow the same solution as the previous bird; the beak is more curved than that of the first bird.

The third bird features a body coloured red, with a black element that proposes the profile of the animal, probably a wing. The head is similar to the previous animals and the details of the legs are not visible because of their state of preservation.

The fourth bird is characterised by a red outline. Like the second bird, the trait of the body is also discontinuous. In the middle of the body is a motif with net from which a broken line comes out, reaching the back of the animal. The beak is curved and the legs are not fully visible because of the separation of a fragment from the wall.

A red body characterises the fifth bird. The outline is clear and well engraved. The internal part of the body features a motif with a broken line that is barely visible. The head and the legs are similar to those of the other ducks, whilst the beak is curved.<sup>27</sup>

After providing a clear picture of the Tomb of the Ducks, it is now important to reflect on the interpretation of the paintings. According to archaeologist Paolo Brocato –who has been of great inspiration for this paragraph on the Tomb of the Ducks–, the simplicity of the animals can be

<sup>24</sup> The tendency to paint the ceiling red is also confirmed by tomb no 5 at Monte Michele, at Veii. This tomb will be addressed in greater detail in this chapter. See: BROCATO (2008: 107).

<sup>25</sup> In the Orientalising funerary painting, the most immediate comparison is that of the Tomb of the Roaring Lions. Here, the motif with water birds is proposed, but the context is more complicated because of the presence of lions. The birds are painted red and black with the outline technique. They are on the bottom wall, alternated in two registers so as to occupy the entire space over the lions, on the right wall arranged in a line, and on the entrance wall. Some elements recall the bird of the Tomb of the Ducks, such as the body of the animal and the details in it. An important difference regards the position of the legs of the birds. Indeed, in the Tomb of the Roaring Lions, the birds' legs are stretched, barely touching the ground as if they are about to take flight. See: BROCATO (1998: 108-109); BOITANI (2010: 29-33).

<sup>26</sup> See DE AGOSTINO (1963: plates LXXXVI); DE AGOSTINO (1964); DE AGOSTINO (1965: 145, Fig. 2).

<sup>27</sup> The five birds have similar features. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe a difference in the head of the animals. Indeed, the first three animals are characterised by a triangle-like head, whereas the last two birds have a circular head from which the curved beak originates. This implies a difference in the trait of the outline: in the first case, a curvilinear trait and a horizontal line; in the second case, a rotatory movement starting from the beak.

misleading. On the one hand, it can reduce the interpretative aspects and underestimate the entity of the paintings; on the other hand, it could determine an amplification and extreme polysemy.<sup>28</sup>

In the tomb, everything revolves around the water birds and colours. If the Etruscan tomb is the combination of life and death, then the use of yellow and red might refer to life in heaven and life on earth respectively.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, red and yellow might also refer to the sun and flames. This can be interpreted with the dualism of good and evil during and after life, the dualism of heaven and hell.<sup>30</sup> It is also important to notice that the sun and animals, in particular birds, are in close proximity.



*Fig. 4 Decoration of the bottom wall in the Tomb of the Ducks*

*(from BROCATO 2012)*

A direct observation of nature has always provided examples of the link between the sun and animals: the migration of birds in the spring, sunrise, sunset, and the cycle of certain phenomena related to vegetation.<sup>31</sup>

As stated by Brocato, the depiction of birds in the funerary Etruscan painting seems to have a meaning that goes beyond the mere representation of the natural or domestic environment. It has a complex symbolic meaning, linked to religious ideology. This explains why birds were usually depicted in relation with the journey of the dead towards the afterlife.

Despite the advances in research in the field of ancient symbolism and ideology, it is rather

<sup>28</sup> See BROCATO (2008: 133); BROCATO (2012: 13-42)

<sup>29</sup> See BROCATO (2008: 134).

<sup>30</sup> To this end, it is interesting to quote Paolo Brocato: "Il viaggio dell'uccello verso il mondo celeste per accompagnare il defunto verso il sole, simbolo dell'eterno risorgere, e il tuffo nel mare dell'uomo ma anche dell'uccello acquatico, entrambi soggetti della pittura funeraria, simbolicamente alludono all'accesso nella dimensione ultraterrena.". See BROCATO (2008: 142).

<sup>31</sup> It is also important to recall that, in Greek mythology, Medea and Circe were both the Sun's daughters, and Circe's power was that of transforming people into animals and vice versa. This is another vivid example of the link between animals and the sun. See BROCATO (2008: 138).

difficult to find solutions to such complex topics. However, the presence of a complicated religious ideology can be traced back to the first phase of Etruscan culture.<sup>32</sup>

As already stated before, an attempt could be performed for the Tomb of the Ducks, that has been object of a recent monograph connected with new symbolic interpretations and chemical analyses carried out on the parietal paintings after which the tomb is named. A example of monographic brochure intended for Anglophones is proposed below<sup>33</sup>:

As already mentioned, technical terms represent obstacles and clear difficulties that need to be overcome, even in cases when these have no equivalence in the target language, because of the presence of words derived from Ancient Greek or Latin. Equally difficult are concepts that cannot be translated according to modern logics -hence the impossibility to "modernise" them-, or expressions whose rendition may not be completely accurate but still fully acceptable. A descriptive glossary with clear information on the most important aspects of the various Italic realities would be a fundamental part of publications aimed at an international audience.

**Here are some examples<sup>34</sup>:**

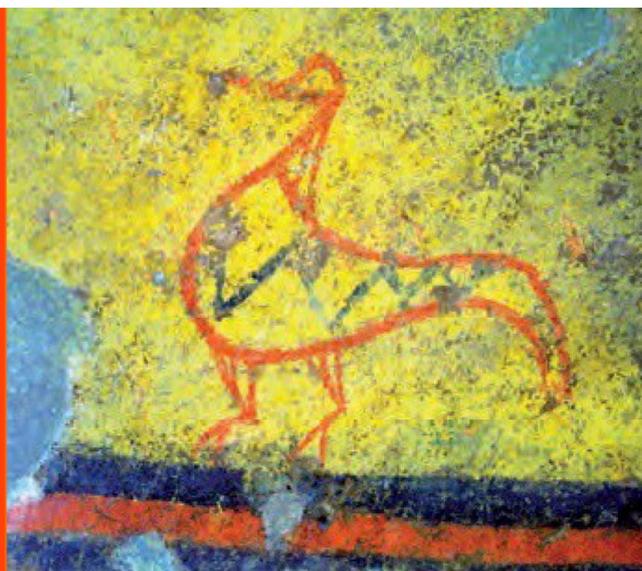
<p><b>BUCCHERO</b> (from italian <i>bùcchero</i>)</p>	<p><i>A class of ceramics used during meals, typical of central Italy and regarded as the pottery of ancient Etruria. Its black fabric distinguishes it, as well as the glossy, black surface achieved through a process of reduction during which it was fired. Indeed, in the smoke-filled atmosphere, the flames drew oxygen molecules from the iron oxide of the pottery. This changed the colour from its natural red to black.</i></p>
<p><b>CANOPO</b> (from italian <i>canòpo</i>)</p>	<p><i>Etruscan funerary vase made of metal or ceramics used for the preservation of ashes and characterised by a human head-shaped lid.</i></p>
<p><b>CHTONIC</b> (from greek <i>χθόνιος</i>)</p>	<p><i>Respectively "under earth" and "earth". Term related to the cult of divinities living under the earth.</i></p>
<p><b>DEVIL SHAPE</b> (from italian <i>dèmone</i>)</p>	<p><i>A particular shape of a painted element that is similar to a butterfly or a single axe. In Italian, it is called "dèmone" and not "diavolo" because the pagan entity differed considerably from the Christian entity</i></p>
<p><b>DOLIUM</b> (from latin <i>dòlium</i>)</p>	<p><i>Spherical terracotta container used for the transportation of goods and for the storage of food. It was often reused as a cinerary container. The name is in Latin but many Italic and Greek peoples used the same shape.</i></p>
<p><b>DROMOS</b> (from greek <i>Δρόμος</i>)</p>	<p><i>Greek and Etruscan architectural element used in funerary contexts or other types of structures with the function of leading to a building.</i></p>
<p><b>FLABELLUM</b> (from latin <i>flabèllum</i>)</p>	<p><i>Element in the shape of a fan, umbrella or canopy, used in both pagan and Christian rituals.</i></p>

<sup>32</sup> See BROCATO (2008: 147).

<sup>33</sup> This sample was presented and discussed during the defence of Faustino Dardi's dissertation. It was created as an example of re-elaborated technical information aimed at Anglophones (see footnote no 2).

<sup>34</sup> The proposed terms have been presented in a wider technical glossary drawn up by Faustino Dardi and included in his final dissertation (see footnote no 2) The first phase of the drawing up of the specialist glossary has been the identification of each term in their particular context and its adaptation to Greek or Latin, by delving into the reference materials used or hard or electronic dictionaries. The next phase has been the evaluation of their possible translation according to a linguistic and socio-cultural analysis. Finally, the last phase has been the explanation in English, produced based on a selection of information taken from the scientific publications consulted for the final paper.

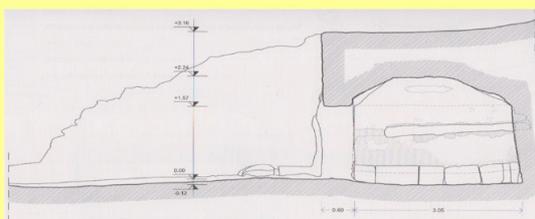
## ***THE TOMB OF THE DUCKS***



The Tomb of the Ducks (in Italian "*La Tomba delle Anatre*") is situated at the necropolis of *Riserva del Bagno*, in the west of the territory of *Veii*, on a hill bordered by the rivers *Fosso del Piordo* and *Fosso della Rimessola*. It was brought to light in 1958.

The outdoor rectangular *dromos* (corridor) is 2.8 meters wide and features a slight difference in the length of the two sides; this is because the east side allowed the path to reach the entrance of the tomb.

The deterioration of the tufa (the local stone) over time has caused several lesions. The bottom part of the internal walls of the *dromos* features remnants of red paintings that are no longer visible because of restoration works that probably took place in 1963.



The entrance door is at the end of the *dromos*, and when the excavations started, it was completely closed with tufa blocks of different size. This implies that the door might have been opened after its first closure because of new burials, and then closed again with different blocks of tufa.

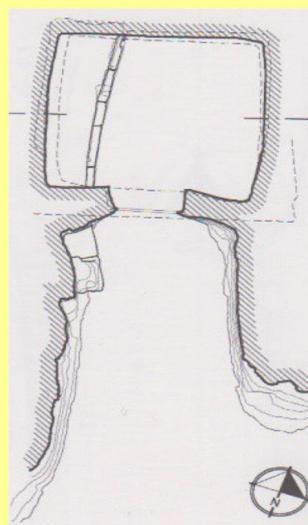
The tomb has a square plan and the internal walls taper towards the top with an average height of 1.62 meters. The wall at the bottom is straight, whilst the side walls tend to follow a curvilinear line that gives the room further space at the centre. The floor is even and extends to the west of the area in correspondence with the burial bed. The latter consists of a low step covered with five plates of different size.

The complex structure of the bed suggests the presence of a space for the deposition of the body, a side border and a recess serving as a cover for the bed.

Two main reconstructions have been proposed. The first identified the presence of a wooden canopied bed; the second, a sarcophagus-like bed.

According to the last data collected, it is possible to state that the funerary bed had gone through two different phases: a canopied or sarcophagus-like bed first and a short, uncovered plane exactly as it is now. Whatever the solution adopted in the tomb, it did not last long, since the bed soon collapsed and was then turned into what is visible today.

The original surface of the ceiling is damaged, due to the separation of some parts over time, but the investigated pitches have allowed for the reconstruction of the pavilion-like shape of the roof.



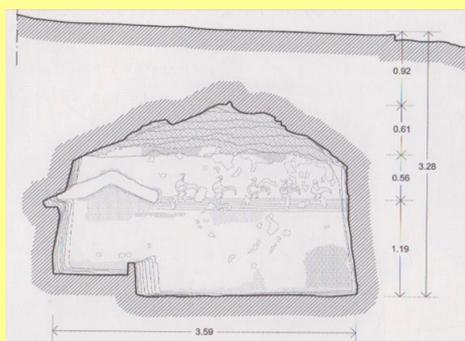
### *The Parietal Decorations*

The decorative painting of the Tomb of the Ducks is one of the most representative examples in South Etruria. All the internal walls feature decorations evidence shows that the external walls were also painted.

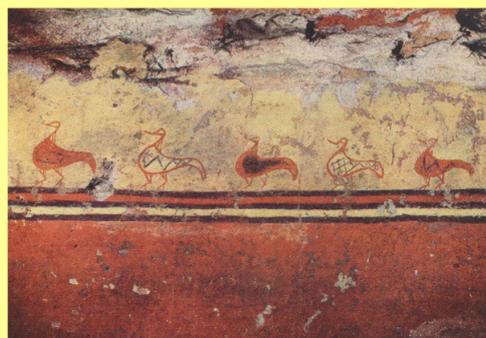
These are divided into two registers separated by a band consisting of three black lines and comprising a yellow one in the space between the first and second lower lines, and a red one at the top.

The only part of the internal walls without such a band is that of the funerary bed. This is because of the presence of the recesses for the coverage of the bed.

The entrance door divides the wall into two parts showing two different types of decoration. The east part is characterised by the same decoration as the other walls, whilst the west part features a band of two unrefined black lines, comprising a yellow line. Therefore, the band divides two big portions of the walls; the upper part painted red and the lower part yellow.



Despite the separation of the plaster in certain points and the state of deterioration of the walls, the painting is rather uniform in both parts. The ceiling features simple geometric decorations. Of these, nearly nothing is left today, because in the past, the ceiling underwent several separations from the stone bank. In the upper part of the bottom wall, five water birds dominate the yellow background. They shift westwards and occupy the space until the coverage of the bed. They cover half of the yellow painting and rest upon the first black line.



The first bird on the right has a red body and head, neck and legs surrounded by a black line. In the internal perimeter of the body, it is possible to identify more intense brush strokes, forming a motif with curls or small snakes, a possible imitation of the feathers of the animal. In addition, a motif with a line possibly referring to the wing of the bird is slightly visible in the body. The head and neck are painted with a black outline, the beak is prominent, and the legs have a triangle continuing into two lines from which two phalanges branch out.

A red line surrounds the second water bird. The body is discontinuous in the front and at the back and absent in the remaining parts. The head, neck and legs follow the same solution as the previous bird; the beak is more curved than that of the first bird.

The third features a body coloured red, with a black element that proposes the profile of the animal, probably a wing. The head is similar to the previous animals and the details of the legs are not visible because of their state of preservation.

The fourth bird is characterised by a red outline. Like the second, the trait of the body is also discontinuous. In the middle of the body is a motif with net from which a broken line comes out, reaching the back of the animal. The beak is curved and the legs are not fully visible because of the separation of a fragment from the wall.

A red body characterises the fifth. The outline is clear and well engraved. The internal part of the body features a motif with a broken line that is barely visible. The head and the legs are similar to those of the other ducks, whilst the beak is curved.

### *The Interpretation of the Painting*

In the tomb, everything revolves around the water birds and colours. If the Etruscan tomb is the combination of life and death, then the use of yellow and red might refer to life in heaven and life on earth respectively. Red and yellow might also refer to the sun and flames. This can be interpreted with the dualism of good and evil during and after life, the dualism of heaven and hell. It is also important to notice that the sun and animals, in particular birds, are in close proximity. A direct observation of nature has always provided examples of the link between the sun and animals: the migration of birds in the spring, sunrise, sunset, and the cycle of certain phenomena related to vegetation.

The depiction of birds in the funerary Etruscan painting seems to have a meaning that goes beyond the mere representation of the natural or domestic environment. It has a complex symbolic meaning, linked to religious ideology. This explains why birds were usually depicted in relation with the journey of the dead towards the afterlife.

A similar situation can be found as regards the two museums that are of great interest for this study. Even though the National Museum of *Villa Giulia* features appropriate fitted exhibitions, the general offer does not seem to be fully effective for an Anglophone target, with a subsequent uncertainty of a large number of contexts housed there<sup>35</sup>. The Museums of the *Agro Veientano*, a body that is relative to a specific territorial area, is experiencing the same condition, despite its modest dimension which would allow for interesting multicultural and multilingual offers.

In conclusion, in the specific case of *Veii*, the importance to internationalise its historical reconstruction arises from the need to guarantee a re-elaborated version of the most significant studies. This seems even more urgent as regards recent publications, that are not suitable for the main segments of the population – medium-high from an economic point of view and whose mother tongue is not Italian – who are interested in archaeology. This is the only possible solution that may bridge the multi-cultural gap between an Italian and an English speaking audience; not to mention the situation of other European languages where a linguistic analysis ought to go hand in hand with the individuation of a valid approach that may guarantee the systematic study of ancient contexts in their particular lexical systems.

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<sup>35</sup> It seems interesting to highlight that the institutional website of the National Museum of Villa Giulia, the most important archive of Etruscan finds, is entirely in Italian.

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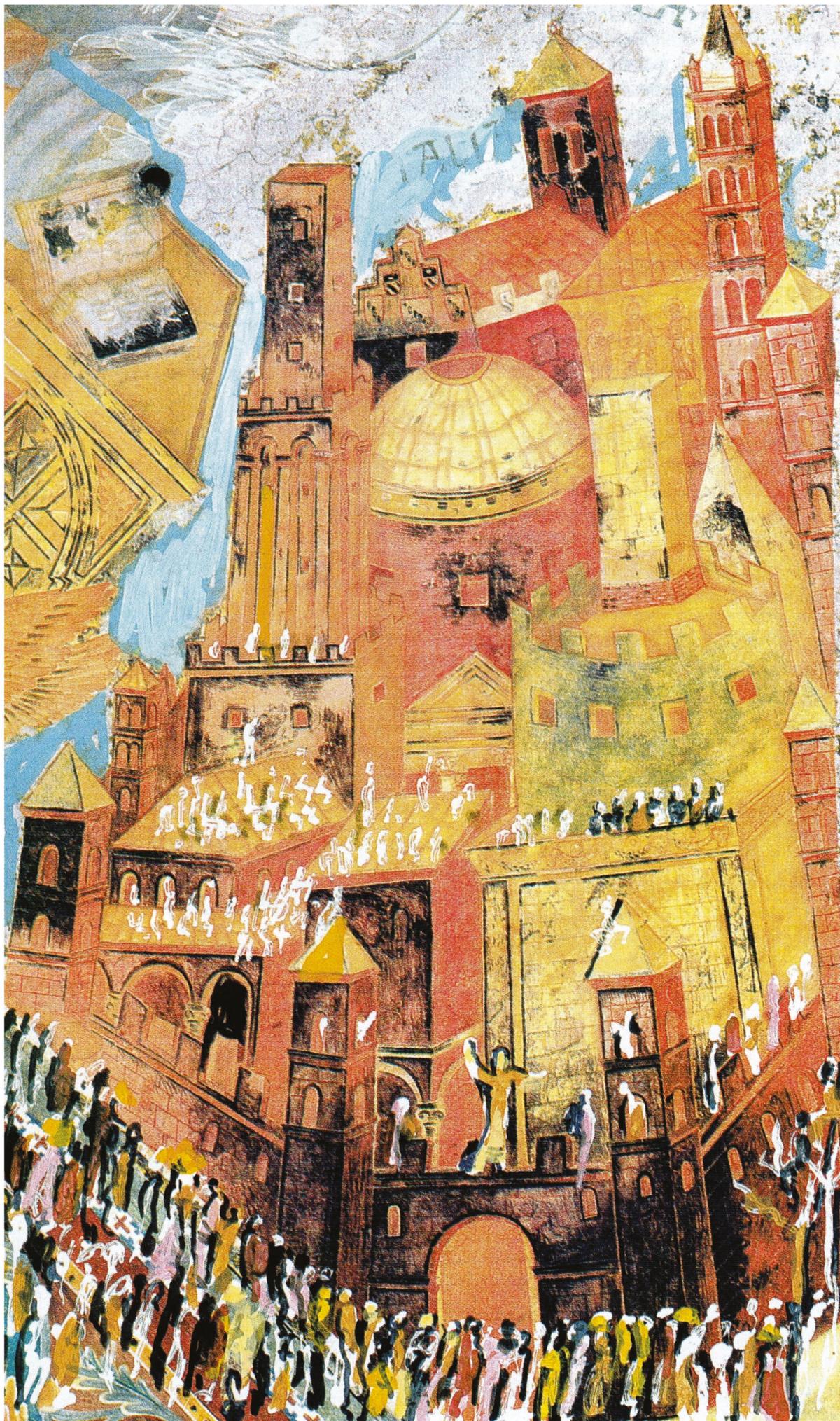
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